MISSIONARY MEN: FORMING IDENTITIES IN IMPERIAL EVANGELICAL BRITAIN

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On March 23, 1816, David Darling wrote to the London Missionary Society:

> I take the opportunity of advizing, you, upon a subject which has been empressed on my mind, for some time. It is offering myself, to you as a missionary to the poor heathen, who is pereshing for lack of knowledge, but I never before could come to the resoluation of doing it senceable of my own unability, to undertake such a Glourous work, as it is to teach the poor heathen the unsearchable riches of Christ[1]. (Darling)

Such letters flooded into the LMS in the nineteenth century from young Protestant men eager to serve God and Empire in foreign lands. Most displayed the combination of fervent religiosity and poor education evident in Darling's letter, as well as the simultaneous self-aggrandisement and self-sacrifice that he expresses. Darling's anxious follow-up letter, when the LMS had not replied to his initial offer, reveals both unworldliness and ambition. After a terse reply from the society, Darling tried to make amends for his eagerness and to advertise his qualifications:

> I was oblidged to you, for your advice concerning the improvement, necessary to be made by me in the English Language, I am making all the progress I can, I have got Scott's Pronouncing Dictionary and Murray Grammar, but while I continue to work, at my business, I have so little time that I can not advance much, because my evenings are all taking up with those ingagements, that I have had for years; such as, visiting the sick, teaching adults, collecting for the bible society etc. (Darling)

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[1] Darling's grammar, punctuation, and spelling are rather idiosyncratic, to say the least, but I have reproduced his writing (and that of the other missionaries) exactly in order to preserve a sense of both his educational background and his own voice. The editorial "[sic]" has been eliminated, because the number of errors (particularly in Darling's writing) are so high that to use it would actually hinder comprehension.

Although obviously a man of limited education, Darling shows himself to be a shrewd operator of the evangelical system. Concerned that he may have hindered his chances by appearing over-eager, he nevertheless uses his second letter to re-emphasise those qualities favoured by the examination committee: religious zeal, financial independence, ongoing self-improvement, and public service. All of these mark him as the evangelical self-made man, committed to God and his countrymen, who made up the field workers of the missionary society. Through such correspondence between the society and its prospective missionary candidates, micro-narratives such as Darling's emerge, providing a unique perspective on the formation of evangelical Victorian subjectivities. This paper maps the development of evangelical masculine identity through LMS missionary applications in the first half of the nineteenth century, tracing the role of religion, class, gender, and imperialism in Victorian identities.

The LMS, Empire, and Evangelism

The LMS was founded in 1794, and rapidly became the largest and most influential British missionary society in the nineteenth century. Broad-based and non-denominational, at least in theory, its home constituency were Nonconformist or dissenting church-goers, aspirational working-class and middle-class Britons whose solid respectability and public spiritedness were consolidated by charity. In its early history, the LMS attracted and appointed mostly working-class men as its representatives abroad, even though its culture firmly inculcated middle-class values and identities. Susan Thorne's cultural history of the LMS in Britain in this period shows that the foreign missionary movement was "one among the myriad sites at which ordinary Britons encountered the colonies," and missionary ties profoundly influenced social relations within Congregational communities and beyond (Thorne 5). Attending religious meetings, reading magazines and books published by the missionary societies, and collecting money for foreign missions were key leisure activities for the "real Christians" who emerged from the evangelical revivals of the late eighteenth century. Thorne notes: "It is a commonplace in Victorian historiography that evangelicalism 'set the tone of British society,' that evangelicalism inspired much of what we think about when we consider Victorian values" (5, 6). The LMS, as the "largest evangelical institution peddling its spiritual wares in the arena of empire" (McClintock 261), was at the very heart of evangelical Britons' understanding of religious responsibilities.

Whilst evangelical ideologies proved to be an important vector of Victorian identities, they were also intimately entwined with that other great social force of the century: imperialism. Thorne argues that missionary experience contributed "to the making and remaking of social relations in metropolitan Britain itself. Missionary imperial identities were not alternatives to but were the medium through which domestic identities of class as well as gender were forged" (21). Indeed, as I have

argued elsewhere, evangelical activity sought to make a profound impact on imperial representation and ideology, and on British self-fashioning at both an individual and a national scale (Johnston). Across the Empire, British missionary commentators sought, by their "zeal," to remake colonial projects in the image of religious conversion and in doing so they remade domestic British identities as well. In this way, autobiographical narratives of men such as David Darling become significant not only personally, but as part of wider national and imperial networks.

Forming identities in "the sight of that heart-searching God"

Applying to the LMS to be a missionary was a complex process. Whilst the early operations of the society were improvisational, experience and increasing numbers of applicants ensured that an examination committee with a formalised system was soon established. Initially, an applicant would write a letter to the society, ideally accompanied by a letter of reference from his minister (the masculine pronoun is quite specific: the LMS would not appoint women until the 1860s). His letter was considered, references solicited if necessary, and he would then be asked to appear for his first examination. Two examinations or interviews were held for each candidate, after which he was either accepted and sent for further instruction before departure overseas, or declined. Careful minutes of these meetings were taken, and through these minutes one can see glimpses of the men applying.

By 1818 the committee sent a printed questionnaire to each applicant, to be completed and returned before the first examination. Handwritten answers to the seventeen questions become a crucial source of information about these men. The document's rubric requested that a candidate give these "your most grave consideration; and they have to desire that, after mature deliberation, you will return candid and explicit answers to them [.. . .] It is requested that the Answers may be entirely of your own composition, and in your own handwriting" (*Candidates' Papers*). Specific and individual responses were thus encouraged by the society: the committee became suspicious of one candidate because it appeared "evident that the Letter of application was not written by Mr Williams, although the facts and sentiments of it might be communicated by him to the Writer his amanuensis." Williams explained that he had drafted the original response himself, but had asked a friend to copy it out. Eventually the committee was reassured, but they deferred his acceptance, recommending that in the meantime "he should improve himself in the knowledge of the English language" (LMS *Minutes (1799-1816)*). Completed, these questionnaires make fascinating artefacts, revealing the individual figures behind the institutional machinery of the LMS. Because these documents remain unpublished, they contain intriguing personal narratives which have escaped the almost ubiquitous control exercised by the LMS on their missionaries' writing. The applicants' individuality, however, is evident most clearly when it clashes with the corporate religious identity that the questionnaire attempts to produce.

The questionnaire attempted to weed out undesirable evangelical subjects. By corollary, it created idealised, standardised missionary subjects. There is no record in the LMS archive of why one candidate was accepted, and another declined; nor is there any "cheat sheet" of correct answers to questions. However, it does not take long to realise that the society had a very clear vision of the evangelical identities it wished to inculcate. But this process is not monolithic. Leigh Gilmore's concept of autobiographics allows us to read these thoroughly institutionalised texts (minutes and questionnaires) to recuperate autobiographical subjects. In this way, it is possible "to recognize that the I is multiply coded in a range of discourses: it is the site of multiple solicitations, multiple markings of 'identity,' multiple figurations of agency" (Gilmore 42). Autobiographics focusses attention on the micro-narratives which are hidden "in the social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions" and within texts that have not usually been seen as autobiographies (42). Missionary micro-narratives in the LMS archive, like those of convicts in the penal archive, provide "brief, super-charged narratives" (Duffield 135). They provide neither an unmediated vision of the real men writing, nor of static categories of Victorian identity. Such identities do not appear fully formed, *ab ovo*, in Victorian texts: in the LMS archives we see the cultural formation of evangelical and missionary identities, as Mary Poovey insists, where formation is "an active concept – the process of forming – not on *culture* or *formation* as nouns of stasis or realization" (Poovey 1). The clash between the individual and the institution is particularly important in this archive, an exemplary case of Michel Foucault's *disciplinary individualism*. As Poovey argues, "both evangelical and disciplinary individualism promised freedom in exchange for voluntary submission to those laws by which liberty was defined" (103).

The questions include standard ones about religious sincerity and commitment, some finer points of doctrine, and the individual's demonstrated capacity for community service. Six of the seventeen inquired about motives. As Stuart Piggin argues, such questions set up an uneasy relationship between the LMS officials and their potential recruits (126). Each applicant had to provide a narrative of their "first religious impressions, and the period of their commencement," and of the history of their desire for missionary work: "What first led you to form that desire? Has that desire been constant or fluctuating? Has it led you to any particular exercises of the mind?" Health was an area of concern both for the LMS and for applicants. Demanding a narrative of a candidate's general state of health from infancy, they also needed to know "If your health be good, is it such as is likely to continue, especially if you should go to a sultry climate? Have you seriously considered the hardships and dangers to which a Missionary may be exposed? Are

you willing to subject yourself to them; and do you judge your constitution is able to support them?"[2]

Other questions seek to place the hopeful candidate in terms of class, education, and financial status. Question 7 asks:

> What has been your occupation? Are you so employed at present as to be able to obtain a comfortable maintenance? Have you a reasonable prospect of the same support in future? Does the desire of improving your worldly circumstances enter into the motives of this application?

Question 8 probes educational background: "What advantages of education have you enjoyed, and what books have you read?" Answers to question 16 produce the most interesting responses for analysis of gender and evangelical identity: "Are you married? If not, are you under any engagement relating to marriage; or have you made proposals of marriage to anyone; or, are you willing to go out unmarried, should the circumstances render it desirable?" (*Candidates' Papers*) As later analysis will show, this was also one of the hardest questions to answer to the satisfaction of the LMS.

These questions encourage – if not produce – particular responses. To answer them satisfactorily, individuals must demonstrate a capacity for self-evaluation and an acceptable mode of narrating that self: an "appropriate autobiographical representation" (Gilmore 46). Certain responses are so typical as to become trite: aberrant responses startle the reader because they subvert the standard narrative pattern. Piggin identifies generic features of applicants' conversion narratives. Most pertinently, their language "is stylised and stereotyped, and laden with biblical imagery." Whilst their preconversion life is described with "unjustified exaggerations" of sinfulness, such tropes were "conventional forms of self-assessment in the evangelical testimony." Secondly, if specific sins are recounted, "they are usually religious." That is, despite the exaggerated imagery of preconversion behaviour, their sins are not bigamy, adultery, or murder, but usually sabbath-breaking, neglecting church/chapel, blaspheming, swearing or cursing, or ridiculing the Scriptures (Piggin 60-61). Both subjectivity and narrative form become formalised in the process of selection and elimination.

LMS evangelical identities were therefore produced through the questionnaire process. This process of identity formation was explicitly *textual*. It required not only the transformation of the embodied self, but also an appropriate narrativation of that self. That this subject had to be produced in writing was typically Protestant.

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[2] Such concerns had proved essential. Lack of knowledge about tropical lifestyles and diseases resulted in a horrifying high attrition rate amongst the missionaries: of the first twenty missionaries sent to LMS mission stations in North India, for example, eight died within their first eight years in residence.

Doctrinal differences ensured that Protestants were peculiarly focussed on the Word, reading, and individual interpretation of Biblical texts: by contrast, Catholics both performed their religiosity orally, and depended on catechetical modes to reinforce religious and social identities. For Protestants, orality was suspect, and literacy and close textual reading were central. As Simon Gikandi argues of Gikuyu converts, "literacy was the mark of conversion, the sign of a radical rejection of the past; conversion, in turn, was inconceivable except in relation to the act of reading and writing" (Gikandi 34). The same was true within Britain, and the LMS's focus on the literacy skills of their potential recruits demonstrates the link between texts and religious identities.

Education and Class

Early mission activity tended not to attract highly educated men. For their first mission abroad (to Taïti in 1796), the society deliberately recruited artisans and gave them theological training. As Darling's and Williams's experiences reveal, the society also often had to prescribe basic education. Reverend Thomas Haweis, an influential founding director, was clear about his low opinion of their earliest representatives: "'It appears desirable to have the best informed that we can find. We hope to obtain some, who are not destitute of letters and education, but the greater number we expect from the inferior classes of life' " (Cathcart qtd. 16). Many were told to improve their writing skills, and/or their reading of literature. In April 1816, for example, Mr Moore had got through to his second examination, but the committee requested that he "improve his mind by reading several Books which were mentioned to him and if he retained the same desire to become a missionary a year hence to apply again" (LMS *Minutes (1799-1816)*). In fact, the rapid formalisation of the appointment process quickly ensured that only literate men would be accepted. By 1818, a concomitant squeeze on funds and an influx of applicants meant that the process became much more rigorous, and candidates had to write an essay. Usually the essay was on a scriptural or doctrinal issue, but in 1818, Michael O'Neill had to submit both "a written solution of the following Question in Geometry: Prove that the 3 angles of a right angle Triangle are equal to two right angles" and "a Theme [. . .] on the Doctrine of Atonement" (LMS *Minutes (1799-1816)*). The committee finally recommended him to be accepted as an assistant in the native schools in Bengal.

The demand for O'Neill to demonstrate both religious and geometrical sophistication seems particularly tough, but missionaries bound for India tended to be more highly educated than those sent to either Africa or Polynesia, the three main areas of LMS operation in this period. This was because the racial ideologies inherent in imperial missionary work saw Africa and Polynesia as inhabited by "lower" races, devoid of civilisation, but recognised India as a sophisticated and ancient (if degraded) culture. Thus candidates with a superior educational

background were usually earmarked for service in India, and all prospective Indian missionaries were given a thorough, if somewhat hasty, classical education.

Answers regarding occupational background generally substantiate the claim that men such as the famous Pacific missionary John Williams were "fairly typical of the lower middle-class craftsman who made up the field-worker strength of the London Missionary Society" (Kent 47). Grocers, weavers, plumbers, clerks, rope makers, carpet makers, teachers, and warehousemen sent in applications. Candidates in the 1830s and '40s contain a large number of drapers or drapers' assistants. Piggin suggests that, since the linen industry "tended to cling to traditional methods more than the cotton and woollen industries," such men were drawn more from the traditional artisan trades than from the new industrial proletariat (Piggin 38-9). Many had had a number of occupations, demonstrating considerable horizontal mobility within the upper working and lower middle classes. David Darling's commitment to his carpentry business marks him as one of the aspirational working-class or lower middle-class men who could expect considerable social advancement from a role as missionary.

Answers regarding education, and the rather peculiar request to list "what books have you read," show applicants seeking to position themselves within the literate culture of evangelical Protestantism. Most claim at least a "modest British Education," and some had attended college or even university. Others aimed for frankness. James Anderson, a warehouseman applying in 1835, said that his education was "not worth naming, and yet I cannot call myself ignorant." Unfortunately, the LMS could. Anderson was examined on November 27, 1837 and committee minutes recorded that "His Missionary knowledge was so limited, and his Missionary Spirit apparently so feeble that it was Resolved to decline his application for the present" (LMS *Minutes (1833-38)*). Their rider – "for the present" – evidences their low standards. Applicants like Anderson regularly reapplied after 6 to 18 months of educational tutoring with a minister, and were often accepted. David Darling barely scraped through. The minutes relating to his examination show some negotiation amongst the committee, with the Secretary carefully negotiating the right form of words for the situation:

> David Darling (carpenter of Hackney) attended, and stated that he was learning the Dutch language, and going through a course of reading – had read Josephus, Whitfield's Sermons, Paley's Evidences &c. His answers to various questions put to him on several point of Christian Doctrine, tho' not entirely were upon the whole satisfactory to the Committee. Resolved that David Darling be recommended to the Directors as a Missionary either to the South Sea Islands or to South Africa. (LMS *Minutes (1799-1816)*)

Candidates such as Darling would certainly not have been sent to India.

Like Darling, the ideal missionary candidate was literate, but not too literate. One missionary in India had passed through the selection and training processes, but was detained when back in England finding a wife. John Hay had been ordained in 1839, and the Examination Committee ensured that he would go to India because of his "peculiar talents and adaptation for educational services." But in July 1843, the committee had received disturbing letters from the chaplain at Vizagapatam. They delayed Hay's return, requesting him to attend a number of meetings. By August, they decided that while the committee entertained "confidence in the general soundness of his Theological sentiments, they did not concur in his views of the subject of human depravity." They communicated to Hay "the earnest hope and urgent request of the committee that he would in future avoid all metaphysical discussions of this nature, and devote himself exclusively to a simple and scriptural representation of the great doctrines of the gospel." Hay, obviously an intellectually gifted man who had a Master of Arts and was awarded a Doctor of Divinity later in life, objected strongly to the committee's interference. In September, the committee advised him more explicitly: "that the tendency of his mind to metaphysical discussion was strong, and unfavourable to his usefulness as a Missionary" (LMS *Minutes (1838-47)*). Hay finally capitulated, but his case makes clear the difference between literacy and intellectual independence: LMS missionaries had to have the former, but the latter was inadvisable.

Given the rich field of nineteenth-century fiction and poetry, the list of books that candidates admitted to having read is rather disappointing. Religious histories, biographies, memoirs, guides to "evidences of Christianity" and the old and new Testaments, and missionary narratives and calls to action dominate the answers to question 8. Authors such as Watts, Doddridge, Paley, and Baxter predominate. Almost all candidates had read the memoirs of Henry Martyn and David Brainerd, missionaries to early British colonies. The sole fictional text that recurs is Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: most had read this too. Many of the better-educated had read the classics: Livy and Virgil, sometimes Horace, Homer, Tacitus, or Ovid. Of the 42 candidates who applied in 1835 and 1836, only one admitted to reading Sir Walter Scott, and one other to reading *Paradise Lost*. William Lethem stated defensively: "I have not during my whole life read above 2 or 3 novels" (*Answers to Printed Questions*).

Evangelical Protestants were deeply suspicious of novels and the effect of fiction reading, especially in the early part of the century. Reverend Daniel Tyerman, a clergyman on the Isle of Wight who was later deputed to travel to LMS missions around the world, warned his congregation in 1806 and 1807:

> The *reading of bad books* has a natural tendency to corrupt good manners [. . .] That depravity which is effected by reading, most commonly begins at that class of books called NOVELS [. . .] These books fill the mind with fiction instead of reality, and produce a

> burning fever in the soul, and a thirst for sensual enjoyment, which something more gross only can allay. (Tyerman 18-19)

Tyerman's invective demonstrates the critical role reading and textuality played in the formation of evangelical identities. Reading "bad books" revealed that an individual had not been focussing all his attention on religious affairs, as a true missionary should, but it also threatened to effect a transformation of innocent religious people. By corollary, reading "good books" – religious material, almost exclusively non-fictional – promised to transform men into appropriate evangelical subjects. The best answers to question 8 look something like that of the nineteen-year-old James Bowrey. An assistant to a sodawater manufacturer, Bowrey explained that because of work, he had had little time for education: therefore "I have been necessitated to confine my reading to devotional works [. . .] and the study of English Grammar's and to the Hebrew language, of the latter I possess a very partial knowledge." By demonstrating a humble awareness of his position in life and his limitations, as well as a commitment to bettering himself but only through religion, Bowrey could hope to join the pantheon of LMS heroes. Indeed, he could aspire to be like the society's most famous recruit, celebrated in the 1899 history of the institution:

> David Livingston, the weaver lad from Blantyre, who had fought his way to knowledge with the indomitable perseverance which was one of his most marked characteristics, learning Latin by keeping his book on the loom as he worked, and obtaining a university course in Glasgow in the intervals of toil. (Thompson 76)

Missionary Men and Muscular Christianity

Nascent ideas about "muscular Christianity" or "Christian manliness" were crucial to the development of missionary identities. Reverend Alphonse François Lacroix, a Swiss-born missionary who joined the LMS in India in 1827, was clear on the suitable qualifications of missionaries. His first priority was physical attributes: "I would remark that none but men of robust frames and unimpaired constitutions should be sent for India [. . .] We want men of the stamp of our four Scottish brethren in Calcutta, who are all six feet in height, and robust in proportion. The work they go through is amazing; they certainly do as much as six missionaries of the ordinary stamp" (Mullens qtd. 268). Lacroix obtained corroborating evidence from Mr Mack of Serampore: " 'We want in India men of stronger constitution, a Grenadier Company of the missionary host; rough-trained sons of the field, men of the thews and sinews of Carey and Chamberlain' " (Mullens qtd. 169). The LMS's

insistence in question 9 on a detailed corporeal autobiography seeks to produce such soldiers of the Word.

Norman Vance suggests that muscular Christianity "represented a strategy for commending Christian virtue by linking it with more interesting secular notions of moral and physical prowess" (Vance 1). As Catherine Hall has argued of Baptist missionaries, "For evangelical Christians the action of combating sin, of enlisting in the army of God provided a worthy arena within which they could prove their manhood" (Hall 249). The muscular Christian model developed through the early years of the century, in parallel with missionary expansion in the colonies. By the latter half of the century, as J. Mangan and James Walvin describe it, "the ideal of manliness [was] shaped and nurtured as a Victorian moral construct by influential and often over-lapping groups of nineteenth century writers, educationalists and activists in both the old and the new worlds" (Mangan 2).

Early missionary heroes provide a site upon which we can see the precursors of muscular Christianity as a more wide-spread Victorian identity. Candidates' applications attest to the influence of such men on their desire to join the colonial evangelical ranks. Applying in 1836, Hugh Goldie stated that his desire to become a missionary began when "I first perused Martyn's Memoirs, and it was probably the reading of his doings, and those of other Missionaries, that first led me to form a desire of being engaged in the same work" (*Answers to Printed Questions*). Public missionary lectures convinced J.T. Poole, and Fred Holloway explained that: "I heard Mr Williams Missionary from the South Sea Islands who told us that he came expressly by desire of natives for the purpose of getting Missionaries to carry the glad tidings of the Gospel to them. My mind has been firmly fixed on it ever since" (*Answers to Printed Questions*). Piggin concludes that some candidates had a romantic element to their motivation "if 'romantic' is taken to mean 'love of adventure'" (Piggin 132). He notes, too, the influence of missionary writing on candidates, suggesting that the accounts of travels and adventures prolifically published by the LMS "were widely read and entered into the calculations of at least some of these missionaries, a not surprising fact as so many were converted in their impressionable mid-teens" (132). Piggin warns that a desire for adventure, in and of itself, would not have been satisfactory to the Examination Committee. James Paterson took some risks in admitting that "'Early in my life [. . .] my mind was impressed with a desire of visiting the natives of the South Seas; but it was then more in the character of a traveller or adventurer'" (Piggin qtd. 132).

Whilst muscular Christianity tended to be associated with high Church, and thus higher class, religious identities in the late nineteenth century, early exemplars such as Williams were from humble origins. Missionary work provided such men with an opportunity for self-improvement and social mobility, which many of them seized with assiduity. Thorne argues, though, that the working-class missionary had to leave his community of origin behind in order to be transformed into the ideal missionary subject, and that a crucial hinge in biographical narratives about

missionary heroes was the departure from the working-class, often at the hands of a middle-class benefactor (68). In reading both evangelical rhetoric and aspiring candidates' applications it is evident that becoming a missionary in foreign lands promised to be a transformative, heroic experience for young British men, particularly those from lower class backgrounds.

Marriage and the Missionary

Reverend Lacroix's second major recommendation on missionary appointees struck at the heart of LMS concerns: marriage and money. "As another means of diminishing the expenditure of the Society," he suggested (and saving money was always at the forefront of the society's policies),

> I would strongly recommend the rescinding of the rule which permits a young missionary, after he has spent two or three years in India, to return home for the purpose of marrying [. . .] If a young missionary when accepted by the Society be married, he will of course bring out his wife with him. If he be unfettered by any matrimonial engagement, I would certainly advise his coming out altogether free. For he will no doubt sooner or later meet in this country with an opportunity of forming a suitable union [. . .] [and thus] he will in all probability get a wife already inured to the climate, which is a great advantage. (272-4)

For the LMS, marriage was a complex and contradictory issue. By 1800, the Examination Committee had resolved that "at present the society thinks it improper to give any encouragement to married persons" (LMS *Minutes (1799-1816)*). Presumably, this was a response to a number of letters they received the previous year from candidates in whom they had invested considerable time. In September 1799, H. Child had informed the committee "that in consequence of his wifes backwardness, he thought it incumbent on him to decline the Missionary work." In October, similarly, Peter Lovesgore wrote that "however well inclined to the cause he himself might be, [he] was obliged on account of the reluctance of his wife to decline any further connection with the Society" (LMS *Minutes (1799-1816)*). Bad wives, it seems, could stymie a missionary candidate's career as effectively as bad books.

By 1817, the committee required all applicants to agree to "a strict injunction not to make any declaration of his partiality to any female, with a view to marriage, till he has ascertained by application to the Directors that the station to which he may be appointed will admit of his going in the married state" (LMS *Minutes (1816-1819)*). Remarkably, the committee interviewed all prospective missionary wives from then until 1834. Usually, a letter from her minister, and a brief interview with a

member of the committee (or a local delegate), ensured that a young woman would be allowed to marry her missionary beau. But the committee found some women wanting in the qualities believed crucial in the role of missionary wife. The committee examined Mr Hamilton's intended, then called him before them in January 1815: "Mr Hamilton [. . .] was informed that Miss Smith was in their opinion altogether an unsuitable person – upon which Mr H agreed to decline all further Thoughts of her" (LMS *Minutes (1799-1816)*). Other candidates were not as submissive, and were wise not to be – a simple delay in reply from a local minister could dash a prospective marriage (especially since many marriages occurred only just before departure on a missionary voyage). Thirty-two year old Claudius Henry Thomsen informed the committee on December 7, 1814 that he wished to marry Miss Bowring, and a testimonial was requested from Reverend W. Scamp. On the 12th, the Committee advised him that "No letter having been received from the Rev. Mr Scamp of Havant in favour of [Miss Bowring and] that in the opinion of the Committee the young woman was unsuitable from their having heard that she was wholly uneducated and unfit to accompany him on the proposed Mission to Malacca." Thomsen requested leave to go immediately to Havant to ascertain Scamp's opinion, and by the next day the Committee had received a letter from the tardy minister, "speaking in the highest terms of Miss Bowring as to her Piety Zeal and Strength of Mind altho' she had not enjoyed the Blessings of Education" (LMS *Minutes (1799-1816)*). Bowring and Thomsen married and left for the LMS station at Malacca in 1815.

Answers also reveal the applicants' respect for early missionary role models and demonstrate the link between imperial missionary and domestic masculinities. James Howie, applying in March 1844, stated that "the impression on my mind has been that, in all cases it was desirable the Missionary should be a married man. The Missionary literature of the day, and also what I had heard from Rev. [. . .] Moffat, tended to deepen such an impression" (*Candidates' Papers*). Mr Rustedt, applying in December 1835, noted that "having consulted one who has lately retired from the Missionary field, he persuades me to go out married, because he says a suitable partner will increase the private and domestic comfort of the Missionary, and prove useful to the cause in which he is engaged"(*Candidates' Papers*).

But many missionary candidates were already involved with women, and they often testified about their fiancées or wives in answering the marriage question. Personal narratives of evangelical British women, and snapshots of feminine evangelical identities, thus emerge from the LMS archive. C. Vanderschalk met the Candidates' Committee on November 10, 1840 and informed them that he was engaged. His (unnamed) fiancée had for a long time felt a "fervent desire [. . .] to [be] personnally useful among the heathen for the extention of our Lord's Kingdom." Vanderschalk explains how "her unfeigned and sincere piety inspired in me for her the warmest Christian love," and describes his proposal:

> After fervent prayer and meditation I proposed to her parents if I were accepted as a Missionary, to become my wife, and that also, if it were the Lord's will, she could fulfil her desire to be useful among the heathen. Her parents declared me that they considered my proposal as a call for their dear daughter, and that they did submit to the Lord's will. (*Candidates' Papers*)

Edward Williams, in 1836, was engaged to a young woman with a similar life-long interest in missionary work. She had another highly desirable qualification: "She has collected, among other objects, some hundred pounds for the London Missionary Society" (*Answers to Printed Questions*). Marriage and money coalesced in William's fiancée.

Other women came to meet the Committee. On August 26 1816, David Darling attended the meeting, and told them of his desire to marry Rebecca Woolston. Woolston accompanied him, and she read the committee a paper she had written "describing her early piety" and noting that her desire to devote herself to the missionary cause "originated in a perusal of the publications of the Society about sixteen years ago." The committee resolved "that Rebecca Woolston be recommended to the board of Directors as a proper person to go out as a Missionary to Otaheite – and as the wife of Darling" (LMS *Minutes (1816-1819)*).[3]

Importantly, applicants' responses reveal the mutual imbrication of male and female evangelical identities. Masculine activity in the public sphere was to be supported and complemented[4] by the pious woman at home. These entwined codes of masculinity and femininity are particularly important to evangelical Protestant identities. G. H. Poole, applying in 1835, made this clear: "My great distinction between the Popish and Protestant Churches is that of a married ministry"(*Candidates' Papers*). Not only was this an important factor of religious identity in Britain, but also, in the colonial missionary field, competition for converts made such distinctions crucial.

Clearly these women and their missionary husbands saw the involvement of women in colonial evangelising as part of a separate "vocation" for Protestant women. Jane Haggis suggests that such women "undertook a missionary marriage not only to inspire their husband, his work, and any children to the missionary 'cause,' [. . .] [but] they also assumed a personal responsibility to be 'useful' to God more directly". (Haggis 126). Marriage to a male missionary was almost the only

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[3] Woolston was a Methodist from Northamptonshire; they were married at the Tabernacle, London, just prior to setting sail. They arrived at Mo'orea in 1817, and Rebecca gave birth to their first two children in 1818 and 1819 (Lewis 12).

[4] Patricia Rooke notes that the "paradigm of 'complementariness' [was] basic to Christian assumptions about female and male natures and [was] mirrored in the social mores of sexual and marital relationships" (204).

means Protestant women had for spreading the gospel overseas in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Of course, the subtext of these marriage questions was sex. Vanderschalk wanted to take a wife with him because "I know by experience the carelessness of the heathen females. The means they set forth to attract the white man; and knowing that the devil go constantly round how he might devour a Soul, So I believe marriage necessary, lest a great blame should be cast on the Lake of our Redeemer" (*Candidates' Papers*). Reverend Samuel Marsden, highly influential in his advocacy and support for missionaries in both the South Pacific and Australia, was particularly concerned that wives accompany missionaries. Marsden's chief argument was that single men could not be expected to withstand sexual temptation, especially in Polynesia. He argued in 1801 that

> when Missionaries change their climate it should be remembered, they do not change their natures as Men [. . .] Place a Young Man in a foreign Climate amongst Licentious Savages remove from his mind every other restraint, but that of Religion and even then we can but form a faint idea how much he will be exposed to the snares of the devil, and the Temptations held out to him by the Natives. A Young Man will have daily to contend in these Islands with a Hot Climate the Vigour of Youth and the Most Alluring temptations. (qtd. in Carey 230)

Evangelical Identities in Imperial British Culture

Marsden's salacious regulations – which emerge only in private correspondence, for the LMS strictly controlled the kinds of issues which could emerge in its public literature – reveal the contested and negotiated forms of evangelical masculinity in formation. His point was that LMS missionaries were evangelical subjects, but they were also masculine ones: religion itself could not hope to dominate other markers of nineteenth-century identity. Evangelical identities cannot be quarantined from other influences, and indeed they were often formed in relation to broader facets of Victorian identity. Judith Walkowitz has described how evangelical men – ministers, doctors, and laymen – were central to the initial 1840s studies of prostitution, condemning "male sexual license as a threat to the family and to conjugal love" (Walkowitz 33). Historians such as Ronald Hyam suggest that sexuality was the hidden motor of Victorian society, and evangelical identities were not immune from this, even if they were defined oppositionally.

For LMS men, like other Britons of the period, evangelical identities proved crucial to establishing both a personal sense of self, and a national identity. The young men who completed the LMS questionnaire were unusually religious, but as Linda Colley has suggested, even though church attendance had declined throughout

the eighteenth century, "the Protestant world-view was so ingrained in [British] culture that it influenced people's thinking irrespective of whether they went to church or not, whether they read the Bible or not" (Colley 31). Colley cogently argues that "Protestantism was the foundation that made the invention of Great Britain possible" (53-54). Catherine Hall shows that British national identity and middle-class subjectivity were constituted by interrelations between class, gender, and ethnicity as axes of power. By the 1830s and 1840s, she argues, "religion provided one of the key discursive terrains for the articulation of these axes and thus for the construction of a national identity" (241).

Given this cultural centrality, emergent evangelical and nonconformist identities were both extremely powerful, and extremely disruptive to earlier and competing British identities. Simon Gikandi nominates crisis as the recurring motif in the definition of English identities in the nineteenth century, a crisis which was intricately connected to colonialism and its effect on the imperial body politic (xii). The nexus of race, class, and gender ideologies bound into imperial missionary and domestic evangelical subjectivities both embodies and enacts this crisis. The lower class background and dissenting attitudes of evangelicals proved confronting for more traditional religious and social communities. As Thorne argues, the radical position of evangelicals questioned facets of more conservative sectors of British (and imperial) culture: "Foreign missions provided materials with which Dissenting evangelicals called into question the cultural foundations on which the British establishment justified its authority" (73). For every hagiographic account of missionaries, there were matching critiques such as John Newton's on the incalculable damage done by "taking Tom, Dick and Harry from their benches, their lasts, and their looms, and transferring them all at once into the Rev. Mr Thomas, and the Rev. Mr Richard, and the Rev. Mr Henry, &c, and sending them forth into the field of the world as Christian Missionaries [. . .] to occupy a station in society, for which, for the most part they have no suitable qualifications, and to exert an influence which they are so apt – even unintentionally and unconsciously – to abuse" (Gunson qtd. 25).

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