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Breaking Down the Barriers: Gender and the Anglican Church at Home

The Reverend James B. McCullagh saw mission work primarily as men's work. Originally from Newry, Ireland, McCullagh went in 1883 as a missionary to the Nass River (K'alii Aksim Lisims) valley in British Columbia, in the Diocese of Caledonia. In 1915, while McCullagh was on furlough in England and engaged in promotional work, he declared his preference for missionary meetings for men far more than drawing-room meetings for ladies:

Personally, I love men; I love to see men at missionary meetings, particularly business men. It interests me to interest them, and show them that missionary work is a man's work. In some places special efforts are made to get men together. With the greatest success, which goes to prove that men can be interested, and are ready to respond, if approached in the "man" way.¹

The Reverend McCullagh felt that drawing room meetings with leading ladies of various parishes were effective and "beautifully English," yet he most enjoyed talking to men about his work. Though a number of messages were suggested here, the most apparent from the perspective of gender issues was that missionaries were men in a men's world. The ideal missionary was conceived of as a male who could endure discomforts bravely for the sake of his work. Yet, according to the Anglican *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, women outnumbered men in the mission field: "The latest statistics of all Protestant Missionary Societies, British, Continental, American &c., give no less than 2576 unmarried women missionaries. The male missionaries are given as 5233, and as these have 3641 wives, the total number of women, married and unmarried, exceeds that of men by just a thousand."² Eugene Stock, the Church Missionary Society Secretary and official historian, claimed that in 1899 the Church Missionary Society staff in northern British Columbia comprised "nine clergyman, three

laymen, nine wives, and eight other women, total 29.”³ Missionary work was nonetheless thought of as men’s work.

This misconception seemed to be reinforced in popular and church literature. In 1904, Norman Tucker, first General Secretary of the Missionary Society for the Church of England in Canada, suggested that, since it was becoming more difficult to find new male recruits for the north, women be sent: “Owing to the great lack of men for the ministry and the unlimited field for workers in the territories and western provinces, it is necessary that trained, efficient, God fearing women should stand in the gap.”⁴ Tucker typically overlooked the fact that women had been working in the north for years. In fact, especially after the turn-of-the-century, most Anglican missionaries in the north were women.

Masculinity, empire, and religion were intricately linked and outwardly manifest in the origins and early practices of the Church Missionary Society. The views of the founding fathers of the Church Missionary Society resonated throughout the nineteenth century and were important in shaping the nature of mission work in northern Canada. In their efforts to raise mission funds, encourage new recruits, or form church policy, the Church Missionary Society administrators and the missionaries themselves frequently emphasized the manliness of their work, much more than other contemporary Protestant mission societies based in Canada or the United States. The Church Missionary Society itself was created at a time when notions of masculine identity and religious practicality were being contested. So too was women’s status within the church.

In its original discussions and organizational meetings, the Church Missionary Society did not include women. The organizers could not imagine, or chose to ignore the fact, that women too would want to go overseas to work as religious missionaries. Inevitably, though, the Church Missionary Society would have to come to terms with this oversight. Throughout the nineteenth century, determined women continually pressed for women’s participation, insisting that they be given the opportunity to pursue mission work. By the 1880s, the Church Missionary Society could no longer resist their demands. In fact, the irony is that, while women’s status within the Anglican church was continually being redefined and contested, it was women who supported and maintained missions through their volunteer efforts within home mission societies and later through their work in the mission field.

The Church Missionary Society, Masculinity, and Empire

The central question addressed by a select group of men on 18 March 1799, in a meeting of London’s Eclectic Society, was: “What methods can we use more effectually to promote the knowledge of the gospel among the Heathen?”⁵ Participants in the meeting were Josiah Pratt, John Venn,

W. Goode, Charles Simeon, Thomas Scott, and a handful of other evangelical Anglicans, many of whom were members of the Clapham Sect.⁶ The Eclectic Society, which consisted of clergy and laymen, had been holding regular meetings since 1783 in the vestry of St. John's Chapel, Bedford Row. They sought to explore the aims of evangelism, propose projects to spread Christianity, and establish philanthropic bodies. One of their prime concerns was missionary work. Over the years, ways to "enlarge the place of thy tent," or spread Christ's message to the heathen beyond England had often been considered.⁷ The Eclectic Society supported the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and the nondenominational London Missionary Society in 1795. Two Anglican missionary societies active before the late eighteenth-century – The Society For The Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) and The Society For The Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) – were seen by the Eclectic Society as too closely tied to the "high" church. From the perspective of the evangelicals, the "established" church was not properly represented in the mission field. Following considerable planning and preparation, the public was invited to a meeting on 12 April 1799 to witness the formation of the Church Missionary Society.

At the heart of the philosophy of this society was the idea that the mission must represent "the Church – principle, not the high-Church principle."⁸ The fact that John Venn distinguished between high and low church was crucial to the establishment of the society and later to the endurance of the Church Missionary Society in Canada. The founders thought it quite acceptable for evangelicals with similar goals to work outside conventional Anglican structures. One of the central principles of the Church Missionary Society was that missionaries did not have to be ordained, something the SPG and SPCK for the most part could not accept. In fact, Simeon was in such a hurry to get the society off the ground that he said it was "hopeless to wait for missionaries; send out catechists." Again, this reflected the evangelical desire for what William Wilberforce described as "real religion."⁹ The evangelicals wanted a different kind of Anglican Church, one which was more in touch with its parishioners.

The establishment of the Church Missionary Society took place during the struggle in the Anglican Church between high Churchmen and evangelicals, and in an atmosphere that was critical of status and prestige. The evangelical movement itself was part of the eighteenth-century revival associated with Methodism.¹⁰ At the parish level, according to historians Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, the Anglican evangelicals called for more active and visible clergy as opposed to the traditional "scholarly cleric immersed in esoteric theological debates."¹¹ In his comprehensive study of the evangelical movement, D.W. Bebbington presents a similar view of the parish clergy: "The hunting, shooting and fishing parson was

a common type. It was the evangelical movement that prompted the clergy to greater diligence especially in cottage visiting."¹² Evangelicals disrupted conventional patterns of exclusive behaviour and moved religious worship outside of customary structures.

Evangelicals perceived themselves as active proselytizing clergy and not members of the gentry. Most evangelical clergy believed in the importance of individual conversion, the need to spread the gospel, the centrality of the Bible, and the importance of Christ's sacrifice. Evangelicals such as the Church Missionary Society founders Henry Venn and his son John, as well as Charles Simeon, believed not only in justification by faith but that grace be properly manifested in public religious works and not restricted to the physical trappings and traditions of the Anglican Church. Practical Christianity and self-reflection were emphasized over questions of doctrine.

Mission work in Britain and throughout the British empire was inextricably linked to the late eighteenth-century evangelical revival. In typical evangelical discourse, the eminent writer Hannah More claimed at the dawn of the nineteenth century that "action is the life of virtue and the world is the theatre of action."¹³ The world, or at least the British colonies, were rapidly becoming theatres of action for missionaries. The Church Missionary Society founders did not wonder how the missionaries would be received in these imagined heathen lands or the world theatre. They did not – and could not be expected to – doubt the wisdom of the mission movement. Nor did they discuss the place of women, who were also absent from their organizational meetings and their plans. The Church Missionary Society was created by men who did not question England's imperial endeavours, who wished to reshape Anglicanism to include a more practical approach, and who felt that men were entitled to spread the gospel while women were not.

Anxieties over masculinity were especially apparent in the discourse surrounding the growth of evangelism. If the shooting, hunting parson was an object of criticism for evangelicals, then what model of masculinity would replace him? As Davidoff and Hall show, the evangelical clergyman "risked his masculine identity" by emphasizing action, emotion, and sensitivity. Public displays of weeping, singing, and praying drew criticism from high church Anglicans. This tension was resolved by the mid-nineteenth century when emotionalism as an expression of religious conversion began to decline and was replaced by a new emphasis on control as a manly virtue. Graham Dawson argues with respect to India that Christian, and specifically evangelical approaches to empire, became especially popular in the early nineteenth century: "A moral critique of the old imperialism expounded against its characteristic forms of masculinity: the Empire had attracted 'the wrong kind of Englishmen and brought out

the wrong tendencies in them.' Training for the [East India] Company service began to propound the virtues of a new kind of 'Christian Englishman' – a righteous, energetic reformer who would be dedicated to the establishment of a virtuous and rational Raj."¹⁴ One aspect of the late eighteenth-century evangelical manhood that did not disappear was a focus on work and action. Work was elevated and God's work was especially distinguished.

The distinctive features that marked the founding principles of the Church Missionary Society were evident in northern Canada. An evangelical background was important, especially in the north where optimism, adaptability, enthusiasm for visiting, and itinerant outreach were crucial characteristics for the success of individual missionaries. These principles were well exemplified in two early missionaries sent from England to the north in the nineteenth century, William Duncan and the Reverend William C. Bompas. Both appeared to be suitable candidates to represent the evangelical beliefs of the Church Missionary Society. And both found scope in their new mission fields to interpret and shape evangelism. They were attracted to what Bebbington called the "empire of philanthropy" offered by the nineteenth-century marriage of evangelism and world mission and, like many others, they were captured by the endless appeals heard in English churches in the 1850s and 1860s to join the mission movement.

A strange twist of fate was responsible for the arrival to the Yukon territory of the Reverend William Bompas.¹⁵ Anglican Christianizing of Aboriginal peoples in the Yukon through missions had begun under the guidance of Bishop David Anderson, the first Church Missionary Society bishop. Under Bishop Anderson's instructions, the Reverend W.W. Kirkby was sent from Red River to Fort Yukon in 1861 to become the first Anglican missionary to contact the Gwich'in Dene. Although he only stayed a week, the Church Missionary Society reported that Kirkby had "prepared the way for a missionary who was about to appear on the scene, settle down and establish a mission among these Indians."¹⁶ The Reverend Robert McDonald, described by the Church Missionary Society's official historian as an accomplished "country-born missionary trained at Bishop Anderson's collegiate school at Red River" settled at Fort Yukon in 1862.¹⁷ Indirectly, McDonald's ill health – or at least the report of it – was responsible for the Reverend Bompas's arrival.

Born into an evangelical London Baptist family, William Bompas converted to Anglicanism as a young man and served as a lay worker in a working-class parish in his home city. He was an avid supporter of the Church Missionary Society and felt comfortable with its evangelical principles. Bompas volunteered for mission work after hearing a sermon in London's St. Bride's Church in 1865, given by Bishop Anderson, who had

just retired to England. He read an appeal from McDonald, whom Bishop Anderson feared was about to succumb to an illness, with pleas that someone “come forward to take up the standard of the Lord as it drops in his hands.” The Reverend Bompas left almost immediately for the Yukon, arriving on Christmas Day 1865 to find McDonald much recovered.¹⁸ As historian Kerry Abel has argued, the Reverend Bompas “was determinedly idealistic about the promise of salvation through the realization of sin and the acceptance of true faith. He felt church rituals such as crosses, candles, incense, and processions were insults to God.”¹⁹ Exceedingly evangelical, the Reverend Bompas wanted nothing to do with high church trappings. He stayed in the north for forty-one years, serving first as a missionary and later as a bishop, first of the Diocese of Athabasca, then in the Diocese of Mackenzie (Deh Cho) River, and finally in the Diocese of Selkirk.

Nearly a decade before the arrival of Reverend Bompas, a mission was established by William Duncan for the Church Missionary Society on the northern coast of British Columbia. Like the Reverend Bompas, Duncan was swept up in the missionary movement in its golden age. Many Sunday services during the mid-nineteenth century featured guest missionaries on furlough who came to speak to congregations about the benefits of mission work. According to his biographer, Duncan was attracted to the Church Missionary Society in the “golden years of missionary fervour. Livingstone’s exploits in Africa had captured the public imagination and created publicity for the whole movement. The glamour and excitement surrounding missionary work exerted a strong pull on the troubled young man.”²⁰ Duncan was certainly troubled. He was embarrassed by his working-class background and ashamed to be labelled illegitimate. At twenty-one, Duncan heard an appeal from a clergyman from York, who was at the Beverly Minster promoting the Church Missionary Society. Duncan applied and was sent to the society’s Highbury College in London, England. Two years later he was recommended by the society for a posting at Port Simpson (Lax Kw’alaams).²¹ Both Duncan and the Reverend Bompas had strong evangelical beliefs, were attracted to the work by Church Missionary Society recruiters, and would ultimately contribute to the mission field as a masculine endeavour.

Male missionaries from Britain generally trained at Highbury College or Islington College in London, which attracted men without university education. Historian John Webster Grant claims the Islington men were “tough if uncultivated graduates.”²² Many of the Canadian male missionaries who went into the northern field trained at Wycliffe College in Toronto. In describing the type of men Wycliffe hoped to recruit, principal T.R. O’Meara claimed as late as 1927 that they wanted masculine spirited men: “We must have good men. The future students in preparation for the sacred work of ministry must be physically sound, manly and

virile. The time is long past when the weakling of the family can be set aside for the work of the church."²³ The masculinity that took root in the north was a curious amalgam of the premodern and modern, in which the masculine outdoorsman combined with the evangelical visiting clergy who attempted to reach out to convert as many people as possible. Ironically, while many of the male missionaries were from the lower middle class, they portrayed the image of the "squire parson" in their self-reflective correspondence, as though in their transplantation from Britain or southern Canada, they had risen in social status.

There were many models for this type of manhood, found especially in popular boys' literature from the mid-Victorian era through to the early twentieth century. According to historian Patrick A. Dunae, boys' literature "reflected the missionary zeal and the pragmatic materialism associated with empire during the last decades of the nineteenth century."²⁴ The middle- and upper-class discourse of empire and masculinity employed such terms as "virile," "manly," "muscular," and "forceful" to convey such assertions. *Tom Brown's School Days*, a mid-Victorian novel written by Thomas Hughes, personified this tradition with special poignancy. Tom Brown was exemplified as an example of a new type of masculinity: muscular Christianity. A contemporary of Hughes described Brown as "a thoroughly English boy. Full of kindness, courage, vigour and fun – no great adept at Greek and Latin, but a first rate cricketer, climber and swimmer, fearless and skillful at football and by no means adverse to a good fight in a good cause ... [his] piety is of that manly order, that not even an ordinary schoolboy of the present day will find himself wearied of it."²⁵ Brown became a symbol of the muscular Christian: physically strong, able to protect the weak, ready to fight for a good cause, and, above all, responsible to God. Historian J.A. Mangan describes Brown as a blend of piety and machismo.²⁶ The idea of muscular Christianity was popularized through such writers as Hughes. Another mid-Victorian writer, Charles Kingsley, preferred to call this combination of manliness and Christian responsibility "Christian manliness."

Historians John Mackenzie and Allen Warren have considered the related emergence of the Boy Scout movement and place it firmly within the context of popular manliness and the formation of many of Britain's imperial masculine images. Lord Baden-Powell's manifesto, *Scouting for Boys*, encapsulated many representations of young men drawn from popular images of the period. Scouts were ultimately frontiersmen whom Baden-Powell claimed were found all over the empire: "The 'trappers' of North America, hunters of Central Africa, the British pioneers, explorers, and missionaries over Asia and all the wild parts of the world, the bushmen and drovers of Australia, the constabulary of North-West Canada and of South Africa – all are peace scouts, real men in every sense of the

word."²⁷ The so-called peace scouts were strong and plucky, adept in the wilderness and, according to Baden-Powell, prepared to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their mother country.²⁸ Masculine representations of missionaries as much as trappers, hunters, and explorers followed noticeably similar lines. Masculine Christianity and the sporting sense of recreation found in the scouts fused to produce an image of masculinity associated with empire. Missionaries were considered an integral part of this masculine culture. Bishop Du Vernet of Caledonia asserted that he knew exactly the type of men needed for his diocese: "they must be men of the right kind. Men who are willing to tramp the trail in advance of the train. Men who can find a joy in carrying the Gospel to the lonely settler. Men who with simple reverence can lead in the worship of God a congregation of ten in a neighbor's shack. Men who count it a privilege to be pioneers for Christ and His Church."²⁹ In fact, a remarkable amount of the missionary recruiting literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries produced by the Anglican Church used this masculine rhetoric to appeal for male missionaries.

Similarities between male missionary correspondence and memoirs, and the texts of late nineteenth-century adventure writers are striking. The language of masculine adventure was evident in the writing of two Caledonia-based missionaries, each of whom served in northern British Columbia for over twenty years. Bishop William Ridley's book, *Snapshots from the North Pacific*, and Archdeacon William Henry Collison's evocatively entitled work, *In the Wake of the War Canoe*, epitomize masculine Christianity in their mission work. Bold undertakings involved long canoe trips, with risky portages and harrowing weather conditions. Strength and endurance were exhibited by hunting or building log houses, churches, and schools. Organizing crews for extended travel required manful leadership.

In 1876 the Reverend Collison set out from Metlakatla to the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii). In his account, Collison invoked images mindful of Haggard or Henty, recalling an arduous journey, involving large squalls that "nearly tore our sail to pieces." "Off Rose Spit," continued Collison, "a large sea lion harassed us by following the canoe, and coming up and down now on one side and again on the other. My crew feared it might upset us, and although we were sailing very fast, we could not outdistance it. So, acting on their advice, I seized my rifle, and as it again emerged very close to the canoe, shot it through the head."³⁰ Similarly, the Reverend William Ridley, first Bishop of Caledonia, who arrived at Metlakatla in 1879, described a trip up the Skeena River (Sginn) in a steamer that entered a treacherous stretch of water: "the swiftness is a difficulty rather than a peril. Not so the whirls and cross currents at the confluence of some of the largest tributaries. At these points skill and nerve

are summoned to the contest, and exciting it really is.”³¹ The thrill of battling nature drew from masculine images of adventure.

In the descriptions of their conquest over the whirls and currents, Collison and Ridley employed the masculine rhetoric of the public school and scouting traditions of Victorian and Edwardian men. They appear to be conscious of the links among mission, masculinity, and British identity. In his hopes to attract more men to his diocese, Ridley reflected on this nexus:

Have you found that the “regions beyond” are always an attraction to missionaries? Thirty years ago I chafed behind the frontiers of the Punjab, as if the British side had not difficulties enough! Then the spirit of adventure bred in British bone might have had a large share in this yearning to go forward; but now I am too old to be carried away by that – I had nearly added “that nonsense.” It is not nonsense, however, but a national quality God has implanted for set purposes. A worn-out charger puts on war-like airs in his paddock at the bugle’s call, and we applaud his quenchless spirit. So I fancy even worn-out missionaries will say in



“Bishop Bompas helping
to work a raft.”
A photograph of a
drawing with this title by
John T. Campbell.

their hearts, "Go ahead, boys," as they see in young soldiers of the Cross a desire to break through old lines right and left ...

I want an enterprising but determined bachelor, very self-contained, yet full of the Spirit as the chief qualification. He will want a log-cabin first, and later a larger building for church and School purposes. Within a few weeks he will do as another did when he showed me his hands blistered through using his axe. I could only comfort him saying, if he stuck to it his hands would harden.³²

The masculinist discourse was not strictly reserved for the "British side." Similar language was employed by Canadians involved in northern mission work. A school history produced to mark Wycliffe College's jubilee celebrated men who had taken up mission work. In this edition, Canon Gould, secretary of the Missionary Society for the Church of England in Canada, recalled when Isaac Stringer and Tom Marsh had been recruited for northern work. Bishop Reeve, a Church Missionary Society missionary originally from Harmston, England, and the second bishop of the Diocese of Mackenzie River, visited Wycliffe in the fall of 1892 and, as Canon Gould described, his meeting with potential recruits was a rousing affair:

On a certain eventful evening, which the writer well remembers, in the month of November, 1892, the Wycliffe students, with 'Ike' Stringer presiding, were addressed by one of the stalwarts, in physical form and missionary spirit, of the Church in Canada, the Right Rev. William Day Reeve, Bishop of the diocese of Mackenzie River. Bishop Reeve presented a plea for two men for service in the far northwest of the Dominion, one to ascend the Liard River from its junction at Fort Simpson with the Mackenzie, and establish there an Indian Boarding School; the other for the evangelization of the Eskimo dwelling in the Mackenzie Delta, westward along the Arctic coast to the border of Alaska, on Herschel Island, and eastward along the same coast to Ballie Islands. The plea was answered, the Chairman of the meeting volunteered for the Eskimo, and husky Tom Marsh, the man that no student could lick in the trial of physical strength, for the Liard River. Thus the Spirit of Missions, whose sources none can determine and whose flow none can control, burst out in fresh forces of life, quickening the zeal, of the whole body of students and inspiring the ever widening constituency of supporters to larger conceptions of the work and to increased liberality for its support.³³

Bishop Reeve as well as Stringer and Marsh were seen by Gould as hardy representatives of Christianity in the north. Their physical strength and passion for mission work stirred the enthusiasm of other men. In fact, on

a visit to the north in 1916, Gould was reminded yet again of Marsh's masculinity: "Of the many and interesting things the General Secretary of the MSCC saw ... none attracted him more than the log house, the first home of the school, which its founder and first principal had hewn out of the forest and erected for the most part, with his own hands."³⁴ Among men such as Bishop Ridley, who admired a man with blistered hands, Marsh had asserted his masculinity by hewing wood to build a log house.

For the Reverend Isaac Stringer, hunting expressed his masculine identity. In 1893 and 1894 he wrote a series of letters to his fiancée Sarah Alexander outlining his recent activities. On a journey to Rampart House (Jiindé Tsik) from the Peel River mission, he told of his first hunting expedition: "We had some good hunting on the way and I shot my first deer. Had a wild chase after it. The snow was quite deep and at times it was difficult travelling." He boasted that he had become "a regular Husky in nearly everything."³⁵ In a more colourful narrative and self-representation of the hunter, Stringer offered Alexander the picture of a masculine hero,



Bishop Isaac O. Stringer beside the bear he killed en route to Forty Mile (Ch'ëdäh Dëk) in a rowboat.

just home from the hunt: "Deer hunt shot one. But wasn't I lionized after the hunt. You ought to have seen how the people came out and expressed their admiration as I walked home through the village with my portion of that deer on my back. They were pleased at my success and I think it helped me in gaining an influence over them."³⁶ Stringer thought his display had won him respect among the Inuvialuit, hoping that masculinity signified by proven success in killing a food animal could be influential. While it might be argued that Stringer's hunting experiences were necessary for his basic survival, the language of lionization also suggests a certain power gained through his hunting conquest.

The Church Missionary Society and the Canadian missionary society appealed frequently to masculinity to attract recruits. And these images of missionary men continued to be reinforced by those already in the field. Whether shooting rapids or being heralded as great hunters, male missionaries appeared in their correspondence to revel in the glories of the outdoor life of masculine Christianity. John Webster Grant observes: "Protestants were more inclined to think of hardships as obstacles to be overcome in the athletic spirit of British Christianity."³⁷ Found in private letters, autobiographies, and public mission newspapers, the strength and persistence of images of the virile masculine missionary provide a recurrent motif. These constructions offer a significant background to the experiences of women missionaries who operated in the same institutional structures and physical surroundings.

Women in the Church Missionary Society

Given the juxtaposition of masculinity with mission work, it should come as no surprise that the Church Missionary Society was resolute in its opposition to sponsoring women missionaries. Nevertheless, during the nineteenth century, hundreds of single women in Britain asked to be sent abroad as missionaries. Frequently women with an interest in mission work married missionaries so that they could pursue their own goals. The society insisted that, if a woman was to partake in mission work, she had to marry a male missionary or go into the field with a close relative, usually a brother or a son. This rule guaranteed that women would stay within the family. In 1864, a number of letters from women were heard by the Church Missionary Society candidate's committee, which remained convinced that its duty did not include promotion of women's mission work.³⁸ Yet, an emerging consensus among missionaries was that women were needed, for, as one observer put it: "only women missionaries can gain entrance to the Zenanas of India, where millions of purdah women spend their lives."³⁹ Until the 1880s, the Church Missionary Society would not be persuaded by this argument, believing instead that the Zenana work was being adequately carried out by other mission societies.

According to Brian Heeney, during the first half of the nineteenth century most Anglicans believed that women were subordinate and should remain within the private sphere: "Victorian Anglican defenders of subordination found a powerful biblical base for their view of women."⁴⁰ This context of subordination was largely responsible for the fact that women were refused the opportunity to pursue mission work.

Maternal feminism, however, with its emphasis on the moral and ethical superiority of women and the social need to bring characteristics learned in family life to the public sphere, was a strong and growing force in Victorian society. An especially important aspect of maternal feminism was its relationship to the growing influence of women within Protestant denominations. Barbara Caine's history of Victorian feminism argues that the maternal ideology was both binding and liberating for Victorian women: "Feminists found in early Victorian domestic ideology not only a set of ideas which they had to combat, but also one which helped them to negotiate with liberalism and with the gendered nature of the public sphere."⁴¹ Caine connects evangelism to an extended idea of domesticity, which ultimately provided women with a wider sphere: "From a statement of their limitations women face and their necessary domestic confinement, it thus moves to the demand that women carry first into their homes and then into the wider society something of the religious zeal and fervour which other missionaries were taking to the heathen in the foreign lands."⁴² Domesticity and maternalism were not always limiting ideologies for women; rather, they could be used as deliberate strategic identities to extend women's influence.

In this vein, Ann Douglas argues that religion in American society throughout the nineteenth century became increasingly a women's domain, in a process she identifies as the "feminization of religion."⁴³ As fund raisers, volunteers, and chairs of women's church committees, women were active agents within religious institutions. While ministers recognized and welcomed their participation in parish work, this enthusiasm had its limits: "At the other extreme, in the realm of fact, ministers blocked the practical implementation of those feminine virtues they lauded so energetically in print. Ministers opposed the outright and by definition unholy demands for political equality posed by the women's rights movement, but they also bitterly feared and fought feminine assumption of conspicuously Christian tasks. Clerical hostility was a form of territorial imperative springing from an uneasy sense of a too cramped common space."⁴⁴

While the church was increasingly a place in which women contested their place, a significant feminization of religion was also occurring in Britain during the same period. By the end of the nineteenth century, the male-dominated domain of Sunday school was largely a female preserve.

Women had their own deaconess houses, sisterhoods, mothers' unions, local clubs, and study groups. Women's increased activism within British religious life was connected to the rise of evangelism, which reinforced separate spheres and created opportunities by challenging conventional occupational and religious roles. Although a clear consciousness of the ideology of separate spheres for each gender had emerged, under evangelism women found themselves transcending prescribed roles. Justified in terms of family strategy or religious work, women increasingly entered the public sphere.⁴⁵ Yet, only grudgingly and gradually did Victorians accept unmarried women missionaries.

In taking advantage of the marital status of missionary men, the Church Missionary Society, with no conscious plan to do so, consequently paved the way for single women missionaries. An observer noted years later in the *Missionary Herald*, "it is the missionary's wife who, by years of endurance and acquired experience in the foreign field, has made it possible in these later years – the years of the Women's Missionary Societies – for unmarried ladies to go abroad and live and work among the people of Eastern lands."⁴⁶ Although the author was likely referring to India, the duties of missionary wives were similar in Canada's north. In an endorsement of the valuable work done by missionary wives, this writer goes on to say: "I never yet saw a missionary's wife whose companionship did not double her husband's usefulness [sic]."⁴⁷ Given irrefutable evidence of the usefulness of women in the mission field, by the 1880s, the Church Missionary Society could no longer reject appeals from single women. Other denominations were opening their doors to missionary women and the Church of England had already sanctioned societies under its auspices to send women abroad. Eugene Stock, the Church Missionary Society's official historian, asserts that opening its doors to women was a move which the Church Missionary Society "never formally or designedly entered upon." Instead, it gradually acquiesced to the opportunity women presented. No specific rule laid out this change in policy: the Church Missionary Society was compelled to follow the lead of other mission societies. For this reason the growth of the society was marked by an increased number of women: from 1887 to 1894, some 172 single women joined as missionaries and, by 1898, there were 253 single women on the Church Missionary Society roll.⁴⁸

The Church Missionary Society moved rapidly from the exclusionary position it had held for most of the century to the imposition of high standards for women missionary candidates. Potential missionaries were to exhibit their qualities throughout a rigorous application process. In a speech on women's church work, Georgina A. Gollock, the Lady Secretary of the new Church Missionary Society Women's Department, whose role was to oversee the training of women missionaries, discussed the appropriate

credentials for candidates and outlined the recruitment process: "Definitions are rarely satisfactory, but it may be well to state that our minimum standard of acceptance would include evidence of true devotion to Christ and subjection to the Holy Spirit; some experience and earnest purpose in seeking the salvation of souls; clear and intelligent Bible knowledge; distinct and well grounded doctrinal views; loyal attachment to the Church principles dear to us; as well as sound bodily health."⁴⁹ The recruits first completed a formal application. If accepted, they took a set of oral interviews with a six-member panel. Each panel generally consisted of three men and three women. Even this process was embedded in preconceived ideas about women's distinct nature. Gollock proudly proclaimed: "the women interviewers naturally deal more with questions of character and temperament, the Clergy with points of Scriptural knowledge, doctrine and Churchmanship, but all seek humbly and in entire dependence upon the Divine spirit to discern the presence or absence of the all-important spiritual qualifications for the work."⁵⁰ Future missionaries would then enter a training program at Mildmay or Highbury deaconess house in London.

The deaconess movement, with its origins in Germany, began in England in the 1860s and represented the culmination of three features in Victorian society: the growth of evangelism, the anxiety over so-called redundant women, and a pronounced moral panic over a decline in social conditions.⁵¹ Evangelism was significant to the deaconess movement since it allowed for a public display of religion beyond institutional strictures. On the other hand, women in high church Anglican communities were cloistered. The deaconess movement allowed middle-class evangelical women to filter their energies into respectable religious charitable work and to put into practice the Victorian belief in *noblesse oblige*. Reverend William Pennefather, the founder of the first deaconess house in England claimed that his motivation for opening Mildmay was to provide religious women with equal educational opportunities:

It seemed strange that, while training institutions and colleges are deemed essential for men who are to be used either as medical missionaries or as preachers of the Gospel, there should not be institutions where women may acquire that knowledge of the bodies and minds of their fellow-creatures which would render them capable of fulfilling their high destiny as help-meets to man.⁵²

While the Reverend Pennefather wanted women to have an opportunity to train for religious work, he also believed that they were meant to use their training as subservient "help-meets to men." Yet, Mildmay and other deaconess houses offered evangelical women the chance to become

professional full-time church workers, which itself represented a step forward for such women.

Deaconess training lasting between one and two years was meant to enhance skills deemed necessary for local parish work and, later, for the foreign mission field. Courses were offered in Bible study, nursing, cooking and other domestic arts, as well as bookkeeping.⁵³ Under the auspices of the local clergy, deaconesses in training worked with orphans and “rescued” women and did home visits in East London. Students were to participate in morning prayers and dedicate at least one hour of each day to either meditation or religious study.⁵⁴ The Toronto Church of England Deaconess and Missionary Training Home initiated in February 1892 took Mildmay as its model. Sybil Wilson, the first principal, studied at Mildmay and, on her return, published a leaflet to advertise Canada’s first deaconess house with a two-year training program.⁵⁵ Lectures were offered in church history, Bible study, and the prayer book. Practical work in local parishes would also be undertaken. The goal of the house was to prepare deaconesses for work as home or foreign missionaries:

The true vocation of a deaconess is to try to lead men and women to Christ, and for his sake to help them in all possible ways. That such trained workers, giving up their whole time, will be an invaluable help to overworked clergymen in town and country, no one can doubt. The committee also hope that many of the deaconesses will become missionaries, both in the Northwest, where such able helpers are sadly needed, and also in foreign fields, where the labourers are so few and the field so large.⁵⁶

Deaconess training was constructed within the framework of Victorian norms about gender. In form, the course curriculum in nursing and domestic arts did not challenge gender hierarchies. Yet, in terms of field practice, the deaconess movement represented a significant step away from the private sphere and into an independent life for many Victorian women.

Deaconesses exercised very little power in the Anglican hierarchy. Although their order began in 1861, official guidelines about their status were not established until the early 1920s. The Lambeth Conference of 1897 sanctioned the order, but failed to give it any formal power within the Church of England. In 1919, a report of women’s status in the Church of England claimed that “there is no official recognition of the status and duties of a deaconess in the English Church, nor any one authorized form of ordination.”⁵⁷ Even the seemingly official category of deaconess, which could have granted a degree of power to women, was ambiguous and subordinated. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, women had broken down the exclusionary barriers imposed by church mission societies.

Mission training was available, although the context of subordination undoubtedly continued to impede full equality of opportunity. In Canada, there was some debate between church women who saw their role as subservient to male clergy and those who wanted to take full credit for their contribution to the Anglican mission enterprise.

Canadian Women and Anglican Missions

In 1885, Canadian Anglican women began to organize an extensive network of voluntary workers to support missions. The catalyst behind the formation of the national woman's auxiliary was Elizabeth Roberta Tilton. She was influenced by the leading Episcopalians and Anglicans she met during her extensive travels when she toured deaconess houses in London, England, and attended woman's auxiliary meetings in the United States.⁵⁸ Tilton felt that Canadian women should organize a similar auxiliary and in April 1885 she and six local Anglican women addressed the board of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society at a meeting in Ottawa. Tilton proposed the creation of a national woman's auxiliary. She appealed to the board by stating that from Victoria, British Columbia, to Sydney, Nova Scotia, there were potential talents that could aid in the Lord's work: "And knowing this, we ask, that as the Apostles of old recognized the women of their day as labourers with them, you our beloved Fathers in Christ, may recognize the women of the Church of Canada, and give your hearty and earnest consent that there should be established, in connection with your Board, a Woman's Auxiliary."⁵⁹ The board approved the proposal, stating that they welcomed the "co-operation of all our Christian sisters [in] carrying out the noble object of our Missionary society."

The purpose of the organization was to encourage women's work at the parish level and to promote missionary zeal by writing to missionaries and by gathering and sending clothes to mission stations for dispersal among converts. In April 1887, the national woman's auxiliary merged with Toronto's Church Woman's Mission Aid, the first Anglican woman's society, formed in Canada in 1879. At the annual meeting of 1887 the Reverend Dr. Mockridge from Hamilton expressed delight that these two societies were joining together and that women were "gladdening poor missionaries with practical sympathy and substantial help." He admitted that "women's work in the Church had perhaps not been enough considered in times past."⁶⁰ His comments mark the beginning of an official recognition of women's participation in Canadian Anglican mission work. But as with women's experience in Britain, the theme of subordination continued to shape the discussion.

Mrs. Harriet Von Iffland, who addressed the Richmond Conference in 1893, was a staunch proponent of the doctrine of woman's auxiliaries as subsidiary to the main work of the church.⁶¹ She issued a warning that

women must be thankful to be allowed to participate in the work. Suggesting that women “guard against the innate love of independence” and work closely under the “direction of our Bishops and those spiritual guides who are set over us,”⁶² Von Iffland believed there was a place for women in the mission field and claimed pride in women Zenana workers and medical missionaries in India, Japan, and northern Canada. She recognized the need for “women teachers and healers of body and soul,” but insisted upon women’s continued deference to church leaders.⁶³ Von Iffland’s statements were made to a group of women, some of whom probably still believed that gender hierarchy was part of an ordained or natural order. However, as Von Iffland was making her proclamations, women had already started to carve out independence for themselves in the mission field. And for those women who worked as mission bureaucrats at home, there were also widening spheres of independence and power.

Support for home missions began slowly. In 1894, an article in the woman’s auxiliary newsletter, the *Letter Leaflet*, argued that the woman’s auxiliary had a moral obligation to support domestic missions. Assuming that charity should begin at home, the author of “The Duty of the Woman’s Auxiliary towards Missions in the north-west” was convinced that the woman’s auxiliary should make the northwest a “specially chosen field for our Missionary effort.”⁶⁴ The woman’s auxiliary was prompted to support the north earlier by Jane Ridley, in Metlakatla in the Diocese of Caledonia, who asked that the woman’s auxiliary consider her diocese when making their pledges: “What I should much like is to be drawn closer to the Church people beyond the mountains, and to feel that we belong to each other. As it is now, England seems nearer to and more necessary to us than other parts of Canada ... Our great difficulty is to obtain funds for the rapidly expanding work. Could we be included in the area assisted in your auxiliary?”⁶⁵ Ridley’s request may have been provisionally addressed, but it was not until 1904 that the woman’s auxiliary began to take an active interest in Caledonia, claiming that until then the diocese had been maintained by the Church Missionary Society or private contributions.⁶⁶ By the late 1890s, the woman’s auxiliary also started to recruit, train, and send women missionaries, as well as material and financial aid, to the Diocese of the Yukon and the Diocese of Mackenzie River.

Woman’s auxiliary workers contributed substantially to mission work in Canada’s north. Corresponding secretaries, in consultation with other woman’s auxiliary executive members, had a great deal of influence over the distribution of finances and materials. Bishops made constant appeals to the woman’s auxiliary, stating their needs and desires, and the woman’s auxiliary responded accordingly. Funds were pledged by the parochial branches for specific projects and passed on to the bishop of the chosen

diocese. Funds for sponsoring missions were largely collected through local donations and sales of handicrafts and baked goods generally known as “sales of work.” As Alan L. Hayes notes, by the 1920s, the woman’s auxiliary was an impressive and efficient Anglican Church organization. Not only did their members collect vast amounts of money for mission work, they also sponsored social work in Toronto: “By the 1920s, with women still excluded from the councils of the ‘official’ Church, the woman’s auxiliary became almost a para-church, in which women could plan budgets, identify ministries, develop programs, appoint workers, gather for worship, and publish religious literature.”⁶⁷ In 1923, it was financing 43 per cent of the church’s domestic and foreign mission work, claimed a membership including young children of 75,000 throughout Canada, aided bishops with material support, and paid the salaries of women missionaries.⁶⁸ This was comparable to the Methodist Church Woman’s Missionary Society which, according to Rosemary Gagan, by 1925, had a membership of 61,049.⁶⁹ The woman’s auxiliary contribution for mission work in 1923 amounted to \$169,000 out of the \$406,000 spent by the entire Canadian church on missions.⁷⁰

In November 1923, the woman’s auxiliary national treasurer, Mrs. D.B. Donaldson, spoke to the annual meeting of the dominion woman’s auxiliary held in the Diocese of Algoma. She pointed to the importance of the work of the woman’s auxiliary, noting that its contribution was undervalued by the clergy:

I have often felt that I should like to suggest to the leaders of our Anglican Theological Colleges that a few lectures on the W.A. and its work would be a helpful addition to the curriculum in those halls of learning. If all the clergy of our Church when taking up parochial work, only understood what the W.A. really was, and what it did, and the work and worry it saved them, they would with one accord rise up and call us blessed – instead of the reverse, as has been known to have been done.⁷¹

Donaldson cautioned that there must be co-operation and unity between the mission society and the woman’s auxiliary; she also suggested that the clergy should be aware and appreciative of the contribution to mission work by the woman’s auxiliary. These points mark a considerable change from the more humble approach taken by women like Tilton and Von Iffland in the late nineteenth century. As women’s work became more essential to the Anglican Church, women began to demand greater recognition. Home bureaucrats and missionaries alike had to promote their work and make sure that it was recognized.

The mission newspaper of the women’s auxiliary, *Letter Leaflet* (later called *The Living Message*) attempted to inspire women to join the Anglican

missions. In 1920, for example, an article appeared under the heading "Another Call for Nurses." In this article, the woman's auxiliary candidate's secretary claimed that, while the suffering of the heathen in "Christless lands" was painful to witness: "one need not look ever so far afield, for at our very doors within our own Dominion there is a crying need for the ministrations of strong, Christian nurses." The stated aim was to place a nurse in each of seventeen residential schools. To qualify as mission nurses, women had to be "members of the Anglican communion, preferably but not necessarily between 30 and 40 years of age possessing sound health, adaptability to unusual conditions, capacity for co-operating harmoniously with fellow workers and ability to live contentedly in a small community with little opportunity for social pleasures."⁷² The call for nurses concluded with an anonymous poem to remind readers of the needs of those still in spiritual darkness:

Why is it that our souls are not on fire
 With zeal to raise our brother higher,
 To lift them from their lives of sin and shame,
 Of degradation, misery and pain?
 Is it because we do not realize
 The veil that hides Thy glory from their eyes?
 Because we do not see and feel their need
 That they for help and comfort vainly plead?
 For surely if we knew our hearts would be
 Filled with a wealth of sympathy.
 And love would not be idle but would move
 In constant, zealous ways itself to prove;
 For love must always thus itself be proving
 And all true work for God is just love moving.⁷³

While this poem has a ring of conventional rhetoric, it demonstrates a significant difference in approach to recruiting than was evident with male missionaries. The nurses had to be strong, but the language reflected a concern with the emotional aspects of the work more than with physical strength. There was no discussion here about building log cabins or tipping canoes. Love of God was deemed to be of central importance. That such messages had a distinctive tone, quite different from that found in the muscular Christianity idealized for the male recruits, is indisputable.

Once more in 1924, *The Living Message* summoned women to join in mission work. Again the need to be able to demonstrate a deep love of God was demanded. This time, however, women from a variety of backgrounds were being encouraged by the Anglican Church:

For the girl who has always lived in the quiet precincts of home, there is the vivid and sometimes awful realization of the way in which other less fortunate folk live ... For the business girl there is the initiation into the necessities and manifold duties of a home with its all-absorbing problems of how to preserve fruit, or how long to bake a cake, all of which practical training is taken in the spring term. The nurse, perhaps only recently from the environment of the hospital ward, realizes that there are other angles of life than that of the medical, and that sometimes sick souls are harder to cure than sick bodies. The teacher with a previous knowledge of kindergarten work, or older children, begins to tackle "Mothers" or to learn something of the art of nursing, and to her too comes a broader and bigger vision, while the university girl comes out of her books and applies her accumulated knowledge to practical affairs. The older woman perhaps accustomed to independence and authority, learns to hold her experience back, to learn new ways, and perhaps watch other younger ones blunder – sympathetically. All learn that without the true Christian spirit the keenest brain, the most efficient and untiring worker is of little avail, that every bit of ability must be subordinated to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and that without love it is nothing.⁷⁴

While versatility was valued the language used in this article was crafted to appeal to the gentler side of women's domesticity, rather than a realistic representation of the duties and responsibilities of mission work.

Other than these appeals, the *Letter Leaflet* – and later *The Living Message* – increasingly throughout the 1920s printed stories about women missionaries that were meant to solicit funds and to encourage women to join in the work. Some women were also persuaded to take up mission work by their local clergy. For example, Bessie Quirt, who was raised in a family that operated a lumber business in South River and Orillia, Ontario, was convinced of the value of mission work by her local clergyman, the Reverend J.R.S. Boyd, a former China missionary. She graduated from the North Bay Normal School and taught school for four years before she started courses at the Anglican Women's Training College in 1928. Like others, Quirt had worked in another field before she took her mission training. This was not so unusual, since most unmarried women who entered the mission field were over the age of twenty-five. Teaching or nursing experience were key qualifications.

Others, such as Deaconess Louise Topping, professed always to have been committed to doing God's work. She was raised in the Canada/United States border town of St. Stephen, New Brunswick. Her father was a bookkeeper for a local furniture manufacturer. She recalled her fondest childhood memories as rambling on her maternal grandmother's farm.

When she was at the appropriate age, she started Sunday school, then church, and claimed to be very devoted at a young age. She referred to her early years as a “wonderful Christian foundation [which] had much to do with choosing [my] life’s work.” After she finished high school, she took a business course and worked as a stenographer with the Canadian National Railway in Moncton for five and a half years. She then applied to the Anglican Church, where she had already served as a Sunday school teacher and president of her local woman’s auxiliary. She attended the deaconess house for three years, declaring them to be the happiest years of her life. Like other women, she took theology at Wycliffe, social service courses at the University of Toronto, nursing courses at various Toronto hospitals, and teaching courses at Toronto’s Normal School. She worked in the northern mission field mostly as a teacher from 1930 until her marriage in 1943 and, after that, continued to serve the church as a deaconess in Yellowknife.⁷⁵

Significantly, the training and experiences shared by many of the women like Quirt and Topping were carried out within a separate-sphere ideology. Training in business, nursing, and teaching would lead to socially acceptable occupations for women. Of course, during the late nineteenth century, women were challenging professional barriers by entering law and medical schools. But, for the most part, women who wanted to pursue careers in Canada and Britain before 1940 were encouraged to work as teachers, nurses, or stenographers. Nonetheless, women were told that they could blend their previous experience in those fields with mission work.

While the social and educational backgrounds of the women missionaries varied, many trained either as nurses or teachers before they went to northern Canada. Thirty-four of the women were trained nurses. During the 1920s, the number of trained nurses increased and their training was in many cases more substantial and specialized. Others were hired as missionary teachers or, as in the case with missionary wives, were expected to teach. Two women, Susan Mellett and Maria Lucas, had taught in Ragged Schools in Britain, and Adelaide Butler had nine years’ experience as a teacher in England before she departed for the Shingle Point (Tapqaq) School. Canadians Kathleen Martin-Cowaret, Mrs. Fry, Blanche Nesbitt, Bessie Quirt, Dorothy Robinson, and Mary Samwell were trained and experienced teachers. Four Canadian women had taken general arts courses at university. Mary Crocker had been a student at Dalhousie and Ruth Hamilton at Trinity; Emily Pontifax Hughes took a post-graduate course in social services after her nursing degree; and Margaret Peck held a bachelor of arts degree from Oxford. Such a well-educated woman as Peck, however, was rare. She was raised in a prominent Montréal family and attended a private girls school before university. According to Archibald Fleming, the

first bishop of the Arctic, Peck did not want her colleagues at the school in Aklavik, where she taught in the 1930s, to know her background:

At Miss Peck's own request no one at Aklavik knew that she was a graduate of Oxford University with honors in history, and came from a well-known family in Montreal. Few knew that only after much intellectual struggle had she attained the Christian position that allowed her to radiate love while performing the ordinary duties of life. Her faith, education, and culture enabled her to interpret to the children, but even more especially to the older girls and younger mothers, what is meant by one's duty to God, and to one's neighbour.⁷⁶

While Peck was unusually well educated for mission work in any area, there were others who were equally well trained for the work. Another college-trained woman who dedicated most of her life to the Anglican Church was Mabel Jones. Born in Toronto in 1895, Jones attended high school at Harbord Street Collegiate and then studied at the deaconess house. On graduation in 1921, she went to Saskatchewan to work with the Reverend Lloyd among recently arrived immigrants. In the late 1920s, she returned to Toronto to take courses at Wycliffe College, where she graduated in 1931 with a Licentiate in Theology, the first woman to receive this degree. From there she went to the first school for Inuvialuit children at Shingle Point.



Women missionaries on their way to the north. *Standing, left to right:* Miss Cox, Marion Harvey, Margaret Peck, and Mrs. Peck. *Sitting, left to right:* Mildred Rundle, nurse; Blanche Nesbitt, teacher; Mildred McCabe, nurse; and Louise Topping.

In general, however, Anglican women missionaries who went to the north were not exceedingly well educated. In this they differed little from their male counterparts. There was only one woman doctor and, while many of the women had studied at the University of Toronto or Wycliffe under the Deaconess and Missionary training program offered by the Anglican Church, there were still very few university graduates.⁷⁷ However, the majority of women who went into the northern mission field had some measure of training in either education or medicine. This included missionary wives. Of all the women, forty-four went into the field as married women.

Missionary wives engaged in a variety of tasks in the mission field and their experiences before leaving for the field were diverse. For example, Sarah Stringer, whose parents were farmers from Kincardine, Ontario, took a nursing course at Grace Hospital in Toronto and spent time at Toronto's Deaconess and Missionary Training Home before she departed for Herschel Island (Qikiqtaruk) in 1896.⁷⁸ In a talk given by Stringer to the Woman's Missionary Society of the United Church in Toronto she reminisced about how her preparedness before going into the field was so useful to her: "After I was engaged to be married my husband went to the north and I entered a hospital here, Grace Hospital, and graduated a nurse. This was so I might be a help in the mission field. It was of untold benefit to me in my work out there. It is an excellent thing to go prepared and fitted for the task. It gives me confidence for emergencies. My course was of tremendous benefit. It gave us a stand amongst those people and made them more willing to listen to the good news or the Gospel that we had to tell them."⁷⁹ Similarly, Marion Goodwin, who married the Reverend William Henry Collison and served in the Diocese of Caledonia for forty-nine years, was a trained nurse.⁸⁰ Not all the women who claimed to have medical training, particularly in the early years, had completed a regimented course in nursing; in some cases, they had received only minimal training.

More rare were those who had no training whatsoever before entering the mission field. For example, in 1868, seventeen-year-old Alice Woods married Robert Tomlinson, a Church Missionary Society doctor posted at Metlakatla. En route to his post, Tomlinson stopped at Victoria to visit the Irish Anglican, the Reverend C.T. Woods, who was Alice's uncle. Apparently Tomlinson met Alice on this visit and asked her father if he could marry her. Richard Woods made his views clear: "Go up there and find what you're takin' a woman to, and if in a year you're of the same mind, you come down and my answer might be quite different. But you're not taking Alice up there at this stage of the game."⁸¹ Tomlinson returned one year later to marry Alice and one assumes that she had some choice in this matter. As she had never done housework and was unable to knit or sew,

she was somewhat unprepared for the work that lay in front of her. But she quickly learned and became skilled in outdoor living.⁸² Although she was formally unprepared, Woods had obviously grown up in a pious household which emphasized religion. One can infer that she had observed her aunt in her role as wife of the Archdeacon of Victoria.

No matter what their previous experiences or preparation for the mission field, all women had to be versatile, combining teaching, nursing, and ministering. The initial reluctance of the church to accept women as missionaries produced a certain tension and impression that the mission field was a male endeavour. Women's status as church workers, whether voluntary or paid, was particularly ambiguous. Ironically, because of this ambiguity, there was potential for women to carve out careers in mission work and ministry that were both unofficial and creative.



Back row, left to right: Reverend Harry S. Shepherd, Rt. Reverend Archibald Lang Fleming, and Reverend Thomas Umaok with Shingle Point (Tapqaq) staff members Ethel Hewer, Mabel Jones, D. Somers, and Adelaide Butler, 1934.