Contentious Liberties: Gendered Power and Religious Freedom in the Nineteenth-Century American Mission to Jamaica

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ABSTRACT

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In 1839, the year after slavery’s end in the British West Indies, a group of young abolitionist graduates of Ohio’s Oberlin College established a Protestant mission in Jamaica. Joining the already numerous British missionaries on the island, these mostly Congregationalist white American men and women created mission churches and schools to aid and convert black Jamaicans as well as to show skeptical whites in the United States a successful model of an emancipated society. The fledgling American Missionary Association adopted their project in 1847, and it continued until the end of the American Civil War. The mission failed to be the shining example of an interracial society its founders had intended because in spite of their devotion to their doctrine of Christian liberty, the missionary men and women positioned themselves as perpetual parents over “childlike” Jamaican converts.

The dissertation focuses on the conflicts over the meaning of liberty as different factions in the mission defined it. It does this in two parts: first by showing how abolitionist men committed to liberty instituted mission churches and households based in strictly controlled hierarchies, and second, by examining the challenges brought to those hierarchies by black Jamaicans, white women, and others. The Americans went to Jamaica with an idea of Christian liberty that conflated religious conversion and emancipation. When the missionary men found that few black Jamaicans lived up this initial expectation of a “born again” society, they managed this “licentiousness” by
imposing strict church discipline and by becoming increasingly attached to their power as infallible "fathers" overseeing their mission households.

Over the course of the mission's almost thirty-year history, disgruntled members of the mission – both black and white – challenged this hierarchy in direct and indirect ways, and most interestingly, the ministers could, at times, be convinced that they were wrong, especially when a white man had raised the complaint. Black Jamaican men and women and the mission's white women had less success. Occurring as they did in the missionary setting, these periodic disputes over the mission's power structure reflected and distorted American discussions about gender and race, religion, and Christian reform.
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INTRODUCTION

In the early nineteenth century, the notion of liberty had an allure for all Americans. It took on many meanings, becoming a justification for white men’s freedom and southern states’ rights, for example, while also laying at the heart of the abolitionist movement against slavery, and more specifically, the American Missionary Association’s abolitionist project to remake emancipated Jamaica. The men and women participating in the Jamaica Mission came from the “burned-over district,” a region of Upstate New York and eastern Ohio beset with religious revival, industrialization, and urbanization in the 1820s. As one historian described it, the time of “freedom’s ferment” included a transition from slave to free labor in the North, growing market towns, and the commercialization of agriculture.¹ The fertile land along the Erie Canal also provided rich soil for religious revival, and the waves of revivals collectively called the Second Great Awakening erupted throughout the 1820s and 1830s. Affected by a changing economic order and evangelicalism’s emphasis on the individual conversion, the residents of the burned-over district developed an interest in individual liberty. For many Protestant Christians, however, the climate of individualism created by market capitalism had its down side: liberty could be taken too far by some immoral people and could devolve into sinful licentiousness. To preserve Christian liberty from this slippery slope, devout northerners, especially those men and women who had been converted during the Second Great Awakening, believed that public morality needed to be reinforced by the moral influence of the home as well as the vigilant members of churches and moral reform societies.

¹ Alice Tyler Felt, Freedom’s Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944).
A small segment of northern evangelicals set their sites on slavery's sinfulness.

For these reform-minded men and women, slavery was antithetical to all of the principles of Christian liberty. Slavery, these evangelical abolitionists believed, was a not simply contrary to the laws of the land, but it was first and foremost a sin against God. Slavery denied enslaved people freedom of conscience, and it put slaveholders in positions of absolute power. The evangelical abolitionists also feared the corrupting influence of slavery. In their minds, slavery's evils could not be sequestered to the southern states. Christian abolitionists, especially those involved in foreign mission work, often asked their compatriots how the United States could live up to being a Christian nation, a beacon of light in a world of darkness, when slaveholders knowingly lived sinful lives and when millions of enslaved people were kept in a state of "heathenism." In addition to harming the people directly involved with the peculiar institution, slavery also ruined

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the very institutions meant to protect public morals – the nation’s homes and churches – in a society dedicated to individual liberty.

American evangelical abolitionists looked to model their activism on that of their British counterparts’ in the 1830s, and when British emancipation ended colonial slavery in 1838, many evangelical abolitionists saw the freed societies of the Caribbean as a laboratory to apply their ideals of Christian liberty. Several white abolitionist graduates of the interracial Oberlin Theological Seminary turned to action; they moved to Jamaica to start self-supporting churches and unified their evangelical and abolitionist goals. They viewed their work as an affront to American missionary efforts that ignored slavery as well as a propaganda campaign to prove to skeptical white Americans that Afro-Jamaicans could become “civilized” Christians. After a period of financial setbacks, the Oberlin-educated American ministers gained the support of the American Missionary Association (AMA) in 1847 and grew in numbers and in missions throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Liberty, in terms of freedom from bondage, whether of sin or of slavery, motivated dozens of missionaries to travel thousands of miles from their homes to live in rural mountain houses among freed people who proved to be rather ambivalent about the Americans’ presence and intentions.

In trying to apply the principles of “Christian liberty” in emancipated Jamaica, the missionaries faced the problem of competing ideas of freedom. The ideals nourished at Oberlin and the assumption that emancipated people, like converted people, were instantly transformed fell flat when the missionaries tried to make their conceptions fit the Jamaican situation. The mission’s male ministers for the most part interpreted liberty as a fragile state to be protected from those not yet ready to handle the responsibility of
being free. But the black landowners and wage laborers living around the mission stations had been slaves and understood freedom as a new way of life in which they no longer had to obey white planters, overseers, or even missionaries. The white men of the mission also found that the white women joining them in Jamaica had taken the abolitionist message of liberty to heart and believed that they had greater rights in the missionary family. In the Jamaica Mission, these conflicting perceptions of freedom ran up against one another in the smaller spaces of the mission households, churches, and schools, all antislavery institutions built in an already emancipated society.

* * *

The Jamaica Mission began in 1837 when Oberlin alumnus David S. Ingraham moved his family to Jamaica where he planned to open a church. Ingraham’s likely inspiration for this drastic move was a former classmate from Oberlin, James A. Thome, who just returned from a six-month fact-finding mission in the British West Indies. Thome’s conclusions were clear: emancipation had transformed a once degraded people, but more help was needed from benevolent Christians. Because Jamaica had transitioned from slavery to the apprenticeship system in 1834, rather than full freedom, enacted on August, 1, 1838, this largest British possession in the Caribbean needed the most aid. David Ingraham either went to Jamaica with some support from the London Missionary Society, or he obtained their support after arriving on the island. As a LMS missionary, he was stationed at a church in Shortwood, a neighborhood north of Kingston, the island’s largest city on its southern coast. Soon joined by a fellow Oberlinite, James Preston, the pair traveled widely across the mountainous region north of the city and

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scouted out locations for possible American Congregational churches. In spite of their efforts, they found it difficult to attract support for their work from American patrons, and the two distrusted (and were probably distrusted by) the wealthy white Britons and Jamaicans on the island. In spite of the lackluster interest in the mission in Jamaica and in the United States, the two men managed to recruit five recent Oberlin graduates, four of whom were married, to join the mission in 1839.⁴

In Jamaica these ministers wanted to continue the work on behalf of black education that they had begun as students in Ohio. Most Oberlin students had worked at local Sabbath Schools and antislavery churches during the school year and vacations as teachers for black adults and children coming to Ohio from the southern slave states. The names of their Jamaica Mission stations reflected their shared evangelical and abolitionist heritage as well as their connection to the Western Reserve frontier of Ohio. The station closest to Kingston was named after their alma mater, Oberlin. Two other stations took on the names of the most famous missionaries in American history – Eliot and Brainerd. John Eliot had founded praying towns in the colonial era, and David Brainerd, also a missionary to American Indians, had written a memoir that exemplified missionary piety. They wanted each mission station to form a Christian community resembling the praying towns of colonial New England and the contemporary free villages being established by English missionaries in Jamaica. The mission house would be occupied by the minister, his wife and children, perhaps a single woman schoolteacher, and several black Jamaican children who worked with the family, often as "assistants" to the missionary wife and

⁴ In 1836, the American Anti-Slavery Society sent two men, James A. Thome and J. Horace Kimball, to the West Indies for a six-month visit to report on slavery. Their report, Emancipation in the West Indies, was published in 1838 by the AASS. Lewis Tappan, History of the American Missionary Association, Its Constitution and Principles (New York, 1855), 20; Fletcher, History of Oberlin College, 1:257, 260.
farmhands on the small plots owned by the mission, in exchange for education. Each station also had a chapel for the religious part of the mission and at least one school at which the missionary wife or teacher would do the “civilizing” work of educating the freed people. This family model would serve as the ideal to which the church members living in the neighborhood should aspire.

In spite of these utopian plans, the scantily documented early years of the Jamaica Mission provide a tantalizing story of conflicting ideas of freedom and who was deserving of that freedom. Christian liberty, after all, praised independence and freedom while also insisting on discipline and order, a fragile balance open to differing interpretations. Further, the missionaries themselves came from a society in transition as the rural farming households and economies of the colonial era disappeared in the face of newer and more amorphous family patterns in rapidly growing towns and cities. The unsettled environment of the missionaries’ home meant that some conflicts would be worked out on Jamaican soil. This included theological disputes, the contested place of women reformers within abolitionism, the role of domesticity in the mission family, and, of course, racial ideologies.

As a way to illustrate the shaky ground of the Jamaica Mission’s foundation, I turn to the experiences of three missionaries from the early period of the mission’s history: David Ingraham, his recruit, Nancy Prince, a free African American woman

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whom Ingraham recruited, and Ralph Tyler, an Oberlin graduate who was one of the five ministers to come to Jamaica in 1839. Prince’s story highlights the difficulties in translating domesticity into the missionary context, while Ralph Tyler’s attitudes demonstrate how domestic understandings of church discipline changed in the Jamaica Mission. Both Prince and Tyler offer compelling evidence that Ingraham’s utopian vision failed to capture the real complexities that were to be found in his attempt to export American evangelicalism and abolitionism to another country. The trio’s struggles to reconcile with each other raise significant themes the American missionaries would face throughout the mission’s thirty-year history.

After spending an initial two years in Jamaica, David Ingraham and his family returned to the States in 1839 to recruit new missionaries and to lecture about the progress of emancipation in Jamaica. In addition to getting the support of the five Oberlin graduates, including Ralph Tyler, Ingraham also recruited Nancy Prince after he met her at an abolitionist meeting in Boston. Prince’s own past proved quite remarkable. She had been born to a free black family in Massachusetts in 1799, and in 1824 she had married an older man, a sailor. Soon after their wedding, the couple moved to Russia, where he served in the court of the tsar. In Russia, Prince adopted several orphaned children and worked with the Protestant ministers in St. Petersburg by forming a “female society” and by helping to distribute Bibles. Prince belonged to a generation of churchgoing women who formed reform societies and engaged in benevolence work as a part of their Christian identity and their interpretation of the duties of “true

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womanhood.\textsuperscript{7} For Prince, as for many African American women, their race and their faith drew them to abolitionism, and when she returned to the United States in 1833, she joined the newly founded Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. Her husband had left Russia shortly after she had departed, and she learned soon after her own return, that he had died during his journey. The widowed Prince settled in Boston and dedicated herself to the abolitionist cause.

When she agreed to join David Ingraham’s fledgling Jamaica Mission, Nancy Prince intended to focus on orphans and education, the same benevolent causes she had dedicated herself to in the United States and in Russia. She hoped to achieve greater independence in post-emancipation Jamaica, something similar to the freedom that she had found in Russia yet felt was lacking in the cities of the U.S. North. As an educated American woman, she thought that she would be respected by black Jamaicans and that in this emancipated society, she would face few limitations from whites. In her memoir, she recalled that her plan for Jamaica had been “to raise up and encourage the emancipated inhabitants, and teach the young children to read and work, and to fear God, and put their trust in the Savior.” Upon arrival, a black-led Methodist congregation recruited her to teach at their school, and from her new position, Prince wrote Ingraham that she had decided to stay in the northern town of St. Ann’s for a time before going south to Kingston and the American mission stations. Her brief and unhappy time with the Methodist church revealed Nancy Prince’s identification with the culture and faith of white Americans, rather than with black Jamaicans. Prince realized she would not be

able to continue to work with the church when she and one of the church's leaders, a black Jamaican woman, disagreed about the terms of church membership. The Jamaican woman, like many Jamaican Christians, disagreed with Prince's belief that it was necessary "to be born of the spirit of God before we become members of the church of Christ." The church's minister sided with the Jamaican woman, leading Prince to tell him her mind: "I did not come here to be guided by a poor foolish woman." She stayed another couple of months and fulfilled her contract at the parish school before leaving to travel south through the Blue Mountains to Kingston.  

In Kingston she reunited with David Ingraham only to find that his situation had changed. Ingraham and his family had taken refuge with a friend in Kingston because, Prince wrote, he "had lost his pulpit and his school," perhaps hinting at a falling out between Ingraham and his employer, the London Missionary Society. While in Kingston, Prince also encountered a number of black Americans who had come to the island in recent years but had found it difficult to find land and make a living. They were interested in staying on the island, and they resolved to form a society along with the white American missionaries for the purpose of building a school for "the poor girls that were destitute." At this time, Prince returned to the United States to raise money and then would return to help run the school; Ingraham, his wife, and infant daughter also left Jamaica for the U.S. Not long after his homecoming, however, David Ingraham died on Emancipation Day, August 1, at the home of his friend from Oberlin, abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld. In spite of the uncertainty caused by Ingraham's death, Prince went about gathering financial support for her school by speaking to female antislavery societies in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, including the "Anti-Slavery Society at

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8 Prince, *Narrative*, 50–51.
Mrs. Lucretia Motts.” She did not collect the amount required for the school, and she resigned to contributing fifty dollars of her own money to make up the difference before returning to Jamaica.⁹

Nancy Prince expected to be reimbursed as soon as she arrived in Jamaica, and she had great hope for the school that she would help build and oversee. However, once back in Jamaica in May 1842, Prince found herself in Kingston amid an Afro-centric religious revival among Jamaican blacks and a violent white backlash trying to put down what whites feared to be a revolt. Several of Prince’s African-American expatriate friends had left the island to become missionaries in Africa, and when she inquired at the American Consul, the consulate advised her against trying to build a school at the current time. Further, the American mission on the island was beginning to organize itself as the four individual churches struggled with serious financial problems. The Jamaican converts had not sustained the ministers’ salaries, as the Oberlin graduates had intended. The different circumstances forced Prince to work with a new committee, made up of a number of “men and women of authority” who were presumably white since Prince remarked on the fact that they accepted her, a black woman, because “the thought of color was nowhere exhibited.” The men leading this new society thanked Prince for her work and then told her that their constitution stipulated that they would care of her and that she would “live among us,” but that “we the undersigned will take charge of all she has brought.” When Prince refused to agree to this point and to hand over her money to this society, she felt that her property was in danger of being stolen and quickly made arrangements to leave Jamaica. Upon her return to New York, she could not afford to pay the ship’s captain, and he kept her luggage; fortunately the wealthy philanthropist

⁹Ibid., 52, 58, 59.
and abolitionist Lewis Tappan, the soon-to-be treasurer of the American Missionary Association, came to her aid.\textsuperscript{10}

Although Nancy Prince raised money for the missionaries’ cause and shared in their goals, Lewis Tappan omitted her story from the 1865 history of the AMA, even as it detailed the experiences of Ingraham and James Preston. Her memoir provides the only evidence that she had any involvement with the mission. Ingraham’s recruitment of Prince, the fact that she belonged to the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and visited in prominent antislavery circles, places her at the hub of evangelical abolitionism. Additionally, Prince’s remarkable life and her work to raise money for schools in Jamaica should have made her an iconic figure among the white missionaries who enjoyed praising “exceptional” blacks, or well-educated black men and women with correct religious views. Perhaps Nancy Prince did not appear in the AMA’s record because she refused to comply with the ministers’ wishes that she submit to them and give up her money and her role as the head of the school. This would have been the proper response of a Christian woman according to the ideology of domesticity so central to evangelical abolitionism and the Jamaica Mission. Prince, however, had not come to Jamaica expecting to compromise her sense of Christian morality and what was right. Prince’s sense of moral superiority as a woman and as a black woman led her to think that she could better represent Jamaican freed people than the mission’s white men, even though she also felt that the freed Jamaicans needed guidance rather than immediate self-government.

The recruitment of Nancy Prince as the mission’s primary educator showed one side of David Ingraham’s broader understanding of liberty, and his successor, Oberlin

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 63–67.
alumnus Ralph Tyler, explained another. Writing generally about the problems besetting the American churches, Tyler bemoaned the unwillingness of black Jamaicans to tithe to mission churches. Some in the mission, he wrote, had dealt with this difficulty by letting in as many church members as were interested. Ingraham especially had been too lax in church discipline and was “too free in admitting to the church.” As a result of Ingraham’s policies, Tyler complained, when the Ingrahams left Jamaica, the “church society and school” at Shortwood was “almost gone to ruin.”

Tyler, like the missionaries who would replace him in the mid-1840s, believed that black Jamaicans should be encouraged to attend church services, but church membership should only be granted to those who had proven their righteousness so thoroughly that they would not go astray and corrupt the body of the church with their sinfulness.

Nancy Prince likely would have agreed with Tyler, as she had herself clashed with black Jamaican Christians over the very same question. But would Tyler have supported Prince as she took on a position of authority in the mission overseeing the mission’s schools? Although Tyler and Prince were in Jamaica at the same time, Prince made no mention of Tyler as one of the Americans who aided her when the educational society was attempting to steal her money. Given Tyler’s dissatisfaction with his colleagues and personal financial troubles, he very likely belonged to the society trying to take Prince’s money from her. The answers to these questions remain unsettled; in contrast to the richly documented years following the mission’s incorporation into the American Missionary Association in 1847, the first years of the Jamaica Mission have left only these faint traces that provide more questions than answers to the relationships.

11 Ralph Tyler to Henry Cowles, 20 March 1842 in Alumni File of Ralph Tyler, RG 28/1, Box 258, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin College. (hereafter cited as OCA).
among the different missionaries. What is apparent, however, in the triangle between Nancy Prince, David Ingraham, and Ralph Tyler, are the multiple understandings of what West Indian emancipation and black freed people meant to American abolitionists, and how the ideals of race, gender, and religion fermenting in the domestic setting of the United States took unexpected turns when exported to Jamaica.

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This first group of missionaries found themselves beset with conflicts that reflected the diversity of ideas within the abolitionist movement of the 1830s and, more generally, the difficulties inherent in a civilizing mission that had at its base a call for freedom and liberty at the same time as it ended up trying to force black Jamaicans to live in a way that the Americans considered "civilized." These same issues arose after the Civil War in the United States as northerners flocked to the South with the intention of teaching ex-slaves how to be free. In southern towns, on southern plantations, and within individual households, white northerners and southerners, free blacks, and the recently freed slaves attempted to define the terms of freedom. The Jamaica Mission, to paraphrase historian Willie Lee Rose, provided the AMA with its first rehearsal for Reconstruction. During the period of the 1830s through the 1860s, the term "freedom" was used to a wide variety of ends in the United States and the Caribbean, and these different meanings are the subject of this dissertation. Following the work of Thomas Holt, Rebecca Scott, and Frederick Cooper who called for seeing freedom as "a social construct, a collectively shared set of values reinforced by ritual, philosophical, literary, and everyday discourse," I argue that the Jamaica Mission served as a site in which
numerous conceptions of freedom collided and were reshaped as a result of the
encounter.\textsuperscript{12}

Like Ralph Tyler, most of the American ministers who would live in Jamaica
faced what they perceived to be a society overrun with “licentiousness” instead of
thriving on liberty.\textsuperscript{13} The AMA missionaries observed Jamaican ideas about religion,
family relations, and even property rights, and the missionaries thought that these were
the remnants of slavery and African “heathenism.” If Jamaicans wanted to progress to
civilization, these old customs would have to be abandoned entirely in favor of the
American Protestant way of being in the world. When Jamaicans resisted the notion that
they would have to be reborn to become “civilized,” the Americans responded in the only
way they knew how: rather than doubt the universality of their own worldview, they
began to see Jamaicans as not yet ready for self-government and therefore in need of
external restraints. The American ministers committed to emancipation and liberty found
themselves imposing restrictions on the freedom of their converts and others within the
mission households. By the mid-1840s, the male ministers in Jamaica described
themselves as paternalistic fathers guiding childlike Jamaicans. This dynamic extended
beyond the relations between the ministers and their black converts to encompass how
the ministers viewed their role within their own families and as governors of the other
white missionaries, especially the mission’s unmarried women.

\textsuperscript{12} Frederick Cooper, Thomas Holt, and Rebecca Scott, eds. \textit{Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor,

\textsuperscript{13} Americans in the United States also feared the “wave of licentiousness,” especially in growing cities, as
can be seen in the growing numbers of Female Moral Reform Societies and other groups set against
alcohol, gambling, and especially sex. See Scott, \textit{Natural Allies}, 41–43.
The ministers expressed this patriarchal authority in two related ways – as the heads of their mission households and as the ministers reigning over the mission's schools and churches. In terms of the mission household, the ministers adapted the ideology of domesticity to fit a racial as well as gendered family.\textsuperscript{14} In the U.S. North, domestic ideology gradually became a way for white women to justify the home as their dominion, and for many white women, using the language of domesticity enabled them to engage in reform work and even political activism. In the households of the Jamaica Mission, however, domesticity developed differently. The ministers believed that “dependent” white women and neighboring black Jamaicans needed supervision and the male ministers expected both white women and children and black Jamaican men and women to submit to ministerial authority. Any disobedience or resistance from either white women or black Jamaican men and women resulted in swift punishment. The order required for a society in which Christian liberty could flourish relied on the hierarchy of the Christian family. The ministers used church discipline as the means to control their church membership. The American missionaries believed that they guarded the church’s morality by restricting who could become a church member, and they frequently excommunicating those who strayed from the path. While their ideas of church discipline had come from northern abolitionists intent on expelling sinful white slaveholders from “free” churches; in Jamaica, it was the former slaves who became the targets of excommunication.

\textsuperscript{14} Nancy Cott points out the usefulness of the term “domesticity” in the preface to the new introduction to her classic account of ‘woman’s sphere,’ noting that unlike “true womanhood,” domesticity implies a set of beliefs that affected both men and women. Nancy F. Cott, \textit{The Bonds of Womanhood: ‘Woman’s Sphere’ in New England, 1780–1835} (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977, 1997), xii. Bruce Dorsey, \textit{Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
The racialized and gendered missionary domesticity and church discipline, however, did not go unchallenged. Both black Jamaicans and white members of the mission protested against various aspects of the mission’s systems of order, and often the two different modes of dissent worked in tandem. Black Jamaicans from within and without the mission churches questioned the Americans’ right to dictate the terms of salvation, and with many religious options on the island, Jamaican inquirers and converts often abandoned the mission churches when they disagreed with the missionary’s lessons. Many black men sought another route and gained considerable power in the missionary congregations as elected deacons. The most successful moments of increased Jamaican authority typically occurred when there was dissension in the ranks of the white missionaries. Coming from a climate charged with radical individualism and abolitionism, a streak of religious radicalism ran through the mission, and made even its staunchest supporters of hierarchy susceptible to the allure of “liberty,” especially when calls for greater liberty were voiced by American men.

Religious radicals, coming out of central New York, brought ideas of spiritual and sexual liberty to the mission in the early 1850s, and these beliefs temporarily dismantled domesticity and church discipline. Less successful criticisms of the mission’s hierarchies came from single women joining the mission in the 1850s. They would, like Nancy Prince, draw on the ideology of domesticity to assert their moral authority rather than to emphasize their dependency, as churchgoing women increasingly did in the United States North. While none of these women were supporters of the woman’s rights movement or woman’s suffrage, the experience of being in Jamaica as a civilizing missionary with a different plan for the mission from that of the mission’s men led them to express a quasi-
feminist argument. Their efforts met with little success. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, the same small group of ministers remained in control of the Jamaica Mission. As they spent more time on the island in a position they felt required them to exert control, the mission's leading men drifted farther from the ideals they had once embraced as young evangelicals and as young abolitionists at Oberlin. Not until the end of the 1850s would they begin to falter as a new generation of missionaries arrived on the island with a different model of the civilizing mission rooted less in discipline and more in sentiment.

Although historians have emphasized flexibility in the discourses of antebellum domesticity and evangelicalism, in Jamaica the white ministers felt it necessary to pin down a single meaning for each. In doing so, they limited the possibilities that might have emerged from this mission with its roots in interracial community and abolitionism. This dissertation, then, is ultimately the story of failure: the Jamaica Mission transformed from a utopian dream of an interracial society driven by the early abolitionist movement of the 1830s into a restrictive hierarchical order that forced its more radical white members to leave the mission and drove many of its black members out of the mission churches to black-led congregations. Yet the ministers' need for complete control could not completely eliminate the slippery quality of liberty within evangelical abolitionism. From time to time and to varying degrees of success, individuals, both black and white,

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invoked broader definitions of liberty to protest the assumptions of inequality underlying the civilizing mission.

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This dissertation looks to understand American history within a broader international context. Besides the missionaries' movements from Ohio to Jamaica, the Atlantic world hovers over the mission as Jamaican freed people had a culture and religion inflected with both African and English traits, and the Americans always looked forward to the time when their converts would be ready to become missionaries to Africa. The mission also demonstrates the shifting place of Jamaica and the Caribbean in the American imagination. In the 1840s and 1850s, American abolitionists looked to the island as a guiding light: northern abolitionists invoked the British West Indies to see the future of their own country after emancipation. This is quite different from the relationship between Jamaica and the U.S. after the Civil War when the island became an economic colony of sorts, a site for banana plantations run by American corporations. The Caribbean was not always the site of American occupations and invasions, as became increasingly true in the late nineteenth century. In this case, the American missionaries to Jamaica did come with the intention to impose their ideas of Christian civilization, but the missionaries need to be considered in light of the power at their disposal. They had no government backing, from either the U.S. or the Jamaican colonial government, and they frequently declared their opposition to British colonialism. In addition to rethinking how American historians have thought about the Caribbean, the missionaries themselves provide a way to see how individuals operated in different historical frames. The missionaries lived in multiple and overlapping timelines as they
were Americans who kept up with the changes in the antebellum North, even as they lived in Jamaica. They also responded to historical events taking place on the island generally and within the history of their own mission stations.

At first glance, the most compelling aspect of the Jamaica Mission is as a precedent to the work of the AMA in the Reconstruction-Era South. It anticipated the massive effort by the AMA and other northern philanthropies to educate and "civilize" southern blacks after the Civil War. Like the evangelicals and Unitarians in Willie Lee Rose’s now-classic Rehearsal for Reconstruction, the missionaries to Jamaica exhibited in-fighting and friendship and tried to walk a line between personal profit and missionary altruism.\textsuperscript{16} Some of the missionaries even went on to work in the Reconstruction South. In the case of one missionary, Abner Olds, the Jamaica Mission served as an introduction to what would become a lifetime commitment to black freedom as he headed two freedmen’s camps in Mississippi and Tennessee during the Civil War and served as a chaplain to the 59\textsuperscript{th} Colored Infantry during the last year of the war.\textsuperscript{17} Due to its small size and perhaps also its eccentricities, historians have seen the Jamaica Mission as an aside in the history of abolitionism, missionaries, and reform. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, the biographer of Lewis Tappan, the founder and treasurer of the AMA, spent only a few pages on the Jamaica Mission, and described its major project – a manual labor school and farm – to be “like most utopian communities of the era: its aims were lofty, but its performance disappointing.”\textsuperscript{18} In other histories of the American Missionary


\textsuperscript{17} Alumni File of Abner D. Olds, RG 28/1, Box 770, OCA.

\textsuperscript{18} Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, 297.
Association, the Jamaica Mission typically gets several sentences, or at most a few pages. In scholarship on missionaries in Jamaica and the Caribbean, the presence of these Americans has been overlooked or ignored, with one exception. The Jamaica Mission was a crucible for the ideas of evangelical abolitionism, and by placing white men and women in close proximity to freed people, it allows us to see race, gender, and religion in the same frame in the decades before American emancipation.

By focusing on evangelical abolitionists rather than their more popular abolitionist colleagues, the supporters of William Lloyd Garrison, this dissertation departs from studies examining abolitionism and woman’s rights as part and parcel of the same movement. In that reading, white women developed a platform for sexual equality and human rights as they fought for the individual rights of enslaved blacks. What of the northern abolitionist women who did not come to this conclusion? These “conservative” or churchgoing women became involved in moral reform and abolitionism through their notion that as women, they had a gendered duty to battle the moral evil of slavery and to stand up for white and black families in the South. Far from

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20 DuBois, *Feminism and Abolitionism*. 

seeing the plight of slaves as a justification for their own rights, these women who manipulated domesticity to justify their activism emphasized their gender difference rather than sexual equality. They battled for black women to become free so that they could marry and have the privileges of “true womanhood,” of submitting rather than becoming equal to men. For feminist historians, these so-called conservative women have posed a problem: why would they work against their own self-interest? This narrowly conceived question, however, belies the enormous power women gained through domesticity during the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Rather than answering or even posing these sorts of questions, I am more interested in asking why the domesticity-based argument failed white missionary women in Jamaica when it was quite successful for white women in the contemporary U.S. North.

Scholars of missionary women have argued that many American and European women turned to the plight of “degraded” foreign women rather than trying to gain rights at home. In this reading, some churchgoing women articulated a kind of Christian feminism when they went abroad since they believed that Protestant Christianity had “elevated” them; non-European women would similarly have better lives when their societies’ converted to “civilized” Christianity. The Jamaica Mission differs from these other antebellum Protestant missions precisely because the mission emphasized instilling manhood and independence rather than elevating black women. In the masculine discourse of abolitionism, the most important marker of an emancipated person was his

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independence, and the missionaries wanted more than anything to prove emancipation’s success to an American audience. In this climate, the agendas of missionary women in Jamaica were ultimately subordinated to the ministers’ primary goal of having black men become self-sufficient, property-owning farmers.

In addition to examining the role of American women missionaries, the dissertation is also interested in the relationship of domesticity and gender ideology more broadly. I add a new layer to Amy Kaplan’s recent analysis of domesticity, race, and national expansion. Kaplan argues that the ideology of domesticity did not merely function to create “separate spheres” to separate and distinguish white men and women. It also operated as a powerful language for talking about racial differences, foreign cultures, and non-Christians, and significantly, gave “conservative” women a way to speak authoritatively on the political questions of the mid-nineteenth century without claiming sexual equality with men. 23 While Kaplan does not emphasize religion in her analysis, women missionaries put the ideology of domesticity into action to support the validity of their ideas about the civilizing mission. White women missionaries thought of themselves as natural civilizers and domesticators of the foreign, and consequently believed themselves to have particular insight into how the mission should be managed. This attitude only grew in strength during the mid-nineteenth century as white women gained an increasingly important role in Protestant Christianity. 24 In Jamaica, however, this did not bring men and women together as united by their shared racial and cultural identity. When missionary women voiced these views, they were seen as dangerous to


the mission's established gender order, and the ministers feared that any insubordination might also damage their authority in the eyes of black Jamaicans.

A study of domesticity as a "civilizing" force in the Jamaica Mission connects American abolitionism and its gender and racial assumptions to a broader literature on colonial households. Ann Stoler has argued that racial differences had to be taught in colonial places: how did European children living in the colonies learn that they were European and not creole or "native" when their primary caregivers might be a nonwhite woman? Stoler answers that colonizing men and women found ways of "teaching" racial difference, a line of inquiry that has obvious parallels to the black and white plantation households of the Old South.²⁵ The missionaries in Jamaica expressed little anxiety about whether or not their children would "go native," but they did see the value in bringing black children into their mission households as a "civilizing" tactic. The Americans used domesticity and their household structures in different ways, sometimes to exert control and other times to encourage integration and equality, and this largely depended upon the missionary's generation and gender. The younger missionaries coming to the island in the late 1850s at the peak of sentimental literature and abolitionist propaganda tended to disdain rigid hierarchies in favor of an "affectionate" model of the civilizing mission, while the older ministers of a different generation insisted on discipline and control in their households' day-to-day activities. Domesticity, then, as a vision for how freed people should live, as a way for men and women missionaries to

relate to one another, and as a means for ordering the mission family, contributed a great
deal to the practice of the “civilizing mission.”

In addition to exploring the gender ideology of domesticity in relation to race and
religion, this dissertation also investigates American religious history and slavery from
the perspective of Christian missions. This is possible because unlike most scholars of
American foreign missions who have written on the massive American Board of
Commissioners for Foreign Missions, a group that only officially condemned slavery in
the late 1850s, the subject here is the abolitionist American Missionary Association.26 By
working with the AMA rather than the American Board and by focusing on the
antebellum period exclusively, my dissertation sheds light on an understudied segment of
the U.S. missionary movement. It demonstrates the inseparability of domestic debates
over slavery with foreign missionaries who encountered racial difference abroad, a point
generally ignored in scholarship on missions before the Civil War. Additionally, because
the missionaries to Jamaica came from a more marginal evangelicalism than most foreign
missionaries and went to the already mostly Christian island of Jamaica, the mission
serves as a fascinating site of encounter between two entirely different Christianities.27

In considering the religious dynamic of the civilizing mission as an encounter
between two sides as well as a dislocating site for the American missionaries’ own
beliefs, I am interested in how religion infused how both the Americans and the
Jamaicans interpreted their worlds through religious and not secular perspective.28 While

26 William R. Hutchison, Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions

27 Ussama Makdisi, Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries, the Middle East, and the Question of
abolitionists are often seen as the harbingers of modernity in the United States context, following these missionaries abroad brings a new perspective to the degree to which religion infused their understanding of the world around them. As noted earlier, the women missionaries gained a sort-of feminist conscience not because of a political ideology but because their religious views about the mission conflicted with that of the mission’s men. As another example, when religious revivals occurred in individual mission churches or on a larger scale, the missionaries became swept up in the religious enthusiasm as much as their “less civilized” black Jamaican neighbors. Religion provided the structure for the mission in the hierarchy distinguishing between freedom’s “pure” Christianity and slavery’s “degraded” Christianity, yet religious belief also allowed that hierarchy and the mission’s gender and racial assumptions to be challenged in the name of God.

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The dissertation moves from an American expression of religious enthusiasm, the Second Great Awakening in the late 1820s, to a Jamaican revival in the 1860s. The former initiated the missionary and abolitionist zeal needed to imagine the mission and the latter inspired the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865 that prompted many of the Americans to flee the island. I begin in the United States and shift to Jamaica, as the island was represented in texts to the missionaries and then as they experienced it first hand. Throughout the dissertation I have tried to emphasize the constantly shifting power dynamics within the mission family because I think it is important to remember that the ministers’ portrayal of their power in their letters often covered over the ever-present

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challenges to their authority coming from their fellow ministers, the white women in the mission, and, of course, black Jamaican deacons and church members. The overlapping metaphors and realities of freedom in this mission to “free” the formerly captive souls of black people created a rich discourse of Christian liberty that was used by many within the mission family to their own ends.

The dissertation is divided into three parts. Part I examines race, gender, and religion in the early years of the American abolitionist movement from the 1820s through the creation of the American Missionary Association in 1846. Looking at some of the major players in the abolitionist movement from the perspective of the Jamaica Mission, I argue, gives a different point of view of how evangelicalism, the gender ideology of domesticity, and abolitionism fit together from the account usually found in scholarship by religious historians, women’s historians, and historians of slavery. Part II turns to Jamaica after the mission was adopted by the AMA in 1847, and it centers on the complexities of the cultural encounter between white evangelical missionaries and black Jamaicans and the evolution of missionary domesticity and church discipline as a means to conduct the civilizing mission. I show how the issue of West Indian emancipation was of critical importance to abolitionists, yet in representing black Jamaicans they covered over the realities of black Jamaican culture and the real challenges facing freed people in the period after emancipation. The failure of imagination on the part of most of the American missionaries that prevented them from seeing black Jamaican culture as a meaningful thing in itself led the white ministers to insist on the “childlike” and stubborn quality of the people they sought to convert, and made the Americans skeptical as to whether or not black Jamaicans could rule themselves. Part III turns to the mission
households and the disputes among the white members of the mission as missionary women and a few missionary men tested more expansive notions of liberty than the governing ministers were willing to accept. In these chapters, I show how the ideology of domesticity and the evangelical beliefs of the missionaries clashed, often creating openings through which black Jamaicans active in the mission stations could insert themselves and gain a degree of control as the missionaries fought among themselves.
Oh! It does seem strange to me that Christians should be so blind, so deliberately blind to their great duty as co-workers with God! That they should say slavery is a sin and yet maintain that it is expedient to protract it! —James G. Birney

PART I

GENDER, RELIGION, AND ANTISLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES
1824–1846

As civilizing missionaries, the American men and women in the abolitionist mission to Jamaica articulated a vision of their ideal society and then tried to realize their dream on an island hundreds of miles and an emancipation law away from their home. Jamaica provided the missionaries with a setting for testing and consolidating the beliefs they had developed as young people in the tumultuous 1820s and 1830s North. Historians of the “burned-over district” the missionaries called home have painted a vivid picture of the towns and cities that grew up along the Erie Canal and in the Western Reserve of northern Ohio. In reading about the social transformations of the era — the evangelical revivalism of the 1820s, the early years of immediate abolitionism in the 1830s, alongside the founding of Oberlin, and the American Missionary Association, I found the missionary men and women and their allies everywhere and their work in Jamaica almost entirely absent. In the first two chapters, I bring together abolitionist men and women linked by their connections to the Jamaica Mission into a narrative that casts a different perspective on the early abolitionist movement.

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2 The exception is a very brief mention of the mission, almost as an aside, in Robert Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College from Its Origins to Reconstruction (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1943), and in several pages in Bertram Wyatt Brown, Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery (Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1969).
The abolitionist movement in the United States can be traced as far back as the 1780s, when northern states slowly ended slavery and a number of small abolitionist groups, often organized by free blacks, came into existence in northern cities. In 1808 the United States officially prohibited the importation of African slaves. In the early republic, antislavery activism took its primary form in schemes of colonization, the notion that black men and women in the United States should be freed and sent out of the United States. In 1817 the American Colonization Society (ACS) formed as a coalition between northern and southern men aimed at sending free blacks to Liberia on the western coast of Africa. While many free black abolitionists had long opposed colonization, in the late 1820s, some whites also began to oppose the colonization idea, as the epigraph by James Birney illustrates. Birney, a white southerner who ran for president on the Liberty Party ticket in 1840, expressed the viewpoint of immediate abolitionists. These men and women called for slavery to be made illegal and for former slaves to be integrated into the United States as citizens, and their ideas paralleled similar work occurring in Britain as antislavery activists petitioned Parliament to end slavery in the colonies. Like their English counterparts, the budding American antislavery advocates were considered “radical abolitionists,” and these white men and women embraced what black Americans and some Quakers had long believed. They opposed the gradualist antislavery theories that held that slavery would eventually dwindle out through western expansion, and these so-called radicals were also outspokenly hostile to the colonization schemes intent on relocating all Americans of African descent outside of the nation’s boundaries. Importantly, they condemned slavery as a moral wrong and a
national sin and condemned all slaveholders as sinners, an attitude that many white
northerners, even those inclined to oppose slavery, found disconcerting.

The immediatists coalesced behind their antislavery sympathies to form the
interracial American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) in Philadelphia in December 1833. It
was with an eye to the recently passed emancipation legislation in the British Parliament
that the American abolitionists united in a national organization that would be a
counterweight to the American Colonization Society. Over the course of the 1830s,
abolitionist agents lectured around the North, and many small local antislavery societies
were founded in their wake. The AASS coalition was short-lived, however, and by the
end of the 1830s the radical abolitionists fractured into two groups: the Boston-based
supporters of William Lloyd Garrison and the New York-based supporters of the
businessmen and philanthropists Lewis and Arthur Tappan. In addition to tactical
disagreements, the primary cause of the Tappan-Garrison split, most historians agree,
stemmed from the controversies of the “woman question,” as reformers called the debate
over the place of white women in abolitionist organizations. In this framework,
historians consider supporters of the Tappans “conservative” abolitionists as opposed to
the “radical,” Garrisonians.

Both Oberlin (town and school) and the Jamaica Mission were made up of
evangelical abolitionists, men and women whom historians have usually considered
“conservative,” like the evangelical Tappans. The very terms “radical” and
“conservative,” however, are difficult to apply to Oberlin and to the missionaries because
neither their religious beliefs nor gender ideology was “conservative” in the sense of
reflecting an older order. The Oberlin community’s identification with perfectionist
Christianity and its support for female education, albeit focused on women's difference from men rather than sexual equality, cannot be fit comfortably with the historical categories imposed upon abolitionist factions. In examining the gender, religious, and racial assumptions of evangelical abolitionists, then, the following two chapters offer a different perspective on the "woman question," masculinity and femininity more broadly, and abolitionist reformers.

The first scholarship on abolitionism and woman's rights focused almost exclusively on "radicals" or the supporters of Garrison rather than also looking critically at other abolitionist women. To remedy the emphasis placed on early feminists, such scholars as Nancy Hewitt, Julie Roy Jeffrey, and Nancy Isenberg have provided studies of other abolitionist women's groups and have shown that women who opposed sexual equality nevertheless engaged in "political" matters, whether through their churches, petitions, or even, to some extent, political parties. These women often drew on the language of domesticity that inscribed differences between the sexes yet could also be mobilized to justify women's engagement with social problems. Not because they were the same as men but because of their difference – as selfless protectors of their families and as the morally superior sex – white women argued that they had a right and duty to

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improve their society.⁵ I argue that this brand of feminine abolitionist activism was only gradually accepted by evangelical abolitionist men who continued to see Christian activism as a fundamentally masculine project.

This had consequences for the Jamaica Mission because the missionary men brought assumptions of a proper gender order and model Christian family that was changing in the United States even as the ministers tried to implement it in Jamaica. In these two chapters, I use the Oberlin Institute, the missionaries' alma mater, as a touchstone for swirling ideologies of race, gender, and religion in the antebellum North.⁶ In describing the formational experiences of evangelical abolitionist men and women, debates between different evangelicals and abolitionists, and the differing opinions present at Oberlin in the 1830s and 1840s, these chapters lay out the context of how the missionaries to Jamaica understood manliness and femininity, and the ideology of domesticity in particular, as it related to Christian activism and their definition of Christian liberty.

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⁶ Oberlin initially contained a preparatory school, a college for young adults (the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, changed to the Oberlin College in 1850), and in 1835, it added a post-graduate seminary. Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to the school as the Oberlin Institute, as the missionaries themselves referred to it, except when specifically talking about "the college" or the "seminary."
CHAPTER ONE
Utopian Foundations, 1820-1834

In the early nineteenth century, the Connecticut Missionary Society and other ambitious New England clergy looked to settle the Western Reserve, the land of northwestern Ohio, as a Yankee Puritan colony. The town of Oberlin and the preparatory school and college of the Oberlin Institute were founded in 1832 as the Christian vision of one such missionary, the New-York born John Jay Shipherd. It was but one settlement in the burned-over district of New York and Ohio, a region marked by rapid transformation in the early nineteenth century. The establishment of the Oberlin Colony, as the town was known, represented the same spirit of evangelical utopian thought that would seven years later lead to the foundation of the American mission in Jamaica.

Oberlin’s founding existed within a much wider westward movement of Yankee settlers. After the Revolutionary War, New Englanders moved West of the Appalachian Mountains to the Ohio River Valley, spreading across the lands ceded by Iroquois tribes in central and western New York as well as the Western Reserve of what would become Ohio in 1803. For many migrants, this settlement was seen as the fulfillment of a national destiny, and they connected these newly settled territories of the west to the Puritan settlement of New England. One account even told of a group of settlers floating along the Ohio River on a boat named the Mayflower, and after landing in Marietta, Ohio, they “reenacted the arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers at Plymouth.”¹ The Protestant clergy, particularly those located in Connecticut, followed this settlement of the Western Reserve closely, watching speculators and land companies map out the supposedly empty lands to

be distributed to adventurous Yankees. As religious studies scholar Amy DeRogatis has shown, in the minds of the Protestant establishment, this “New Connecticut” represented a place of moral regeneration for the descendents of English Puritans. Organizations like the Connecticut Missionary Society spoke for many when they united national history with providence, or God’s plan for the new republic, in their visions for the future of the West. In speaking and writing about the Western Reserve, they recalled the images of the New World in the 1600s as well as sites selected for foreign missionaries. At once a “howling wilderness” and a “garden paradise,” the frontier only awaited the civilizing efforts of godly men and women.²

While the West was seen as a way to regenerate the Puritan spirit of two centuries before, there was also anxiety that the white settlers leaving the “civilized” East were degenerating into savages. Consequently, after a brief failed attempt to convert the Indians of the Western Reserve to Christianity, the missionaries sent out by the Connecticut Missionary Society shifted their attention to the souls of white settlers. This change of focus came in part because many of the Iroquois and members of other Ohio tribes had been pushed farther west to Illinois and Wisconsin, but also because the missionary’s and traveler’s reports filtering back to Connecticut detailed what they saw as the moral decline of white frontier families. Unlike their Puritan ancestors who “tamed” the wilderness of New England, the whites settling on the western frontier were apparently reverting from the norms of a civilized society. As an example, a travel narrative written in the early 1820s by Zerah Hawley found Indian “savages” and foreign “heathen” to be the only apt comparison to the white settlers. He declared that the tiny

towns seemed the same "as they were when possessed by the savages of the forest," and that "industry is not so much the order of the day." Hawley, like foreign missionaries, focused on family arrangements and gender practices. Families slept together "promiscuously in one room," leaving the visitor to declare that this represented but one "great step toward a state of barbarism." Not only did the civilization level of the Ohioans suffer but so did their religious state. According to Hawley, "the Western Reserve needed missionaries as desperately as the 'Islands of the Seas' because many frontier families lived without the 'word of God' and were 'groping in almost heathenish darkness.'" Probably acquainted with the efforts of the fledgling American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), Hawley compared white Americans to the people targeted by missionaries abroad in the Sandwich Islands and Burma in the 1820s, and by doing so, he demonstrated the insecurity of many within the new nation about western expansion.³

Less than a decade later, a Presbyterian missionary from northern New York found the Western Reserve similarly disappointing. John Jay Shipherd had been editing an evangelical children's newspaper, the Youth's Herald, when he decided to leave the Adirondacks for "a distant land and try to do good to others" in 1830.⁴ Shipherd traveled with his wife and two young sons across New York to Niagara Falls and took a ferry boat over Lake Erie to Cleveland, and they settled in Elyria, Ohio, a six-year-old town to the


⁴ Youth's Herald, Dec., 1830, quoted in Robert Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College from its Foundation Through the Civil War, 2 vols. (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1943), 67.
southwest of Cleveland. He reported to his mother the physical as well as the human challenges of living in Elyria. One night, he wrote to her, on the way home at twilight: “I lost my way, as I could not see the marked trees or tracks which were covered with leaves – and to comfort me while searching for the road a gang of wolves set up a howling which make the woods ring.” But he reassured his mother that the wolves had yet to kill anyone in his neighborhood, and that the more pressing concern was the “wolfish men” for whose salvation he labored. More than the rural isolation of the frontier, Shipherd feared his fellow whites who violently opposed his evangelical faith. Indeed, the people he encountered in Elyria were “so hostile to God that they have not . . . even for once, entered his house.” For Shipherd, the true wilderness of Ohio was not in the dense forests and sparse population but rather in the antagonistic men and women who refused to accept the light of Christ.

After serving for little more than a year as the minister at the Elyria Presbyterian church, Shipherd offered his resignation, sadly informing his family back in New York that “[t]he signs of the times (political and religious) evince to me that the blood of the martyrs will ere long be demanded. The state of our country is indeed fearful.” Shipherd did not speak in metaphor, but like many contemporary evangelicals, he truly believed that the current state of religion in the United States would lead to the end times. He feared that the “Romanists, Atheists, Deists, Universalists, and all classes of God’s enemies will combine against the Church and our once happy government seems to be

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5 Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 68, 75.
6 John Shipherd to Z.R. Shipherd, 6 April 1831, Misc. MSS, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 76, (Oberlin Archives hereafter cited as OCA).
7 John Jay Shipherd to his mother, 3 Sept. 1832, John Jay Shipherd Letters, OCA, quoted in DeRogatis, Moral Geography, 158.
fast preparing to favour their murderous projects."

Like many evangelicals of the early nineteenth century, Shipherd surmised that the collapse of religious authority and the rapid spread of liberal Christianity in the East threatened the young nation’s existence. Frontier “savages,” the creeping despotism associated with Roman Catholicism, as well as the practically secular Unitarianism coming out of Boston besieged the delicate balance required for Christian liberty in the minds of Shipherd and his fellow Protestants.

Rather than abandoning all missionary efforts to return to New England, Shipherd organized a utopian town several miles south of Elyria. He believed that this colony, Oberlin, would serve as a beacon of morality in the Western Reserve, or the “Valley of Moral Death” as he and his companions had taken to calling it. Shipherd named Oberlin after an Austrian Protestant minister, Johann Frederich Oberlin, who had in the late 1700s revitalized and reformed a small French community, Ban de la Roche. Shipherd intended his Oberlin to be a covenant town: all the residents would live morally upright lives and pledge their faith in God. The town and its associated preparatory school and college would train missionaries for western churches, and their spirit would revive the faith of the stodgy churches in “old” New England to the East. Oberlin did become an unprecedented outpost of evangelical radicalism, but perhaps not in the way that Shipherd initially imagined. By 1834, the Oberlin Institute had become coeducational

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8 Shipherd to Zebulon R. Shipherd, 9 April 1832, Treasury Office, File H, OCA, quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 84.

9 Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 87.

10 Ibid., 92. In Ban de la Roche, Pastor Oberlin built roads, advocated public health programs, supported industry and agricultural reform, and promoted education. He was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1819, and died in 1826. Shipherd and his colleagues had read about Oberlin in a biography published about him in 1830 by the American Sunday School Union.
and interracial, and in its first few decade it became the home of the controversial Christian perfectionist theology of the evangelist Charles Finney, a stop on the underground railroad, and one of the leading producers of Protestant missionaries. The Oberlin Institute’s classrooms trained men and women in the “Oberlin spirit,” an ideology that would evolve during the 1840s and 1850s but that was in the 1830s an expression of the evangelicalism of the Second Great Awakening, support for the immediate end of slavery, and the gender ideology of domesticity.\textsuperscript{11}

The missionaries to Jamaica almost all attended Oberlin, and the Jamaica Mission founded in the late 1830s became a dynamic test site for the ideals held by evangelical abolitionists. Oberlin’s graduates had already begun to spread their moral fires in the towns of the western United States, and it was a logical move for some at the college to look south to the West Indies and the emancipated population as another front on the battle against sin. The utopian aspirations of Oberlin’s geography, politics, and faith underwrote the goals of the Jamaica Mission, and the missionaries sought to replicate its ordered morality, educational ethic, and Christian zeal in the churches and schools that they founded on the island. Like Oberlin’s founder John Shipherd, they also had a strong missionary impulse to spread their particular “civilization” and its religious, gendered, and racial beliefs. This chapter looks at how these beliefs evolved over the course of the 1820s and early 1830s by examining the evangelical revivals of the Second Great Awakening and how two young people, Theodore Dwight Weld and Catharine Beecher, were influenced in different ways by this faith. Weld’s commitment to manual labor schools and Beecher’s advocacy of female education reflected two articulations of the

\textsuperscript{11} The “Oberlin way” was used by missionary Sarah Inghram Penfield. Sarah Penfield to Minerva Penfield Cowles, 4 March 1859, \textit{Letters From Jamaica, 1858–1866}, ed. Charles C. Gosselink (Silver Bay, N.Y.: Boat House Books, 2005), 38.
gender ideology of domesticity in its early stages. Beecher’s vision for white women and Weld’s idealization of a form of evangelical manhood were not incompatible, but as this chapter argues, the issue of slavery and abolitionist activism in particular put the two individuals as well as their supporters in opposition to one another.

I. REVIVALS AND RECONFIGURATIONS

In 1825 the Erie Canal was completed and Charles Finney held his first revival tour in central New York, two events that responded to and catalyzed transformations in the social fabric of the antebellum North. The Erie Canal facilitated a new era of commercialized agriculture, new industries, and an complex market economy in the burned-over district. Of particular significance to this dissertation are the changing forms of the family and religion as the traditional lines of hierarchy were reorganized in the early phases of industrialization. As men and women adjusted to the new order of an industrial society, Charles Finney launched his revival tour around the region, bringing his dynamic preaching and techniques of conversion to the Yankee population who had left New England for the New York frontier towns. Finney’s calls for conversion fell on the ears of men and women seeking a new worldview through which to understand the declining corporate family of the rural farm and the rise of middle-class families and market towns.

The household economy that still predominated in the rural districts of the republic no longer made sense in the booming towns along the Erie Canal. During the

1810s and 1820s, young men and women left the family farms of their childhoods in the eastern states to work in factories or in shops or to travel to the western territories to seek a different life. The American missionaries to Jamaica belonged to this moment— one future missionary to Jamaica departed his father’s farm to become a traveling Bible salesman in New York State, a move only imaginable in the context of the Second Great Awakening and the growing western population.\textsuperscript{13} The decline of household production also changed the pattern of life for men and women and their relationships to each other and their living quarters. As the home production of material goods moved to shops and factories, married women redefined their relationship to the domestic sphere. No longer requiring many hands to help out on the farm, couples had fewer children, allowing women to focus more intently on developing the character of each child. As a result, home-work slowly shifted away from spinning yarn and producing textiles to the sort of domestic labor that called women to refocus their attention to the needs of the nation’s children’s hearts and minds and the importance of keeping a physically and morally clean and orderly home.\textsuperscript{14} For the men and women who would become evangelical abolitionists, Charles Finney’s enthusiastic religion provided a way to reevaluate their positions as Christians and as children, husbands, and wives. Finney’s revivals in the 1820s and his theology aided in molding the gender ideology created by northerners at the same time.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Loren Thompson Alumni File, RG 28/2, Box 859, OCA.

\textsuperscript{14} The transition from the gender ideology of colonial households to that of domesticity is central to Nancy Cott, \textit{The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman’s Sphere in New England, 1780–1835} (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977, 1997).

The faith of Charles Finney and the missionaries to Jamaica grew out of the crisis in Calvinism during the early nineteenth century. In the wake of the Revolutionary War, the two dominant Calvinist denominations in New England, the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists, joined together in an effort to spread their influence around the new Republic. Their Plan of Union in 1801 provided a way to unite their assets and people as they planted new churches across the New York frontier. These “Presbygationalists” believed in the missionary destiny of the United States, and with wide-eyed enthusiasm they planned for the conversion of the world to their brand of Christianity. Yet their intention to dominate the religious scene along the northern frontier was challenged by the more open and emotional Christianity preached by itinerate Methodist and Baptist circuit riders, on the one hand, and the liberal and rational Unitarianism developing in Boston on the other.¹⁶ Like Oberlin’s founder John Jay Shipherd, many orthodox Protestant ministers felt that unless their faith prevailed, the United States would fail in its attempt to become the New Zion.¹⁷

Aside from the itinerant revivalists and the rationalist Unitarians, even more eccentric religious groups found eager followers in western New York, and not surprisingly, these alternative Christian and freethinking ways of living also reconsidered the gender and racial assumptions of their societies. For orthodox clergy, these groups encroached upon the public morality required in a society founded upon liberty. Joseph Smith’s Latter Day Saints emerged in western New York and then settled first in

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Kirtland, Ohio, not far from Cleveland and Oberlin. While this was before Smith’s formal declaration in favor of “celestial marriage,” rumors of the community’s alternative sexual practices were in circulation. The Shakers, who believed Christ had returned in the form of their leader, Ann Lee, and the Quakers who permitted women ministers, proved bothersome as well to ministers intent on keeping women silent in church. The ideas of freethinkers like Frances Wright similarly concerned the orthodox clergy as they lectured to the immigrant working classes of eastern seaboard cities. As women who opposed marriage (Lee and the Shakers were celibate, Wright opposed marriage and the laws punishing illegitimate children), orthodox clergy easily connected dissenting sects with disorderly gender systems that truncated male power and that promoted “abnormal” sexuality. Further, Wright’s commune in Tennessee was interracial, adding the specter of interracial sex to her already transgressive gender ideology. Religious heresy, alternative gender systems, and racial mixing seemed to go hand in hand to many evangelicals who saw themselves as guardians of the nation’s moral order.

To respond to the varied assaults on Calvinism, the “New Divinity” professors at Yale reached back to the eighteenth-century divine Jonathan Edwards to articulate a new theology that would create recommitted Christians and new converts without leaving

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orthodoxy behind. These New Lights or New School theologians managed to maintain the covenant theology that emphasized the importance of church membership while at the same time softening the rigidity of the Calvinist concept of the “elect,” the idea that God had predestined who had been saved, and that humans could do nothing to sway God’s opinion. Edwards’s faith, as interpreted by the New Light theologians at Yale in the late 1700s, provided a way to explain missionary work and experiential religion within the spectrum of Puritan orthodoxy that maintained the doctrinal position that humans were powerless before an almighty God. By the 1820s, Yale theologian Nathaniel Taylor modified the New Lights’ theology when he controversially claimed that “sin was in the sinning.” Humans were not innately sinful, Taylor suggested, although he qualified his statement somewhat, affirming that the human condition meant that they could not live entirely sinless lives. People could, however, strive to avoid sin at any cost, a principle Taylor felt should be emphasized by preachers.

“Taylorism” was made most famous by Taylor’s contemporary, Lyman Beecher, a Yale graduate and a prominent Connecticut clergyman. Realizing that orthodox Protestantism needed an injection of vitality, Beecher organized emotional yet controlled revivals, and he preached sermons that appealed to the hearts as well as the minds of his audiences. His congregations were urged to see their own sinfulness and then to move to correct this by allowing God to direct them to live more moral lives. In spite of criticism from many older church leaders, Beecher and other followers of Nathaniel Taylor found the new measures to be an ideal compromise between the overly rational liberal Christianity and the uncontrolled frontier enthusiasm of Methodist and Baptist revivals.

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Beecher's support of revivals may have been held in disdain by some Calvinist clergy, but his version of religious enthusiasm seemed remarkably tame when compared to that of the upstart revivalist Charles Grandison Finney. In the mid-1820s this young lawyer-turned-evangelist burned a path across New York preaching fiery sermons that led to swooning, groaning, and writhing converts. Lyman Beecher worried that the extreme emotionalism of Finney’s revivals “would ‘roll back the wheels of time to semi-barbarism,’” if allowed to continue. While rooted in Calvinism, Finney’s religious inclinations responded to the needs of the people as much as to traditional understandings of God. Converted at the age of twenty-nine while living in Adams, New York, Finney’s beliefs drew more on “common sense and democratic values” than on the theological formulations of Yale professors. Finney was an outsider who had not attended the traditional schools of Andover, Yale, or Princeton, and he had learned his faith from a small-town Presbyterian minister, George Gale. While Finney’s theology would become more elaborate in the Christian perfectionism he developed by the early 1840s, he initially held only a few simple tenets of faith. Christ’s crucifixion offered salvation to all people, but in order to be saved, a person must be brought to their knees with “self-abasement” before the redeeming goodness of the Holy Spirit could enter her soul. For Finney, the stance of orthodox Christianity that placed all powers of salvation in God’s hands and that held that only an elect were able to be saved was a roadblock to conversion; the orthodox clergy who held that viewpoint were actually working against God.\(^{24}\)

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Many of the established evangelicals of the era frowned upon Finney’s emotionally driven tactics and disdained his lack of formal theological training, and they also feared the disruptions to the social order left in the wake of a Finney revival. In the minds of the Finneyites, Beecher argued, “Truth,” was more “frequently admitted than the importance of order.” Beecher complained that they completely misunderstood the relationship between religious truth and social order: “truth and order are viewed as if so distinct, as to possess almost nothing in common. What is this, but to mistake them? They are near relations, and almost inseparable intimates!”

Social order, and particularly the family order that affirmed men’s authority over women and children, needed to be reinforced by religious faith, not challenged by it, and as Finney’s converts questioned the ministerial authority of the establishment and often the legitimacy of earthly sources of authority as well, they brought a troubling anarchic spirit to the communities of New York and Ohio. Finney and his evangelists encouraged women to speak out in revival meetings, and as one of Finney’s band, Theodore Weld, later recounted: “It made a great deal of talk and discussion, and the subject of female praying and speaking in public was discussed throughout western New York.”

In the opinions of many, Finney’s disregard for such matters was fast leading to the disintegration of civilization.

The dissenting tradition as well as the quest for a pure faith influenced the religious beliefs of the missionaries to Jamaica, and for many, the missionary impulse to

24 Abzug, Passionate Liberator, 44.


spread their faith and its ideals had driven them into reform work in the first place. The proliferation of moral reform organizations during the late 1820s provided a means to direct the enthusiasm sparked by religious conversion to reforming work. While evangelical men and women both participated in a variety of societies aimed at a number of causes, there also developed gender-specific modes of living out their evangelicalism. For young men, independence and individual freedom intersected with their religious calling, manifesting itself especially in battles with their elders. Young women, on the other hand, interpreted the emotional experiences of evangelical faith as a plea for them to become involved in influencing men to build a more moral society and nation.\(^{27}\)

These gendered understandings of reform can also be compared to gendered missionary roles, even though scholars of domestic reform efforts and foreign missions tend to focus on one or the other. Religious studies scholar Dana Robert observes that “early missionary men were ‘pioneers,’ with the accompanying traits of independence, single-mindedness, and the stubborn ability to overcome opposition that made them both successful missionaries and difficult to live with at the same time,” a description that matched the American ministers in Jamaica, and as this chapter shows, reflected the ideals of manhood valued by evangelical abolitionist men. Even men with obvious differences, like Lyman Beecher and Charles Finney, both drew on religious dissent to delineate themselves from older clergy. For converted women, however, the evangelical emphasis placed on independence of thought did not develop in the same way as it did for men. Like the pious women praised by the ideology of domesticity, missionary wives also needed a husband in order to fulfill their religious vocation, and these women

desired above all to be useful helps meet whether in service to their husband or to his potential converts. Women engaged in reform work or missionary labors were praised for their selflessness while men's reform activities emphasized their own self-control and leadership abilities.

Both Charles Finney's revivalist faith and the evangelical gender roles to which it gave rise informed the educational plan for the Oberlin Institute and set the agenda for the men and women who served as missionaries to Jamaica. In terms of religious faith, the battle between religious enthusiasm and social order would be a constant conflict in the Jamaica Mission. More specifically, Finney's position as an outsider and his converts marginality compared to the orthodox easterners made the missionaries particularly attuned to infringements on their individual liberty. The transition from being Christian perfectionists on the fringe of the Protestant mainstream in the United States to being guardians of Christian orthodoxy in their Jamaican mission stations did not come easily. The emerging gender roles of domesticity emerging alongside evangelical revivals and industrialization also impacted the Jamaica Mission. For many women, especially the missionary wives, the gendered model of reform that went along with the emerging ideology of domesticity was an easy fit. For other reforming women, especially unmarried women, domesticity’s gender roles complicated their mission work. Additionally, while these gender roles fit white northern nuclear families living in towns, they did not apply especially well to the large, rural mission households formed in Jamaica, and the missionaries had very little success in trying to impose them on black freed people.

II. Theodore Weld and Abolitionist Manhood

In the transitional moment of the 1820s, young men claimed a new role for themselves in the churches and in society. In doing so, they began to piece together the qualities of manhood valued by the Jamaica Mission’s men and idealized by these missionaries as the model for black Jamaican men emerging from the dependence of slavery. For young men engaged in religious reform in the 1820s, intergenerational disputes were the most common. As historian Bruce Dorsey observes in his study of Philadelphia, young men dedicated to temperance and sabbatarianism reacted against the irreligious habits of their fathers’ generation.29 This trend holds true for the earnest group of men who were Finney’s early converts and who would become the leaders at Oberlin in the 1830s. Charles Finney himself maintained that the fires of religious feeling produced during his revival meetings enlivened Christianity, and he was particularly critical of the “cold,” and usually older, clergy who failed to ignite their congregations. At one revival meeting he prayed, “Lord wake up these stupid sleeping ministers; [else] . . . they wake in hell.”30 One young follower of Finney agreed, shouting down his own minister by reportedly yelling, “you old grey headed sinner, you deserved to be in hell long ago.”31 These moments reflect the openly hostile debate between the established, and often older, clergy and the upstarts who had been converted by Finney and other like-minded evangelists. As will become evident in the case of Theodore Weld, young men interpreted Finney’s call to conversion in strikingly different terms than did the

29 Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women, 130–31.

30 Quoted in Cross, Burned-Over District, 174.

31 Pastoral Letter of the Ministers of the Oneida Association, to the Churches Under Their Care, on the Subject of Revivals of Religion (Utica, 1827), 14, quoted in Abzug, Passionate Liberator, 47.
evangelical women of the day.\textsuperscript{32} For evangelical men, Christian liberty meant creating a new moral order, and it also inspired an expression of independence that represented a split from their father’s world. In the 1830s, however, the intergenerational conflicts would fade in importance as reforming men became increasingly interested in distinguishing their faith and work from the benevolent activities of women.\textsuperscript{33}

Although Weld has served historians as a representative figure of a man who supported woman’s rights, especially following his marriage to woman’s rights proponent and abolitionist lecturer Angelina Grimké in 1838, I draw on a younger Weld in this chapter. Weld was an incredibly important figure for the early abolitionist missionaries to Jamaica as their friend and supporter. In the early 1840s, for example, a number of the missionaries would stay at the Welds’ New Jersey farm before embarking on their voyage to Jamaica or upon return from the island, and the very first Oberlin missionary, David Ingraham, died in the Weld home in 1841. Also, his well-documented childhood and youth resembled that of many of the missionaries for whom there are only archival traces. Weld’s conversion experience, his discovery and outspoken support for manual labor schools, and his adoption of abolitionism shows how his understanding of manly reform and individual liberty evolved in the era of the Second Great Awakening. In the years before his acquaintance with Angelina Grimké, Weld focused little on women (he even swore off marrying until emancipation occurred) and instead formulated

\textsuperscript{32} Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women, 1–2.

\textsuperscript{33} The need for white men to demonstrate their manhood by disassociating from increasingly feminized churches and benevolence work is discussed in Amy Greenberg, Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). While Greenberg does not focus on northern Protestant men interested in reform, this chapter will show how these men had many of the same concerns as her more aggressively masculine characters. Northern abolitionist men and evangelical men in particular differed their reform work from the proliferating ladies’ societies when they took their message into the realm of politics by forming a number of antislavery parties in the 1840s and 1850s.
an ideology of evangelical manhood that was compatible with domesticity although quite different from the middle-class manhood and white-collar gender ideology developing in northern towns at the same time.\textsuperscript{34} The gender ideology of evangelical manhood was based in a rigid moral code, manual labor and self-sufficiency, and economic and intellectual independence.\textsuperscript{35}

Born in 1803 into the family of a Congregationalist minister in Connecticut, Weld followed the path of many sons of Calvinism and attended Andover with the intentions of becoming a minister. A temporary period of blindness derailed his expected career path, and he left school as a teenager to become a lecturer on behalf of mnemonics, or the art of memorization. He had picked up the skill at the time of his eye ailment. Against his father’s wishes, Weld departed from his Connecticut home in order to travel around the United States, and during his teens and early twenties he visited almost every state in order to give speeches on mnemonics but also on subjects requested by his audiences, ranging from religion to the benefits of female education. In 1824, at the age of twenty-one, he returned to his parents who had recently moved to Fabius, New York, upon his father’s retirement from the ministry. Weld decided to continue his education at Hamilton College. As the Weld family lived some distance from the school, Weld stayed with an aunt and uncle in Utica, and their circle of friends included many prominent reformers who became swept up in Finney’s Oneida County revivals in 1826.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Paul Johnson, \textit{The Shopkeeper’s Millennium}, 45–48. The evangelical abolitionists share something in common with the religiously rigorous middle class of Johnson’s analysis, but the foreign missionaries to Jamaica, with their decision to leave the United States had a different, although related, compulsion to create social order.

While Weld initially resisted Finney-mania, his aunt insisted that he attend at least one of the meetings. She strategically found seats in the center of the room, and Finney recognized Weld and remarked how astonishing it was that a son of a minister had yet to devote himself similarly to God. As Weld later recounted, Finney “just held me up on his toasting-fork before that audience.” After several days of hostility between the two men and reportedly sleepless nights for Weld, he converted and decided to give his life to God and to follow a new moral path. He again left school and joined Finney’s Holy Band, a group of men who assisted in the revivals as Finney was called to preach in various cities and towns across the state. Another member of Finney’s crew, Charles Stuart, became a sort of patron to Weld. A Jamaican-born Scotsman, Stuart had served in the British army in India, and after being dismissed for refusing to lead a raid on “unarmed Indians,” he moved to central New York and became a teacher. In the late 1820s Stuart departed for England and became swept up in the antislavery movement that would lead to West Indian emancipation in 1834 and in 1838. During this time, Stuart was praised for his vocal opposition to racial prejudice by the wealthy New York philanthropist, Lewis Tappan.

Weld’s biographers note that in Charles Finney and Charles Stuart, Weld found substitute fathers, and whatever the relationship, the two men deeply influenced Weld even though he often strongly disagreed with them. For evangelical men, the

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38 Ibid., 32.

conversion experience initiated a deep interest in religious freedom, and for Weld as for many others, it interrelated with the democratic fervor and “self-made-man” ideals of the Jacksonian Age. For the religiously upright, freedom meant that one avoided all dependencies except on God because Christian freedom was the “liberation from the slavery of doing wrong.” Weld took these ideas seriously and with the financial support of Charles Stuart, he enrolled at the Oneida Institute in Whitestown, New York. The strict moral code of this manual labor school required its students to abstain from alcohol, of course, but also coffee and tea and other stimulants, and many of the students were practicing vegetarians, some adherents to the Graham diet that prescribed simple meals of mostly raw fruits and vegetables. The austerity of the Oneida Institute contrasted with the material wealth of some men in the canal towns and eastern cities, yet rather than seeing these physical restrictions as deprivations or limitations on his freedom, they allowed him to be liberated from sinful dependence on the newly available consumer goods of the industrializing North.

The Oneida Institute was built on Finney’s evangelical principles, especially the idea that “physical and intellectual education” should “be considered inseparable.” Yet the Oneida students took this a step farther and crafted an “amalgam of primitive-

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41 Ibid.


Christian and common-man” in their dress, labor habits, and meals.\textsuperscript{44} The lessons of the classroom emphasized practical Christianity, and one future missionary to Jamaica, Charles Stewart Renshaw, declared that he found little use in studying Latin and Greek, for “it would not aid me in telling a heathen sinner the way to go to the saviour’s feet.”\textsuperscript{45} The labor-intensive and practical education provided at Oneida did foster the skills that missionaries like Renshaw would require in Jamaica, and Weld and Tappan believed that farming techniques, basics of construction, as well as evangelical Christianity would be essential to raise up morally sound leaders along the western frontier of Ohio and beyond. The labor regime at Oneida can be seen as a dying art as market towns rose up around the school.

The student body also included some pupils who hailed from wealthy families, such as the sons of the evangelical philanthropist Lewis Tappan. Lewis Tappan had moved from Calvinist Boston to join his brother Arthur’s silk business in New York City in the 1820s. The two amassed a fortune, and they expanded to build a mercantile company that hired agents to report on the status of rural farmers for their city creditors and buyers. Finney converted the Tappans in the mid-1820s, and the two became his greatest financial backers. In spite of the fact that they manufactured the silk that outfitted the morally suspect, the Tappan brothers led morality crusades in their adopted home of New York City. Their infamous battle against prostitution and brothels won them particular notoriety in the late 1820s as their published reports of the names of prominent clients had led to the formation of a violent mob that tried to burn down

\textsuperscript{44} Abzug, \textit{Passionate Liberator}, 62.

\textsuperscript{45} C.S. Renshaw to Charles Finney, Oneida, 15 July 1832, Finney MSS, OCA, quoted in Abzug, \textit{Passionate Liberator}, 64.
Arthur’s New York residence. To get his sons out of the morally depraved city, Lewis Tappan sent them away from the city to the rural Oneida Institute. At Oneida, Tappan’s sons and eventually their father met Theodore Weld and the two men immediately recognized their shared dedication to Finney’s evangelicalism and the unrelenting need for moral reform.

While family farms certainly continued to exist in the region, for many of the students, like Tappan’s New York City-born sons, the school provided a chance to live “off the grid,” to use an anachronistic term. Both Weld and Tappan appreciated the usefulness of the intensive manual labor program for mission work abroad as well as in the United States. Manual labor schools provided a democratic way to increase education around the country, and its rigorous moral framework encouraged students to “free” themselves of the sins of idleness and dependence. Lewis Tappan’s support for manual labor would be a constant all of his life, from 1831 when he told his brother, Ben, that “it has been the disgrace of this country that education has made most men ashamed of manual labor” to his work in the 1860s to establish manual labor schools for free blacks in the South. It is likely that Weld’s total dedication to the hard work of agriculture made him all the more appealing as a friend to Tappan, who worked in an office and operated a credit agency that existed as a part of the new economy of market capitalism. Weld’s leadership role at Oneida and his popularity as a lecturer certainly made him the most obvious person to speak on behalf of manual labor programs. Tappan hired the

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46 Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, 65–70.
47 Abzug, Passionate Liberator, 52–53.
48 Lewis Tappan to Benjamin Tappan, 7 Sept. 1831, Benjamin Tappan MSS, Library of Congress, quoted in Thomas, Theodore Weld, 19; for Tappan’s interest in manual labor in Jamaica and for the American Missionary Association more generally, see Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, 297.
young orator to conduct a one-year lecture tour on behalf of manual labor schools, and Tappan further commissioned him to scout out a seminary in the West that would serve to educate ministers for the expanding frontier. As readers of the reports coming back to the East from explorers and travelers in the new western states and territories, Tappan and Weld believed that a Godly presence was needed if the nation was to maintain its moral center during expansion.49

In the early 1830s Lewis Tappan and Theodore Weld were not the only two men looking to affect change in the West. In hiring Weld to go on a national lecture circuit in support of manual labor, Lewis continued the work of his brother, Arthur, who in 1832 had invested a great deal of money in an evangelical seminary in Cincinnati. Arthur convinced Lyman Beecher to take over Lane Seminary by making the case that Beecher’s religious influences was needed if the west was to be saved. By this time, nearly a decade after Finney’s first revival tour in 1824, Lyman Beecher and Charles Finney had reached a compromise of sorts on their shared project to reclaim the United States for God. The Tappans shared in this vision. Like the Connecticut Missionary Society in the earlier decades of the century, the brothers, along with Beecher and Finney, saw the hope of the nation in the western frontier, and they wanted to train ministers who could work against alcohol, prostitution, gambling, and other myriad immoralities that seemed to proliferate in the new towns. Beecher, in his 1836 Plea for the West, declared the West to be “a young empire of mind, and power, and wealth, and free institutions” that needed to be protected from “barbarism and license” and most emphatically, the despotic designs

49 Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, 100. Lewis Tappan not only bankrolled Weld’s year of lectures, but he also frequently bailed Weld and other young abolitionists out of financial difficulty throughout the 1840s. See Weld to Lewis Tappan, 3 May 1840, Weld-Grimke Letters II: 832-833.
of the Pope.⁵⁰ Lane Seminary was therefore the obvious choice for a manual labor program to raise up well-trained and well-educated ministers for the settlements of the Old Northwest. Towards the end of his year of traveling, Theodore Weld proposed to the brothers that he enroll in Beecher’s Lane Seminary to help the school adopt a manual labor program, and they heartily agreed.

While Lyman Beecher and Charles Finney and his supporters reached a truce, a new ripple of discord arose with the rumblings of immediate abolitionism. During his year-long tour of the nation, Theodore Weld had become familiar with the conditions of slaves in the South and he had met several early supporters of William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist Bostonian editor of the *Liberator*.⁵¹ Defending the rights of enslaved men and women struck a chord with Weld, who already had a deep interest in the cause of manly independence, and the *Liberator* had also drawn the attention of the Tappan brothers. Lyman Beecher, however, had no interest in giving up his support for the American Colonization Society. Like many in the evangelical community, Lyman Beecher recognized the moral problems inherent in colonization, but he was more worried about the divisive nature of the slavery debate, particularly when his seminary and church existed in a very southern town within a northern state. Although Lyman Beecher was hesitant to support any movement that threatened schism, his cautious attachment to gradualism ultimately became his undoing. After his first year at Lane,

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Beecher was disappointed to find that his financial backer, Arthur Tappan, had decided along with his brother that their newest reform cause would be immediate abolition.\(^{52}\)

In one sense, Theodore Weld’s devotion to immediate abolitionism can be interpreted as the natural progression of his commitment to independence begun during his youthful decision to leave Andover to strike out on his own. Importantly, Weld’s support of abolitionism derived from his own belief in manly independence and religious freedom: liberty was a Christian imperative, not something that could be granted or withheld by a human government. Like his fellow evangelicals, the future missionaries to Jamaica, he was, in effect, “converted” to abolition, and just as assuredly as he “knew” God, he now knew that slaves had to be freed. In sending Weld to Lane Seminary, Weld and the Tappans not only wanted to change Lane into a manual labor school, they also wanted to convert perhaps the most influential minister of the moment, Lyman Beecher, to the abolitionist cause.\(^{53}\) Lane would give them an opportunity to train ministers in the hearty Christian manliness needed to move out onto the frontier, work on farms and build towns, and, of course, form abolitionist churches; if they could have the added bonus of recruiting Lyman Beecher and his large family, so much the better. In the fall of 1833, Weld enrolled at Lyman Beecher’s Lane Seminary, only months before Weld, Garrison, the Tappans and others met in Philadelphia to form the American Anti-Slavery Society, inaugurating a new era in American abolitionism.

Weld’s interpretation of Christian liberty located freedom in manly independence, manual labor, and a strict moral code, and slavery blocked black men from all of these

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 82–85, 89.

things. It was this understanding of manhood that the missionaries brought to Jamaica, even building a manual labor school to try and recreate what they had experienced as students at Oberlin. Yet in Jamaica, as would happen in the United States as well, race complicated the clear-cut understanding of manly independence fostered by evangelical institutions like Oberlin and the Oneida Institute. The missionaries found themselves having to adjust their expectations. Would largely uneducated freed people be granted the same rights as white men immediately upon emancipation? What if black men did not submit to the religious faith presented to them by American missionaries, and tried to enjoy freedom without the moderating influence of Christian discipline? These questions would throw a wrench into the missionaries’ universal understanding of manhood once they arrived in Jamaica.

III. Catharine Beecher and Domesticity

While Theodore Weld, Lewis Tappan, and other evangelical reformers saw the future of the nation and the abolitionist cause in manual labor education, a feminine model of education had begun to take root in Troy, New York, and Mount Holyoke, Massachusetts. These towns hosted female seminaries or institutes established with the intention to train women in the subjects and skills necessary for their work as mothers and wives but also as missionaries and reformers. Women such as Emma Willard and Mary Lyon taught young white ladies about their duty to be self-sacrificing Christians. One foreign missionary board recommended that a missionary’s potential wife exhibit “fervent piety – An amiable temper and pleasant manners – Good common sense and a

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54 Mary Lyon’s Mount Holyoke especially had its origins in training missionary wives. See Robert, American Women in Mission. Mt. Holyoke’s importance to women missionaries is also explored in Patricia Grimshaw, Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989).
well cultivated mind, Good health, Cheerfulness, Industry." implicit in this prescription was that the young lady would submit to her husband's authority, in effect presenting the opposite qualities valued in evangelical men. These same ideals fed into the school founded by Catharine Beecher, Lyman's daughter, in the early 1820s. Catharine Beecher opened her own school for young women in Hartford in 1823, marking the beginning of her long career in molding American womanhood and spreading the ideology of domesticity through her educational program as well as her widely read articles and books. As her biographer, Kathryn Kish Sklar, argues, Catharine Beecher embodied the ambivalent place of white women within the ideology of separate spheres as she both sought a position of power and influence while ascribing to these women the very characteristics that made them unsuitable to claim the traditional avenues of power as political or church leaders. Unlike independent men striving for financial and political success, dependent women were noble because of their disinterestedness and their selfless devotion to God, their family, and their country. Beecher elevated the home and the family – the domestic – to fill a "central place in national life," and in doing so, she elevated white women's status as the protectors of "cultural virtue." Beecher's ideology of domesticity opened new doors for white women in the North, but when the women missionaries in Jamaica attempted to use it to justify their actions, they faced opposition from the mission's men who, like Theodore Weld, resisted any limitations on their independence, whether from their elders or women.

55 Grimshaw, Paths of Duty, 18–19. Notably, the anti-abolitionist American Board that crafted this list forbade the young inquirer from marrying an Oberlin graduate, Mary Tenney, for her religious views.

Catharine Beecher was a contemporary of Theodore Weld, and like Weld, her father was also an orthodox New England minister. She was born three years before Weld, in 1800, but in contrast to his education at Andover, Catharine Beecher was taught at home until the age of ten and then entered a school for young ladies. Sklar describes Catharine’s school as one focused on teaching girls the refinements they would need to attract a husband, and Catharine performed exceedingly well in her social education. Her home, filled with seven younger siblings, was a joyful place until her mother’s death in 1816, at which time the sixteen-year-old Catharine left school to attend full time to her sisters and brothers and her father. Lyman Beecher remarried in 1817, and Catharine struggled to find her place in the newly configured home. She also struggled with her father over her faith. Like Theodore Weld’s Congregationalist-minister father, Lyman Beecher expected his children to undergo conversion and join the church, but Catharine was unable to feel the guiltiness required of the sinful before reaching the moment of conversion and relief. Catharine and her father would struggle over the issue of her conversion for several years. In contrast to a young man’s conversion in which the moment of dependence would end and he would “recover his sense of independence and self,” a woman’s conversion experience, in the Beecher’s form of Calvinism, meant that “submission to God might be but the prelude to a lifetime of earthly submission to a husband.” Sklar points out that Catharine was torn between the independent and intellectual father she admired and the expectations that she, as a young woman, would be permanently dependent on another. After a brief engagement in which her fiancé died at sea, Catharine more or less resigned herself to the life of a single woman and moved out of her family home and opened her Hartford school.57
While Charles Finney led his brand of raucous revivals across New York in the mid-1820s, Catharine Beecher dedicated herself to evangelicalism as well, although it was her father’s more moderate and orthodox faith that she followed rather than Finney’s wild spectacles. Catharine followed Lyman’s lead at her school by encouraging her students to undergo conversions. She had early triumphs and reported to her father in 1826 that at least fifteen of her students were moving towards conversion. But when she asked her father and another minister for advice in spreading the revival to other women in the Hartford community, she was discouraged. Lyman Beecher suggested that she cool her religious ardor, as “excited feeling” was “too hazardous to health to be indulged, and necessarily too short-lived to answer in the best manner the purpose of advancing a revival.” Instead, Lyman warned Catharine “a steady benevolent temperature” was better than “intense heat and flashings of holy and animal affections and passions,” perhaps alluding to the temper of Finney’s western revivals. Catharine had success in spite of her father’s foreboding and the summer of 1826 witnessed a great deal of religious excitement for the women at Hartford’s churches. Sklar argues that this moment was formative for Catharine as it provided her with a sense that she could affect her community’s culture and society through her leadership. She began a fundraising campaign to build a real building for her school, the Hartford Female Seminary, based in the belief that girls needed to be educated “not to shine, but to act.”\(^{59}\) As Theodore Weld and other evangelical men grew to believe that boys would be best educated through

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 17–20, 32–33, 31.


manual labor and strict moral discipline, Catharine Beecher thought that evangelical women needed to be schooled in how to become useful moral influences within their families and as teachers in their communities.\textsuperscript{60}

Catharine Beecher's most innovative contribution to female education came when she put her full effort behind a scheme to education women as teachers. As teachers, she argued, women could exercise influence not only in their homes but also nurture the great mass of American children. Although she began to formulate her plan to train female teachers at a time when education was largely a male profession, her biographer notes that the moment was perfect. "A matrix of support for Catharine Beecher's ideas" occurred in the 1830s: "the creation of a leisured middle class of women, the institution of tax-supported common schools, the expansion of population in the West and its need for new schools, and the glorification of female qualities of nurture throughout the United States."\textsuperscript{61} These social changes facilitated Beecher's educational plans, and they were also important factors in spurring Oberlin's founders to include a Ladies' Department. By encouraging women to become educated and educators, the segment of the evangelical community in agreement with Catharine Beecher laid out the groundwork needed for missionary women and for women who would become activists in moral reform organizations and in abolitionism. This "matrix" of domesticity was not conservative because it was a drastic departure from how women were viewed and how women constructed their own agendas in the early years of the nineteenth century. Yet neither was Catharine Beecher's vision of women's activism through their domestic skills based on "radical" claims of sexual equality and equal rights such as appeared in the late

\textsuperscript{60} Sklar, \textit{Catharine Beecher}, 59–77.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 97–98.
eighteenth-century writings of the English radical Mary Wollstonecraft or in the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments written at Seneca Falls. This was a new form of describing the place of women in relation to their families and society.

While Catharine Beecher increasingly looked to spread her views on a national level, churchgoing women across the North were forming benevolent societies on a local level that sought to exert a moral influence on their communities. Many of the women who had participated in Finney’s more radical revivals enacted their newfound faith in ways that resembled the domestic ideology that was directing Beecher’s actions in Connecticut. Mary Ryan calls the late 1820s and early 1830s the “Age of Association,” and Nancy Hewitt’s work on women in Rochester, New York, adds nuance to Ryan’s associations and shows how women of different classes, races, and religious affiliations had different paths of social activism. These societies asked their female membership to mend social problems, and raising money and petitioning the local, state, and federal governments became a primary way for women to address issues as diverse as “intemperance, violation of the Sabbath, Indian removal, mistreatment of the mentally ill, and prostitution.” The abolitionist cause would soon become a part of acceptable female reform activities leading to the organization of female anti-slavery societies across the North. The greater role taken on by white and black women through organizations created an experience that was an important precedent to the woman’s rights movement, even as not all benevolent women turned to natural rights and equality arguments. As

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62 Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class*; Hewitt, *Women’s Activism and Social Change.*


Nancy Cott argues, evangelical clergy faced the dilemma of needing “to elevate women as religion’s supporters and yet (in order to sustain social stability, as they saw it) to reaffirm women’s subordination to men.”\textsuperscript{65} This had mixed effects among white northern women. Some participants in female benevolence societies would eventually become advocates of woman’s rights; others thought women should participate in the public sphere as mothers, wives, and sisters and that by getting involved in politics of any kind, women would abandon the very qualities of selflessness and distinterestedness that made them into successful reformers.

This tension in domesticity would also have a place in the Jamaica Mission as missionary wives and single missionary women tried to balance between their religious duties and the expectation that they needed to submit to the ministers’ wishes.\textsuperscript{66} The American women in Jamaica did not lack for models of missionary domesticity. At this time, missionary women abroad also began to justify the need for women to take a proactive role in their world. The harrowing and ultimately fatal experience of an early foreign missionary, Ann Hasseltine Judson, in Burma elevated this missionary woman to a saint-like status in the 1830s. While pregnant and with an infant daughter, Ann Judson took in two native girls, ran a school for Burmese women, until the authorities took her husband, Adoniram, prisoner. Ann Judson followed him as his captors led him across the countryside, and headed the campaign for his freedom. She died not long after the government released him. While Judson’s life story prompted evangelical men to accept that “the cause of Christianity oftentimes justified some measure of female aggressiveness,” most preferred that the focus remained on what white Christian women

\textsuperscript{65} Cott, \textit{Bonds of Womanhood}, 159.

\textsuperscript{66} Sklar, \textit{Catharine Beecher}, xiv.
might do for "degraded womanhood" abroad rather than for the emancipation of women in the United States.  

Like American missionary women who critiqued foreign gender practices as unchristian and degrading to womanhood, abolitionists also took this tone when they decried the southern way of life. Both black and white southern families and certainly the plantation household bore little resemblance to the ideology of domesticity as it was being elaborated in the North. Depictions of slave mothers having their children torn away from their breast to be sold and of slave men being prevented from protecting their wives and children appeared alongside stories warning of how white women and children were corrupted by the power they held over other human beings. Additionally, abolitionists warned that slavery led to white men's sexual assaults on black women and that those same white men would sell their own offspring rather than admit paternity. The gender roles that domesticity idealized for women and men, both black and white, were perverted under slavery. For the missionaries in Jamaica, it was a natural fit to bring missionary domesticity together with abolitionist domesticity.

Like the Protestant missionaries who called on American women to go abroad and aid their degraded sisters, abolitionists also asked white northern women to take up the plight of black and white southern women whose homes and families were corrupted under slavery. Radical abolitionists believed that white women would live up to "true womanhood" by spreading abolitionist sentiments, whether as mothers and wives in their own home or as American women interested in the moral state of their nation. This line of argument found more enemies than supporters, however, in the early 1830s. In the

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1830s, Catharine Beecher condemned this attempt to extend domesticity into the realm of antislavery politics, but the ability for white women to support women’s missionary work abroad while making it off limits for women at home would become increasingly unsustainable throughout the antebellum period.

In 1832 Catharine Beecher accompanied her father to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he took on the presidency of Lane Seminary. Catharine started her own school in early 1833, the Western Female Institute, where she continued to develop her “aggressive ideas on women as the moral educators of the nation’s youth,” even though it seemed that few in the city were interested in these plans. Catharine, like her father, found resistance to her desire to refine the “crude democracy” she found in the West and to bring civilization to “uneducated lower-class people.” Not incorrectly, the Beechers were seen by many in Cincinnati as New Englanders and know-it-alls who looked down at the westerners in Ohio and wanted to remake them in their image. These tensions would come to a head in 1834 when Theodore Weld orchestrated an abolitionist revolution at Lane Seminary that the Beechers opposed but were powerless to suppress. Weld’s radical support of immediate emancipation spread through the seminary and associated Lyman Beecher with the cause even as he remained a supporter of the American Colonization Society.68

Catharine Beecher cultivated an ideology of domesticity in which women, because of their moral superiority to men and their predisposition to be selfless devotees to the general good, became powerful through their powerlessness. Her appreciation for self-abnegation as a means to gain moral authority contrasted directly with what men like Theodore Weld had learned from evangelicalism – manly independence and self-reliance. On one level, these gendered qualities – Beecher’s ideas for womanly behavior and

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68 Sklar, Catharine Beecher, 113.
Weld's ideals for manhood – should not have been in conflict with one another since men and women had clearly defined and different roles to play. Yet Beecher wanted men to submit to feminine authority and to aim to be benevolent reformers, and Weld, especially after his marriage to Angelina Grimké in 1838, thought that women ought to manifest the same independence of spirit and outspoken opposition to sin as he valued in men. More than simply standing in for prescribed behaviors for men and women, gender defined how Beecher and Weld understood Christian activism and what would become two very different responses to abolitionism.

IV. THE LANE REBELLION

Catharine Beecher and Theodore Weld moved to Cincinnati in the early 1830s with different but ambitious plans and visions for the future. Catharine and her father, Lyman Beecher, expected their educational programs to cultivate New England values, particularly civilized domesticity and all that it entailed. Weld's goal was to spread antislavery sentiment by educating abolitionist ministers who would set out to convert slaveholders and westerners to the abolitionist gospel. The Beechers, however, remained committed colonizationists, and Catharine found Weld's tactics coarse and unchristian while her father thought the young students had stepped out of line in disobeying his authority as the school's head. The Beecher's also feared the negative consequences Weld's abolitionism would have for the school's reputation. In Cincinnati, a city closely connected to Kentucky's slave plantations and with a large free black population of its own, racial tensions ran high. Opponents of emancipation and racial integration feared that if southern slaves were free, blacks would pour into the North and devalue white labor. The racist arguments against emancipation could not be separated from gendered
arguments that suggested that sexual licentiousness would result if the imposed social order of slavery ended. Black men would become threats to white women, or so proponents of slavery contended, and if the racial caste system embedded in slavery ended, inferior mixed-race people would corrupt the purity of the American national home. Interracial sex, whether consensual or not, struck fear into the heart of many a white northerner, and this persistent component of anti-abolitionist rhetoric made many abolitionist white men wary of including white and black women in their organizations. Theodore Weld and his group of student agitators, however, gave little thought to the reputations of Lane Seminary, their professors, and Lyman Beecher.

During Theodore Weld’s first year at Lane, he and many of his friends from the Oneida Institute proved difficult for the faculty to control. They abided by the strict moral code that had reigned at Oneida, where they had risen at four AM and regulated their diets by avoiding meat or any stimulants. At Lane, the students would boycott lectures of faculty members they disliked, and they protested the hiring of any man who might “lay abed late of mornings” or who “profaned his body with tea and coffee.”69 One of Lyman Beecher’s sons commented that the group was “uncommonly strong, a little uncivilized, entirely radical, and terribly in earnest . . . a kind of imperium in imperio.”70 Beecher himself complained about the abolitionists: they “are the offspring of the Oneida denunciatory revivals, and are made up of vinegar, aqua fortis, and oil of vitriol, with brimstone, saltpeter, and charcoal, to explode and scatter corrosive matter.”71 Unsurprisingly, during his first year at Lane, Weld had little success in “converting”

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69 Thomas, Theodore Weld, 49.


Beecher to the cause, and Weld decided to take a bold step on behalf of immediate abolitionism.

Cognizant of the first meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Association in Philadelphia, Weld organized a controversial series of debates at the seminary between supporters of colonization and immediate abolitionism. Scheduled for February 1834, the meetings incorporated seventeen speakers who had experiences with slavery in the South, including James Thome, the son of a Kentucky slaveholder, and a former slave who was the only black student at Lane, James Bradley. Most of Lane’s faculty and students attended the two-and-a-half hour meetings spread over nine evenings where speakers discussed documents from the American Colonization Society as well as the newly founded American Anti-Slavery Society. Lyman Beecher even sat in on some of the meetings and had a student read out an essay of his gradualist views that his daughter, Catharine, had drafted (but did not read publicly) for him.\textsuperscript{72} Additional testimonies came from a man who had visited Liberia and a written statement from Prudence Crandell, a white woman who had started and then been forced to close a school for free black children in Connecticut. The speakers argued that slaves wanted to be free and detailed the brutal conditions of slavery, particularly the “sickening” state of morals in the slaveholding states.\textsuperscript{73}

The passionate speeches and dramatic narratives of slavery worked like an evangelical revival in persuading most of the student attendees to “convert” to immediate abolitionism, and almost all of the students concluded the debates by voting against

\textsuperscript{72} Fletcher, \textit{History of Oberlin College}, 152.

\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Debate at the Lane Seminary, Cincinnati; Speech of James A. Thome, of Kentucky. Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Letter of the Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Cox, Against the American Colonization Society} (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1834), 3–4.
colonization.\textsuperscript{74} One former advocate of colonization had been convinced through his discussions with thirty or forty free blacks in Cincinnati of "their preference to remain in their native land, rather than to emigrate 'home' to a foreign shore."\textsuperscript{75} Like their religious leader Charles Finney who used the emotive revival to make his followers see and repent of their sins, the students at Lane were going to rely on their power of moral suasion, and they would end slavery by convincing "the minds of slave holders [with] the truth, in the spirit of the Gospel."\textsuperscript{76} Those who had been active in the meetings organized an antislavery student group and made plans to put their faith into action in the black community of Cincinnati. For Weld and the men at Lane Seminary, their own freedom was tied up in their advocacy of emancipation. The abolitionist position adopted by the students at Lane extended their idea of liberty to cover black men as well as themselves. A black man, like a white man, the Lane Anti-Slavery Society decreed, was "a moral agent, a keeper of his own happiness, the executive of his own powers, the accountable arbiter of his own choice," and slavery blocked the enslaved man from obtaining his rights.\textsuperscript{77}

Several months after the Lane debates, Lyman Beecher returned to the East Coast to raise funds for the seminary in the summer of 1834, and he met with the Tappans in New York to complain about Weld and his followers. Instead of gaining the support of the Tappans, however, Beecher was chastised for failing to accept immediate

\textsuperscript{74} Thomas, Theodore Weld, 71.

\textsuperscript{75} Debate at the Lane Seminary, 5.

\textsuperscript{76} Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 154.

abolitionism. As the Lane students battled against the board of trustees in Ohio, Beecher extended his stay in the East in a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to form a moderate antislavery organization that would fall somewhere in between the immediatists and the colonizationists. Beecher feared that his students’ radicalism would result in angry Cincinnati mobs attacking his seminary. His anxiety was not unfounded: in May 1834 a mob had attacked Lewis Tappan’s New York home, and other abolitionists in Boston had faced hostile crowds as well. As Beecher had earlier tried to find a middle ground between the enthusiasm of revivals and the orthodoxy of Calvinism, he now sought a mediation between different antislavery factions. Beecher hoped that a moderate society would calm abolitionists on the one hand and continue the cooperation between white northerners and white southerners within churches and reform organizations.

The students at Lane would have none of Beecher’s compromises. From its earliest roots, evangelical abolitionism had a missionary agenda, and Weld’s disciples at Lane launched into action to convince northerners of the righteousness of abolitionism. Like the Connecticut missionaries who had wanted to build the good society in the forests of northern Ohio, Weld and his classmates envisioned an interracial Christian society on the banks of the Ohio River. The students who attended Weld’s meetings traveled widely and spoke at churches, antislavery meetings, even at great risk to their personal safety, and they began to organize schools, Sabbath schools, and lectures for the black community of Cincinnati. Additionally, the students were found using the school’s

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printing press to run off thousands of copies of a pamphlet that made the case against colonization even though four of Lane’s trustees served or had served in the past on the board of the American Colonization Society. More damaging to their reputations, though, were the accusations of interracial social mixing hurled at the students in the local press. Weld and the others declared “social intercourse according to character, irrespective of color” and proceeded to attend black churches, and join black families for meals, parties, and funerals. Before Beecher left for the east, he warned Weld that while he would gladly “fill your pockets with money” to open “colored schools,” but “if you will visit in colored families, and walk with them in the streets, you will be overwhelmed.”

The abolitionist students raised the most attention when their antislavery activities included men and women interacting with one another. It was when racial and sexual boundaries were crossed that abolitionism, evangelicism, or unorthodox religious raised the most ire among those who opposed them. While the Lane Rebels were silent on the issue of marriage and sexuality, their interracial activities encouraged white women to serve as teachers in black schools, and the seminarians personally associated with both black men and women. Among the colonizationists on Lane’s board of trustees, the most shocking stories about the Lane students involved actions like that of seminarian

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80 Deeply invested in the power of conversion, the students believed they could persuade white southerners of the righteousness of their cause, but in traveling through southern states with abolitionist literature, they more often met with hostility. Amos Dresser, one of the Lane Rebels and a missionary to Jamaica in the early 1840s was jailed in Nashville and received 20 lashes for carrying abolitionist literature in his suitcase. (Alumni file of Amos Dresser, Dresser memoir, RG 28/2, Box 273, OCA). For the southern converts to abolitionism, they feared returning home. James Allen, son of an Alabama slaveholder, told his father he refused to go home for fear he would be killed. (Thomas, Theodore Weld, 93). As dangerous as it was for white southerners, black supporters of abolitionism in Ohio faced persistent threats of violence for their work. (Thomas, Theodore Weld, 94).

81 Lesick, Lane Rebels, 123.

Augustus Wattles, who was seen escorting a black woman, and the attempt of the students to seat a black woman next to “one of the most prominent white ladies in the city” at a church service.\textsuperscript{83} Black and white mixing was allowable in the all-male confines of the Lane Seminary, but when the Lane students attempted to integrate Cincinnati and openly transgressed gender boundaries, their behavior stirred resentment and led to scenes of mob violence.

While the Lane students did not oppose the ideology of domesticity, they questioned its racial exclusiveness by expanding true womanhood to include black women. In contrast to Catharine Beecher’s racially pure vision of white American women, this abolitionist version of domesticity implicitly argued that black women should be considered ladies. As an example, Lewis Tappan had funded several young white women to become teachers in the black schools of Cincinnati. In a letter to Weld from four of these teachers, they referred to their black students repeatedly as “ladies,” a descriptor almost never applied to a black woman, no matter what her class status.\textsuperscript{84} The abolitionist men and women at Lane Seminary were intent on spreading the notion that white gender norms also applied to black women and men. In doing so, they hoped to help their cause that freedom would not result in sexual licentiousness among blacks, but that black ladies and gentleman would embrace the same moral codes of Christian liberty cherished by white Protestants.

The Lane students and their friends made few inroads on this subject. Instead, their critics responded to their activism with accusations that they were all

\textsuperscript{83} Lesick, 92, quoting David Brainerd, \textit{Life of Brainerd}, 108.

\textsuperscript{84} Phoebe Mathews, Emeline Bishop, Susan Lowe, and Lucy Wright to Weld, March 1835, \textit{Weld-Grimké Letters} I, 211–218. Phoebe Mathews uses “ladies” many times in her letter, while Emeline Bishop uses it only once. The other two women use “colored friends,” “they” or “them” or simply “people.”
“amalgamationists” or supporters of interracial sex and the “corruption” of racial purity. For colonizationists who wanted to send all blacks out of the U.S.’s borders, this was a key issue, especially in cities with large free black populations like Cincinnati. One virulently racist pamphlet called abolitionists “nigger hearted amalgamationist traitors,” for example. Abolitionists fought back, however, usually arguing that more “amalgamation” occurred between slaveholders and their slaves than would happen in a free society. The fear of interracial sex among northern whites remained just under the surface in anti-abolitionist speeches and writings, and this context put the Lane students in a highly precarious position in their community. The stakes of “amalgamation rhetoric,” historian Bruce Dorsey argues, were high: it “represented an interrelated pattern of ideas about race and politics that exploited sex and gender in order to deny political equality and ensure racial dominance through violence.” At Lane Seminary, the students’ enunciations of a kind of Christian perfectionism only added to their marginalization from mainstream Protestantism, making them even more suspect in the eyes of the Cincinnati elite; after all, since the earliest days of the Second Great Awakening, new formulations of Christian faith often went along with disruptions to the traditional gender order.

The Lane students’ actions profoundly disturbed the school’s trustees, mostly local businessmen who did a great deal of commerce with slaveholders on the other side

85 Freemen Awake!, 21, quoted in Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women, 152.

86 Amos A. Phelps, Slavery and its Remedy (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1834), 235–38, Lydia Maria Child, Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans, (Boston: Allen and Ticknor, 1833), 140.

87 Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women, 151.
of the Ohio River in Kentucky. In addition to fearing for their own personal reputations, the trustees dreaded the very real potential for mob violence against abolitionism to erupt in Cincinnati in the same way that it was occurring in New York that summer of 1834. In order to attempt some kind of damage control, the trustees denounced the “exciting topics” that had become so interesting to students at Lane, and the local newspaper agreed, commenting that “there may be room enough in the wide world for abolitionism and perfectionism, and many other isms; but a school, to prepare pious youth for preaching the gospel, has not legitimate place for these.” In the summer of 1834, with Lyman Beecher in New York, the board passed a series of regulations that banned their antislavery society and prohibited the discussion of slavery even in private conversations. The board further decided to fire the faculty member who supported the students and moved to expel the students’ leaders, Theodore Weld, James Thome, and Henry B. Stanton, the future husband of woman’s rights activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

For his part, Lyman Beecher saw the rebellious students as disobedient to his paternal authority. In a letter to board member Nathaniel Wright, Beecher affirmed that “our plan of Parental and evangelical government is right and would have carried all before it but for one headlong power mind too powerful and too unsafe to be trusted.”

In the opinion of Beecher and the members of the seminary’s board, the students’

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88 Lesick, Lane Rebels, 116–19.


90 Lesick, Lane Rebels, 118.

91 Ibid., 119.

92 Lyman Beecher to Nathaniel Wright, 7 Sept. 1834, Vertical File, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, quoted in Lesick, Lane Rebels, 122.
complaints that their freedom of inquiry was being circumscribed made no sense, since they were not independent men but sons with a dependent place in the family hierarchy. Weld, the “headlong power,” was leading them into rebellion. To the board members, both the threatening mobs opposing abolitionism and the disobedient behavior of the students were “signs of the times,” revealing the “strong and growing propensity to insubordination – a disposition to set up individual notions or constructions in opposition to lawful authority,” whether that order was local government or the patriarchal family.93

The Western Monthly Magazine, published in Cincinnati, agreed, calling the students “embryo clergymen” and “precocious undergraduates” and blaming them for disrupting public order.94 By describing the students as children and emphasizing their youth, those opposed to their clamoring for freedom could write them off as minors incapable of self-government. Their rebellious attitudes thus appeared to be a case in point of why slavery and strict social hierarchies were necessary.

The students, on the other hand, embraced the insubordinate label and strongly protested the administration’s attempts to control their freedom of speech. When the fall term began in mid-October of 1834, seventy-five students at Lane withdrew from the seminary. Out of the larger group, the core members, about a dozen students including Theodore Weld, James Thome, and the future corresponding secretary for the American Missionary Association, George Whipple, removed to Cummins ville, Ohio. There, with the financial backing of Arthur Tappan, they continued their outreach work to the black community and crafted a statement in response to the trustees of Lane that would increase

93 Lane Seminary, Trustees Formal Minutes, meeting of 6 Oct. 1834, Lane Theological Seminary Archives, quoted in Lesick, Lane Rebels, 127.

94 Thomas, Theodore Weld, 76.
the publicity of their cause in the national antislavery press. Their departure from the seminary was seen in a positive light by many. Lewis Tappan, for example, wrote to his friend Amos Phelps, the future leader of the West India Mission Committee, that once freed from the seminary, the “students will swing their packs, and be voluntary agents all over the country.”

On the other side, Lyman Beecher again tried to moderate between the radicals and the conservatives. He realized that the growing press coverage of the Lane students’ withdrawal could be detrimental to the school’s financial stability, and he tried in vain to get the students to return to the seminary and even convinced the trustees to reverse some of the new policies restricting the activism of the students. But historian Robert Fletcher suggests in his history of Oberlin College that the widespread news coverage of the Lane Rebels probably made them even more “adamant against all the appeals” requesting their return to Lane.

In December 1834 the Lane Rebels launched a public attack against those who had sought to quell their moral opposition to slavery, and in January 1835 their *Statement of the Reasons Which Induced the Students of Lane Seminary, to Dissolve Their Connection with that Institution*, signed by fifty-one students, was published. In it, they framed their experience at Lane as one in which their free speech had been suppressed, but they left the subject of their free speech, abolitionism, out of their report. Perhaps they did so in order to gain broader support, as more northerners would agree with their rights to free speech and to organize than with their stance on abolitionism. The

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95 Lesick, *Lane Rebels*, 132–33.

96 Lewis Tappan to Amos Phelps, 10 Oct. 1834, Phelps MSS, Boston Public Library, quoted in Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan*, 128. The West India Mission Committee raised money for the Jamaica Mission before it was adopted by the American Missionary Society in 1847.

97 Fletcher, *History of Oberlin*, 163.
emphasis on freedom also reflects the oppositional stance long-cultivated by men like Weld and Thome. Both had already defied the wishes of their biological fathers in the name of spiritual liberty and political freedom for enslaved people, and now they faced new restrictions from the proslavery press, the trustees of Lane Seminary, and Lyman Beecher. Notably, the document said little about the institution of slavery or the racist attitudes of Lane’s trustees, a point Weld mentioned in a letter written in 1835: he told his correspondent that his opposition to racism was “expressed in our Expose of the Lane Sem.,” but then he remembered “that a long paragraph was stricken out by a vote of the majority of the brethren which they thought was so strong amagamationally that the Anti Slavery community would kick.”98 Rather than focusing on what might be a controversial issue for even abolitionists, Weld apparently had agreed to leave out the paragraph condemning racism and in favor of interracial interactions.

Instead, in their statement the Lane Rebels addressed the situation in a way that might potentially appeal to a broader audience of white men, and they wrote in a democratic language that defended their rights. They wrote that if schools had the power to control what was discussed by students, then they defeated the entire point of education. “Better, infinitely better, that the mob demolish every building . . . than that our theological seminaries should become Bastiles, our theological students, thinkers by permission, and the right of free discussion tamed down into a soulless thing of gracious, condescending sufferance.”99 Beecher and the trustees of Lane thought of the seminary as the family they headed, but the students had quite a different idea of themselves as the


99 Statement of the Reasons which Induced the Students of Lane Seminary to Dissolve Their Connection with That Institution (Cincinnati, 1834), quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 163.
egalitarian faithful. They had a moral duty to act, and their right to “free discussion” was a “right conferred by God, and its proscription would be ‘sacrilege.’” Charles Finney agreed, noting that as Lane Seminary stood in the way of their moral duties, the school proved that it was “ill adapted to fit its pupils for warring with the sins and enormous evils of a corrupt and corrupting age.” They would receive their training for this spiritual warfare at the Oberlin Collegiate Institute and at the newly founded Oberlin Theological Seminary.

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Two years before the Lane Rebellion, John Jay Shipherd had founded the Oberlin colony, and as an abolitionist, Shipherd’s school seemed a refuge for the Lane students. Shipherd intended his utopian town and school to “gather some of the right spirits and plant them in the dark Valley” and he planned that Oberlin “will make our churches ashamed of their unholy alliances with earth.” Not only were the students of the proposed school expected to live moral lives, but so were the town’s citizens: “Every one, regardless of worldly maxims, shall return to Gospel simplicity of dress, diet, houses, and furniture . . . and be industrious and economical with the view of earning and saving as much as possible not to hoard up for old age and for children, but to glorify God in the salvation of men.” This matched the ideals of the Lane students perfectly.

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100 *Statement of the Reasons*, 5, quoted in Lesick, 136.

101 Charles Finney to George Whipple and Henry B. Stanton, 18 Jan. 1835, Finney Papers, OCA, quoted in Lesick, *Lane Rebels*, 137.


103 Ibid.
In December 1834 arrangements were made between Shipherd, the Tappans, and others to create a seminary at Oberlin, in addition to the existing preparatory school and college, for the Lane Rebels to attend. Arthur Tappan pledged a total of $20,000 to the school, and a number of others, including Lewis Tappan, offered to pay the $600 salaries of eight new professors, under two conditions. First, that Charles Finney would be hired as a theology professor, and secondly, that Oberlin would accept black students. If the Lane students were to move to Oberlin, this latter proposal was a must. One of the Lane faculty members who had supported Weld wrote to Finney that he “could not see how consistent abolitionists can give their money or personal labours and influence to Oberlin till the trustees are ‘prepared’ to . . . do justice to their coloured brethren whether other institutions do so or not.” After a good deal of debate and a vote on the proposal conducted by the students, the measure passed, and Oberlin welcomed the new influx of cash, faculty, and the Lane Rebels.

V. ENACTING EVANGELICAL ABOLITIONISM

Many of the Lane Rebels who went to Oberlin in 1835 soon left and to become antislavery agents employed by the American Anti-Slavery Society. While Oberlin’s students often did antislavery work during vacations, Weld and James Thome and many of the older Lane Rebels became employed by the AASS. As lecturers, they faced violent opposition in many of the places they spoke, for most white northerners thought that immediate emancipation would result in the complete breakdown of society. Not unsurprisingly, the men took pride in the manly strength required in their labors. At Weld’s abolitionist lectures across New York and Ohio, he often was forced to shout

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104 John Morgan to Charles Finney, 13 Jan. 1835, Finney MSS, OCA, quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 176.
down opponents who interrupted him, and on occasion he and his fellow speakers were pelted with rotten eggs or drowned out by musical instruments and drums. The worst violence came in June 1836, when a mob assaulted him in Troy, New York, with “stolen, pieces of bricks, eggs, cents, sticks, etc.” while he spoke and as he walked between the lecture hall and his lodgings. The attacks on his own freedom made him mindful of the brutal punishments suffered by the “helpless and innocent” slaves, and he closed his letter with a new beatitude: “Blessed are they who die in the harness and are buried on the field or bleach there.” White northerners remained apprehensive about immediate abolitionism, particularly when the message came out of the mouths of the Lane Rebels, men who were notorious for disrupting the status quo in Cincinnati.

Beyond individual antislavery lecturers, a general rancor against abolitionism gained strength throughout the United States in the early 1830s. In 1834 rioters in New York City had besieged the Tappans, and in 1835, Arthur Tappan and other abolitionists were hung in effigy in Charleston, South Carolina, when Charlestonians discovered antislavery pamphlets coming in the mail from New York. Many southern states responded by passing laws prosecuting anyone using the mails to distribute literature intended to incite rebellion, and South Carolina, Alabama, and Virginia tried to extradite Arthur Tappan to stand trial. In 1836 someone sent Lewis Tappan a black person’s severed ear, and William Lloyd Garrison warned both Tappans that they were “liable to

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be abducted by blood-thirsty men.”109 In 1837 the first abolitionist martyr became Elijah
Lovejoy, an editor who died protecting his press from a mob in Alton, Illinois. For
Theodore Weld and many others, the death of Lovejoy reaffirmed their own commitment
to freedom. In an elegy to Lovejoy, Weld bitterly commented on the irony of American
freedom:

Free! The word and sound are omnipresent masks, and mockers! An impious lie!
unless they stand for free Lynch Law, and free murder, for they are free. Where
are the murderers of Lovejoy? ‘Free,’ going at large . . . holding up their bloody
hands along the streets of Alton, and telling how they killed him.110

The violence with which white northerners and southerners alike received abolitionism
made the abolitionists acutely aware of the privileges of freedom they were fighting for in
the South. The murder of Lovejoy and the failure of the local authorities to apprehend
his killers proved to Weld and to compatriots that not only was the freedom of blacks at
stake in the abolitionist battle, but so was the freedom of whites, and white men
especially, who opposed slavery. The besieged state of abolitionism in the 1830s only
reinforced the ideas of Christian manliness held by the movement’s members.

The abolitionist lecturers put themselves in mortal peril when they spoke out on
immediate abolition, and it seemed that the anger from northern audiences came in large
part because ending slavery was seen as a measure that would dramatically change the
social order. The fact that the two most notorious abolitionist speakers were women –
Angelina and Sarah Grimké – had led to a common association between improper or
“public” women and the abolitionist cause.111 James Thome tried a way to get his

original. Quoted in Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, 158.
message of black freedom across by assuring his restless audience that the social order that privileged white men would not collapse with emancipation, and he did this by emphasizing that free blacks, like white women, would remain restricted even after emancipation. He wrote to Weld that during a recent lecture he had stopped his angry audience in their tracks when he had “disclaim[ed] certain things which are confounded with abolitionism, such as social intercourse, amalgamation etc.” and pointed out to them that “we did not wish [emancipated slaves] turned loose, having the possession of unlicensed liberty.” His words reveal the texture of “Christian liberty” that Weld and the other evangelical abolitionists promoted as opposed to the unrestricted license that they were accused of supporting. Anticipating the mission to Jamaica and the later Reconstruction plans for the U.S. South, Thome declared that immediate abolitionism would not immediately place black men on the same level as white men but would bring about a systematic process through which black men could be educated and “civilized” from dependent slaves into independent men. Independent men and morally sound men educated on the principles of Christianity would not succumb to temptation and turn their freedom into “unlicensed liberty.”

Thome recognized that race and gender went hand in hand, and he knew that interracial sex or even interracial friendships between white women and black men were anathema to his audiences; Thome had witnessed the damage that such claims could do when they were made against the students at Lane Seminary in Cincinnati in the early 1830s. Thome’s thought process linked “social intercourse” to “amalgamation” or

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111 This fear can be seen in Weld’s own attempt to get the sisters to stop speaking on behalf of women’s rights, arguing that although he agreed with their platform, the woman’s rights cause was distracting from the abolitionist message. Weld to Sarah and Angelina Grimké, 15 August 1837, Weld-Grimké Letters I: 425–27. It is during this time that the sisters and Weld argue over the place of women in the abolitionist movement with the sisters eventually winning Weld over to their cause.
interracial sex, showing how, in the 1830s context, “unlicensed liberty” signaled the potential for inappropriate sexuality. In response, he explained how special laws would reinforce social distinctions even after emancipation, and his words provide an important precedent to the actions of the Jamaica missionaries. Thome told the angry crowd in Akron, Ohio, freed slaves would be left to “unlicensed liberty,” but would be governed by a “special code of Laws restricting them in their freedom, upon the same general principles that apply to foreigners, minors, etc.”¹¹² For Thome, universal liberty did not preclude a hierarchy of laws regulating access to freedom. White Christian men could control themselves, Thome and his colleagues believed, but others – foreigners, non-whites, children, and women – still needed guidance. In Thome’s account, his speech was well-received and many in the audience changed their minds about abolitionism. When one man in the audience suggested that Thome was a “new abolitionist” rather than a radical, Thome responded: “I blazed and threw sky-rocketts, talked of human rights, touched upon the Amer. Revolution and brought heaven and earth together.”¹¹³ In his theories of emancipation, Thome saw no contradiction between the qualified freedom blacks would be allowed upon emancipation and the sweeping declarations of liberty pronounced by white abolitionists.

The riots that occurred during the summer of 1834 and the widely reported Lane Rebellion divided the ranks of evangelicals interested in ending slavery into the colonizationist or gradualists and the immediate abolitionists like Weld, Thome, and their financial backers, the Tappans. Unlike Beecher’s centrism, the converts of Finney saw the world in the apocalyptic terms of absolute good and absolute evil. In being liberated


¹¹³ Ibid.
from sin through their Christian faith, they could no longer compromise with evil even if this meant overthrowing the institutions of the church and family. The Lane Rebels’ opposition to the institution of slavery thus blended with their own heartfelt sense of being confined and controlled by “masters” who would dictate what they could and could not do or say. The young men’s idea of freedom was also tied to an irreproachable moral order drawing on their particular understanding of evangelicalism. The belief in the perfectibility of the world that would become known as Charles Finney’s perfectionist doctrine by 1840 was at once a vehicle for liberation and a system of moral restraint.

CONCLUSION

The settlement of Oberlin in the late 1820s by John Jay Shipherd grew out of a utopian dream for a Christian community that would serve as a beacon of moral light in the dark wilderness of the Western Reserve, but these initial utopian aspirations expanded and shifted during the 1830s. The fiery sermons of Charles Finney had led to an initial outburst of religious radicalism that affected young men and women alike who were seeking a new way to understand themselves and their relation to God, their families, and their fellow citizens. Out of Finney’s revivals came the manual labor schools that taught evangelical men to value independence from their elders and to appreciate labor and self-reliance. For these men, abolitionism meant claiming their own independence as well as that of enslaved people. Northern abolitionist men set themselves apart from the older and established Protestant clergy as well as from their actual fathers. Further, their activism against slavery’s corruption went hand in hand with their evangelical quest for spiritual purity, and it gave them an actual target to attack. The evangelical abolitionist men prided themselves on facing hostile audiences, physical violence, and jail sentences
when they traveled to the South. This mode of evangelical abolitionist activism, however, largely excluded white women from its ranks. Female converts of Finney in New York State and at Oberlin as well as the disciples of Catharine Beecher embraced a different form of Christian activism: the notion of womanly moral superiority and the almost contradictory idea that their powerlessness in relation to men gave them a special sphere of influence. These two different understandings of Christian activism would clash in the late 1830s, as the next chapter shows, and would also cause misunderstandings between the men and women in the Jamaica Mission.

Unlike other foreign missionaries from the United States, the Jamaica Mission was founded by men and women on the fringe of Protestantism because of their abolitionist viewpoints. Several Lane Rebels served during the Jamaica Mission’s first years (David Ingraham, Charles Stewart Renshaw, and Amos Dresser) and James A. Thome traveled to the island in 1836 on a fact-finding mission for the American Anti-Slavery Society. Their heritage of maintaining spiritual purity and cultivating a healthy degree of dissent made sense in the context of the North where they were a small minority within Protestantism, but in Jamaica, where they put themselves in charge over black converts, it would have a different result. When black Jamaican converts and the mission’s white women challenged the mission’s men on their rights to greater freedom and independence, the ministers hesitated to yield any authority.
CHAPTER TWO
Diverging Paths, 1836–1847

Missionary societies in the 1830s thought that they averted potential scandals by sending out married missionary couples abroad, and the mixing of white missionaries with non-white “natives” would be mediated through the imposed hierarchy of the mission station. In the missionary context, the racial and also gender order remained intact and there was no question of equality between men and women or between white Americans and their potential converts, at least in the foreseeable future. For those white Americans who opposed emancipation, however, it appeared that abolitionists had dissolved all of the social rules governing how men and women, and blacks and whites. While most American Protestants celebrated missionary efforts abroad, even as this would inevitably result in people of different races living in close quarters, many who could even be considered radical questioned the Oberlin Institute’s decision to incorporate white women as well as black people into its student body.¹

One man wrote to Oberlin founder John Shipherd about his concern for the school’s reputation: “New England will scarcely bear to have young Ladies at the same sem[inar]y [with white gentlemen]” and while the writer agreed that “this point might be gained” in the future, “to place black and white together on the same standing will not most certainly be endured. . . and in trying to do this you will lose the other object, nay you lose Oberlin.” The writer further warned Shipherd that when black students arrived at the school, “the whites will begin to leave” and that Oberlin would become a black college. The only solution, he proposed, was to “keep the blacks entirely separate, so as

¹ Oberlin welcomed black students to all of its schools in 1835, and in 1837, women were accepted into the Collegiate Institute, although they had always attended the preparatory school and the Ladies’ Course.
to veto the notion of amalgamation.\textsuperscript{2} On the other side, the wealthier and much more powerful Lewis Tappan threatened to withhold his financial support from the college if black students were not enrolled and treated as equals in every way to the white students.\textsuperscript{3} Another abolitionist supported the inclusion of black students but hesitated at the coeducational nature of the school. The former Lane professor and friend of the rebels, John Morgan, maintained that he would only move to Oberlin if black students were allowed to matriculate. The question of women, however, was more problematic: "the mixing of young men and women together in the same institution strikes me as not at all judicious," he wrote to Theodore Weld.\textsuperscript{4}

Race and gender distinctions caused the a great deal of discomfort for the men and women committed to abolitionism precisely because of the school's call for equality. While the abolitionist rhetoric of equality and individual liberty had a significant place at Oberlin, the practical need to manage the school's students and to protect the school's reputation led to a much more restricted campus than one might have expected. Oberlin's faculty and administration became strict enforcers of morality through church discipline, and they drew a heavy line between the male and female students, using the prescribed gender roles of the ideology of domesticity to inform how men and women were educated. Any transgressions committed by students resulted in rapid punishment.

\textsuperscript{2} Benjamin Woodbury to John J. Shipherd, 26 March 1835, Treasurer's Office, File J, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, quoted in Fletcher, \textit{History of Oberlin College From its Founding Through the Civil War} (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1943), 523. (Hereafter, Oberlin Archives will be cited as OCA).

\textsuperscript{3} Bertram Wyatt-Brown, \textit{Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery} (Cleveland: Case-Western Reserve University Press, 1969), 130–31.

Yet the gender ideology governing how male and female students should behave was itself undergoing reevaluation more broadly in the antebellum North, and the emergence of the early woman's rights movement could not be held completely at bay. In the early 1830s, as the last chapter showed, evangelical men like Theodore Weld crafted a masculinity defined by independence, self-control, and rigid moral discipline. Evangelical women, in contrast, tried to work within the boundaries that men prescribed them, and many, like Catharine Beecher, saw ways that women could use their submissive and apolitical position as a way to exert a positive influence on society. In the mid-1830s, these ideas of masculinity, femininity, and the different modes of evangelical reform began to diversify and change.

The changes centered around the place of white women in the abolitionist movement. Most abolitionist men, whether evangelical or otherwise, wanted to capture the support of northern women precisely because they felt women's supposed detachment from politics would lend credibility to their cause. Many male abolitionists encouraged both black and white women sympathetic to abolitionism to petition the federal government to end slavery in Washington, D.C., to form female antislavery societies, and to generally be an antislavery influence on their families and friends. They did this by emphasizing the point that slavery was a moral question, not a male-sphere political concern, and therefore a perfectly acceptable cause for white Christian women. Yet in the late 1830s white women steeped in the abolitionist men's language of freedom and equal rights for African Americans began to see a larger role for themselves that moved beyond domesticity. Might not white women have the same rights as white men? For the evangelical men and women at Oberlin, and those who would form the American
Missionary Association, the answer was a resounding no. The “woman question,” they argued, distracted from the primary goal of abolitionism, and it took away from the gender order that evangelical abolitionist men had used to pacify opponents convinced that abolitionism equaled sexual license. Evangelical abolitionist men adhered to the ideology of domesticity: God had decreed that women and men occupy different spheres and modes of activism, and this division would be broken if women began to speak publicly before men and women and if women became full members of the same organizations as men.

The evangelical abolitionist position supported a limited role for women within abolitionism that did not disrupt men’s claims at independence and superiority, whereas the woman’s rights platform took those principles of independence and asked why women did not also qualify for these privileges. There was also a third expression of how white women should relate to abolitionism. Still stung from the aftermath of the Lane Rebellion, Catharine Beecher came out against abolitionism and especially against women’s participation in it as she found its adherents rude and uncivilized and everything that good Christian women should despise. The role of white women in all of this, Beecher attested, should be as reconcilers between the disputing parties of the North and the South; those women who engaged in the abolitionist movement betrayed their God-given role in the social hierarchy and sacrificed their womanly virtue that endowed them with the power to influence society in general.

The intersection of abolitionism and domesticity provoked abolitionists and their detractors to consider the meaning of freedom and who deserved what kinds of liberty. Out of this multifaceted debate over the place of white women in the racially charged
abolitionist movement came multiple understandings that would arise throughout the Jamaica Mission. The missionaries who went to Jamaica in the early 1840s as these debates were still unsettled, brought the idea of independent manhood and womanly submission with them to the island. They had little place for the feminized Christianity of Catharina Beecher and other opponents to abolitionism, and this had the effect of diminishing the modes of activism available to the mission’s women. The mission’s men, fresh from Oberlin’s strict disciplinary codes, also became invested in church discipline, as well as domesticity, as a means to preserve order in Jamaica. In the North, on the other hand, churchgoing white women abolitionists who advocated some form of woman’s rights, combined with Catharine Beecher-style feminized Christianity gained moral ground in their churches, reform societies, and in the abolitionist movement. By the 1850s, they had helped to establish a gender order that mediated the moral rigidity and manly independence that had prevailed at Oneida and Oberlin in the early 1830s. In terms of church discipline, as this chapter will show, its most important role in the abolitionist movement was to exclude sinful slaveholders from the churches and religious societies organized by abolitionists. In Jamaica, as we will see, it took on a different meaning.

I. Gender and Abolitionism

Women’s antislavery organizations had existed alongside the men’s organizations since 1833, much in the same way that female benevolence and moral reform societies had sprung up in earlier decades. Black women also played a founding role in the female antislavery societies founded in the early 1830s; the Jamaica missionary Nancy Prince belonged to the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, for example. In Philadelphia,
Quaker women had a history of greater inclusion, as the sect had female ministers and allowed women to speak in church, and this was reflected in Philadelphia's abolitionist community in which men and women participated jointly in various societies. In New York, however, there were two women's antislavery groups during the 1830s—the Chatham Street Chapel society and the Ladies' New York City Anti-Slavery Society. Both were governed by women who were wives and daughters of the city's clergymen, and historian Amy Swerdlow has argued that this led them to oppose woman's rights almost unanimously, even as other female societies in other cities split over the issue at the end of the 1830s. This section lays out the narrative leading up to the schism between the evangelical abolitionists who opposed woman's rights and the "radical" or Garrisonian abolitionists who supported it.⁵

In 1836 James Thome, the Lane Rebel and friend of Weld, gave an address calling on white women to join with their abolitionist brethren in the cause. His "Address to the Ladies of Ohio" was published that year after he had given it a number of audiences, including the Ohio Ladies' Anti-Slavery Convention. Thome's address exemplifies an early example of how the ideology of domesticity—not woman's rights—could be integrated into evangelical abolitionism without challenging the gender order. By acting on behalf of enslaved families white northern women would be "the authors of their happiness," and the after emancipation, reunited families, he argued, would "rise up together to call you blessed." White women belonged in the abolitionist movement, Thome insisted, however, women would have a limited role to play according to their

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sex. His address criticized some aspects of the emerging concept of women’s sphere without abandoning the idea that men and women had different responsibilities when it came to reform.6

Thome criticized the idea of a woman’s sphere as it had been used to limit her participation in the abolitionist movement. Thome complained about those men who would have women educated only to be ornaments and kept on a pedestal, because women’s sensitivity and moral compass made them especially relevant to the antislavery cause. Thome called on women to act in familial terms: “Permit us, therefore, to lay before you the claims of our cause upon you, as mothers and daughters, as sisters and wives.” His text maintained these appellations, referring to his readers alternatively as “Mothers,” and “Sisters,” clearly linking women’s roles within their families and within their national family to their duties to fight slavery. Like Catharine Beecher, Thome avowed that Christian women had something to offer the nation because their moral superiority, and yet in stark contrast to Catharine Beecher, he wanted northern women to embrace the abolitionist movement for these reasons. “God evidently intended that woman should exert an immense control,” Thome wrote, and this was “evident” from how she was made: “Her constitutional susceptibilities – her sympathies – her yearnings of compassion – her enlargedness of benevolence – and her generous disinterestedness – are the finger of God pointing her out as the guardian angel of the world’s hopes.” It was woman’s difference, not equality to men, that made her especially suited to the work of antislavery. Her power came in her powerlessness in the political and public sphere, and

her disinterestedness gave the abolitionist movement greater moral legitimacy since a non-voting woman could rise above the partisan politics that corrupted men.\(^7\)

For a northern woman to ignore the outrages of slavery on white and black southerners alike was for her to “bury her womanhood,” which would mean that she will have “deserted her peculiar sphere! Then will she have forgotten to be a woman, and have forfeited all claim to the title of sister, mother, wife!” Thome continued to construct a case that tied domesticity to the opposition of slavery, and if any woman refused to condemn slavery, she was, in his view, no longer a woman. He concluded his speech by submitting to his readers a list of acceptable activities for women’s activism: petitioning Congress, forming ladies’ anti-slavery societies, writing about the cause, persuading their friends and family to oppose slavery, and perhaps most radically, he encouraged young (and unmarried) women to teach in “female academies” for “people of color of this state,” for the work of education was critical to proving that “the colored man is susceptible of cultivation.” Women were not to participate in men’s societies nor were they to speak in public, even as these two modes of activism formed the backbone of the American Anti-Slavery Society, but they were encouraged to be active petitioners and to teach in black schools.\(^8\)

As historians Julie Roy Jeffrey and Michael Pierson have argued, many white northern women did exactly what Thome laid out. While not considering themselves woman’s rights supporters, they spoke out in their churches and even in the political

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7 Ibid., 26.

8 Ibid., 36, 38–39. Many women acted just as Thome recommended, as Julie Roy Jeffrey shows in *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998). After AASS agents came through a town, female anti-slavery societies were created by women attracted to the abolitionist cause.
rallies of the antislavery Liberty Party. \(^9\) Pierson calls these women "domestic feminists" who "argued that women and men had very different physical and emotional capacities. While men were made by God and nature to strive for personal and public advancement, women for the most part felt happiest when staying at home serving their husbands and raising their children." \(^10\) Jeffrey argues similarly that churchgoing women gained a sense of authority on the slavery question from the "middle-class culture" in which women were considered "naturally moral and religious." \(^11\) Both Jeffrey and Pierson paint a picture in which the ideology of domesticity was a way of claiming feminine power over moral questions that fit with the abolitionist movement. Through the early 1840s, as Pierson points out, Liberty Party men (whose ranks included many evangelical abolitionists) still felt uncomfortable with even this limited female reform movement. They faced the quandary mentioned in the last chapter of having to answer to women reformers when it came to their own morality and many men felt this to be an impingement on their autonomy. \(^12\)

As James Thome made the case for white women's participation in abolitionism, Angelina Grimké, a recently converted Quaker who had moved to Philadelphia from South Carolina in the early 1830s, leapt headlong into the abolitionist movement. In 1836 she composed a very successful abolitionist pamphlet entitled *Appeal to the Christian Women of the Southern States*, and while a southern restriction on abolitionist literature in the mail prevented it from circulating in most southern states, she gained

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\(^11\) Jeffrey, *Great Silent Army*, 141.

\(^12\) For the Liberty Party makeup see Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*, 116–36.
widespread fame among northern abolitionists. Following her success, in October 1836 both Angelina and her much older sister, Sarah, were invited to come to New York City and stay with Abby Cox, the head of the Ladies’ New York City Anti-Slavery Society. While in New York, the Grimkés participated in the American Anti-Slavery Society’s training session for abolitionist agents, where they met Theodore Weld, along with most of the Oberlin men who had been active lecturers since the Lane Rebellio[n] in 1834.13 After being trained as agents (although their claim to this job title remained contested as Theodore Weld futilely tried to explain why their participation in the agents’ convention did not mean they were agents), the women were invited to give a series of lectures around New York in early 1837.14

Like James Thome, the son of a Kentucky slaveholder, and other white southerners who had disavowed slavery, abolitionists valued highly the Grimkés because of their personal experiences with slavery – they were first-hand witnesses. The sisters attracted large audiences of women abolitionists in their lectures in New York and New Jersey, and many times they used the largest possible meeting space – a Congregational church. This worried some abolitionists who felt that having women speak in church would result in accusations that the speech was “a Fanny Wright affair,” but Theodore Weld encouraged the sisters to go ahead with their plans.15 The Grimké lecture tour in January and February 1837 was a departure from the activities most abolitionist men thought fit for abolitionist women. By becoming lecturers, if only at this point to all-

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female audiences, the sisters still were striking out a new path of activism for white women.

Before the Grimké sisters articulated woman’s rights, they were acting within the bounds, if on the far edges, of what was expected of women abolitionists. The Grimkés took Thome’s pronouncements a step farther by becoming public speakers, if only to all-female audiences, and in 1837 Angelina published her own account of what northern women should do on behalf of abolitionism. The speaking tour and Angelina’s pamphlet set off a firestorm of opposition from clergymen uncomfortable with immediate abolitionism, and also from Catharine Beecher who remained a committed gradualist. After their winter lecture tour, the Grimkés came to New York City in May 1837 for the Convention of Anti-Slavery Women. At the Convention, Angelina aided in drafting another antislavery appeal, this one telling northern women in “nominally free states” why they should become abolitionists.

Building on James Thome’s work, this document presented ideas about why northern women should join the abolitionist cause, and it emphasized sisterhood between white northern women and enslaved black women. It also moved beyond Thome’s speech by articulating explicit connections between white women’s place in northern society and the place of enslaved and free blacks in the United States: “Women ought to feel a peculiar sympathy in the colored man’s wrong, for, like him, she has been accused of mental inferiority, and denied the privileges of a liberal education.”\(^{16}\) Their anti-racism and interest in expanding women’s rights drew the Grimkés to the women from the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society during the anti-slavery convention and distanced them from the New York women, like Abby Cox, with whom they had been interacting

\(^{16}\) Grimké, *An Appeal to the Women in the Nominally Free States* (New York, 1837).
during the previous months. At the convention, the sisters were invited to lecture in New England during the summer, and it was this lecture series that prompted the Congregationalist clergy of New England to write the first of a series of pastoral letters criticizing William Lloyd Garrison and other immediate abolitionists as well as the Grimkés.

The pastoral letterers sent to the ministers of New England Congregational churches expressed unease with women’s public roles but also with the entire immediate abolitionist platform. Three years earlier, during the Lane Rebellion in 1834, these same churches had sided with the besieged Lyman Beecher, and the Congregationalist leaders who opposed the Lane Rebels. They certainly had no interest in having white women speak out on behalf of black freedom from the churches’ pulpits. The letters warned clergymen to guard their churches carefully and to not allow “strangers to preach on subjects the ministers do not agree with.” The letters also urged ministers to consider “the dangers which at present seem to threaten the female character with widespread and permanent injury,” for when a woman “assumes the place and tone of man as a public reformer, our care and protection of her seem unnecessary.” The letters’ writers spoke in the language of domesticity that held that God preordained the roles given to men and women. When women acted independently, they not only challenged the submissive place of women in this hierarchy but also the gendered role of men as independent protectors. The letter continued with a metaphor illustrating the need for women to remain dependent to men for the sake of social order: “If the vine, whose strength and beauty it is to lean upon the trelliswork, and half conceal its clusters, thinks to assume the
independence and the overshadowing nature of the elm, it will not only cease to bear fruit, but fall in shame and dishonor into the dust.”17

As the Grimké sisters and the abolitionist leadership responded to these critics in the autumn of 1837, the two women also received warning notes from several men whom they had considered likeminded abolitionists. Many abolitionist men believed that the gender order was essential to the success of abolitionism. If white women like the sisters started to agitate for equal rights, then the abolitionists would be unable to continue their work because of the accusations of “amalgamation.” Angelina and Sarah received one such letter from the Boston abolitionist Amos Phelps who urged them to abandon woman’s rights. While Phelps approved of Thome’s version of female activism, he had, after all, helped to form the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society with his wife, he strongly opposed the Grimké’s new line of thinking. Sarah Grimké summarized his point: Brother Phelps recommended “our desisting from our preset course and confining our labors to our own sex.”18

An even more important challenge to their work came from their trusted friend, Theodore Weld. Weld and the Grimkés had a epistolary conversation about the question of woman’s rights and abolitionism, an exchange that ultimately led to Theodore and Angelina confessing their love for one another in late 1837. Yet Weld did not immediately support their desire to connect woman’s rights to abolitionism. He remarked that he had long been a supporter of woman’s rights, claiming not to have found anyone who was as “ultra” as he in matters of marriage (he informed the sisters


that he believed women as well as men could propose marriage).\textsuperscript{19} Weld feared that if they mixed abolitionism with woman’s rights, they would distract from the abolitionist cause. His friend, the poet John Greenleaf Whittier, also expressed his worry on this note: “Does it not look, dear sisters, like abandoning in some degree the poor and miserable slave, sighing from the cotton plantation of the Mississippi, and whose cries and groans are forever sounding in our ears, for the purpose of arguing and disputing about some trifle oppression, political or social, which we may ourselves suffer?”\textsuperscript{20}

Angelina Grimké responded to both letters and questioned the hypocrisy of her male correspondents who assured her that they agreed in principle but needed her to avoid woman’s rights talk for the time being. She was angry that these men who had fought for their independence and freedom of speech so assiduously at Oberlin would have her be silent to save the cause. Would not the best way to end accusations of amalgamation be to show that women could speak in public without sacrificing their morality? She wrote to Weld: “I think we could convince you that we cannot push Abolitionism forward with all our might until we take up the stumbling block out of the road.”\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, she spoke about the difficulties she had encountered in trying to speak out for the abolitionist cause: “If we dare to stand upright and do our duty according to the dictates of our own consciences, why then we are compared to Fanny Wright and so on.”\textsuperscript{22} She wanted to get rid of this prejudice at the root rather than avoiding the issue entirely. For the Grimkés, it was impossible to continue with their abolitionist activism

\textsuperscript{19} Weld to Grimkés, 15 August 1837, \textit{Weld-Grimké Letters I}: 425.

\textsuperscript{20} Whittier to Grimkés, 14 August, 1837, \textit{Weld-Grimké Letters I}: 424.

\textsuperscript{21} Angelina Grimké (and Sarah) to Weld, 29 August 1837, \textit{Weld-Grimké Letters I}: 429.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 430.
unless they removed the barriers set against their speeches and demolished the grounds for criticism and disparagement on account of their sex.

The Grimké sisters both stopped giving lectures in the late 1830s as Angelina married Theodore Weld in May 1838 and the couple along with Sarah all moved to New Jersey; however, the ideas of sexual equality the promoted did not end here. They were taken up by other men and women in the abolitionist movement. One of their supporters responded to Amos Phelps’s increasingly public disapproval of woman’s rights in a letter to the *Liberator*. “Phebe” asked, “If men and women were together in a social setting . . . would it be wrong for a woman to ‘converse freely, on any question of religion or morals that might be introduced, giving their opinions, etc. etc?’ What if the men and women adopted certain rules for the purpose of convenience? ‘Would it be sinful for women to open their lips?’ Could women meet alone, adopt rules, and ‘use prayer, exhortation, discussion’ without sin? And if a man should come to the meeting, ‘must every woman forthwith close her lips?’23 Other men and women in the abolitionist movement, especially in the Boston societies, also adopted the sexual equality platform, much to Bostonian Amos Phelps’s dismay.

The stakes of incorporating woman’s rights with the black freedom message were made clear two days after the Weld-Grimké wedding, on May 17, 1838. The couple had scheduled their wedding to coincide with the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, the inaugural event in the newly constructed Pennsylvania Hall in Philadelphia. This female-organized meeting would include women speaking before an audience containing black and white men and women, and anti-abolitionist protests were likely. On the evening of the meeting’s first day, an angry mob surrounded the building and

hurled bricks through the windows just as Angelina Grimké Weld addressed the
audience. Fearing for their safety, that night the abolitionists asked Philadelphia’s mayor
for some protection from the mob, and he advised them that they should just keep black
people out of the audience. The assembly rejected his proposal the next day. On the
meeting’s second night, the mob escalated its assault and lit fires in the hall’s lobby. One
protestor punctured the gas line, and the building went up into flames. Two versions of
events came out of this meeting. As the abolitionists used it as an example of their
persecution, their opponents played up the interracial and mixed sex nature of the event,
noting that black men had been seen escorting white women out of the hall, and racist
cartoons also played up the “amalgamation” threat this abolitionist gathering raised.²⁴

The meeting and its aftermath emboldened some abolitionist women like the
Bostonian Abby Kelley, whom Theodore Weld encouraged to speak at Pennsylvania Hall
in spite of the threatening mob, while it had the opposite effect on men like Amos Phelps
and Lewis Tappan, who were already resistant to the idea of the increased participation of
women in the movement. In May 1839, a year after the Pennsylvania Hall disaster,
Amos Phelps and the pro-clerical faction of the Boston abolitionists formed their own
Massachusetts Abolition Society and separated Garrisonian New England Anti-Slavery
Society and Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society when the two groups allowed women to
be voting members.²⁵ Abby Kelley in particular proved problematic to Phelps and Lewis
Tappan, and her name rose to the level of Fanny Wright’s in representing a challenge to
the gender order favored by the evangelicals. An Oberlin professor wrote to Phelps in
early 1839 “that the young ladies accustomed to read compositions before considerable


classes of young men were on the high road to Abby Kelleyism."\(^{26}\) In 1840 Kelley was elected to the business committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Refusing outright to serve alongside a woman, Tappan, Phelps, and their allies withdrew from the society and created their own American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society aligned with the British abolitionists who were similarly indisposed to woman’s rights, a position that would become clear during the summer of 1840 when American women were denied seats at the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention in London.

This narrative of the fracturing of the American Anti-Slavery Society has been told before, but the simple division historians tend to create between Phelps, Tappan, and the New Yorkers and Garrison, Abby Kelley, and the Bostonians becomes blurrier when put in relation to the Jamaica Mission’s activities in the early 1840s. In the years immediately before and after the 1840 schism, the missionaries to Jamaica would often stay at the home of Theodore and Angelina Weld before embarking for Jamaica. Lewis Tappan helped Amos Phelps, the head of the West India Mission Committee, raise money for the mission. While the Welds refrained from joining either Garrison’s AASS or Tappan’s AFASS, preferring to remain neutral in the squabbles occurring between their friends, Angelina and Sarah, and eventually Theodore, did not back down on their support of woman’s rights, and Sarah in particular grew increasingly interested in the pacifism and nonresistance ideas of the Garrisonians. In spite of this, Lewis Tappan and Theodore Weld remained close friends until they fell out over religious differences in the mid-1840s. The Tappan family visited the Welds, and so did Jamaica missionaries and Lane Rebels, David Ingraham and Stewart Renshaw. Angelina and Sarah’s friends, the

Boston feminists Abby Kelley and Maria Weston Chapman came to the Welds’ New Jersey farm. The trio were also visited by Weld’s friend from Lane Seminary, Henry B. Stanton and his new wife, the soon-to-be woman’s rights activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

II. ABOLITIONISM AND GENDERING CHRISTIAN REFORM

To delve more into the relationship between domesticity and antislavery, I turn now to two key texts published in 1837: Catharine Beecher’s Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism and Angelina Grimké’s response, Letters to Catharine Beecher.27 In these two texts, the ideology of domesticity and abolitionism are opposed to one another, and this moment would shape how the missionary men to Jamaica shaped their gender ideology. The mission’s men agreed with Grimké’s assertive and masculine Christianity, without taking her call for woman’s rights seriously, and they disliked Beecher’s explanation of feminine Christianity, ultimately leading them to oppose the notion that women, through the language of domesticity, might have an influence over men. The ideas presented by Grimké and Beecher had one trajectory in the United States as northern white women increasingly became sympathetic to abolitionism, and Beecher’s younger sister, Harriet, had won the hearts of many white women with her sentimental novel, Uncle Tom’s Cabin. In the Jamaica Mission, however, Grimké’s masculine faith and the abolitionist opposition to Beecher’s ideology of domesticity prevailed, leaving white women missionaries a quite circumscribed place in the mission.

Catharine Beecher’s book, Essay on Slavery and Abolition, provided the classic example of the ideology of domesticity as it existed in the 1830s. Unlike her later work interested in the ways white women could share in nationalism by performing the

domesticating work of civilizing non-whites and Catholics, the *Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism* argued that white women should be reconcilers interested in healing the wounds between northern and southern white men. Beecher presented a feminized view of Protestant Christianity and through it, illustrated the type of abolitionist she could respect through a benevolent and gentle portrait of William Wilberforce. In Angelina Grimké’s response, a very different and decidedly masculine view of Christianity appeared, and in this reading of proper Christian behavior, for men and women, Grimké made the case that immediate abolitionism’s beliefs and tactics were perfectly in line with the Bible and the Christian faith.

Beecher began by comparing the tactics of the immediate abolitionists in the United States to the abolitionist heroes in England. She narrated the history of William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson in relation to the end of the British slave trade in 1807, praising Wilberforce as “mild, benevolent, peaceful” with a “gentlemanly and forbearing spirit.” In contrast, she criticized the American abolitionists for launching their activities with an attack on another benevolence society, the American Colonization Society. Clearly still wounded by the Lane Rebels’ attacks on her father, Beecher suggested that if abolitionist men wanted to work in a Christian manner, they would stop opening black schools in places like Cincinnati and refrain from accusing colonizationists of being racists. Rather than stirring up trouble, they needed to leave the abolition of slavery to lawmakers in Washington and in the individual states.  

From this point, Beecher turned specifically to the place of women in the abolitionist movement. She began by articulating what would become central to the

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ideology of domesticity that she formulated over the next decade – the social hierarchy of the family:

It is the grand feature of the Divine economy, that there should be different stations of superiority and subordination, and it is impossible to annihilate this beneficent and immutable law . . . . The master of a family the superior, the domestic a subordinate - the ruler a superior, the subject a subordinate. Nor do these relations at all depend upon superiority either in intellectual or moral worth. However weak the parents or intelligent the child, there is no reference to this, in the immutable law . . . . Heaven has appointed to one sex the superior, and to the other the subordinate station, and this without any reference to the character or conduct of either. It is therefore as much for the dignity as it is for the interest of females, in all respects to conform to the duties of this relation . . . . But while woman holds a subordinate relation in society to the other sex, it is not because it was designed that her duties or her influence should be any the less important, or all-pervading. But it was designed that the mode of gaining influence and of exercising power should be altogether different and peculiar.\textsuperscript{29}

Like the authors of the pastoral letter intended to stop the Grimké’s speaking tour,

Beecher proposed that social order came out of a natural gender order in which men were always superior and dominant over women. This had little to do with the inherent intelligence or morality of individuals, she contended, but was how God had arranged things. Even if Angelina and Sarah Grimké were intelligent and well-spoken, they still could not transgress the gender order of the family ordained by God. Like James Thome, Beecher believed that women had a special power as women. God had created the Christian gender order of domesticity in order to elevate women and to give them a distinctive way of “exercising power.” For Beecher, women’s power came in performing “the conquests that are lawful to woman,” or those reforms that “appeal to the kindly, generous, peaceful, and benevolence principles.”\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, 97–99.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 100.
For Beecher, petitioning politicians seemed to be the most flagrant violation of this God-given gender order. James Thome and even abolitionists like Tappan and Phelps had supported women’s petitioning efforts. In opposition to this, Beecher wrote: “It is neither appropriate nor wise, nor right for a woman to petition for the relief of oppressed females. In this country, petitions to congress, in reference to the official duties of legislators, seem, IN ALL CASES, to fall entirely without the sphere of female duty.” Rather than petitioners, Beecher concluded, women should become teachers, work that she was herself engaged in as the headmistress of school that trained female teachers. In her opinion, when women became more educated and rose to the position of educators, “the more she can appreciate the wisdom of that ordinance that appointed her subordinate station, and the more her taste will conform to the graceful and dignified retirement and submission it involves.” The solution to the slavery question was not to be answered by rabid abolitionists, Beecher argued, as this martial approach left no room for compromise and would only end in a bloody civil war. Instead, women should focus their attention on becoming reconciling and peaceful creatures, an alternative to the politicized and contentious men’s sphere.\(^{31}\)

Beecher’s text expressed a complicated gender ideology. On the one hand, she valued men who had feminine attributes. Men like Wilberforce who were, in her reading, gentle, benevolent, and peaceful, were to be praised, as compared to the “unchristian” behavior of American abolitionist men and men who were engaged in politics. She personified this aggressive and disruptive activism in a sketch of William Lloyd Garrison whose opening move was to denounce the American Colonization Society, a group that Beecher believed exemplified the Wilberforcian way of ending slavery since it included

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 103–03, 107.
northerners and southerners alike. Northern women had no place among aggressive men like Garrison, Beecher argued, nor did women have anything to gain by entering into political debates. For Beecher, successful reformers – both men and women – should embrace Christian practices of modesty, gentleness, and humility, a feminized version of the faith. Women were naturally disposed to this temperament, yet the best men would also display feminine Christian virtues and should be directed to do so by their mothers, sisters, and wives.

Angelina Grimké completely contradicted Beecher’s feminized version of Christian activism in her response written in late 1837. Angelina Grimké wrote Letters to Catharine Beecher during her fall lecture tour, and she collaborated with both Sarah as well as her soon-to-be fiancé, Theodore Weld. Upon reading the first draft, Weld declared that he liked them “greatly, and yet I wish they were better.”32 Weld was immersed in cutting down and editing James Thome’s Emancipation in the West Indies at the same time as he read and edited Angelina’s project.33 In considering her text, let us put to the side for a moment the final three letters in which she made her case for sexual equality and woman’s rights, and first focus on how she gendered Christianity in the majority of her text and defended abolitionism as a worthy Christian cause. In general, the rest of her text echoed the rhetoric of the Lane Rebels, claimed for both women and men. In responding to Beecher’s gendered distinction between gentle Christian women and aggressive unchristian abolitionist men, Grimké defended so-called masculine traits that Beecher disliked, and Grimké linked them to Christian prophets. In doing so,

32 Weld to Grimkés, 22 July 1837, Weld-Grimké Letters I, 413.
Grimké invoked and praised the qualities most valued by evangelical men – the same characteristics seen in Theodore Weld and his classmates at the Oneida Institute, Lane Seminary, and on the abolitionist lecture circuit. Not long after Weld read her drafted letters to Beecher, the two had begun to exchange heated letters on the subject of woman’s rights, and Grimké let slip her feeling about Beecher’s definition of womanhood: “And doest thou really think in my answer to C.E.B.’s absurd views of woman that I had better suppress my own?”

Instead of valuing submissiveness and benevolence, Grimké praised individualism, as the Lane Rebels had proclaimed in 1834, but in her work, she also claimed that women deserved individual rights as well, an affront to Catharine Beecher’s principle of womanly dependence.

In her text, Grimké defended the moral duty of abolitionists to attack slavery and prejudice wherever it appeared – North or South. She praised the “abolition army” for taking up the “sledge hammer of truth” against the American Colonization Society, and she also defended the abolitionists’ attack on the southern states. Christianity had been misunderstood by Beecher, Grimké argued, writing that her own faith was essentially preemptive: “I consider it pre-eminently aggressive; it waits not to be assaulted, but moves on in all the majesty of Truth to attack the strong holds of the kingdom of darkness, carries the war into the enemy’s camp, and throws its fiery darts into the midst of its embattled hosts.” Although a Quaker, Grimké invoked martial metaphors to speak about abolitionism, and she lauded a vision of a Christian army carrying arms and removing the sinfulness of slavery from the country. Her language matched the impassioned speeches of abolitionist men who understood the antislavery cause as a war on sin. The martial metaphors continued into an analysis of Jesus, and she wrote: “Now I

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solemly ask thee, whether the character and measures of our holy Redeemer did not produce [denunciation, recrimination, and angry passion]? . . . . Why did they seek to lay hands on him if the tendency of his measures was so very pacific? Listen, too to his own declaration: ‘I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword.’” Grimké argued that Jesus had not only been a meek soul committed to peace and benevolence, as Beecher would have it. Instead, Jesus, like American abolitionists, sometimes created discord in the cause of righteousness.35

Angelina Grimké also responded to Catharine Beecher’s paean to the English opponents of the slave trade. She wrote very critically about William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson whom Beecher had praised. Grimké suggested that because these English abolitionists had focused their attention on merely ending the slave trade, “never have the labors of any philanthropists so fully showed the inefficacy of half-way principles . . . . They were not immediate abolitionists, but just such gradualists as thou art even now.”36 Grimké’s argument had its strength in the fact that she did not try to contradict the negative criticisms Beecher had of abolitionism. Rather than seeing the masculine qualities of aggression and abolitionist men’s refusal to support gradualism as bad, she claimed them to be positive attributes of the abolitionist movement.

Grimké repeatedly drew on the prophetic tradition to represent a different version of faith than Beecher’s feminized Christianity of benevolence and self-sacrifice. Grimké invoked Old Testament stories and other narratives addressing the tensions between prophets and the mainstream community. She clearly found parallels between her own historical moment and the biblical stories of shunned reformers. In response to Beecher’s

36 Ibid., 15.
elaborate theory of the necessary hierarchies of society, Grimké asked how Moses’s resistance to Pharaoh fit with this theory and called on Beecher to “look at David rebuked by Nathan, Ahab and Jezebel by Elijah and Micaiah. What, too, was the conduct of Daniel and Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, but a practical rebuke of Darius and Nebuchadnezzar? And who were these men, apart from these acts of daring interference? They were the Lord’s prophets.” She also defended the abolitionists’ declarations in favor of immediate emancipation in prophetic terms, referring again to Moses, but also to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Paul. Grimké had no patience for the virtues Beecher valued as feminine and for Beecher’s defense of social order and the status quo. Yet Grimké’s text reveals that Christianity was just as important to her understanding of abolitionism as it was to Beecher’s opposition to immediate abolitionism.37

In her portrait of immediate abolitionism, Grimké placed women alongside men as warriors in the battle to end slavery. She took issue with Beecher’s feminization of Christianity and retorted that Beecher had made Christianity into “a weak, dependent, puerile creature as thou hast described woman to be.” In the text’s final three letters, Grimké made her own bold claims about sexual equality that punctured Beecher’s overarching argument that dependency and submission were the only way women could be reformers. Grimké took Beecher’s proposition that “Woman is to win every thing by peace and live; by making herself so much respected, etc. that to yield to her opinions and to gratify her wishes, will be the free-willing offering of the heart.” Grimké saw this as “the rule of action to the fashionable belle whose idol is herself . . . . But to the humble Christian who feels that it is truth which she seeks to recommend to others . . . this subtle principle must be rejected with holy indignation.” The real models for Christian

37 Ibid., 59, 11.
womanhood, Grimké argued, were not women who remained silent when it came to the truth but those women like the biblical figures of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah, who “were called to fill public stations in Church and State” and the women who were disciples of Jesus and who were overtaken by the Holy Spirit and preached on Pentecost. All human beings were moral beings, Grimké argued, and therefore deserving of human rights, and for Beecher to use the Bible to come to different conclusions was disingenuous. Grimké not only defended the rights of women; she had a broader vision of sexual equality that made no distinction between the sexes, what historian Nancy Isenberg calls co-equality. Grimké declared: “I recognize no rights but human rights – I know nothing of men’s rights and women’s rights; for in Christ Jesus, there is neither male nor female,” and she pointed to the problem of the churches in their slowness to recognize this fact. With this principle in mind, Grimké also criticized Beecher’s plan to train women as schoolteachers, asking why women should be “more bound to engage in this sacred employment than men?” Grimké imagined a much broader interpretation of the place of women in society that took issue with the ideology of domesticity as well as Beecher’s attempt to claim Christianity as a feminine virtue. Yet Grimké’s faith and activism also was not gender-neutral, as the bulk of her letters to Catharine Beecher invoked the same claims of individualism, agitation, and rights of free speech that had come to define evangelical manhood in the 1830s.38

In opposing Beecher’s feminine faith, domestic ideology, and anti-abolitionism, Angelina Grimké presented a decidedly masculine version of Christianity to justify the immediate abolitionist movement as well as women’s individual rights. Rather than seeing Christianity as a faith of self-sacrifice and gentle compromises, Grimké used it to

38 Ibid., 30, 104–5, 105, 118, 122. Nancy Isenberg, Sex and Citizenship.
elaborate on what abolitionists saw as God’s call for both men and women to speak out on injustices like slavery. Abolitionist men and women would have agreed with Grimké’s critique of Beecher, whose colonizationist sympathies made her an enemy of immediate abolitionists. In a larger framework, however, beyond the question of abolitionism, the understandings of gender and reform presented in both women’s texts offered two different modes of women’s activism. Significantly, Grimké’s more forward-thinking understanding of the relationship between reform and Christianity left no place for women to use a gendered argument based on their superior domestic abilities and civilizing talents, as Beecher’s explanation provided. Evangelical abolitionist men like Lewis Tappan, Amos Phelps, and most of the early ministers to Jamaica appreciated Grimké’s version of manly Christian activism, yet only as it applied to men. In their version of domestic ideology, women had no place in Grimké’s masculine faith, and the soft and feminine Christian qualities of benevolence and pacifism granted to women in Beecher’s ideology of domesticity were useless and inferior, just as Grimké persuasively argued. This left evangelical women with a very narrow place in the evangelical side of the abolitionist movement, a position that proved difficult to female missionaries in Jamaica and that led to the disappearance of the female auxiliary evangelical antislavery societies in the early 1840s in New York City and Boston.

Over the next decade, however, Beecher’s conception of women’s special and distinctive influences worked their way into the abolitionist movement, providing churchgoing women with a way to critique slavery without also advocating for woman’s rights or without using a masculine model of Christianity as Grimké had done in 1837. The strongly masculine origins of the evangelical abolitionist movement developed in the
manual labor programs of Oneida, the individual-rights revolt at Lane Seminary, and in
the violent episodes encountered by early antislavery lecturers, but this masculine tone
softened over time in the United States and even among evangelical abolitionists at the
Oberlin Institute into the 1850s, and consequently, permitted women a larger role in the
movement. Yet the gender ideology of domesticity taken to Jamaica by the mission’s
men in the early 1840s did not take this pathway and instead hardened into the strictures
of the mission household. Like Angelina Grimké, the American ministers in Jamaica
agreed that their idea of evangelical abolitionism had in it an “uncompromising integrity
and fearless rebuke of sin, which will bear the enterprise of emancipation through to its
consummation,” but this fierce prophetic voice was only to be wielded by men.39

III. FOUNDED THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION

The masculine Christianity of evangelical abolitionists manifested itself in
relation to the question of church discipline during the formation of the American
Missionary Association in 1846. Lewis Tappan and his evangelical abolitionist allies,
like Amos Phelps, feared the compromising and forgiving attitudes of other evangelicals
— evangelicals who saw Lyman Beecher as a respected leader — to be weak and
unchristian. Tappan, as his biographer argues, “drew real pleasure from his defiance of
danger” when rioters threatened his home and business in the early 1830s, and a decade
later, he similarly raised the ire of some of the most powerful men in American
Protestantism by forming a missionary organization in opposition to the American Board
of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.40 Not long after breaking with the Boston
abolitionists in 1840, Lewis Tappan and his associates embarked on a struggle over the

39 Ibid., 35.

40 Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, 154.
relationship between foreign missions intent on spreading Christianity and the problem of spreading a faith that was supporting slavery at home. Since the Lane Rebellion in 1834, Lewis Tappan and other leading evangelical abolitionists had battled with individuals and Christian societies over the question of slavery at the same time as they had been fighting with the Garrisonian wing of the radical abolitionist movement over the woman question. Another long-simmering conflict involved the relationship between abolitionism and mission work. Evangelical abolitionists had long been frustrated with the American Board because its leadership refused to condemn slavery as a sin, and in 1846, the uncompromising and unforgiving faith Angelina Grimké praised in her response to Catharine Beecher became the founding principles of the AMA.

The different ideas of church membership among the American Board’s leaders and the future founders of the AMA represented a major divide in evangelical thought. Most members of the American Board were sympathetic to the antislavery cause, but they thought that by including slaveholders in their churches, they would stand a better chance at convincing them to abandon slavery, caste, polygamy, or whatever sinful behavior. They lived out the less confrontational faith promoted by Catharine Beecher in which good benevolent men and reconciling women would mend the ties of sectionalism through a shared religious community. Through influence, not violence or confrontation, the sinful would be brought back into the fold. The future AMA supporters, on the other hand, saw church discipline as the means to encourage sinners to change their ways: church membership was only an option to those who had chosen Christ over sin, Christian freedom over enslavement to sin. The evangelical abolitionists also viewed any participation in slavery to be a sin and therefore including slaveholders as church
members or as members of missionary societies breached the rules of church discipline. In other words, how were sinful slaveholders to be punished if the churches did not lead the charge? In 1845 the American Board held its first debate dealing with these issues, and the dissatisfaction with the meeting’s results led to the creation of the American Missionary Association.

The American Board had chosen to remain quiet on the slavery question because of its past experiences with taking an unpopular view in the 1820s. The American Board had been instrumental in defending the rights of the Cherokee and other southeastern Indians during the 1820s. The American Board, formed in 1811 and under the leadership of Jeremiah Evarts in the 1820s, had fought on behalf of the “Five Civilized Tribes” against Andrew Jackson’s plans for Indian Removal. Evarts’s tracts in favor of Indian land rights tied the honor of the nation to how the government treated Native people, but he also argued that Native Americans could be civilized and made into Christian, republican, land-owning citizens, a point that many in the United States found absurd. After Evarts’s death in 1831, the question of “civilizability” transferred from discussions about Indians to the slavery question. Like their white neighbors in Tennessee and Georgia, the southeastern Indians owned African-American slaves and had continued to use slave labor on their farms in the West. These Indian slaveholders and the American Board missionaries who lived in Indian Territory after the Trail of Tears were at the root of the conflict between the evangelical abolitionists and the American Board. How could the American Board in good conscience support missionaries who owned slaves and who ministered to a slave society? The issue also arose in reports coming from some of the

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41 To the best of my knowledge, Jeremiah Evarts is of no relation to William Henry Evarts, one of the missionaries in Jamaica.
American Board’s foreign missions where reports of converts who maintained polygamous marriages or who still lived according to the society’s caste restrictions provoked irritation among the evangelical abolitionists seeking a purified church.\textsuperscript{42}

In the 1830s the American Board consciously separated itself from controversial political issues in order to gain a more financial support, and this included the issue of slavery. The Board’s de facto leader in the 1840s, corresponding secretary Rufus Anderson, inaugurated a new mission theory that especially perturbed the abolitionists. To make missions more efficient, Anderson detached religious conversion from the “civilizing” goals of mission work and asked his missionaries to focus on spreading the gospel rather than changing how potential converts lived their lives. Anderson defended his position in terms of the autonomy of the mission churches: the “judgment” of a potential convert was the minister’s responsibility and “the Board, not being an ecclesiastical body, has had no power to interfere.”\textsuperscript{43} In a 1845 sermon that was reprinted in pamphlet form, Anderson complained that too often Christianity was conflated with “the blessings of education, industry, civil liberty, family government, social order, the means of a respectable livelihood, and a well-ordered community.”\textsuperscript{44} These things would follow conversion, he argued, but they were not prerequisites to church membership: “Is


\textsuperscript{44} Hutchison, \textit{Errand to the World}, 82.
this Board . . . to be held responsible for directly working out these reorganizations of the social system, without giving Christian truth time to produce its changes in the hearts of individuals and in public sentiment.” For the future leaders of the AMA, Christian missionaries were indeed responsible for “reorganizing” social systems, an essential point of argument in their case for the social transformation called for in emancipation. The American Board, like Catharine Beecher’s similar argument, disavowed the notion of a Christianity that had the power to “invade” other territories and force a change.

The uncompromising moral code that Angelina Grimké had drawn out of the prophetic tradition of Christianity also informed the evangelical faith of Lewis Tappan, Amos Phelps, and others pushing the American Board to change its position on slavery. These men shared a perfectionist evangelical faith pioneered by Charles Finney after he had been appointed to Oberlin’s faculty. Christian perfectionism linked outward performances of faith to internal conversion, as it was through the sinlessness of the converted that the world would be made perfect. In a letter to his family not long after he had begun his education at Oberlin, missionary Julius Beardslee explained how the perfectionism at Oberlin was not to be confused with other unorthodox utopian faiths. He went to great pains to distinguish Charles Finney’s doctrine of Christian perfectionism from the other “perfectionisms” making the rounds in the burned-over district, noting that “we do not mean that a person can understand perfectly and at once everything that may at some future time appear to have been his duty.” Instead, Beardslee explained, there was a difference between “sin” and “imperfection.” He offered the example of alcohol, noting that in the past it was not known to be sinful to consume alcohol, and it was therefore an “imperfection” and not a sin. Only after knowing the “injurious tendencies”

of an action is one guilty of committing a sin. It then followed that once Christians acknowledged slavery to be an evil, it was a sin to continue to support it in any way. In his excitement, Beardslee also noted the problems with the old theology of “the great mass of Presbyterian and Congregational professors” who thought it impossible “to gain full and complete victory over these habits” within this life. This attitude, he wrote, “is evidently anti-scriptural,” because Jesus died “‘to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’” The American Board clergy who refused to get involved with abolitionism because they believed that the human world could never achieve moral perfection stood opposed to the faith of men like Beardslee, Tappan, and Phelps.46

After several years of protests along these theological lines from abolitionist evangelicals, the American Board finally consented to hold a debate on slavery at their annual meeting in Brooklyn in 1845. The meeting came in the wake of a number of denominational schisms as southern and northern missionary organizations split on the question of slavery. The American Board wanted to avoid a split, even as some members, including Arthur Tappan, had already begun to withdraw support from the society for its tacit acceptance of slavery and public support of the American Colonization Society.47

The ghosts of the decade-old Lane Rebellion were just beneath the surface in the Brooklyn church. The representatives of the American Board, Edward Beecher (Lyman’s son) and Calvin Stowe (husband of Harriet Beecher), successfully defended

46 Julius O. Beardslee to Mrs. William Wright, 10 April 1837, Alumni File of Julius Beardslee, RG 28/1, Box 59, OCA.

47 Arthur Tappan withdrew his generous financial support of the American Colonization Society in the early 1830s when he discovered that the American blacks relocated to Liberia conducted a brisk business in rum. Tappan’s moral qualms with the society came less out of anti-racist sentiments and more from his abhorrence of drink.
their continued silence on the issue of slavery by classifying it as a new category of sin: an “organic sin” or “organic social wrong,” which they defined as a sin that was ingrained in a people’s cultural and society and therefore not a transgression that an individual could be condemned for practicing. One slaveholding minister who had been born in the North but who worked in South Carolina testified that the Board ought not to concern itself with slavery as it would only lose supporters, foment revolution (presumably slave rebellions), and make itself “as a Pope dictating to local churches.”

Aligning the abolitionist movement with Catholic despotism was a persuasive point to the virulently anti-Catholic evangelical community. Edward Beecher agreed with his southern colleague even though he opposed slavery himself. Slavery, Beecher argued, was a “sin of the body politic,” and God dealt with these sins differently than he did with individual sins. The speaker for the abolitionists was the head of the West India Mission Committee and leader of the clerical opponents to Garrison in Boston, Amos Phelps. He refused to go along with the notion of “organic sin,” asking: “Why call the act a sin and say that he who commits it may be a Christian . . . . We do not thus in the case of drunkenness, or polygamy, or any other sin—why this sin?”

As the meeting concluded, the Board voted 75-0 in favor of the initial report that took no formal action against slavery other than generally wishing for its end.

Only months after the American Board meeting in the summer of 1845, Amos Phelps addressed a crowd of 1,200 antislavery partisans in Boston and asked: “Shall


friends of the slave, who are also the friends of mission, sit down quietly, and give their silent assent to the position now taken?” He told the audience of the emerging two-pronged plan to form a new abolitionist missionary society “to reach the perishing at home and abroad, free from all contact and fellowship with slavery,” all while giving “the Board no rest till its steps are retraced, and slavery has no home in its churches.”

This would become the rallying cry of AMA supporters: how could Americans presume to spread “civilization” when millions of “heathen” on their own shores were left trapped in the state of slavery? Phelps was not wrong in seeing the moderation of Stowe and Beecher as problematic, for proslavery southern clergy had drawn on the men’s argument that a slaveholder could still be a morally upstanding Christian defend the institution and to attack abolitionism. Not only did men like Amos Phelps speak out about the corrupt policies of the American Board, but women’s societies also sided with clerical men on this question, as seen in an 1842 report of the Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society that criticized “the American church, and its benevolent and religious societies, which cries union and peace before purity.” The women also explicitly called on missionary organizations to condemn slavery. It was “antichristian” for Americans to try “to Christianize far distant heathen, at the expense of the heathen at home.”

Women, as well as men, joined together in opposing the religious institutions that refused to speak out against slavery and to withhold church membership from slaveholders. However,

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53 Jeffrey, Great Silent Army, 138.
women and the feminine Christianity enshrined by the ideology of domesticity had gained little acceptance from the AMA's male leaders.

In September 1846 Lewis Tappan, Phelps, and a number of other antislavery abolitionists gathered together in Albany and made plans to unite three small missionary organizations, including the West India Mission Committee headed by Phelps, into one larger society. The other two organizations – the Oberlin-based Western Evangelical Mission Society to frontier whites and Indians in the Midwest, and the Union Missionary Society that had been founded by African American clergy and operated with aid from Lewis Tappan – had been similarly small enterprises. Combined, the fledgling AMA had three primary fields of mission labor: Jamaica, the Ojibwe Indians in Minnesota that had been run by the Western Evangelical Mission Society, and the African mission in Sierra Leone that had been founded there in part by the Amistad Africans whom Tappan had financially supported during their Supreme Court case.

As two of the three mission fields directly engaged with the question of slavery, the AMA made a clear statement of their intentions. Tappan wrote that its intent was to spread "a pure and free Christianity" that:

wages an uncompromising warfare against all forms of sin, public as well as private: social, political, and organic, as well as individual; sins sustained, authorized, enacted, and even required and enjoined by civil rulers, as well as sins forbidden and punished by them; and ministers of the gospel, Christians, and Christian churches, should themselves abstain from, and reprove others, the one class of these sins as fully as the other; making no distinction between them in their teachings, their examples, their terms of church membership, or their administration of church discipline.54

The AMA drew on the same martial language Angelina Grimké used in her defense of immediate abolitionism and criticized the position of the American Board and its leader,

Rufus Anderson. One review of Anderson’s mission theory ran in the *American Missionary* and questioned how a society could call itself Christian when it remained “uninstructed as to what constitutes lying, stealing, and a violation of the rights of man.” In contrast to the American Board’s corrupted laborers, the Christian missionaries sent out by the AMA were to wage war on sin, and maintain strict discipline to exclude the sinful from joining in with the body of the saved. Just as Grimké had no toleration for Beecher’s desire to compromise with southerners and to respect the southern way of life, Tappan and his allies had no toleration for those who did not live up to their idea of Christianity.

Lewis Tappan’s two-fronted confrontation with the Garrisonian woman’s rights supporters on one side and the institutional commitments of moderate evangelicals on the other, represented a wider conflict historians have described in relation to evangelical abolitionism. Writing on the abolitionist supporters of the Liberty Party, Douglas Strong characterized proponents of Christian liberty, like Tappan, as striking a balance between “true freedom – the ‘freedom of holiness’ – with the false ‘liberty of atheists’ (i.e. anarchists).” For the founders of the AMA, the Garrisonians were the anarchists who opposed government, and on the other side, the mainstream evangelicals, like Rufus Anderson and the majority of the American Board’s supporters, remained committed to institutions that Tappan and others identified as standing in the way of freedom. In charting the middle path, the evangelical abolitionists paired Christian liberty with church

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56 Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*, 42.

57 Douglas Strong suggests that the AFASS was committed to maintaining institutions. This might be partially true, but Tappan’s decision to abandon the American Board for his own missionary society complicates Strong’s claim. Strong, *Perfectionist Politics*, 79.
discipline, or in the case of sexual equality, merged Christian liberty with the gender ideology of domesticity's assumptions that insisted on fundamental differences between men and women. While the former emerged in the separation from the American Board, the latter can be seen clearly at Oberlin in the 1840s.

IV. GENDER AND CHRISTIANITY AT OBERLIN IN THE 1840S

The reasoned arguments in favor of sexual equality made by Angelina and Sarah Grimké and their successors, including Abby Kelley, had little to do with Oberlin's coeducational principles. Instead, John Jay Shipherd and the school's other founders had wanted to build a Christian community on the western frontier that would train women, as well as men, for missionary work in the new cities and towns. This meant that the ideology of domesticity, as expressed by James Thome would prevail, paired alongside strict church discipline ensuring compliance from the school's young people. As evidence of the behavior expected of the school's female students, Mary Welch Cowles, the head of the Female Department at Oberlin from 1835 to 1839, offered practical advice to her young ladies: "Be accurate in everything," "Be scrupulously honest in very little things," "Cultivate a cheerful countenance," "Make short calls," and "Never wear dark skirts under light skirts or dresses." She also gave talks entitled "Learning," "Marriage," and addressing the subject of being a minister's wife.\(^5\) These were not the lessons of sexual equality pronounced by Angelina Grimké in her response to Catharine Beecher. They sounded more in harmony with Beecher's growing opus of advice on domesticity. In spite of following the same educational program as the male students, for the most part, the young women at Oberlin contended with layers of restrictions enforced by the school's faculty and the Ladies' Board, a group made up of respectable Oberlin

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townswomen. The school attempted to hold together its call for immediate emancipation and black equality with its need to maintain the principles of the ideology of domesticity, a compromise that largely came from the school’s need to protect its reputation from accusations of “amalgamation.”

From the time when the Lane Rebels joined Oberlin in 1835, many Americans believed the school to be primarily African American, although this was far from the truth, as black students remained only a small proportion of the student body. One student writing to her parents as late as 1852 felt the need to clarify the matter to her friends in New England: “I received your letter and take this opportunity of answering it so that you can tell anybody that asks that we don’t have to kiss the Niggars nor to speak to them without we are a mind to. I don’t think there are six pure Niggars here that go to school. They are almost all part white . . . they dress a great deal better than the rest of the students.”59 The student’s letter appeared a year after the president of the college, Henry Cowles, made a more refined but similar claim. In response to a letter from a prospective student inquiring about Oberlin’s race policies, Cowles wrote an article explaining the school’s stance: “The white and colored students associate together in this college very much as they choose. Our doctrine is that mind and heart, not color, make the man and the woman too. We hold that neither men or women are much the better or much the worse for their skin.” He also spoke to the school’s mission of racial uplift: “Our great business here is to educate mind and heart, and we should deem ourselves to have small cause to be proud of our success if we should fail to eradicate, in no long time, the notion that nature had made any such difference between the colored and the white classes that it would be wrong for either to associate with the other as beings of common

59 E.A. Colester to Mrs. John Colester, 19 April 1852, OCA, quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 524.
origin and a common nature.” Black and white, man and woman were all alike, Cowles pointed out, true to Oberlin’s founding principles, but he did qualify his remarks as well when he ended his article on a gendered note: “In this college colored and white students of the same sex, walk together when both are agreed to do so – not otherwise.” White men and black men, white women and black women could freely associate with one another, but Cowles made sure to emphasize that this was only of students of the same sex.\(^6\)

The student’s letter home that used the charged word “kiss” to describe black-white interactions, and Cowles’ insistence that black men and white women or black women and white men did not socially mix, represented the ongoing fears of interracial sex that plagued Oberlin. Perhaps partly to compensate for this, the school operated on principles of church discipline and regulated behavior that made students’ lives far from free and independent.

Male and female students ate together in Oberlin’s boarding houses’ dining rooms with assigned seats for the entire year – benches for the men and proper chairs for the ladies. One student wrote that “the ladies set around among the gentlemen to wait on the table, get milk, bread, etc. when wanted.”\(^6\)

In addition to serving at table, the female students tended to laundry, preparing food, and washing the dishes after meals. Far from relying on the girls’ education before coming to Oberlin on these matters, the head of the Female Department, Alice Cowles, prepared numbered instructions for each task. Cleaning silverware, for example, had these instructions:

1. Commence when the bell rings for leaving the table.

\(^6\) *Oberlin Evangelist*, 10 Sept. 1851, quoted in Fletcher, *History of Oberlin*, 526. Fletcher notes that there was no rule prohibiting the sexes from interacting with one another, but there were many rules governing exactly where and how and for how long social interaction between men and women was to take place.

\(^6\) Fletcher, *History of Oberlin*, 612.
2. Gather the knives and forks from the table.
3. Place them on the north end of the table, at the east side of the kitchen.
4. Wash them clean.
5. Wipe them dry.
6. Avoid wetting the handles.
7. Place the knives and forks in separate departments in the knife box.
8. Place those of a kind in the same department.\textsuperscript{62}

The rules concerning preparing the food and removing it from the tables, mopping, the floors, and washing clothes and linens were just as precise. Domesticity at Oberlin was elevated to an academic lesson inculcated in its female students.

While their academic education might have paralleled that of their husband’s, the manual labor required of young ladies at Oberlin fit within the more traditional understanding of women’s abilities. The men at Oberlin worked on the school’s farm, performed mechanical repairs on equipment, and worked on the printing press, and had instructions for each task just as specifically written out as did the young women for their domestic work. Additionally, the students tried to start a silk worm farm, a scheme that proved a failure but that was quite appealing to the antislavery college because they felt that silk could replace southern cotton. While the manual labor changed form over the course of the 1830s and 1840s, moving from an obligation to an elective department, it remained critical in the minds of many at the college. One wrote that the “pecuniary disadvantages” of the college’s farm “can never counter-balance the moral, intellectual, and physical advantages that he derives from manual labor.” The orderliness of their manual labor obligations also appeared in their daily schedules. Both sexes kept strict schedules: rising between four and five in the morning when the bell rang, spending a

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 641.
half hour in prayer, and then breakfast, work, and classes until the evening when they retired at nine-thirty.  

One female student praised the manual labor system, writing to the school’s agent in England that it was “the very thing we need. After having our minds absorbed in some abstract subject until we become weary with intense thought, we repair to some household duty and the mind and body become relaxed.” She continued along a point of reasoning that Catharine Beecher would have seconded: “While the majority of well educated ladies are ignorant of domestic affairs, here the two are blended, here domestic economy which is true should be inculcated by the mother is carried on to still greater perfection, here knowledge of domestic affairs, high intellectual culture, and even refinement of manners are considered as consistent with each other.” For women and for men, Oberlin paired a thoroughly eastern education with the expectation that its students be prepared to live practical lives rooted in the soil, for the men, and in the home, for the women. When the missionaries went to Jamaica in the early 1840s, they brought with them this family order and implanted it in their mission stations on the island.  

In the late 1840s, one of the American ministers in Jamaica launched into a description of the ideal missionary man, and his words point to the kind of student trained at Oberlin. The missionary, Seth Wolcott, himself matched his portrait as he had come to Oberlin with little education and no money and had taken advantage of the school’s manual labor option in order to pay for his nine-years as a student. He wrote that the

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63 Ibid., 649–57; 661; 640, 746–51.

64 Mary Ann Adams and others to John Keep, 10 July 1837, Keep MSS, OCA, quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 640.
mission had no use for “a sleepy man, nor a lazy man – we don’t want a gentleman . . . .
Nor do we care about a showy, frothy man.” Instead, Wolcott urged the board of the
American Missionary Association to send “a man [who was] discrete, and of sound
judgment . . . who will put his hand to the plow in good earnest and never look back. He
should be economical in his expenses, but not mean, and accustomed to take care of what
he possesses.” The ethic promoted by Oberlin’s insistence on manual labor trained
young people in skills that would prepare them for missionary work, whether in Jamaica
or in rural towns in U.S. territories.

In addition to a ordered timeliness and regulated chores, the students at Oberlin
also experienced rules governing the relations between the sexes. Their parents, after all,
had sent them to school to be educated in mind and spirit. Marriages among the students
were strictly forbidden, and the faculty expelled married students. To prevent
relationships from forming among its student body, the girls were regulated, especially in
their mobility:

Their walking was especially restricted: They were not allowed to walk in the
streets for recreation on the Sabbath. They were not allowed ‘to walk for
recreation with gentlemen’ on any day of the week except by special permission.
Those who did not live with their parents could not even ‘walk in the fields or
woods without special permission from the Principal.’ . . . . Finally, to make
doubly sure that they never had an hour of unsupervised freedom, it was provided
that no young lady shall ‘leave her boarding place for any length of time,
excepting for her regular exercises in the Institution, without previous
consultation with the matron of the family.66

In spite of faculty attempts to control the Oberlin students, some were asked to leave
because they violated the rules and formed attachments. One young man was expelled

65 Wolcott to Whipple, 29 Aug. 1848, Fl-1487, Jamaica, AMA Archives, Amistad Research Center.

66 Laws and Regulations of the Female Department 1852, 1859, 1865, OCA, quoted in Fletcher, History of
Oberlin, 671–72. Emphasis is Fletcher’s.
because his "habits of associating with young ladies are not such as will sustain the character of this Institution or the honor of the Christian name." He was warned that at Oberlin in particular, "their example and influence cannot fail to be most pernicious!"\textsuperscript{67} The Ladies' Board that constantly reviewed the characters of female students and the watchful faculty kept most sexual or even flirtatious liaisons between students from occurring in the name of protecting the reputation of the school.\textsuperscript{68}

In addition to regulating the students' free time, the school's leaders placed restrictions on women students in the classroom. Lucy Stone, a twenty-five year old supporter of William Lloyd Garrison, matriculated in 1843, and she brought with her ideas of woman's rights and an opposition to institutional religion that challenged the school's evangelical abolitionism.\textsuperscript{69} She wrote to her parents of her irritation with some of the school's policies: "I was never in a place where women are so rigidly taught that they must not speak in public." Stone also complained: "They hate Garrison, and woman's rights . . . I love both, and often find myself at swords' points with them."

Before Stone enrolled at Oberlin, James Thome and Oberlin's President, Asa Mahan, supported the rights of women to speak before both men and women, yet apparently most of the young ladies protested making speech and rhetoric classes coeducational, and so the plan was scrapped. When Lucy Stone and Antoinette Brown asked to debate with their male classmates in 1846, their professor, James Thome, granted the request, but the faculty quickly vetoed Thome's decision and prevented any repeated public speeches by

\textsuperscript{67} (Cowles to Mr. E-----, June 30, 1841, Cowles-Little MSS, OCA, quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 685.

\textsuperscript{68} Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 671.

women, even those requesting especially to read their commencement addresses themselves.⁷⁰

Lucy Stone managed to upset the faculty again in 1846 when she took up the invitation of some students in a school for black adults in the town to speak on Emancipation Day, the anniversary of West Indian emancipation.⁷¹ Also in 1846, Stone invited the Garrisonian abolitionists Abby Kelley Foster and her husband Stephen Foster to campus to speak on abolitionism and woman’s rights, and many in the Oberlin community disapproved, especially when Abby Kelley took to the stage. In spite of the ongoing resistance from Oberlin’s Ladies’ Board and many of the male faculty to woman’s rights activism at the school, for a number of Oberlin’s graduates, including Stone, Antoinette Brown, and the abolitionist lecturer Sallie Holley, their education had not taught them to “stay in their place” but instead to claim greater rights for themselves. As had proven the case in eighteenth-century revolutions in France, Haiti, and the United States, it was difficult to promote liberty and individual rights while at the same time maintaining that those rights belonged exclusively to white property-owning men, and this also increasingly became the case at Oberlin.⁷²

The ideology of domesticity operated not only as a way for the Ladies’ Board to organize the work of the female students and to justify prohibitions on women’s public speaking, as it also underwrote the Oberlin Female Moral Reform Society. Even proto-

⁷⁰ Lucy Stone to her parents, 16 Aug. 1846, loaned to Robert Fletcher by Alice Stone Blackwell, quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 292, 290; Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 290, 294, 292.

⁷¹ Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 292.

⁷² The most notable suffragists were Antoinette Brown (Blackwell) and Lucy Stone who attended Oberlin in the mid-1840s. Lucy Stone protested the restrictions placed on women at the school. From a letter between See also Ellen Carol DuBois, Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women’s Movement in America, 1848–1869 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), 29–31. The story of antislavery lecturer and Oberlin graduate, Sallie Holley, is told in Jeffrey, The Great Silent Army, 199–204.
feminists like Lucy Stone joined this organization rooted in the ideology of domesticity and gender distinctions. This organization along with other familiar causes of female benevolence revealed the rift between the principles of the ideology of domesticity that kept white women silent and secluded in their homes and the reasoning invoked by women that their gender made them ideal commentators on social problems. Women reformers who did not support sexual equality connected the ideology of domesticity to broader issues with ease. A representative of the New York Female Moral Reform Society lectured to the Oberlin organization that immorality stemmed from a wide variety of causes that they needed to guard against, including “Impure imagination, Dress of females, Slavery, Public opinion licenses the evil, Females receiving visits of gentlemen protracted to a late hour, Low prices of labor in cities, Voluptuousness, Balls, Parties, Theaters, Novel Reading, Classics, Prints, and Books.”\textsuperscript{73} The female reformers at Oberlin in the mid-1840s embraced a wide spectrum of causes that included political concerns such as slavery as well as more social concerns such as the forms of entertainment available in the town. Ultimately, Oberlin’s young ladies turned to the ideology of domesticity and the modes of Christian activism privileged by Catharine Beecher, leaving the more radical ideas of Angelina and Sarah Grimké and their disciple, Abby Kelley, to a much smaller minority of women at the school and in the North more generally. The domestic argument for women’s activism continued to develop at Oberlin and by the 1850s, Oberlin women spoke before mixed audiences quite commonly, especially when “feminine” issues like temperance were at stake. Yet the drastic changes that came from educating women alongside men had only begun when the first American

\textsuperscript{73} Oberlin Female Moral Reform Society MSS Minutes, 13 May 1836, quoted in Fletcher, History of Oberlin, 305.
missionaries left Oberlin for Jamaica, a point that would make life in the Jamaica Mission difficult for young women used to speaking out on social issues in the language of domesticity.

**CONCLUSION**

The schism between the Garrisonian and Tappan factions of the abolitionist movement resulted in large part over the dispute about the place of white women in the movement. Theodore Weld and his wife, Angelina, and sister-in-law, Sarah Grimké, stood in the middle of this battle in more ways than one. Not only had the Grimkés precipitated the discussion about women’s right to speak before audiences of both men and women, the Grimkés had been friends with Garrison while Weld had been a friend and brother in faith to Lewis Tappan. After the 1840 schism, the three declined from joining either the Boston or New York antislavery societies and effectively stepped back from the activism that had animated all of their lives in the 1830s. By considering how Theodore Weld and Angelina Grimké Weld understood Christian activism and immediate abolitionism in masculine terms, we can understand how their ideas fell out of favor in the abolitionist movement as the ideology of domesticity and the feminization of Christianity ascended in the 1840s.

On opposing sides of the abolitionist issue, Angelina Grimké and Catharine Beecher pronounced very different sorts of Christian activism. Grimké embraced the manly tactics of the Lane Rebels for both women and men, while Beecher shunned such practices as ineffective, warlike, and opposed to the Christian spirit of benevolence. Beecher instead encouraged northern women, as well as men, to engage in a softer mode of influence and offered a more feminine version of Christianity. In a society bound by a
gender ideology that drew strict distinctions between men and women, Beecher's feminine Christian activism ultimately provided even abolitionist women with a model they could use, while Grimké's masculine approach to antislavery could not readily be employed by most northern women. Unfortunately for the women missionaries who would go to Jamaica, the mission's men drew on Grimké's Lane-Rebel inspired understanding of abolitionism, even as they left out the part about sexual equality.

The rigid moral codes and Manichean understanding of good and evil that had driven the evangelical revivalism of the 1820s and that were present in Grimké's expression of abolitionism eventually faded over time in the U.S. North. For the missionaries in Jamaica, however, the impulse for manly independence and evangelical spiritual purity did not fade. They became central to the Jamaica Mission's missionary domesticity and ideas of church discipline. On an island thousands of miles from their increasingly mainstream alma mater, the missionaries lived in rugged mountain cabins, worked at churches only partially constructed, and struggled to grow enough food in their gardens to support their own families and the young black Jamaicans they adopted into their mission households. The white frontier families whom John Shipherd had feared were slipping into licentiousness by sleeping in the same rooms appeared to the missionaries in the form of the recently emancipated people struggling to survive in a collapsing economy. The move to Jamaica, then, had the effect of reinforcing the gender ideologies of the 1820s and early 1830s on the minds of the male ministers to Jamaica, even as their peers in the United States and at Oberlin drifted in new directions.
Brother, suppose we take one of your real hot headed sanguine abolitionists . . . and sit him down among his emancipated ones whom his imagination sees enjoying freedoms, priceless boon, and, grateful to God, industriously laboring, rising rapidly to prosperity, to moral greatness and happiness, and there let him labor . . . to awaken in their minds some practical idea, more, able and better than idly to sit smoking over the fire that roasts their plantain, their yam, what think you would be the effect? —Seth T. Wolcott

PART II
CULTURES IN CONFLICT

Part I focused exclusively on the development of the ideas behind the civilizing mission to Jamaica during the Second Great Awakening and the abolitionist movement. Most histories of missionaries begin this way, and then progress by following the missionaries outward to their destinations, and built churches and schools. All too often studies of American foreign missions tend to see the mission field as static, even while they illustrate how the missionaries themselves change over time. This focus has the effect of diminishing the many other factors in operation in the missionary encounter, and in these next two chapters, I seek to shed light on the dynamic Jamaican context into which the Americans inserted themselves. The politically charged nature of this mission

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1 Seth Wolcott to George Whipple, 17 July 1849, FI-1582, Jamaica, AMA Archives, Amistad Research Center, (hereafter ARC).


3 This tendency is especially apparent in works of missiology, or the literature on missions produced by scholars expecting to educate seminarians: Robert, American Women in Mission, and Bosch, Transforming Mission, are such examples. In a more secular vein, the mission histories by William Hutchison, Patricia Grimshaw, and Joan Jacobs Brumberg trace how changes (American exceptionalism or white woman’s rights, for example) within the United States affected the way Protestants thought about foreign missions.
to emancipated people resonated with abolitionist debates in the United States, and it
demands that we consider the connections between white abolitionism and Protestant
missionary work. The mission was not just a Protestant mission to convert “heathen” in a
distant place with little connection to the United States. Like the “horrors of St.
Domingue” that put fear into the hearts of southern and northern whites alike early in the
nineteenth century, the slave societies and emancipation acts of the West Indies were
discussed and analyzed throughout the United States in the context of the ultimate
resolution of the slavery question in the American South.  

The Jamaica Mission seemed to the AMA’s leadership an ideal propaganda piece
for the antislavery cause – that is, as long as positive stories of success and iconic freed
people appeared in the missionaries’ letters to the United States. If black men and
women could be shown to act just like white northern Protestant Christians, and if the
emancipated people demonstrated gratitude to their former masters rather than violence,
then the AMA would have a solid case to offer the American public on behalf of
emancipation in the United States. Yet this vision for the mission hardly found
fulfillment in the Oberlin alumni’s reports about the state of liberty in the West Indies.
Black Jamaicans did not share a common culture with the white missionaries, as had free
blacks in the U.S. North; nor did black Jamaicans need the American missionaries as
fugitive slaves needed aid from white northerners, especially after the passage of the

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4 The evidence of this is widespread. Proslavery writers decried the economic failures of the islands;
abolitionist papers, books, and tracts praised emancipation in a variety of ways from the faithful
Christianity adopted by ex-slaves in the West Indies, to changing gender norms, to landownership, and to
free black emigration from the United States. A search through the Liberator or Frederick Douglass’s
North Star, or the D.C.-based National Era and other papers turns up countless articles. Reporters from the
United States as well as planters and other visitors to Jamaica wrote editorials and articles for the country’s
major newspapers, and these books and articles were read and commenting on by Edward L. Pierce, the
architect of the social and economic post-war Reconstruction in the South. “Journal for Port Royal, S.C.,”
Folder 2, Ms N-712, Edward L. Pierce Volumes, Massachusetts Historical Society.
Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. Indeed, as one missionary put it, Jamaican “Freedmen are free from bondage” even as he found them “yet in iron bondage to all those vile habits and filthy degrading practices that slavery so fruitfully engenders.” It seemed that the moment of emancipation did not have the dramatic effects of a religious conversion imagined by the evangelical abolitionists.

Instead, black Jamaicans continued to live in a way that the Americans found heathenish and degrading, a “problem” the ministers attributed to just about everything (British policies, the scarcity of land, the “civilized vices” of slavery, the “unchristian” beliefs of most Jamaican churches) except biological racial difference. Strikingly, the missionaries writing about how freed people in Jamaica were different from white Americans used gendered language to distinguish between “uncivilized” habits and Christian “civilization.”

The disparity between what had been expected by the missionaries and what they experienced – their culture shock – as well as the perspective that black Jamaicans likely had of their would-be civilizers turned the mission churches and schools into contested ground. Historian Catherine Hall has examined how slavery and freedom in Jamaica impacted industrializing England during the nineteenth century, and here I take a similar approach but with its focus on the United States where slavery was still practiced. In Part II, I examine how the missionaries interpreted black Jamaican cultural practices as well as the historical context of those practices and what they meant to black Jamaicans.

Chapter Three examines how West Indian emancipation and ex-slaves were depicted in the abolitionist press by focusing especially on the articles written by men and

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5 A.M. Richardson to George Whipple, Report of Brainerd Station, Aug. 1853, FI-2202, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
women associated with the Jamaica Mission. These representations are paired with Jamaican history as told by modern historians. I focus particularly on gender, and show how even among abolitionists there was not a consensus on how to represent freed blacks. Should they appear passive and gracious, as both male and female slaves commonly appeared in the American abolitionist press, or was it more useful to emphasize manliness and independence to show how freedom had transformed this once-dependent people? This chapter shows how representations of freed people largely served the political needs of white commentators with one major exception: two articles written by an American missionary, Stewart Renshaw.

Chapter Four moves in for a closer look at day-to-day struggles between the missionaries and black Jamaicans living near the mission stations. Black Jamaicans had little interest in becoming blank slates for the missionaries’ designs, although this did not mean that they avoided the mission’s churches and schools. The resources of buildings, and schools in particular, were greatly appreciated by many Jamaicans, particularly since the American missions were located in the more rural and mountainous inland region of the island. The churches and schools often became ideological battlegrounds between the missionaries and their potential converts. In this chapter, I focus on three issues – religion, land use and labor, and family structure. For the most part, Jamaican culture baffled the missionaries, and the “willfulness” of the Jamaicans, or their refusal to completely submit to the Americans’ wishes, led many of the mission’s men to try to assert control and authority within their churches, schools, and households. The Americans slowly realized that the expectations and prefabricated plans that they brought
to the island could not be neatly imposed upon the dynamic culture and society of post-emancipation Jamaica.
CHAPTER THREE
West Indian Emancipation and
the United States in the 1840s

On the tenth anniversary of West Indian emancipation, a crowd of several
dozen people gathered in Rochester, New York, to commemorate the day Britain
ended slavery, August 1, 1838. People had come from miles around to hear the
abolitionist and former slave, Frederick Douglass, as well as other prominent speakers at
the well-advertised ceremony. Rochester’s 1848 celebration transpired during the
summer of a year in which momentous events had occurred. In February, the Mexican-
American War had ended and the United States had gained vast southwestern territories
from Mexico by way of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Abolitionists had denounced
the war as a southern plot to perpetuate slavery by spreading it to the West. A month
later, many abolitionists looked excitedly to the popular revolutions in France and
Germany, since the anti-monarchical uprisings resulted in the emancipation of French
colonial slaves. Closer to home, the first woman’s rights convention had been held in
Seneca Falls, New York, at the end of July. Douglass drew these varied events together
in his address. He told the interracial audience that recent events indicated that “the day
of freedom and order is at hand.” Yet, Douglass warned, even as Americans praised “the
people of the East on casting down tyrants,” they were themselves “propagating slavery
in Oregon, New Mexico, and California, and all of our blood-bought possessions in the
South and Southwest.” He pointed out the bitter irony of a nation that boasted “justice,
freedom and humanity” and that was “sympathizing with the progress of freedom
abroad,” still persisted in “extending the foul curse of slavery at home.”

1 “Frederick Douglass’ Address,” North Star, 4 Aug. 1848.
In this speech and in those given at other Emancipation Day commemorations, abolitionists invoked the West Indies and British emancipation as a model for the United States to follow. In his speech in 1848 Douglass refuted the “misrepresentations of the American press” that freed blacks were lazy and refused to work. He offered in response recent comments made by the English Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, that “the negroes of the West India colonies since the abolition of slavery had been in the best condition. They had the best food, and were in all respects better clothed and provided for than any peasantry in the world.” By invoking the West Indies, Douglass entered into a debate that had been ongoing since the mid-1830s and that would continue through the American Civil War as abolitionists, proslavery partisans, and supposedly disinterested observers witnessed to the success or failure of West India emancipation. These testimonies were meant to guide the United States in its policy concerning slavery and, if and when it occurred, emancipation.

The widespread celebration of Emancipation Day in the United States, and the prominent place of the Jamaica Mission in the AMA’s organ, the *American Missionary*, begs the question of how West Indian emancipation played out in the antebellum United States, a point overlooked by the comparative studies of emancipation. The yearly Emancipation Day commemorations provide evidence of the importance of West Indian emancipation in the consciousness of abolitionists, and the circulation of texts offering

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2 Ibid.

negative and positive evaluations of the “experiment in freedom” taking place in the British Caribbean shows how closely Americans watched the West Indies. The American missionaries in Jamaica engaged eagerly in this debate, claiming first-hand knowledge to critique books and articles that appeared during the antebellum decades. For the missionaries, like other American and British abolitionists, emancipated people became useful symbols, and representing them in a particular gendered and religious way had the potential to alter how whites, especially northern whites, viewed racial difference.⁴

A critical component of these evaluations judged gender relations in the West Indies, a subject inseparable from discussions about race in the United States. Given the importance of proper gender roles in the United States at the time, it is not surprising that gender was an essential measuring stick for “civilized” and “savage” societies in missionary discourse.⁵ Race could not be physically changed, but missionaries could look to see converted women act according to “true womanhood” and to watch for converted men behaving like “manly” Christians, as can be seen in missionary reports on the progress of Native Americans and foreign people alike. Gendered language offered a way of talking about racial difference in missionary discussions of conversion. It also had a central role in the abolitionist movement. In the same way missionaries depicted new Christians as humble and grateful converts, abolitionists often feminized black slaves as passive victims of an unjust system. As a telling example, both the seal of the


American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and the seal of the American Anti-Slavery Society depicted kneeling, non-white figures, pleading for help and, in the case of the AASS, the question: “Am I not a man and a brother?” The image of a willing convert or a pliant slave allowed missionaries and abolitionists alike to connect their work with a broader discourse of sentimental literature.

The image of feminized slaves who meekly prayed for freedom resonated with the feminized Christianity promoted by Catharine Beecher in the late 1830s. While this had once been anathema to the abolitionist movement, as Angelina Grimké’s fiery response illustrated, it gradually moved to a more prominent position as the antislavery movement became more mainstream. Beecher’s younger sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, immortalized slavery in sentimental terms in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, published in 1852. Bruce Dorsey’s work on gender and slavery argues that the shift toward the feminized slave during the 1840s “eased the identification of white women abolitionists with slaves,” since white women “could see themselves in both the oppression encountered and the character exhibited by the enslaved.”

I would add that these depictions of downtrodden dark-skinned people also minimized the threat of violent revolt. Neither the colonial “savage” in the American Board’s seal nor the slave in the anti-slavery seal protested their subjugation.

The passive slave, however, complicated the AMA’s mission to Jamaica. This dependent victim did not match the evangelical manhood and quest for spiritual independence that Grimké had praised in her writings and that had directed evangelical abolitionist men in the 1830s. For the former Lane Rebels, several of whom served in the Jamaica Mission, ex-slaves were to be elevated from their dependency and made into

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independent, morally robust men. Just as the white evangelical abolitionists had undergone conversion and had taken a stand against slavery’s evils and the other sins of their decadent society, they believed that freed blacks would throw off the shackles of dependency to follow a similar path. How to best represent freed people in Jamaica thus presented a problem. Should they still be meek, gracious, and passive, as many American slaves appeared in abolitionist literature, or would it better aid the abolitionist cause if freed men appeared manly and independent, much as evangelical abolitionist men had fashioned themselves? If the latter, how did the missionaries justify their continued work as “fatherly” caretakers over “childlike” freed people? The disputes over how to represent freed men were evident in American abolitionist and Jamaica missionary writings about emancipation.

It is significant that in the published accounts of American missionaries to Jamaica, black and white women alike were largely ignored or used only to talk about manhood, a striking contrast with the prominence of “native” women and girls in missionary literature and of slave women in abolitionist tracts. The reason for this can be traced to the evangelical abolitionist men’s gendered conception of reform. Telling the story of emancipation meant narrating a transformation from “effeminate dependency” to “manly independence,” and freed women proved a distraction to this triumphant story. If black women were represented as independent in their new liberated society, the white missionary men compromised their commitment to the ideology of domesticity; on the other hand, if women were depicted as dependents, then this complicated the victorious story of independence, unless their dependency allowed the writer to demonstrate manly independence on the part of their husbands. While some abolitionist writers addressed
the place of black women in the new emancipated society, most stuck to the simpler story of black men moving from dependent slaves to independent men.

This chapter grapples with the varied representations of black Jamaicans written by the Oberlin missionaries to the island, and at the same time it will tell a history of the island to give these representations a context. I focus particularly on how gender and religion were used to diminish racial difference in the published accounts of James A. Thome and Charles Stewart Renshaw. In the winter of 1836, James Thome and his abolitionist colleague, J. Horace Kimball, traveled to Antigua, Barbados, and Jamaica at the bequest of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The book that followed their trip, *Emancipation in the West Indies*, was widely read by abolitionists throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Thome’s 1837 book about full emancipation in Antigua and the dismal results of apprenticeship in Jamaica and Barbados largely ignored black culture and provided abolitionist northern readers with black Christians who resembled whites in everything but skin color. In his telling, emancipation had brought about an immediate and discernable transformation in the hearts and minds of formerly enslaved men and women, and black people were represented as feminized characters according to the gender ideology of domesticity – grateful and passive men and women still committed to working for their former masters and to worshiping in white-led churches.

A different depiction of Jamaican emancipation appeared in the mid-1840s in the articles of missionary Charles Stewart Renshaw. Renshaw, a former student at the

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Oneida Institute and, like James Thome, one of Theodore Weld’s antislavery agents, had come to Jamaica in the early 1840s and worked at Oberlin Station until 1846. While Renshaw agreed with Thome on the viability of a civilizing mission that could replace African “heathenism” and the unchristian practices incubated during slavery, his depiction of black Jamaicans sought after examples of manliness rather than effeminate submissiveness and dependency. Renshaw also drew on his longer stay in Jamaica to caution his audience that this transformation would take generations. Even though Renshaw mostly wrote despairingly about Afro-Jamaican culture, he recognized its existence and sometimes even its meaningfulness to black Jamaicans, both of which were absent in Thome’s earlier text.

The contest over representation of freed people involved more than simply these two authors. One of Stewart Renshaw’s primary purposes in writing about Jamaica was to refute the overly idealistic view seen in Thome’s work but also in the book of the English Baptist missionary, James M. Phillippo. Phillippo published Jamaica: Its Past and Present State in 1843 after spending twenty years in Jamaica, and in it he created what historian Catherine Hall calls a “Jamaica of the mind.”9 Phillippo represented black Jamaicans much in the same way as the American, James Thome; freed people had flocked to white churches, adopted “civilized” habits and morals, and obediently looked up to Phillippo as an emancipator and father who would lead them into the future. When Afro-Jamaicans refused to adopt white values in their entirety, missionaries, social

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commentators, and other writers in England and the United States rethought the implications of emancipation, and many attributed its alleged failure to the inferiority of the African race. Renshaw saw it as his task to present a more authentic picture of emancipation to lower the expectations set by Phillippo, Thome, and others.

I. JAMAICA BEFORE EMANCIPATION

New England Protestants had settled and organized Oberlin, Ohio, as an experimental covenant town meant to be a beacon of light on the frontier. From the Jamaica missionaries' letters, we can develop a picture of the new frontier they found on the island of Jamaica. The Americans settled in the rural districts of the Blue Mountains, several miles north of Kingston, the island's largest city located on the eastern side of the southern coast. The island's rugged internal mountains towered over the fertile coastal plains that supported the island's sugar economy. In contrast to the large sugar estates that dominated on the coastal areas, the mountainous parishes in Jamaica had smaller landholdings made up of estates that combined small plots of sugar cane with coffee fields and livestock-raising pens. The Blue Mountain parishes of Metcalfe, St. Thomas-in-the-Vale, and St. Andrews contained a mixture of black Jamaicans ranging from freed people who had always lived in the region, the Maroons, and newly arrived freed people seeking cheap land. The missionaries also reported a handful of European, usually Scottish-born, whites living near their mission stations, and the Americans employed several as mission teachers in the early 1840s. In contrast to the island's cities, there were very few "colored," or "brown" Jamaicans near the mission stations, a demographic detail that is important as the island's burgeoning colored middle class often distanced themselves from the "black" Jamaican working-classes and opposed missionary work.

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10 Hall, *Civilising Subjects*. 
intent on educating and socially advancing blacks. In the mountains, there were small villages, usually composed of former slave quarters connected to a particular property, but no towns or cities. The missionaries built their stations near these villages, although in the turbulent post-slavery period, many of the settlements simply dissolved after an estate went bankrupt and the former slaves-turned-wage-laborers left to find work elsewhere.

In the Blue Mountains, the American missionaries positioned themselves in another frontier, one kind different from the Ohio frontier of their youth yet sharing in some of the same characteristics. Travel between even geographically close stations was difficult as the mountainous passages, particularly during tropical downpours, proved dangerous to navigate. A five-mile trip as the crow flies could take an entire day of climbing and descending mountains, crossing unpredictable rivers, and negotiating washed-out or muddy roads. The most oft-described trip was that from Kingston to Oberlin, the station located nearest to the city, especially when a new missionary had arrived. The missionary, distracted by the new climate, its flora and fauna, and often still shaky from the three-week sea voyage, would be assisted in her upward climb by her new fellow missionaries as well as a cadre of Jamaican church members. The latter would carry by hand (or on their heads) the novice missionary’s trunks and personal effects as well as the various building implements (ranging from small tools to the components of a tin roof) and crates filled with books, furniture, or stoves sent by the AMA. The corresponding missionary always spoke of the relief found in the mountains as the warm moist air of Kingston changed to the drier and cooler air of the mountains. The rustic buildings of the mission, the chapels and schools in various states of completion, and the
gardens growing unfamiliar crops like plantains, yams, and sugar cane made Jamaica into a frontier quite different from any in the American West, but a frontier just the same for the Americans. Even for many native to the Caribbean, the sparsely populated mountains in central Jamaica seemed decidedly rural and backward compared to the region’s booming mercantile and cosmopolitan cities like Kingston, Port-au-Prince, and Havana.

In Jamaica, the missionaries from Oberlin also encountered a completely different colonial history from that of their New England home. Christopher Columbus had landed on Jamaica’s northern coast in 1494. Taking its name from the word Xaymaca, assumed to mean the “isle of springs” in the tongue of the island’s indigenous population, Jamaica became an official part of the Spanish New World. Its native population, the Taino, were plundered and used as slaves in Spain’s mining efforts around the Caribbean basin.\textsuperscript{11} Jamaica itself was a stunning combination of rugged mountains, fertile fields, and tropical beaches, a picturesque landscape that would stand in sharp contrast to the centuries of greed-driven brutality that too often characterized the lives of the people living on the island. Under the Spanish the native people of the island were enslaved, and the cruelty of this early form of mercantile slavery, in Jamaica as well as in other Spanish colonies, became the subject of one of the first modern texts in opposition to Indian slavery, if not African slavery, written by the Jesuit priest Bartholmé de las Casas. The American missionaries who went to Jamaica centuries later wrote this history as a part of the anti-Catholic and anti-Spanish black legend. Jamaica remained a small part of Spanish colonization, and the city of Santiago (St. Jago) de la Vega, later called

\textsuperscript{11} Lesley-Gail Atkinson, ed. The Earliest Inhabitants: The Dynamics of the Jamaican Taino (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2006).
Spanishtown by the English, served as an operations center for the mining projects in Mexico and on other Caribbean islands.

Jamaica was then a relatively unimportant colonial possession compared with Spain’s wealthy mineral-rich outposts on the mainland, and as a result, Spain did little to defend the island. In 1655 the British Navy conquered the island after a failed attempt to claim Hispaniola for the empire. The British established themselves at Port Royal on the south coast of the island, although after a devastating earthquake in 1692, the city was relocated to Kingston, which would become the island’s largest city and the center of shipping. The more inland Spanishtown was considerably smaller but served as the colony’s capital. The island became a notorious haven for pirates interested in acquiring gold and silver from Spanish ships. In the eighteenth century, stealing material wealth became second to human piracy as vast numbers of African slaves were imported to Jamaica to work in the islands’ sugar estates and coffee properties that provided the newly established European coffeehouses with their much needed supplies. From outlaw pirates seeking quick fortunes and notorious fame to the shipping companies, slave-traders, and slaveholding landowners, Jamaica’s economy had a long history of dependence on violence and greed.

As historian Catherine Hall succinctly pointed out in regards to the lopsided gender balance among whites in Jamaica, “England was for families, Jamaica was for sex.”\(^{12}\) White men left England for Jamaica in order to make their fortunes, whether they owned their own land or whether they worked as overseers or estate managers for absentee landowners. Few brought their wives and children, but white men often claimed black and colored women as their mistresses, creating a system of concubinage. The

\(^{12}\) Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*, 72.
sexual licentiousness in the West Indies can be found in nineteenth-century English novels. Charlotte Brontë’s famous madwoman in the attic, brought from Jamaica to England in *Jane Eyre*, spoke to the uncomfortable presence of the colony in the English imagination. It was an imperial responsibility, deserving care and ameliorative acts, and it was also a burden, liable to start metaphorical and actual fires.\(^{13}\)

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In the eighteenth century, whites in Jamaica divided up the land that could be used to cultivate cash crops like coffee, tobacco, and, of course, sugar, and they began the massive importation of enslaved Africans to work the plantations. Africans brought to the Caribbean had extremely short lives due to the intensive work but also to the dangers of malnutrition and diseases that struck already weakened bodies during the time of “seasoning,” the initial time that a person spent in the islands. Unlike those enslaved in the mainland American colonies, the slave population in Jamaica did not reproduce itself and consequently depended upon the constant arrival of replacement laborers. Although the statistics contrasting slaves imported to the future United States to slaves imported to Caribbean colonies point to the almost inconceivable loss of life that occurred in the latter, it is important to note that the high death rates began to drop off by the early 1800s.\(^{14}\) The legal, if not actual, end of the slave trade contributed to this, but it is also notable that a creole culture developed among blacks in Jamaica that allowed Africans to bridge their ethnic and linguistic differences and to strengthen community bonds. Religious beliefs and rituals, whether African, Euro-Christian, or Afro-Christian, became

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a critical component to black responses to slavery and black struggles for freedom. The slave community itself can be interpreted as an act of resistance, and many Caribbean historians have argued that African customs or creole customs that bondpeople linked to Africa were a “shield” of protection against the dehumanizing effects of slavery. Even though resistance studies once focused exclusively on slave men and armed rebellion, the turn to everyday resistance and scholarship on gender and slavery have broadened the role of the slave community in survival.

Sugar culture created the racial, class, and gender structure of the island even though only a relatively small portion of the island’s land was used for cultivating sugar cane. The sugar estates that had once been run by white Englishmen in the 1700s had by the early 1800s fallen mostly to the care of attorneys, as the men who oversaw land in the owners’ absence were called in Jamaica. Absenteeism was the norm in Jamaica. White attorneys usually had control of several plantations, making the overseer the dominant white man in residence on most plantations. Other whites would also live on the estates, usually bookkeepers or skilled laborers, who were needed for their skills but, perhaps more importantly, to fill a “whiteness” quota that the colonial assembly required as a means to discourage slave rebellion. The eighteenth-century historian of Jamaica, Bryan Edwards, wrote that the population in the late 1700s was 250,000 enslaved blacks,


17 According to Philip Curtin, in 1834, around 650,000 acres of sugar estates existed, but only 100,000 acres of that land was used for sugar cultivation. The remainder was either “pasture, waste, or provision grounds” used by the slaves to grow their own food. Philip Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), 11.

18 Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 17.
30,000 whites, 10,000 colored and free blacks, and 1,400 Maroons. These numbers changed quite sharply in the early nineteenth century, with the population of enslaved people growing to 311,000, freed people growing to 45,000, and the population of whites falling to 15,000. The declining white population concerned many in the government, while the growing ranks of free people of color and free blacks spurred them to agitate for increased rights from the colonial assembly.

The high number of “coloreds” in Jamaica was the result of sex across the color line, but unlike the situation of mixed-race people in the United States South, planters often manumitted coloured or brown Jamaicans, and a largely urban class of free people of color grew in the early nineteenth century. With the exception of certain well-off attorneys and governmental officials, few white men in Jamaica married European women or creole whites but instead took “housekeepers,” who might be an enslaved black or colored woman or a woman from the free population, a population that had been formed by the manumission of children from such relationships. It is difficult to speculate on the nature of these relationships. It is not difficult to imagine, however, that some enslaved women sought relationships with white men as a way to secure for themselves and their children a better life, and perhaps even freedom, but it is also necessary to keep in mind the unbridled power held by white men in the social hierarchy of the estate.

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21 Curtin, Two Jamaica, 17–18.

22 Bush, 115-117.
The chain of command on the Jamaican plantation that started with the proprietors (most of whom lived in England) and then the attorneys (many of whom operated more than one plantation), the overseers and bookkeepers, then moved to the black drivers who essentially ran the day-to-day operations in the fields and in the sugar mills. Even as the slave community connected individuals and families, it was not without its own hierarchy and related power struggles. The slave drivers became de facto leaders in the black community, and after emancipation, many became important spiritual leaders in the mission churches and in the black Baptist churches that emerged in the early nineteenth century. In the cane fields, "the driver stood by with the long cart whip round his neck – the badge of office and the means of summary punishment" and he supervised three gangs: the "great gang" filled with adults, the "smaller second gang" made up of older children, "nursing mothers and old people" who did lighter work. The third gang, usually containing the younger children, had a female driver, and was, in a perverse sense, a school.23

Absenteeism received much criticism from Americans as well as from some "enlightened" Englishmen who felt that slavery had gone awry when the paternal influence of white masters had disappeared. During the early nineteenth century, many proslavery planters blamed the troubles with slavery on the practice of absenteeism: a planter who did not live among "his people" on his West Indian estates had abandoned his responsibilities. This is particularly true in the famous account of one Englishman, the novelist Matthew (Monk) Lewis, who went to Jamaica in the early 1800s to visit the estate he had inherited from his father. Lewis's account critiqued absenteeism in the most racist and paternalistic language, and the way he postured as a kind but firm father

over "childlike" slaves echoes in how some of the American missionaries would characterize their own actions. His diaries also give insight into the dynamics between enslaved people and their masters and reveal how much enslaved people protested and negotiated the conditions of their labor, an important point often, but not always, neglected in American abolitionist accounts of slavery because evidence of resistance undermined the version of the defenseless and victimized slave. Lewis's text also gives a sense of how some enslaved black Jamaicans manipulated whites to serve their own ends. This brief discussion of the tradition of accommodation and dissent among Jamaican slaves gives a precedent to the experiences the Americans would have in their mission stations.

In his journal, Lewis wrote that he refused to use the lash to discipline his slaves and instead chose to threaten them with his imminent departure from the island. He had used this technique during a recent labor strike led by one of the chief agitators on his estate, a woman named Whaunica. As a slave woman, Whaunica's primary responsibility was to carry away the used-up canes from the boiling house. Whaunica led a labor strike that resulted in work stoppage since the cane-boiling could not continue with the piles of already-boiled canes lying around. Lewis's overseer and the black driver both wanted to beat the women as punishment, but Lewis refused to permit this. Instead he ended this "petticoat rebellion" by declaring "that, if any similar instance of misconduct should take place, I was determined, on my return from Kingston, to sell the


most refractory, ship myself immediately for England, and never return to them and
Jamaica more.' Lewis threatened his female slaves with his absence, and his tactics
apparently worked, although not for the paternalistic reasons that Lewis imagined.
Whaunica and her fellow strikers feared that his departure would put them back at the
mercies of the overseers who apparently shared little of Lewis’s opposition to physical
punishment. Lewis, however, in his paternalistic posturing, interpreted the success of this
threat with the fact that “his people” loved him as a father and did not want to be
deprieved of his fatherly presence.

Whaunica and her fellow laborers appeared chastened by Lewis’s words, but this
did not stop them from again going on strike. Lewis wrote that his attorney informed him
“that they never conducted themselves so ill before; that they worked cheerfully and
properly till my arrival, but now they think that I shall protect them against all
punishment, and have made regularly ten hogsheads of sugar a week less than they did
before my coming upon the estate.” Lewis eventually learned that since his arrival, the
rumor had been spread that his intention was to free all of his bondpeople, and this had
stirred anxiety among other planters: “It was the report at Montego Bay, that, in
consequence of my over-indulgence to my negroes, a song had been made at Cornwall,
declaring that I was come over to set them all free, and that this was now circulating
throughout all the neighborhood parishes.” Lewis’s fellow landowners warned him to
exercise caution so that such a rumor might not start a slave revolt. 27 Monk Lewis
thought that black Jamaicans feared freedom because it would sever their connections to
their masters, but his diary constantly contradicts this as he recounts the many family


27 Ibid., 140, 226.
relationships, friendships across sugar estates, and even communal labor action (Whaunica’s "petticoat rebellion") he observed during his months in Jamaica.

While Lewis’s account can be used to glean a glimpse of the slave community in pre-emancipation Jamaica, it also is an example of the British contest over representations that occurred in the years immediately before and after emancipation. English missionary James Phillippo’s *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*, published in 1843, contradicted Lewis’s version of events as well as other widely read histories of Jamaica by Bryan Edwards and the Reverend George Bridges, in 1791 and 1828 respectively. Phillippo challenged the proslavery stereotype of “Quashee” or the savage African – “evasive, lazy, child-like and lacking judgement” – and replaced it with the antislavery image of the childlike, but obedient, Christian subject.28 Creating this black subject, Catherine Hall argues, became the central object of white missionaries in Jamaica and the antislavery lobby in England during the 1820s. Yet the actions of black Jamaicans often problematized the American missionaries’ attempts to make them into grateful and passive beings. For example, the Baptist War, a labor strike/slave rebellion that occurred at Christmas of 1831, was precipitated by black Jamaicans invoking the Bible to agitate for their freedom. Both versions of black Jamaicans – Monk Lewis’s uncivilizable dependent who craved a master’s attention and the civilizable Christian subject who could become like whites in everything but skin color – were stereotypes, and the perfection expected of black men and women by the missionaries was “a sure recipe for disappointment and one carrying its own potential for demonisation” as indeed occurred in the late 1840s.29

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While a similar contest of representations occurred in the United States after West Indian emancipation, it had remarkably different stakes. Catherine Hall hints at this distinction when she noted that blacks who came to England and who did not "behave" could be sent back to the West Indies. "Distance here was crucial . . . . White people could visit the colonies, even settle in them, but always have the possibility of returning home. The idea of the geographical separation between metropole and colony was critical to colonial rule: a form of rule which depended on the authority of the coloniser." 30 This was not the case in the United States. Not only did communities of free blacks live in northern cities and towns, even some factions of antislavery proponents opposed interracial mixing, as seen in the foundations of the American Colonization Society and in the continued discussion of colonization among white northern reformers. 31 A fear of gender disorder and sexual license played a prominent role in attempts to keep blacks and whites separate in the United States, and many whites were terrified that emancipation would result in freed people taking revenge on whites for their enslavement. For white southerners, the "horrors of St. Domingue," as the Haitian Revolution was called, usually emerged in the same sentence as emancipation, and white northerners feared that a race war might easily spill into northern states. In constructing the ideal black citizen in the West Indies, then, American abolitionists wanted not only to appeal to the hearts of Americans but also meant to prove that blacks would work hard,

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29 Ibid., 322.

30 Ibid.

seek education, and most importantly, that freed people would act as “civilized” men and women by embracing the proper gender order.

II. GENDERING EMANCIPATION: THE BAPTIST WAR AND WATCH NIGHT

Even among like-minded abolitionist Americans, there was hardly agreement with what the ideal black subject should be, and the battle over representation gained momentum when West Indian emancipation provided an actual case study. Whether black Jamaicans should be seen as manly resisters to their enslavement, or passive and humble men and women being gifted with freedom by generous white abolitionists, remained up for grabs, even among American abolitionists. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, James Thome, Stewart Renshaw, and the British missionary James Phillippo all told versions of emancipation that revealed more about the writers than the freed people who were their subjects. The most common narrative was “watch night” or the church services held on the even of emancipation, whether in 1834 or in 1838. The less common subject for abolitionist writers, but perhaps the more interesting, was the Baptist War of 1831.

The events of the Baptist War and watch night also appeared frequently in later American abolitionist books, pamphlets, and newspapers. The simplistic story of watch-night with its churchgoing slaves becoming pious freed people showed little variation in its many tellings. Nearly identical versions of the watch-night story found in James Thome’s text popped up in places like Frederick Douglass’s North Star, almost all books dealing with emancipation in the West Indies, and even in the much later Freedman’s Book, penned by the feminist and abolitionist Lydia Maria Child’s in 1865 as a textbook for ex-slaves in the U.S. South. The Baptist War that begins this section had a much
more ambiguous place in the U.S. versions of West Indian emancipation. The Baptist War obviously raised the specter of slave revolt at a time when threats of black vengeance made up a substantial part of anti-abolitionist propaganda. Yet it also proved useful to some of the evangelical abolitionist missionaries who wanted to prove that black men were not weak and effeminate but manly resisters. The watch night story of emancipation proved more compatible, however, to the mainstream of American abolitionism since it depicted freed people as devout churchgoers, thankful for the freedom that had been bestowed upon them by benevolent whites.

The Baptist War that occurred in December 1831 was a perplexing subject for most American abolitionists. It happened, after all, not too many months after Nat Turner’s revolt in Virginia, an event that made whites in the North and South alike fear violent retribution from African Americans. Historians, in contrast, have looked to the Baptist War as a war of emancipation and have analyzed it to demonstrate what freedom meant to black Jamaicans. The revolt happened in part because white Jamaican planters overreacted to the news of the ameliorative acts being pushed by the antislavery movement in England. Planters feared the imminent end of slavery, and at the time of the Baptist War, it was common for planters to give “inflammatory speeches” that were “duly published in the newspapers,” many whites supported “armed revolt” against Britain.32 For black slaves, however, the whites’ anger seemed to prove that Britain had in fact issued an order for emancipation, and that the white colonial officials in Jamaica resisted enacting it.

32 Mary Turner, Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787–1834 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 150. This account of the Baptist War is taken from Turner. Another similar slave rebellion occurred in Demerara in 1823 in which enslaved people radicalized Christianity to justify their rebellion. See da Costa, Crowns of Glory.
In the social networks created by English Baptist mission churches and operated by black church leaders, news of the possible emancipation order circulated, and Sam Sharpe, a black Baptist and member of an English missionary church, began to plan. According to Sharpe’s narrative of the rebellion, it was initially planned to be a labor strike that would force the white colonial government to implement the supposed emancipation laws supported by the English. The enslaved people would refuse to process the cane crop until they were paid wages. But soon after the strike began, it escalated into armed conflict. As Monk Lewis’s account demonstrated, slave petitions and labor stoppages were not uncommon ways for slaves to express their grievances, but at this moment when emancipation appeared to be in sight yet denied, the strikes spread like wildfire. On the days before and after Christmas, traditionally a holiday for the slaves, labor strikes erupted on plantations around the island, and workers burned the cane harvest, the sugar works, and the estate houses of their masters, destroying over one million pounds of property by the rebellion’s end.

Once the uprising had been quelled, the Jamaican militia promptly arrested and “tried” 621 slaves. The colonial government quickly executed the plot’s leaders and over three hundred of the Baptist War’s alleged participants. Believing the Baptist missionaries to be the source of the agitation, angry white mobs responded by setting fire to chapels and other mission buildings, and the government officially banned missionaries from operating on the island, a statute that lasted until emancipation in 1834. For their part, the English Baptists denied any involvement in rebellion, claiming instead that they had tried to suppress it. The long term effects of the Baptist War on the Baptist Missionary Society, however, led them to end their official line of neutrality on the
slavery question and to take on a fully articulated antislavery position. Following the Baptist War, expelled white Baptist and Wesleyan missionaries became the best propagandists in England’s antislavery movement until the first stage of emancipation began in 1834.33

The understanding of Christianity and freedom developed by black leaders before and after the Baptist War provides quite a different conception of liberty than that which took shape within evangelical abolitionism in the northern United States at this time. The divergence between these two concepts of Christianity and black freedom, on the one hand, and spiritual liberty on the other, points to problems that would develop between the perfectionist Christian missionaries and the recently freed people they wanted to convert. Theodore Weld and his colleagues at Oberlin and in the American Anti-Slavery Society framed Christian liberty in terms of morality and missionary zeal, and they opposed sinful “bondage” ranging from “unmanly” dependence on alcohol or prostitution, to the more obvious captivity created by slavery. Afro-Jamaicans, in contrast, drew on an interpretation of Christianity that told them not to serve two masters, and that ultimately led them into armed rebellion. For the evangelical abolitionists, Christian liberty meant protecting liberty from license through personal and spiritual discipline – a regular schedule of prayer and worship, along with manual labor that provided for the needs of one’s family and made the father and family head independent from the control of an employer or patron. Jamaican slaves lived in a society already replete with rigid hierarchies and physical and social bondage, and freedom meant an end to this tyrannical system of control.

33 See also Hall, Civilising Subjects, 105–6.
Mary Turner cogently observes, “[t]he slaves used Christianity as their revolutionary ideology and, in doing so, identified the missionaries as their allies.” Yet the white Baptists were largely unaware that “their teaching was inciting political action,” and they even tried to restore order during the uprising.\(^{34}\) On the other side, the leader of the rebellion, Sam Sharpe, proclaimed the Christian lesson that “no man could serve two masters,” and the phrase became widely used by his fellow rebels who probably gained strength from the implied meaning that their action was in God’s service.\(^{35}\) Turner’s insightful argument that the enslaved rebels were trained, “like missionaries, in the intellectual and organizational traditions of Dissent,” underscores the dilemma central to the Jamaica Mission.\(^{36}\) Black Jamaican men and women interpreted freedom and Christian liberty in a way that conflicted with the Christian liberty praised by American evangelical abolitionists.

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The Baptist War presented a dilemma to men like James Thome and J. Horace Kimball, the two men investigating the West Indies for their American Anti-Slavery Society report. While Kimball died not long after his return to the United States, Thome and his editor, Theodore Weld, chose to leave the Baptist War out entirely. While they had no qualms in asserting an almost martial version of manly independence at Lane Seminary and as antislavery lecturers, they showed ambivalence when it came to depicting black men taking up arms against slavery. An earlier hint at the discomfort Thome and other evangelical abolitionists had when it came to slave rebellion showed up

\(^{34}\) Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 148.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 154-55.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 200.
in his "Address to the Ladies of Ohio," the speech where he had laid out how white women were to join the abolitionist movement. In Thome's speech, he expressed the widely shared abolitionist idea that emancipation would end the threat of slave rebellions. One of the horrors not of emancipation, but of slavery, Thome argued, was that it threatened the security of white families. White southerners lived in perpetual fear, he wrote, reminding his audience that as the son of Kentucky slaveholder, he knew this well. The perpetuation of slavery meant that whites' "brains may be dashed out on the field by an unexpected blow from some desperate man, whose next act may be to kill himself." Thome did not present this man as a criminal or even a full-fledged rebel or freedom fighter. Instead, the slave rising up against his master immediately felt regret and guilt and became suicidal.

While Thome neglected to discuss the Baptist War and its role in the passing of the 1834 emancipation law that resulted in apprenticeship, Stewart Renshaw did include a quite sympathetic portrayal of the rebellion in his 1848 article. Renshaw began by discussing the ameliorative acts and their effects on the slave population, and then built his narrative by arguing that these expanded freedoms led to widespread rumors among enslaved blacks "that the king had set them free; but that the planters, like the Egyptian Pharaoh, had refused to let them go. They resolved to strike for liberty.”

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37 James A. Thome, “Address to the Ladies of Ohio,” in Report of the First Anniversary of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society (Cincinnati, 1836). Also see a similar explanation that draws heavily on both biblical stories of slavery as well as the Haitian Revolution (as if they both happened in the same historical time) in Amos A. Phelps, Lectures on Slavery, and its Remedy (Boston: New England Anti-Slavery Society, 1834), 190–91, 206–33.


39 Renshaw, “Historical and Statistical View,” 559. The excerpt of Renshaw’s analysis of the Baptist War was reprinted on the front page of the American Missionary, Dec. 1848. In between excerpts, the editor made sure to emphasize the peacefulness of the moment of emancipation as opposed to the violence manifested during the Baptist War that occurred under slavery.
comparison of slaves to the Jews of Exodus resonated with the black church tradition, as well as the prophetic and masculine language used to defend abolitionism in Angelina Grimké’s retort to Catharine Beecher. For Renshaw, blacks striking for freedom were acting as Christian men against an unjust oppressor.

The Christian component of the Baptist War was not lost on Renshaw, and in his different religious language he justified black Jamaicans’ decision to protest their position as slaves. This differed quite substantially from Thome’s hesitancy to even discuss rebellion and to imply that slave rebels were acting out of emotional and mental strain rather than just cause. Renshaw clearly took the side of the rebelling slaves and described the rebellion and the amount of property loss (“six millions of dollars”) along with the fact that “few whites were slain . . . but the miserable negroes were butchered by the hundreds.” It was not the slaves who appeared “savage” in Renshaw’s telling, but instead the reactionary planters. The planters acted unmanly and were “incendiaries” who “madly fired the chapels and dwellings of the missionaries, and thus added to the destruction more than two hundred thousand dollars worth of mission property.”

Renshaw craftily left the door open on the exact reasons for the rebellion – was it the white missionaries or black Jamaicans who had coordinated the efforts? – not-so-subtly hinting that the black Jamaicans he wanted to represent positively were not fully to blame. He concluded his paragraph on the Baptist War by writing that even though the Baptist missionaries were ultimately “exonerated” from any participation in the rebellion, “it is worthy of remark, however, that it broke out in a district extensively influenced by missionary agencies, and in the very midst of mission churches.” His readers could
imagine either the white Baptists or the rebelling slaves in the role of Christian
manhood.\footnote{Ibid., 559.}

Two decades after Stewart Renshaw told this version of the story, one that at once
admired the rebels and tried to exonerate them from the charge of being barbaric and
threatening warriors, the prolific novelist and abolitionist activist Lydia Maria Child told
the story in a different way that implied that the black Jamaicans had acted as outspoken
children who should have waited for their patrons in Britain to act on their behalf.\footnote{Child’s
1833 \textit{An Appeal In Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans} also feminized slaves,
“emphasizing that slaves were slow to seek revenge.” Dorsey, \textit{Reforming Men and Women}, 191.}
Child’s version is very close to Renshaw’s but it differs in significant ways that help her
agenda as a white abolitionist and feminist. Child started out much the same way as
Renshaw by telling how “the slaves received the idea that the British government had
already passed laws for their freedom, and that their masters were cheating them out of
the legal rights that had been granted them.”\footnote{Child, \textit{The Freedman’s Book}, (New York, 1865), 130.}
But then her tone shifted, and she became patronizing: “it was a sad mistake for the poor fellows, and brought a great deal of
suffering upon themselves and others. They rose in insurrection, and it is said destroyed
property to the amount of six millions of dollars.” The situation got even worse, she
wrote, because “instead of being protected by the British government, as they had
expected, soldiers were sent over to put down the insurrection, and many of the negroes
were shot and hung.”\footnote{Ibid.} While Child made the rebels into victims of their own misplaced
agitation for freedom, Renshaw had admired their manliness that led them to “strike” for
freedom.
For Child, the problem was that black Jamaicans should have waited for “their friends in England” who “were working for them zealously. They published pamphlets and papers and made speeches and urgently petitioned Parliament to ‘let the people go.’” As a white woman abolitionist also interested in women’s rights, Child did not waste the opportunity to point out that this antislavery English public contained the voices of Englishwomen: “One petition alone was signed by eight hundred thousand women. One of the members pointing to the enormous roll, said: ‘There is no use in trying longer to resist the will of the people. When all the women in Great Britain are knocking at the doors of Parliament, something must be done.’” The work of white women on behalf of “poor” slaves, Child argued, whether in England in the 1820s or in the United States in the contemporary moment of the 1860s, deserved recognition, an argument made by many feminists at the time. Child wrote a book that she hoped would serve as a fundamental text book for emancipated people in the United States. Presenting the Baptist War as an unfortunate event when blacks acted out of turn therefore suited her purposes. Freed people in the United States could learn from this that it was best to obey white abolitionists, and particularly civilized white women, rather than claim freedom on their own terms.

With the exception of Renshaw’s projection of the manly Christian sentiment behind the Baptist War, the more common narrative used to symbolize West Indian

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44 Ibid., 131.

45 Ibid.


47 For more on Child in particular and the feminization of slaves more generally see Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women*, 191–92.
emancipation involved the “watch night” church services that took place primarily in mission churches in Jamaica and in the other islands of the British Caribbean. The story of humble and pious slaves graciously receiving their freedom matched the Christian liberty imagined by British and American Protestants alike and skirted the issue of the bold strikes for freedom taken during the Baptist War. The watch-night tradition had its origins in English Christian New Year’s Eve traditions, and after the Civil War, watch-night services also became a part of African American Christianity as well as New Year’s Eve was the eve of American emancipation. Many of these services also became prominently featured in the *American Missionary* and in other publications sympathetic to the AMA’s work in the South.⁴⁸

The basic form of the West Indian watch-night story appeared again and again in speeches, articles, and books addressing the history of emancipation, and even Renshaw alluded to it after his discussion of the Baptist War.⁴⁹ James Thome repeated the story as it was told to him by an English Methodist missionary who had been in Jamaica during emancipation. A solemn church service was to be held, as the missionary, the Reverend Bleby, “thought it right and proper that our Christian people should receive their freedom as a boon from God.” By ten o’clock, the church was filled, not only the pews, “but the aisles, the gallery stairs, the communion-place, the pulpit stairs” too as well as “thousands

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of people round the building." 50  As midnight approached, Bleby asked his congregation
to kneel "in silent prayer to God" and silence was kept, "broken only by sob's of emotion,
which is was impossible to repress." 51  As the clock struck twelve ("the knell of Slavery
in all the British possessions!") the scene became one of family affection: "Mothers were
hugging their babes to their bosoms, old white-headed men embracing their children, and
husbands clasping their wives in their arms." 52  The happy family scene taking place
within the walls of a church created a familiar and sentimental scene that represented
everything that the Baptist War was not.

Another account of a watch night church service written by James Phillippo, an
English Baptist missionary with a church in Spanishtown, emphasized the orderliness of
the event. He wrote: "They were clean in their persons, and neat in their attire. Their
behavior was modest, unassuming, and decorous in high degree. There was no crowding,
no vulgar familiarity, but all were courteous and obliging to each other, as members of
one harmonious family. There was no dancing, gambling, or carousing. All seemed to
have a sense of the obligations they owed to their masters, to each other, and to the civil
authorities." 53  In the accounts of Phillippo and Thome, the emancipated behaved like
ideal Christian subjects, loyal to their owners even after being freed and ready to accept
the new bonds of law that replaced the bondage of slavery. Both Thome’s version of
watch night as it was told to him by the Rev. Bleby and Phillippo’s firsthand account
appeared in Child’s Freedman’s Book immediately following her shortened version of

50 Thome, Emancipation in the West Indies, 134.
51 Ibid., 135.
52 Ibid.
53 Phillippo, Jamaica, 184. Also see Child, Freedman’s Book, 141.
the Baptist War. It was obedience, not rebelliousness, Child argued in 1865, that should characterize the emancipated slave.

In his version of events, James Phillippo described the scene in Spanishtown and noted the banners carried by children. One declared “August First, 1838 – the Day of Our Freedom,” another read “Wisdom and Knowledge the Stability of the Times,” and another simply said “Education, Religion, and Social Order.” These slogans speak more to the white abolitionist dream of Jamaica than to the reality of the difficulties facing black Jamaicans. In the period following 1838, the terms of freedom would be a battleground between black laborers and white employers, white politicians and black and colored men who pressed for greater enfranchisement, and missionaries and their church members. This reality was minimized in the depictions of Jamaica and other West Indian islands written about by James A. Thome and James Phillippo in the late 1830s and early 1840s, and their rose-colored view would be criticized in the writings of Stewart Renshaw in the late 1840s. For the American missionaries in Jamaica, it became important to report on the bad as well as the good in their experiences because they felt strongly that the United States needed to learn a lesson from how emancipation had been conducted in the West Indies.

The watch-night stories precluded the complications that a story about the Baptist War might have created for a white American audience. This manifestation of Christian humility and graciousness easily meshed with the increasingly feminized abolitionist representation of American blacks. Renshaw’s support of the Baptist War stood out from the 1837 and 1843 books by Thome and Phillippo, and it also had little in common with Maria Child’s 1865 discussion of West Indian emancipation – a narrative aimed at a

54 Phillippo, 178.
black, not white, audience. Renshaw’s desire to praise black manhood rather than feed into the wider literature interested in feminizing slaves and freed people reflected his experiences in Jamaica. Renshaw had no illusions of ideal subjects, like his fellow missionary, James Phillippo, as the next section will show, but he was also able to appreciate that black culture existed with a history and a context and a logic of its own. He disapproved of black culture and wanted to change it, but he could see that it existed, unlike the other authors who knowingly or unknowingly ignored it.

III. EMANCIPATION AND ITS DISENTENTS

For both James Thome and James Phillippo, emancipation was akin to a conversion experience in terms of its immediate transforming power. Catherine Hall has argued as much for Phillippo’s account. The “new black subject” would display “[i]ndustry, domestic economy, prudent provisions for sickness and old age, a proper regard for the hierarchies of family and work, a refusal of the disgrace of dependence. . . . This new subjectivity was made possible by the linked moments of conversion and emancipation.” 55 She adds that the ideas of “before and after” were important to Christian missions but also to conversations about slavery and emancipation, because in Jamaica and other West Indian colonies, “Christian rebirth” was “coterminous with the granting of political, legal, and civil subjecthood,” the status granted to freed people through their emancipation. 56 James Thome also linked conversion and emancipation. He recollected that in his interviews, “the planters often spoke of the greatness and suddenness of the change . . . ‘The transition from slavery to freedom was like passing

55 Hall, Civilising Subjects, 117.

suddenly out of a dark dungeon into the light of the sun' . . . 'There never had been in the history of the world so great and instantaneous a change in the condition of so large a body of people.' Thome, the slaveholder-turned-abolitionist at Lane Seminary, invoked a similar version of the black Christian subject in his account, _Emancipation in the West Indies_, researched in the winter of 1836–37 and published in early 1838. Significantly, when he needed to give examples of how this change occurred, he illustrated emancipation's effects by describing how black men and women were eager to adopt the gender practices of northern Protestants.

As a professor at Oberlin, Thome would have met most of the American missionaries to Jamaica, and perhaps his own journey motivated the formation of the mission in the first place. Yet his idealized version of emancipation, like James Phillippo's, later frustrated the American missionaries who found themselves in a more complicated situation than that depicted by Thome. Missionary Stewart Renshaw's two articles published in 1846 and 1848 explicitly refuted Phillippo's history of Jamaica and implicitly critiqued Thome's work. For Renshaw, unlike James Thome, emancipation would be a long process, not a single moment of transformation.

Thome and Kimball's journey to the West Indies came at the request of Theodore Weld, who in 1836 recommended that an abolitionist might be sent to Haiti and the British West Indies to "gather a mass of facts as to their condition: statistical, educational, agricultural, commercial, Religious, etc." Thome, with the aid of Theodore Weld,

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57 Thome, _Emancipation in the West Indies_, 137.


59 Weld to Lewis Tappan, 5 April 1836, _Weld-Grimké Letters_ I: 289.
compiled the pair’s notes into the volume, and they painted over freedom in the Caribbean with the heavy brushstrokes of their own interpretations. The themes appearing on the Spanishtown banners described by James Phillippo: “Religion, Education, and Social Order,” became central components to Thome’s proof of emancipation’s success. Representations of social order, Thome and Weld felt, were the best way to show that emancipation would result in a better society. And they showed this by describing displays of public morality and black Jamaicans who supported education, along with recognizable nuclear families made up of domestic women and hardworking men who earned enough to support their dependents. Freed people, Thome and his colleagues wanted to say, have become just like us, different only in skin complexion. By showing a recognizable family order in the Caribbean, the authors of *Emancipation in the West Indies* would make their case about the safety of black emancipation, arguing that there was no reason why this should not happen in the United States South. Significantly, their text was a great success in the abolitionist community. It became an important reference for Edward L. Pierce, the architect of the Freedman’s Bureau, and much of their text was reprinted by the prolific and popular abolitionist, Maria Child, in her abolitionist tract advocating for immediate emancipation published on the eve of the Civil War as well as in her later *Freedman’s Book.*

On their tour of the West Indies, Thome and Kimball focused the majority of their attention on Antigua, as the colonial assembly on this island had skipped over apprenticeship and had fully emancipated all slaves in 1834. Antigua was depicted as a society that had replaced the bonds of slavery with the bonds of Christian marriage and

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family. The emancipated society of the West Indies allowed Thome to develop and explain what he meant by Christian *liberty* as opposed to unrestricted *license*, a point he had been considering since his work as a traveling lecturer for the American Anti-Slavery Society. In Antigua he found that the social order had not fallen apart with emancipation, but on the contrary, a religiously inspired gender order had risen up as a gentler replacement to the rigid social hierarchies of slavery. In *Emancipation in the West Indies*, Thome invoked the ideology of domesticity and descriptions of black manhood and womanhood as the signs that emancipation had succeeded best in Antigua where it had been instituted in full.

Thome argued that social order would be the natural outgrowth of freedom. Towards the end of his section on Antigua, he listed several propositions related to the consequences of the abolition of slavery. "Emancipation," he wrote "has operated at once to elevate and improve the negroes." Thome continued, declaring that freedom had "awakened in the negroes sentiments of self-respect" and had instructed them in "proper ideas of moral and legal obligations, of social relations and of duties to God."

Emancipation, like a conversion experience at a religious revival, had changed the very core of enslaved people. He also quieted the fears of American whites who thought that immediate abolition would result in complete social chaos. True freedom, he argued, was not a license to do as one wanted but was a recognition of political, social, and religious obligations and a desire to "bind" oneself to those duties rather than to a human master.61

In stating the "proof" of this proposition, Thome guided his readers to the many earlier examples of how society had changed beyond merely the dress habits of freed people. He noted the "decrease of licentiousness" and "the increased attention paid to

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marriage,” showing how the unholy gender order of slavery was being destroyed in favor of Christian families. Also, there was an increase in “the universal reverence for the Sabbath [and] the general attendance upon divine worship.” While slavery had been antithetical to religion, freedom caused the ranks of Christians to grow. Finally, emancipation had witnessed freed people’s “exemplary subordination to the law, [along with] the avoidance of riotous conduct, insolence, and intemperance.”  

Christian families and evangelical faith, according to Thome, resulted in a society that could live in perfect liberty without the danger of slipping into licentiousness. For Thome and his editor, Weld, this point could not be made too strongly. Demonstrating the success of freedom in the British colonies was more than abolitionist propaganda, but it also worked to justify their political and religious stance in the evangelical North.

On numerous occasions in *Emancipation in the West Indies*, Thome projected an image of the social order that he believed would unfold when the gender ideology of domesticity and the homes, families, and labor practices it entailed prevailed in Antigua. After visiting one sugar estate, he described the new village being built by freed people on the land that had formerly been the site of their slave huts. The new houses were “to be built of stone instead of mud and sticks, and to be neatly roofed. Instead of being huddled together in a confused and crowded manner . . . they are to be built on an elevated site, and ranged at regular intervals around three sides of an extended square.” At the center of the square “a building for a chapel and school house is to be erected,” and each house was to have “a small plot of land for a garden.” Thome’s depiction of the imagined village can be read as a metaphorical account of the changes that emancipation inaugurated: freed people no longer lived disorderly lives “in some hole or by place,” but

62 Ibid., 193.
rather their homes and their lives were now “elevated” to civilized standards. Organized into neat lines and divided into individual properties, the homes all looked onto the centerpieces of civilization, the church and the school.63

The creation of homes would make the freed men more manly, and Thome thought that when the laborers purchased or rented their own land from their former plantation owner, it “would relieve [them] from some of that dependence which they must feel so long as they live on the estate and in the houses of the planters.” Men could also exercise greater control over their wives’ lives, rather than suffering the humiliation of having wives who could only obey the white master. Thome cited the remarks of one Antiguan landowner who let women refrain from working until nine months after giving birth, and he remarked that when new mothers had husbands, their husbands “prefer[ed] to have their wives engage in other work” than field labor. As for the black women he encountered, Thome was struck that most continued to work in the fields because “the manager said they chose it generally ‘for the sake of the wages.’” Thome reported that the “fervent hope” of one Methodist missionary in Antigua was that men would soon be solely responsible for field labor and “that the women would be occupied in keeping their cottages in order, and in increasing their domestic comforts.” The transformation of women’s lives was important, but even more meaningful to Thome was how this change allowed black men to become independent by virtue of having dependent wives and children.64

Thome and others anticipated what Jamaica’s colonial governor would advise the freed people on the eve of emancipation in Jamaica. Governor Lionel Smith gave a series

63 Ibid., 27–28.

64 Ibid., 28–29; 194; 26; 194–95.
of speeches in 1838 addressed to freed men (even as freed women were in the audience) advising them to "spare your wives from heavy field work . . . make them attend to their duties at home" and to "lighten their labors, and give them time to take care of your houses and children." An English Baptist missionary in Jamaica, Samuel Oughton, also authored a petition asking for similar manhood rights, proclaiming "we are resolved to devote ourselves with increased industry to the discharge of our several duties, that by so doing we may provide for our wives and children as well as support our aged and infirm relatives . . ." Like Thome and the Antiguan planter, these white men in Jamaica assumed that black men would be responsible for keeping black women away from hard labor in the fields. However, as historian Diane Paton compellingly argues, black women, who were more than half of field laborers on sugar estates, and not black men who engaged in disputes over the terms of their labor. These women used their own ideology of domesticity. Rather than returning to their homes to become housewives or private women along the lines of white women in the North and in England, black women wanted to tend to their provision grounds in order to sell surplus crops in local markets, in addition to taking care of their children.

In Emancipation for the West Indies, Thome projected onto free blacks the vision of a Christian society the abolitionists had long imagined, even as this rarely matched up with reality or with what freed people desired. In the representation of Antigua in his

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67 Paton, 195–96
book, the accoutrements of the private sphere would tie black and colored men to their families and make them reliable laborers, and domesticity would fashion black and colored women into respectable ladies. Moreover, the text served to alleviate fears that once freed, blacks would take their liberty and turn it into licentiousness. The morally centered families, laborers, and ministers who filled the pages of Thome’s account of the West Indies presented a strong counter to the proslavery versions of emancipation that looked at the islands’ economic decline. Further, his interpretation of freedmen’s manliness contrasted considerably with the rebellious manhood of the slaves involved in the Baptist War that might have put fear into the hearts of his white northern readers. Neither did Thome write about the labor strikes organized by women like Wuaunica on Monk Lewis’s plantation. Instead the freed people were idyllic Christian subjects who had naturally adopted all of the gender conventions and religious beliefs that Thome hoped for his own society as well as for emancipated societies.

In the books written by Thome and Phillippo, both of which were widely read in the United States, African and creole practices had been largely erased and black men and women had been remade in the image of their white advocates. This overly rosy portrayal of emancipation reflected the hostile nature of the debate over slavery in the United States. American proslavery forces had conversely presented West Indian emancipation as an unmitigated disaster that had ruined the colonial economy and caused black men and women to “revert” to African heathenism. This negative version of emancipation appeared most notably in Thomas Carlyle’s 1849 “Occasional Discourses,”
which was widely reprinted in the United States, but its core ideas had been in circulation since 1838 in a variety of southern and northern periodicals and pamphlets.\textsuperscript{68}

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The American missionaries went to Jamaica with Thome’s fantastical vision of an emancipated society and with the intentions of forming churches that would be self-supporting by these newly prosperous freed people. They faced a different reality. They witnessed a society rife with racism and a colonial government that had little interest in spending money to aid freed people’s social and economic advancement. In contrast to Thome’s belief in emancipation as a transformative moment, the missionaries learned what Caribbean historian Mimi Sheller describes: “emancipation is not a single moment when one becomes free, but is attached to a long-term process of interaction between former slaves, former masters and state personnel, along with various brokers or mediators ranging from missionaries and judges to overseers and abolitionists.”\textsuperscript{69} A more complicated picture of emancipation in Jamaica emerged in the abolitionist press in the articles Stewart Renshaw authored in the mid-1840s. Still committed to abolitionism, Stewart Renshaw tried in his mid-1840s articles to explain why two such drastically different pictures of Jamaican emancipation had emerged in the United States.

The history of Jamaica needed to be written, Renshaw noted, and “it should rise above the prejudices and prepossessions of the hour . . . History is the truest philosophy and its teachings are absolute wisdom.” He endeavored to present to his readers “a

\textsuperscript{68} For various references to the West Indies in the writings of prominent proslavery writers, see Drew Gilpin Faust, ed., \textit{The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830–1860} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 24, 56, 64, 200-3, 276-7, 284-85.

\textsuperscript{69} Mimi Sheller, \textit{Democracy After Slavery: Black Publics in Haiti and Jamaica} (Gainsville, Fl.: University of Florida Press, 2000), 30; see also Curtin, \textit{Two Jamaica}s, 81–82.
dispassionate, well considered, thoroughly authentic history of Jamaica” since Phillippo’s *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State* had failed at the task. In Renshaw’s opinion, Phillippo’s text told the story of “a nation of slaves, who, according to Mr. Phillippo, were ignorant, debased, corrupt, almost imbruted, in the space of a few years converted to a nation of meek, humble, self-denying, consistent Christians;” indeed, freed people appeared to be “far exceeding the developments of Christian character in the churches of England and America.” Renshaw’s article intended to set his readership straight after they had read an excerpt from Phillippo’s book in the same magazine some months earlier. Further, Phillippo’s book had gone through many editions and had been discussed and reviewed widely in the United States, as well as Britain, of course, and Renshaw saw his task to correct this incorrect picture of Jamaican emancipation. In his critique of Phillippo, he excerpted long passages and offered his own alternative reading.

Renshaw saw his task to be to show that this “improvement” or “progress” was possible to a skeptical American audience who were reading dismal accounts of black backwardness and degeneracy from leading scientists and other cultural commentators. He also used this history of slavery to put forth his argument that “transient visitors” who wrote about the condition of Jamaican blacks after emancipation tended to “leap at the conclusion that they are relapsing to barbarism, and that emancipation has proven a curse to them.” When these “eye-witnesses” published their ideas, they misrepresented the reality, which was in his words:

> The emancipation opened before the masses, whom it delivered, a new and unexplored world. It took them from among the beasts of the field, and restoring to them their humanity, bade them ‘strive.’ They have striven, many of them nobly, and though their progress has been marred and hindered by the deep and dark degradation of their brute life, and by external, adverse circumstances, it has

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yet been more rapid, more encouraging, and more profoundly peaceful than the most sanguine could reasonably have anticipated.\textsuperscript{71}

Emancipation was a necessity and should not be regretted, Renshaw made clear, but it had not resulted in fully formed “Christian subjects” in the way that Phillippo and Thome presented the matter. Yet Renshaw also made pains to show that it was not heredity and race that had prevented black men and women from becoming this ideal Christian subject, either.

Renshaw attributed the failure of an immediate transformation of the island to the circumstances of slavery and to “external circumstances,” by which he meant British trade policies and the racist attitudes of the colonial assembly that tried to thwart emancipation from being fully realized. The free trade policies of Britain had put Jamaican sugar up against other countries’ products, including the slave economies of Brazil and Cuba, and consequently, English proprietors abandoned estates and their wage laborers to avoid putting money into a sinking economy. In addition to facing economic challenges, freed people also lacked adequate political representation. The largely white colonial assembly spent little of its funds on educational programs or other social programs intended on easing freed people’s transition from slavery to freedom.

Like many abolitionists, Renshaw thought that one of the most troubling aspects of slavery was its disregard for the family and for sexual morality, and this he attributed to whites as well as blacks. He believed that the system of “concubinage” that had been “well nigh universal” during slavery to be central to the difficulties of emancipation. Jamaican whites in general were “not religiously disposed” in his opinion, in part because

\textsuperscript{71} Renshaw, “Historical and Statistical View,” 570.
the climate had made them “men of irritable temper and violent passion.”\textsuperscript{72} In Renshaw’s view, the persistence of family practices different from his ideal of the Christian family appeared to be another remnant of slavery instead of a choice made by individual Jamaicans according to their desires and best interests.

Renshaw framed his history of Jamaica in a way that explained the sexual disorder he found; he tied together the consumption of alcohol, the deceptive actions of greedy and embittered white planters, and wanton sexual morals into a single narrative. When slavery existed, according to Renshaw, overseers and other whites working for attorneys in Jamaica were not allowed to marry but were encouraged in their “licentious intercourse with female slaves” as a means to spy on the slave community for any hint of “a spirit of discontent and insubordination.” As Renshaw explained it, white men and black and colored women had extramarital sex as a means to protect the island’s white community from slave insurrection. The sexual license that flourished before emancipation went “hand in hand” with drinking (for rum was obviously widely available) and ignoring the Sabbath, and all were defended in the name of the “patriarchal institution” according to Renshaw. If white society in Jamaica was immoral during slavery, black men and women learned “only the vices of civilization” from their overseers.\textsuperscript{73}

From this enforced immorality, Jamaican freed people had admirably risen to a new level of sexual propriety, Renshaw declared, but there still remained a gap between “civilized” gender practices and those of black Jamaicans. While sexual licentiousness had been “checked by the substitution of marriage for concubinage,” unwed mothers

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 567.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 567, 568, 570.
remained a problem in Renshaw's estimation. Mothers supporting children without the help of fathers could not stay home and cultivate homes but instead would have to labor in the fields to support their young children. This not only trampled on Renshaw's ideal for Christian motherhood; it also troubled him that black men were not taking on the responsibilities of fatherhood, a quality essential to manly independence. Renshaw thought that marriage was more of a "legal relationship" among freed people in Jamaica than a relation based in affection and love, as he imagined it to be among evangelicals in the United States North. His observation that men and women chose marriage partners out of economics or convenience was meant to denigrate the state of matrimony, but in elaborating on this point, Renshaw described Jamaican family culture in a way that recognized its internal logic even as he disparaged its cultural resonance. He commented that "the consent of parents, of grandmothers, and above all 'god-mothers,' is requisite" for young couples, and that "it was the custom for parties to live together after they were affianced, that they might be sure they were suited." Unlike his predecessor James Thome or even James Phillippo, Renshaw found few ideal Christian families in Jamaica. His representation fell somewhere in between the ideal black Christian subjects of Thome and Phillippo and the helpless dependents of Monk Lewis and other proslavery writers. Instead, Renshaw represented black Jamaicans as having a gender system (albeit a problematic one in his opinion) rooted in their history, culture, and community.

Renshaw also observed the custom of "family lands" in Jamaica. He interpreted the longstanding practice of passing down land through the family as a sign of weak marriage bonds: "husbands and wives frequently rent and cultivate different 'grounds,' keep separate purses, and defend their rights against each other as rigidly as against

74 Ibid., 572.
strangers.” Black Jamaicans, however, had a different meaning attached to land ownership. Historian Jean Besson explains that when freed slaves left the estates in Jamaica to purchase their own land, it was more than a move to fiscal independence, as it also had a “symbolic significance to a people who had not only once been landless, but property themselves. For such land symbolized their freedom and provided property rights, prestige, and personhood.”

Even economically unsuccessful plots of land were valuable to families as it represented more than the sum of the crops that could be grown on it. Family land existed as the “spatial dimension” of the family itself, and as such, it was rarely divided or sold, and when the landowner died, all children, regardless of their sex, birth order, or legitimacy, were considered heirs. Nigel Bolland adds that family land represented a different understanding of personal autonomy from that of liberal-bourgeois society, or, I would suggest, of the missionaries’ ideal of the Christian family. For black Jamaican families, “principles of mutuality, cooperation and independence, in contrast to social hierarchy, competition, and the dependency of subordinates,” made up the “very fabric of society itself.”

For Renshaw and other northern evangelicals coming from a culture in which the ideology of domesticity cherished a married woman’s dependency and prized her


separation from the public sphere of the market, this system of dual-income families with separate accounts and property seemed at odds with the Christian family. In his article, however, Renshaw hinted that he was less opposed to Jamaican culture than it might have appeared: “It must not be inferred that the people live together unhappily; not at all. They move along without much friction, naturally accommodating themselves to the customs of the island, and their views of the relationship.” Unlike Thome and Phillippo, Renshaw saw that Jamaican culture, or the “customs” of the island, had a context in which it worked. Thome and Phillippo believed the “heathen” or “degraded” practices often attributed to slavery needed to be eradicated for society to be reborn into Christian liberty. Renshaw hinted that he might disagree; black Jamaican culture was different from that of northern white Americans or middle-class evangelical Britons, yet this did not mean that its people were miserable or mutually destructive.

Reforming marriage remained at the center of the American mission in Jamaica, and this related directly to their plans to encourage land ownership among black Jamaican men. The Americans saw the transformation from slavery to wage labor on the sugar estates to be a troubling process that worked against social stability. Renshaw noted the attempts of the Jamaican Assembly to “introduce foreign laborers” as cheaper substitutes to freed people on the sugar estates. The Americans, like most British missionaries and black Jamaicans, opposed the indentured labor of East Indians and Chinese workers as an attempt to lower wages even further for black men and women.  

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79 Indian and other immigrant indentured laborers were often used by black men as well as white missionaries as “others” against whom black men appeared civilized and Christian and deserving of rights. Mimi Sheller, “Acting as Free Men: Subaltern Masculinities and Citizenship in Post-Emancipation Jamaica,” in Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World, eds., Scully and Paton, 79–98.
Renshaw recognized that black workers were not lazy, as many whites believed, but that they refused to work because the planters did not pay them enough in wages. Yet he also observed that the white landowners were not making enough money to adequately pay their workers and still make a profit. The free trade laws that reduced tariffs on sugar imported to England drove the price of sugar down and caused financial strain on Jamaica’s largest sugar producers. Renshaw sympathized with freed people who heard talk of re-enslavement or even annexation to the United States from the colonial government as a way to end the labor strikes, and he hoped that these labor issues and wage debates would be resolved by “the kindness, fairness, and firmness of the governor.”

Renshaw offered a solution to this dilemma in the form of land ownership. In the Blue Mountain region where the American mission churches were located, this was already becoming the case, and Renshaw wrote glowingly of the improvements that had been made since emancipation:

Many thousand huts have been built . . . and they are uniformly better than slave huts; higher, larger, better ventilated . . . About twenty thousand of the peasantry have become freeholders. Not only have the people homes, they have the means of a comfortable subsistence. Every man and woman, and half-grown child, has a provision ground, in which they cultivate yams, cocos . . . plantains, sugar-cane, cassada, coffee, corn, beans etc. etc. which they sell or barter for bread, biscuit, butter, sugar, cheese, lard, fish, meats, soap, candles, etc. . . . These new gettings, are all in a humble way; yet they are so general, that nearly every family has a beast, many have several; and nearly every hut in the island is more or less adorned with some of these indications of incipient civilization.

The description of what Renshaw termed the first fruits of “civilization” was his hope for the future of the freed blacks in Jamaica. A nascent internal market for goods had emerged, even if the sugar exports had declined, making Jamaica a proper society rather

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than a mere colonial outpost. As voters, this “rising yeomanry” would put an end to “enormous governmental expenditure and [the] weight of taxation.” He concluded this 1848 article with few paragraphs on how land ownership along with increased temperance and the eventual prohibition of alcohol would be the salvation of this former slave society.\footnote{Ibid., 572, 577.}

Renshaw’s perspective on emancipation and conversion in Jamaica had more flexibility than James Thome’s utopian version of emancipation in the West Indies. Like other Protestant missions of the mid-nineteenth century, the American missionaries struggled to reconcile their need to send positive reports of conversion home with the reality on the ground that converts were always “backsliding” to their heathen customs and were often chosen from the poorest and most desperate people. In the Jamaica Mission this common problem took on an even greater significance since Americans both for and against ending slavery looked to Jamaica for proof that emancipated blacks were “civilizable” or that former slaves would work without the threat of violence, obey the law, and establish a moral society instead of reverting to African heathenism. Thome’s short visit to Antigua, Barbados, and Jamaica in 1837 resulted in a book that glossed over the realities of emancipation, from the Baptist War to labor strikes to the resilience of Afro-Jamaican family practices. Renshaw, on the other hand, depicted a more ambivalent picture in his 1840s articles that recognized the uneven process of emancipation. While Renshaw shared Thome’s vision of an ideal society and was certainly not an advocate that Afro-Jamaican culture should be embraced equal in value to his own white northern American culture, he recognized its existence and its meaningfulness to the black Jamaicans with whom he lived for five years. In his critical
review of James Phillippo’s book, Renshaw seemed to perceive at times the danger inherent in representations of ideal Christian subjects, pointing out that his corrections were intended to prevent “friends of the slave” from being “overwhelm[ed] with calamities of which they were unsuspecting, and for which they were unprepared.”82

CONCLUSION

Representations of West Indian emancipation and the state of Jamaica freed people had significant stakes for abolitionists in the United States. Stewart Renshaw’s articles justified the need for the continued funding of the Jamaica Mission at the same time as they complicated the triumphal story of emancipation being told by many American abolitionists. By showing black Jamaicans lagging behind the so-called markers of civilization, Renshaw questioned the more common narrative of West Indian emancipation that emancipation had been like a conversion experience, immediately transforming ex-slaves.

Underlying the friction between mainstream abolitionism and the Jamaica missionaries’ experiences were other complications related to the associations between race and gender in American abolitionism. The watch-night story of emancipation cast black slaves as pious and obedient men and women, awaiting the gift of freedom for which they would graciously accept from their former masters. This matched the increasingly feminized depiction of slaves in America during the 1840s as abolitionists attracted white women to the cause by writing about slavery in a sentimental fashion. For the American ministers in Jamaica, however, showing passive and thankful slaves was not a part of their missionary goals. Instead, the ministers wanted to demonstrate how freed men embraced manliness and independence just as the American ministers

themselves had done as evangelicals and abolitionists at Oberlin in the 1830s. The Jamaica Mission’s goals conflicted with the abolitionists’ goals from the mission’s beginning and the divergence between the two would continue to grow over time.
CHAPTER FOUR
Americans in Emancipated Jamaica

Following Stewart Renshaw’s departure from the mission in 1846 and amid his less-than-celebratory account of progress in Jamaica, the AMA felt the need to construct a narrative explaining its interest in emancipated Jamaica given the seemingly lackluster portrait of the island in the press. One article appearing in the American Missionary in 1849 offered one common interpretation. The article acknowledged that the uplifting spirit of freedom immediately after full emancipation in 1838 had led to many conversions and a growth in church membership in Jamaica. Yet, the article’s author lamented that this widespread reports of this moment had been overblown. He wrote that “comparatively few conversions proved to be real and genuine, and this was discovered only when it was too late.” Many of the island’s missionaries, including the Americans, regretted “that greater care and strictness were not exercised in the admission of members to the church.” The ministers on the island in 1838 had been too quick to welcome new church members, and as a consequence, not much time passed before the new converts’ “liberality diminish[ed] and a spirit of selfishness appear[ed].” As a result, “the novelty of freedom and the peculiar sensations to which it gave birth gradually wore off,” leaving corrupted churches filled with black men and women who had little interest in living “pure” Christian lives: “the Christianity so largely professed was seen to be a false and spurious thing.”

James Thome’s faith in the transformative power of emancipation through which former slaves would be born anew into a society of Christian liberty had

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1 American Missionary, June 1849, Report reprinted from the Kingston Jamaica Messenger; A similar account of the problems ensuing after emancipation appears on the front page of the American Missionary in July 1848, almost the tenth anniversary of West Indian emancipation.
not come to pass, and those interested in the progress of emancipation blamed it on a lack of faith.

This dour assessment appearing in 1849 fit alongside other explanations to convey to the home audience why the Oberlin-based mission was not working out exactly as intended. Since its origins in the late 1830s, the Jamaica Mission had been plagued with financial problems and the number of missionaries and converts had been in decline, especially because of competition from black religious leaders in the early 1840s. After the formation of the American Missionary Association in 1846 and its adoption of the Jamaica Mission, Lewis Tappan, the AMA’s treasurer, and George Whipple, the editor of the *American Missionary* and the organization’s corresponding secretary, hoped that a new influx of money and missionaries would save this critical missionary effort. The AMA had already pointed out the importance of the mission to its readers: “The intrinsic value of this mission is greatly enhanced by the relation which Jamaica emancipation must necessarily sustain to American slavery and Jamaica evangelization to African idolatry . . . .”² The Jamaica Mission had implications for the AMA’s antislavery project in the United States as well as for current and future missionary labors in Africa, and Lewis Tappan shrewdly drew a transatlantic triangle to persuade donors to consider giving funds to this benighted mission.

Dedicated to making the Jamaica Mission work, Tappan encouraged Amos A. Phelps, the head of the West India Mission Committee, to report to him on the state of the mission when Phelps traveled to Haiti and Jamaica in the fall of 1846 for his health.³ Since the creation of Phelps’s West India Missionary Committee, only $2,032.84 had

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³ Ibid.
been raised for the mission in the United States, an amount “altogether inadequate to the
wants of the mission” according to the AMA.\(^4\) With a public relations campaign,
however, the AMA thought they could revive this mission and with it, its compelling
potential for the American abolitionist cause.

The ministers in Jamaica faced understaffed churches and near bankruptcy at the
time of the mission’s adoption by the AMA. In the summer of 1846, only two American
ministers worked at the mission churches: Loren Thompson at Eliot Station and William
Henry Evarts at Brainerd. Both men and their wives, Nancy and Lucy, respectively, had
attended Oberlin and ventured to Jamaica in the early 1840s and had dealt with a rotating
roll of mission teachers drawn from the educated colored and white population of the
island. The AMA immediately sent a new minister, Seth T. Wolcott, to the island in late
1846 and promised more ministers and even female schoolteachers, and a carpenter to
help the ministers with their building projects. With Wolcott and his wife, Mary, at
Union Station, only Oberlin Station remained without a minister, as the mission still
expected Stewart Renshaw to return to his old post. The financial relief and new laborers
arriving in 1846–47 eventually allowed the mission to expand and build new mission
stations and schools in the late 1840s and early 1850s, but at the time of his visit in
January 1847, Amos Phelps found the mission at its lowest point.

In spite of the mission’s troubles, Phelps saw great potential in the Jamaica
Mission, and he testified that the success of this work would aid the abolitionist cause in
the United States. Parts of his letters to Tappan were printed in the *American Missionary*
and in the Washington D.C. paper, the *National Era*, but other parts of his letters were
marked private, especially Phelps’s disparaging thoughts on the way emancipation had

\(^4\)“To the Patrons and Friends of the West India Mission,” *American Missionary*, Jan. 1847.
been conducted by the British. After all, Lewis Tappan had close ties to the English Quaker abolitionist, Joseph Sturge, and his British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society was associated with Tappan’s American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. In one confidential remark, Phelps predicted that “we shall be able to silence at once and by a short cut any clamor that may be made in our country [the United States] from the bad results of emancipation where it has been worked in the old Master, British Spirit and way.”5 The British had, for example, financially compensated slaveholders but had done little to support freedmen in terms of money or infrastructure. Tappan and Phelps thought that paying off the old masters represented the imperial government’s tacit approval of slavery and refusal to reeducate the master class. Phelps agreed that the island’s planters had shown little remorse for owning slaves, and he described white Jamaicans as “slave-scolding, brow-beating, domineering, as far as possible, as in olden times,” and he added that Jamaica’s whites demonstrated the “master spirit” fused with “the spirit of British aristocracy.” Indeed, he believed that the British had never intended “the emancipated [to be] anything more than a low English peasantry.”6 English prejudices of race and class and the planters’ financial interests to keep the freed people attached to their estates as dependent, low-wage workers countered the ideals of emancipation.

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5 Amos Phelps to Lewis Tappan, Oberlin Station, 12 Jan 1847, FI-1289, Jamaica, AMA Archives, Amistad Research Center, (hereafter cited as ARC).

6 A.A. Phelps to Lewis Tappan, 12 January 1847; FI-1289, Jamaica. AMA Archives, ARC. Excerpts liberally taken from this letter appeared in a letter to the National Era from “Clarkson” on 4 March 1847. Phelps’s use of the word “peasantry” should not be confused with modern historians use of the word in a Marxist context. While historians often refer to the independent farming and animal husbandry of Jamaican slaves as indicative of a ‘protopeasantry’, Phelps, I think, uses the term in reference to a system that kept the former slaves tied to wage labor on the estates.
According to Phelps, the Americans would operate emancipation differently in the Jamaica Mission and, one day, in the United States. Phelps declared that in addition to the obvious missionary goal – the “salvation of the people,” the more exciting and important aspect of the mission was that it would “work out the experiment of freedom on New England and American principles, in distinction from West Indian and British.” The Americans would treat the Jamaicans “as men, and not as serviles,” and their goal would be “to make them a New England farming population, not an English peasantry.” He committed himself to this plan by advising the missionaries to give black church memberships ownership of all mission properties, and he encouraged the ministers to give black men voting rights in the mission’s government. Land ownership should be a priority: “Nothing will give them a feeling of independence, and make them act like men, sooner than this.” Further, Phelps bristled at the notion that the “emancipated are really inferior in nature, etc., and that a guardianship should be exercised over them.” For Amos Phelps and Lewis Tappan, the Jamaica Mission could be turned around if the missionaries cultivated Christian manhood among black men by promoting landownership and independence.7

While Amos Phelps and Lewis Tappan both looked favorably on what American evangelicals could accomplish in Jamaica, this did not mean that they ignored their growing concern that black Jamaicans were not progressing in the way that the missionaries had expected. The gap between expectations and reality surfaced in discussions of whether or not black Jamaicans were getting trained for mission work in Africa. This had been an early goal of the mission; Lewis Tappan and Joseph Sturge had

7 Phelps to Tappan, 12 Jan 1847, FI-1289, Jamaica Mission, AMA Archives, ARC; “Phelps” and “Additional Hints in Regard to the West India Mission,” American Missionary, Sept. 1847. In this letter and two articles, there is a great deal of overlap since the articles reprinted parts of the letter.
corresponded about the prospect of opening a seminary on the island for training black ministers.8 Doubting the potential of such a plan, Amos Phelps wrote Tappan that the efforts to train black Jamaicans for missionary work “has signally failed” for other Christian denominations and declared that “we shall have to give up that bubble.”9 The “failures” of emancipation appearing in Phelps’s letters rang true to the ministers who had been in Jamaica since the early 1840s. In an early issue of the AMA’s American Missionary, one missionary summed up the dilemmas facing the mission, difficulties he attributed to the lingering aftermath of the slave mentality. Freed people required constant guidance to remain on the path to civilization: “[t]he people, just emerged from the darkness and degradation of slavery, are but too easily affected by the evil influences surrounding them, and need the constant supervision of a pastor.”10 In contrast to Phelps’s admonition to encourage manly independence, this missionary felt called to act as a fatherly guardian of wanton freed people.

This gendered and racial trope of the fatherly-missionary and the childlike-savage echoed other nineteenth-century Anglo-American missionaries, yet in this specific mission built by men so committed to freedom it requires some explanation, a point not lost on the missionary men themselves. How did the American ministers so interested in spreading liberty and fostering individualism and manly independence become convinced of the need to “supervise” black Jamaicans? As one answer, the Americans appeared genuinely surprised to find that most black Jamaicans were unwilling to abandon their religious beliefs and cultural practices for the “civilization” valued by white Americans.

8 Tappan to Sturge, 28 Feb. 1845, Letterbook, Papers of Lewis Tappan, Library of Congress.

9 Phelps to Tappan, 12 Jan 1847, Jamaica Mission, AMA Archives, ARC.

10 American Missionary, Nov. 1847.
The American notion that slavery’s products needed to be completely erased left the missionaries with essentially two choices in their dealings with black Jamaicans, both of which resulted in a patronizing hierarchical relationship. If black Jamaicans refused to change and adapt to the Americans’ rules of church discipline, labor practices, and gender roles, the missionaries considered them to be clinging to sinfulness because of ignorance or willfulness. For the black Jamaicans who did join the American churches, they were infants, newly born in the light of Christ, and in need of “supervision” to be kept on the path of righteousness. Neither standing up to the missionaries nor acquiescing to the missionaries earned black Jamaicans a degree of freedom from the observing eye of the American ministers.

One missionary, probably Seth Wolcott, reflected on this “problem” soon after he arrived in Jamaica. “In the transition of a people from slavery to freedom – from things to men, and to meet the demands of the new state, many and great changes are necessary in their temporal interests. One would suppose, at first thought, that disgust at former things would be sufficiently strong to secure the desired changes; such is not the fact.”¹¹ To his consternation, black Jamaicans did not turn against the culture they had constructed under slavery. Instead they were actively reformulating it in the wake of emancipation, and this entailed religious revivals that separated Afro-creole faith from the religion of the white missionaries, claiming property rights rather than being considered property themselves, and what historians of Jamaica have called “family strategies,” since “the transcendence of slavery had to involve the reassertion of gender distinction as a principle of social life.”¹² Their seeming disinterest in undergoing “great

¹¹ “Jamaica,” American Missionary, July 1848.
changes,” at least those changes proposed by the missionaries, disappointed the missionaries who had been primed by enthusiastic abolitionist propaganda to expect something more. In dealing with their disillusionment, the missionaries’ complaints converged on three related issues: religion, land and labor, and family. On these three related realms of the civilizing mission, the American ministers repeatedly misread and misunderstood black Jamaican culture, and as a consequence, felt the need to impose even more “discipline” over disorderly Jamaicans, whether in the churches, schools, or mission households.

I. White and Black Faiths

The dynamic religious culture of Jamaica grew out of a history of encounter between different African cosmologies, the racist hierarchical gospel of the Established Church, a more egalitarian Christianity from British and European dissenters, and Afro-Christianity from the southern United States. The American missionaries, in contrast, came from a much more homogenous Christian culture in which strict doctrinal rules had great importance. Further, church discipline, or the control that the ministers exercised over the behavior of church members, had been essential to the formation of the AMA in 1846. Evangelical abolitionists refused to be members of churches that allowed slaveholders, whom they considered knowing sinners, as members. In Jamaica, however, the American missionaries found a different group of the sinful that needed to be kept out of the church – the black Jamaicans who had now heard the message of the “gospel of liberty” but who did not always appear interested in submitting to the northern

evangelical culture with its gender practices and theological beliefs. From the Americans’ perspective, black Jamaican Christianity’s multiple origins seemed a problematic faith: a combination of African “heathenism” and a corrupted version of Christianity. But Afro-Christianity, and the Native Baptist congregations in particular, had their own historical roots and theological disputes.

Up until the early 1800s, Jamaica lacked much in the way of formal religious structures. It was an outpost of the Anglican Church under the distant supervision of the Bishop of London, and only in the early nineteenth century did Anglican clergy become interested in expending resources on Jamaican whites, and to a lesser extent, the enslaved people. While few white Jamaicans proved devout churchgoers, Africans and creole Afro-Jamaicans drew on religion to maintain their humanity in the harshest circumstances by continuing the rituals and beliefs brought from Africa through the Middle Passage. White accounts from the pre-emancipation period show that African religions survived in burial ceremonies, in conceptions of the afterlife, and in deity myths, the collective rituals and practices that became known as Myalism and Obeah.\(^\text{13}\)

Myalism and Obeah combined different African languages and religious practices into a distinctly creole system.

While observers have long considered Myalism and Obeahism to be distinct (Myalism being a positive, communal faith, Obeah being individualistic and negative witchcraft), religious studies scholar Dianne Stewart has cogently argued that they were part and parcel of the same faith and only made distinct from one another during the

Myal revival in the early 1840s at which time Myalists self-identified against their enemies, “Obeah men.” Following Stewart’s lead, I will refer to the Afro-Jamaican faith existing before the arrival of missionaries as Myalism. Myalism allowed Africans from different groups to come together with a common creole faith and religious language. Myalism had six core beliefs reflecting African religions writ large: a communion of deities or spirits, ancestral veneration, possession trance, food offerings and animal sacrifice, divination and herbalism, and, finally, a belief in a strong, neutral power. Myalists believed invisible and visible powers controlled the world, and that these powers needed to be kept in balance for the well-being of humankind. Black Jamaicans did not assign an inherent moral value of “good” or “evil” to people or objects in Myal rituals; rather they believed that each person had the capacity for either. Consequently, the general goal of practicing Myal was to achieve neutrality, for the sake of the community’s temporal greater good, rather than salvation. This stood in sharp contrast to the Christianity of American Calvinists in the Great Awakening of the 1700s, and their descendents, the nineteenth-century evangelical abolitionists, who stressed the moment of individual conversion – the transformation from sinner into saved that precipitated church membership.\(^{14}\)

Importantly, Myal rites shared symbolic elements with rites of European Christianity, although black Jamaicans attached different meanings to them. This fluidity allowed for black Jamaicans to incorporate aspects of European Christianity into their traditions, and it also made it easy for Africans to join in Christian services with their own understanding of the rituals. In Myalism, the state of religious excitement that Euro-Americans associated with conversion – the crossing of the threshold from sinner to

\(^{14}\) Dianne Stewart, *Three Eyes*, 47, 62, 58.
saved—reflected a spiritual possession or the crossing a the threshold between life and death. The “convince” in which an individual underwent spiritual possession to communicate with the dead, could be mistaken for the ecstatic throes of conversion.\(^\text{15}\) As one American missionary described it: “First, the subject is seized with laborious breathing, soon he falls from his seat, and for hours rolls and tosses his arms and legs in all directions. It is said that old men and women, young men and maidens, thus roll for hours together in the darkness of the night!”\(^\text{16}\) This missionary was perhaps too young to have been a part of the Finneyite revivals of the 1820s, all-night affairs that often merited similar descriptions from staid clergy in eastern cities. Myalists also practiced baptism, or a ritual immersion in water, but in the African cosmology, water served as a protection and did not imply a one-time rebirth, as it did in the Congregational Christianity of the American missionaries.\(^\text{17}\) Some practices, however, seemed quite different from Euro-Christianity. Most white observers wrote about the Myal Dance, a communal circle dance in which a “dead” person placed in the center of the circle was symbolically brought back to life by the dancers’ invocation of the spirits.\(^\text{18}\) As in all religions, death also involved significant rituals, and Myalist funerals involved a number of rites that were performed to placate the dead person’s spirit so that he would not become a ghost and disturb his living relatives’ lives.\(^\text{19}\) Strains of these practices appeared in the

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 54–64; Schuler, Alas, Alas Kongo: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 32.


\(^{17}\) Schuler, Alas, Alas, Kongo, 36.


\(^{19}\) Frey and Wood, Come Shouting, 53.
American missionaries’ letters as “corrupt” Christianity; the ministers were unwilling to see these faith practices on their own terms as historically rooted in black Jamaican culture.

The evolution of Myalism during the eighteenth century reflected the changing social conditions creole Jamaicans faced: Myalism exemplified adaptability. It enabled linguistically and culturally diffuse Africans to formulate a common creole religious system that existed as perhaps the sole black institution in Jamaica. Myalism, one scholar points out, “was the first Jamaican religion known to have addressed itself to the affairs of the entire heterogeneous slave society rather than to the narrower concerns of separate ethnic groups.”

Myalism aided in establishing norms of behavior among enslaved people. In the Myal ethical code, negative or hurtful sorcery used against an individual was not seen as a sin “against God but against society,” indicating Myalism’s focus on “this world” instead of on an abstract idea of an afterlife predicated on individual morality. The person accused of attacking another person with spiritual means was an antisocial threat. In these terms, enslaved black people lived according to a belief system that made some sense of the brutal experiences of slavery. Daily encounters with oppressive and random acts of maliciousness from whites and also other slaves could be countered by rites and rituals to restore the wholeness of the community. Myalism stood in sharp contrast to the European Christianity preached to slaves as a justification for enslaved people’s bondage and that promised heaven to obedient servants and to their masters. The distinction between Myalism and European Christianity began to change in the late eighteenth century when blacks from the United States came to Jamaica. The Christianity they brought with them combined with the Myalist beliefs and practices of

black Jamaicans and formed an Afro-Jamaican Christianity, the roots for the Native
Baptist sects that served as the chief competitors to the American mission churches.

* * *

Many Loyalist black men and women were evacuated from the United States
South to the Caribbean colonies after the American Revolutionary War. The best known
of these émigrés was George Liele, a Virginia-born slave who had founded one of the
first African-American Baptist church near Savannah, Georgia. Liele’s conversion
reportedly occurred during the Great Awakening of the mid-eighteenth century, and he
demonstrated the spiritual gifts of ministry and was allowed to preach on several
plantations in his neighborhood. Liele’s Loyalist owner, who died during the
Revolutionary War, freed Liele a few years before his own death, and Liele, along with
his wife and children, left the new nation as an indentured servant to a British soldier
headed for Jamaica. In 1784 Liele began a small church in a Kingston house along with
four other black Americans, and after a time of persecution from the island’s whites,
Liele was allowed to preach to enslaved people with relatively little interference from
colonial authorities. Liele described himself as a farmer, but he regularly traveled around
the island baptizing black Jamaicans and the occasional white person as well.
Significantly, this meant he supported himself through his own work rather than relying
on a congregation of tithing church members.²¹

²¹ The letters discussing this are reprinted from the Baptist Annual Register in one of the first articles to
appear in the Journal of Negro History. "Letters Showing the Rise and Progress of the Early Negro
Churches of Georgia and the West Indies, George Liele, Stephen Cooke, Abraham Marshall, Jonathan
been culled from the Baptist Annual Register. Liele’s autobiography has been republished in Vincent
Carretta, ed., Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English Speaking World of the 18th
Century (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996): 325–32; Liele’s life is also discussed in Frey
Liele structured his Baptist church around a system of deacons and elders, leaders that the people chose and that he approved. The church rapidly gained new members among freed blacks as well as urban slaves, and the Kingston congregation built its own church building in 1802. In addition to the Kingston church where Liele preached twice every Sunday, he hired a teacher for his free school that let in both free and enslaved children from Kingston. As the Baptists converted enslaved people on the plantations around the island, the church existed beyond the urban brethren who were both slave and free, black and colored. Those interested in the church were divided into classes, a system that had originated with Wesleyans but that had become widely known as a Baptist practice. Tickets were issued and sometimes sold to individuals as a way to raise money, and the ticket identified one’s status in the church, or class. Baptismal services occurred four times a year, and the church held communion at the evening service on the first Sunday of each month. Church activities filled the week. Aside from Sunday services, prayer meetings were held on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and worshippers met on Monday night in their classes with the leaders who examined their faith. The Baptist ministers had little financial support since their congregations were primarily enslaved people, and this point would create endless problems for the American missionaries who expected black Jamaicans to contribute time and money to the Jamaica Mission’s chapels. In the words of one of Liele’s deacons, he traveled around the island to “preach, baptize, marry, attend funerals, and go through every work of the ministry


23 Ibid., 90, 88.

24 Schuler, Alas, Alas, 34.

without fee or reward.” He emphasized his poverty, comparing himself to Saint Paul in that he had not received anything for his pastoral work and instead “had to labour with my hands for the things I stand in need of to support myself and my family, and to let the church of Christ be free from incumberances.” The free Black Baptist churches and their ministers worked in addition to performing their ministerial duties, and the financial strain caused by having a church made up of enslaved people led the Jamaican Baptists to reach out to their white Baptist brethren in England for assistance.

The Native Baptists did not escape the divisive battles common to religious groups everywhere and as Myalist leaders joined Baptist congregations, disputes arose among black Jamaicans about Christian purity. By the 1790s Liele’s Baptist faith had spread faster among the black Jamaicans than the missionary Wesleyan church, and a “sensible gentleman” living in Kingston commented to the English Baptists that “the Baptist church is the church that will spread the Gospel among the poor Negroes and I hope and trust, as there is reason to believe that your church will be preferred before all others by the Negroes, that those of you who are in affluence will contribute and send out a minister and support him.” The English Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) had been formed in 1794, and its leaders expressed interest in reaching out to Jamaica’s enslaved people but did not send missionaries until 1814. In the meantime, the BMS sent religious tracts and books to support Liele’s ministry. In seeking the support of their English brethren, the black Baptists and other clergy on the island testified to the respectability of the denomination and presented their denomination in a “civilized” fashion. The black Baptists were no longer “living in slavery to sin and satan” but “the Lord hath redeemed

26 Ibid, 89.

27 Ibid., 85. Unknown author, letter in Baptist Annual Register, 542–3.
our souls to a state of happiness to praise his glorious and blessed name.” The church’s leaders, most of whom were U.S.-American-born, wanted to make Jamaica into a “Christian country,” and they did so by working with planters who hired them to educate the slaves in Christianity. For example, as planters had to give their slaves permission to attend Baptists services, Liele encouraged them to peruse his covenant, a document of scriptural extracts read once a month to his largely illiterate congregations. At least in their letters to their potential white patrons, the key words denoting a civilizing mission were present: Liele’s “industry” had “set a good example to his flock,” and he encouraged education and literacy, as well as marriage instead of sexual wantonness.

In spite of the black Baptist leadership’s outspoken advocacy of white values that lent themselves to the perpetuation of slavery, the Afro-Jamaicans who joined the churches embraced Baptist doctrine and rituals without necessarily adopting a European worldview. It could be argued that the success of the Baptist church on the island was due in part to the numerous sects that emerged with the name “Baptist,” a fact the Baptist Missionary Society probably did not fully understand until their missionaries arrived. The Native Baptist sects integrated Myalism with aspects of Christianity such as baptism and the presence of the Holy Spirit. For most non-Baptist European Christians, baptism occurred once, usually at infancy, and represented a child’s initiation into the life of the church. For some evangelical Christians, and Baptist sects in particular, one received the rite of baptism a second time after having an adult conversion experience. This second

29 Ibid., 80–1.
30 Ibid., 76, 81, 88.
31 Dianne Stewart, Three Eyes, 89; Frey and Wood, Come Shouting, 131–32.
baptism indicated that a person had been born again into a new life of Christianity, and like Jesus’s baptism in the Jordan River, the Baptists immersed the candidate in water. For followers of Myalism in Jamaica and for Liele’s earlier black converts in the United States, this central component of Baptist doctrine resonated with their African-derived understanding of the importance of immersion. The symbolic language of baptism and the Holy Spirit made sense within an Afro-Jamaican religious perspective, and as Myalism, like early Christianity, had its roots as an integrated faith; it brought elements of Liele’s Baptism into its practices.

Historians Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood attribute this more Myalistic Christianity to another African-American emigrant to Jamaica named George Lewis. They write that Lewis belonged to a schismatic faction that withdrew from Liele’s Kingston church in the 1790s after the congregation was divided over a “dispute respecting speaking with tongues,” a faith practice that resonated with Myal spirit possession but could also symbolize the presence of the Holy Spirit, and that would have a long history in Jamaican religion. George Lewis’s new charismatic sect became known as the Independent Baptists or the Native Baptists, although it is unclear how firm the denominational divisions between Baptists were for the majority of black Jamaicans. In her history of Pentecostalism in Jamaica, Diane Austin-Broos notes the degree to which the Native Baptists incorporated heterodox practices in the early nineteenth century. While some Native Baptist preachers, like Liele, practiced European Christianity, others “relied on dreams and the experience of ‘convince,’ a state of swooning away accompanied by visions, as the evidence of Christian conversion.”

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Native Baptist ministers in Jamaica, we see the mixture of creole and African customs and European Christian beliefs and the difficulty that even black ministers had in differentiating one from the other.

The letters from George Liele and other Baptist Jamaicans point to an early transatlantic evangelical network tying together blacks and whites. Tellingly, both Liele and Bryan referred to their congregations as Ethiopian or as Ethiopian Baptists, perhaps choosing the descriptor as it was the biblical designation of Africa. Their churches were not merely “native” or creole because they also had a biblical basis and a connection to Africa. As Ethiopians in the New World, Liele and his fellow black Baptists identified themselves with a term that indicated their connections to the material geography of Africa even as it also located them within a biblical space, a sacred geography that connected them to the biblical Christian heritage that their Anglo friends might have had a difficult time in claiming for themselves. Yet the experiences of black Jamaicans within most of the white mission churches left the impression that they would never become equals within the Christian family. The biblical representation of black Christians as Ethiopian Baptists had become symbolic of inferior difference rather than a marker of multiplicity within the Christian church. When Lewis Tappan and others in the AMA saw the Jamaica Mission as a way to touch on the questions of American emancipation as well as African missions, they approached Africa as a foreign and heathen place whereas black Jamaican Baptists connected it to a broader Christian heritage.

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34 “Letters Showing the Rise and Progress of the Early Negro Churches,” 78, 84, 89, 90.
The Native Baptists thus had a long tradition on the island that had existed before the arrival of the white English Baptists. The Native Baptists drew on their religious beliefs to organize and execute the Baptist War, and the rebellion, which occurred during the Christmas holidays of 1831, revealed the divisiveness between the Myal Native Baptists and the Baptists of the white churches.\textsuperscript{35} After emancipation, black Jamaicans began to leave the white Baptist missionary churches in the early 1840s because of disputes over who controlled the churches. This time also marked a moment when many anti-slavery advocates in England were losing interest in supporting the civilizing mission to the freed people, and the Baptist missions had funding crises throughout the 1840s. Emancipation, writes Catherine Hall, “offered the key which allowed black men and women the possibility of entry into modernity.” The joint processes of emancipation and conversion, missionaries believed, meant that blacks were “no longer locked in another time, archaic African time or the pre-modern time of slavery, they could enter the present as infants.” Yet few black Jamaicans had any interest in unlearning their culture and lashing out against the way of life they knew. Further, even those who chose to be “reborn” as infants, the “native leaders” in white churches, existed in a perpetual state of being chronologically delayed, behind the whites. Much to the confusion of white missionaries, including the Americans, black Jamaicans did not desire the “enlightened and reformist” influence of the whites, but instead their own autonomous religious institutions. The Americans did not understand Jamaican Christianity and viewed the Native Baptist churches as corrupted versions of the pure American version of faith, and the AMA missionaries at once loathed the competition from the Native Baptists and

feared that their own converts might bring these “corruptions” into the mission’s churches.36

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A frequent biblical allusion invoked by the American missionaries to convey the state of religion in Jamaica referred to the Exodus story of the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness after Moses had led them into freedom from Pharaoh. While the first part of the story played a prominent role in black and white abolitionist rhetoric, few paid attention to the post-emancipation part of the narrative. One of the missionaries sought to correct this: “Let a person spend a few years, or even months, in Jamaica,” he wrote, “and if he does not read the historical parts of the book of Exodus more intelligently than ever before, his experience will not be like mine.” The forty days in the wilderness connoted a period of strife and dissension among the Israelites, and the missionaries drew strength from this biblical tale in their own mission work. They also employed it as a Sabbath School lesson, and in 1850, Loren Thompson spent several months charting the progress of the Israelites through biblical lessons and maps for the benefit of his students.37

As one means of exerting some control over the confusing situation they entered, the AMA missionaries kept circling back to the importance of church discipline. In an article in the American Missionary, the AMA endorsed the missionary instructions issued by the English Wesleyan Missionary Society and recommended it to its readers as the ideal way to approach the problems of excluding sinners. While the AMA officers in New York might have had southern slaveholders in mind when they read the Wesleyan


37 “Jamaica,” American Missionary, July 1848. From an anonymous letter dated March 12, 1848; Thompson to Whipple, 24 July 1850, Fl-1761, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
directives against loose church membership, the Americans in Jamaica likely interpreted them according to their original meaning. The instructions told missionaries to expel a church member who “became a Polygamist or an adulterer – who shall be idle, disorderly, or disobedient to lawful authority – who shall steal, or be in any other way immoral or irreligious.” Such problems would be avoided if the church “first placed on trial” any potential church member to make sure that he “has wholly renounced all those vices to which he may have been before addicted.”38 Church discipline entailed keeping a close watch on the congregation and monitoring the behavior and any potential converts.

One of the missionaries who joined the Jamaica Mission in 1851 recounted his methods of patrolling membership at Brainerd Church. A.M. Richardson had replaced missionary Henry Evarts at Brainerd, and at his new post he met with several people associated with the church who expressed interest in conversion. He saw his potential converts each week, and he found himself “greatly interested and profited by the answers they gave to questions, showing their knowledge of the dealings of God’s Spirit with their souls.” Richardson offered a specific example of how he knew a potential convert had taken a chosen a new path in life. “I inquired of an aged female, who had been somewhat noted for her quarrelsome temper and fiery tongue, whether she was not likely to exhibit the same unchristian spirit and temper as formerly? She promptly replied in the negative. I asked the reason why. Said she: ‘When de Lord take my heart, him mash it all up clean – all up clean, every bit!’ A striking description of the process of turning a stony heart to flesh.” The woman’s expression of faith and sentiment of renewal made an impression on Richardson; she voiced the “rebirth” so valued by the American

38 “Instructions to Missionaries,” American Missionary, March 1847.
missionaries. Another minister, Loren Thompson, had earlier detailed the events of a revival sweeping his congregation at Eliot Station. In the wake of a deadly cholera epidemic in 1850, Loren Thompson believed “many are in heart turning to God” even as he admitted “some no doubt are only excited by fear . . . . It is so in all revivals of religion.” Yet this time seemed different: “Persons who, two or three years ago, were anxious to join the church are now acknowledging that they were then deceived, and are very glad the church did not receive them.” These new converts, Thompson explained, did not join the church “with the design to deceive the minister . . . but because they feel that they are not prepared to meet God” and need the saving grace of Christianity. By April, Thompson announced that eight new members were received into the church already, and there were plans for “ten or fifteen more” to join soon. Knowing the reported false conversion that happened at the time of emancipation, the American missionaries made pains to demonstrate that these converts were truly repentant and purified from the sinfulness of slavery.39

These examples of conversion and increasing church membership, however, appeared relatively rarely in the missionaries’ letters. Often the moments of revival and church growth, such as the post-cholera conversions at Thompson’s church, that merited such optimism among the missionaries were followed with regretful stories of backsliding, excommunications, and the formation of breakaway churches by disgruntled ex-church members. Seth Wolcott feared that the mission’s temporary “popularity will undoubtedly be the stimulus to the faith of some” and he testified that one man, about whom he had doubts, had already slipped into his church and would require extra

vigilance from Wolcott. “One person who has joined the church is the man in the habit of turning his wife out of doors,” and Wolcott had thought he had left the mission’s Union chapel to “go to the natives on account of my plain dealing.” The American ministers spent more time worrying about the Native Baptists’ lack of church discipline and the effect of these congregations on the AMA mission churches. One common frustration for the Americans was that when they denied a Jamaican church membership or excommunicated a church member, the Native Baptists would welcome that person, as Wolcott had thought would happen with his unwelcome convert. Henry Evarts wrote in 1847 that he had been told that three Jamaicans once associated with the chapel at Union Station were “baptized last Sabbath by a native Baptist in the neighborhood. No inquiries were made about them or their standing in our church. This running away is very common.” Besides his startling accusation of his church members “running away” in the manner of fugitive slaves, Evarts felt that the Baptist ministers ignored his position as an ordained minister when they allowed people who had been rejected from his chapel into their church. A year later, in October 1848, Evarts still faced stiff competition from the Native Baptists, and he complained that “prejudice against or rather in favor of, color is excited by them to draw the people away from white ministers.” It was the Native Baptists, Evarts believed, who were the racists in Jamaica because they opposed white ministers. From the perspective of black Jamaicans, the white missionaries’ insistence on church discipline likely seemed like an affront to their sense of freedom.

The ease with which people could be admitted to Native Baptist churches prompted the missionaries to confront what they perceived to be the core problem with

40 Seth Wolcott to Whipple, 9 Oct. 1848, FL-1504; Henry Evarts to Whipple, June or July 1847, FL-1320; Evarts to Whipple, 12 Oct. 1848, FL-1505.
Afro-Jamaican Christianity: so many people declared themselves to be Christians yet the missionaries could see no signs of Christian behavior. One of the first missionaries to the island, Ralph Tyler, had written in 1842 that while “one hundred of my people at Devon Pen were members of a Baptist Church,” he was unable to “see any evidence of one among them being a christian.” Six years later, Seth Wolcott similarly noted that while “the first sight discovers a plenty of religion . . . a closer inspection discloses the solemn fact that there is but little vital godliness . . . I utter no slander when I say that it is quite common for professing christians to be both intemperate and licentious.” The failure to show external evidence of Christianity troubled the ministers. How could someone profess to be one of the faithful without living according to the Americans’ moral code? The American missionaries were blind to the rules of community driving the Native Baptist congregations since they differed from the moral guidelines of sin and holiness the Americans themselves observed. Yet as we have seen, the Myalist and Native Baptist beliefs of mutuality and communal harmony provided a structure for morality quite in contrast to the individual and personal terms of morality that defined the Congregationalist faith of the Americans.41

Accusations of sexual impropriety also informed the tactics used by the Americans to attack the Native Baptists in their letters to the AMA. They were not only corrupting Christianity, the missionaries complained, because the Native Baptist ministers’ failures to enforce church discipline went to the other extreme of promoting immoral sexuality. In one of his articles written about Jamaica, Stewart Renshaw had accused Native Baptist ministers of being “always ignorant, and often grossly

41 Ralph Tyler to Henry Cowles, 10 March 1842, Tyler Alumni File, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, (hereafter cited as OCA); Wolcott to Whipple, 17 Jan. 1848, FI-1394, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
licentiousness, brutal men” who used their position of power to exercise “an iron despotism over the bodies and souls of their classes.” Henry Evarts complained more specifically about the black leaders in charge of the large Native Baptist church that had been built very close to his Brainerd Station. In contrast to being moral beacons for their congregation, Evarts described them as “shrewd and cunning men” able to “descend to the superstitions and low prejudices and intrigues of the people.” Black ministers competing with the Americans for church members could be attacked as those who by not enforcing strict church discipline, promoted premarital sex, adultery, and other transgressions to the American idea of the Christian family. Few freed people believed in the immorality of sex outside of marriage, however, and consequently black ministers did not see it as a sin in the way that the white Americans did.42

While the missionaries typically attributed black Jamaicans’ “inability” to understand sinful behavior to their “childlike” willfulness – they were, as missionary Abner Olds put it, mere “babes in Christ” requiring “simple milk” and black Baptist church leaders were characterized as overly masculine and threatening figures. In the case of one Baptist deacon, Henry Evarts wrote that “more than once his wife has come, bruised and bleeding, to complain to me of his abuses. It has long been a current report that he has been keeping and supporting another woman beside his wife.” For Evarts, the most irksome part of this deacon’s situation was that his congregation continued to support him: “all of these things were well known about him when he was received to the church and put in office.” Another deacon in the nearby Native Baptist congregation had once belonged to Evarts’ church and had been expelled for adultery. The missionaries

proved the illegitimacy of the Native Baptists most convincingly to a home audience by their “uncivilized” gendered behavior. Native Baptism, they believed, was the religion of slavery, rehashing the old systems of concubinage and rape as a means of control, while their American Christian faith was the religion of a new order of freedom.43

In 1852 A.M. Richardson felt that black Jamaicans misunderstood entirely the point of spiritual discipline. To him, church membership represented a person’s devotion to living a moral life, and he thought that the church’s acceptance of people who had not made this commitment was problematic. Richardson and the others also feared that the widespread desire for church membership would cause sinners to infiltrate their own mission chapels. He wrote, “there is a prevailing desire, among the colored people here, to get into the church. They have been taught to believe, that it is almost the gate of heaven; and there is a sort of feeling that if they can only get into it and enjoy its ordinances, they shall be safe.” Yet from the perspective of the history of religion in the Jamaican tradition, it made perfect sense for neighbors, especially in the newly settled peasant communities in the American mission’s mountainous districts, to want to join the church as the emblem of the community. Further, the mission churches and some Native Baptist congregations offered educational resources in their day schools and Sabbath schools. The Americans simply did not understand why this would be the case and often wrote about their need to clean out their churches. One missionary, probably Seth Wolcott, described his job as of a “sifter” and declared his intention to “clear away the rubbish which has been gathering during the joyful days which followed emancipation.”

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43 Olds to Whipple, 19 July 1852, FI-2074; Evarts to Whipple, 12 Oct. 1848, FI-1505, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
In his estimation, too many false conversions had corrupted the churches, and they needed purification “before we can expect God to work much here by his spirit.”

The skepticism any convert raised in the mind of the missionaries created an obvious problem for the missionary effort as a whole. In consideration of a frequently quoted biblical verse in missionary circles, one missionary meditated that while “Ethiopia is stretching forth her hand to God” and “India is raising her voice for the gospel,” they often “stretch out their hands,” and ‘raise their voices’ for what they suppose is the gospel but when the self-denying religion of Christ is presented they will turn away with disappointment and hatred in their hearts.” Black Jamaicans, it seemed, preferred their own understanding of Christianity, and the ministers simply could not understand why formerly enslaved people would remain committed to a faith connected to slavery.

The Native Baptists, in the missionaries’ estimation, clung to the old ways too much, and this created a culture that made it difficult to judge Christian from heathen. To the missionaries, the “superstitious” practices of adult baptism and the ticket system seemed like ways for unreconstructed people to receive forgiveness. Seth Wolcott agreed with this point, noting that “their gospel . . . guilts the conscience by practically assuming that by immersion heaven is certain[.] however vicious the life.” Wolcott continued, “Any one who pleases can be received into the native churches . . . a passport to the world of glory is sure.” If the church had no moral standards through which it patrolled its membership, then the church offered no discipline to control how people lived supposedly Christian lives. A.M. Richardson reported that tickets became something like

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44 A.M. Richardson to Whipple, 2 Jan. 1852, FI-1977, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC. Emphasis original; “Jamaica,” American Missionary, July 1848, Anonymous Letter (probably Seth Wolcott), dated March 12, 1848.

45 Abner Olds to Whipple, 12 April 1853, FI-2152, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
fetish items for the Native Baptists and that “a native preacher in this vicinity, took from a bundle of tickets, laid upon the breast of a corpse, about to be lowered into the grave – the last one rec’d by the deceased, and addressing him, bade him present that when he should arrive at the gate of heaven, and ‘massa Jesus’ would open and let him in!” The black Jamaicans who fell for the practices of the Native Baptists were being fooled into damnation, Richardson believed. He did not see the burial practice as a custom developed by slaves who married African burial rites with Christianity to create their own autonomous rituals to honor the dead. Instead, Richardson passed on this story to the AMA “to show what superstitions, soul-destroying notions are instilled into the minds of this deluded people, by some who set themselves up as native preachers.” Black Jamaicans who continued to subscribe to the faith of their culture were either childlike and easily “deluded” or were the manipulative preachers responsible for “corrupting” Christianity.46

The missionaries’ preoccupation with the corruptions they perceived in Native Baptist congregations also put them on edge about their own church members, and two incidents reveal the ease with which black Jamaicans joined the American churches without necessarily turning against aspects of Native Baptist beliefs. In the first incident, a black deacon at missionary Heman Hall’s Providence Church protested the fact that Hall had repeatedly preached on baptism. Towards the end of Hall’s second sermon in as many weeks on baptism, the deacon “got up and flew into a violent passion and raved at the top of his voice . . . ‘What kind of a gospel is this! What nonsense is this that minister has preached for two Sundays. I don’t want such a gospel as this. I won’t have such a

46 Wolcott to Whipple, 1 May 1848, FI-1435; Renshaw, “Historical and Statistical,” 558; Richardson to Whipple, 2 Jan. 1852, FI-1977, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
gospel. I will leave the church before I will have such a gospel! Minister think we are all fools. Minister is going to make us all jackasses.” He left the meeting yet continued his protestations in the yard outside, even as a number of the church members went out to try and calm him down. The morning’s events startled Hall, who had until then considered the deacon “a deeply spiritual man.”

The deacon went unnamed in the several missionary letters recounting the incident, but his words and actions offer some insight into the way black Jamaican men approached the mission churches. Hall reported that the deacon had not left the church by himself by that “[a] good many members of the church – the more ignorant part – took offence that I should present views differing from their baptist notions, they thought it was not proper that I should preach on that subject, and this led them to sympathize with that deacon.” Like the conflicts that had occurred in Native Baptist churches before emancipation, this dispute over baptism allowed a man who was arguably quite powerful since he had been elected a deacon by the congregation to increase his authority by standing up against the white minister. Black Jamaicans, and most often, black Jamaican men who served as deacons, could use the white churches as a means to gain greater authority over other freed people in the community.

In his interpretation of events, Hall apparently was blind to any other dynamic than the theological question at hand. He thought that the deacon’s anger erupted out of a conflict between the man’s “considerable intelligence” and his emotional connection to Baptist ideas of baptism. Hall wrote that the deacon’s “intellect had been convinced by

47 H.B. Hall to Whipple, 5 March 1856, FI-2471, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

48 Ibid.
the truths that were presented while he set his will against it." In other words, the deacon’s mind knew that the doctrine on baptism preached by Hall was true religion, but his “will” – his feelings, his heart – could not accept what his intellect had adopted. When the deacon and his followers deserted Hall’s church, Hall attributed this to the deep-seeded presence of “slave culture” – even if they could educate and convert willing black Jamaicans, the ministers pointed to examples like this as cases of backsliding. As for the deacon, he was excommunicated from the church and left Providence Station to form his own congregation, gaining the legitimacy required for a religious and community leader.

Heman Hall did not fare so well at the Providence mission station, and not long after, he and his family relocated to Brainerd Station, an indication that he no longer fit in with his former church community. The events at Providence had a lasting effect on Heman Hall and his relations with his next mission post. The missionaries had to make compromises with their congregations if they were to have any church members, and when they broke unspoken agreement – as Hall did when he preached on the subject of baptism – the black church members revoked their vote of confidence for their minister. He wrote of his new congregation: “When they say ‘they left their soul all to God,’ I am left to feel that perhaps they know in their own souls what true faith is and perhaps they do not know anything about it.”

Unsure of whether or not his converts were saved, or if they even understood salvation in the same terms as he did, Hall laid bare the dilemma facing all of the American missionaries in Jamaica. In spite of constructing neat categories like sinner and saved, heathen and converted, the reality of religion on the island defied simple binaries. As much as the missionaries might have cast the Native

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49 Ibid.

50 Hall to Whipple, 29 May 1856, FI-2501, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
Baptists as antagonistic to their civilizing mission, the American churches contained men and women who still practiced ritual meals, adult baptism, and probably other Afro-Christian or Christian Myalist rites.

Heman Hall was not the only minister to deal with manifestations of Native Baptist beliefs in his congregation. Missionary Abner Olds, who joined the Jamaica Mission along with his wife, Ann, in 1849, found many of his potential converts to be still fully engaged in the rituals associated with creole religion. Olds had been stationed at Oberlin Station until 1852, when he was asked to start a new mission station at Golden Vale, land owned by a friend of Lewis Tappan. On one scouting trip to investigate the state of the people at Golden Vale, Olds visited a prayer meeting led by the existing Native Baptist congregation on the estate. He scoffed at the leader of the church for being illiterate and wrote incredulously that this minister encouraged its members to fast twice a week, meaning that they did not go to work on those days. Further, on two nights every week, he wrote, “they sit up and sing all night.” In spite of his dismissive tone towards Native Baptist or Afro-creole practices, Olds proved himself to be something of an anthropologist when it came to these matters. He attended one of these night services and wrote a description of the proceedings: “At these meetings numbers of the women are in the habit of having what they call the ‘convince,’ which consists in falling on the ground, rolling over and tossing their arms, and shrieking out dismal cries; the congregation the mean while encouraged, raise still louder their voices in singing!” According to Olds, not only was the Native Baptist an ignorant man incapable of providing a modern education for the estate’s children, but the religious rituals prevented the laborers from their work. Towards the end of the letter, Olds noted regretfully “that
they had not yet attained the idea that their religion was to affect their daily lives; - to make them better men.” Christianity was intimately connected to certain labor habits and morals tied to “manliness,” and Native Baptists and Myal practices worked against these goals of the civilizing mission.\footnote{Olds to Whipple, 28 April 1852, FI-1880, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.}

After he and his wife had moved to Golden Vale, Olds visited one of his regular prayer groups that apparently had not been expecting him. Olds described in great detail the scene, indicating that he neither interrupted nor absented himself from the “heathen” rite. The Jamaicans were assembled around two tables covered in white cloths, and each person had a white bowl upon a white plate. An herbal tea was served in the bowls, flavored with milk and sugar, and each person had bread to break into the tea. All of the people were dressed in white, and as Olds entered, the leader was leading the congregation in saying grace. The call-and-response service surprised Olds because it seemed all of the people knew the responses by heart. Interestingly, while Olds introduced the rite as yet another “superstition,” he found himself liking parts of the service, particularly the exhortations pronounced by the leader at the end of the service that he thought were “very good.” The missionary and teacher C.B. Venning, who had witnessed and described an identical ritual meal ended his later account with the closing remarks spoken by the leader at the end of the service: “’You done with the world now? No tief [sic]? No lie? No backbite? No whoremonger? You have peace with all your broders [sic] and sisters?’” The service thus concluded with a moral code not all that different from the one taught by the missionaries.\footnote{Ibid.; Venning to Whipple, 21 April 1858, FI-2665, AMA Archives, ARC.}
The rite's complexity impressed Olds, and, in his account, Venning found that the Native Baptist practices were not "evil and only evil." The two only mildly criticized the ritual meal when their comments are compared with other missionary evaluations of the Native Baptists, yet Olds later mused "that it were better for them not to know any thing of Christianity" instead of having an "imperfect knowledge of [it] . . . commingled with gross superstition." The good that the two found in the ritual meal were the elements they interpreted as Christian, and the other aspects they viewed as heathen corruptions. The missionary men could not see that the ritual was acceptable in itself as a meaningful religious expression designed by and for Jamaicans. The pluralist faith of the Jamaicans enabled them to attend Olds's prayer meetings at the same time as they maintained their own practices, and it was this pluralism that routinely evoked anxiety in the minds of the missionaries.

Olds's views would continue to evolve on the question of native practices and their relation to "pure" Christianity. After being on the island nearly four years, Olds wrote about a recent revelation that he admitted might appear "heterodox" to those at home. At one time, he wrote, he had "verily thought that a heathen or a semibarbarian converted would be almost immediately possessed of the habits, manners, and amiabilities of a christian in civilized lands." His experiences in Jamaica had changed his mind concerning instantaneous transformation, and he cautiously expressed his feelings: "a man may become a christian and yet be what might be termed a half naked barbarian." Conversion, Olds implied, did not necessarily entail a radical change of outward behavior. Indeed, this prototypical convert would be changed in "moral bearings" if not in habits. The outward appearances would come slowly, because even after a man "lives

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53 Olds to Whipple, 19 July 1852, FI-2074, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
for a new end... he may not at all think that christian propriety requires that he should cover the nakedness of his back even though he be at work among men, women, and children!” Perhaps modest clothes, middle-class family values, and a gendered division of labor along the lines of northern ideals was not, after all, the signifier of conversion. Olds did not go so far as to declare these “civilizing” advancements unnecessary, but he hoped that they would come in time.54

Ultimately, Afro-Christianity and creole religion had rituals and beliefs that the American ministers could interpret as vaguely Christian, and at various points in the mission men like Abner Olds, along with some others, recognized that Christianity might exist in a different form than their American version of the faith. Abner Olds’s move toward a less outward-focused understanding of faith, however, was less common than the transformations undergone by other ministers, including his colleagues Loren Thompson, Seth Wolcott, Heman Hall, and A.M. Richardson. These men grew more resistant to Afro-Christian ideas and remained committed to the idea that black Jamaicans were susceptible to “corrupt” Christianity, and as a result, needed more supervision to keep from going astray. Without pure churches, how could freed people be turned from “things” into “men?”

In contrast to the American missionaries, black Jamaicans’ pluralist religious experience had prepared them better for the missionary encounter. They could, as Heman Hall’s deacon, join the American churches and benefit from them without casting off all of their personal religious beliefs. The perfectionist brand of evangelicalism of the Americans, on the other hand, made the mission almost impossible. Perfectionism had led the missionaries to abolitionism in the U.S. North, but it was of little use in matters of

54 Olds to Whipple, 2 July 1853, FI-2184, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
intercultural exchange. Confronted with black Jamaicans who did not seem committed to
the rules of church discipline, the Americans grew more attached to discipline as a means
of controlling potential converts and church members, even as they fretted over the
“childlike” behavior of their congregations. This impulse, in spite of its effects, came not
out of a sense of biological racial superiority, even as it reflected the rhetoric of many
proslavery partisans. Instead it grew out of a genuine concern to save the souls of freed
people whom they believed were being led astray by black Baptists. The Native Baptists
represented a threat to the salvation of black Jamaican souls, and even more broadly, they
made the abolitionist goals of this civilizing mission more difficult to achieve for the
American home audience.

II. Faith in Property

The American missionaries believed another peril to the progress of emancipation
in Jamaica entailed land ownership, labor habits, and how black Jamaicans spent the
fruits of their labor. In general, the American ministers and black Jamaican men agreed
on the necessity of land ownership and recognized white planters and the white colonial
government as the primary hindrances to black freeholders. The leading ministers in the
Jamaica Mission in the late 1840s – Seth Wolcott, Henry Evarts, and Loren Thompson –
all had grown up on rural farms and Wolcott in particular, spent his youth working odd
jobs on other people’s property before enrolling Oberlin. He and his fellow missionaries
felt strongly committed to the notion that land ownership was the key to success in
Jamaica because it would allow black Jamaican men independence from unstable wage
labor work, and it marked the first step in social advancement. Just as several of the
mission’s men had became degreed and ordained ministers through their hard work,
black Jamaican men could similarly achieve great things if they worked hard. Although the mission’s men had not had much of a chance to own their own land in the United States, their experiences at Oberlin infused them with a deep regard for self-sufficiency exemplified by the small farmer, and this directed their designs for the Jamaica Mission.55

Property, and land ownership in particular, took on a religious and gendered significance in the Jamaica Mission. In his plans for the mission, Amos Phelps thought that Christian liberty would flourish when black Jamaican men owned property and began to behave like “independent men” who cultivated their own land to support their wives and children, and, of course, the mission churches. In the years after Phelps’s 1847 visit, the ongoing discussion about how to make “men” of black Jamaicans preoccupied the ministers, and the constant remained the link between manliness, property, and moral purity. With property, including a home and provision grounds, would come the Christian family, Phelps and the other missionaries believed; it was only a matter of time before black families settled into homes, and black women were freed from backbreaking agricultural labor to become refined and educated guardians of public morality. Black Jamaicans had different conceptions of land ownership. The notion of family land prevailed in Jamaica in which both men and women inherited land from their parents and shared this land with their siblings, and this confused the missionaries who looked for land to be owned by the head of a family, a married man with a dependent wife and children. As one of Stewart Renshaw’s articles discussed, married couples kept separate provision grounds and separate finances, often joined economically with their siblings

55 Seth Wolcott Alumni File, RG 28/2, Box 1135, OCA.
and parents’ or larger natal family network. Also, while many freed women stopped working as wage laborers, they opted to work on their own provision grounds rather than becoming purely housewives as the missionaries had hoped. The missionaries and Jamaican church members also disagreed on the matter of supporting the church. The ministers assumed that with land ownership and prosperity, converts would freely give money to support their mission churches, yet as we have seen, Jamaican ministers traditionally worked for a living as farmers and relied on their own labor rather than the donations of the faithful. Thus while the Americans and Jamaicans agreed on some aspects of land ownership, they also approached the matter from widely different perspectives.

The question of land rights in post-emancipation Jamaica had a volatile history. After full emancipation in 1838, planters tried to get freed people to stay on as wage laborers on sugar estates and other plantations in hopes that hardworking free laborers might revive the island’s long-declining sugar output. Freed people, however, were more interested in having control over how much time they spent in their former owners’ fields and how much time they worked on their own provision grounds than on the island’s sugar exports, and this led to obvious problems for the planters. As early as 1839 Jamaican planters created a report for England complaining about the difficulties they had in keeping workers in the fields. Whites in Jamaica and those with financial interests in the production of sugar blamed blacks’ poor work ethic for the declining

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economy. One colonial official complained that “the want of continuous labor is still very much felt on many estates, as the Labourers generally work very irregularly, without any regard to the wants or wishes of their employers.”\(^{58}\) In response to their difficulties in maintaining control over the labor force, the planters did not offer higher wages to attract workers, as a free labor system would dictate, but instead devised the “wage-rent” system. Landowners started charging rent for the houses and provision grounds that had been held by slaves and freed people for decades, and the only way the cash payments could be made was if freed people worked the poorly paid wage labor jobs on the landowners’ fields. This obviously contradicted the meaning of freedom former slaves had in mind, and many found ways around the planters’ schemes. Some freed people managed to make their rent payments without needing to have their children work as well, and could send their children to school. Others paid their rent by working for fewer hours but for higher wages on a neighboring estate, allowing them to spend time on their own provision lands. The landowners responded in turn by increasing rents and charging each individual in a household a share of the rent to ensure a continual supply of regular laborers.\(^{59}\) As Diana Paton argues, the wage-rent system had the greatest effect on freed women, “the non-wage-laboring adults” in each household. After emancipation, women withdrew from the estate field gangs to do household work, especially childcare and small-scale farming on family provision grounds. Women also sold their surpluses at weekly markets. When landlords increased rent based on the number of occupants in a

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house, black women had to return to estate field labor if families were to earn enough money to keep their homes. Black men and women did not want to change their family life to satisfy the needs of a white landlord. 60

Stymied in their attempts to get higher wages on the estates, and frustrated with the planters’ unpredictable rental fees, many freed black families left the estates to buy small freeholds in the mountainous regions of the island, the districts where the American missionaries had stations. This “flight from the estates” was less a rejection of slavery and instead should be understood as a response to the “inequities of early freedom,” the wage-rent system of coerced labor, especially the wage-rent system’s intention to force women to work according to the planter’s design rather than the freed people’s plan. Freed people living in the mountainous regions near the American mission stations worked in kin groups, although not necessarily nuclear families, and focused on self-sufficient farming and contributing to the local markets that had been fixtures on the island since the days of slavery. Women’s work included tending the provision grounds and selling the surplus at the weekly market, as well as caring for children. Men also helped in the provision grounds and took on additional wage labor work on estates to supplement the family income. 61

The transforming economy in the early 1840s and the abundance of unsettled land and abandoned plantations in Jamaica made it relatively easy for freed people to make choices about where they lived and for whom they worked. The planters’ decidedly anti-


free market attempts to control their labor force had failed. This changed, however, with the passage of the Sugar Act in 1846, a British free labor policy that devastated the Jamaican economy. The Sugar Act ended duties on non-British sugar imported into England and forced Jamaican sugar to compete with the world market, including that grown by slaves in Brazil and Cuba as well as in other British colonies. Facing economic difficulties, planters had difficulty in paying even low wages to workers, and many proprietors abandoned their estates entirely. The American ministers worried about the declining wages, since it hurt their church coffers, and they focused on the importance of land ownership. The aftermath of the Sugar Act created a window for the American missionaries to purchase land cheaply for themselves, the mission, and as properties to rent or sell to their church members, and the missionaries imagined building a market around crops like arrowroot, ginger, and other small-scale products, items that they advertised for sale in the American Missionary. These small efforts brought some prosperity to farmers associated with the mission churches, but they could not recover the economic decline facing Jamaica as its share of sugar production fell from eleven percent of the world’s crop in 1830 to less than two percent in 1851.\(^2\)

The ministers were quite skeptical of the white proprietors of the land surrounding their mission stations, especially in the wake of the Sugar Act in the late 1840s. Loren Thompson discussed at length the problem with estates becoming “combinations,” or monopolies of a sort, as the owners of neighboring estates agreed to universally lower wages that forced laborers “either to go without money or work for what the Estates may chose to give them.” In spite of lower wages, rents remained the same – £ 1 per acre, and Thompson wrote that the people living near Eliot “do not wish to lease, another month

even, their land. They wish to purchase it.” Thompson suggested that the AMA find some “friends of the oppressed” who might issue loans of several hundred dollars to aid the “worthy poor in this their time of need.” Requests for cash from Americans to help their efforts in Jamaica rarely resulted in large donations, at least during in the early years of the mission, but Thompson wrote hopefully of the potential in the rumored sale of estates bordering Eliot Station: Aleppo Estate, Montrose, a cattle pen, Richmond, and Charlottenburg. The missionaries would ultimately try out their plans on the Richmond Estate when they purchased it in 1854.63

In siding with freed people over the proprietors, especially the owners of the pens (cattle-raising plantations) surrounding Eliot Station, Thompson’s interest in cultivating land ownership had multiple aims. First, having a church of landowners rather than renters ensured that the population would not move away from the church, and the missionaries also felt that in ministering to freed people with their own land, they avoided potential conflicts with the island’s politically powerful whites. With land came homes and, the ministers believed, prosperity. As Thompson observed, the mission churches would never succeed so long as freed people had to choose between their land rents and “the support of the gospel.”64 These three concerns remained central to the ministers’ perennial linkages between their mission’s success and their converts’ land.

When Abner Olds scouted a potential mission station at Golden Vale, the estate owned by Lewis Tappan’s friend W.W. Anderson, the problem of being beholden to a landlord arose. Olds knew that the proprietor, Anderson, wanted him there to “make better citizens [out] of the peasantry and thus enhance the value of [his] property,” and it

63 Loren Thompson to Whipple, 10 Jan. 1848, Fl-1385, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC

64 Ibid.
was not uncommon for some landlords to recruit mission schools as an incentive for their laborers to remain tied to their wage-labor estate jobs. But as a minister, Olds had a different idea in mind. He wrote to the AMA that whatever Anderson expected, “I have no scruples in taking advantage of the openings for the sake of preaching deliverance to those whom Satan holds as captives.” Anderson believed that educating and civilizing his laborers would make him a wealthier planter, but Olds saw “civilizing” as the mere byproduct of his religious work. If Olds could gain souls for Christ and teach them to live in a Christian way, then it was worth it, even if Anderson benefited financially from the mission work. Yet Olds also firmly stated that he would be careful “to be perfectly free so that we need not be trameled [sic] by their schemes of selfishness.” Olds’s feelings towards Golden Vale reflected the concerns raised by Amos Phelps some years earlier when he warned the missionaries against moving into areas with tenants rather than landowners: “Besides while the people are a tenantry, the proprietors can control them, in various ways, as seriously to interfere with the labors of the missionary.” The missionaries had learned this lesson when they built Union Station and then lost most of the neighboring population when the nearby sugar estate shut down, forcing the laborers to relocate and leaving the mission church largely without members. The ministers’ attachment to the idea of land ownership and manliness also spoke to a broader concern about the financial responsibilities of a landowner toward his community.65

The missionaries also believed land ownership had a more psychologically transformative effect. As landowners rather than wage laborers, black Jamaican men would be changed in their morals, gendered behavior, and in their economic standing.

65 Olds to Whipple, July 1851, FI-1915, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC; [Phelps], “Hints Respecting W. India Mission,” American Missionary, Sept. 1847.
One missionary avowed that it “is a necessity that the people should be the responsible cultivators of the staple exports of the Island, and intelligent persons must become the manufactures and exporters of the same.” This was important because the system of wage labor paid by the hour or by the job led “to indolence, unfaithfulness, and wasteful habits” and “must be abandoned.” Wage labor affected more than individual income; it created “pernicious habits, so prejudicial to morals as well as to the temporal prosperity of all classes of the inhabitants of Jamaica.” The only solution, Phelps declared, would be “for every laborer in the fields to become a laborer for himself, that he may reap the benefits of his industry, or bear the evils of his indolence and wastefulness.” Through landownership and self-sufficient labor, black Jamaican men could finally purge the “debasing influences of slavery” that “prevent manly and noble actions.”

If the moment of emancipation had not brought about the immediate change that had been predicted by abolitionists like James Thome, the American missionaries placed their hope in the transformative power of landownership. They viewed property as the opposite of slavery and the best means to eradicate the culture of slavery and to bring about the gender norms valued in the U.S. North.

The goal of the Jamaica Mission had always been for self-supporting churches to be created on the island, and benevolent landowning church members rested at the heart of this vision. In wanting their church members to tithe to the mission’s chapels, the ministers’ expectations did not match the desires of many black Jamaicans. Loren Thompson did purchase several acres of land around Eliot Station, and he organized a rent-to-own scheme to the freed people in his neighborhood. He wrote to the AMA of his plan and to ask them to invest in it: “I wish now to say a few things as to the importance

of the people’s being freeholders. Hitherto, they have got on pretty well all things considered, in leasing land, but such is the present condition of affairs in Jamaica that the sooner the people can procure little homes for themselves the better.” The wealthier their church members became, the missionaries hoped, the more would be given to the struggling mission, and landownership was a sure way to gain more affluent members. Missionary Henry Evarts addressed this issue from another angle, complaining about the distance his congregation had to travel to their wage-labor jobs on sugar estates. Evarts found this to be a “waste of time . . . so a large class are able to do but little more than supply the daily wants of their families.” He meant, of course, that there was nothing left to donate to the mission churches, in terms of time or money. Evarts would have preferred black Jamaicans to own land near the mission church so that they could spend their evenings working on the Brainerd chapel building instead of walking back home from a distant estate.67

The missionaries became exasperated even with those black Jamaicans who had become landowners because they were not giving enough money to the mission. Black Jamaicans were too individualistic, the ministers thought, and not engaged in improving the culture at large. Henry Evarts remembered that “[t]he people, like children, gave liberally while their means at hand were plenty. At Emancipation their wants were very few – their living simple and cheap.” Now, he worried that because Jamaicans “have greatly improved in their living and comforts” and had forgotten “how to get on with as little expenses as formerly,” they were wasting their money on material possessions.

67 Thompson to Whipple, 10 Jan. 1848, FI-1385, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC; [Evarts], “Letters from Jamaica,” American Missionary, June 1847.
rather than donating to the churches. In the Jamaica Mission, property mattered because it imbued men with a sense of independence; however, the missionaries fretted at the development too much independence and the development of consumerism.

From one account, we learn that black Jamaicans thought the white ministers were greedy. The American Nancy Prince discovered this during a conversation with a black Jamaican man as they traveled to Kingston. The man agreed with Prince that Jamaicans needed education, and when she asked him why black men could not pay to support their own teachers, he replied: “our money is taken from us so fast we cannot. Sometimes they [the missionary teachers] say we must all bring 1l.; to raise this, we have to sell at a loss or to borrow, so that we have nothing left for ourselves.” Prince added that the man referred to missionaries as “Macroom hunters,” the macroom being a nickname for a coin of small value. The American ministers might have unfairly taken Jamaicans’ money, and it is likely the Americans and Jamaicans disagreed about what ends should be supported by their money. Prince’s observation of distrust between black Jamaicans and white missionaries (American or English) proved problematic for the American mission in the long run as few black Jamaicans jumped to join in the investment plans of the mission.

When the black Jamaicans living near the mission stations showed little interest in the white men’s schemes for philanthropy, the missionaries read their behavior as evidence of heathenism or the persistence of slavery’s selfishness rather than a rational and legitimate choice. The gap between the black Jamaicans’ views of things and the missionaries’ perspective left the Americans with only one explanation: black Jamaicans

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68 Henry Evarts to Whipple, 19 March 1847, FI-1299, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
69 Nancy Prince, Narrative, 58.
were not yet capable of taking care of themselves because they did not understand how to cultivate a benevolent public culture. In 1847 Henry Evarts attributed this to the mentality of slavery: “It is evident that the slave’s thoughts are naturally and almost necessarily devoted principally to seeking excuse, and evading duties, which he has no interest in doing,” and this meant that “[t]o be ‘co-workers with God,’” seems not at all to be understood.70 Black Jamaican men might have been “manly” in their own minds, but the American ministers saw “manliness” to have the expanded meaning of generously donating money and time to the church.

As most black Jamaicans living near the mission stations did not pool their resources to aid the American churches, the ministers blamed this problem on the habits taught by slavery and to the consequential need for paternal authority within the mission. The need for supervision became clear to Henry Evarts in 1847 when he began to work on building a chapel building for Brainerd. In this year after the passage of the Sugar Act that resulted in decreased wages and jobs for many Jamaican workers, Evarts was flummoxed by the lack of interest his congregation showed in the chapel. In early 1848 a metal roof had arrived from the United States, but Evarts wrote to Whipple that he doubted he could find anyone to help him attach it to the chapel building. In general he found that “the minister among his people is much like the parent in a large family, finding great difficulty in providing for them and keeping them out of evil.” The Jamaicans, Evarts wrote, “were mere children in the point of requiring counsel and planning and in most things, the execution also.” He would have to supervise their every move in the chapel’s work because they showed no incentive to contribute time and planning to the building project. The trouble Evarts had with his own mission station led

70 American Missionary, June 1847. From a letter by Henry Evarts.
him to speculate on the problems of leaving any mission station without a minister. The black Jamaicans living near Oberlin who had been without a minister since 1846, he wrote, "are like a company of children who cannot govern themselves, and must have a parent's eye constantly upon them to keep them from prove tempters to each other." In Evarts' mind, neither the moment of emancipation nor the efforts to cultivate manliness through landownership had created a trustworthy or independent peasantry in Jamaica.  

In the question of property ownership and financial acumen, as in the case of religious faith, black Jamaicans failed to measure up to the Christian subjects that the white missionaries envisioned creating. Just as the missionaries grew suspicious of the religious beliefs and internal attitudes of black Jamaicans when it came to Christian doctrine, they saw heathenism and the legacy of slavery to be the root cause of the difficulties black Jamaicans had owning land and earning money, even if they recognized the institutional racism and macroeconomic problems that complicated black landownership. A people without land and a people who had little interest in helping the missionaries build chapels and schools equaled a people unworthy of self-government to the American ministers.

III. Family and Sex

The differences between black Jamaicans and the white American missionaries over the meaning and proper uses of faith and property also manifested themselves in conversations about the family practices and sexual habits of black Jamaicans. The missionaries critiqued black Jamaican gender ideologies as heathenish or as the lingering effects of slavery whenever they came up against an impasse, whether on issues of

71 Evarts to Whipple, 24 Feb. 1848, FI-1409; Evarts to Whipple, June or July 1847, FI-1320, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
religion or of land and labor, as this chapter has shown. More specifically, the ministers pinpointed a wide variety of sins falling under the category of "licentiousness," a loaded word for antebellum Protestants that represented how liberty could collapse into anarchy without the saving grace of Protestant Christianity. In the antebellum northern lexicon, "licentiousness" served as a polite word for illicit sex - whether prostitution, adultery, sexual assault, or premarital relationships. The *Friend of Virtue*, a publication of the Female Moral Reform Society based in New York and supported by Lewis Tappan and other evangelicals, offered its readers a first-page story on the need for legislation punishing licentiousness with prison in January 1846. "The vice is so flagrant, deadly to the individual and social happiness, offensive to God and all decent men," the editor wrote, that it was as bad, if not worse than, murder.72

At the Oberlin Institute, the problem of licentiousness, and more specifically the accusations that the school encouraged "amalgamation" because of its coeducational and interracial arrangement, was handled by strict rules and harsh punishments for any who stepped out of line. Male students (for women were almost always the victims, never the aggressors in the minds of reformers) who made or even appeared to make advances towards a female student, were forced to read their confession and apology to the entire student body during a chapel service. As an example of such a confession:

I W---- W----, do hereby confess before the Faculty and students of this Institution that I have rashly transgressed one of its most sacred laws by entering the apartment of a young lady not only without permission but after permission had twice been refused me. Though my conduct in this matter may admit of a slight extenuation in the fact that the young lady was confined by sickness, yet it has no apology; and I do now confess that the act was precipitate, unjustifiable, and adapted to break down the wholesome and needful regulations of the Institute and

bring disgrace upon its character before the public. For this offense I ask forgiveness of my fellow students, of the Faculty, and of my God; I solemnly promise hereafter to yield implicit obedience to the laws of the institution and study in all things to promote its honor and welfare.\textsuperscript{73}

The faculty at Oberlin kept their students in order through a culture of “needful” strict rules and the use of the community – and public confessions – in enforcing the rules.

Like most white visitors to Jamaica, the American missionaries were astounded by the “licentiousness” of black Jamaicans and the lack of public condemnation for premarital sex, unwed mothers, couples who lived together without being married, and the lack of interest in forming “traditional” Christian families. The absence of a recognizable way to control sexuality in black Jamaican society made the missionaries feel a need to impose their own order through the methods available to them. Public humiliation played a critical role in the work of teaching guilt and shame. The English Wesleyan Missionary Society’s instructions to missionaries, endorsed by the AMA, recommended the following: “polygamy” or other sexual promiscuities would be combated “by the minister pointing out their evil both in public and private, and by maintaining the strictest discipline in the Society.”\textsuperscript{74} The ministers did their best to control licentiousness by keeping known sinners out of the church and by quickly excommunicating any person proven to be involved in unsanctioned sexual practices.

In the rural regions of the Jamaica Mission, the American missionaries found a society with entirely different gender norms from their own. As Diana Paton summarized, “There was no expectation that women would marry before bearing children. Nor did bearing children necessarily imply that a woman would live with a

\textsuperscript{73} Robert Fletcher, \textit{A History of Oberlin College, From Its Origins through the Civil War} (Oberlin: Oberlin College, 1944), 673.

\textsuperscript{74} “Instructions to Missionaries,” \textit{American Missionary}, March 1847.
pool resources with the father of her child. She could expect support from other family members, especially her mother and the other older female relatives, but bore primary responsibility for the economic support, as well as physical and emotional care, of her children. While some black Jamaicans and many more colored Jamaicans (who numbered few in the mountainous area of the American missions) adopted the Victorian gender ideology of whites, most operated on an entirely different understanding of the family, a point that has been discussed with some derision by a century of missionaries, anthropologists, and other scholars. Caribbean historian B.W. Higman's research pointed to a contrary view – that in the final years of slavery, most black Jamaicans lived in nuclear families, even if multiple nuclear families shared a common house and yard. Other feminist historians have modified Higman's assessment as well as taken issue with the sometimes negative characterization of "matrifocal" families of earlier scholars. These scholars made the case that a family structure more closely resembling West African customs than European notions existed in post-emancipation Jamaica in which female respectability was not tied to the economic dependence of wives and the seclusion


76 Edith Clarke, My Mother Who Fathered Me (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1957). In Raymond T. Smith's analysis, matrifocal families did not preclude a male head of household. He argued that the mother had primary control over the domestic sphere as she often earned as much or more money than her partner. Raymond T. Smith, "The Matrifocal Family," in The Character of Kinship, ed. J. Goody, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1973): 121–44. For more on this historiography see Christine Barrow, Family in the Caribbean: Themes and Perspectives (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1996): 22–25, 72–82.


of women within the private sphere. After all, the family model that served the needs of people living in the industrializing towns and cities of the United States North and England made little sense in the rural agricultural society surrounding the American mission stations in Jamaica.\footnote{Brereton, "Family Strategies," 157.}

When Stewart Renshaw reflected on his several years spent in Jamaica, he commented on an issue that would perplex the American missionaries for the entire span of the mission – the "problem" of unwed mothers. Renshaw wrote that "it is still common for young girls to become unmarried mothers. They lose no standing by it among their neighbors, nor does it offer the slightest impediment to any future matrimonial engagement." While Renshaw complained about unwed mothers as a social problem, not adequately condemned by the community, it proved shocking to most missionaries when they first came to the island. During his first few weeks in Jamaica in early 1849, Abner Olds observed that while he had thought he had known sinful behavior in the United States, it was nothing compared to that which he encountered in Jamaica. Olds wrote that "it is awfully true that while we find all the selfishness that is found in the land of Bibles, civilization, religion, we also find deep degradation, abominable superstitions, and the most disgusting loathsome lustfulness." In a letter published in part in the *American Missionary*, Heman Hall seconded Olds's observations several years later, commenting more specifically on the number of unwed mothers. The reprinted letter came with the following comment from the editor: "The trials of which Mr. Hall speaks have their origins in the terribly corrupt state of public morals, especially in relation to the intercourse of the sexes. Licentiousness is one item in the legacy of woe and crime that slavery has left to its victims. Our missionaries [often] mention . . . this.
They say that the sin is so common, that a young woman who enters the marriage state without having first become a mother, is regarded as possessing uncommon virtue.” Like Afro-Christianity, gendered understandings of land ownership and labor, the black Jamaican family order and Jamaican sexual norms were seen as the products of slavery and therefore problematic.\textsuperscript{80}

Historians recovering black women’s experiences in the Caribbean and have showed how enslaved women crafted their own gendered interpretation of womanhood that, like that of freed men, contained elements of white gender norms with aspects of black culture as well.\textsuperscript{81} In terms of slave resistance and also women’s labor and political activism after emancipation, motherhood offered black women a means to justify their activism that resonated with contemporary white notions of femininity yet that also drew on African traditions, and motherhood also was an important way to signal the passage from child to adult.\textsuperscript{82} With no public stigma of immorality or class status associated with unwed mothers as existed in the United States North, it was worse to be poor or without family support than to have children out of wedlock in Jamaica. Many young women who became pregnant continued living with their parents because most Jamaican men could not afford to establish households until middle age. Sometimes young women would move into the house of their fiancé, and the couple would postpone marriage until

\textsuperscript{80} Renshaw, “Historical and Statistical View,” 572; Olds to Whipple, 8 Jan. 1849, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC; “Jamaica Mission,” American Missionary, Feb. 1853, emphasis original.


\textsuperscript{82} Mimi Sheller, “Quasheba, Mother, Queen: Black Women’s Public Leadership and Political Protest in Post-Emancipation Jamaica,” Slavery and Abolition 19, no. 3 (1998): 90–117.
they became financially independent. Historian Thomas Holt points to a more complicated dynamic at work later in the nineteenth century: even as black Jamaican women “aspired to an ‘ideal’ family structure” with a male head of household, they also “insisted upon their own and their daughters’ economic autonomy.”\(^\text{83}\) If this can be traced backward and applied to the mothers of the period following emancipation, it becomes clear why a mother might keep her daughter in her home and even help raise her illegitimate children until the daughter could marry either the children’s father or another man who made enough money to support her. During slavery and after, strong networks between older women and young women had often replaced the traditional male-headed family, or meant that a young woman might live in a household where the male-head was an uncle rather than a father.\(^\text{84}\) Family lands and the discard for marriage bonds within the Native Baptist church reflected these family and sexual practices.

The missionaries interpreted this in a different way. Charles Venning worried about the state of the young people – the children of church members – in his congregation whom he feared would not become church members themselves until they had passed through a phase of “sowing their wild oats.” The young people in his congregation, Venning wrote, had been “stimulated by extreme notions of freedom, and restrained but little from vice especially the vice of licentiousness” by the others in the community. The problem of a lack of public condemnation of sex outside of marriage irritated the missionaries to no end, and this is understandable given the rigor with which

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any hint of impropriety was handled at the Oberlin Institute. Loren Thompson remarked that a change was in the air from the old ways when he saw “a public sentiment” was taking shape “against public crimes – such as lying, dishonesty, fornication, and drunkenness.” Civilizing required a public moral order of a particular kind, even if this had little parallel in the island’s history, in the missionaries’ opinion. 85

Aside from worrying about premarital sex and illegitimate children, the American missionaries also fixated on the nature of black Jamaican marriages. Stewart Renshaw complained that Jamaican marriages were not based on affectionate ties between a man and a woman, but that “a woman wants some one to ‘dig her yams,’ the man, some one to ‘boil his pot,’ and wash his clothes.” These merely legal relationships, or economic arrangements between men and women, did not seem to cultivate the Christian bonds of tenderness and affection between men and women that would make them loyal to one another and that would set them up to be good parents. Seth Wolcott pointed out the widespread adultery he believed existed among black Jamaicans, commenting that at Union Station, “the sentiment prevails extensively, that a married man may have as many sweethearts as he pleases.” Even those black Jamaicans who did marry were judged by the ministers as having somehow illegitimate marriages since they did not look like the Christian families the ministers expected. One aspect of this skepticism towards marriage came from a connection the missionaries observed between marriage and church membership. Abner Olds recounted a conversation with a potential church member in which Olds asked him if he were married. “‘O, yes!’ was the reply, ‘I am all ready to draw to table! (to come to the communion,) implying that marriage was perhaps

85 C.B. Venning to Whipple, 1858 Annual Report, FI-2709; Thompson to Whipple, 14 Jan. 1849, FI-1539, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
the better half of religion. The people often speak of it as constituting an evidence that they are in favor with God." The reasons given for marriage, like converts’ demonstrations of faith, remained suspect in the minds of the Americans.\(^{86}\)

George Allen, a professor at Oberlin in Ohio who volunteered to teach at the mission’s Richmond School in 1863–64, remarked on what he interpreted to be the mixed-up gender roles of the families living near Richmond. According to Allen, men did not want to work hard in order to provide for their wives. Regarding Jamaican men’s labor practices, he wrote that they worked in gangs, as in the times of slavery instead of independently. “A man gets his neighbors to help him a day in planting yams. He does no more himself – the women and ‘pickneys’ must do all the rest.”\(^{87}\) What Allen observed was the long-existing division of labor that black Jamaicans had employed on their provision grounds during slavery, and on their own land after emancipation. On the land apportioned to them to grow their own food, Jamaicans had divided agricultural responsibilities between men and women, leaving the more labor-intensive task of yam and sugar cane agricultural to men while women harvested “female crops” like beans and nuts.\(^{88}\) While fewer women worked as wage labor on estates, they still had responsibility for the provision grounds. Yet for Allen, this demonstrated black men’s laziness and their mistreatment of women for not protecting them in the private sphere. Not surprisingly, Allen also saw little value in the weekly market near Richmond. Regarding the Saturday morning market “conducted exclusively by women,” Allen found it

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\(^{88}\) Holt, 171.
“amusing to see the women gesticulating and hear their gibberish and laughter, as they conducted their trading. It was a purely African scene.” The women selling and buying at the weekly market were depicted as comical, women playing at men’s work, rather than the backbone of the Jamaica’s domestic economy. It was also “African,” and would need to change before the black men and women of Jamaica would become “civilized” to European eyes.

The sexual practices of black Jamaicans appeared to the Americans as the result of slavery, a society debauched by sexual assault, mixing men and women in laborer’s barracks, and a system that made creating any sacred private sphere impossible. In abolitionist propaganda writ large, the negative effect of slavery on families and sexual purity was a common refrain. As cruel as slavery had been, freed people had not become only victims but had cobbled together an understanding of the family that became central to how they approached the new world facing them after emancipation. In Bridget Brereton’s words, freed people drew on “family strategies” to keep women and children protected from intensive labor and the assaults of former masters, and this often resulted in women removing themselves from field work, but not necessarily to stay in the home as a housewife. This confused the missionaries, who expected that with slavery’s end, black Jamaicans would want to reorganize themselves along “Christian” lines, just as they would abandon all of their religious customs and gendered understandings of labor. Just as when the missionaries faced unrepentant converts or “selfish” church members who resisted donating time and money to the chapels, they found themselves unable to control or really even understand Jamaican “licentiousness.”
CONCLUSION

In the metanarrative of Jamaican emancipation, Americans told themselves that in the immediate aftermath of emancipation in 1838, black Jamaicans had converted in large numbers to Christianity, perhaps at the watch-night services written about by so many abolitionists. This wave of new Christians, however, proved problematic when it turned out that they had no interest in being reborn into newly constituted Christians. For the American missionaries, the “failures” of emancipation were attributed to the persistence of the lessons learned by slavery and the ongoing assaults coming from “heathen” Native Baptist ministers as well as the racism of white planters. Yet even when the “childlike” blacks were not being influenced by either group, the missionaries kept running up against Afro-Jamaican culture. The abolitionist ministers had come to Jamaica with the hopes expressed by Amos Phelps – they would cultivate a society of free holders reflective of New England farmers. Each landowning man would have a dependent wife and children whom he provided for by working his own farm, and the extras would be invested in the church community. The assertion that Christian liberty required manly independence took a backseat to what ministers’ saw as a more immediate need to keep “licentiousness” in check and to prevent the impurity of their churches by regulating their converts through strict church discipline. Such measures were necessary because the Jamaica Mission had greater implications beyond the individual souls of black Jamaicans – it was of critical importance to the question of slavery in the United States, at least in the minds of the ministers. If they could succeed, they would give abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and other speakers on the First of August something truly spectacular to discuss.
In America, especially in dear old Oberlin, we are borne along on the wave of religious feeling and it requires very little effort to take the right course. But here the case is reversed. There is nothing (but the grace of Christ), nothing external to keep us up but everything to pull us down, and first we know, we find ourselves in the slough of despair. – Sarah Ingraham Penfield

PART III
INSIDE THE MISSION HOUSEHOLD

The American ministers in Jamaica remained committed to their position as fatherly caretakers responsible for ushering freed people into a new era of Christian liberty, yet they did not always manage to maintain firm control over the mission family. As the previous chapters showed, the ministers had trouble convincing the majority of black Jamaicans that they were living sinful lives requiring transformation. Further, some of the leading ministers’ less powerful missionary colleagues took issue with the way the civilizing mission was being conducted and, in response, the dissenting members of the Jamaica Mission proposed alternative methods of “civilizing.” In the following chapters, I turn to these conflicts among white missionaries. Even as time progressed and new people joined the mission, the divisive issues in the Jamaica Mission reflected recurring themes: the dilemma of how to define Christian liberty, or the balance between the abolitionist-inspired notions of freedom and social control; the related question of what liberties should be granted to women missionaries; and the matter of how individual missionaries governed their households, the primary locus of the mission’s “civilizing” work. As the 1850s progressed, the place of white women in American abolitionism evolved along with the gendered rhetoric of Christian reform, and this, along with religious developments in the burned-over district, produced missionaries to Jamaica with ideas about “civilizing” quite at odds with the established notions of the mission’s stalwart, and often stubborn, leaders.

As the missionaries squabbled, they provided an opportunity for black Jamaicans to gain more control over the mission's churches and schools. This had the effect of creating multiple fronts in any conflict. For example, a disgruntled missionary had not only his American opponent to confront, but he also needed to measure the effect of his actions and words on the single woman schoolteacher or "native" assistant at his station, the young Jamaicans living with his family, the deacons in his church elected by the congregation, and, perhaps, the Native Baptist minister trying to recruit new church members from the American church's congregation. A defense of religious liberty or ministerial authority made by a white minister could be co-opted by a Jamaican deacon in his own congregation who sought similar independence, or might be interpreted to apply equally to a white woman schoolteacher at his mission station. The Jamaica Mission became a crucible showing the real effects of the theoretical squabbles among American abolitionists in the antebellum period, conflicts that would continue to boil over into the Reconstruction South.

The growing generational gap in the mission cannot be ignored. The missionary men like Loren Thompson, Henry Evarts, and Seth Wolcott, the main characters of the previous chapter, had grown up in the 1820s and attended Oberlin in the 1830s when it was a small school on the fringe of northern society because of its commitment to abolitionism. They had left Oberlin during the first half of the 1840s, and by 1847, all three were established at their mission stations in Jamaica. Throughout the late 1840s and in the 1850s, these men, their wives and children would be joined by some likeminded men and women who were about the same age, and others who had quite different experiences and, consequently, ideas about mission work. The last group of
missionaries to come to Jamaica arrived in the late 1850s, and this group of married couples in their early twenties, a generation younger than the Thompsons, Evartses, and Wolcotts, had graduated from a dramatically different Oberlin. No longer a lone rural outpost, Oberlin was one of many Midwestern towns founded by abolitionist reformers from Ohio to Iowa, and by 1858, the ranks of abolitionism’s supporters had grown far beyond the radical fringe that marked the movement in the 1830s.

One of the most important transitions during the 1850s involved the changing place of women in the abolitionist movement and, more generally, the gendered language used to white women’s roles in Christian reform and American nationalism. While some new arrivals to the mission agreed with the older men’s notions of manly independence and masculine Christian reform, others, particularly single women, found this mode of “civilizing” to be antiquated and ineffective. If the mission were to flourish, these white women believed, the women missionaries could not be relegated to the sidelines as mere teachers but needed to take a more active role as leaders. Invoking Catharine Beecher, the one-time opponent of abolitionism, these women (and some men who supported them) declared that white women, by virtue of their race and gender, had special talents to offer missionary work.²

Indeed, by the end of the 1850s, the AMA had changed course on “the woman question.” No longer interested in the same manly manifestations of Christian reform, the AMA called on women to work for “the promotion of every benevolent enterprise

² Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” American Literature 70 (1998): 581–606; The feminine civilizing mission also focused on controlling the feelings of converts and many women missionaries as well as some male sympathizers interested themselves in forging emotionally dependent connections with converts rather than judging Jamaicans simply on external behavior as was common for the older men in the mission. In this sense, the mission households bear comparison with the interracial intimacies and power relationships in colonial households described by Ann Stoler in, among other places: “Tense and Tender Ties,” in Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).
and the salvation of the world.” Women needed to be missionaries, this article attested, and they should “address themselves to labors for the conversion of souls, the promotion of temperance and purity, the overthrow of oppression, and the relief of the oppressed.”

In the late 1850s, the AMA had abandoned their masculine and martial language of reform for the Beecher-esque softer language of female influence. The ministers in Jamaica were largely removed from these changes and were still committed to the primitive Christianity fostered at the Oneida Institute and Oberlin and the masculine Christianity developed during abolitionism’s early days. Further, their perceived position as fatherly-missionaries among their black and white households and churches in Jamaica made them attached to a strong sense of white paternal privilege.

In addition to processing the changing ideology of domesticity in relation to missionary work, the Jamaica Mission also encountered some of the odd aftereffects of the Second Great Awakening. The burned-over district that had spurred the formation of Christian perfectionism and evangelical abolitionism served as the home base for a number of religious sects that took the ideas of the Second Great Awakening in heterodox directions. As early as the 1830s, New Yorker William Miller predicted the imminent return of Christ, a movement that attracted much interest from the veterans of Finney’s revivals, including Angelina Grimké Weld, as they saw it as the culmination of their movement. While Miller died a disappointed man at the end of the 1840s after his initial calculation and his several recalculations for the date of the millennium proved faulty, his followers created their own sect, the Seventh Day Adventists. Other outgrowths of revivalism that emerged in Central New York gained strength in the years leading up to

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the Civil War including Joseph Smith's Mormons and the utopian perfectionist colony at Oneida led by John Humphrey Noyes. Both of these groups proffered alternative gender arrangements for their communities as Smith and his followers introduced plural marriage, and Noyes arranged a system he called "complex marriage." In addition to these groups, the more diffuse movement of spiritualism had taken hold in Western New York as certain young women were reported to have gained the ability to communicate with the dead. These many departures from orthodox Protestantism built on the language of evangelicalism familiar to many people and made new truth claims that seemed to be the fulfillment of the religious awakening that had dwindled in the 1830s.

The conflicts among the missionary men and women in Jamaica reflected these changing religious and gender values in the United States, and the Jamaican context added another complicated angle to these familiar conflicts. Chapter Five narrates a sex scandal that began with missionary John Hyde's radical religious views. As an independent man, the other ministers claimed, he had a right to express his beliefs, even as those beliefs turned the racial hierarchy of the civilizing mission upside down. Only when Hyde's message of extreme Christian liberty subverted the gender order of the mission family did his colleagues take action against him. Chapter Six turns to the 1850s and the experiences of three single women schoolteachers in the Jamaica Mission. In this chapter, I show how women who were opposed to women's rights found themselves using a hybrid of domesticity and woman's rights language to defend their approach to the civilizing mission. Finally, Chapter Seven analyzes the mission household and the Christian family as both were viewed as critical locations for transmitting civilized habits to Jamaican freed people. This chapter highlights the differences between younger
missionaries and older missionaries' ideas of what the Christian family should look like, and it also points the varied ways discipline and affection were intertwined in the mission family.
CHAPTER FIVE
Civilizing Missionaries: From Spiritual Liberty to Sexual License

In May 1850 a black Jamaican named Thomas Livingston wrote to George Whipple, the foreign corresponding secretary of the American Missionary Association, to inform him of the changes that had recently taken place at the Eliot Station’s school. The forty-seven-year-old Livingston had become a shopkeeper after emancipation in 1838, and he had belonged to the Jamaica Mission’s Eliot Church since the early 1840s. He reported to Whipple that the newest teacher at Eliot School, an American woman named Urania Hunt, “was not the person for this place.” Irritated with the inconsistency of the American women who served as schoolteachers, Livingston and other black Jamaicans had decided to form a board of trustees to take control of the school, and Livingston told Whipple that the board had hired a native Jamaican man to take Urania Hunt’s place. This would provide for reliability as well as giving black church leaders a more prominent role. In the past, Livingston recounted, “the school was intierly under the control of the Minister and we had no voise in the school.” The appointment of a black man to teach at Eliot gave the black Jamaicans an unprecedented measure of control over their children’s education. While apprehensive at first, by July 1850, the minister at Eliot, Loren Thompson, fully supported the actions of the black Jamaicans; Thompson told George Whipple that the recent events at Eliot were “a very important step in the advance of freedom” and remarked that “the people at Brainerd and Hermitage have taken the same stand.” For Thompson, these events signaled the advance of “Manhood under the genial influences of a pure Christianity,” and he proclaimed: “Let pure freedom
be preached, the freedom that the Son of God gives” so that the “signs of life” might emerge from the “dry and crushed ruins of Slavery.”¹

What made Loren Thompson, the same man who declared that few freed people were “able to judge what a good school is” two years earlier, decide that he should hand over his Eliot School to their authority?² Why did Thomas Livingston chose this particular moment to seize control over the school when he and other Jamaican men had a long list of grievances against Thompson’s way of doing things? The events occurring in the Jamaica Mission during 1850 clash not only with the missionaries’ expressed opinions in the late 1840s, but they also sound out of tune with the dominant story of most nineteenth-century Protestant missions. Historians such as Catherine Hall, Patricia Grimshaw, and Jeffrey Cox have demonstrated how Anglo-American missionaries in a variety of locales expressed their hope for native-run churches but almost always felt that their church members lagged behind the necessary degree of “civilization” to merit their independence.³ This chapter examines how this issue was forced to the forefront of the Jamaica Mission in 1850 in the wake of one missionary’s unrelenting attempt to convert the others in the mission to his radical evangelical notions of spiritual freedom and individual equality.

For the entirety of 1850, the white members of the Jamaica Mission battled over the meaning of Christian liberty, and their disputes resulted in a power vacuum that

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¹ Thompson to Whipple, Eliot Station Report, 24 July 1850, FI-1766; Thompson to Whipple, 8 Aug. 1850, FI-1776, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

² Thompson to Whipple, 18 May 1848, FI-1444, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

enabled black Jamaicans to take a greater hand in the day-to-day operations of the
mission churches and schools. Just as important was the nature of the missionaries’
infighting. The religious message of missionary John Hyde reflected the mood among
many veterans of the Second Great Awakening in the 1840s, especially in Hyde’s home
of Central New York. Hyde argued that the outward practices of Christianity, such as
rituals and church discipline, distracted God’s people from true spirituality. He asserted
that men and women, blacks and whites were all equally endowed with God’s spirit, and
he preached to anyone who would listen that God resided within each individual’s soul.
To follow one’s instincts was to follow God’s will and to exist in true spiritual liberty
rather than following the moral codes set out by the human church institutions. In many
ways, his radical individualism resembled the beliefs of some small Christian sects.4
These groups complicated the Christian perfectionism developing at Oberlin because
oftentimes these “perfectionist” communes called for new gender and family
arrangements that contemporaries deemed “licentious.” Over the course of his time in
Jamaica, Hyde developed a theology and understanding of “spiritual wifery” resonant
with the religious climate of the burned-over district; however, in the missionary setting
of post-emancipation Jamaica, his beliefs had the additional effect of serving to denounce
the civilizing mission. For the missionaries to try to “civilize” black Jamaicans was
pointless if black Jamaicans, like white Americans, had God within them. According to

4 Hyde’s perfectionism resembled that of John Humphrey Noyes, and his emphasis on individualism
resembled that of Hicksite Quakers. For more on the radical religious context of central New York see:
Whitney Cross, The Burned Over District (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1950); Richard DeMaria,
Communal Love at Oneida: A Perfectionist Vision of Authority, Property, and Sexual Order (New York: E.
Mellen Press, 1978); Ann Braude, Radical Spirits: Spirituality and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth-Century
America (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989); Spencer Claw, Without Sin: The
Life and Death of the Oneida Community (New York: Allen Lane, 1993), 10–19. While he might have
drawn inspiration from Noyes and others, his faith ultimately seemed to have been a method of self-
aggrandizement for his own personal gain.
Hyde, true Christians and free Christians, the all-important factor in this particular
abolitionist civilizing mission, followed the dictates of their inner conscience, and for the
missionaries to impose their lifestyles on the Jamaicans was working against Christianity
and against the principles of abolitionism.

Hyde’s rhetoric of freedom corresponded in part to the freed people’s case for
emancipation, and consequently, the missionaries who took Hyde seriously had a
newfound appreciation for black men like Thomas Livingston who showed an interest in
leadership roles in the mission stations. In striking contrast, the mission’s white women
had more difficulty finding their place in the mission’s upheavals. Hyde’s idea of
Christian liberty temporarily rewrote how the ministers understood the mission family’s
hierarchies of race but had relatively little impact on the standing of women in the
mission. Significantly, Hyde’s biggest critic was a single woman schoolteacher whom all
but one of the mission’s men described as an irritating dogmatist who opposed religious
liberty. Just as the Lane Rebels had defended their right to speech against Lyman
Beecher in 1834, the American men in Jamaica protested any circumscription of their
colleagues’ freedom of expression.

Through a narrative of the events taking place in the Jamaica Mission in 1849 and
1850, this chapter illustrates how the American ministers clung to gender hierarchies
even as their support for religious liberty directed them to see the racial dimensions of the
civilizing mission in a new light. Hyde’s supporters in the mission abandoned their
endorsement and support for his ideas and his right to express them only when it was
revealed that he had taken another missionary’s wife for his own “spiritual wife” and had
been encouraging Jamaican men and women to do the same. The rapid, albeit temporary,
dissolution of the mission’s underlying principles and the subsequent outburst of sexual experimentation among some of the missionaries revealed the delicate balance between liberty and license, freedom and social control in the abolitionist mission to Jamaica.\(^5\)

I. **MARY DEAN AND THE “PECULIAR VIEWS” OF JOHN HYDE**

In 1849 two young women joined the Jamaica Mission as the first single women schoolteachers. Like their predecessors, Mary Dean and Catherine Strobie must have been awed to feel the winter warmth of Kingston and to see the green foliage of a Caribbean winter as they departed Kingston for the arduous journey up into the Blue Mountains. At this relatively early date – the AMA had only adopted the mission two years earlier – the women faced mostly illiterate students, many of whom spoke more creole than standard English, rustic schoolrooms, limited supplies, and with half of the salary of their male colleagues, they were expected to live with married couples to help offset their costs. Mary Dean and Catherine Strobie had graduated from the Oberlin-inspired Mission Institute in Quincy, Illinois, and having lived on the Illinois frontier among transplanted New Englanders and European immigrants, the women were not strangers to rural life or to uneducated and foreign country folk. Their new living arrangements as the “daughters” or “assistants” to married couples might have been more unfamiliar territory.

Strobie, assigned to Eliot Station with the Thomsons, soon met a British missionary whom she married and the couple planned to relocate to Africa. Mary Dean had a different fate. Placed at Oberlin Station with John Hyde and his wife, Dean quickly found herself at odds with this couple but found little support in her criticism of them.

\(^5\) Barbara Fuller, “‘Christian’ Morality in ‘Heathen’ Jamaica: The American Missionary Association and the Case of Dr. Hyde, 1847–1858,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 36 (1): 228–42. In her study, Fuller does not use gender as a category of analysis.
During and after their time together, Dean complained that neither of the Hydes did much work, and she added that John Hyde rarely led the household in family prayer and often expressed “peculiar views.” After the Hydes’ departure from Oberlin Station, Dean was not left alone for long; in January 1849 Abner and Ann Olds replaced the Hydes. Mary Dean liked the couple, and both husband and wife quickly allied themselves with Dean when she began to publicly denounce John Hyde as a danger to the mission’s goals.

Dean was astonished that all of the ministers, save her housemate Abner Olds, considered Hyde to be “a proper teacher” and that they believed his views to be in accordance with Christianity and therefore proper for a missionary. She questioned their logic: “I have known some Catholics and Mormons whom I verily believe were Christians,” but it did not follow that “it would be right and proper to send them forth as gospel missionaries.” Missionaries to foreign places needed to represent the right sort of Christianity: orthodox evangelical Protestantism. She emphasized that when teachers were sent to “a heathen land” the society sending them should “know what doctrines they teach.” Dean concerned herself with the negative impact of Hyde’s teachings on the Jamaican people. She thought that while religious liberty might be allowed for people in the United States, missionaries who were models of Christian behavior must be held to a different standard. Her own duty as a teacher and role model for her students was never far from her mind, as her letter against Hyde concluded with a paragraph describing the progress of her “little black folks” who she hoped to see become “ornaments of society.”

In spite of having the support of Abner Olds, Dean had little success in getting the other missionaries – Henry Evarts, Seth Wolcott, and Loren Thompson – to agree with

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6 Mary Dean to Whipple, 7 March 1849, FI-[unreadable], Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
7 Dean to Whipple, 14 Aug. 1849, FI-1594, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
her assessment of Hyde, and she wrote of her concerns to George Whipple and the Executive Committee of the AMA in New York. Dean faced challenges from the ministers who did not appreciate her attempt to be the moral conscience of the mission. As a single woman, Dean already occupied a precarious place in the mission family, and her outright condemnation of John Hyde was an exercise of moral authority that the ministers in Jamaica would not tolerate. One missionary even told her directly that she “had better not write so much” for she was a “lone little girl.” In a letter written about six months after Dean’s arrival, Seth Wolcott praised Dean’s docile fellow teacher, Catherine Strobie, and he called the Hydes “valuable help,” while in regards to Mary Dean he wrote: “I fear Sis. Dean has not quite command enough of herself, and is rather too much disposed to find too many Nazareths, out of which no good can come, to make herself so useful and happy as she might be.” Dean met with not only Wolcott’s disapproval as Loren Thompson and Henry Evarts also commented on the difficulty she seemed to be having fitting into the mission family in their annual reports of 1849.8

Rather than desisting, Dean continued to voice her disappointment in John Hyde and her distress at the other ministers’ apparent unwillingness to see his faults for what they were. She justified her intervention by invoking both her intellectual qualifications as well as her responsibility as a woman to serve as a moral beacon and a protector of the mission family. She defended herself against the charges laid against her by citing her educational credentials. She wrote: “since the year 1835, I have been under the spiritual and bible teaching of such men as Samuel May, Asa T. Allen, David Nelson, Moses Hunter, and many other good men and women perhaps not as well known.” Dean had

8 Dean to Whipple, 18 Oct. 1849, FI-1634; Wolcott to Whipple, 29 Aug. 1849, FI-1487, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
also read all of "Finney and Mahan's writings and doctrines and more than that all I have been searching the scriptures myself to see if those things were so." Charles Grandison Finney, the famed revivalist, and Asa Mahan, the president of Oberlin, both occupied privileged places in the evangelical abolitionist community, and further, both men were personal friends of George Whipple as he had worked at Oberlin before moving to New York to become the corresponding secretary of the AMA. More than simply taking these men at their word, Dean had conscientiously crafted her own hermeneutics to assure herself that the writings of the most prominent antislavery evangelicals were correct. She thus felt quite confident in her abilities to judge the religious views of Hyde, and she had found them to be destructive to the broader goals of the mission and could not understand why the other ministers failed to recognize his error.

Dean also felt that her gender placed her in a position to guard the Christian family. Following the ideology of domesticity that saw women as the moral centers of their families and the protectors of virtue, Dean extended her reach beyond the private sphere, that had no real correlation to the state of things in Jamaica, to incorporate the entire mission family as her own. This matched the rhetoric of women's special place as missionaries and schoolteachers that filled the articles and books penned by supporters of female education, including missionary theorist Mary Lyon and domesticity's greatest populizer, Catharine Beecher. At Lyon's Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, future missionary wives and teachers learned that while men were to be the evangelists of Christian faith, women missionaries were charged with keeping their men safe from "going native" and also had a duty to model Christian motherhood and to teach female

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Dean to Whipple, 12 March 1850, F1-1691, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC. All emphases original, unless otherwise noted.
converts how to comport themselves as Christian ladies. Thus in addition to arguing from a theological point of view, Dean also wrote from the perspective of a white woman interested in modeling the Christian home and preserving the Christian family, especially since the mission family’s purity had high stakes for the civilizing project. While Catharine Beecher and other northern domestic writers spread the idea that American women had a particular racial work to perform in preserving the nation’s racial and moral purity, this was more than theoretical for Dean in Jamaica. Dean thought of herself not only as a woman with moral duties but as a white woman civilizer, and as such, she believed she held important power.

This became especially clear in the nature of Dean’s critique of Hyde. She mentioned only tangentially that Hyde “has openly said he did not believe in the divinity of Christ,” but she spent a half page detailing his frequent declaration that “his soul abhors the idea of family prayer.” Even as a single woman, family prayer was a particularly sensitive subject for Dean, as she wrote: “it is family religion that has saved me from the depths of ignorance and vice, as low as any [black Jamaicans] I have come to teach. And shall I see the family altar broken down and say nothing [?]” Family


prayer had been central to Mary Dean’s own salvation from sin, and it was even more important in Jamaica. When a family joined together for a daily prayer service, as was expected by both evangelicals at home but especially for those abroad, they turned the hearth into a chapel and united parents and children into a congregation of sorts, and outwardly demonstrated that the home was dedicated to the preservation of morality and Christian virtue.

In neglecting family prayer, Hyde demonstrated to Dean that he was ill-suited for modeling Christian manhood to black Jamaicans. Family prayer, Dean insisted, also protected the mission household from the “heathen” threats coming from unconverted Jamaicans. While Dean herself was unmarried and thus unable to fulfill the motherly and wifely ideals of domesticity, she believed she could act on these principles as a member of the mission family writ large. Her femininity called her to defend the sanctity of the Christian home and to guard against impurity. By neglecting family prayer, Dean thought that Hyde was not only a bad example to black Jamaicans, but she also feared that Hyde and his family were letting down their guard in the midst of a society ridden with potential corruption. For Dean, the institution of the Christian family and religious orthodoxy could not be separated from each other, as Hyde’s religious views implied. As many contemporary northern white women might have responded, Dean believed that the mission’s men, Hyde included, would heed her womanly moral authority.12

Yet the mission’s men precluded white domesticity from taking on the same degree of authority that it had in many northern evangelical circles, and indeed, in other

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12 Dean to Whipple, 18 October 1849, FI-1634; Dean to Whipple, 14 August 1849, FI-1594, Jamaica, AMA Archives. ARC.
missionary contexts. When Dean came to Jamaica in 1849, she did not find a female auxiliary society of some kind created by the missionary wives, nor did she find herself in charge of a female school or some other relatively autonomous position. Dean’s use of domestic and gendered religious language ran into the ministers’ assertions of evangelical manhood that had been established in the 1830s. As Christian men, they cultivated independence and liberty of speech, religious views, and actions; and Dean’s persistent attacks on John Hyde appeared to be an unwarranted attempt to limit his freedom. The mission’s men were so dismissive of Dean in their letters to the AMA because they feared that she might induce the mission board to take a more proactive role at monitoring their activities, and this would be an unconscionable limitation of freedom in their minds.

In October 1849 Hyde broke his silence and responded to the AMA with his own letter in defensive of his religious views. As one of the few letters actually written by Hyde – with one or two exceptions, he stopped writing directly to the Executive Board after this letter because he no longer recognized their authority over him – this long document revealed how he couched his religious views in a language of religious liberty and individual freedom, one familiar and appealing to abolitionist supporters and evangelicals like George Whipple and Lewis Tappan, the AMA’s treasurer. Hyde denied none of the accusations being made against him and instead reinterpreted them within a framework of Christianity that made his faith seem more purely spiritual and less legalistic than the faith of his accusers. If Mary Dean played up her womanly role to

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13 Missionary wives and unmarried teachers created broader roles for themselves in Hawaii and in Asia at the same time as the Jamaica Mission. See Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty*, 171–75; Robert, 56–75.
protect the family, Hyde emphasized his need for religious freedom and manly independence from the “chains” of the outward practices of religion.

Hyde began his letter conventionally by recounting his spiritual journey and his conversion experience. He wrote that as a younger man, he had struggled with his own dedication to God, as he had believed it necessary to experience a “thorough consecration of [himself] to God – a consecration in which nothing was reserved.” Like many living in the evangelical burned-over district of central New York, Hyde desired a dramatic religious experience, but after his initial conversion he failed to keep the fires of faith alive. First, Hyde tried to consecrate himself through outward practices: he regulated his dietary intake of “meats & drinks,” read “spiritual books,” and attended “to every duty,” yet he still “felt a bondage within that [he] could not shake off.” In hindsight, however, he realized that “God had led me to a point where the church was not able to deliver me.” For Hyde, the institutions and practices of Protestant Christianity only confined his soul and prevented him from opening up to God, and he significantly made this point to George Whipple, a dedicated abolitionist, through a language of “bondage” and “freedom.”

Hyde continued his spiritual narrative by recounting an experience that he had had just prior to leaving New York for Jamaica. He had met a person who had once experienced a similar spiritual dilemma, and this unnamed person told Hyde to stop focusing on outward practices as he was guilty of “making a Christ of religious duties” rather than knowing the true Christ. This advice resonated with Hyde who had felt overly dependent on “formal prayer” since his conversion. In the year and a half he had spent in Jamaica he had further escaped from this “inward bondage,” and, he wrote: “God has cut

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14 J.S. Hyde to Whipple, 11 Nov. 1849, FI-1642, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
me loose from every dependence, but Christ for salvation.” “Cut loose” from any obligations, Hyde believed that he had achieved total independence. He no longer felt obliged to pray regularly because he now knew “what it is to pray with the spirit and the understanding.” Even more significantly, he claimed that “I now find my mind constantly exercised in the things of God, or on the subject of Christian experience, without any effort on my part against my natural inclinations.” He interpreted his “natural inclinations” to be the things that God desired him to do, and these things no longer included family prayer, as he wrote: “for more than a year past, God has not given me liberty to do it (as it seems to me) and in giving it up, I am satisfied that I have followed the leadings of God’s Spirit.” He reason for not saying grace before meals followed the same logic. Hyde concluded with a comment on the mission project in Jamaica: “God has opened my eyes to see the truth” and “it is painful to me, to see those who are laboring in this island for the conversion of men, appear so well satisfied with outward appearances.” These other missionaries, Hyde believed, had “not advanced very far in Christian experiences,” and their “want of discernment” was what led them to be so critical of his own more developed spiritual views.15

Hyde’s personal conversion narrative drew on a familiar antebellum evangelical language of bondage and freedom, but given that he was a missionary to emancipated people in Jamaica under the employ of the first abolitionist missionary organization, his choice of terminology was particularly effective. He described his new understanding of religion to be so powerful that it freed him from bondage: his soul’s emancipation occurred when he no longer felt bound to participate in the rituals and regulations that he understood to be outward expressions of faith instead of true spiritual understanding.

15 Ibid.
Hyde’s “peculiar views” led him to interpret his own impulses as God’s will and to preach a gospel of radical individualism that called on each person to follow their own instincts instead of the inherently false (because they were external) teachings of those in authority. The missionaries’ earlier focus on how Jamaicans lived, dressed, and worked were no longer important: only their commitment to the spirit mattered. Yet this newfound spiritual “liberty” was exactly the spiritual illness diagnosed by Mary Dean. She felt that Hyde’s abandonment of church discipline was a bad example for black Jamaicans and that it had the potential to undermine the order of the civilizing mission. For Dean, salvation would only be achieved through orthodoxy, and Hyde’s cavalier actions might result in the damnation of black Jamaican souls that he had been sent to save. In other words, religious diversity might be acceptable in a “civilized” society like New York where white people could be responsible for their own salvation, but it was tantamount to disaster in a “heathenish” place like Jamaica peopled by “childlike” blacks who could not be held accountable for their actions.

The Executive Committee in New York shared Dean’s apprehension about introducing such religious ideas into the Jamaica Mission. But when George Whipple began to inquire about Hyde in letters to the other missionaries in Jamaica, he received a startling response. Rather than seeing Hyde’s unorthodoxy as problematic, the majority of the other missionaries jumped to Hyde’s defense. They invoked two central reasons to explain their support of Hyde, even as some acknowledged the peculiarity of his views. First, the missionaries fiercely defended their own freedom and autonomy from the oversight of the American Missionary Association. The ministers in Jamaica had no intentions of relinquishing their independence to an authority thousands of miles from the
mission field who had little understanding of the day to day challenges of missionary
work. Secondly, the ministers blamed the whole controversy on an overly judgmental
Mary Dean. The ministers' commitment to their own independence as well as their deep
dislike of Dean's attempts to assert any authority would remain significant factors that
allowed the brewing storm surrounding Hyde to build in strength.

II. EXPANDING CHRISTIAN FREEDOM, SPRING 1850

The animosity between Mary Dean and the Olds family on one side, and John
Hyde and the other ministers on the other, crystallized in January of 1850 with the arrival
of another single woman schoolteacher named Urania Hunt. Hunt was expected to
replace Dean's classmate Catherine Strobie at the Eliot School. She had been recruited
by two of the missionary couples – Henry and Lucy Evarts and Loren and Nancy
Thompson – when the foursome had been in the United States for six months in 1849.
The Evartses had stayed at Oberlin for some time, and there they successfully recruited
Lucy's younger brother Heman Hall to join the mission with his new wife, Sophronia.
The three couples and Hunt all traveled together and arrived in Kingston around New
Year's Day. The rough voyage proved disturbing to Urania Hunt in more ways than one.
In addition to disliking the uncomfortable weeks at sea, Hunt apparently fought with
Nancy Thompson, but the oblique references to the dispute in the letters of the
Thompsons and Hunt did not specify the exact nature of the conflict. Whatever occurred
was serious enough to cause Hunt to postpone her move to Eliot Station – where she was
expected to teach – and in January 1850, she temporarily moved in with Mary Dean and
Abner and Ann Olds at Oberlin Station instead.16

16 Urania Hunt to Whipple, 7 Jan. 1850, FI-1663; J.O. Beardslee to Whipple, 15 Jan. 1850, FI-1671,
Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
In the mission family in 1850, then, were many married couples – the Wolcotts at Union Station and Abner and Ann Olds at Oberlin had remained in Jamaica while the Thompsons from Eliot Station and the Evartses from Brainerd returned to America. The married teachers included Charles Venning and his native Jamaican wife, who taught in the mission’s large Brainerd School, and the newly arrived Halls, stationed at the outpost of Providence, where the Hydes had been staying up until now. After Heman Hall took over at Providence, the Hydes were set adrift and stayed at a number of mission stations over the ensuing months. Urania Hunt and Mary Dean were exceptional as unmarried women, and as housemates at Oberlin Station, the two became close to one another during Hunt’s first two weeks on the island. Yet after Hunt’s first month in Jamaica, the two were no longer friends and had become sworn enemies. Hunt became a supporter of John Hyde, his most apt pupil, while Dean remained his most persistent critic. These two women occupied the mission’s most ambiguous role as they had no husbands or fathers to speak for them in the mission’s governance, and because they received the smallest salaries by far, they depended upon the support of others for their livelihood on the island. They did not remain on the margins of the Jamaica Mission, however, but became its center.

After a few weeks at Oberlin Station, in mid-January 1850, Urania Hunt wrote to Whipple to assure him of her recovery from the unhappiness she had suffered during the first few weeks in Jamaica. Indeed, Hunt told Whipple that she had discovered her true vocation in Jamaica: “the Lord has given me the sentence of peace maker [between Hyde and Dean] for which naught but the grace I have received since I came here had power to prepare me.” She admitted her initial opposition to Hyde’s views, after having spent her
first few weeks with Mary Dean, but after meeting with him for twenty-four hours she converted to his beliefs. The meeting, she told Whipple, had been the most “exciting conversation I have held with any individual.” This unusually long discussion of faith, religious practices, and missionary work made Hunt cognizant of her own “spiritual infancy” and had triggered a new awakening in her soul. Now that she had learned Hyde’s “way of faith,” she felt “impelled by the inestimable grace I had received to make an effort to impart knowledge of the way” to others, in spite of the fact that she “was held back by those who had received less or received it so long before that they loved less.” Dean and the others who did not understand John Hyde were deemed inferior to his supporters who had been risen to a new level of faith.  

Hunt’s “conversion” into a “Hydeite” (as Dean referred to his allies) proved extremely distressing to Mary Dean as well as to Abner Olds, Dean’s ally and the minister at Oberlin Station. Building on Urania Hunt’s support, Hyde became more vocal about his religious beliefs in February and March. The pair became constant companions, moving between mission stations as they saw fit. Dean and Olds both wrote letters to Whipple in March of 1850 describing how Hunt and Hyde would ride around together on the Sabbath, not for the purpose of attending church services but “to seek their own pleasure.” Olds also noted that on one Sabbath when Hunt was staying at Oberlin, “she was exceedingly rude.” He continued, “I was awakened from my sleep in the morning by her hallooing to Dr. H. in another room and saying that Miss Dean had broken the Sabbath . . . . In all these things she was not only not rebuked, but manifestly encouraged by Dr. H.” The pair, it appeared, were intent on making Mary Dean’s life miserable for she was their primary critic in the mission. In a later account of the events

17 Hunt to Whipple, 15 Jan. 1850, FI-1672, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
around this time, Hunt did not dispute Olds’s account, but she defended her actions by claiming that as Dean misrepresented Hyde to the AMA on purpose, she was left with no recourse but to treat Dean with “indifference or ridicule.” To be sure, Mary Dean did criticize the AMA for sending both of them, writing to George Whipple that the AMA was paying for “two laborers each to tear down what the others had built up.” Dean believed that the unorthodox behavior of Hunt and Hyde worked against the civilizing mission. Dean equated the two errant missionaries with the very people she had been sent to civilize, as she saw it her duty “to oppose all the teachings of Dr. H. and Miss H. just as much as I do the errors and wickedness of the people.”18

What might Urania Hunt have gained by supporting John Hyde? Her three-week sea voyage to Jamaica resulted in a traumatic break with the Thompsons, and she had no escape from them after arriving in Jamaica as she was stationed in their mission house. As a single young woman, she would be expected to serve as a deferential assistant to Nancy Thompson, helping with housework, childcare, and other domestic duties, all added on top of her four-day-a-week teaching schedule. She probably found little sympathy in the rooms of Mary Dean, as Dean generally prided herself on her own ethic of unceasing labor. Hyde’s charismatic personality along with his need to gain allies made him a perfect match for a woman feeling homesick and out of place. Further, as Abner Olds’s account of their antics unwittingly revealed, Hyde supported Hunt’s actions within the mission and gave her a vote of confidence that the other members of the mission did not. Whether or not Hunt was actually mentally insane, as the ministers’ would later claim, her rapid adoption of Hyde’s religious views and her quick attachment

18 Abner Olds to Whipple, 18 March 1850, FI-1693; Evarts to Whipple, 15 June 1850, FI-1744; Dean to Whipple, 12 March 1850, FI-1691, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
to a married man likely happened in part because of the sense of power she gained by befriending Hyde. Like Mary Dean, Hunt found herself at odds with some of the mission’s ministers, but she had found a dedicated advocate in John Hyde.

True to patriarchal form, the mission’s men continued to stand by John Hyde while becoming increasingly irritated with both Mary Dean and Urania Hunt, whom they saw as the source of the recent disturbances in the mission family. Hunt proved especially problematic for Loren Thompson, the minister at Eliot Station where Hunt had been assigned to live and teach. By early April 1850, she moved out of Thompson’s Eliot mission house and into the home of Thomas Livingston, the church deacon whose letter began this chapter. While it is unclear how much Livingston had to do with Urania Hunt’s choice to take up residence in his house; Loren Thompson was bewildered by her decision. He wrote to Whipple that it created “a good deal of inquiry among the people.” To make the situation even worse, Hunt stayed near Eliot Station, if not in it, so that she could have a better chance to influence the church members and her former students. Thompson soon found himself up against an attempted coup as Hunt and Hyde tried to turn the black church members against him. According to Loren Thompson, Hunt spread reports far and wide that Thompson was deceptive, and when people asked her for proof, she claimed cryptically that his deceitful ways were visible only to her spirit, a comment that led Thompson to think she was mentally unwell. Urania Hunt also allegedly schemed to get Thompson fired and John Hyde ordained and hired by having Thomas Livingston write to the AMA. In retrospect, Thompson later remarked that the only reason why his congregation had not abandoned the church once their ears had been
“filled with her unjust and slanderous talk” was because of his established reputation in the community.\textsuperscript{19}

An elaboration on Loren Thompson’s standing at Eliot Station gives some insight into his relationship with Thomas Livingston as well as the more general currents of how Jamaicans perceived the American missionaries. Some years before this incident, when Stewart Renshaw left Jamaica to return to the United States, he took with him two girls—the daughters of Thomas Livingston. Renshaw’s intention was that the girls would help care for his own children on the voyage back to the States and then he would educate them at Oberlin or some other interracial institute. As an aside, Renshaw asked Theodore Weld if his school in New Jersey would take some black Jamaican children, likely the two Livingston girls, and he was denied his request. Weld, perhaps too well-read in the missionary literature on the state of Jamaica, feared that “the contact of children brought up in slavery is, almost of necessity, pollution.”\textsuperscript{20} Meanwhile, the absence of the girls stirred a great deal of conversation among their friends and family in Jamaica who believed that Renshaw had taken them for the purpose of selling them into slavery in the United States. This indicates that the abolitionist stance of the American missionaries was not always so clear in the minds of black Jamaicans who recognized the United States as a slaveholding country, a continuing problem that a later missionary observed in 1860.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Thompson to Whipple, 25 Nov. 1850, FI-1807, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.


\textsuperscript{21} Thompson to Whipple, 15 Feb. 1848, FI-1404; Thompson to Whipple, 25 Jan. 1850, FI-1676, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC; Thorton Bigelow Penfield to Henry Cowles and Minerva Penfield Cowles (his
The problem was resolved in 1849 when one of the girls, named Angelina, grown up and married to a (presumably) African American, returned to Jamaica in 1850 along with the Thompsons, Evarteses, Halls, and Hunt. She and her husband eventually served as teachers in the mission, but at the time of their return, they were most valuable to the missionaries in that they proved the ministers to be honest brokers. Thompson wrote about this at length throughout the Spring of 1850. In one letter he saw potential in the fact that in leaving the island and then returning, in addition to bring back Thomas Livingston’s child, he had made new inroads with the church members at Eliot. He wrote, “My going home and returning, bringing with us Mr. Livingston’s Daughter have settled questions, which in many minds have for a long time been doubtful. . . . Our people had been told, by evil designing persons, that we were fooling them – that we did not intend to come back, etc. etc.”22 His return to the island salvaged his reputation and left him in a position of strength so that when Urania Hunt tried to overthrow him, he managed to maintain his position as the minister of Eliot Church.

If he wrongly interpreted the feelings of the black church members, Thompson’s fears that Hunt and Hyde were trying to unseat him were not imagined. One Sunday while Thompson was visiting another mission station, Hyde and Hunt joined together to lead a service at Eliot espousing their views and their intense dislike of Thompson. Hunt’s message was so inflammatory that Thompson spent no space complaining about the fact that Urania Hunt, a woman, had preached in his church. According to Thompson, Urania Hunt preached a sermon that exhorted the couple’s belief that “God’s


22 Thompson to Whipple, 13 May 1850, FI-1727, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
Spirit was alike in all, in the children as in the Adults, in the Sinner and the Saint, and our duty was to follow this spirit.” Further, the couple denounced the civilizing mission by using the same racialized metaphors of the family used by the missionaries. “Children,” Hunt told the black congregation, “must not be controlled as it would be interfering with the Spirit’s teaching.” In the antiauthoritarian gospel of Hunt and Hyde, they not only opposed the social order of the missionaries that firmly differentiated between the civilized and the heathen, the teacher and the students, but they condemned it as anti-God. The couple saw the missionaries’ paternalism to be dictating God’s will to others rather than allowing the spirit of God to work freely without interference. The actions of the two led the other missionaries to call a mission-wide meeting on the last day of April in 1850.

III. SHIFTING ALLIANCES, MAY AND JUNE 1850

On April 30, all of the missionaries convened at Eliot Station to discuss the supposedly separate issues of Urania Hunt and John Hyde, yet the meeting’s debates centered on the behavior of the two single women: Mary Dean and Urania Hunt. Going into the meeting, most of the missionaries found there to be something amiss with Urania Hunt, but only Mary Dean and Abner Olds connected her erratic actions to the influence of John Hyde. The other ministers and schoolteachers found Dean as well as Hunt troublesome but generally supported Hyde’s work. Henry Evarts, on the other hand, was quite partial to both Hyde and Hunt. Indeed, for most members of the mission, the issue was not whether or not Hyde should be expelled from the island, but what position he should hold since he felt God called him to perform some labor other than carpentry, the task to which he had originally been assigned. In seeking to regain control over the

23 Thompson to Whipple, 25 Nov. 1850, Fl-1807, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
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threatening chaos, the mission’s men thought that they needed to chastise the two women at the heart of the problem, the two women who represented the extremes on either side of Christian liberty – the “atheism of liberty” espoused by Urania Hunt and the “despotism of institutions” that Dean tried to enforce. The ministers’ negative reaction to Hunt and Dean alike, and their almost indifference to Hyde, showed the ministers’ gendered way of interpreting who could express what notions of freedom. When a woman preached a gospel of liberation, as did Hunt, or critiqued the religious beliefs of one of the mission’s men, as did Dean, it was seen as indicative of a mental illness. Yet Hyde’s views – or perhaps his way of expressing them – was seen to be in accordance with Christian belief or, at the very least, worthy of support from his fellow men.

The April 30 meeting had three main results in the shifting alliances of the mission. First, Abner Olds gained the support of Heman Hall after a lengthy theological debate with John Hyde. Yet the two men were not enough to counter the decision by the mission to appoint Hyde to the position of “missionary evangelist.” This resolution also stipulated that the AMA should continue Hyde’s salary, much to the chagrin of the newfound alliance of Abner Olds, Heman Hall, and of course, the nonvoting Mary Dean. The meeting’s unanimously passed second resolution called for Urania Hunt to be sent back to the United States. The brethren agreed to have Evarts speak with Hunt and try and convince her that it was in her own best interest to return to New York, but they left the departure date up to her. Thus the meeting concluded with the lines between the two faction now explicit, and with Hyde being elevated to a new position and Urania Hunt

24 Strong, Perfectionist Politics, 41–43.
being tentatively scheduled to leave the mission.\textsuperscript{25} In early May, a flurry of letters left the island for New York reporting on what had taken place at the meeting at Eliot and afterwards. These letters demonstrated the changing attitudes of many of the mission’s men, and they also revealed the mounting hostility between some missionaries and contained accusations of inquisitorial personalities on one hand and unorthodox licentiousness on the other. They further revealed the ambivalence the mission’s men had in regulating one of their fellow ministers as Hyde’s message of spiritual liberty began to convince them that they had been investing too much effort in social control instead of following the “true” spirit of God. Although significantly, neither Urania Hunt nor Mary Dean seemed to merit any similarly licensed freedom from the ministers’ authority.

In the May round of correspondence, ministers Seth Wolcott and Henry Evarts, and teacher Charles Venning, all had come to new “Hydeite” understandings of their faith and spirituality. Seth Wolcott reported that he was quite irritated with the likes of Abner Olds and Mary Dean who failed to recognize the new spirit that was taking hold of the island. Wolcott witnessed a new movement to end the rules and regulations that humans placed on God’s spirit. Henry Evarts, the strongest supporter of Hyde, used similar language to speak about the great change occurring in Jamaica. As the Hydes and Urania Hunt had all moved in with Henry Evarts at Brainerd, they also influenced the teacher at the Brainerd school, Charles Venning. Venning complained that Abner Olds was a “legalist,” and consequently it was “quite natural” that he “would condemn a gospel-free

\textsuperscript{25} Thompson to Whipple, 7 May 1850, FI-1722; Olds to Whipple, 8 May 1850, FI-1723, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
man as being disposed to licentiousness." Venning’s comment reveals the line of attack employed by Olds, Dean, and Hall – they must have accused Hyde and Hunt of acting like black Jamaicans who were too easy with the privileges of freedom and who took liberty beyond the constraints of Christianity. In the opinions of Hyde’s supporters, he was merely living out the “gospel of liberty” in his own way as an independent man deserved to do.

These three men’s rapid conversions can perhaps be explained by Hyde’s evidently charismatic and persuasive character, hints of which emerge in a series of letters written by Julius Beardslee. A former member of the Jamaica Mission who had moved to Kingston in 1846, Beardslee had been kept in the loop about the recent controversies. At first he outright condemned Hyde’s theological position, writing that it was absurd and dangerous to believe that “conscience is just Christ within and that if an individual, even in the darkness of heathenism, follows the dictates of his conscience, he will assuredly be saved.” Yet Beardslee’s deep disgust of Hyde’s views evaporated after he had spent several days in the company of Evarts and Hyde. In his second letter, sent less than a month after the first, Beardslee confessed, “I have not been in a right state of mind – I have had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. The Lord has graciously opened my eyes to some of my own defects, and I have seen enough to convince me that I am not in a state to judge others.” Stylistically, Beardslee’s second letter resembled letters penned by Wolcott and Evarts that repeatedly referred to “the living God” and lyrically described the wonder of God’s work with the mission. The men

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26 C.B. Venning to Whipple, 9 May 1850, FI-1726, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
of the mission felt quite certain that they were righteously defending their independence and that of the people they had come to save.\(^{27}\)

In between Hyde and his supporters and Dean’s alliance sat Loren Thompson, who struggled to balance between what he believed to be Hyde’s right to his own views and the havoc these views had created at Eliot Station. In early May, Thompson not only dealt with the mission business of Hyde’s and Hunt’s positions, but he also had to manage the change in leadership taking place at Eliot School. As to the issue of Hyde, Thompson wrote to Whipple that he wanted to change his vote upon further reconsideration. He clarified his stance: “I voted in favor of this at the time, but on looking on the resolution it says more than I am willing to say or I apprehend that it says more. My difficulty is with the word ‘sustain’ . . . I am free to let him act out the convictions of his own mind, I have no desire to bind his conscience, or have my own bound by promising to ‘sustain’ him.” Thompson expressed his doubts about Hyde in relation to the mission family. Hyde seemed to want to “be left free to do or not to do, go or not to go, stay or not to stay, etc. just as he feels inclined,” and when Hyde found that others disagreed with his plan for ministry, he judged them “as acting hypocritically or deceitfully” rather than as truly committed to Christian liberty.\(^{28}\)

Thompson’s disagreements with Hyde and Hunt also reflected the fact that her sudden refusal to teach at the Eliot School had upset many of his church members. Hunt’s support for greater freedoms had led her to complain that Loren Thompson was too controlling over the school, a complaint that might have been shared by Mary Dean.

\(^{27}\) Beardslee to Whipple, 29 May 1850, FI-1738; Beardslee to Whipple, 21 June 1850, FI-1748, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

\(^{28}\) Thompson to Whipple, 7 May 1850, FI-1722, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
Thompson attempted to assuage Hunt's concerns by telling her that "I acknowledged that I had always held this position in the view of the people and took the first opportunity to correct the matter among them and assured her that I desire her to act as freely and uncontrolled in her deportment as I did in mine." Yet Thompson's attempts to reach a compromise did not go far enough, in Hunt's opinion, and she quit her post with this as her reasoning. In the vacuum created by her departure from Eliot, Thomas Livingston had stepped up along with a set of church-appointed trustees, and Thompson observed that "the people feel like having school trustees appointed who shall have the general management and control of the school" rather than relying on the missionaries. 29 Chastised by Hunt and Hyde's harsh condemnations, Thompson felt that maybe he had been too controlling in the past, and he was optimistic about what might come of the new experiment of a Jamaican-controlled school.

We can only imagine the dread with which George Whipple received these letters written by the people he had specifically chosen to evangelize Jamaica. In adopting extreme interpretations of Christian liberty, they not only attacked the AMA's authority over the mission but threatened to undo the work that the AMA had set out to do in Jamaica - to show the people in the United States that freed people could become just like hardworking white Protestants. As a result of the discord coming from his missionaries, George Whipple requested that the missionaries reconvene to reconcile their differences, although he privately hoped that they would collectively decide to dismiss Hyde, whose behavior, to the outsider, seemed obviously counterproductive. 30 It

29 Thompson to Whipple, 13 May 1850, FI-1727, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

30 Wolcott to Whipple, 15 June 1850, FI-1747; also George Whipple's comments on the back of Abner Olds's letter, 8 May 1850, FI-1723, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
is likely that Whipple hesitated to issue a direct dismissal from New York because it would only confirm the ministers’ suspicions that the AMA was attempting to regulate the spiritual beliefs of its missionaries. In spite of his repeated criticism of missionary societies of all kinds, Hyde had not found it necessary to stop taking a salary from the AMA. Hyde declared that he would continue taking “the devil’s money” in order to do as he wished, a problem even for Hyde’s supporter Seth Wolcott who wrote Whipple several times about Hyde’s failure to perform any helpful sort of work.\footnote{Wolcott to Whipple, 15 June 1850, FI-1747, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.}

While missionary teachers Mary Dean and Heman Hall were appalled at Hyde’s ideas about education, his number one disciple, Urania Hunt, and Charles Venning had embraced them for their own schools. Before leaving Eliot altogether, Hunt justified her abandonment of corporal punishment by her religious beliefs as she told Mary Dean that “she would not punish one of her scholars for she would not flog God and God was really in every one of them.” Charles Venning, the teacher at Brainerd School, also found Hyde’s approach to education quite convincing. In the spring of 1850 he closed the common school at Brainerd, and when asked about his choice to turn control of the common school over to the Jamaicans, he explained his reasoning using Hyde’s language. “The Providence of God seems to indicate that the time is past for the people to be carried,” Venning informed the AMA. Now, he wrote, “they must learn to walk, they will stumble and fall and cry but such discipline is necessary if they are ever to be men.” According to Venning and the other disciples of John Hyde, the Jamaicans no longer needed to be treated as perpetual children in the Christian family. The “discipline” required was not that enforced by watchful parent, but would be the discipline of having to make it on their own. Interestingly, while Venning and the others
saw the fault in their paternalist need for control, they did not stop thinking about the Jamaicans as being children; they merely changed their parental approach. When the missionary teachers gave up their authority in the school, it reflected less a recognition that the black Jamaicans were equals and more a proof of the missionaries' own religious ideas. Whether they were forcefully indoctrinating black children like Mary Dean or willfully choosing not to teach anyone like Venning, neither took the thoughts and feelings of the black Jamaicans into consideration.\textsuperscript{32}

The second mission-wide meeting convened in June, and it provided an arena for a dramatic confrontation between Abner Olds and Heman Hall on the one side and the other missionaries on the other. John Hyde went so far as to attack Olds directly by calling him a hypocrite and told him that his "spirit would preeminently fit [him] to be a leader of the inquisitorial lands."\textsuperscript{33} Hyde's charisma and his outright dismissal of the likes of Mary Dean and Abner Olds rallied his supporters even more, and any attempts by Olds and Hall to counter Hyde's views were met with hostile accusations. Ultimately the meeting concluded with Hyde regaining the support of the wavering Loren Thompson. Perhaps the most startling occurrence at the gathering occurred after Olds, Thompson, and Hall had left to return to their mission stations. Hyde's most outspoken defenders, Seth Wolcott and Henry Evarts, decided to ordain John Hyde.

Since the upheavals in leadership at Eliot School in May, it became apparent that the antiauthority positions of Hyde and Hunt had a practical effect on the mission schools. Like Thompson's earlier hesitancy about his authority, the ministers who

\textsuperscript{32} Dean to Whipple, 28 May 1850, FI-1737; Venning to Whipple, Rpt. on Brainerd School, July 1850, FI-1775, AMA Archives, ARC.

\textsuperscript{33} Olds to Whipple, 8 May 1850, FI-1724, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
supported Hyde spoke out against the paternalist principles of the civilizing mission. The schools' programs of material progress and socialization dictated by white missionaries seemed to Hyde and his followers to be in contradiction with the liberating goal of the Christian mission. By putting an end to the imbalances of power found in the classroom, however, the missionaries were going back on promises made to black Jamaicans by abandoning the educational services they provided to the children enrolled in their schools, a point made in Livingston's letter. Aside from the element of religious indoctrination in the mission schools, the American teachers also taught reading, writing, and math, essential tools required by black Jamaicans if they were to succeed as small farmers in a country where whites and "coloreds" faced few consequences for cheating former slaves on land sales, leases, and other business transactions. However, Hyde's personal quest for spiritual freedom had little to do with the needs and wants of black Jamaican parents. Hyde's teaching philosophy held that education could not be forced on children unwilling to attend school. He told one missionary that "we are not to teach the children, until they see the value of knowledge, and come and beg to be instructed."34

Hyde's followers either turned their schools over to black teachers (or perhaps were taken over by black teachers when the Americans stopped showing up), or closed their schools altogether.

IV. RECONSIDERING THE MISSION FAMILY

As the new wave of spirituality encouraged Hyde's followers to abandon their paternalist positions as schoolteachers, they also began to rebel against religious and social conventions in their own families. In the early summer months of 1850, all but Heman Hall and Abner Olds had all stopped holding regular family prayer and regular

34 Heman B. Hall to George W. Hall, [July 1850], FI-1830, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
Sabbath meetings, and even more alarming to the orthodox few, the residents of Brainerd Station – Henry and Lucy Evarts, the Hydes, and Hunt – started to question the institution of marriage. The established gender roles of father-missionary and father-husband quickly dissolved in the new liberated spirit of Hyde’s teachings, and this created an avenue of a form of free love. If God was within, after all, then following an urge to have extramarital sex was only following God’s will. In the religious turn taken at Brainerd Station, husbands could not try to control the “spiritual” inclinations of their wives, nor could wives expect their husbands to remain faithful to their marriage vows.

The first hints that something improper was occurring at Brainerd came from Heman Hall, the younger brother of Lucy Evarts. In late June, a couple of weeks after the last rancorous mission meeting, Lucy asked her brother to come and witness her husband Henry’s spiritual crisis. Hall recorded his trip to Brainerd in two letters to Whipple. The first dodged specific details and spoke generally of “a strange state of things” on the island, probably because Hall felt uncomfortable about stating his observations that reflected poorly on his sister and his brother-in-law. The second letter, however, written a week later, went into considerably more detail. Hall wrote that when he had been called to his brother-in-law’s bedside, he had soon been joined by Urania Hunt. Besides getting into bed with Evarts upon her arrival at Brainerd, Hunt “was there most of the evening with no other person in the room and no light in the room.” Hall also reported that Hunt spoke “of ‘going in a-swimming’ in company with Dr. Hyde and wife . . . all together and all entirely naked.” Significantly, Hall reported that the missionaries did not keep their new sexual openness for themselves alone, but that they had also advised a Jamaican woman that she could live with a man other than her husband if she
wished because, “we do not know what the Spirit will require us – that it will not lead us to commit fornication in heart, though it may outwardly.” For themselves and for the Jamaicans to whom they preached, Hyde and Evarts separated outward behavior from inward spirituality so one’s material life did not reflect negatively on one’s soul.\textsuperscript{35}

While the missionaries had all thought that Evarts and Hyde had been humoring Urania Hunt because of her mental instability, the story changed when Evarts declared that Hunt had been “sent here by God as she has been made instrumental in bringing my mind up to many precious things in the gospel.” Evarts and Hyde now interpreted her behavior as godly, believing that she was a “prophetess” sent from God. Hinting at the growing tide of suspicion concerning Hunt, Evarts wrote that she is often misunderstood by those who have not yet become “spiritually minded.” Again, Evarts spoke about a spiritual hierarchy, and those lagging were not the “uncivilized” black Jamaicans but the overly legalistic Mary Dean and Abner Olds. Like some perfectionist evangelicals in the United States, Hyde and Evarts had adopted the theology that true Christians were above church discipline and laws, for they had achieved a higher truth. Also, like the emerging Spiritualist movement, they focused their attentions on the spiritual power of a young woman. They believed that proof of their advanced faith could be found in their own aversion to the rules that they had formerly accepted; Dean and Olds had simply not yet realized this more elevated level of spirituality.\textsuperscript{36}

Evarts’s spiritual crisis led him to write a letter of resignation to the AMA in which he declared his new sense of independence. In his resignation letter, the same

\textsuperscript{35} Hall to Whipple, 26 June 1850, FI-1750; Hall to Whipple, 1 July 1850, FI-1734, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

\textsuperscript{36} Evarts to Whipple, 16 July 1850, FI-1758; Hall to George W. Hall, [July 1850], FI-1830, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC; Braude, Radical Spirits, 23–24.
letter in which he extolled Urania Hunt’s spiritual wisdom, he wrote that he believed that missionaries should not take money from societies but should instead work for their income, because “in this way the spirit which leads us to our work would be made more evident to those for whom we labor than it now is.” Further, Evarts wrote that accepting the society’s funds meant that the missionary was bound to certain beliefs endorsed by the society, leading to a “real impossibility of enjoying perfect liberty of conscience.” Evarts believed that the missionary organization’s structure and his own accountability to the people who paid his salary were limiting his own liberty to do God’s work. It was unwise, he wrote, “for any of us to place ourselves under temptation to dictate others, or to be dictated beyond the liberty of the Gospel.” It was his goal to test the Gospel’s power, so to speak, by taking the bold step of relying on God to provide for “the wants of his people” instead of relying on a “human arm.” In these statements of faith, Evarts asserted his new understanding of the full implications of freedom and liberty, namely that as missionaries, taking orders from a society in New York and then passing along their content to the black Jamaicans, the missionaries were themselves constraining the freedom of the people they sought to liberate. Evarts represented his newfound faith as a source of manly independence, the exact sentiment missionaries had wanted to cultivate in the souls of formerly enslaved black Jamaican men.37

While Evarts spoke only about the higher and more spiritual pursuits he sought to attain through following a purer gospel of liberty at Brainerd Station, a later account offered by Loren Thompson went into more detail about the scandalous nature of the situation first described by Heman Hall. Speaking about Urania Hunt’s insanity,

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37 Evarts to Whipple, 16 July 1850, FI-1758, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
Thompson noted that Evarts had at first allowed for Hunt’s questionable behavior because of her delicate mental state. He wrote:

She would before the family (and in the presence of strangers,) sit down at his feet, lay her head in his lap, and ask him to stroke her hair. She would throw herself upon his bed at night – put her arms around his neck, kiss him, and freely talk about sexual emotions, making a distinction between Emotion & Passions, she would do the same to Dr. Hyde, would go with him to the river to bath. And in a state of nudity do so. These things I suppose they only tolerate on the ground of her insanity. But when such conduct was regarded as the natural fruits of the Spirit, and that persons in a highly Spiritual state would naturally be led to do such things and that Miss Hunt’s madness was but the madness of Paul, it put a new feature upon such conduct. 38

While Thompson had believed that Hyde and Evarts were merely humoring Hunt so as not to make her state worse, when the two declared her to be struck by God’s spirit as Paul had been on the road to Damascus, they had gone too far. As usual, Urania Hunt served as the primary actor in Thompson’s narrative, and Hyde and Evarts took the place or more passive participants, as if Thompson felt her to be more at fault than either of the two men.

While Hunt might have truly been mentally unwell, there is no doubt that she gained power through her sexuality, although this power was stripped from her when she was forced to return to the United States in August 1850. Wolcott added to Thompson’s account of events at Brainerd by quoting from a conversation he himself had had with Hunt in which “she frankly acknowledged . . . that she felt free, (free by the Spirit of God, so I understood) to enjoy sexual intercourse with any man who had the same liberty with herself –it would then be a spiritual intercourse – approved of God.” 39 Proclaimed a prophetess with a direct connection to God, she found a way to get at least some men of

38 Thompson to Whipple, 17 Dec. 1850, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
39 Wolcott to Whipple, 14 Oct. 1850, FI-1669, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
the mission to pay her proper attention, unlike Mary Dean, whose protests continually were pushed to the side.

Like the Spiritualist mediums who were contemporaneously attracting attention in Hunt’s native central New York, she used her alleged spiritual gifts and her sexuality to gain a degree of power in the mission. At any event, Urania Hunt’s spiritual authority was not uncontested, and the ministers finally convinced her to return to the United States for the sake of her health. If Hunt was not insane, Loren Thompson wrote, “I can but regard her as notoriously wicked – this may seem uncharitable, yet it is the only construction that I can put upon her conduct.” In Hunt’s absence, however, the remaining members of the mission viewed the ongoing situation at Brainerd in a new light. It apparently had not been dependent upon her, as the Hydes and the Evartes continued in their reprehensible behavior. Wolcott, Thompson, and most of the other ministers had, to varying degrees, believed that Hyde had a right to express and act on his religious beliefs and that to put restrictions on him would be a limitation of his freedom. Now they came to the realization that the goings-on at Brainerd and in the Evarts, Hyde, and Venning families reflected something far beyond an expression of Christian liberty.

V. REINSTATING THE MISSION FAMILY, FALL 1850

In August, Loren Thompson and his wife went to stay with the Wolcotts for a few weeks to help with the labor-intensive process of milling the year’s crop of sugar cane grown by the farmers around Union Station. Thompson wrote to Lewis Tappan about what had happened in the mission over the past several months. He described the recent events as tests of faith, and cited biblical passages addressing “trials” put forth by God for the faithful, and remarked, “for trials we feel grateful to God. We have in all good

40 Thompson to Whipple, 21 Aug. 1850, FI-1785, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
conscience endeavored to exercise ourselves by these trials. The apologetic members of the Jamaica Mission attributed their lapse of judgment to a test of faith that they had ultimately passed, to misunderstandings, and to their distrust of the reliability of Hyde’s early critic, Mary Dean. In their letters written in the late summer and fall of 1850, they blended these explanations for why they had tolerated Hyde for so long.

Seth Wolcott explained that he had found Dean’s condemnation of Hyde so offensive that he had been pushed into Hyde’s camp only through his opposition to Dean. His distrust of Dean’s judgment had even led him to doubt the first reports of sexual infidelity at Brainerd. To him it seemed “false and calumnious” and written in a spirit that seemed “to say ‘Away with him. Crucify him, crucify him.’” But after learning, as did Thompson, of the actual circumstances at Brainerd, he realized that there was more to the story than false allegations. More metaphysically, Wolcott felt that while Evarts and Hyde still professed to be working for God, “it seems to me that Satan as an angel of light holds them just there – right up to God, since he can hold them no where else, yet filling them with lies fashioned after the similitude of God’s truth.” This rather stunning image of Satan’s directing his servants speak evil in a godly language shows the degree of confusion Wolcott suffered at having one of his best friends turn to practices that he could not understand. Far from being independent, Evarts had come under the authority of Satan. Yet Wolcott also recognized that Evarts’s points about being accountable to God instead of to human authorities or organizations like the AMA sounded like orthodoxy, even if it was not. He lamented his friend’s decision to leave the mission as well as Evarts’s feeling that one who becomes a true disciple of Christ “will of necessity bring upon one the absolute hatred of the church and the world universal.”

41 Thompson to Lewis Tappan, 8 Aug. 1850, FI-1776, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
mourned the loss of his friend and their increasingly irreconcilable differences, but at the end of the summer in 1850, he and the other missionaries still knew only part of what was happening at Brainerd.\textsuperscript{42}

Julius Beardslee, the former American missionary who worked at the Mico Institute in Kingston, also wrote expressing regret for his earlier positions. Beardslee apologized to Whipple and emphasized that he had been unaware that such things were going on at the time of his earlier June letter of support. These new revelations about the state of things at Brainerd, he wrote, "have been the means of opening the eyes of those, not too far committed, and too deep in error, as it appears to me, to the tendencies of views that have been advanced."\textsuperscript{43} Thompson, Wolcott, Beardslee, and eventually the teacher at Brainerd, Charles Venning, all considered themselves not "too deep in error" and returned to the fold of the AMA with a renewed dedication to the family order.

With Urania Hunt's absence it became clear that she had not been the root cause of the sexual license taken at Brainerd, and the ministers faced the task of bringing the situation under control. Evarts, Venning, and Hyde, along with their families, were all living together in the same house, and towards the end of 1850, the two ministers had lost the support of most of the black church members at Brainerd who had held a series of meetings about what to do with the missionaries. Deciding ultimately to evict the foursome from the Brainerd mission house, the black Jamaicans took a stand in support of the AMA and asked for a new missionary to be sent to take over the station and the school. In response, Evarts and Hyde had vaguely decided to leave the mission station because the church members were "unwilling to receive the truth." As the two couples

\textsuperscript{42} Wolcott to Whipple, 14 Oct. 1850, FI-1669, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

\textsuperscript{43} Beardslee to Whipple, 20 Sept. 1850, FI-1791, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
were officially dismissed from the AMA in October 1850, they responded by turning their backs on the other American ministers. Loren Thompson wrote in December 1850 that Hyde and Evarts had “cast out” the rest of the mission, “ex-communicated [us] because we sanction the action of the society in casting them off and because we remain connected with it and preach not their gospel.”

Thompson also cleared up any doubts that the Executive Committee might have harbored about his involvement with Hyde and Evarts by praising the practice of family prayer. He wrote that while he had refrained from having family prayer for a time, he now understood it to be “a duty, naturally growing out of the family relations, and he who lives in his family without it, deprives himself of a heavenly privilege, and violates a law of social order.” Thompson’s reaffirmation shows that the ministers were also aware of the connections between the gendered family and the larger social (and racial) order of the mission. Yet Thompson as well as Mary Dean had it reversed: the collapse of the family order at Brainerd came after, not before, Hyde’s initial questioning of the civilizing mission. It was his critique of racial and religious hierarchies that led to the partial end of gender hierarchies at Brainerd, not the other way around, even as Hyde’s use of familial language applied to both.

The family order at Brainerd was far from the Protestant ideal. In letting his wife sleep with John Hyde, Henry Evarts had abandoned his husbandly duties, and Hyde could hardly be looked upon as a Christian gentleman. Echoing earlier missionary condemnations of Native Baptist ministers, Thompson reported that John Hyde “beats Mrs. Hyde as he would a child.” Further, in a biblical analogy to the patriarch

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44 Ibid.; Thompson to Whipple, 15 Nov. 1850, FI-1817, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

45 Thompson to Lewis Tappan, 17 Dec. 1850, FI-1815, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
Abraham’s two wives, Mrs. Hyde had reportedly started to think of herself as “Hagar while Mrs. Evarts is the Sarah.” Henry Evarts, on the other hand, acted as a child and permitted Hyde to be “the ‘sole monarch’ of all that was Mr. Evarts” even the children of Lucy and Henry had taken on Hyde’s last name. Loren Thompson also was disturbed to find that Evarts’ had ceded his place at the head of the table to John Hyde. If the ritual of the seating order at the table represented the family order of sex and age, then Hyde had symbolically claimed the father’s role. Hyde and Evarts had, in different ways, failed to uphold the Christian family and their fatherly roles at the head of their individual families. Hyde’s critique of authority had inserted itself into the most intimate relationships, and in the context of his beliefs, Evarts had no authority over his wife Lucy. Notably, Hyde had a more difficult time applying his radical individualism to his wife’s person as he apparently beat her.46

The new family and social order among the men and women at Brainerd became even more problematic when it was learned in March 1851 that John Hyde and Lucy Evarts had rejected their marriages in favor of living together as husband and wife. Mrs. Hyde and Henry Evarts had not yet followed suit, for, Wolcott wrote, “when I was there ‘the spirit’ had not yet given them liberty.” Wolcott was baffled: “these persons seem to have got into such spiritual liberty and light that they are quite without reproof. They talk and act like mad people. Their perversion of common sense, reason, and the word of God is beyond description. The people have all left these teachers alone in their glory – quite horrified at such developments.” Wolcott praised the black Jamaicans for shunning the civilized “teachers,” illustrating just how much the situation in Jamaica had changed.

46 Thompson to Whipple, 11 May 1851, FI-1886; Thompson to Whipple, 11 April 1851, FI-1878, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
from less than a year earlier when the missionaries' letters were filled with the depravity of black Jamaicans. Now the problem they faced was not the wantonness of the black Jamaicans, but the uncontrollable and reprehensible behavior of their own white, American, and supposedly civilized colleagues. In a sense, the earliest predictions by Mary Dean that the abandonment of family prayer would lead to libertinism had come true as the nuclear families of Hyde and Evarts mixed and combined.\(^{47}\)

Another major problem for the missionaries concerned the Hyde and Evarts children. There were five Evarts children under the age of ten and several young Hydes at Brainerd who had little parental control. While the missionaries were used to complaining about black Jamaican families and the inattentiveness of Jamaican parents, they now had to figure out some way to deal with the children. While the sexual exploits of the errant missionaries were troubling, the breakdown of the family structure and the proper fulfillment of motherly and fatherly duties by the two couples proved even more distressing to the missionaries. The couples had made Brainerd into a place entirely unsuitable for children. In May, when the new missionary for Brainerd, A.M. Richardson arrived with his family, the mission had the local authorities legally evict the Hydes and the Evartses from the mission station. On his first visit to Brainerd in May 1851 when Hyde and Evarts were still living there, he witnessed John Hyde having "illicit intercourse with Mrs. Evarts in broad daylight, before the family and with his doors wide open." What once had been accusations leveled against the Native Baptists had now become the popular gossip about the American missionaries, and just as the missionaries had once feared the negative home influences on black children, they now faced the same problem with their white former colleagues. By June 1851 the foursome and their

\(^{47}\) Wolcott to Whipple, 10 March 1851, FI-1862, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
children moved to thatched huts about nineteen miles from Brainerd and, according to Heman Hall, “they are earning nothing, and are spending in a prodigal manner what little they have. . . . They seem to think that God will take care of them, and that it would be a dishonor to God for them not to live well.” Hyde’s earlier interest in collecting shells for display and jewelry (“conchology” as the others called it) that had occupied his time when he was supposed to be working for the mission had become the method by which the two couples supported themselves.⁴⁸

Due to the lack of correspondence from the Hydes and Evartses as they grew more isolated from the other missionaries, it is difficult to parse how much of their behavior grew out of the seeds of religious radicalism brought with them from New York, was influenced by Jamaican gender practices, or even came from the experience of moving to a foreign country more generally. Their actions likely derived from a combination of the three. The ideas behind Hyde’s religious views resonated with the beliefs of Oneida perfectionism as well as the evolving metaphysics of Theodore Weld, a decidedly more traditional man, in spite of his marriage to a woman’s rights activist, who argued with Lewis Tappan in the mid-1840s over the tenets of evangelicalism. In an 1844 speech by Weld called “Truth’s Hindrances,” he declared that “whatever the problems . . . men must confront that inner voice that spoke Truth, no matter how faint, and follow its dictates.”⁴⁹ Yet clearly in Jamaica, these ideas operated in a different context and became tools for the dismantling of the civilizing mission. True freedom, they argued, meant that there should be no “civilized” and “savage,” Christian and

⁴⁸ Richardson to Whipple, 6 June 1851, FI-1896, emphasis original; Hall to Whipple, 25 July 1851, FI-1910; Thompson to Whipple, 31 May 1852, FI-2039, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

⁴⁹ Abzug, Passionate Liberator, 241.
heathen, but all were equally endowed with God’s light. They might have listened to the Jamaicans in their congregations who at this time were asking for greater control in the schools and churches and have taken these requests to heart, even though it seems that many Jamaicans pressing for greater control, like Thomas Livingston, were doing it out of a dislike of the unpredictability of the Americans. The errant missionaries’ might also have felt liberated from convention by leaving the strictly ordered northern church community for Jamaica.

VI. Aftermath

With the arrival of the new missionary for Brainerd, A.M. Richardson, and the reorganization of the school and chapel under his care, the missionaries turned their focus away from the Hydes and Evartses and began to plan out new mission stations to look to the future of the mission. In the summer of 1851, Mary Dean decided to return to the United States for a year, perhaps due in part to the bad blood that had developed between her and the other missionaries. Meanwhile, Heman Hall was eventually able to get some of the Evarts children away from their parents, and he, Wolcott, and Olds adopted three of the five children. The new spiritual marriage of Hyde and Lucy Evarts temporarily dissolved in late 1851, and Richardson wrote in January 1852 that Hyde had rejected Lucy Evarts from his bed after she became pregnant with his child. Now able to joke about the situation since the Hydes and Evartses had removed themselves from the mission property, Richardson found this to be “a most impressive comment upon the spiritual nature of their intercourse!” He predicted that their situation would only end in ruin and switched tones to describe the ongoing licentiousness in his own church: “Three

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50 William Henry Evarts Alumni File, Box 307, RG 28/2, Oberlin College Archives, Oberlin, Ohio, (hereafter cited as OCA).
of the most promising women in our congregation have been seduced within a few months . . . The ch[urch] has taken a very decided stand, and we hope by lord’s help, to stay the tide of Licentiousness and create a healthy public sentiment on this subject.” The gospel of liberty preached at Brainerd no longer meant a relaxation of church discipline and social regulation, particularly of Jamaican sexuality. The critique of the civilizing mission launched by John Hyde had become irrelevant as he and his friends lived increasingly erratic lives.51

While rumors of the Hyde affair trickled back to the United States through personal letters of the missionaries’ as well as leaks from the AMA officers, the mission remarkably continued undamaged. Few of its financial supporters withdrew their money, a point perhaps related in part to the growing numbers of abolitionists in the United States after the 1850 passage of the Fugitive Slave Act and the 1852 publication of Uncle Tom’s Cabin. The AMA assured its supporters that the mission remained in good standing among Jamaicans “white and colored” in spite of the American “fear that the unhappy errors of some formerly connected with it would weaken, if not destroy, its influence.” More than simply existing, the mission was expanding, the American Missionary article excitedly reported, “Applications are being made for the opening of new stations, three of which the mission deems of such importance that they have requested the attention of the Executive Committee to them.”52

When Mary Dean returned to Jamaica in 1852 to teach at the mission’s Chesterfield School, many of her students and their families had been under the instruction of John Hyde. Dean explained her opposition to Hyde as a perpetual battle of

51 Richardson to Whipple, 21 Jan. 1852, FI-1979, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

52 “Jamaica Mission,” American Missionary, Sept. 1851
wills, and she had no intention of giving up the battle for souls. She and Hyde were 
“antagonists,” she wrote, “and have been ever since we met. He for Satan. I for God. 
He declared years ago that he would stay in Jamaica and teach his doctrines while he 
could get trash to sleep on and yams or even yam skins to eat, and I declared the same.” 
All of the deprivations she suffered at Chesterfield would be worth it, she asserted, and 
she prayed that she would live long enough “to be the means of converting one more soul 
than he destroys,” hoping that the last soul “could be the Dr. himself.”53 Caught between 
the patriarchal ministers like Seth Wolcott on the one hand, and the spiritual libertines 
like Hyde on the other, Mary Dean continued to uphold her staunch evangelical faith and 
her opposition to biblical hypocrisy whether it came from the direction of Hyde or 
Wolcott and the others whose losses of faith she had witnessed.

The situation between John Hyde and his legal wife shed light on the nature of 
their relationship and the awkward position his wife took on when her husband had left 
her for his “spiritual wife,” Lucy Evarts. In May 1852 Hyde’s wife left her husband 
while pregnant with his child to return to New York with her children. John Hyde 
showed up in Kingston a day after she had sailed, quite upset at his wife’s defiance of his 
will; ironically her desire for freedom from her husband was not viewed as legitimate by 
her husband.54 She eventually sought a divorce from Hyde, a somewhat rare occurrence 
in the 1850s, but she remained in epistolary contact with him and gave birth to his child 
in December 1852. During the winter of 1853, she came into contact with Urania Hunt, 
who had been living with her parents in Elmira, New York. Hunt initiated the 
correspondence, writing to Mrs. Hyde that John had asked her to retrieve his youngest 

53 Dean to Whipple, 15 July 1852, FI-2052, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

54 Beardslee to Whipple, 31 May 1852, FI-2039, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
son and take him back to Jamaica.\footnote{Mrs. Hyde to Whipple, 31 Dec. 185[2], FI-2131, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.} Mrs. Hyde had absolutely no intentions of sending one of her children to Jamaica, especially not in the care of Urania Hunt. But her ex-husband’s attempt to claim the child left her with a growing ambivalence about having divorced her husband. John wrote letters to her in which he equated her decision to divorce him with her failure to remain a devout Christian. She confessed to George Whipple that her husband had interpreted her “unwillingness to return to him as an unwillingness to suffer persecution for righteousness sake.” According to John Hyde, by staying in New York she was “yielding to the temptations offered by relatives and the world.” Hyde’s words to his ex-wife placed her in a state of spiritual confusion, and she wrote to Whipple that she had “been so long harassed and driven about by every wind of doctrine” that she had decided to close her heart to religion for the time being. She continued to receive letters from Hyde, and she hoped to answer them “in the way that will secure the best good to him,” although she did not plan on ever rejoining him in Jamaica.\footnote{Mrs. Hyde to Whipple, 12 March 1853, FI-2141, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.} When Mrs. Hyde paid Urania Hunt a visit at her New York home, she found a woman with quite different intentions. Writing about Hunt to George Whipple, Mrs. Hyde noted that Urania was “deranged, though not insane.” She also observed that Hunt’s family had little tolerance for her “peculiarities” and that the young woman wanted to return to Jamaica and John Hyde with whom she would be “appreciated.”\footnote{Mrs. Hyde to Whipple, 2 May 1853, FI-2161, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.}

In 1853, Urania Hunt got her wish and did indeed return to Jamaica in order to live with John Hyde and Lucy and Henry Evarts, but the foursome did not last long. Soon after Hunt’s return, in September 1853, Henry Evarts was killed when a cow
attacked him, although the details of his death were quite suspicious, and it was implied that he might have been murdered. Urania Hunt died less than a year later, in February 1854, after falling ill at Hyde's house, and it was widely believed that he had poisoned her either on purpose or by mistake when he tried to treat her for the illness. Hyde and Lucy Evarts quickly disposed of her corpse before there could be an autopsy, and Hyde was put in jail for six months for burying her without an inquest.\textsuperscript{58} Hyde and Lucy Evarts, however, remained together in spite of their brief separation, and they had at least two children together. It was reported that the eldest died in 1856, and soon after, her brother Heman reported that she "gave" her second eldest son by Henry Evarts, George, to Seth Wolcott. It appears that the other four Evarts children were distributed among family members in the United States, and their youngest child, a boy named Samuel who was born in August 1849, was adopted by Abner Olds and his wife. Lucy Evarts and John Hyde eventually returned to the United States at the end of the 1850s. No new news of John Hyde and Lucy Evarts appeared in the archives after 1858, but their saga would be retold until the mission's conclusion as many of the people who visited or worked for the Jamaica Mission had known Henry and Lucy Evarts as students at Oberlin. In the retellings, the ministers tended to leave out their own favorable attitudes towards John Hyde.\textsuperscript{59}

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

In spite of their premature deaths and ultimate demise into obscurity, the Hydes, Evartses, and Urania Hunt commanded the Jamaican Mission for a few crucial months in

\textsuperscript{58} Wolcott to Tappan, 18 Dec. 1855, Fl-2437, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

\textsuperscript{59} H.B. Hall to Whipple, 2 Oct. 1856, Fl-2538, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC; Alumni File of Henry Evarts, RG 28/2, Box 307; Jamaica Journals of George N. Allen, 1863-1864, George N. Allen Papers, 1804-1924, OCA.
1850. Their radical interpretation of the civilizing mission called for the end of hierarchies between the missionaries and the AMA's leadership, between the black Jamaicans and the missionaries, and between husbands and wives. In doing so, these eccentric and ultimately self-serving characters tested the uneasy balance between religious freedom and social control contained within the ideological framework of the AMA's abolitionist civilizing mission. Hyde's message of individual spiritual freedom appealed to the abolitionist missionaries and led many to temporarily abandon their desire to control black Jamaicans. Overall, however, the long term effect of the sex scandal of 1850 was the reaffirmation of the patriarchal control of the white ministers who realized that idealistic notions of their evangelical abolitionist youths had no place in an "uncivilized" country like Jamaica.

The unexpected result of the sex scandal, however, was that black Jamaican church members, if not single white women, gained a greater foothold in the mission's governing structure. The black deacons at Brainerd remained more powerful than their counterparts in other mission churches, and black schoolteachers grew more common after the precedent of John Campbell's employment at Eliot Station. The ministers' shifting views perhaps proved to Jamaicans the inherent transient nature of the white Americans and prompted them to take greater charge over the institutions provided by the AMA. As for Mary Dean, her remaining five years in Jamaica proved difficult as the other missionaries continued to distrust her, and in 1857 she left Jamaica on bad terms with the other ministers. The experiences of Mary Dean and Urania Hunt showed that the mission's men were susceptible to arguments on behalf of religious freedom even as they resisted the requests of white women for greater autonomy and independence within
the mission family. After all, it was the collapse of the marriages at Brainerd that finally made the mission’s men see Hyde’s views as counterproductive to the goals of their civilizing mission.
CHAPTER SIX
Disputed Domesticities

In October 1849 the missionary schoolteacher Mary Dean trekked over mountain paths in order to visit her students’ homes. Recent tropical downpours had made the roads largely useless, and Dean, her long dress “wet with perspiration,” would arrive at her destinations “so out of breath from climbing” that she required a rest before she could speak to her hosts. She explained the purpose of her arduous journeys in a letter to her employers in the American Missionary Association: “I take a map of the world with me, show them the difference between educated and uneducated nations and tell them the sure consequences of letting their children grow up in ignorance.”  

We can only imagine what geography of civilization Dean described to her students’ patient parents, who perhaps humored the bedraggled white woman so far from her home. If Dean’s cultural chauvinism offended or irritated her black Jamaican neighbors, it did not affect her popularity. From all accounts, even from fellow missionaries who found her irritating, Dean was the mission’s best teacher, and black Jamaicans respected her teaching abilities.  

It is therefore surprising to see that Dean’s time in Jamaica came to an abrupt end in early 1857, when, after a cumulative seven years of teaching, Dean left the mission because her male colleagues had driven her to the point of despair.

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During the 1840s and 1850s, northern churchgoing women drew on the ideology of domesticity to influence men in their family and in society more generally. While white women in the U.S. North manipulated the discourse of domesticity to gain some

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1 Mary Dean to George Whipple, 14 Oct. 1849, FI-1634, Jamaica, AMA Archives, Amistad Research Center, (hereafter cited as ARC).

degree of moral authority, those women who came to Jamaica as single women missionaries had no such success. As wives and mothers, the married women in the Jamaica Mission had specific roles to model in terms of the Christian family. Following religious studies scholar Dana Robert’s gendered analysis of missionary workers, men were the evangelists and their wives acted as their helpmates, expected to provide domestic comforts to enable their husbands’ work to continue and, if possible, to take on the additional duty of tending to converted women and children. While missionary societies required or strongly preferred their male missionaries to marry before leaving the States, some single women began to go out as missionaries in the antebellum period, often as either a particular friend to a missionary wife or, as in the case of the first single woman missionary sent to Hawaii in 1822, a “domestic assistant.” In the Jamaica Mission, single women were recruited as teachers for the mission’s common schools and none had previous attachments to the mission’s married women. The single women were expected to live with and obey a married couple, assist the missionary wife in domestic work, and still attend to their teaching duties. The ministers scrutinized their teaching practices and everyday behavior, particularly in the wake of the disastrous events of 1850 when the unmarried teacher, Urania Hunt, had been at the center of a sex scandal.3

Until 1848, the Jamaica Mission had relied on men to teach in the mission’s schools with the help of their wives. During Amos Phelps’s 1846–47 visit to the island, he recommended that the mission consider employing single American women. Phelps told Tappan that “Gov. Slade [of Vermont and the secretary of the Board of National Popular Education] and Miss [Catharine] Beecher had come to the conclusion that

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female teachers are better than male teachers for children and youth." In his opinion, "By employing female teachers instead of schoolmasters, the expense can be much diminished." Notably, Phelps and the Jamaica Mission turned to single women as teachers because they could be paid less, and also because of the gendered belief that women had domestic sensibilities useful to teaching and to mission work. It was this ideology that Catharine Beecher had developed into a critique of masculinity and into a pathway for women, both single and married, to gain a degree of authority as morally superior women. Yet the single schoolteachers in Jamaica faced the problem of demarcating the "home" in which they could exercise their domestic authority. All but one of the twelve unmarried women sent to Jamaica lived with a missionary family. The minister observed her work in the schoolroom and his wife monitored her work in the mission home. The single women missionaries were caught between their own ideals of domesticity and their vision for the civilizing mission and the reality of being assigned a subordinate place in the Jamaica Mission family.  

This chapter examines the strategies of several single women in the Jamaican Mission and their different interpretations of the ideology of domesticity. I focus especially on two factors: how the single women developed a missionary domesticity that shared common elements, and, secondly, how the women defined their place within the missionary family. The male missionaries, as we have seen, based their civilizing agenda

4 "Additional Hints in Regard to the West India Mission," American Missionary, Sept. 1847.

on the principles of independent manhood that had been so central to the early abolitionist movement. The ministers encouraged their male converts to own property, become self-sufficient farmers, and above all, to maintain rigorous spiritual discipline. The mission’s women, and the single women in particular, had a more sentimental approach to mission work. Following the domestic literature of the day, the single women missionaries wanted to affect change in the hearts of their young students primarily, but also in adults, and these women missionaries looked to accomplish this goal by forming sentimental connections rather than rigid hierarchies. To be sure, these “sentimental” attachments should not be confused with some kind of greater equality, as white schoolteachers, like Mary Dean, and missionary wives made no attempt to dismantle racial hierarchies. Yet the dynamics between white women and black Jamaicans in the mission often positioned white women against the white men, and as a result, against the white men’s version of the racial and gender hierarchy of the mission. When a single woman schoolteacher defended her methods against the ministers’ criticism, she became, almost by accident, an advocate for some form of woman’s rights within the mission context as she argued that she had as much a right to use her civilizing tactics as the mission’s men did to theirs.

Before turning to the experiences of the missionary’s single women, it is useful to position them within the larger history of unmarried and married women in nineteenth-century missions. Overwhelmingly, historians of women and mission have looked at the late nineteenth century when white women dominated American foreign mission work, but several books take the earlier antebellum foreign missions into consideration. One common theme examines how white evangelical women articulated an early feminist
conscience as they tried to “elevate” non-white women through Christian conversion. Historian Joan Brumberg argues, that it was through “the process of describing the condition of heathen women, [that] evangelical women became involved simultaneously in defining their own status and function.” These studies, however, with their interest in identifying proto-feminism, have not dealt with how domestic debates over slavery impacted the racial ideology of the missionaries. This fault comes in part from the fact that the American Board, the subject of most scholarship on missionaries, avoided discussing slavery until the eve of the Civil War. This has resulted in historical work that mirrors the logic of the American Board leaders who wanted to separate their work to convert the “heathen” abroad from the problems besetting their own country. As a consequence, historians have tended to see foreign mission stations as utterly separate from the social and political concerns at home. These connections, however, are difficult to ignore in the abolitionist Jamaica Mission. As white northern women “discovered” their subjugation by discussing slavery’s evils, several of the single women missionaries in Jamaica, women who were not a part of the woman’s rights movement, responded to the mission’s men in what we might call a feminist way precisely because they were treated as children in the mission family. In many respects, the mission’s single women had less autonomy than black Jamaican converts who at least had connections to a broader community than the circumscribed mission family of the Americans in Jamaica.

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In other words, an American woman missionary had few options when it came to obeying the mission’s leaders – if she acted out of turn she would likely be ejected from the mission and given a one-way ticket back to the United States.

The missionary women in Jamaica should also be seen in light of discussions relating racial ideology to the ideology of domesticity. American Studies scholar Amy Kaplan contends that the ideology of domesticity allowed white women to join together with white men as the nation’s natural “civilizers” at a time of expansion and immigration. “When we oppose the domestic to the foreign,” Kaplan argues, “men and women become natural allies against the alien, and the determining vision is not gender but racial demarcations of otherness.”\(^7\) In her analysis of popular works by the prominent northern writers Catharine Beecher and Sarah Josepha Hale, Kaplan proposes that talk of national expansion and American empire in domestic literature emphatically called for the establishment of “habits of system and order” that functioned “to make Euro-Americans feel at home in terrain in which they are initially the foreigners. Domesticity inverts this relationship to create a home by rendering prior inhabitants alien and undomesticated and by implicitly nativizing newcomers.”\(^8\) This was indeed the case with the Jamaica Mission, although not exactly in the way Kaplan imagines.

The American abolitionists in Jamaica clearly marked black Jamaicans as “foreign,” but the mission’s men and the single women missionaries differed on how an integrated Christian community should be constructed. This created gender divisions in the Jamaica Mission between the missionary men and women rather than a united front. Unlike clergymen in the North, the American ministers in Jamaica felt they lived on the


\(^8\) Ibid., 591.
brink of social disorder in which the liberty they sought to spread might slip into licentiousness. The mission’s men tried to stem the tide of licentiousness by asserting strict control over the mission family, both black and white. The biggest threat to the mission family, aside from Jamaican “licentiousness,” was the mission’s single women. Especially in the wake of the Hyde-Evarts affair, the ministers worried about the place of these women who were neither wives nor daughters.

As earlier chapters showed, the men employed church discipline in their churches to excommunicate the problematic church members. In the mission households, they upheld a hierarchical mission family intended to “civilize” as well as to keep order. This masculine program for missionary domesticity dictated that the father-minister headed his nuclear family as well as the extended mission household, including any missionary teachers or black Jamaicans within it. Some of the single women missionaries, however, as educated as the mission’s men on the principles of abolitionism and evangelicalism, chafed at their second-class status in the mission family. These women’s feminine civilizing mission critiqued hierarchy in the mission household as a civilizing tool and also challenged their own subjugation to the mission’s men.

The experiences and actions of three of single women missionaries – Sarah Blakely, Mary Howe, and Mary Dean – are representative of the other single women who came to Jamaica during the late 1840s and 1850s. Sarah Blakely married a fellow missionary during her time in Jamaica, and she found her place in the mission family as a wife, mother, and assistant in her husband’s school. Blakely’s letters reveal that she had a feminine approach the civilizing, but her feminized civilizing mission complemented rather than challenged the methods of the mission’s men. Further, because Blakely
married, she escaped the scrutiny of the ministers because she passed from their authority to that of her husband. The story of Mary Howe stands in stark contrast to that of Sarah Blakely. Howe, like her predecessor Urania Hunt, refused to submit to the mission’s men, ultimately leading the ministers to question her sanity, and the ministers in Jamaica requested that she be sent home. If the women who married and the women forced to return to the United States represented extremes of submission and defiance, the third woman discussed in this chapter, Mary Dean, fell somewhere in the middle. Dean disliked the ministers’ authority over her, but unlike either Blakely or Howe, she criticized them in the language of domesticity: she claimed womanly authority based on morality to oppose the masculine power of the ministers.\(^9\) While northern churchgoing women used the language and assumptions of women’s moral superiority to gain some control in the churches and reform communities of the antebellum North, white women had little success with similar arguments in the Jamaica Mission.\(^{10}\) Catharine Beecher’s plan that women, as the weaker sex, could use this position of powerlessness and self-sacrifice to gain greater social influence, did not work in the Jamaica Mission.

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I. SARAH BLAKELY AND DOMESTIC SUBMISSION

Sarah Blakely was not the first of the American missionary women to marry while in Jamaica, and brief examination of an earlier marriage shows the mixed feelings that the mission’s men had when it came to “losing” mission workers to marriage. The first two single women to join the mission were Catherine Strobie and Mary Dean, both graduates of the Mission Institute in Quincy, Illinois. Arriving in early 1848, the women found rustic mission stations and ministers who had only begun to use their new AMA-provided funds to make repairs on their buildings. Loren Thompson, the minister at Eliot Station and Catherine Strobie’s host, wrote about the new school room provided for her classes. “The floor is all rough – benches rough and all shapes – seats uncomfortable and indeed the whole affair is not what it ought to be.” Strobie not only met with difficult physical conditions for herself and her students; she also encountered distrust from the Jamaicans who had never seen a female teacher before. Thompson explained that there was some “dissatisfaction” because she was a woman, as “[i]t was thought that a female could not manage the boys,” yet Strobie had risen above it. Thompson praised her for being “so diligent to her duties – persevering in her efforts, that she is now gaining not only the esteem of the parents and children, but doing away that unholy prejudice that exists against female teachers.” Catherine Strobie proved an excellent addition to the mission, although the ministers, as the last chapter showed, found her companion, Mary Dean, more difficult. Yet only months after arriving on the island, Strobie announced her engagement to a British missionary and her imminent departure for Africa with her soon-to-be husband.

11 Thompson to Whipple, Annual Report of Eliot Station, May 1848, F1-1445, AMA Archives, ARC.
Strobie’s marriage caused some irritation for the AMA officers in New York, since the society had paid for her passage to the island only to quickly lose her much-needed services. Loren Thompson complained to George Whipple that the students at the Eliot School needed permanent teachers if they were to succeed. The “marriage problem” apparently concerned Whipple as well, as he asked Thompson: “Is there a probability that we shall continue to lose our laborers as we have lost Miss Strobie?” Whipple also inquired if the brethren in Jamaica would prefer all future single women to take a pledge to remain single for at least two years. In reply, Thompson wrote to Whipple that he thought not, noting that if a woman took a pledge, “I, for one, should have been troubled to reconcile the keeping of it with God’s providence.” While Thompson was clearly annoyed at losing the teacher at Eliot, as it required his wife to return to the work until a replacement was sent, he also showed an aversion to having single women pledge themselves to celibacy. For Thompson, it would be imprudent for a missionary society to prevent a couple from marrying and starting a family if God had so ordained that they should marry. While “losing” teachers to marriage might be an expense and an annoyance for the AMA, it was not something that they could in good conscience prevent.12

With no pledges of celibacy in place, Sarah Blakely joined the mission in 1852, and a year later she married a fellow American teacher and her shipmate on the journey from the United States. Upon arrival in Jamaica, her future husband, Addison Moffat, had been assigned to the somewhat isolated Mount Pleasant School, while Blakely lived with the Thompsons and taught at the Eliot School. With twenty-six students at the end of the term in July 1852, Blakely was happy with her work considering the “worth of

12 Thompson to Whipple, 30 Oct. 1848, FI-1513, Jamaica, AMA Archives.
their souls,” and she felt as though her work helped to save “these priceless jewels.”
Importantly, Blakely taught boys and girls because the Jamaica Mission never had single-
sex schools, a fact perhaps attributable to their own coeducational experience at Oberlin
as much as limited funds. Her twenty-six students seemed “as bright and apt to learn” as
students she had taught in the United States, but their creole language often prevented
them from understanding “very many of the English terms” she used.\footnote{13}

Beyond her teaching duties, Blakely also expounded on the delights of the natural
surroundings she found in the Blue Mountains. She effused about the breathtaking
Jamaican scenery, writing that “one’s own eyes must see, and one’s heart feel, to know
the cause and the effect” of the “rich foliage, fruits, and flowers.” Blakely’s situation
with the Thomsons was, at least by her reports, going very well, and she praised their
kindness. She had no difficulty, at least in her letters to the missionary association, in
fitting into her expected place in the mission family and in her roles as an assistant to
Nancy Thompson and as a wife to Addison Moffat.\footnote{14}

After getting married on January 1, 1853, in a ceremony at Eliot Station that,
Loren Thompson wrote, brought all of the missionary family together, the couple moved
to Addison’s school at Mount Pleasant. Sarah Blakely, however, felt the need to defend
her choice to marry to the corresponding secretary, implying that the happy occasion was
not without a cloud of disappointment in her commitment to missionary work. She had
not acted “selfishly” in choosing to marry Addison, but had followed the path she
believed would glorify God. The other missionaries agreed, although not without a hint
of resentment. At the wedding, eighteen adults and nine children gathered: “a happy

\footnote{13} Blakely to Whipple, 30 July 1852, Fi-2054, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

\footnote{14} Ibid.
band of brothers and sisters convened together to bear testimony to the constitution of a new family. We all rejoice in the new family though we are left again without a teacher,” Thompson wrote, again trying to find someone to help his wife in the coming school year. Like Catherine Strobie’s wedding five years earlier, the Moffat-Blakely marriage pleased Thompson in that it created another family to serve as a positive model for Jamaicans, but he also regretted the loss of Sarah to Eliot Station’s family. True to patriarchal form, Sarah was passed as a daughter from Thompson’s household to be a wife in Addison Moffat’s home. The missionary men were far more comfortable with having Sarah become a missionary wife than in keeping her as a single woman schoolteacher. As a married woman, she had a clearly defined place in the mission family, and the marriage also enhanced the status of her husband, Addison, in the minds of the other ministers, for he now had a dependent wife.¹⁵

Sarah Blakely Moffat’s marriage and eventual motherhood did not mean that she had lost interest in her work as a missionary. Unlike the ministers’ wives who wrote only a handful of letters to the AMA’s offices over the course of two decades, Sarah Moffat, perhaps because of her former status as a single woman, continued to update George Whipple and the AMA’s New York office on her school’s progress. These letters from her new station reflected a different voice than the communications of the mission’s men. For example, the minister Seth Wolcott requested that a minister be stationed at the Providence School, making the case that an older man would have more authority and would provide the “thorough discipline, not of children only, but of parents also” required. While “a common teacher may discipline his school indoors . . . he cannot

discipline the parents. Ministerial authority is demanded here.” Another missionary complained about the “superstitions, soul-destroying notions” that were “instilled into the minds of this deluded people.” Unlike the men in Jamaica who fretted about the manliness of black Jamaicans and their tendencies towards “licentious” behavior in the new climate of freedom, Sarah Moffat, like many white women missionaries, concerned herself with sentimental ties. Further, her letters continued to depict Jamaica in a romantic light, speaking to her appreciation of the emotional qualities of black Jamaican religious life, the same aspect many northern women favored in evangelical faith. She told George Whipple that the “prayers and remarks” of “uncultivated minds” during prayer meetings “benefited and strengthened” her, and “their expressions, though course [sic] and unrefined, are often full of sound practical truth, and affect my heart.” The mission’s men found the “unrefined” quality of black Jamaicans irritating and demonstrative of a lack of education and theological rigor, whereas Sarah Blakely Moffat found the childlikeness of “uncultivated minds” to be empowering.16

The “primitive” qualities so admired by Sarah Blakely Moffat in black Jamaicans elevated her own sense of spirituality, but this did not mean that she ignored the “civilizing” work required of her. Drawing on the language of domesticity, Moffat believed that her domestic gifts as a white woman allowed her to mold young black Jamaicans into civilized Christians. She declared that “all the little avenues to their hearts” must be watched, “lest the roots of selfishness and deceit and theft obtain a hold.” While she certainly sought control over her students, as did the white ministers, Moffat wrote about this in a different way than did the mission’s men, who spoke of the need for

16 Wolcott to Whipple, 10 Sept. 1849, FI-1612; Richardson to Whipple, 2 Jan. 1852, FI-1977; Blakely to Whipple, 30 July 1852, Jamaica, FI-2054, AMA Archives, ARC.
“discipline” in their churches. Like growing numbers of women in the United States, Sarah Moffat used a more psychological form of discipline than did the mission’s men. The softer discipline of Sarah Blakely Moffat and other women in the Jamaica Mission echoed the advice of Catharine Beecher in her popular manual concerning domestic matters, originally published in the early 1840s. Beecher recommended that her readers “govern” their children by following a “medium course”: neither “a stern, unsympathizing maintenance of parental authority” nor an indulgent position from which the parent lacks the “right to command.” In her work as a domesticating influence, Sarah Blakely Moffat approached her black Jamaican students, but also their parents, as she would children. But the way she ran her household was in accordance with the ideas of the mission’s men, as she made no attempt to push them to change their ways. Further, she and her husband, Addison, were quiet members of the mission, interested in the advancement of the mission’s Voluntary School Association, yet not concerned with having a greater say in how the mission was run as a whole. As Sarah submitted to Loren Thompson and her husband, the couple seemed to obey the older members of the mission.17

II. MARY HOWE AND THE ABSENCE OF DOMESTICITY

Sarah Blakely Moffat had successfully fit in with the Thompsons as a daughter and in her husband’s household as a wife and motherly schoolteacher, and in sharp contrast stood her successor at the Eliot School, Mary Howe. Already in her late thirties when she went to Jamaica in 1853, Mary Howe refused to submit to her assigned place in the mission family, and ultimately the mission’s men sent her back to the United States.

Over a decade older than Sarah Blakely, Howe was of the same generation as the three oldest ministers in the Jamaica Mission, Abner Olds, Seth Wolcott and Loren Thompson, and older than the other missionary men. She also had experience as a missionary teacher and had lived on her own, not with her parents or as a boarding school student, before coming to the island. In the 1840s Howe had worked for eight years as a mission teacher for Seneca Indians in Buffalo, New York, but after a bout of poor health because of the cold Lake Erie winds, she decided to offer her pedagogical services to people in a warmer climate.\footnote{Mary Howe to Whipple, 24 Nov. 1851, Jamaica, Fl-1948, AMA Archives, ARC.} While Howe came highly recommended from clergy in New York and from members of her church, she quickly found herself on bad terms with the missionaries in Jamaica. While an erratic character, the response of the missionaries to Howe’s requests shows how their desire to prevent another scandal narrowed their sites on the behavior of single women schoolteachers.

Mary Howe’s series of unhappy incidents in Jamaica began soon after her ship docked in Kingston: her traveling companion, an fellow AMA teacher named John Briggs, died from a fever during their first week on the island. While it is impossible to know for certain, it would not have been unusual if the two had developed a close bond during their journey like Sarah Blakely and Addison Moffat, and perhaps Briggs’ death left Howe particularly bereft. Not long after the traumatic death of her colleague, Howe faced the challenge of having to ride on horseback into the steep mountains for fifteen miles from Kingston up to Oberlin, and then from Oberlin Station to her post at Eliot where she was to work with Nancy Thompson in the Eliot School, taking the place of the newly married Sarah Moffat. It took a great deal of persuasion before Howe agreed to ride to Oberlin, as riding terrified her. The fifteen-mile journey into the mountains
proved exhausting, and once at Oberlin she waited over a week before consenting to undertake the next leg of her journey, a ten-mile trip along mountain roads to Brainerd Station. Once she reached Brainerd, however, she absolutely refused to get on another horse and continue on to her final destination, the mission’s northernmost station, Eliot.

After two weeks at Brainerd, it became clear that Mary Howe was miserable in Jamaica. She wrote Loren Thompson, the minister at Eliot, a letter declaring her intention to return to the United States because she was “both homesick and heartsick at the thought of remaining.” Thompson traveled south to Brainerd to help the minister there, Albert Richardson, convince Howe to make the trip to Eliot. The two men persuaded her to go and teach at Eliot until a passage to New York could be arranged, but once she reached Eliot she refused to “comply with the regulations” of the mission’s Voluntary School Association. Thompson wrote that Howe was disgusted by the black students she was supposed to teach, and she had apparently been warned by friends against working for the abolitionist AMA before she even left New York. While these accusations were serious and obviously would be a problem for Howe if she intended to stay on the island, the ministers frequently expressed similarly racist opinions themselves, albeit mediated by their hope for the “transformative influence” of Christianity. Howe’s racism must have been quite intense for the missionaries to find it problematic.19

Nonetheless, Howe’s racism came at the bottom of a long list of problems that the other missionaries had with her. Loren Thompson was preoccupied with the fact that Howe wanted nothing to do with the “mission family” and her position that if she had known the circumstances in Jamaica, she would “never have come.” Reiterating his line

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19 Thompson to Whipple, 16 March 1853, Jamaica, FI-2142, AMA Archives, ARC.
of thought at the Blakely-Moffat marriage, Thompson wrote: “we as a mission are as one family,” and Howe “likes independency (i.e.) to do as she chooses and none to controll [sic] her, and the fact that she must be under some controll [sic] here, as we all are one to another, greatly distresses her.” Independence might be expected of the American men and hoped to be cultivated in the black men; but for an unmarried missionary woman, it was perceived as a direct threat to the “mission family,” the phrase the ministers used to invoke the racial and gender order undergirding the mission as a whole. Additionally, Howe’s attitudes negatively impacted the students at Eliot, because according to Thompson, she “refuse[d] to engage for any length of time, and claims the privilege to leave when she chooses.” Aside from wanting “privileges” over her schedule, she also said things that made Thompson question her sanity. He wrote, “She has repeatedly said to me ‘You are crazy – the old nick is in you, and all the same declared that it was not so with her.” Howe proposed that she be located at a school where she could live by herself, and the mission’s men thought her unfit to live on her own. They described her “a mere child” when it came to “domestic affairs.” Whether she was truly mentally troubled or simply strong-willed is unclear, but whatever her mental state, the mission’s men found her brazenness to be incompatible with the mission family.

Howe’s behavior forced the missionaries to define the mission family clearly in gendered terms that explained why the mission’s men needed to be independent and free from authority, while identifying white women and black Jamaicans as needing to submit to external “controll.” Further, Howe as well as Urania Hunt made it clear to the mission’s men exactly what they looked for in a female missionary. Missionary Albert

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20 Ibid.

21 Thompson to Whipple, 9 May 1853, Jamaica, FI-2163, AMA Archives, ARC.
Richardson made the distinction clear when he requested that George Whipple would provide replacements for Howe and John Briggs who would “prove faithful helpmeets in our work.” Richardson’s turn of phrase had layered meanings ranging from the obvious – the teachers sent by the AMA relieved the ministers and their wives from the time-consuming responsibility of teaching school. As God had created Eve as a “helpmeet” for Adam, then the teachers, whether male or female, performed the womanly work of educating and civilizing Jamaican children while the men of the mission tended to their soul-saving labor. The same division of labor required to make nuclear families function was similarly expected in the larger mission family, and Howe’s refusal to submit to the men and women who were her elders threatened the gendered power structure upon which the mission had been constructed. The mission family replicated the God-given order assumed in the ideology of domesticity that Catharine Beecher clearly articulated: “In this arrangement of the duties of life, Heaven has appointed to one sex the superior, and to the other the subordinate station, and this without any reference to the character or conduct of either. It is therefore as much for the dignity as it is for the interest of females, in all respects to conform to the duties of this relation . . .” Sarah Moffat abided by this family order, exercising her feminine civilizing mission without challenging the mission’s men, but Mary Howe rejected it entirely.

It is notable that in the mission’s three-decade history, the most upsetting scandals had men, not women, at their centers. While Urania Hunt had obviously played a role in

22 A.M. Richardson to Whipple, 17 March 1853, Jamaica, F1-2144, AMA Archives, ARC.

23 For another study of the division of labor in the mission field, see Patricia Grimshaw’s chapter in Paths of Duty, “Prudent Helpmeets,” 100–27.

the Hyde-Evarts affair, her part was clearly secondary to Hyde’s machinations. In the mid-1850s, many of the missionaries lost money in a copper speculation scheme orchestrated by one of the missionaries, P.M. Way, causing a great deal of embarrassment to Lewis Tappan. In the late 1850s, several of the mission stations were taken over by former missionary, Julius Beardslee, recently converted to Campbellism, or the Disciples of Christ. Each of these events shook the Jamaica Mission’s foundations, and all took place because the ministers hesitated to reign in the rights of one of their fellow evangelical men. In contrast, the mission’s women were never allowed to get remotely close to causing a scandal because they were under constant scrutiny.

The conflicts between the mission’s men and Mary Howe illustrates one of the fundamental dilemmas that arose in the Jamaica Mission, a situation not unfamiliar to scholars of the intersection of race and gender. The racial anxiety of the white ministers led them to assert complete authority over black Jamaicans, yet the brunt of their disciplinary rule fell on white women within their own mission. Black Jamaican men and women could choose from myriad churches and social networks because Jamaica was their home and the Americans were a tiny minority. A woman like Mary Howe, in contrast, had no real alternative community to turn to when the ministers opposed her wishes. If the mission household dynamic prevented the missionary wives from forming a maternal society or a female missionary auxiliary, it also limited the options open to single women missionaries. The women schoolteachers who presented the most persistent challenges to the missionaries’ governance represented a small voice in a decidedly undemocratic mission. Unlike Mary Howe, most of the mission’s single

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25 For the copper mining business see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery (Cleveland: Case-Western Reserve Press, 1969): 296–7; for more on Beardslee, see Chapter Seven.
women acquiesced to the minister’s authority and kept their feminine approach to their students within the bounds of acceptable behavior.

III. Mary Dean and Domestic Feminism

The longest-serving teacher in Jamaica, Mary Dean, in contrast, developed a distinctly feminist civilizing mission during her time in Jamaica whereby she sought to control the white ministers on the island as well as the black Jamaicans, as she held them both to the same standards of Christianity. Dean arrived in Jamaica in 1848 from Quincy, Illinois, where she left behind her widowed mother and ailing sister to whom she always sent a portion of her small salary. Her return to the United States in 1851 for a year, and then again permanently in 1857, came about only in part because of her problems with the missionaries and her health, but also out of a sense of responsibility she felt towards her family, particularly as her mother became older and more frail. Dean had attended the coeducational and abolitionist Mission Institute in Quincy, where she had been a classmate of Catherine Strobie, the young woman who married soon after the arriving in Jamaica in 1848. In his letter about the two women to George Whipple, the school’s headmaster, Elijah Griswold, wrote that Catherine Strobie would likely “take better care of herself than Mary Dean” because Dean was “very apt to neglect herself for the benefit of others.” Dean, he commented, had a “superior mind” and “much feeling” compared to Strobie, to whom he attributed “strict moral principle.” In these brief notes from their headmaster, the central conflict for Dean and for many Protestant women committed to domesticity is apparent: Dean had a “superior mind” assured that her way was the correct way, yet this was paired with selflessness, an character trait essential to

26 Dean to “George” [not Whipple], 15 Sept. 1851, (Amesville, Ill.), Jamaica, FI-1935, AMA Archives, ARC.
Victorian womanhood, and a trait that complicated how Dean would present herself and her opinions to her fellow missionaries and the AMA board. While Catherine Strobie’s marriage took her away from Jamaica in 1849, Mary Dean remained.27

Dean’s two terms of service in Jamaica involved a number of different schools. From 1848 to 1851, Mary Dean lived and taught at Oberlin Station, and she got on well with the missionary couple assigned to Oberlin, Abner and Ann Olds, if not the rest of the mission’s members. As discussed in the previous chapter, a major conflict arose when Dean formally complained about the unorthodox beliefs of one missionary, John Hyde. The other ministers, meanwhile, grew increasingly irritated with Dean and accused her of being an inquisitor and a woman intent on limiting other people’s religious liberty. Dean’s complaints were ultimately justified when Hyde’s behavior took a turn towards disturbing the gendered power structure of the mission. With a great deal of embarrassment, Hyde’s former supporters explained themselves to the AMA’s Executive Committee, but they remained ill at ease with Mary Dean who had been pointing out Hyde’s faults for almost two years. Dean left the mission in early 1851, just as the scandal was coming to an end, for a year in the U.S. The events of 1850 left the ministers even more committed to enforcing strict control over the women in the mission as they blamed Hyde’s accomplice, Urania Hunt, for the sexual antics of the other missionaries.

Mary Dean returned to Jamaican in 1852, and the ministers relocated her from Oberlin Station to a more remote location, much to the irritation of her former pupils. Indeed, it was not uncommon for black Jamaicans to ask specifically for Mary Dean to serve as the teacher. Even if she was an unending source of irritation for the ministers because of her persistence, her constant and often biting criticism, she was a popular

27 Elijah Griswold to George Whipple, 8 Nov. 1849, FI-1356, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
teacher. Her new school, Chesterfield, was isolated from the mission stations, and one of the ministers told her later out of spite that she had been sent there because the ministers had thought that she "was fit only to live alone." Apparently a combination of their dislike and a grudging respect for Dean allowed her the privilege of living by herself that they later denied Mary Howe. After two years at Chesterfield, Dean moved to the even more remote Rock River school in July 1854 where she stayed until the mission opened up its manual labor school in late 1855. She served as the teacher at the Richmond Industrial and Normal School for a little over one year before her conflicts with its principal, missionary Seth Wolcott, made it impossible for her to continue to live with his family. In January 1857 she resigned from Richmond and retreated to the home of another teacher, Charles Venning, and his family until March 1857 when she returned to the U.S for good.  

In her many letters to George Whipple and Lewis Tappan in New York, Mary Dean held back little. The other missionaries unsurprisingly resented her critical reports about them, and one minister warned her, in the midst of the John Hyde affair, that as a "lone little girl," she "had better not write so much" to the Executive Committee. The unnamed missionary recognized that Dean's letters mattered to the AMA officers, and he likely feared that Dean might influence the board against him. Unlike Howe, who told Loren Thompson and others exactly what she thought with no pretense of the softened and sentimental language of domesticity that emphasized her sisterhood and womanhood, Dean used gendered language and more circuitous routes as a way to gain clout in the

28 P.M. Way to Whipple, 1 Jan. 1853, Jamaica, F1-2119; Hall to Whipple, 5 Feb. 1856, F1-2463; Dean to Venning, 10 March 1857, Jamaica, F1-2580, AMA Archives, ARC.

29 Dean to Whipple, 18 Oct. 1849, F1-1634, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
mission. By playing a variety of feminine roles, including sister and daughter to the men on the Executive Committee and mother to black Jamaican children, the unmarried Dean drew on the language of domesticity to criticize their actions while staying just barely on the “right” side of proper feminine behavior.

Examples of this can be seen in Dean’s reports about her financial circumstances when she returned to Jamaica in 1852. At remote Chesterfield, Mary Dean faced immediate challenges. While there was a “nice new house” near the school, the isolated mission station was “without a stone, chair, or an article of furniture.” Dean raised her concerns about her new home to George Whipple in her typical long-suffering voice. She wrote in a self-sacrificing tone central to the language of domesticity, as northern women emphasized their selflessness and dedication to their children and families when speaking out against public problems such as prostitution and alcohol. Dean drew on this rhetorical tactic to ask, in a roundabout way, for financial support from the men of the AMA. Of Chesterfield’s barrenness, she wrote, “this is just what I am used to. I have always had to provide fuel, light, furniture, and for all the expenses of housekeeping out of woman’s wages, which has sometimes made pretty close corners.”

Indeed, her recent year-long stay in the United States had been the cause of much anxiety, as her teaching jobs had not paid her enough money to accumulate any savings that she might have given to her mother and sister or kept for herself. Her autonomy at Chesterfield came with a price. Her financial situation was aggravated because at Chesterfield she lived alone, and she received no food or other necessities from other missionaries as she might have were she to live in an established mission station with a married couple. Like the white

30 Dean to Whipple, 6 June 1852, Jamaica, F1-2043, AMA Archives, ARC,

31 Dean to Whipple, 2 Dec. 1851, Shullsburgh, Wis., Jamaica, FI-1958, AMA Archives, ARC.
women activists historian Michael Pierson has termed “domestic feminists,” Mary Dean questioned her smaller salary even as she assured George Whipple that she did not mean to claim equality with men. Her letter continued: “I am not complaining or speaking on the subject of women’s rights but stating facts.”

This was not the first time that Dean skirted the controversial “women’s rights” platform adopted by her more radical abolitionist sisters in 1848. During her last several months in the United States in 1851, she had gone on a fund-raising trip around Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa, but had told George Whipple: “Don’t suppose I intend to speak in public on the stage. I have engaged tongues more eloquent to speak for me while I . . . speak individually with my hearers.” Dean addressed the issue that been highly divisive in the abolitionist movement at the beginning of the 1840s when abolitionist sisters Angelina and Sarah Grimké raised a storm of controversy when they lectured to audiences containing both men and women. The Grimkés had rejected the ideology of domesticity popularized by women like Catharine Beecher and instead defended sexual equality. Yet even as Mary Dean shrugged off women’s rights in her letter, she still drew Whipple’s attention to the very real concerns raised by women’s rights activists as she had directly experienced as a single woman missionary. While not a man, Dean was willing and eager to speak on behalf of the Jamaica Mission to raise much-needed money, even as she would hardly be the beneficiary of increased funds.

While Dean’s gender left her at a financial disadvantage, it also granted her a degree of freedom through which she could criticize decisions being made by the ministers in Jamaica and the mission board in New York. The men only asked for money

32 Dean to Whipple, 6 June 1852, Jamaica, FI-2043, AMA Archives, ARC.

33 Dean to Whipple, 2 Dec. 1851, (Shullsburgh, Wis.), Jamaica, FI-1958, AMA Archives, ARC.
in a circumspect way, for example, while Dean would demand it. In a letter to Lewis Tappan, the wealthy philanthropist who served as the AMA’s treasurer, she wrote in pleading manner that none of the men could have done:

by the by, I have always heard, yes for many years and it has been the talk, that ‘Mr. Tappan is very rich,’ and maybe he would be willing to give a small sum from his vast treasures to the poor in Jamaica. $5000, yes, he would scarcely miss it, and oh what a multitude of ignorant children it would educate. But who is to ask for it? If it be a crime who will bear the blame of it?  

There is no record that Lewis Tappan ever sent Mary Dean $5000 for her mission work in spite of her wily attempt to get it out of him. Her status as a woman allowed her to write in a more direct manner than the mission’s men, even if it also allowed her requests for funds to be dismissed with probably little more than a chuckle from Tappan.

Dean’s letters also veiled strong criticisms of her fellow missionaries in the softer language of feminine weakness. In one she begged Whipple “to have patience with me but this once while I pour out my complaints,” and in another, she wrote “I will take the place of a servant, only allow me to speak my grievances.”  Mary Dean also made more specific complaints about particular missionaries in spite of her awareness that it did not “look very amiable for young ladies to be always finding fault.” Dean could not contain her dissatisfaction with “false brethren and sisters.” A minister would never have abdicated his independent manhood in such a way, yet for Mary Dean this type of pleading was quite useful. As a woman, Mary Dean had no vote in the mission’s decisions, and writing to Whipple and Tappan was the only means of getting her voice heard. One letter she began by calling herself a “great baby” who had required care when

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34 Dean to Tappan, 18 Jan. 1854, FI-2230, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
35 Dean to Whipple, 27 June 1849, FI-1577; and 14 Aug. 1849, FI-1594, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
36 Dean to Tappan, 2 May 1853, FI-2160, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
she had first returned to New York from Jamaica in 1851, and she reminisced about Whipple’s “angelic” voice and words that still bring a “sudden shower of tears” to her eyes. From sentiment to assertion, Dean quickly turned to protest the plans of the ministers, telling Whipple that she would die before leaving her post if she is to be replaced by “heretic or drowsy do-nothing souls.”

37 She might have been referring to Mary Howe here, as she had earlier complained about Mary Howe’s “strange views and conduct” and asked why the AMA had not investigated her more thoroughly during Howe’s stay in New York City. 38 Either way, Dean felt insecure in the mission because she was a single woman and had no vote over her place in the mission family. She warned Whipple that the “Jamaica Mission is about to vote that you send no more old maids out here. I believe they are talking of sending me home in about seven years, when from certain signs they imagine I shall enter that list.”

39 Mary Dean used domesticity to maintain a careful balance between submissive woman and moral critic in her relations with the Executive Committee and the mission’s men, and domesticity also informed Dean’s matriarchal relationship to the black Jamaican children adopted into her household. Indeed, the sense of racial and religious power she gained as a white woman overseeing the education and “civilizing” of black children and young adults arguably expanded her sense of womanly authority in relation to the mission’s men. She took pride in the practical skills that enabled her to survive in an empty house at some distance from her fellow missionaries, at both Chesterfield and her next post, the even more remote Rock River. It appears the decision to move had not

37 Dean to Whipple, 27 May 1853, Jamaica, FI-2172, AMA Archives, ARC.
38 Dean to Tappan, 2 May 1853, FI-2160, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
39 Dean to Whipple, 27 May 1853, FI-2172, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
been hers; she wrote to Whipple that “the Brethren removed me to Rock River,” and she described the difficulties of the school’s location. The school had eight acres but on such steep terrain that it could not be used for pasture land. While she was only four miles from one of the mission’s chapels, the journey over the mountainous terrain was quite dangerous, requiring her to cross several rivers and to travel along muddy and sometimes flooded roads. Further, she noted that “it was not judicious to leave my family of seven children.” While she had almost one hundred students at Chesterfield, at Rock River her school contained twelve students in addition to her “own” seven children. At Rock River she felt “like a foreigner shut up from Sabbath privileges,” but as “the united voice and wisdom of the Mission has put me here, I will try what I can do.”

Even as Dean had greater acceptance among black Jamaicans, particularly the young people in her household, she still did not consider them her equals, but instead imagined them to be “natives” who made her, by default, the “foreigner.”

At Rock River, Dean, like other missionary couples, created her own household by “adopting” Jamaican children. Unlike the others, Dean developed close relationships with the Jamaican children who lived with her. Mary Dean rejected the harsh rhetoric of “discipline” employed by the mission’s men and instead spoke of her students in language echoing the way mothers spoke about children in the North. For example, in a report on her “children” she wrote: “My Mary is really quite changed in all her conduct and Ellen seems thoughtful and serious. William came to me last night to tell his troubles and hindrances about going on with his studies. I scarcely slept last night my soul was so stirred with burning thoughts for these children.”

Like Sarah Blakely Moffat, Dean

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40 Dean to Whipple, 7 Sept. 1855, Jamaica, FI-2395, AMA Archives, ARC.
cared for the hearts and souls of her students and their families and had "anxious hours" worrying about their salvation. Dean clearly relished the opportunity to be a sort of mother to these young people.

As one of the only single women missionaries to live separate from the other missionaries, Jamaica enabled Mary Dean to create her own household in a way that she probably never would have done in the North. As a schoolteacher in frontier towns in Illinois and Wisconsin, Dean either lived at home or she boarded with a family. In Jamaica, however, she lived as a single woman and could be both a mother and an authority figure because of the power she derived from her status as a self-declared civilizing missionary. Another missionary schoolteacher, Lucy Woodcock, a young woman who attended Oberlin and who came to teach at the Eliot School, found herself in a similar position when she was left alone at Eliot for six months in 1858. With the Thompson family away, Woodcock pronounced herself the "monarch of all I survey," and she told her brother that "I shall have more cares and enough to take up my time so I shall not have any opportunity to get home."\textsuperscript{42} Defining themselves as civilizers and white women committed to the transformative power of domesticity, Dean and Woodcock gained a sense of limited authority in Jamaica, at least when they were apart from the mission's men.

Dean also formed lasting relationships with her students, and they corresponded with her after she returned to the United States. Dean grew close to one fourteen-year old student at the Chesterfield School named Elizabeth Mogg. Mogg's parents had both been

\textsuperscript{41} Dean to Whipple, 22 Dec. 1855, FI-2439, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

\textsuperscript{42} Lucy Woodcock to Harry E. Woodcock, 4 January 1858, Harry E. Woodcock Papers, RG 30/80, Series 1, Correspondence, Subseries 2, Incoming-Lucy A. Woodcock, Box 1, Folder 3, Oberlin College Archives, (hereafter cited as OCA).
born into slavery, and her father, John, had become a deacon in the mission’s church at Chesterfield. While he was literate, his wife Letitia was not, but the couple made provisions so that their children would become educated, and this included sending Elizabeth to live with Mary Dean. Elizabeth wrote to Dean after she had returned to the United States. Writing in the effusive and affectionate style described by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in her analysis of nineteenth-century women’s correspondence, Elizabeth’s letter detailed her spiritual trials and desire to see Dean again. The Jamaican girl felt that there was no one to whom she could confess her sins after Dean had left. She also expressed her longing to meet Dean again in this life. She told Dean that “my love to you is unabated” and again longed “to have the pleasure of looking steadily into that calm, sweet face, and those eyes beaming with love.” Whether or not Dean also felt emotionally attached to Elizabeth remains to be seen, although she did forward the letter to George Whipple with a note indicating that this was one of the students she wished the AMA to support financially.

Mogg’s letter to Dean indicates the degree to which Mary Dean’s civilizing mission differed from that of the mission’s patriarchs. As a woman, Dean had to find novel ways to engage in the mission’s governance, and similarly, she had developed a different mode of “paternal” control over black Jamaicans. Rather than insisting on church discipline or in seeing herself as the stern father responsible for leading his erring children on the right path, Mary Dean created bonds of affection between herself and

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43 C.B. Venning to Whipple, “Statistics of Church” June 1860, FI-3075, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

44 Elizabeth Mogg to Mary Dean, 6 Feb. 1858, FI-2651, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

black Jamaicans. Indeed, Dean had her own theory of missions that she believed entitled her to judge women like Mary Howe (of whom she disapproved) and the mission’s men. Dean believed that missionaries needed to be “working and practickle people,” noting that to expect people like Mary Howe to be missionaries was like asking herself to make “ladies fancy silk bonnets.” According to Dean, “missionaries need to be amphibians and able to live in two elements equally well, for the moral atmosphere here and at home is as different as the air and water.” She had become frustrated with the likes of Way, Howe, and a few others of the mission and declared that “If I did not think slavery the sin of sins and the quintessence of all evil, I should sometimes be tempted to go over to the American Board for I know they use every precaution against imposters.” At Rock River she put into action her mission theory by acting as the mother and schoolteacher to the few children whose parents let them attend Dean’s school and listen to her evangelical message. Even though she lived far from the others in the mission, she never “backslid” from her faith or morality. She believed that she exemplified the “amphibious” missionary, able to interact with black Jamaicans in a way that resulted in affectionate relationships even as she refused to cede any moral ground in terms of her faith and understanding of civilization.

After a year at Rock River, Mary Dean moved to the newly founded Richmond Normal School to serve as the “assistant” to Seth Wolcott, the school’s owner and principal. At Richmond, Dean’s feminine civilizing mission and established practices came into direct conflict with the patriarchal presumptions of Seth Wolcott. In 1855 Wolcott had purchased a thousand-acre estate near Eliot Station. Most of the land was divided up to be sold to small farmers, but Wolcott reserved one hundred acres for an

46 Mary Dean to Tappan, 2 May 1853, Fl-2160, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
industrial and normal school and an accompanying farm to support the school's financial wants. Dean, as the best teacher in the mission, was asked to move in with the Wolcott family and teach in the school. In spite of the loneliness she felt at Rock River, Dean showed some hesitancy about giving up her autonomy to be under the Wolcott family roof. She insisted on serving as a "a sort of matron" who rather than relying on the family for room and board asked to be paid wages by Wolcott for her labor. Dean had no intention of playing the daughter to Seth and Mary Wolcott and instead tried to negotiate a degree of independence.

Wolcott not only served as the patriarch over the boarding students and missionaries who made up the "family" at Richmond, but his long residency on the island and his position as the mission's corresponding secretary for many years made him an important figure in the mission's governance. Yet Wolcott's prickly personality made him a difficult man. After Dean's departure from the island, one newly arrived young missionary incredulously told her friends back in Ohio about his advice to her that she limit her diet to bananas and salt as a money-saving tactic, as he had done in his early years on the island. In the early 1860s an Oberlin professor visiting Richmond justified Wolcott's admittedly severe personality by arguing that it had come about because of the man's time in Jamaica. The professor wrote in his journal that Wolcott had "lived so long in the midst of a people who cannot be trusted, who must be directed and commanded," that he had become overly critical in all of his dealings with other people. This meant, according to Allen, that "those that cannot fall in pretty nearly with his [Wolcott's] own views must of course be set down as wrong." He "severely criticized" nearly everyone and everything he encountered, from the mission's members to the

47 Wolcott to Tappan, 27 Dec. 1854, Fl-2304, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
island’s government, to the English missionaries, and “especially the people of the country.” Apparent, Mary Dean was not the only target of Wolcott’s sharp tongue.

In late 1856 Wolcott discovered that Dean had been giving out small amounts of money to Jamaican children, probably those whom she had supported at Rock River and at Chesterfield. Wolcott and Heman Hall, the mission’s corresponding secretary at the time, decided to withhold Dean’s money from her. Like the later AMA missionaries to the South during the Civil War, both Wolcott and Hall heartily disapproved of giving the black Jamaicans “charity” for fear that it would perpetuate dependency. Mary Dean, not surprisingly, interpreted her actions in a different way. When Wolcott refused to pass along fifteen dollars to two of Dean’s former students at Chesterfield, she felt that he “treated the matter with the same coldness.” She commented in her farewell letter to her friend Charles Venning that the ministers were hypocrites as they certainly found a “large and sure salary a very nice and convenient thing,” and she was sure that they had “read in the bible the often repeated precept concerning giving to the poor.” Dean believed her gifts to the children to be acts of affection and kindness. She wrote to Venning that “I would die for these children. I do think our worthy children should receive aid and I intend to get it to them and send it [to] their mt. house if none of the missionaries will give it to them.”


50 Dean to Venning, 10 March 1857, Fl-2580, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.
Dean's fondness for her students perhaps had its origins in her sense of isolation from the other missionaries. The patriarchs, on the other hand, thought that the gifts of money spoiled the black children who needed discipline, not charity. Heman Hall, the mission's secretary, reported a different set of conflicts between Dean and Wolcott to George Whipple. According to Hall, the troubles between the two came out of Dean's "own peculiarities." He wrote additionally that "she has said many things respecting Mr. and Mrs. Wolcott which were severe and cruel and untrue, things which if said under some circumstances might be a serious detriment to Richmond." Neither Hall nor Wolcott ever wrote exactly what accusations were leveled, but Dean's departing letter to Venning shows her side of the conflicts between the ministers and herself. Dean felt that she was treated differently as a single woman in the mission, and the constant judgment and criticism of the mission's men became intolerable.

At this time, Dean spoke freely about her long-felt grief that as a woman, she was judged differently than her fellow male teachers. She wrote to Charles Venning: "I don't hear the brethren dictating to you what texts you shall teach in Jan. or Feb. They don't say whether your pupils shall sit or stand while reading. They leave you to make your own rules, but I this awful 'me' must be found fault with for everything I do." She continued: "If I speak it is the opinion of some that I ought to be silent. If I go out, some think I should have stayed at home. If I can't give, I am called callous, if I do, I commit almost an unpardonable offense. All my performances are misdemeanors." Dean must have enjoyed her time at Chesterfield and Rock River because of the autonomy she had at

53 Hall to Whipple, 4 March 1857, F1-2575, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
54 Ibid.
55 Dean to Venning, 10 March 1857, F1-2580, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC. Emphasis original.
the remote schools, and she found it harder to readjust to the role expected of her in the
Wolcott family at Richmond. Yet Dean regretted her estrangement from the other
Americans in Jamaica, and she remarked sadly that while she had been planning her
departure from the island for the past six months, “not one told me a common
affectionate good by.” Mary Dean left Jamaica and returned to the United States by her
own will, but her parting from the other missionaries was hardly on good terms.

Like Mary Howe, Dean resisted the ministers’ need to control her life, teaching
practices, and relationships with black Jamaicans, but unlike Mary Howe, she managed to
persist in her missionary labors by drawing on the language of domesticity rather than
insisting on her complete liberty from the ministers’ authority. Interestingly, Dean’s own
sense of martyrdom because of her sex never led her to express a similar outrage at the
mission’s racial or religious hierarchies that limited black participation in the mission’s
churches and schools.

CONCLUSION

The white women in the Jamaica Mission offered a different model of the
civilizing mission that reflected their attachment to the ideology of domesticity as a way
to preserve liberty and social order. Like northern women committed to domesticity,
many of the women missionaries in Jamaica, and the single women in particular, believed
that keeping a close watch on black Jamaican souls through exercising maternal power
worked more effectively than the strict disciplinary measures of the ministers. The
mission’s men were preoccupied with making “men” in Jamaica, and they saw the best
means of achieving this goal to lie in external transformations. The act of owning land,
for example, would make a man become more attendant to morality and the needs of his

56 Ibid.
family, and would lead to a better end. The mission's women, exemplified by Blakely, Howe, and Dean, had a different idea of how to "improve" black Jamaicans. Blakely, and many other women in the mission, spoke about hearts and sentiment, but they remained focused exclusively on their students and converts. Dean, in contrast, turned her attention to the mission's men as well, and when she sought to exert her feminine moral authority over them, she was rebuked and became the subject of their constant scrutiny. Her alternative "civilizing" methods that included distributing money to her students came under attack as counterproductive to the men's plans of fostering self-sufficiency. Finally, Mary Howe's experience, as well as that of Urania Hunt recounted in the previous chapter, fit less neatly in the ideology of domesticity. Neither woman had any interest in submitting to the authority of the ministers, and both obviously exhibited extraordinary behavior and were deemed insane. Yet both women had come to Jamaica with solid recommendations from their New York ministers, and Howe had worked as a missionary teacher for many years in Buffalo. It is difficult to judge what exactly transpired in their minds. Was the culture shock of Jamaica too much for them to handle? Did the mission's men push them over the edge, or had they simply been unprepared for mission work?

While scholars like Amy Kaplan have pointed to how race and gender intersected in the antebellum ideology of domesticity, the Jamaica Mission provides a concrete and specific case study of how northern white women put these ideas into practice both in terms of how they understood the civilizing mission and in how they used domesticity to put themselves on the same plain as the mission's men. We can see how these two components of domestic ideology were often interrelated, although not always, as the
case of Sarah Blakely Moffat showed. For Mary Dean, the domestic claim that as white women, their duty was to “domesticate” foreign elements and to keep their homes pure was inseparable from her claim to greater authority in the mission family. The antebellum instances of white women’s special duties continued through at least the early twentieth century, as scholars of European and American women have argued that feminists often advocated for suffrage and equality by contrasting themselves with non-white men, both at home and in the empire, and by emphasizing their centrality to the project of racial uplift.57

The ideology of domesticity, as enacted in the Jamaica Mission, also points to other conclusions. First, the women who did not use domesticity but who still sought greater power in the mission – Mary Howe and Urania Hunt – were both labeled insane and sent home. Also, even as domesticity aided in the creation of the categories of “civilized” and “uncivilized” based on gender practices and the manner of keeping house in different cultures, domesticity also drew on a sentimental discourse of feeling, love, and sympathy that allowed the mission’s women to avoid talking about discipline and instead conduct the civilizing mission on different terms. This did not change the power dynamic of the missionary encounter, yet it allowed the missionary women to create bonds of affection between themselves and black Jamaicans that very few of the older mission’s men could understand. Far from being influenced by the single women, and even some married women, who joined the Jamaica Mission during the 1850s, the

mission’s older men – especially Seth Wolcott and the slightly younger Heman Hall –
grew more convinced that they needed to control the mission’s white women as well as
freed people if they were to create the orderly society that would “prove” emancipation’s
success to the United States. The longer they occupied the position of civilizing
missionaries, the farther these men turned from the sentimentalized abolitionism
emerging in the United States during the 1850s.
CHAPTER SEVEN
Multiple Mission Families

Both the mission’s men and women believed that the domestic setting of the mission household and more specifically, the Christian family, was critical to the success of the civilizing mission. The missionaries adopted black children into their mission households as a way of removing them from what the Americans viewed as corrupting cultural influences. One missionary schoolteacher stated the stakes plainly, writing, “I have always noticed that after a vacation the children are much harder to govern . . . they are not much benefited by the influence of home.”¹ If the mission were to succeed, the ministers, missionary wives, and schoolteachers needed to work with the rising generation as much as they tended to the souls and habits of their parents. While all of the missionaries agreed with this principle and with the importance of the mission household as a “civilizing” influence, they had different visions of how the household and the mission family should be structured.

In the late 1850s, several occasions prompted the American missionaries to discuss their ideas about family life and its relation to the civilizing mission. In 1854 the missionaries purchased the Richmond sugar estate and made plans to divide and sell the land for model black families as well as to reserve one hundred acres to support a manual labor and industrial school that would board most of its students. Over the next several years, Richmond became a focal point for all of the ministers and teachers. A second incident that prompted reflection occurred in 1859 when missionary Charles Venning had excommunicated five church members from his Chesterfield congregation, all of whom had been young people who had sex outside of marriage, and the event set him thinking

¹ Maria Hicks to George Whipple, 17 March 1854, FI-2245, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
about the importance of Richmond School for the mission's efforts. In the early 1860s a revival of religion swept across the island, and the missionaries demonstrated the religious enthusiasm in stories of individuals sins pertaining to family life. For the American ministers, depicting a change in Jamaican gender norms meaningfully illustrated the power of this religious revival. The Great Revival, however, hardly resulted in the kind of perfectionist Christianity that the missionaries had long hoped would take hold. Instead, the Great Revival marked the beginning of Zion Revival, a more organized version of the creole Myalism that the American missionaries had been trying to combat since the mission's first days.²

While the missionaries shared a common gender ideology, differences emerged in the late 1850s over how domesticity and the mission family should work. The older ministers' disciplinarian models of the Christian family were put into a new light with the arrival of a younger generation of missionaries beginning in 1858. The three new married couples were all at least twenty years younger than the likes of Seth Wolcott, Loren Thompson, and the other missionaries who had been in Jamaica since the 1840s. The younger men and women also brought with them different ideas about Christianity, childrearing, and domesticity than the missionary domesticity that had developed over the course of the Jamaica Mission's two decades. Significantly, the generational tensions between the older and younger missionaries flared up over issues related to domesticity, specifically the place of black children within the mission household.

Unlike the Christianity of the older generation that had emphasized independence and manhood as the keys to emancipation, the younger missionaries, men and women

both, had a more feminine conception of Christianity and the civilizing mission that emphasized sentiment and affection instead of discipline and hierarchies. These young couples’ households more closely resembled the civilizing mission tactics used by Sarah Blakely and Mary Dean. Anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler and others have argued that the power relations between colonizer and colonized were not only in the public sphere but also played out in intimate relationships. In the familiar spaces of the Jamaica Mission, as in colonial households in the British and Dutch empires, the bonds between native nursemaids and white children, lonely white wives and the domestic servants, combined power inequalities and racial differences with sentimental attachments. The black and white families of the Jamaica Mission were not a part of an official imperialist construct, but the desire of the white missionaries to convert and civilize the black children they adopted can certainly be thought of in Stoler’s terms. In the Jamaica Mission’s houses, as in Stoler’s Dutch colonial houses in southeast Asia, the attempt by the younger missionaries to control the sentiments of Jamaican children led them to emotional entanglements that created “precarious vulnerabilities” in the white mission family and between the missionaries and the Jamaicans, and this became particularly true at Oberlin Station when its new occupants, Sarah and Bigelow Penfield, arrived.

I. Richmond Estate and the First AMA Industrial School

The older ministers’ plans for recreating the gender order of Oberlin in the 1830s came to fruition when the mission purchased a 1,090 acre sugar estate in 1854. Seth Wolcott, who actually bought the land, intended to sell most of the acreage to small farmers, and turn the rest into a manual labor school and farm. This Richmond estate and

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school represented a new phase in the Jamaica Mission because it institutionalized the patriarchal family bonds between the white missionaries and the black Jamaicans. According to Wolcott, the Jamaica Mission required “more than a recited catechism to save Jamaica,” it also needed to “produce the fruits, as well as teach the doctrines of righteousness.” Wolcott told George Whipple that the fate of the Jamaica Mission rested on the success at Richmond, writing, “what can we do with a people who have no homes?” Wolcott’s idea of how those homes should be differed from the younger missionaries’ idea of home, although they similarly thought landownership and homes were essential to the civilizing mission.⁴

Richmond, the ministers hoped, would be a model community for freed people. The land would be divided and sold into small farming plots, and with the cane mill restored to working order, Wolcott would process the farmers’ cane crops for a small fee. Further, the former buildings would operate as a boarding school to train young Jamaicans to be teachers and missionaries. The extended Wolcott family would serve as a model for all of the farming families. While the Richmond School had more applicants than it could offer places, the land-selling scheme had considerably less success and proved to be a financial burden to the AMA and to Seth Wolcott. As late as August 1859, five years after Richmond had been purchased, only sixteen individuals had bought “small farms” on the estate, ranging from “two to thirty acres each,” and a larger portion of the estate, around one-hundred acres, was rented out with the understanding that the tenants would eventually buy the land.⁵ The inability of the mission to sell the land can be attributed to several factors. First, the English Baptist missionary, Joseph Sturje, had

⁴ Wolcott to Whipple, 10 Aug. 1854, FI-2279, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
⁵ Wolcott to Tappan, 1 Oct. 1858, FI-2726, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC; Circular (to shareholders in the United States) from Richmond, July 1859, FI-2860, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
written to Tappan in the mid-1850s expressing his doubts that many Jamaicans would buy land because almost twenty years after full emancipation, most freed slaves of any means had already purchased property. Secondly, the Americans thought that the lack of interest in the Richmond Estate came from their nationality – the black Jamaicans had been told that Americans were land speculators.\(^6\) Four years after the establishment of Richmond, Seth Wolcott proposed another reason for the slow rate of land sales. It was not because Jamaicans did not want to “avail themselves of good opportunities to make themselves owners of the soil,” he informed Lewis Tappan, because the “more enterprising” had “purchased lands long ago,” and those who still rented land “have too little the spirit of farmers to own anything of importance.” Wolcott believed that a major problem was that nefarious forces were at work and “that not a little pains has been taken to persuade the poor people, naturally suspicious enough, that they better look out for some ‘yankee trick.’”\(^7\) The missionaries frequently attributed their difficulties to Satan or to the work of the devil in Obeah men and Native Baptists.

While all three of these reasons probably contributed to the difficulty the mission had settling Richmond, it also might have come in part from a general conflict over American and Jamaican ideas about landownership. Would tenants be evicted as the churches excommunicated misbehaving church members? Would the property rights be allowed to pass to women and children regardless of legitimacy? Just as the Americans interpreted sexuality and labor in terms of their own issues about freedom and social

\(^6\) Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War Against Slavery* (Cleveland, Ohio: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1969), 296. Seth Wolcott to George Whipple, 3 Aug. 1857, FI-2612, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

\(^7\) Wolcott to Tappan, 1 Oct. 1858, FI-2726, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
control, they did the same thing with land ownership. While both the Jamaicans and the Americans saw land as important to the family, they did so in different ways. For Jamaicans, the family land was the family, the links between generations and a symbol of freedom, and to the Americans, the land was property that signified the independence of its male owner, something like the evangelical manhood cultivated at the Oneida Institute in the 1820s, rather than the autonomy of the entire family.

The Richmond Estate represented the two strands of "civilizing" that occurred in the Jamaica Mission. First, the missionaries tried to reshape and control individual Jamaican families through church discipline. In selling small plots of land to Jamaican families, Richmond was to serve as a "fenced city," protected from the sinful influences of the rest of the island. The missionaries subscribed to the free labor ideology notion that landownership fostered manly independence. The old proposal raised by Amos Phelps when he visited Jamaica in 1846 still remained important to the ministers. The fastest way to evangelize and uplift black Jamaica, Phelps had argued, would be to create opportunities for land ownership: "the first thing is to have the people become the proprietors of the soil – to buy up the land wherever they can, in little properties of their own, and put up their little houses and get their other little comforts around them. Nothing will give them a feeling of independence and make them act like men sooner than this." Aside from sexual morality and performing the right sort of work, land ownership itself would make black Jamaicans become men. Phelps, like his colleagues in Jamaica, understood land to be something owned by individual men that would be used entirely to support a family and, importantly, to make a profit. He also thought that

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8 Mary Dean to Whipple, 22 Dec. 1855, Fl-2439, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

9 Amos A. Phelps to Lewis Tappan, 12 Jan. 1847, Fl-1289, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
after the land itself belonged to a man, the landowner could construct a house and use the land’s profits to furnish the house for his dependents. Landownership was an important first step, but in Phelps’s mind, building a comfortable home and filling it with goods was equally important in achieving a “feeling of independence.”

The missionaries in Jamaica and those who had returned to the States filed glowing reports of the estate’s financial potential, focusing on the possible crops that could be grown on the land and the potential for profit. The Richmond Estate had formerly been valued at $50,000 and was on the market for a mere $2,500. As Richmond’s terrain was mountainous, only 200 acres of the estate had been and could be used for growing sugar cane, with the rest of the land being mostly pasture for the plow animals and provision grounds used by the slaves for growing their own food. Wolcott also noted that the estate had “extensive and flourishing cocoanut groves” and a water-powered sugar mill that was “first rate.” The estate’s steep terrain required that most of the land be hand-plowed, as animals could not safely navigate the inclines, but Abner Olds testified that the soil was ideal for growing coffee, arrowroot, yams, and plantains, crops that the missionaries envisioned exporting for sale to friends of antislavery in the United States. Olds’s description of the property also mentioned the buildings on the property: two houses, one large and one small, that had been occupied by the estate’s attorney and overseer, a grand house in a state of severe disrepair, as well as the sugar works and a distillery. It brought the teetotaling missionaries great satisfaction that the “Old Still” would be transformed into the school’s rooms and a dormitory. Loren

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10 Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, 296.

11 It seems that the major export of the missionaries was arrowroot. The American Missionary advertised its availability.

12 Abner Olds to George Whipple, 2 Dec. 1854, Fl-2302, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
Thompson agreed, writing favorably about how the “Richmond enterprise” was “converting [the] Richmond Rum and Sugar Establishment into halls of industry and learning.”13 The Richmond Estate never became worth the $50,000 at which it had once been valued, and it was more of a utopian fantasy than an “eloquent model for future American action,” according to Lewis Tappan’s biographer, Bertram Wyatt-Brown.14 Instead, it was Richmond’s “halls of industry and learning” that became the hallmark of the Jamaica Mission.

Plans for a boarding school to educate teachers and missionaries originated before Richmond’s purchase, as an American visitor to the mission identified the Jamaican family as the chief problem facing the ministers in their civilizing mission. Ruth E. Carpenter, a “voluntary missionary” from Oberlin, suggested to Seth Wolcott that the mission create a boarding school based on industrial education for the island. Carpenter, a married woman who was interested in investing her husband’s money in an educational endeavor, wrote to George Whipple that she found the children on the island to be “bright and teachable if taken early” and “kept away from evil influences,” yet the lack of attention paid to the island was letting the island become “heathenish.” The mission’s common schools were not entirely useless, but she thought it to be “almost impossible to educate a child surrounded by heathen influence more than one half of the day so as to make him an upright earnest worker for others.” Jamaican culture failed to mold children into adequate laborers and certainly did not create a class of philanthropists or future missionaries. Carpenter, like the missionaries, felt that the only way to change a society

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13 Loren Thompson to George Whipple, 6 Oct. 1855, FI-2410, Jamaica, AMA Archives. All emphasis original unless otherwise noted.

14 Wyatt-Brown, Lewis Tappan, 297.
was to affect the means of socialization of its children. In enrolling Jamaicans in a boarding school, they would not only be isolated from bad influences but they would also “be taken care of . . . and considered as a family.” Seth Wolcott agreed wholeheartedly with Carpenter’s idea, writing that “Mrs. Carpenter’s plan for schools quite like the one I have long cherished – a family school. I could get any desirable number of children from ten to sixteen years old given me as my own children.” Wolcott and Carpenter perceived no difficulty in finding students for their school, assuming, of course, that Jamaican parents were willing to give over their children. They did, however, have to approach the AMA for funding.\(^\text{15}\)

The AMA understood the significance of family life to abolitionist rhetoric, and the best way to raise money for the school lay in its family-forming potential. For northerners, even those opposed to slavery, the social disorder that would accompany emancipation was a perpetual concern. In the words of another historian, the missionaries, like most northern abolitionists, wanted to ensure “that once set free they [former slaves] made the right choices,” and Richmond seemed like the best way forward after the limited success that had occurred in the mission churches and schools. Showing the emergence of the Christian family among black Jamaicans would prove to a U.S. audience that slave societies could be reborn as free labor republics. This line of reasoning appealed to the AMA’s treasurer, Lewis Tappan, in New York, and he hoped that a successful school would “strike a very effective blow at American slavery.” With the profits from the industrial school, Carpenter projected, more schools could be built, and “Jamaica would not as now disappoint those who were looking to see the Africans

\(^{15}\) “Jamaica Mission,” *American Missionary*, April 1854; Ruth E. Carpenter to George Whipple, 21 Feb. 1854, FI-2236; Wolcott to Whipple, 24 March 1854, FI-2246, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
rise.” The missionaries and Ruth Carpenter idealistically thought that they could remake Jamaican society one child at a time.¹⁶

Wolcott likely imagined Richmond to be an alternative to the academies serving white and colored children, perhaps like the Mico Institute in Kingston where Julius Beardslee worked. Located in mountains rather than in a city, Richmond would not make “great scholars, but good men, good citizens,” men and women like Wolcott and his fellow patriarchs who had grown up on farms themselves and had found affordable education at the rural outpost of Oberlin. As early as December 1854, Wolcott had proposed that the school not to be “designed for g-e-n-t-l-e-m-e-n and l-a-d-i-e-s but for the people to educate for men and women and good citizens.” The “pattern” for the school was to be the “New England family with all its domestic and other influences,” and the extended family of the school was to be a model for all of the freeholders’ families spread out across the estate. During its first full year, the school enrolled twenty-three students, and Mary Dean served as the school’s teacher. While Seth Wolcott was the father, his wife Mary Wolcott was the mother, and Mary Dean could only be considered “a sort of matron” who rather than relying on the family for room and board asked to be paid wages by Wolcott for her labor. In 1856 Wolcott (the “principal” of Richmond) and Mary Dean (the “assistant”) circulated a advertisement about Richmond for those interested in supporting it around the island. The notice informed its readers that Richmond had “a family at its head of which a large portion of the pupils will be members.” This enabled the school to meet “a most urgent want, a desirable home and healthful family

influences.” As cholera epidemics in 1851 and in 1854 had left many children orphaned, the circular also noted that the school was especially open to orphaned children who would “be considered and treated much as adopted or indentured children.” Wolcott apparently saw little difference in the terms “adopted” and “indentured,” implying that the children attending the Richmond School would be expected to pay their way through their labor within the family and on the institution’s farm.17

By August 1857, the enrollment had increased to thirty-six students, with thirty-two of those young people living with the Wolcotts.18 Wolcott reiterated the school’s purpose and its difference from more expensive and exclusive schools on the island. He wrote, “our course is thoroughly unflinchingly industrial, designed to meet the wants of the mass – to develop a self-dependent and hence independent manhood.”19 While the student body was almost half young women, Wolcott centered his attention on his task of teaching young men to behave as “proper” men. He also addressed the disciplinary methods he employed within his “family.” Wolcott acknowledged that the children were subjected to discipline that was “much severer in many respects, though more rational than” what they were used to. At any rate, he wrote, “they are not sufficiently annoyed by it to make them willing to leave us.”20 Perhaps one of those who had complained about the disciplinary tactics used by Wolcott was Mary Dean. She had left the island five months before this August report because of her recurring conflicts with Wolcott.

17 Wolcott to Tappan, 27 Dec. 1854, FI-2304; Richmond circular, December 1856; Wolcott to Tappan, 15 April 1857, FI-2589; Circular for Richmond, signed Seth Wolcott and Mary Dean, enclosed in the letter from Wolcott to Whipple, 8 April 1856, , FI-2488, Wolcott to Whipple, 3 Aug. 1857, FI-2612, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

18 Wolcott to Tappan, 27 Dec. 1854, FI-2304, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

19 Wolcott to Whipple, 3 Aug. 1857, FI-2612, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.

20 Ibid.
over how to conduct her classes. While Wolcott might have won a victory for the
patriarchal family in 1857, two years later he would meet his match in a new generation
of missionaries who found his gender ideology and his methods for governing the
missionaries and the black Jamaicans in his family to be distasteful and domineering.

Many of the students at Richmond had lived within missionary families as
younger children, and several became teachers in the mission’s common schools in the
late 1850s. Three black Jamaican graduates of Richmond – Robert Jackson, James
Mailett, and William Davis – had become teachers employed by the AMA. The
missionary men allowed these young men to teach and live relatively without ministerial
supervision, yet the story of another Richmond student, Mary Ann Lamb, shows that
young Jamaican women had different fate. Lamb had grown up living with the
Thompsons at Eliot Station, the closest church to the Richmond School. When the
Thompson family left the island in 1858 to return to the United States because of their
failing health, they arranged for the twenty-year-old Mary Ann to move in with the
Vennings at Chesterfield where, Thompson wrote, she could assist “him as a member of
his family and will continue to do so till we return.” Lamb accompanied her former
family to Kingston when they were getting ready to sail for the States, and according to
Thompson, she “did things which we had to reprove her for.” As they left each other on
bad terms, Lamb apologized for her behavior in a letter that Thompson received in Ohio,
and he found it an exemplary case of how useful family ties were to the civilizing
mission. Lamb’s letter also hints at her own internal conflicts of being torn between her
Jamaican family and the mission family.21

21 Thompson to Whipple, 24 Nov. 1858, FI-2754, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
In her letter, Lamb apologized to the Thompsons, writing that after she left Kingston, “I felt crushed and that I would sink beneath my own wickedness, it was such a burden to me.” Whatever she had done in Kingston – perhaps drinking rum with friends or maybe rebuking the Thompsons for leaving her – Lamb considered disobeying Loren Thompson’s wishes for her future. She thought about staying at “home” or with her mother who lived near Brainerd Station, instead of going to the Venning family at Chesterfield. Lamb then had a sudden change of heart, going from “total darkness” to seeking “Christ in earnest, and I hope, with humble broken heart.” In spite of overcoming this particular trial, Lamb expressed the same sentiments often voiced by evangelicals: “Although I am among Christians I feel so fearful all the time, I am in the world, just like a little boat on the mighty deep, knowing not where and when a storm of sin and temptation may be coming from.” Yet her spiritual trials and backsliding incident had only strengthened her faith, and Lamb declared her intentions to prepare to become a missionary for Africa.

When Thompson’s used Lamb’s letter to prove his point about the success of incorporating black Jamaicans into missionary families, he looked only to the conclusion of the incident: Mary Ann Lamb’s soul ultimately followed the right path. Unlike the rebellious members of Heman Hall’s church who protested against the Congregational view of baptism, and also unlike the men and women Abner Olds had discovered partaking in Myal feasts, Mary Ann Lamb stood for proof that the mission household was the best way to redeem and “civilize” Jamaican souls. Yet in Lamb’s letter shows a more complicated situation that begs questions about her relationship with her own family as compared to her relationship to the Thompsons. When she feels unredeemed,

\footnote{Ibid.}
Lamb wanted to rejoin her birth mother, pointing to the connection in her mind between sinfulness and her former way of life. With her choice to return to live with a mission family, however, Lamb finds her redemption but also the precarious position of living in two worlds at once, a complex identity leading her to fear the fragility of her faith. She has to be both a domestic and/or daughter in a white family and a Jamaican woman in her native home. While the paucity of Jamaican sources too often obscures the uncomfortable decisions black Jamaicans made when they chose to join the American mission churches, Lamb’s letter gives a small amount of insight into how the American plan to focus on family life affected the converted.

Both of the Thompsons’ health improved enough so that they could return to Jamaica, and they did so in 1860. In one of Thompson’s reports to the AMA after returning to Eliot, he explained how Richmond had changed over the past year. The school was “not as numerous attended” as before, and he sensed that “there was such a suspense in the school” because sixteen of the fifty or so enrolled students had “concluded to close their studies and settle down.” Thompson fretted that many of these students had gotten married or were engaged, and while “this is just what we desire the young people do,” Thompson “wished some of them had waited a little.” Enrolled students were not allowed to become engaged or married, just as the ministers had been prohibited from forming romantic attachments when they were students at Oberlin. Thompson looked on the bright side, however, writing that “several of them settle at Richmond” and those at least partially educated couples “will thus aid us in our work as colonists.”23 In this last thought, Thompson hinted at a long-running yet never enacted plan for free blacks and fugitive slaves from the United States, especially the free people

23 Thompson to Whipple, 6 Nov. 1860, FI-2884, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
living in the AMA’s Canadian mission towns, to settle in Jamaica. With little funding available for this project, Thompson and the other ministers saw their future to lie instead with the example of the Jamaican graduates of Richmond.

II. DISCIPLINE IN THE MISSION FAMILY

Although sins of intoxication, theft, lying, and “heathen” beliefs sometimes led to excommunications from the mission churches, the primary sins requiring church discipline involved sex. This meant that some black Jamaicans who had been welcomed into the church family had persisted in behavior that the missionaries felt to be contrary to the Christian family. In trying to address these continuing problems, the missionaries were sometimes at a loss as to what or who was to blame. While aware that converted people in the United States often backslid into sinfulness, in Jamaica the problem of having to continually excommunicate people created a bad image for the mission churches. It also raised problems for the missionaries themselves about what exactly the best course of action should be. Marriage, for example, had a central place in the Christian family, as Thompson noted in his letter about the Richmond students, but on the other hand, there was some ambivalence about whether Jamaicans shared the same understanding of marriage as did the missionaries. A problem since the mission’s beginning in the 1840s, sex continued to lie at the bottom of the minister’s discussions of discipline, and when the Great Revival swept into the American mission churches in the winter of 1860, it was confessions of sexual indiscretions that proved to the missionaries that God’s spirit was at work in their churches.

In the early 1859, Charles Venning’s congregation at Chesterfield, formerly called Union Station, faced a crisis when a number of young people had been asked to leave the
church family because they were engaging in premarital sex. For Venning, this moment came at a time of general crisis in his church. He wrote of the church’s suffering reputation: “The iniquity prevailing around . . . the weakness and fearfulness of others, the evil reports which Satan set afloat in the community to bring reproach on us, and last, but not least, the bad conduct of some of the young people under our instruction, all combined, presented to mind fearful signs of a wreck of all our hopes concerning this people.” Predictably, Venning was preoccupied with how this made his church look to the neighboring Native Baptists, especially after one Native Baptist conveyed his condolences to Venning and “professed to be shocked at the conduct of our folks.” Venning testily responded that “I believe that it is not so much the evil things they have witnessed that deters them from us as the good principle that by the grace of God prevails” at Chesterfield. To add to his irritation, two of his former church members had been converts from the same Native Baptist church, and he attributed their recent lapses to the fact that as Native Baptists, “they never learned in their conversion to submit to truth as truth.” These converts from the Native Baptist church, he complained, were like how one writer visiting Italy had described Roman Catholic priests converted to Protestantism: they needed to be “broken down and broken up by the Holy Ghost” before a new “foundation” could be “laid for their being built up anew.” Yet this did not mean that he meant to exclude all potential Native Baptist converts, as one of his most helpful church members had come from the same Native Baptist congregation. Venning’s frustration came from how his church was perceived and from his inability to judge whether or not his converts were telling him the truth about their spiritual state of mind.24

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24 C.B. Venning to Whipple, 14 Nov. 1859, FI-2885, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
Feeling unable to decipher the souls of potential converts, Venning suggested that in the future, the missionaries pay more attention to the outward behavior of inquirers. He observed that “four out of the five who joined the Church here in July last were young unmarried folks,” and this practice of allowing unmarried people into church membership was seen as “a doubtful experience.” This was also the case in the Native Baptist churches that taught young inquirers to avoid starting “a religious life until they were married.” This meant, Venning surmised, that young people “might live in sin for as long a time as may be” and then after getting married, they could join the church with all of their sins forgiven. The problem for Venning was that he could not admit unmarried people into the church for fear of their behavior, and yet in doing so, he was going along with the native Baptist practices that he found so reprehensible. He worried about what this meant for his church and, more generally, for the young people of Jamaica and the future of the mission that had invested its work in reaching out to the younger generation. “Satan,” he wrote, “has been for these years hastening them on fast in the broad way to destruction.”

Venning’s crisis in 1859 soon became old news in the wake of an outburst of religious enthusiasm beginning in 1860. The Great Revival grew out of the movement in American and English evangelicalism away from Calvinism and towards a more Arminian faith in the late 1850s. One missionary saw it as evidence of “the power of the Lord” that she thought was being “felt in an unusual degree throughout the world in these days,” and she saw it as a sign that “He will go conquering the nations of the earth until

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25 Ibid.
every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ."

New denominations formed in the U.S. and in England sent representatives to the island, including the former AMA missionary Julius Beardslee who had been converted to the Disciples of Christ during a return visit to the States in 1857. The first reports in the missionary letters remarked on religious revivals taking hold in the island’s western coastal parishes, and by January 1861, Loren Thompson reported that he had held a joint meeting with a Presbyterian congregation on a Thursday, and “the house could not hold all the people that came,” and on the following Sunday, “the church were more than ever in earnest and solemnly pledged to each other a more faithful life and godly work.” The spirit of God, Thompson felt, had finally come to emancipated Jamaica.

The high attendance at Eliot Church on Sunday morning prompted Thompson to hold an inquirer’s meeting that evening to give attendees the opportunity to come forward and publicly confess their past sins as the first step on the road toward forgiveness and church membership. “Such confessions of sin,” he wrote excitedly, “I have never heard before in Jamaica.” To give evidence:

One married woman confessed among other things (her husband being present,) that she had kept with four married men and eight bachelors, during which time, she had separated from her husband – another unknown young woman confessed that she had stolen, another woman [confessed to cheating on her] husband by whom she had had two children and was soon to have a third – he being present, - also confessed to his wife and promises a new life – Another woman confessed to the sin of living in open fornication for years – her load was heavy – could live so no more, has left the man, etc. Another man confessed himself guilty of the sin of

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28 Loren Thompson to Lewis Tappan, 24 Jan. 1861, FI-3177, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
drunkenness and fornication before marriage, also lying, theft, etc., etc. More than 20 thus confessed their sins, old and young. Thompson emphasized the candor of these confessions and their public nature, since this had long been important to how the missionaries envisioned public morality and the correcting of sinful behavior. At Oberlin, public confessions were expected from errant students, and the ministers expected no less from their congregants. Also telling in Thompson’s account is the degree to which sex, more than the other sins of drunkenness, theft, or lying, lay at the root of the confessed sins. It is difficult to say whether this is because the Jamaicans knew that the Americans expected something along these lines in their confessions, or whether Thompson wanted to make plain the degree of change he was seeing by focusing on the subject that had most concerned the missionaries since the beginning.

At Eliot Church, Loren Thompson also turned his focus to the children in his congregation and led a revival meeting aimed specifically at these young souls. With thirty-five children in attendance, including his daughter Lizzie, and all but one “were more or less under convictions,” Thompson wrote, and “never have I witnessed such a scene.” He described the scene as one in which “so many little children all bathed in tears and some sobbing as though their hearts would break.” While some of these children had Christian parents, Thompson feared for those who “are as lambs in the midst of wolves” and called on Lewis Tappan and others in the United States to pray for “these tender lambs.” The most interesting child, a little girl named Naomi, had become so affected by her sense of sinfulness that she had had to leave her classroom because of her tears. This potential convert pleased Thompson, who wrote that this little girl was

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29 Ibid.
correcting her mother and older sister. Additionally, four “native children in our family” showed evidence of conversion, and he hoped “they have given their hearts to God.”

While the manifestations of faith at Eliot Church might have been exactly what Thompson had long hoped to see, the revival moment as a whole gave rise to and reinforced Myal sects throughout the island and resulted in the dawning of a new era of Afro-Jamaican Christianity in the Zion Revival faith, one that hardly could be compared to the Congregational perfectionism the missionaries hoped would take hold.

Bigelow Penfield, one of the younger ministers, wrote with similar anticipation to his parents at Oberlin, his stepfather being a professor at the school. Aside from similar observations to those made by Loren Thompson, Penfield also commented on the effect the revival had on himself. He found that “God is drawing very near my own soul and seeking to revive it,” and he felt the need to confess to his mother and stepfather all of the sins of his youth, telling them that if what he had done had been known at the time, “it would have been their duty to have excommunicated me.” These sins ranged from not spending enough time at prayer to allowing “a mistake made in my favor [to] go uncorrected” to having a heart that “has been too often the abode of lust and impure thoughts.” He asked that his letter be read aloud to everyone at the Oberlin Church so that his sins and repentance would be made known publicly. Bigelow’s letter arrived

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30 Ibid.

31 It is interesting to note that Thompson was not seen as a good preacher. When he left Jamaica for the last time, Bigelow Penfield mentioned to his parents in confidence that the Eliot Church members said, “they have had so so chat long enough, they want preaching, etc. etc. They would not probably give him a call again unless we pressed it exceedingly.” Bigelow Penfield to his parents, 2 Oct. 1863, Penfield Letters, 169.
along with a similar one from his wife, Sarah, who discussed her own spiritual failings and her hope to become a better Christian.\textsuperscript{32}

In contrast to the almost tangible religious excitement in Loren Thompson's and Bigelow Penfield's letters, Seth Wolcott looked at the potential effects of the revival in more sober and material terms. In a letter written during the early stages of the Great Revival, he noted that while "there may be no general marked 'revival of religion' . . . there will be a higher order of religious development." In explaining what he meant, Wolcott elaborated that "the spirit of enterprise and industry is greatly increased . . . . The people are cultivating for themselves much more largely - are supplying themselves with more and better material - are living better and everything seems tending to a higher civilization." Additionally, the earnings from the Richmond Estate's sugar crop were "over $50 weekly." Unlike his more emotional friend Loren Thompson, Seth Wolcott faced the religious enthusiasm creeping into the mission churches with a hope that order, industry, and financial growth would prevail.\textsuperscript{33} Discipline and the family order would remain intact at Richmond, if Seth Wolcott had anything to do with it. Both Wolcott and his similarly minded colleague Heman Hall returned to the United States in fall of 1860 and thus were not present to comment on the most fervent moments of the Great Revival. If he had, he might have had a change of heart.

It seems that Wolcott's premonitions gradually became the party line among the AMA missionaries. By May 1861 the temporary enthusiasm about the revival from earlier in the year had turned into a more mixed appraisal. Bigelow Penfield had been one of the only American ministers to continually support the revival when "bands" of


\textsuperscript{33} Seth Wolcott to Whipple, 13 June 1860, FI-2060, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
revivalists appeared. Unlike the earliest days of the revival, Sarah Penfield wrote, these bands incorporated “superstitions and odd notions,” including the idea that “judgment is just at hand, and interpreting the second chapter of Joel as applying to these times.”Sarah was apparently too young to remember the Millerite phenomena that had swept across New York in the 1840s. Additionally, “Messengers” led the bands of people who claimed to be “favored with communication from the other world.” In spite of these clearly unorthodox practices, “many of the young people who had joined the inquiry class went off to meet some of these bands and were stricken,” although Sarah wrote that her husband had “been able to keep them from most of these delusions” and that “one by one we have seen them coming into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.” In an article published in the American Missionary, Bigelow confirmed that “there is an immense deal of evil, but as I believe, much more good in the movement,” as the “sin of concubinage and fornication is being torn and broken up, root and branch, and multitudes are getting married on all sides.”

The Penfields, however, were not open enough to the spirit’s movement because in the early summer of 1861, the former AMA missionary, Julius Beardslee, took over Oberlin Station from them by a vote of the congregation. Beardslee’s Campbellism resembled the Native Baptist faith that he had once loathed: “it is his custom to invite forward those who will say they believe in the Lord Jesus after service Sunday, and then take them right to the river Monday morning and immerse them, telling them that the Lord will meet them at the river and they shall receive the witness of the Spirit.” Pronouncements of faith rather than church discipline structured the new Oberlin Church.

Bigelow also wrote a revised article about the Great Revival for the *American Missionary*. He spoke of the young people who had joined with the bands the previous summer and then returned to his church as prodigal sons. "They returned to Providence [his new mission station] scarcely knowing what had been done to them, but determined to confess their sins, both privately and publicly. These confessions implicated many in the church, and then commenced such an outpouring out of their own corruption by the members of the church, as one after another they arose and with strong crying of tears and deep agony of soul, confessed their heart wanderings from God." The older members of his church, many of whom had been at a loss when their children had rebelled against them to join the Myal bands, felt that their children had been returned to them and the family restored.\(^{35}\)

In Thompson’s correspondence and in other missionaries’ letters expressing similar thoughts, the signs of spiritual growth were demonstrated through manifestations of the Christian family. Like Venning’s earlier confusion about what to do concerning marriage and his young converts at Chesterfield, the conversions happening during the Great Revival prompted Thompson and his colleagues to apply different rules to black Jamaican families than they had for their own family hierarchies. In the missionaries’ minds, black children were allowed to go against their parents if the child had become converted while the parent remained behind, and similarly, wives could disobey their husbands if they had converted and their husbands refused. The revival also fostered a more open policy towards church discipline as well as self-reflection among the missionaries, as evidenced in the Penfield’s experiences. As always in the Jamaica

Mission, family life proved to be a complicated area of religious life. Did it mean order, as Seth Wolcott would have it, or a tool to create order in the churches, as Venning tried to figure out? Or as in the case of the revivals at Eliot and Oberlin, did family become a way to affect conversions and to show proof of renewed faith? The family served the American missionaries as a means of control, but it was not always so clear how precisely it was to do so. While the Penfields ran a comparatively open church compared to some of their colleagues, they were seen as overly disciplinarian to their church members and to their usurper, Julius Beardslee.

III. SENTIMENTAL FAMILIES

While the older missionaries imagined success in the civilizing mission to mean increased church discipline, even at a time of religious revival, we can shift back in time a few years and follow how another understanding of the relationship between family and the civilizing mission developed in the last years of the Jamaica Mission. Three years after Mary Dean’s unhappy parting from the mission in 1857, a nineteen-year old missionary wife, Sarah Penfield, wrote her mother-in-law that “Miss Dean” had from all appearances been “a lovely woman and excellent teacher,” but she had been “sent home” for “no other reason than that she put herself on equality with the people too much or rather strove to put them on equality with her.”36 As their time in Jamaica did not overlap, Penfield might had met Dean in the United States or simply heard about her from the other members of the mission or the Jamaicans. Whatever may have been her source, her information was not fully correct, but Penfield accurately captured the spirit of her departure if not the facts. Sarah Penfield must have felt a degree of kinship with Mary Dean, as she and her husband lived at Oberlin Station, which had been Mary

Dean's first post in the mission, and like Mary Dean, she and her husband felt distanced from the older missionaries.

The same year that Sarah and her twenty-four-year-old husband Bigelow Penfield came to Jamaica, the forty-seven-year-old Seth Wolcott wrote a light-hearted letter to George Whipple that commented, "well, we are growing old. My hair is getting grey, and my eyes are becoming dim with age. You might think us extravagant, but I have directed Mrs. Thompson to procure me some gold spectacles." The generational difference between the young newcomers and the older missionaries who had been in Jamaica for years was only one problem faced by the young Penfields. The couple and a cadre of other new arrivals came to the island in the late 1858 and 1859, including Sherman B. Wilson and his wife who were to teach at the mission's Brandon Hill School, and Francis (Frank) Douglass, a recent graduate of Hillsdale College in Michigan who Loren Thompson had hired as the teacher for Richmond. With twenty years of age difference between these couples and the missionaries who had been on the island since the 1840s, the two sets of missionaries had quite different gender ideologies, thoughts about the Christian family, and consequently, different ideas about the civilizing mission. In contrast to previous challenges to the patriarchal order by John Hyde, the young couples did not frame their criticism in terms of spiritual liberty and ideas related to the religious radicalism circulating in the 1840s burned-over district and neither did they battle the missionaries with the same sense of moral indignation as had Mary Dean.

In the two decades between the time Wolcott and Thompson had been at the Oberlin Institute and the time the Penfields had been students there, much had changed. The Female Moral Reform Society had grown in numbers and in strength, and it was

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37 Wolcott to Whipple, 26 April, 1858, FI-2668, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
common at Oberlin for women to speak in front of their male classmates and even at larger scale events. Bigelow Penfield’s mother, the wife of Professor Henry Cowles, presided at meetings of the Ohio Women’s Temperance Society, for example.\textsuperscript{38} Other broader cultural changes had taken place as white women, even those opposed to woman’s rights, had found ways to involve themselves in party politics, antislavery societies, and as writers for the numerous ladies’ magazines and as novelists. The transforming gender norms that accompanied industrialization in the 1830s had been firmly instated by the mid-1850s. This gave women and men like the Penfields a clear vision of how the civilizing mission should be conducted, and their methods conflicted with both the 1830s ideas of the mission’s older men and the missionary domesticity that they had cultivated in Jamaica.\textsuperscript{39}

The younger missionaries did not differ in the fundamentals of what they thought “proper” gender and family relationships should be. Sarah Penfield, like her elders, complained about the habit of young Jamaican women to live with men before marrying them. In an article that appeared in the New-York based \textit{Advocate and Family Guardian}, a publication that had been started as the organ of the New York Female Moral Reform Society in the 1830s, she observed that “it is almost the universal practice for a girl to go and live with a man upon his simple promise to marry her.” Penfield certainly

\textsuperscript{38} Gesselink, “Introduction,” \textit{Penfield Letters},” 17

disapproved because such promises of marriage were “often more broken than kept.” Sarah Penfield and her husband had direct experiences with this phenomenon because the father of one of their “adopted” children lived with a woman who was not his wife. When the woman became very sick, she asked for Bigelow Penfield to come to her bedside; but in spite of his attempts to “show her her great sin,” she did not repent. Yet upon recovering from her illness, she asked to receive forgiveness for her sins. With her conversion came marriage, and Sarah Penfield reported that “she seems to be a growing Christian.”

In contrast to the older missionaries who complained about Jamaican children’s misbehavior and in no place wrote about Jamaican adults’ parenting skills, Sarah Penfield found herself interested in how black mothers raised their children. Sarah Penfield recounted to her mother-in-law the story of a Jamaican mother who was attempting to physically punish her son after he stole an apple from the Penfields’s tree. According to Sarah, the boy was tied up to a tree and his mother “with a huge stick began beating him.” Bigelow Penfield rushed over to the scene and “begged her to stop, and when she would not, he stepped between her and the child and pushed her back when she tried to whip past him.” Sarah wrote that the woman became angry at Bigelow, and she “ordered him out of her yard. Her loud voice might have been heard half a mile as she abused him and dared him to unloose the child.” In spite of the pleas of “the little fellow,” Bigelow did not intervene, “thinking he had no right to.” Sarah noted that she felt “very sorry for the little fellow” as he seemed “quite bright and smart.” He had worked for her in the past, and she had paid him in clothing that he could wear to Sabbath School. Sarah

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wished that she could take the little boy away from his mother, but because they lived so close to Oberlin Station, she feared what might happen if she did. For the Victorian generation of missionaries, Jamaican children behaved badly because they were children, and Jamaica’s “barbarism” came not from the inherent evil of heathen religions, but from a failure on the part of Jamaica’s parents to be civilizing influences in their childrearing.

Sarah Penfield also wrote candidly about the need for affectionate marriages rather than hierarchical relationships. She told an aunt that being in Jamaica, “shut out as I am from almost all other society,” she did not know how she could live without “the first warm love between husband and wife, parent and child.” The democratized family of the younger missionaries also changed the position of adopted black children within those families. For just as patriarchy had governed the older minister’s families and dictated the terms of the civilizing mission, the Victorian gender ideology of the young missionaries affected the way they planned to “civilize” black Jamaicans. Rather than thinking of such children as “indentured” to the family or as servants, as Wolcott’s Richmond Circulars had suggested, the younger missionaries emphasized the affectionate ties that bound them to the black children they had taken into their homes. The rhetoric of equality pouring forth from the new missionaries should not be interpreted as a new wave of racial equality. The younger missionaries may have felt discomfort with the hierarchical households they found upon arriving in Jamaica, but they were not above feeling themselves to be racially, culturally, and religiously superior to the bulk of Jamaicans. Yet the affectionate civilizing mission created more complicated families than did the patriarchal civilizing mission because emotional ties that connected black

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children to their white "parents" also opened up the possibility for the missionaries' own sentimental entanglements.

The relative youth of the missionaries also affected the way they fit into the black and white mission family, and the situation of Sarah Ingraham Penfield poignantly illustrates the gray area in the younger missionaries' sense of authority. Penfield had been born in Jamaica, as her father, David Ingraham, was the first of the Oberlin missionaries. She lived on the island until she was three, at which time her family returned to the United States. Penfield, then, was a child of the mission and a missionary, and when she met with men and women who had known her as a little girl, they still saw her as a child rather than a role model. As Penfield's parents had both died during her childhood, the Jamaicans who remembered them gave her solace in a place that was both her home and a foreign country. At the same time, she also knew that her duty as a missionary on the island was to educate and "civilize" black Jamaicans. Unlike any of the older missionaries, she saw herself as both a child of black Jamaicans and as a parent towards them, and this inner divide can be seen in two different accounts, one private and one public, of her first visit to Shortwood, the village where she had been born.

The private account that appeared in a personal letter differed considerably from the public version she wrote for a northern magazine. In her epistolary account of the experience, Penfield wrote that "my old nurse took me to a little chamber where I was born and made me eat of some cake like what she used to make for father and drink the lemon drink he loved -- called me her own daughter and told me many things about my parents and myself." 43 Her second and later account of the meeting appeared in an article published in the Advocate and Family Guardian in 1860, and this public version of

events omitted the intimate exchange recounted in her letter. Instead it portrayed a caricature of "Grandma Burton" speaking in creole and startling Penfield with her outburst when she realized her identity: "'He!' she [Grandma Burton] screams and claps her hands, so sharply I start involuntarily. 'He, me missus! God too good! I never spect this!'" 44 The tender and physically confining encounter found in Penfield's earlier private account was absent in her public narrative that placed her at a distance from her former nurse. There is no sharing of food and drink, the two do not enter a "little chamber," and it seems unlikely that Grandma Burton has any knowledge to impart. In the personal letter she identified herself as a child compared to the older woman, who was a source of knowledge about her family and childhood. In contrast, the article implied a different relationship in which Sarah inhabited the respectable womanhood she had been sent to teach to women like Grandma Burton.

Sarah Penfield's internal conflict about her relationship to black Jamaicans did not mean that she was equally ambivalent about her youth in respect to the other members of the mission family. She quickly found herself at odds with the older ministers and Heman Hall, who had become the mission's corresponding secretary and its de facto leader. Unlike Mary Dean, Penfield did not write to the mission's board in New York with her dissatisfaction, but instead wrote them to her family in Ohio. To be fair, no private letters exist from the other missionary wives as they do for the Penfields, so it is possible that they similarly raised such complaints in the past. Yet the multitude of other conflicts between the Penfields and the older missionaries lead one to conclude that missionary wives in the past had not protested as much as Sarah Penfield. First, she

complained about the wages assigned to men and women. Penfield remarked that a 
female teacher’s salary, $420, was hardly enough for a person to live on. She thought 
that a $110 difference between ministers’ salaries and the payments made to the women 
teachers was too much, but “that the ministers here have seemed to countenance such a 
great gulf between them and the teachers.” Sarah Penfield similarly voiced her views that 
it was unfair that the mission-wide meetings excluded women. According to her, Heman 
Hall frequently joked “that if all the gentlemen voted for a motion and all the ladies 
against it, he should write home that it was an unanimous vote, and this when [the 
mission board] requested the ladies to vote, too.” She became irritated enough to tell 
Hall directly how much this remark of his bothered her, and he stopped saying it, at least 
in her presence.\(^{45}\)

Unlike Mary Dean, Penfield generally vented her frustration through her husband 
rather than speaking out directly to the ministers, as she reassured her mother-in-law that 
with the one exception concerning Hall, “you may be sure I do not trouble myself to vote 
or say anything at the meeting except through my husband.”\(^{46}\) Sarah Penfield limited her 
involvement in the “public sphere” of the mission’s meetings, and instead focused on her 
work as a maternal missionary within the confines of her own home. In the private 
sphere, Sarah Penfield contrasted her own civilizing mission from that of the other 
missionaries whom she felt “had departed very far from the Oberlin principles.”\(^{1}\) Soon 
after the Penfields arrived in Jamaica, they found themselves with a “large family” that 
required fiscal discipline. The children taken in by the Penfields were not only orphans, 
as one’s father lived nearby with a woman to whom he was not married, and another had

\(^{45}\) Sarah Penfield to Minerva Cowles, 8 Nov. 1859, Penfield Letters, 61.

\(^{46}\) Sarah Penfield to Minerva Cowles, 8 Nov. 1859, Penfield Letters, 62.
an aunt within three miles. For Sarah Penfield, bringing up Jamaican children in her own family was an essential part of the mission’s work, just as it was for the patriarchal ministers. Yet she found little to appreciate in the way they treated the black children in their families. Both of the Penfields were “greatly disappointed in the missionaries” for “in no way acknowledging [their adopted children] as equals.” Abner Olds and Mary Dean, both now back in the United States, had been exceptions, and Sarah Penfield found most of the older members of the mission, Hall, Starbuck, Wolcott and Thompson, to be “equally conservative” and noted that “their conduct is so utterly adverse to our Oberlin training [that] it seems to us quite wrong.”

Sarah Penfield gave birth to the couple’s first child in February 1860, but during 1859 she preoccupied herself with the needs and wants of her Jamaican family. Her letters provide a window into the domestic life that characterized her house. She joked with Bigelow’s sister that “you would be quite amused to see how motherly I am with my five children about me,” and early in her pregnancy, Bigelow hoped she would recover from her bouts of morning sickness to take “her accustomed place at the head of domestic affairs.” She described Anna as a “noble good girl” but thought she could be more of “a leading spirit among the younger children.” Anna proved to be an excellent help with the Penfield’s baby. Sarah also commented on the skin color of her “children:” the next oldest, Thomas, “was quite black but carries such a pleasant, happy face” and proved to be “a great help to Mr. Penfield.” When school was out of session, Thomas

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47 Sarah Penfield to Sarah Cowles, 14 March 1859, Penfield Letters, 41; Bigelow Penfield to Minerva Cowles, 21 June 1859, Penfield Letters, 47.

48 Sarah Penfield to Sarah Cowles, 14 March 1859, Penfield Letters, 41.

49 Sarah Penfield to Minerva Cowles, 4 April 1860, Penfield Letters, 73.
worked steadily and saved up money so that he would have “something to start off in the world with.” Willie was Sarah’s favorite, even though he was often in trouble. She wrote that “he has a good mind and excellent memory and will make a fine scholar . . . but he is greatly inclined to indolence.” Thomas agreed, telling Sarah that Willie “hasn’t energy enough.” In the spring of 1860 Willie had left the family, and Sarah commented that “the children do far better without him.” The youngest two were girls, Silena and Anna’s cousin, Mary Reynolds, whom they planned to take back to Ohio when they returned, as she was being “sponsored” by the Columbia (Ohio) Sabbath School.

The children all attended school until four in the afternoon, and then on Friday and Saturday the girls helped Sarah with the labor-intensive laundry and the boys helped tend the garden in which the Penfields grew yams and sugar cane and were in the process of planting seeds that they had been sent from Ohio. The Penfields also instructed the children in “unobjectionable games . . . often giving them exercises that draw out the mind as well as interest and amuse it.” The pleasure Sarah got from the children and the importance she thought they were doing by adopting them was enough to keep them even when the cost of feeding and clothing the extra family members meant that the couple went into debt.

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50 Ibid.
51 Sarah Penfield to Sarah Cowles, 14 March 1859, Penfield Letters, 41.
52 Sarah Penfield to Minerva Cowles, 4 April 1860, Penfield Letters, 73.
54 Sarah Penfield to Sarah Cowles, 14 March 1859, Penfield Letters, 41.
56 Bigelow Penfield to Charles Henry Penfield, 11 April 1859, Penfield Letters, 43.
Sarah Penfield first confronted the other missionaries about this issue during an unfortunate experience with Charles C. Starbuck, a man who had come to the mission in 1855 as a teacher. He married a fellow teacher in 1858, and she unexpectedly and tragically died two weeks after their wedding. Starbuck stayed in Jamaica in spite of his loss and was eventually ordained. He became the minister at Oberlin station and had moved to teach at Richmond just before the arrival of Sarah and Bigelow Penfield. One day when Starbuck was paying the Penfields a visit, he became outraged when he found that Sarah and Bigelow permitted their Jamaican children to eat dinner with them at the same table. In retelling the evening’s events, Sarah Penfield wrote to her mother that “he went on about it at such a rate and acted so cross that it made me quite miserable and I thought perhaps we had best have the children wait when he was here.” Her husband begrudgingly agreed with her, and as they couple had not yet a table large enough to fit their six children along with guests, it made practical sense. Bigelow’s commitment to bringing together all of his household at the dinner table reflected the difficulty he had with his position in the mission. He was the youngest American missionary, so he had relatively little power within the mission family, and in his church he was generally seen to be too young to have any authority. His youthful appearance resulted in his congregation, during prayer meetings, asking God to help and care for the “young youth,” by which they meant their minister.\textsuperscript{57} In taking a stand against Starbuck, even after his wife relented, Bigelow might have been trying to make a point that would get back to the Jamaican church members: their “young youth” would stand up to the other older missionaries on their behalf.

The next time Starbuck paid the Penfields a visit, the new table and linens had arrived, making it easy for everyone to fit. Sarah wrote that “we set the table for all again and oh, how mad he was. A child for acting so would have gotten a sound flogging.” When the children joined the adults in the sitting room after dinner, which Sarah liked “so we may see that they use their time properly,” Starbuck became even more irritated. Sarah Penfield complained that if the children were left to their own devices, as they were at the other stations, she would feel like she was failing in her “duty.” This incident illustrates the escalating conflict between the Penfields and their colleagues, but it also demonstrates another example of how the Penfields thought about their job as missionaries and the role of their family differently. Inviting the children to dine at the family table and to join the adults in the sitting room was a means of exercising control over them, but in a more cerebral way than the tactics used by the other missionaries, as will be shown. Like many middle-class parents interested in new childrearing tactics, the Penfields wanted to win hearts and minds by exercising their power through kindness and by making their adopted family obey them because of dependence rather than because of threats of physical punishment. Even though the cost of providing for a large family taxed the Penfields financially, they both thought it critical to their mission that they gave “them as good as we have ourselves.”

The issue of the black and white family dining together and on the same food became a major dispute between different factions of the mission. The degree of interest taken by the missionaries in a seemingly small point shows how family governance related to the larger status of the mission. It would seem to make sense that each family

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could live as they saw fit, but the older missionaries expressed grave concern about the Penfields’ mode of conducting their family. The couple found allies in Charles Venning, whose attitudes in terms of “prejudice against color” were “preferable to those of the other brethren,” and the Douglasses, as well as the teachers Lucy Woodcock and Edward Hoppin. In October 1859 Bigelow got into a discussion with Heman Hall’s Oberlin-educated wife, Sophronia, about the situation. He learned that her choice to make the children “live on yam and fish” instead of the “variety of food they use at their own table” was cheaper and enabled them to support more children, and she felt that “the children themselves would be generally better satisfied to eat by themselves than with the mission family.” Also, the Halls did not want to “foster pride in the children” for fear that they might “consider themselves our equals if we allow them to share our meals.” Mrs. Hall also referred to the children as “servants,” and Bigelow noted that the other missionaries thought that the Jamaicans’ supposed inferiority could not be changed even by “training of the right sort.”

The Penfields continued running their family as they thought best, and in March 1860, only a couple of weeks after Sarah had given birth to their daughter Mary Cowles Penfield, Loren Thompson stopped in to stay with the couple on his way to Kingston. This was only a little more than a month after Thompson had been witness to the Great Revival’s influences on his Eliot congregation. He apparently did not gain a great deal of spiritual charity out of this momentous event. According to Sarah, “he gave us such a talking to about our treating of the native children. He said we were losing the confidence of the rest of the mission, that we should find ourselves isolated from the rest

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of the mission if we persisted, and . . . that we should ruin the children.” Thompson had started into his speech in Sarah’s “sickroom,” and while Bigelow convinced him to go walk around outside to finish what he wanted to stay, it still so upset Sarah and she had a relapse of fever. Worried about what might happen to them within the mission, the Penfields and the Wilsons decided that they would make the children eat separately when the other missionaries came to visit. This solved the dispute on the surface, but Thompson continued for many months to express his grief “about the course we are taking with our native children,” which Thompson found to be “a continual rebuke” against him. He also used this difference of opinions to prevent the Penfields from moving from Oberlin to the larger Brainerd Station later in 1860.60

Sarah Penfield also had run-ins with Loren Thompson’s wife Nancy, who scolded her for wearing a silk dress underneath her riding clothes, something that Sarah did so she would not have to carry it separately in addition to all of her baby supplies. Sarah wrote in a post-script, “She thought I was young, did not understand, etc.” and added that Mrs. Douglass wore silk tissue to meeting under her riding skirt, but she is so large they dare not attack her.” Apparently, pregnancy offered the younger missionary women some protection from the critiques of their elders. This did not really bother Sarah, who wrote it off, remarking that “my conscience, and not Mrs. T, is my guide.”61

Not only did the younger missionaries run their families differently from the older missionaries; they also wrote a great deal more about their interactions with black Jamaican children, showing an interest in reforming the sentiments and feelings of their

60 Sarah Penfield to Minerva Cowles, 3 March 1860, Penfield Letters, 68; Sarah Penfield to Minerva Cowles, 6 July 1860, Penfield Letters, 84.

61 Ibid., 85.
converts. Reflecting the tone seen in Loren Thompson's letters written during the revival, Francis Douglass tended to always speak about his work with young people in terms of emotions and sentiment rather than discipline. One long letter from Douglass, the new teacher at Richmond, provides an excellent example of how the Penfields' young allies spoke about their duties as religious influences on young Jamaicans. Douglass, about whom Bigelow Penfield felt had "principles... nearer our practice than that of the other missionaries," came to Jamaica in the summer of 1859 after obtaining his college degree in Hillsdale, Michigan. Like Seth Wolcott, Douglass also believed that the students at Richmond who did not board with the missionaries were "likely to receive far less benefit than those living entirely in our families." But the manner of their benefiting was somewhat different. It was not strict discipline that Douglass found to be useful in his civilizing mission but a cultivation of particular feelings. In the case of one of his students, Alexander, he wrote that he was pleased to hear the boy's confession that "his past disposition" had been "passionate" and that he had often been "cruel to the beasts" and subject to giving into his disposition. He now "testifies to his power over himself," which Douglass thought to be "a reformation." Alexander demonstrated what Douglass had been seeking, "the evidence of a saving work of the spirit on their hearts." It was a positive sign that both Alexander and another girl, Elisabeth showed "a tenderness of conscience in little and specific things." Alexander's confession, if it can be taken at face value, was important because it showed that the boy was learning right from wrong, as well as self-control, perhaps two of the most important lessons the missionaries wanted to teach.62

62 Bigelow Penfield to Minerva Cowles, 19 July 1859, Penfield Letters, 52; Douglass to Whipple, 26 March 1860, FI-3041, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
In keeping with separate spheres, the Jamaican girl named Elisabeth, confessed her sins to Mrs. Douglass. Her husband recounted the young girls’ lengthy speech about sin and repentance in his letter, and interestingly, he wrote it out in dialect which few missionaries ever used except for particular phrases here and there; perhaps Douglass wanted to let her voice come through to the men in New York. Her confession demonstrated perfectly the internalization of right and wrong as she supposedly said, “me know God care for poor we, he know all we do, he sees we all de time and he no like we to do wrong. Now if I do any wrong ting . . . Ise bery uncomfortable. Ise much trouble till I go to God and tell I fels my sin.” She then recalled an incident when she thought she had lost her spoon, and while she planned to hide her carelessness from the Douglasses, her guilt caught up with her, and so after a sleepless night, she confessed to Mrs. Douglass: “Ise bery anxious to tell you, den when I tell you, my trouble go way. Ise so much comfort, no more trouble, me no more vex. Me go tell God all bout it, and me know he hear me.” Confessing to Mrs. Douglass relieved Elisabeth of her guilt and bad feelings, and either she or her narrator Mr. Douglass moved quickly from her confession to her earthly surrogate parents to her father in heaven. Rather than relying on the rigid discipline that Wolcott admitted to using on the students, Douglass instead relied on more psychological tactics of socialization that played on the children’s desires to gain approval from their “parents.”

**Conclusion**

Seth Wolcott, Loren Thompson, and Heman Hall had designed the Richmond Estate on patriarchal principles that they hoped would remake Jamaican gender practices by instituting a family model and directing their attention at young people. Although in

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63 Douglass to Whipple, 26 March 1860, F1-3041, Jamaica, AMA Archives, ARC.
the waning years of the Jamaica Mission, the perpetual slipperiness of the Christian family that had challenged the mission throughout the 1850s persisted. Charles Venning, like other ministers, faced the dilemma of what to do about young people and marriage in his church, and during the Great Revival, confessions of sexual licentiousness led to Jamaicans’ marriages breaking up when one partner became converted. Another inter-missionary conflict came when the younger missionaries began to arrive in the late 1850s and found the practices of the older missionaries problematic. The older missionaries wanted to change the way their adopted Jamaican children lived their lives, and the younger missionaries wanted to change the way they felt. However, relying on sentiment and affection complicated the civilizing mission, for at the same time as the younger missionaries intruded into the desires and consciences of their young converts, the reciprocal bonds of sentiment affected the missionaries. By depending on affection rather than discipline, the Penfields, Wilsons, and the Douglasses opened a door to the “precarious vulnerabilities” of the missionary encounter.64 Rather than being a one-way street, the civilizing mission became more fluid and prone to greater exchange between the missionaries and the Jamaicans.

Ultimately, the American ministers in Jamaica were unable to agree on what was meant exactly by the Christian family and how it should inform the mission family that they looked to as the means to conduct the civilizing mission. As early as 1850 this had become clear when John Hyde and his disciples had done some damage to the mission’s standing with their opposition to marriage bonds and other idiosyncrasies. Throughout the 1850s, the missionaries struggled to balance spiritual awakenings, movements of

religious enthusiasm and increased conversions, with the hierarchical order of the family that upheld marriage and a father’s right to be in charge of his wife and dependent children. Whether they became swept away with the signs of the Spirit of God, as did Loren Thompson during the Great Revival, or whether they brought a different gender ideology of domesticity with them from the United States, the missionaries could not reconcile exactly what they wanted to do in Jamaica, and often, as in the case of Loren Thompson and Sarah Penfield, preexisting tensions between different individuals kept potential alliances from being formed.
EPilogue

Not long after the Great Revival struck Jamaica in late 1860, news of a more cataclysmic nature trickled into Jamaica from the United States. Beginning in December 1860, southern states had begun to secede from the Union; war was imminent, and, the missionaries hoped, so too would be emancipation. They got their wish when in October 1862, reports that Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation were confirmed. Bigelow Penfield was overjoyed to hear this, but he also expressed fears for the future of emancipated Americans as they tried to claim their freedom while still living in the South: “How are slaves to gain their liberty but by wading through a sea of blood and will they have courage to set out or perseverance to achieve it at such a cost?”¹ The missionaries had failed to transform Jamaican society into their Christian utopia, and this in a peaceful country; how would American freed people face additional challenges because of the war? Would the work of the Jamaica Mission be in vain?

The American missionaries also faced mounting difficulties of their own in the early 1860s. They felt emotionally involved in the Civil War and regretted being far from the men and women experiencing the war firsthand in the United States, especially friends and family. Bigelow Penfield wrote that “we feel identified with our countrymen, bond as well as free, quite as much we think as if we were still on American soil.” The war also complicated more material realities for the missionaries as imports to the island decreased and the rate of exchange between dollars and pounds resulted in a 10 percent loss each time they drew on the AMA’s accounts.² In 1862 the missionaries began to

² Ibid.
scout around for another source of support because they guessed that the AMA would shift its attention to American freed people rather than to the Jamaica Mission, a point that had come up at the society's annual meeting. The new stations and schools that the mission had begun in the 1850s (Golden Vale, Sea View, Mt. Patience, Rock River, among others) had been turned over to Jamaican ministers and teachers, or, like Oberlin Station, had been taken over by another white minister. The missionaries toyed with the idea of joining the London Missionary Society (LMS), in a sense returning to the roots of the mission as the LMS had employed David Ingraham. However, they remained with the AMA in spite of the declining interest and support from the society. As many in the mission left Jamaica to return to the United States, others stayed with their churches and schools, eventually dying in Jamaica. The mission's churches that maintained congregations during this time floated about for a while in the late nineteenth century and eventually became a part of the United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

Loren Thompson joined the Jamaica Mission in 1844, and he died at his brother's home in Perry Centre, New York, in August 1865. He had still expected to return to Eliot Station, where he had lived for almost two decades. His longtime colleague Seth Wolcott and his wife, Mary, remained in Jamaica continuing to work at Richmond Estate. Their surviving son, Henry Wolcott, attended Oberlin in the 1860s, and when his father died in 1873, Henry came back to Jamaica, lived at Richmond, and even ran for the Colonial Assembly. Charles Venning and his Jamaican-born wife also stayed on the island and continued to receive small amounts of funding from the AMA until the late 1870s. The other American missionary to continue life in Jamaica was an unmarried schoolteacher, Lucy Woodcock, who had joined the mission after graduating from Oberlin in 1853. She
died on the island in 1876. Sarah and Bigelow Penfield lost their younger child in 1863, and then Sarah returned to the United States where she died the next year. Bigelow returned to Jamaica and taught at the Richmond School until 1866 when he left his remaining daughter, Mary Cowles, with his parents and left the United States as an American Board missionary in India.3

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The planners of the Jamaica Mission had come out of the religious enthusiasm and abolitionist excitement of the 1830s, and they endowed the emancipation experience with qualities they found in religious conversion. For these independent and independence-minded evangelical men, they awaited to see their own recent pasts reenacted in the lives of ex-slaves. In their imaginations, freed men would throw off the shackles of dependency and embrace Christian liberty as men. Freed men would own property and become self-sufficient farmers; they would build sturdy and clean homes for their respectable wives and obedient and educated children; and most important of all, they would live moral lives and would commit themselves to perfectionist Christianity. This civilizing mission, the AMA’s officers pronounced, would not instate new hierarchies of power but would merely assist ex-slaves in their process to become independent men. In the plans for the Jamaica Mission and in the evangelical abolitionist movement in the 1830s United States North, women had a limited role. The absence of black women in the ministers’ letters and the constant suppression of the mission’s white women revealed the consequences of a fixation on independent manhood in this group of abolitionists.

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3 This information is culled from the alumni files, Oberlin College Archives, and Gosselink, 213–14.
Once in Jamaica, these missionaries found themselves in a situation they could not have imagined. They were living among people who had little interest in their utopian schemes but who persisted in living in a way that the ministers had thought would end with emancipation. In facing widespread disobedience from black church members and potential converts, the American ministers who stayed in Jamaica the longest grew more intent on exercising control over those whom they felt were unprepared for self-government. In this trajectory of the Jamaica Mission, men like Seth Wolcott, Loren Thompson, and Heman Hall grew more determined to having control over all of the mission's members, whether black or white. This reflected the ideas of domesticity and church discipline they had brought with them to Jamaica from the 1830s United States, and it also spoke how the experience of being disciplinarians transformed them the longer they stayed in Jamaica. The divergence between the missionaries in Jamaica and the changes happening in the antebellum North became especially apparent in the late 1850s when the Penfields and others brought to Jamaica a different understanding of the civilizing mission, racial difference, and gender norms. The conflicts between the older and younger missionaries showed the distance between the 1830s and the 1860s, and it also reflected how the missionaries had began to see themselves as masters in the mission family.

The other persistent, and seemingly contradictory, theme in the Jamaica Mission and in this dissertation has been the fluidity of the mission. Even the strictest ministers proved susceptible to arguments made by their fellow male missionaries on the basis of liberty and freedom. This tension can be found underlying dramatics as drastic as the Hyde-Evarts affair in 1850 to the more long-suffering battles of Mary Dean who tried to
carve out a degree of autonomy for herself and her missionary designs. The mission family order that offered a new and more rigid interpretation of the gender ideology of domesticity and church discipline that benefit of the ministers could collapse into itself if the right strings were pulled. John Hyde, a man who declared his manly right to express his own religious views, grasped at the correct string while Mary Dean did not with her attempts to gain female moral power over the mission’s men. In the United States, Dean would have been praised and Hyde immediately rejected, but the conditions of the Jamaica Mission had heightened the other men’s need to protect manly independence – hence a different conclusion ensued. Besides Dean and Hyde, more subtle power shifts can be seen throughout the mission’s history when various missionaries had moments where they reconsidered their own dogmatism and gained different degrees of respect for Jamaican culture.

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The slow decline of the Jamaica Mission and its relative smallness in relation to the AMA’s work in the South should not obscure the lessons it has for how we understand antebellum evangelical abolitionist ideas about race, gender, and religion, and how these ideas changed over time in the United States as well as when they were taken abroad to Jamaica. The mission reveals the oft-ignored linkages between evangelical abolitionism and missionary work, a point obscured in historical work rooted within the borders of the United States. The missionaries and organizers of the AMA made it their goal to connect the plight of slaves at home with the “heathen” abroad, and their sustained agitation against the American Board prompted the organization to eventually come out in opposition to slavery in the late 1850s. While modern readers recoil at the
patronizing tone of abolitionists and missionaries in the 1830s, the AMA’s officers understood the important connection between domestic and foreign policies. Some years before the Jamaica Mission began, abolitionist Amos Phelps made this point: “[t]here are more than two and a half millions of human beings—of immortal minds, almost in the darkness of Paganism itself . . . and we are Christians, and are sending the light of the gospel over all the earth, and yet we may not touch a system of oppression, which is shutting out this light of life from those millions at our very door . . . . Slavery, then, is a concern of ours. It is my concern. It is your concern. It is every man’s concern.” His message was that Americans could not seek to reform the world unless they affected change at home, and this, in a nutshell, gets to the heart of the Jamaica Mission. From its start it was, ultimately, less of a mission focused on changing Jamaica to become more like the United States, like other nineteenth-century missions, and more of a mission intended to affect change in the United States.

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