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**“AFRICA STRETCHES FORTH HER HANDS UNTO YOU”:
FEMALE COLONIZATION SUPPORTERS IN THE
ANTEBELLUM UNITED STATES**

A Thesis in History

by

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ABSTRACT

The American Colonization Society (ACS), founded in 1818, initially gave little thought as to how women might contribute to the cause. Despite its posture as a religious and benevolent organization, the colonization society promoted itself as a political movement. So intent on securing federal funding, the society made only weak attempts to build local organizations and no appeals to women. However, in the early 1830s, while the ACS was in tremendous turmoil struggling to maintain its centrality in the nation's political imagination, the movement recast itself as a benevolent organization and privileged volunteerism over politics. Leaders continued to recognize the importance of political activities but they also encouraged female participation even as they promoted the centrality of female values in the movement. For a brief but intense period in the 1830s and 1840s, the ACS came to rely on all types of female support. Women who joined colonization societies perceived their efforts to be part of the triumph of American, white evangelical Protestantism in the world and viewed colonization as an ideological middle ground between immediate abolition of slavery and perpetual bondage. These women were committed to ridding the United States of both slavery and African Americans. Female colonizationists believed that the United States was a specially blessed place and saw their own sex as exceptionally privileged. This status encouraged their willingness to act as the conscience of the nation in all places judged morally inferior. Just as benevolent women might extend their concern to the poor, the widow, and the orphan in America, so too, might women legitimately engage in moral and religious reform in locations outside America. On the one hand, female support for colonization reflected an extension of woman's natural role as moral guide and guardian. At the same time, however, their actions brimmed with social, political and personal consequences.

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For my parents

Gloria Fisher, who taught me to love

and

David Fisher, who dared me to believe.

Introduction

“I rise to plead the cause of a people,” Edward Dorr Griffin thundered in 1817, “who for ages have been crushed, and broken, and deserted.” A new age had commenced, explained Griffin, in which the glory of Africa and “the elevation of the African race is a part” of God’s larger plan to establish Christ’s millennial reign on earth. Redoubling his plea for Africa’s redemption, he insisted that America should play a central role. “The great work of bringing forward these events plainly belongs to us... We owe a greater atonement than any other nation to bleeding Africa... the work is laid on ourselves by the plain direction of heaven.” Griffin staked his triumphant prediction of Christianity’s march of conquest across Africa in a sermon preached before the Presbyterian synod of New York and New Jersey. As pastor of Park Street Church in Boston, the flagship of nineteenth century conservative Protestantism and the hub of evangelical missions, Griffin’s vision of a new age of evangelical world dominance is not unexpected. What is unusual is Griffin’s assertion that evangelical triumph was contingent on America’s obligation to African redemption.¹

Griffin based his exhortation on an obscure verse in the book of Psalms, part of which says: “Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.”² Leading his listeners through thirty-six pages of detailed exegesis of the historical and grammatical context, Griffin concluded that the term ‘Ethiopia’ must be understood as a reference to “the whole negro world,” and that the prophecy applied to his day. This interpretation rejected the traditional understanding of the text. Earlier scholars

¹ Edward D. Griffin, *A Plea for Africa* (New York: Gould, 1817), 1, 31.

² Psalm 68:31, King James Version.

construed the verse to be a general prophecy of “universal subjection to Christ,” and Ethiopia referred to “the whole world” or “all sinners.”³ As late as 1811, Oxford professor Richard Dixon, in “A New Interpretation of the Sixty-Eighth Psalm,” did not alter the traditional understanding of the verse in this regard. Even John Wesley, the foremost founder of modern evangelicalism and prominent English anti-slavery leader, understood Ethiopia as a general term used to denote all “ancient enemies of God and his people.”⁴ Griffin, on the other hand, pronounced that “I hear our text declare, *that under the reign of Christ the whole negro race shall be converted to the true worship of God.*”⁵ Griffin’s reinterpretation of Psalm 68 marked the beginning of a “ceaseless roundelay” chanted in sermons, essays, and orations that promoted African colonization. “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God” quickly became the colonization movement’s rallying cry and the Christianization of Africa its mission.⁶

Using a Bible verse as a mantra communicated a clear and firm belief in divine approval. More than this, however, claiming divine approval helped colonization supporters reconcile tensions inherent in antebellum sensibilities. These

³ See, for example, Augustine, *Exposition of the Psalms*, trans. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886); John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 5, trans. Rev. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979); Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

⁴ John Wesley, *Wesley’s Notes on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1987). Mark Noll argues that the adjustments John and Charles Wesley made to Protestant traditions were “the most important single factor in transforming the religion of the Reformation into modern Protestant evangelicalism.” Mark Noll, *Turning Points* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), p. 224.

⁵ Griffin, 11.

⁶ P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 119. Throughout the nineteenth century, the verse continued to be interpreted as an indication that God was exacting a providential plan to convert Africa and its inhabitants to Christianity through the institution of slavery. Charles Spurgeon, England’s most prominent 19th century preacher wrote, “Poor Ethiopia, thy hands have been manacled and hardened by cruel toil, but millions of thy sons have in their bondage found the liberty with which Christ made man free.” Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Co., 1882).

tensions—between beliefs in white superiority and the sanctity of all human life, between the image of America as God’s chosen land and the “stain” of slavery, between millennial Christianity’s call to convert the world and America’s developing conceptions of imperialism—were not new. The solution for many colonization supporters lay in a biblically infused conception of manifest destiny in which America—gospel and democracy in hand—would help speed Africa along its preordained path and restore Africa to its former glory. As Griffin argued, “The Almighty Deliverer is already on his march to relieve the woes of Africa. Her resurrection is already stamped with the broad seal of heaven.” All that remained was for American citizens to fulfill their duty and bring forward the events. Then the world would witness Africa’s “desert plains turned into a fruitful field...her Gambia and Niger whitened with her floating commerce, —her crowded cities sending forth the hum of business, —her poets and orators standing on the same shelf with Milton and Burke, —and all her sons employed in the songs of salvation.”⁷

In its own time, the colonization movement was first and foremost part of the larger antebellum benevolent movement and was characterized by a mission-mindedness that sought to reform the nation and world. It is not a coincidence that the first major American Protestant push for world wide mission activity developed alongside the growing popularity of the colonization effort, and mission leaders were central to the formation of the American Colonization Society (ACS). Both efforts were founded on the vision of a Christian empire and its accoutrements—territorial

⁷ Griffin, 30.

expansion, Christian conversion, and the march of republicanism. And no group was more influential in spreading the reform impulse than evangelicals.⁸

In the historic sense the term “evangelical” applies to the network of Protestant Christian movements arising in the eighteenth century in Great Britain and North America. It included a wide variety of established and developing groups in both the North and South. Although evangelicals did not share a formal theology, they did share a set of convictions and attitudes. First was a commitment to the Bible as the ultimate religious authority. Second was an insistence on personal, emotional conversion as the sign of conversion. Third was activism, an energetic and individualistic approach to religious duty and social involvement that stressed the inexorable internal demand to share the “good news” with others who had not yet experienced its power. Finally, evangelicals perceived their role and duty as Christian citizens to be that of political engagement. Evangelicals firmly believed it was their obligation to advance a moral republic. Indeed, evangelicals accepted the

⁸ Colonization and world wide missionary activity emerged almost simultaneously with the founding of the American Colonization Society in 1817 and the American Board of Foreign Missions in 1812. An article title search of over 900 periodicals in *American Periodicals Series Online* between 1825-1830 indicates the intense interest Africa held for missionary advocates. There are nearly twice as many articles about Africa as any other country, including those with strong missionary interests such as the Sandwich Islands, India, China, and Turkey. A title search produced 256 hits for Africa; India, 172; Sandwich Islands, 121; China, 46; Turkey, 45; Asia, 26; Persia, 12; Japan and Siam, 3. On early nineteenth-century missions see William Hutchinson, *Errand To the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Dana Robert, *American Women in Missions: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996); Amanda Porterfield, *Mary Lyon and the Mount Holyoke Missionaries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); selected essays in Daniel Bays and Grant Wacker, eds., *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2003). On African Americans and the African Mission see Sylvia M. Jacobs, ed., *Black Missionaries and the Missionary Movement in Africa* (Wesport, CT: Greenwood, 1982); David Wills and Richard Newman, eds., *Black Apostles at Home and Abroad* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1982). James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998).

larger culture's claims that democratic government, personal freedom, and material wealth anticipated the radical global transformation of the future.⁹

It would be a mistake, however, to presume an evangelical unity in the nineteenth century. Evangelicals were divided over a number of controversial issues including government support of religious groups, revival techniques, a human's ability to do what God wants, the role of women in leadership, and the propriety of slavery. The push for colonization was, in fact, part of a larger attempt within evangelical circles to build a religious consensus—both regionally and denominational. To evangelicals' dismay, despite phenomenal growth and successful recruitment among the general population, evangelicalism had not transformed the United States into the kingdom of Christ. Instead, they witnessed a tempestuous religious environment, watched as the tenets of conservative republicanism gave way to an age of increasing liberalism, and looked on as the issue of slavery threatened to destroy national and denominational harmony.

It is in this context of rising evangelical expectation, intractable resistance to conversion, and internal religious controversy that evangelical support for colonization intensified. To the ACS's evangelical constituents, the colonization of Africa by freed blacks seemed providential. Colonization efforts invited evangelicals to intensify their sacred mission of global conversion, assigning to the cause what Robert Abzug labels, "transcendent significance." It appealed to evangelicals' desire for harmony and Christian reconciliation, and it seemed to be an antidote to political

⁹ On evangelicalism see Mark Noll, David Bebbington, and George Rawlyk, eds, *Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Peter Williams, *America's Religions* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1990); Catherine Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989).

antagonism and growing sectionalism. Colonization also appeared to provide a solution to denominations struggling to find common ground on the issue of slavery. Finally, colonization appealed to evangelicals' belief in the humanitarian obligation of the government. Colonization advocates believed the government was obligated to have a hand in sending black Americans to Africa both for their own good and for the welfare of the country. In line with this rationale, many evangelicals interpreted colonization as their patriotic duty.

While the evangelical dimension is central to the story of the ACS, it is not the sole explanation for support of the cause. Colonization appealed to more than evangelicals, and not all evangelicals were colonizationists. Quakers, Catholics, Reformed, Swedenborgians, and Lutherans also supported the cause. Indeed, there was a vast complexity of social, economic, and psychological realities of which evangelicalism was a part. Local context and class standing, for example, played crucial roles in building and sustaining support for colonization.¹⁰

Until very recently historians who studied the colonization movement viewed it merely as a conservative anti-slavery faction that sought to restore society to its God-ordained ideal of relatively homogeneous communities composed of independent, white citizens. These studies focused on the political rise and fall of the ACS and the men who contributed to the process. P.J. Staudenraus's *The African Colonization Movement*, published in 1961, remains the most comprehensive, if dated, example of this argument. In the 1970s and 1980s, scholars grew more critical of the ACS, emphasizing colonizationists' pro-slavery faction and the group's

¹⁰ Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford, 1994), viii. See chapter four for the important role of locality and class.

rampant racism. By the 1990s, most historians no longer considered the ACS an antislavery enterprise. For these historians, the relevancy of colonization involves its failure as the racist opponent to the more radical abolitionist movement, or the Republicans' "drastic solution" to unite the party and gain support from Southern yeomen. Some scholars have characterized the movement as hypocritical and insincere, "odious" because it tolerated slavery and "divisions among men." This scholarship views the ACS as chameleon-like in character, misleading many of its constituents even as it represented many diverse motives and interests.¹¹

Overall historians have tended to overlook colonization because they have found the drama of abolitionism more appealing and so have focused their scholarly attention on the smaller and more strident, antislavery movement. General histories of antislavery give but cursory attention to colonization and diminish the movement's popularity. Perhaps because of their eventual turn to woman's suffrage, women involved in the antislavery movement have received particular attention. Indeed, no subject has received more interest from antebellum women's historians over the last thirty years than the connections between women's abolitionism and the origins of feminism and women's rights.¹² Still these historians largely ignore women's

¹¹ Some of the more important works include Aileen Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967); Leonard L. Richards, *'Gentlemen of Property and Standing': Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Lewis Perry, *Radical Abolitionism* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ., 1973); Richard Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom* (New York: Oxford Univ., 1976); Paul Goodman, *Of One Blood* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1998); David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹² Some of the more important works include Blanche Glassman Hersh, *The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionist in America* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois, 1988); Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Debra Gold Hansen, *Strained Sisterhood in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Julie Joy Jeffrey, *The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina, 1998); Jean Fagan Yellin and John Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ., 1994).

debates on colonization and fail to recognize the important way notions of womanhood contributed to the colonization effort as well as shaped the variant responses to slavery among Northern reformers. In much the same way, the abundance of scholarship on women and the antebellum reform impulse overlooks the colonization movement.¹³

More recently, several scholars have placed the ACS back in the antislavery circle.¹⁴ Others have expanded the study of colonization by examining the movement from the perspective of race and gender. Elizabeth Varon has traced the rise and decline of white female support of colonization in antebellum Virginia. Her work has shown the significant impact these women had on political culture in antebellum Virginia. Joanne Pope Melish has demonstrated how the dominant discourse of “race” put forth in colonization rhetoric in New England helped naturalize the undesirability of free blacks even as it encouraged whites to regard free people of color as “anomalous and unaccountable” in New England. Bruce Dorsey and John Saillant have provided greater understanding of how conceptions of manhood were inextricably linked to dilemmas of race and slavery and the place of African Americans in antebellum America. Dorsey has argued that colonization assumed a masculine character even as it questioned the masculinity of African American men, and the gendered racial discourse explains the scarcity of white women

¹³The literature on antebellum reform is vast. Some of the more important works on religion and reform include Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); and John Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1990); Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*. Important scholarship on women and reform activity include Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class* (New York: Cambridge Univ., 1981); Nancy A. Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ., 1984); Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the 19th Century United States* (New Haven: Yale Univ., 1990).

¹⁴ Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution* (Gainesville: The University of Florida Press, 2005); Claude A. Clegg III, *The Price of Liberty* (Durham: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

colonizationists. John Saillant has illuminated how notions of manhood informed the self-understanding of African American emigrants and missionaries, which fostered a notion of black men as citizens and governors. These studies have thus elucidated the central place of gender in the history of slavery, abolition, and colonization.¹⁵

As much as recent work has added to our understanding of the complex nature of the colonization movement, scholarship has barely begun to explore how evangelical religious ideology—and the concomitant missionary efforts fostered by evangelicalism—influenced the movement.¹⁶ Nor has there been any attempt to survey the role of women in the colonization movement. This dissertation, then, reevaluates colonization in light of antebellum religious impulses and female participation in the movement. It argues that female participants perceived their efforts to be part of the triumph of American, white evangelical Protestantism in the world and viewed colonization as an ideological middle ground between immediate abolition of slavery and perpetual bondage. These women were committed to ridding the United States of both slavery and African Americans.

By no measure egalitarians, colonizationists did affirm the humanity of African Americans and assigned to them the building of a Christian republic in Liberia. In so doing, female colonizationists inadvertently drew attention to the

¹⁵ Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1998); Elizabeth Varon, *We Mean To Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); John Saillant, "Missions in Liberia and Race Relations in the United States, 1822-1860," in *The Foreign Missionary Enterprise at Home*, eds. Daniel H. Bays and Grant Wacker (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2003), 13-28.

¹⁶ Early Lee Fox, *The American Colonization Society, 1817-1840* (Baltimore: Whetham, 1937); Amos Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900* (Lanham: UP of America, 1991); David M. Streifford, "The American Colonization Society: An Application of Republican Ideology to Early American Reform," *Journal of Southern History* 45 (May 1979): 201-20.

contradictions of slavery and challenged conventional notions of race, citizenship, and the meaning of freedom. Yet male and female colonization supporters explicitly argued that female colonizationists were uninterested in the politics of slavery. The very presence of female support, however, demonstrated their admiration of the cause and established that women did have a duty to bring their moral principles concerning race and slavery into the public sphere.

Colonization efforts also offer a revealing window into the tangled web of racist thinking that characterized white Americans' views about reform and race. On the one hand, colonizationists attempted to demonstrate their elevated view of African Americans by assigning to them a unique and providential role in building a worldwide Christian empire. At the same time colonizationists maintained a clear and certain notion of white superiority, unwilling to consider a multiracial society or include African Americans in their vision of an American democratic society. Female colonizationists participated in this discussion on race. Unlike female abolitionists who came to see their own oppression reflected in the experiences of slaves, female colonizationists refused to identify with African American women. Instead, they remained committed to a hierarchy of class, race and sex that assigned to them—mostly white middle and upper-class women—a special role in society. By maintaining a social hierarchy and refusing to identify with African Americans, female colonizationists reaffirmed the foreignness of African American women and men. My dissertation explores the complexity and contradictions embedded in colonizationists' thinking about race and reform and the larger racial foundation sustaining colonization and antislavery debates.

Chapter 1 focuses on the origins of the colonization movement and female support in the 1820s. It challenges scholarship that portrays colonization as a masculine endeavor where women were marginal by showing that women supported the ACS from its inception. It also contests the dating of female anti-slavery activism. Women, both as individuals and in groups, were involved in efforts to end slavery through colonization as early as 1819. It also argues that early female supporters endorsed colonization as a benevolent and religious cause and advocated participation as an extension of Christian womanhood, even as their actions undercut the institution of slavery. Chapter 2 compares the views of two of colonization's most outspoken female advocates. The tales of Lydia Sigourney of Hartford, Connecticut, and Margaret Mercer from Baltimore, Maryland, illuminate many important characteristics of female ACS supporters, including their potential to challenge conventional notions of race.

Lydia Sigourney, one of the most widely read authors of the first half of the nineteenth century, was founder and secretary of the Hartford Female African Society. In 1830, several years before the formation of racially integrated female antislavery societies, Sigourney invited a group of black women, who were members of an auxiliary group called "The Charitable Society in the African Sunday School," to the annual meeting. Both groups were committed to the colony of Liberia. A young black woman named Betsy Mars especially impressed Sigourney. One year later, Mars went to Liberia as a missionary, supported in part by the Hartford African Society. Sigourney maintained her connection and friendship with Mars until Mars'

death in 1864.¹⁷ Margaret Mercer was active in the ACS from almost its beginning in 1817. In the late 1820s, she decided to free her twenty slaves. Her manumission plan included teaching the slaves how to read, and one received a medical education. When the time came to emancipate her slaves, a few refused to go to Liberia. Initially, Mercer insisted that these individuals remain slaves, but eventually she allowed them to go free to settle in the North. Her manumission plan greatly upset slaveholders in her community, but she persevered believing that slaves were “human flesh and blood” with “souls belonging to the God that made them.”¹⁸

These brief snapshots bring into view several prominent features of female colonization supporters. Both Sigourney and Mercer were not antislavery radicals but their actions were charged with social, political and personal consequences. Both believed that human bondage was a flawed institution and considered colonization the only remedy. In different ways, they challenged societal expectations and challenged traditional notions of race and the meaning of freedom. Sigourney organized a biracial meeting and corresponded with a black American woman she thought “capable and intelligent” for over thirty years. Mercer educated and manumitted her slaves and allowed several to remain in America as free blacks. In addition, Sigourney and Mercer were emblematic of female ACS supporters. Female supporters were religious, mostly from the middle and upper class, and involved in benevolent activity outside of colonization. Most called for gradual emancipation at

¹⁷ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no 6 (July 1830): 150. Sigourney was the only person in the United States Mars’ son requested be notified of his mother’s death. J.M. Thomson to Rev. S.D. Denison, 16 May 1864, *Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society Papers*, Episcopal Church Archives, Austin, Texas (hereafter ECA).

¹⁸ Casper Morris, *Memoir of Miss Margaret Mercer* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1848), 121.

the same time they rejected abolition as dangerous and were convinced that equality would always elude African Americans in America.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine in more detail the characteristics and motives of individual female colonization supporters. At the same time the two chapters trace the rise and decline of female colonization societies. The heyday for female support occurred during the brief but intense period of the 1830s. It was during this time that the ACS was losing its centrality in the political imagination. As a consequence, benevolent activity became more compelling to the organization, and a more defined role for women took shape as volunteerism and moral suasion became privileged over politics. However, the mobilization of white women that began in the late 1820s peaked in the 1830s, and culminated not in the formation of a widespread colonization movement among women, but in active support of denominational missions to Africa. During the 1840s women struggled to make sense of their role in colonization and by the end of the decade only a handful of female societies continued to operate. Chapter 4 focuses on female societies in Philadelphia, New York, and Greene Country, Ohio, to show the factors that contributed to the decline in female support for the colonization movement.

If chapters 1 through 4 gaze upon white female participation in the colonization movement, chapters 5 and 6 turn toward Africa. Chapter 5 examines the image of Africa made popular by colonization supporters in the 1820s and 1830s. The image of Africa as the true home of “orphaned” black Americans proved so powerful that even as the cause of colonization weakened and the efforts of

abolitionism gained strength, the image of Africa made popular by colonization supporters continued to be affirmed by the popular and religious press.

Because most colonization supporters considered colonization a missionary endeavor, chapter 6 examines missionary activity in Liberia and shows the complicated relationship between colonization and Liberian missions. A focus on missionary activity in Liberia also reveals the power of racist thinking. Liberia was the first location all the major denominations sent white missionaries. It was also the first place mission boards sent African Americans as missionaries. Females—white and black—made up at least fifty percent of the force. Chapter 6 focuses on these women and explores the way black and white missionary women constructed their identities and interpreted their responsibilities, as well as how they perceived African people and their cultures. The racial prejudice that fueled colonization and encouraged white Americans to view black Americans as foreigners, ironically, energized black and white missionaries as well. White and black missionaries stressed the “otherness” of Africans and shared a belief in the expansionist Christian ideology that sought to introduce Christianity to Liberia. These beliefs aligned black and white missionaries against the African foreigner. Yet, for all the shared assumptions of white and black missionaries, white missionaries refused to consider black missionaries as equal partners.

The colonization movement of the nineteenth century was replete with inconsistencies. Certainly the movement demonstrated the practical and idealistic as well as the selfish and racist sides of antebellum men and women. And yet from the early nineteenth century onward, African colonization occupied a central place in

debates on slavery and race. In the most general sense, my dissertation attempts to explain the enterprise's saliency and appeal. More specifically, it resurrects a forgotten chapter in American history. For too long historians have been tempted to ignore or dismiss female colonization supporters as hypocritical and short-sighted because they fell on the wrong side of history and lacked the moral vision and courage of the abolitionists. Yet their story is a reminder that the struggle over ideologies of gender, race, and religion extend deep into the American past.

Chapter One **“The Work of God”**

In the summer of 1810, fifty-five-year-old Anne Mifflin, a widowed Quaker from Philadelphia, set out on a tour through Virginia. Her mission was both religious and political. She hoped to convince “individuals in power” of the moral turpitude of slavery and, at the same time, provide a plan that would “stir them up to a consideration, of the necessity of endeavoring to escape from the danger they are in.” She brought with her Sarah Zane, a woman who had liberated about 30 slaves and would help Mifflin gain access to men of influence. The two women met with dozens of men and women in and around Richmond and Williamsburg. At each visit Mifflin outlined her plan. She proposed that America work with England to colonize “some of the Blacks on the Coast of Africa...whose expenses of conveyance and something toward their settlement, should be paid by the people of this land.” To Mifflin it seemed appropriate that African Americans go to Africa because “our predecessors and successors down to 1808 had forcibly removed them from their native bounds for mercenary purposes, [so] it is but reasonable they should be returned to their bounds, and not empty handed.” To fund such a scheme she recommended the creation of state associations called “Returning Societies” to raise subscriptions. Under her proposal, it would be left to each state to support and sponsor the colonization of its African American population. Mifflin did not call for state laws abolishing slavery

outright. Instead, she favored individual manumission as the best procedure for ending slavery.¹

Anne Mifflin was the daughter of George and Anne Emlen, wealthy Philadelphia Quakers. In 1786, at the age of 31, Mifflin married Warner Mifflin, a prominent anti-slavery supporter. Born of Quaker parentage on a plantation in Virginia, Warner had determined never to own slaves. When in 1774 he found himself the owner of slaves as a result of his first marriage, he manumitted them. The next year he convinced his father to free his slaves and persuaded a number of his Quaker acquaintances to free theirs as well. After Warner and Anne married, they traveled extensively in the service of the Society of Friends and the cause of anti-slavery until his death of yellow fever in 1798. Anne continued her anti-slavery work until her own death in 1815. Ironically, she would die two years before the formation of the American Colonization Society in 1817 whose purpose was to promote the emigration of free blacks to Africa.²

Anne Mifflin was not the first or last person to advocate African colonization as the solution to slavery in the United States. She acknowledged her debt to Paul Cuffe, her friend and correspondent, as well as the work of English anti slavery proponent Granville Sharp in Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, several aspects of Mifflin's account are worth remarking. Mifflin targeted female slaveowners and women of "note and fortune in high life." These included the widow of Thomas Snowden, "who lives in great style" because of her slaves, but "nevertheless...seemed cordially

¹ Anne Mifflin, Philadelphia, to Paul Cuffe, 2 February 1811, Swarthmore Special Collection, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania (hereafter SSC).

² John W. Jordan, *Colonial Families of Philadelphia*, vol. 1 (New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1911), 194, 845.

to approve” her scheme. The widow Harvey, likewise, lived in “high style...but being a sober minded Woman—on my opening to her the plan, she much approved it.” Nearly all the women she met seemed to applaud Mifflin’s plan.³ It is unclear whether these women ever freed their slaves, but scores of other southern women publicly worked to dismantle the slave system by manumitting their own slaves and encouraging others to do likewise.

Scholars have tended to disregard as inadequate, even disingenuous, any expressions of female antislavery sentiment that fell short of calls for immediate abolition. Yet thousands of white women in the North and the South expressed opposition to slavery through the colonization movement—fundraising, circulating information, publishing writing, forming auxiliary societies, supporting African missions and education, manumitting slaves, and becoming missionaries. Like Mifflin, many of these women supported African colonization as a solution to the problem of slavery and in response to deeply held Christian convictions. While they lacked the progressive moral vision of the abolitionists and remained committed to a God-ordained hierarchy of class, race and gender, they nevertheless contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the way in which religious benevolence and ideologies of gender influenced responses to slavery and race in antebellum America.

Even more remarkable than Mifflin’s appeal to female slaveowners is that she took her message to politically powerful men. She spoke to Virginia’s governor, John Tyler, and former governor, James Wood. Both men “well approved of the plan.” She discussed her ideas with leading Virginia politicians such as Bishop

³ Anne Mifflin, Georgetown, to Anne Emlen, 19 September 1810 and 30 September 1810, Washingtoniana Etting Papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (hereafter HSP).

Madison, president of William and Mary. She also met with John Lynch, the leading businessman of Lynchburg, Virginia, and former classmate of Thomas Jefferson. So impressed was Lynch with the plan that he suggested Mifflin meet with Jefferson, who might be able to solicit assistance from France. Mifflin left town before the two could meet, so Lynch wrote Jefferson for his opinion on the proposition. “You have asked my opinion of the proposition of Mrs. Mifflin,” Jefferson replied, “to take measures of procuring, on the coast of Africa, an establishment to which the people of color of these States, might, from time to time, be colonized....” Jefferson, whose advocacy for colonization dates from 1773, not surprisingly believed “nothing is more to be wished than that the United States should themselves undertake to make such an establishment on the coast of Africa.”⁴

It takes little effort to appreciate the influence of the former president’s opinion. Colonizationists later gave wide publicity to it in order to strengthen their cause. But Mifflin’s efforts have largely disappeared from historical records. Her actions, however, challenge scholarship that portrays colonization as a masculine endeavor where women were marginal. Female colonizationists were not a small minority too hampered by social and religious mores and gender conventions to transform their benevolent activism into a critique of the slave system. Women supported colonization in a variety of ways in the 1820s, and the ACS gained a substantial female following in the 1830s. By the end of the 1830s male colonizationists had come to believe that women were indispensable participants in the effort to colonize Africa. More than this, Mifflin’s efforts challenge the dating of

⁴ *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford, vol. 9 (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1898), 303-304.

women's anti-slavery activism. Historians of women of the antebellum period generally agree that females began organizing against slavery in the 1830s, but women were actively involved in efforts to end slavery through the ACS as early as 1819.

Origins of Colonization

Mifflin's plan was emblematic of decades of debate among black and white intellectuals through the years of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As early as 1773 Samuel Hopkins, a Presbyterian minister in Newport, Rhode Island, proposed sending educated Christian blacks to Africa as missionaries. Quaker William Thornton looked to clear the way for emancipation while enlarging trade operation with Africa. Combining philanthropy and profit, Thornton believed that "By proper encouragement and perseverance, a most valuable country would soon become the seat of commerce, of arts and the manufacture, of plenty, of peace, and happiness!"⁵ Thomas Jefferson, as a member of the Virginia Assembly, proposed an emancipation plan calling for freeing all slaves at adulthood and then colonizing them in the American West. During his presidency he advocated African colonization. Another manifestation of white sentiment for colonizing African Americans in a distant territory is found in a series of resolutions passed by the Virginia Assembly. In 1800, 1808, 1811, 1813, and again in 1816, the Virginia legislature met secretly to ask their governor to correspond with the President of the United States requesting

⁵ Quoted in Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement*, 7.

him to use his treaty-making power to provide a place in Africa or elsewhere for the colonization of free African Americans.⁶

African colonization benefited from the support of some eighteenth-century African Americans. The most influential of the black colonization advocates was Paul Cuffe. When Mifflin wrote to Paul Cuffe in 1811, he was making preparations to go to the Windward Coast of Africa to investigate the possibility of colonization. Cuffe, of mixed African and Native American descent, was a devout Quaker, ambitious entrepreneur, accomplished sailor, and one of the wealthiest black men in the United States. He believed emigration to Africa would remove the “yoke of oppression” from African Americans, enabling them to “rise to be a people.” At the same time, emigration promised to “regenerate” Africa through the introduction of Christianity, civilization, and legitimate commerce.⁷

Other eighteenth-century African Americans considered the benefits of colonization. Phillis Wheatley, the celebrated eighteenth-century poet, endorsed African colonization. Wheatley was one of the first people Samuel Hopkins informed of his scheme. After hearing of the plan she responded to Hopkins, “What I can do in influencing my Christian friends and acquaintance, to promote this laudable design shall not be wanting,” adding, “Methinks Rev’d Sir, this is the beginning of that

⁶ On Hopkins’s scheme see Samuel Hopkins, *A Dialogue concerning the Slavery of the Africans* (Norwich, Conn.: Judah P. Spooner, 1776); Lorenzo J. Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 277-79; John Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 6-7; Staudenraus, vii-viii. Charles I. Foster, “The Colonization of Free Negroes, in Liberia, 1816-1835,” *Journal of Negro History* 38:1 (January 1953): 43-44; *The First Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1818; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 6.

⁷ Paul Cuffe, *Memoir of Captain Paul Cuffe, A Man of Colour: To Which is Subjoined The Epistle of the Society of Sierra Leone, in Africa, &c.* (London, 1811); Henry Noble Sherwood, “Paul Cuffe and His Contributions to the American Colonization Society,” *Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association* 6 (1912-13): 370-402; Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality*, 21-53; Campbell, *Songs of Zion*, 65-67.

happy period foretold by the Prophets.” Independent church leader Absalom Jones, a man who devoted his life to the effort to secure full equality for blacks in America, believed that some individuals might be destined to “return” to Africa. Others such as Olaudah Equiano, the slave mariner whose narrative established many of the conventions of African American autobiography, and Prince Hall, founder of the first black Masonic lodge, grappled with the meaning of enslavement and considered the possibility of a return to Africa.⁸

Eighteenth-century supporters of colonization were committed to the panacea of Christianity and commerce in Africa. These reformers believed the introduction of Christianity and commercial trade would cure what they viewed as Africa’s moral and cultural inferiority. Superior societies were commercial societies. In order to propel Africa forward, it had to move beyond an agricultural society as well as disengage itself from the illegitimate slave trade. All progress, however, ultimately depended on a proper introduction of Christianity. Reformers believed that the most effective messengers were those of African descent.⁹

The first demonstration of the reform spirit of Christianity and commerce in Africa was “The Province of Freedom,” a settlement founded by English evangelical Granville Sharp in 1787. Sharp hoped to create a multi-racial community that principally, but not exclusively, settled England’s “black poor” in Africa on the land that became known as Sierra Leone. Sharp called on his evangelical friends,

⁸ *Complete Writings: Phillis Wheatley*, ed. Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 151-52; Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (1789; reprint ed., Leeds, 1814), in Henry L. Gates ed., *Classic Slave Narratives* (New York, 1987), 22-24, 167-169; Sidney Kaplan and Emma Nogrady Kaplan, *The Black Presence in the Era of the American Revolution* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), 207-209.

⁹ On commerce and Christianity in Africa see Phillip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 68ff.

appealed to colleagues hoping to use the “Province of Freedom” as a base for commercial operations, and used his political connection with William Wilberforce to solicit the English government for a charter. In 1787 about four hundred London blacks with sixty whites—many of them prostitutes recruited to go as wives—set sail to found the colony. The colony would become a homeland for thousands of former slaves, mostly from Britain, Canada, and the West Indies, as well as for countless Africans “recaptured” by the Royal Navy in its campaign against the slave trade. Sierra Leone proved to be less auspicious than its origin. After a dismal beginning—mass desertions, deadly fever, hostile natives, and infighting—Sharp and his London philanthropists surrendered the settlement to the Sierra Leone Company in 1792. The trading company also failed. Before complete ruin struck, the company unloaded the faltering colony on the British government. After 1808, Sierra Leone operated as a crown colony.¹⁰

Despite Sierra Leone’s failings, many nineteenth-century colonization supporters in America viewed the colony as a divinely inspired example. In America, however, the importance of commerce would remain of secondary, even tertiary, importance behind benevolent and religious motivations.

As Sierra Leone struggled, across the Atlantic in rural Massachusetts an unplanned event, the famous “Haystack Prayer Meeting,” had profound effect on the African colonization movement. In 1806 Samuel Mills and several other Williams College students got caught in a thunderstorm one afternoon as they prayed together outside. They took shelter under a nearby haystack and under the haystack pledged

¹⁰ On origins of the Sierra Leone colony, see Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

themselves to missionary service, marking the beginning of American foreign missions. By the time of his ordination in 1815, Mills—the “workhorse of American benevolence”—had helped form the famous and long-lived American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Education Society, the American Bible Society and the United Foreign Missionary Society. Mills had also come to believe that systematic colonization of African Americans would strengthen American society and benefit the emigrating African American. He considered the idea of an African American colony in the western United States or along the African coast, discussing his plan with Paul Cuffe and a few other black Americans. In 1816, Mills learned of a plan being promoted in New York and New Jersey by Robert Finley, a New Jersey Presbyterian minister, for government support of African colonization, and agreed to promote the idea as he traveled around the country raising money for benevolent societies.¹¹

Finley’s and Mills’ views on religion, race, and slavery were nearly parallel. Their work with northern African Americans convinced them that African Americans were an anomaly in American society, and that their removal would benefit both the black and white American. Both looked to colonization as a means for ending slavery and as an “atoning sacrifice” for the national sin of slavery. And each viewed colonization as a missionary enterprise that could “tame the wild and wandering people who now roam over that great section of the globe,” and “redeem and emancipate a million and an half of wretched men.” In 1818, Mills embarked for the

¹¹ Charles Foster calls Mills “the workhorse of American benevolence in his article, “The Colonization of Free Negroes, in Liberia, 1816-1835,” 43. For more on the “Haystack Prayer Meeting” and American missions see Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), 423ff.

shores of Africa as an agent for the newly formed American Colonization Society. After visiting Sierra Leone and various villages along the western coast of Africa, Mills ended his “mission of inquiry” with the conviction that African colonization was possible and desirable. Neither warnings from British leaders in Sierra Leone nor evasive and noncommittal African kings and natives persuaded Mills to alter his opinion. “I am every day more convinced of the practicability and expediency of establishing American colonies on this coast.” However, before completing his report that strongly urged colonization, Mills contracted fever, chills, and hiccups. On June 16, 1818, he died with no idea his combined interest in African Americans and foreign missions represented a force that would carry the American Colonization Society through the century.¹²

The Formation of the American Colonization Society

Robert Finley went to Washington, D.C., in December 1816 to advocate forming a society for colonizing African Americans in Africa. Finley, a graduate of Princeton College and a teacher and pastor of the largest Presbyterian church in New Jersey, had formulated his own ideas on African colonization as early as 1814. Once in Washington he canvassed the community, delivering speeches in local churches and distributing his pamphlet, “Thoughts on the Colonization of Free Blacks.” In the pamphlet he wrote: “At present, as if by divine impulse, men of virtue, piety, and reflection, are turning their thoughts to this subject, and seem to see the wished-for plan unfolding, in the gradual separation of the black from the white population, by

¹² Gardiner Spring, *Memoirs of the Samuel John Mills*, 2d ed. (New York: Perkins and Marvin, 1829), 116-133, 136, 221; Isaac V. Brown, *Biography of the Rev. Robert Finley, D. D., of Basking Ridge N. J.* (Philadelphia: J.W. Moore, 1857), 60-75. Spring, 221.

providing for the former, some suitable situation, where men may enjoy the advantages to which they are entitled by nature and their Creators' will." Finley recognized the obstacles to African colonization—the need for explorations, diplomatic negotiations, and the great expense—but he was confident that Africa was the most suitable location for settlement. To those skeptical of his plan he declared, "I know the scheme is from God." Sending black Americans to Africa had a "three-fold benefit," he argued in words that echoed long into the next decades in spite of changing conditions and the growth of the anti slavery movement: "we should be cleared of them; we should send to Africa a population partially civilized and Christianized for its benefits; our blacks themselves would be put in better condition." His campaigning paid off. On December 21, 1816, in the Davis Hotel, "numerous and respectable" politicians, ministers, and philanthropists met to discuss the formation of a society for colonizing African Americans in Africa. Elias Caldwell, Finley's brother-in-law and clerk of the Supreme Court, delivered the principal address and underscored Finley's arguments. He argued for the expediency and practicality of colonization at the same time he emphasized the society's benevolent intentions. Africa seemed the best place to send African Americans because there was a settlement already in Sierra Leone, the climate was presumed agreeable to black Americans, they could live cheaply, and they would carry civilization and Christianity to the Africans.¹³

The majority of the signers of the society's constitution, men such as Daniel Webster, Charles Mercer, William Meade, Fernando Fairfax, William Thorton,

¹³ Brown, 90-100, 106-113, 136-150; Henry Noble Sherwood, "The Formation of the American Colonization Society," *The Journal of Negro History* 2, no. 3 (July 1917): 209-228; Mathew Carey, *Letters on Colonization and its Probable Results* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1834), 7.

Robert Wright, Samuel Mills, Francis Scott Key, Elias Caldwell, and Robert Finley, promoted the scheme as a way both to remove freed and enslaved African Americans from the United States and provide a way for gradual emancipation. The society's first president, Bushrod Washington, in the first annual address, confirmed the aim of the society: "should it lead, as we may fairly hope it will, to the slow but gradual abolition of slavery, it will wipe for our political institutions the only blot which stains them; and, in palliation of which, we shall not be at liberty to plead the excuse of moral necessity, until we shall have honestly exerted all the means which we possess for its extinction." Male-headed auxiliaries were established throughout the country, primarily in the Upper South and Mid-Atlantic states. Men who were morally opposed to slavery dominated these auxiliaries and hoped colonization would pave the way to general emancipation.¹⁴

A vocal minority articulated an alternate view that asserted the society was not interested in ending slavery; rather it hoped only to remove free black Americans. "It was far from the intention of the society to affect," insisted Henry Clay, "the tenure by which a certain species of property is held." John Randolph of Roanoke insisted that the ACS would "not in any way affect the question of Negro Slavery." Within a few short years, the desire to find consensus among members and the need of private funds compelled the society to advocate benevolence alone. By 1825 Ralph Gurley, the newly elected secretary, asserted that "This Society promulgates no new and dangerous doctrine," nor was it gripped by the "ungovernable spirit of fanaticism." It aimed only to colonize free black Americans in Africa. Only in Africa could

¹⁴ Brown, 113; Sherwood, 209-228; *First Annual Report of the ACS*, 2; Allison Freehling, *Drift Toward Dissolution: The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-32* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 118-121.

American blacks enjoy freedom and spread to the rest of the continent civilization and Christianity.¹⁵

Gurley and many other colonization supporters hoped that one long-term consequence of colonization would be the end of slavery, but this goal would not be pressed. The ACS secretary urged its adherents to trust for its success “moral principle” and colonization’s “influence on the moral opinions of the country.” Gurley was convinced that the society would do best by “appeals to the moral feelings of their countrymen” rather than to “interest or expediency.” On the one hand, he hoped that the ACS through its colonization program would “convince the southern people and their legislatures, that emancipation might be both safe [and] ...practicable.” Gurley also recognized the need for moderation in recommending colonization as a means toward emancipation. He assured southerners that the ACS would be the “last institution in the world to disturb the domestic tranquility of the south,” and acknowledged that the question of the abolition of slavery had to be decided by the southern states.¹⁶

The appointment of Rev. Ralph Randolph Gurley as the ACS Secretary in 1825 marked a new era for the organization. He brought to the office a zeal for administration and a vision to expand the colonization cause into “a great national movement.” For the next fifty years, Gurley’s career focused on African colonization. The son of a congregational minister, and an ordained minister himself, Gurley came to the position experienced as an ACS traveling agent in New England and the former assistant to Elias Caldwell. Caldwell was the organization’s first

¹⁵ *First Annual Report of the ACS*, 9; Sherwood, 223.

¹⁶ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 1 (March 1825): 13-20; Staudenraus, 99.

secretary and had been in Liberia for a short time representing the ACS. Initially, the ACS envisioned itself as unique among benevolent associations in that it would depend largely on federal assistance. Unlike other benevolent societies that relied on private contributions and a network of auxiliaries for collections and sometimes the support of local governments, early ACS leaders believed auxiliaries supplemental to the larger goal of federal assistance and so established the ACS's headquarters in Washington, D.C.¹⁷ While the assorted local and state auxiliaries provided thousands of dollars annually to the cause, these private funds were altogether insufficient. By 1823, the society was nearly insolvent. With only limited assistance from the government, no immediate prospects for complete acceptance in Congress, and rising colonial expenses, it was clear the society needed to remodel itself.¹⁸

Gurley had been selected to fix these problems. To do this, he set out to win the support of the North primarily by emphasizing the benevolent and religious aspects of colonization. Before 1825, although there were pockets of support led by influential men in a few northern cities, the ACS did not have steady or substantial

¹⁷ The Slave Trade Act of 1819 was passed in large part as a colonization effort. It allowed the president authority to return Africans stranded in the United States. It also authorized him to send a naval squadron to the African coast for resettling victims of the slave trade; \$100,000 was appropriated for the work. Colonization supporters urged President Monroe to interpret the act as granting authority to purchase territory and establish an African colony. Although Monroe was a strong advocate of colonization, his cabinet, specifically John Quincy Adams, argued that colonization—to establish and possess colonies—was unconstitutional. The compromise was that the federal government would appoint an agent and send a warship with workmen and agricultural implements to the coast to establish an African agency, and the ACS would purchase the territory. The administration acted as though the expedition were a step towards suppression of the slave trade, but it marked the beginning of the colonization effort. Of the 86 “workmen” sent on the Elizabeth on January 31, 1820, only one-third were men, the rest wives and children. As president, John Quincy Adams interpreted the act loosely using funds to enlarge the colony as well as the government agency. In response to proslavery backlash, the Jackson administration stopped making payments to the ACS in 1830. However, not before the federal government had spent over \$240,000 for less than 260 Africans rescued from the slave trade.

¹⁸ For more on Gurley see Mason Noble, *A Discourse Commemorative of the Life and Character of Rev. Ralph Gurley* (Washington, 1872); Staudenraus, 94-103; 117-35.

support in the North. In 1824, traveling agents sent to New England to raise support concluded, “little dependence can be placed upon any effectual or permanent pecuniary aid from the Northern and Eastern sections of our country.” It was not that the north opposed the idea of colonization. The lack of support resulted from a perception that colonization was a government-supported movement in contrast to other benevolent societies and missionary enterprises.¹⁹

Beginning in 1825, the message flowing out of headquarters and printed in newspapers combined benevolence, patriotism, and missionary zeal in an attempt to appeal to the impressive array of benevolent societies in the North. The ACS solicited the endorsement of the major denominations and called on ministers to promote the cause in Independence Day sermons. Scores of clergymen, mostly Congregational, Presbyterian, and Episcopalian, promptly took up the charge, advocating colonization as a patriotic duty that would send Christianity and republican government to Africa. “In behalf of this unhappy class of the community, an appeal, Fellow-Citizens, is this day made to you,” asserted Rev. Nathaniel Bouton in a Fourth of July sermon in 1825, “made to the spirit of patriotism which you cherish as Freemen and as Christians; made because the object is a national one...to Him who hath made of one blood all the nations, you are invited to evince your love of liberty, by affording relief to the enslaved.” In 1825, the society launched a monthly journal, entitled *The African Repository*, which became the mouthpiece of the ACS. With Gurley as the editor, the journal repeatedly emphasized the themes of

¹⁹ *Eighth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour* (Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1825; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 50.

benevolence, patriotism, and missions, and appealed to three groups: the clergy, the patriot, and “our fair countrywomen.”²⁰

Indeed, Gurley viewed the recruitment of females as one of the first tasks in broadening the movement’s popularity and securing Northern support. He believed that the subject of colonization had yet to be sufficiently urged upon women. Not long after taking editorial control of the *African Repository*, he published an editorial that encouraged ministers to use the Fourth of July as a means of promoting colonization. “How much might be effected by this institution [ACS]” the author asked, “were the churches unanimously to express their charity towards it.” Then, the author turns to the subject of women:

In the cause of missions, and in most of the benevolent projects of the age, the ladies have acted a noble part...The American Colonization Society, however, we regret to say, has been honoured with less of their charity than the other humane and religious institutions of our land. The reason is evident; we have failed to offer it as we should have done, to their consideration, to represent the numerous claims it has upon them, and to seek, under the authority of principles ever recognized as paramount by christian ladies, the patronage which, thus sought they have never denied.²¹

Over the next several years, editorials continued to urge female participation and often criticized the society’s indifference toward “the more virtuous sex.” One editorial expressed the hope that “the christian ladies amongst us, whose hearts are most susceptible of kind impressions...will give a portion of their time, their influence, and their efforts to this Heavenly work.” Another implored, “the fair

²⁰ Nathaniel Bouton, *Christian patriotism: An address delivered at Concord, July the fourth, 1835* (Concord: Shepard and Bannister, 1825); Staudenraus, 20-21; Fox, 47, 60-61. Appeals to these three groups are frequently used in both the *African Repository* and the Society’s *Annual Reports*. See for example, *The Twelfth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1828; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), x, 26, 54.

²¹ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 1 (March 1826): 24-26.

portion of our community” to “be awake to a subject which calls so loudly for their attention, which has not been sufficiently urged upon them....” A still later one entitled, “To Christian Ladies,” reported, “few of our enlightened countrywomen...are aware to what extent, and with what moral power their influence may be exerted.”²²

Overtures to women in the name of religious benevolence were an overt attempt to alter northern perceptions of colonization as a political movement led by elite men to a benevolent reform movement. Female participation would also confer moral legitimacy on a struggling society. From its inception the society suffered a public relations problem. Many northerners and southerners lacked extensive knowledge of the colonization scheme. In the North, some believed colonization was a plan of the slaveholders to get rid of their free blacks and surplus slaves. In the South, many believed colonization was a northern scheme to rob slaveowners of their property. Like other reformers, Gurley understood the power women exerted in benevolent causes and hoped to benefit from it. “The seal of their good opinion is,” he argued, “the best and surest passport to general favour.” Another editorial declared, “We have long believed that it was only necessary to... excite their [women’s] best feelings...which should soften down opposition and outlive censure, prove admirable its influences, and illustrious in its deeds.” Gurley believed that female involvement was as good as having the scriptures endorse the movement. “Blest with souls of finer structure and more exquisite sensibility than men; less exposed to influences which pervert the moral feelings, and mislead the judgment in

²² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 1 (March 1826): 9; 4, no. 10 (December 1828): 285, 315.

matters of duty and charity, their decisions in relation to these, are seldom wrong; and, next to the sacred Word, merit our confidence.”²³

Other leaders shared Gurley’s conviction that the support of females indicated “a most propitious omen to the future hopes and prospects of the Society.” Henry Clay, speaking at the Annual Meeting in 1829, declared, “Our fair country women...have manifested a warm approbation of that of the Colonization Society...Their co-operation was wanted to complete the circle of moral exertion.” He then submitted a resolution thanking women, “who contribute by their countenance, association, and their donations, to the success of the Society.” Benjamin Latrobe, an agent for the ACS in Maryland, believed that success depended upon the involvement of women because “by getting women enlisted for us we may move the men, who may ultimately move the government.” Latrobe believed that the best way to get women involved would be for the Society to encourage them to “form Auxiliary Societies for the purpose of aiding in the collection of funds by procuring donations [and] holding fairs.” Moreover, there should be a general appeal to “female sensibility” and “sympathy.” “The moral influence of female zeal, exerted in a cause like this,” he asserted, “can scarcely...be too highly appreciated.” On January 12, 1829, the Board of Managers unanimously adopted a resolution encouraging women to form auxiliary societies and “aid in the collection of funds by such other methods as their wisdom and charity may suggest.”²⁴

²³ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 4, no. 11 (January 1829): 350; 5, no. 8 (October 1829): 245.

²⁴ *Twelfth Annual Report of the ACS*, x; Benjamin Latrobe, Baltimore, to Ralph Gurley, Washington D.C., 10 January 1829, American Colonization Society Records, 1792-1964. Wash. D.C., Library of Congress (hereafter ACS Papers); *Thirteenth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1830; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), xi; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 4, no. 11 (January 1829): 350.

To a large extent, this rhetoric was similar to other benevolent societies' appeal to women. The principles of the ACS were promoted as especially congenial to women whose "bosoms are ever so ready to answer to the calls of charity." Leaders argued that colonization work appealed to women's traditional duties of benevolence and piety. Women's efforts in the "heavenly work" would aid America by transferring the "degraded" African American "from a state of political, intellectual, and moral degradation, to a country which they may call their own." Participation in colonization would allow women to exercise their religious and missionary convictions by contributing to the "redemption of Africa." Through the meliorating influence of Christianity, American women would help elevate the female savages "in Liberia, and in all Africa," and instruct "the countless tribes of a long barbarous and wretched continent, in the arts which civilize and the religion which saves our race." The cause of education in Liberia was thought to be particularly deserving of female attention. Should not "christian ladies...whose hearts are most susceptible of kind impressions, and who seldom yield to discouragements in the discharge of any duty," educate African Americans in preparation for emigration to Africa? Indeed, by the late 1830s education had become the centerpiece of female involvement in colonization.²⁵

Colonizationists also appealed to female sentiment by focusing on the moral and domestic implications of colonization. Because of their piety and sensitivity, women were presumed to have a special sympathy for the plight of freed African Americans and African natives. "Can any female heart...remain indifferent to the

²⁵*African Repository and Colonial Journal* 4, no. 10 (December 1828): 315; *Ladies Magazine and Literary Gazette* 3 (Oct. 1830): 442; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 1 (March 1826): 8-11.

claims which our infant Colony, and the people whom it would bless,” asked one author, for “the miseries of the African race...appeal irresistibly to the sympathies of the female mind.” Colonizationists made the case that women had a special moral perspective on Africans. The plight of the African mother was most often emphasized in connection to female sympathy. Because of their role as mothers, women were thought to have a special awareness of the horror of the slave trade and slavery. “How have the sacred ties of nature been ruthlessly sundered, the peaceful village and the quiet home violated by those who would tear children from their parents, and bind even a mother’s limbs in fetters of iron!” Benjamin Latrobe stated “Africa spoke to them [women] from their very hearth stones.” Colonizationists firmly believed that once women were made aware of the human suffering in Africa, it “would be sufficient to pierce every female heart with sorrow, and unite in a holy sisterhood of charity all the Ladies of our country.” And, in turn, inspire those around them to support the cause.²⁶

Early Involvement of Women in the ACS

Women supported colonization from the beginning as Dr. James Finley, the son of the ACS’s founder Rev. Robert Finley, noted as he looked back on the 1820s:

The American Colonization Society is indebted to female benevolence for much of its success; without their aid it would hardly have been sustained. When men were almost in despair and many feared the plan must be given up, two benevolent ladies of Virginia, sisters, bequeathed \$12,000 to the Colonization Society. Soon after, the ladies of Baltimore gave \$2,500, the proceeds of a fair. Other donations from ladies have been frequent; and more than half the manumitted slaves

²⁶ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 4, no. 10 (December 1828): 285, 314-317; *Thirteenth Annual Report of the ACS*, xi; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 12 (February 1830): 317.

have been set free by ladies. The destiny of Africa, as well as that of our own country, will be mightily affected by the influence of American woman.²⁷

As early as 1819, scores of women in the Upper South and Mid Atlantic states supported colonization with money and goods. They attended annual meetings in Washington, D.C. Women in New York, Rhode Island, Washington D.C., Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, South Carolina, and North Carolina, submitted anywhere from \$1 to \$100 annually to the ACS. In 1820, a group of sixteen women formed the “Ladies of Annapolis” and submitted \$5 or \$10 each. Other groups participated in the movement by making clothing. Women in Georgetown, D.C., donated \$400 worth of clothes in 1820. Two years later, “the ladies of Baltimore, about 55 in number” each worked two to six days in order to make 154 garments worth \$100. The next year they gave garments worth \$50. Still other women set up charity boxes, the proceeds of which they gave to the ACS. Although New England women were not as actively involved in the early years, some did support the movement. One of the earliest groups to support colonization in New England, the “Female Society for Educating Heathen Youth” from Dedham, Massachusetts, gave \$40 in 1823. The next year, students in New Haven, Connecticut, donated \$8 and their teacher, Mary Peters, contributed another \$7. Individuals from Philadelphia and Hartford, strongholds of female support in the 1830s, as well as women in Maine and New Hampshire, supported the ACS with donations as early as 1823.²⁸

²⁷ “Woman’s Sphere,” *Christian Watchman* 6 (June 1833): 276.

²⁸ *Boston Commercial Gazette* 67 (28 February 1825): 4; *Third Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1820; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 133-146; *Fourth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1821; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 67-71; *Fifth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1822; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 111-119; *Sixth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*,

Some women acted through their churches, typically by purchasing a life membership in the ACS for their minister. In July 1824, the women in Georgetown made Gurley—then in Liberia representing the ACS—a life member. In 1821 a group of women from Bristol, Rhode Island, made the Episcopal Bishop of New England, Alexander Griswold, a life member. Various groups of ladies in New York purchased life memberships for their ministers in 1823. Also, female Sunday school teachers in various cities contributed to colonization by donating money and the proceeds of their work. The actual amount of money women contributed through their churches remains uncertain. Ministers and traveling agents raised thousands of dollars through general collections in local churches, unquestionably, women contributed to these offerings.²⁹

Other women formed informal networks that supported colonization. Quaker women in North Carolina, to give one example, formed a benevolent society that supported various causes, colonization among them. “We are very sensible that females can do but little,” wrote the secretary of the benevolent society in March 1826, “we beg you will accept this small sum (five dollars) and with it our sincerest wishes for your success and the growth of your colony.” In time, these networks were converted into female auxiliary societies.

Initially women were not encouraged, nor were they discouraged, from forming auxiliary societies. In fact, the ACS made only weak attempts to form male auxiliaries. Nevertheless by 1826 sixty-nine male auxiliaries had formed in fifteen

Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1823; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 71; 67-72; *Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1824; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 44-47, 160-65.

²⁹ *Fourth Annual Report of the ACS*, 67-72; 67-71; *Seventh Annual Report of the ACS*, 44-47, 162-165.

states, boasting the names of men of prestige and wealth. In the same year, the annual report records just one female auxiliary in Wilmington, Delaware. It would take almost 5 more years before the formation of an additional female auxiliary. By the mid-1830s, however, female auxiliaries had been formed in Connecticut, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, DC, Georgia, Ohio, and Kentucky.³⁰

Little is known about this early group of female supporters in Wilmington. Like so many of the female auxiliaries, their records have been lost. Similar to male auxiliaries, it claimed prominent women as members. The director was Miss Elizabeth Montgomery, the daughter of Captain Hugh Montgomery who was best known for his trip to St. Thomas to import arms and ammunition for the Continental Congress, and where, in 1776, he raised the first American flag in a foreign port. Elizabeth Montgomery remained involved in colonization at least until 1836, when records go silent. Later in life she wrote a popular account of Wilmington entitled *Reminiscence of Wilmington in Familiar Village Tales*. The book primarily deals with the Revolutionary era and is full of anecdotal stories of patriotic women who acted in heroic and benevolent ways. In the book, she advocates colonization. She mentions Paul Cuffe, “a warm advocate for colonizing the people of color in their mother country,” because “it [was] the only way to advance their prosperity and permanent good.” Clearly, her support for colonization developed within the context

³⁰ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 1 (March 1826): 22-24; Staudenraus, 20-21; *Fifteenth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1833; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 67-71; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 1 (March 1826): 22-24; 6, no. 6 (August 1830): 178-181; 10, no. 5 (July 1834): 149; 10, no. 3 (May 1834): 89; 12, no. 6 (Jun 1836): 193; 13, no. 10 (October 1837): 306-307; 16, no. 4 (15 February 1840): 44.

of her acquaintance with Wilmington's free black population. She notes that slaves in Virginia were generally better treated than free black men and women in the north, "where much more labor was exacted, and in general...[they] were less cared for by the employer."³¹

Montgomery asserted the immorality of slavery at the same time she affirmed the inferiority of African Americans and the moral goodness of slaveowners. She wrote about a woman named Mrs. Bancroft who late in life had to move from Wilmington, Delaware, to a Virginia plantation with 400 slaves in order to live with her daughter and son-in-law. In the tale, Montgomery described Bancroft as "inimical to slavery," and "conscious of prejudice." Out of compassion for the slaves, Bancroft set "her unwearied attentions on this class of the human family," and labored "for their welfare and moral improvement...though not often successfully, she continued to persevere." Montgomery described the humanity of slave owners. The Bancroft plantation had many slaves too old and too young to labor. "Such swarms to be fed and clothed, consumed the annual crop," which often "incurred a heavy debt." Yet Bancroft's son-in-law refused to dispose of "family servants...while there was land to sustain them." Montgomery suggests an almost idyllic situation for the slaves on the plantation. In the summer, Bancroft would "walk into the cornfield on Monday morning, and meet the cheerful black faces with clean white cotton garments, mingling among the green stalks...and be pleasantly greeted by the slaves, calling to each other 'our lady has come.'"³²

³¹ Elizabeth Montgomery, *Reminiscences of Wilmington, In Familiar Village Tales, Ancient and New* (Philadelphia: T.K. Collins, 1851), 209.

³² *Ibid*, 365-66.

Another member of Wilmington's female colonization society was Mrs. Lydia Monro Gilbert, the wife of Rev. E.W. Gilbert, a Presbyterian minister, president of Delaware College and a manager of the male auxiliary in Wilmington. Gilbert gave large and frequent contributions to benevolent societies, and in 1830 opened a correspondence with some female colonists in Liberia.³³

In 1834 the society reorganized under a new name, the Female Colonization Society of Wilmington, Delaware. The diary of Phoebe George Bradford, the wife of politician Moses Bradford and colonization supporter, notes on the first meeting of the reorganized auxiliary: "The Society met at Judge Hall's. Miss Elizabeth Montgomery and myself submitted the Constitution which we had been appointed to prepare. It was read and adopted. After the adoption of the constitution the Society went into an election of officers." The society elected Mrs. Harriet Hall, the wife of Judge Willard Hall, as president of the Wilmington Union Colonization Society. The group also elected two vice-presidents, a treasurer, two secretaries; and seventeen managers. In 1836, the society gave "several hundreds of dollars in money and various useful articles" in response to an urgent call from the Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania, to whom it had become an auxiliary.³⁴

³³ *Tenth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1828; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 81-101; "Obituary of Lydia M. Gilbert," *Delaware State Journal* (24 February 1843); Elliott Cresson, Philadelphia, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, D.C., 10 October 1830, ACS Papers.

³⁴ *Phoebe George Diaries*, ed. Emerson W. Wilson (Wilmington, Del.: Historical Society of Delaware, 1975), 86; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 4 (April 1836): 125-127.

White Women and Colonization in Virginia in the 1820s

The strongest early support for colonization came from the upper South when many there were looking for ways to put an end to the “necessary evil.” Traveling colonization agents successfully recruited hundreds of men and women from Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. Agents spoke in Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Methodist churches, and, occasionally, in a Quaker meetinghouse. They collected money from men and women, churches, and auxiliaries. Everywhere they went they encountered encouraging signs that colonization would triumph. Mary Mendenhall, a Quaker from Guilford, North Carolina, believed many in North Carolina supported colonization. In a letter to Ralph Gurley she wrote, “The benevolent society of James Town think the cause of colonization and Emancipation is gaining ground in our Country. May your Society grow stronger and stronger and your colony flourish as the cedars of Lebanon so that conscientious men may not die hampered with their Slaves—This I believe is the Prayer of many in this section of the Country.” Perhaps her confidence was in part the result of the Friends Society of North Carolina raising \$300 to buy a colonial schooner to transport emigrants. Collections, primarily from the slave states, flowed in to headquarters, from a low of \$800 in 1822 to \$4,700 in 1824, \$10,000 in 1825, and \$15,000 in 1826 and 1827.³⁵

Enthusiasm for colonization among white women ran especially high in Virginia among the relatively prosperous in the 1820s. Many also were related to men in the ACS and as such were closely connected to the centers of local political and economic authority. Ralph Gurley attributed the popular support of African

³⁵ Mary Mendenhall, James Town, NC, to Ralph Gurley, Washington D.C., 17 March 1827, ACS Papers; Staudenraus, 104-116.

colonization itself to Virginia women. “From the sacred retirement of a few devoted ladies in Virginia,” he wrote, “emanated a zeal and charity in behalf of the afflicted Africans, which has widely spread—inspired ministers and statesmen with an almost divine eloquence in their cause, and given to it, its present hold upon the public mind.” Major Robert Grattan, in an address before the Auxiliary Colonization Society in Rockingham county, Virginia, commented on the level of female support for colonization in Virginia: “our mothers, our wives, and sisters, always foremost in every benevolent and charitable design, are with one heart, and one voice, enlisted in its service.” In truth, white Virginians were not of one mind regarding colonization. By the late 1820s the ACS was encountering considerable political opposition in Virginia from both men and women. Proslavery advocates thought colonization was an abolitionist front and states’ rights advocates saw colonization as part of an effort by nationalists like Henry Clay to extend the power of the federal government. Nevertheless, there was strong female support in Virginia. In 1824, Mary Garnett, wife of former Congressman James Garnett, started the “Ladies Liberian Society.” The group included primarily students at her girls school, family members, and neighbors. Each Saturday the women would meet and make “articles, both for ornament and use” that were then sold, with the entire proceeds going to the ACS. Margaret Mercer, Garnett’s cousin and teacher at the school for a time, noted the diligence of the Society. “Saturday is as labouriously spent in working for the Liberian Society, as any other day in the week.” In its first six months it forwarded to the ACS \$170. By 1830 there were auxiliaries in Richmond, Warrenton, Albemarle, Charlottesville, Rockbridge, Fredericksburg, and Louisa, Jefferson, Frederick,

Lynchburg, Powhatan counties. Women formed groups which did not explicitly identify themselves as “auxiliaries” in Charleston as well.³⁶

In contrast to northern abolitionists for whom slavery was usually a distant abstraction, many Virginia women colonizationists directly participated in the colonizing process by emancipating their own slaves. Miss Patsey Morris of Louisa county liberated sixteen slaves in her will. She also left \$500 dollars to help defray the expenses of their passage and provide them with necessities. An anonymous woman from Virginia contacted the ACS after she “had obtained a full and legal title” to twenty-five slaves. She then gave the slaves, valued at \$4,100, as a gift to the ACS to be transported to Liberia. Lucy Minor manumitted her slaves in 1826. Minor also encouraged her children to support the ACS. She asked Ralph Gurley to pray for her son Charles “that he may still more deeply feel the great importance of the work” of colonization. More than this she hoped God would call him out of the Army “and by the blessings of his grace, make him an ‘ambassador of Christ!’” Charles died two years later, but another son, Rev. Lancelot Minor, did become an ambassador of Christ as a missionary to Liberia. From an early age he was interested in “the poor degraded race.” His favorite book as a child was Mungo Park’s travel account of Africa, and he often gave his childhood savings to the colonization society and missionaries in Africa. His interest went unabated through college, and he continued to contribute to the ACS. Finally, in a letter to his mother in 1834, he wrote “after a

³⁶ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 14, no. 4 (April 1838): 125; Casper Morris, *Memoir of Margaret Mercer* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1848): 98; *Eighth Annual Report of the ACS*, 25; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 10 (December 1825): 320; *Fifteenth Annual Report of the ACS*, 58; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 3 (May 1829): 96-97; 6, no. 3 (May 1830): 87-90; 6, no. 4 (June 1830): 126-128; 7, no. 4 (June 1831): 128-130; 7, no. 12 (February 1832): 380-384.

calm and prayerful consideration of the subject it is my firm conviction that Africa is the field of labor allotted me by God.” The conclusion of Elizabeth Hening, a fellow missionary, was that his decision to become a missionary to Liberia was “greatly influenced by the consideration of that heavy debt due to the oppressed people from American Christians.” No doubt this was a message repeated by his mother throughout his childhood.³⁷

Lucy Minor’s only daughter, Mary Minor Blackford, manumitted her slaves with the support of a network of women who donated money and supplies for the emigrants. She was also the leader of one of the Virginia’s most active female societies. The Fredericksburg auxiliary raised funds to constitute the ministers of the Presbyterian, Episcopal, Methodist, and Baptist congregations in Fredericksburg life members of the ACS. Besides collecting money they distributed 3,000 tracts throughout the surrounding counties. By May 1830, the society had collected \$650 and boasted eighteen new female “life members,” including Dolly Madison, wife of the former president James Madison, and Catharine Lomax, manager of the Fredericksburg Female Orphan Asylum. Mary Blackburn’s sister-in-law, Judith Blackburn, freed her own slaves and then looked to manumit the slaves of others. She attempted twice to purchase a boy from a family whose mother she used to own but was refused. On three separate occasions, she encountered masters who “refused to sell, when finding emancipation was the object of the purchase.” In 1830, she

³⁷ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 7 (September 1826): 220; 4, no. 8 (October 1828): 251. These are two examples of numerous bequests. See for example *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 7 (September 1826): 221; 4, no. 9 (November 1828): 380; 6, no. 7 (September 1830): 214-215; 7, no. 7 (September 1831): 217; 8, no. 5 (July 1832): 155; 8, no. 9 (December 1832): 310-311; 9, no. 7 (September 1833): 126; 10, no. 9 (November 1834) 286; Lucy Minor, Edgewood, VA to Ralph Gurley, Washington D.C., 3 February 1831, ACS Papers; E.F. Hening, *History of the African Mission* (New York: Stafford and Swords, 1850), 131-32.

attempted to purchase a man “about fifty or fifty two, of uncommon integrity, and faithfulness, and industry,” and his wife and child so that they could emigrate to Liberia.³⁸

Perhaps the most publicized emancipation came in 1823. Susan and Lucy Meade, the sisters of William Meade, a strong evangelical and the Episcopal Bishop of Virginia, died within hours of each other. According to William, an ACS vice president, the sisters felt that colonization “was ... a cause which, above all other, had long interested the feelings of both sisters.” Indeed, both had been generous supporters of the ACS in life and in their death. While alive, they each gave hundreds of dollars, and in their wills left their fortunes to the ACS. The women, both slave owners, believed colonization to be part of the larger scheme of world redemption. As avid readers of missionary publications and committed evangelicals, they were deeply concerned with the “glorious triumph of the cross in all parts of the habitable globe.” Susan believed that slavery had been part of God’s providential plan for the redemption of the African race. Her will also freed her three female slaves, Lucy and her two daughters Lucy and Alice, and requested that the executors see to their “comfortable maintenance,” instruct them “in reading the word of God,” and “do the best for them that the laws of our Country will allow.” There was no stipulation that the women be sent to Liberia, although she hoped it might occur if a way could be

³⁸ Judith Blackburn, n.p. to Ralph Gurley, Washington, D.C., 20 April 1830; Judith Blackburn, Mount Vernon to Ralph Gurley, Washington, D.C., 29 March 1831, ACS Papers; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no. 3 (May 1830): 87-90.

found to liberate the husband of the elder Lucy. Together Susan and Lucy Meade contributed nearly \$6,000 to the cause.³⁹

In 1822 Elizabeth Lee Jones of Fairfax, Virginia, drafted a will that left the President and the Board of Managers of the ACS all the “slaves now belonging to me” as well as their future increase, for the purpose of “colonization and complete emancipation.” If, upon her death, the slaves were not adequately prepared to leave for the colony, the society would commence such “preparatory education and discipline” until the slaves were deemed worthy to emigrate. She also requested that one of her young slaves, named Davy, be educated by the society in order to become “a missionary to Africa” or “a minister of the gospel” in Liberia. Jones and the Meade sisters are the earliest examples among many such bequests. These women believed they were furthering the cause of emancipation and advancing missions to Africa.⁴⁰

It would be a mistake, however, to view the actions of these women as wholly altruistic. As Eric Burin has shown, colonizationists’ manumission schemes often were designed to “put one’s finances in order, one’s slaves in their place, and one’s conscience at ease.”⁴¹ Even in death, Elizabeth Lee Jones dictated the terms of her slaves’ freedom. Perhaps these women believed their testamentary manumission would enhance their postmortem reputations. Certainly, they hoped their actions would garner God’s favor. When Susan Meade wrote in her will, “we who have lived

³⁹ Will of Susan Meade, 1820, in Ann Page, Annefield, VA, to Mary Custis, Arlington, VA, 24 August 1830, Mary Fizhugh Custis Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter VHS); “Obituary of Misses Susan and Lucy F. Meade,” *Washington Theological Repertory* 5 (November 1823): 150-151. There is some discrepancy as to the total amount the sisters gave. Contribution records indicate \$5,600, but a speech by Robert Finley claims they gave \$12,000. I found no evidence for this later amount. He may be including the value of the manumitted slaves.

⁴⁰ *Eighth Annual Report of the ACS*, 51-53.

⁴¹ Burin, 40.

by the sweat of their brow, should thank God for the honour and privilege...of having a mite to throw in to help them to their native home with the word of God in their hands;" she no doubt hoped that her "mite" would persuade God to "have mercy upon my soul."⁴²

The majority of Virginia's female supporters were Episcopalians. In fact, the Episcopal Church was one of the ACS's strongest supporters. Certainly, the generally conservative and elite nature of the Episcopal Church contributed to the denominations cooperation. Also important, is the impact of evangelicalism within the denomination. The Episcopal Church had not remained immune to evangelicalism and its emphasis on individual conversion and experience. By the 1830s, evangelical Episcopalians, or low churchman, were the church's most swiftly growing population. In Virginia, evangelical bishops had dominated the state since the turn of the century. Many of Virginia's female colonization supporters were influenced by these leaders and the tenets of evangelical Christianity.⁴³

While the Second Great Awakening gave an ethical urgency to the issue of slavery, many, perhaps, most evangelicals did not favor immediate abolition but gradual emancipation.⁴⁴ Moreover, in the South, most evangelicals translated their

⁴² Will of Susan Meade, 1820, VHS.

⁴³ Diana Hochstedt Butler, *Standing Against the Whirlwind: Evangelical Episcopalians in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: University Press, 1995); Ahlstrom, 624-25, 628-631, 670-671.

⁴⁴ Church leaders from the major denominations espoused the missionary possibilities and amelioratory effects of colonization. Leaders also hoped colonization would provide a way for denominations to maintain interregional integrity. For example, in 1827 alone, resolutions and recommendations were made in the Massachusetts Convention, The Convention of the Congregational Clergy of Connecticut, the Ohio Methodist Conference, The Baptist General Convention of the State of Ohio, The Lutheran Synod of Ohio, The New York Methodist Conference, The Connecticut General Association, The Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania, and the Synod of the German Reformed Church. Werner Theodor Wickstrom, "American Colonization Society and Liberia: An Historical Study in Religious Motivation and Achievement, 1818-1867" (Ph.D. diss., Hartford Seminary, 1958). Although the slavery issue split nearly all the major denominations along regional lines, the Episcopal Church remained undivided before the Civil War and was never seriously threatened by schism. The Baptist,

religious zeal into a worldview that celebrated a hierarchical social order based on mutual responsibilities. Society was bound together by reciprocal obligations, including those between slaveowners and slaves. For proslavery advocates, benevolent and conscientious slaveowners provided for the physical and spiritual health of the slave, and the slave returned the favor with hard work and gratitude. For Virginia's colonization women, these principles encouraged them to seek an end to slavery. They believed true reciprocity could not exist within a slave system because the nature of slavery was flawed. For example, no matter how kind the owner, slaves were at the mercy of economic fluctuations that forced slaveowners to sell their slaves.⁴⁵

Ann Meade Page had long lamented the negative spiritual consequences of slavery and had decided to prepare her slaves for colonization despite the objections of her husband, Matthew Page. It was not the cruelties of slave life—the work load, the lack of basic civil rights, the racial prejudice—that bothered her as much as the “ignorance and sin” of the slave. It “is a most pressing care” she wrote to her sister-in-law, Mary Custis, that her slaves “be delivered from the indescribable state of subjection to deceit and lies, roguery and idleness and filth and all manner of sin.” Using language reminiscent of a minister and his congregation, Page believed God had put her “in charge over the interest of the souls on [the] estate” and would be personally accountable “at the judgement seat” for her treatment of her slaves.⁴⁶

Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations divided over the slavery issue. Congregational, Lutheran and Catholic remained undivided.

⁴⁵ Anne Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1980); Eugene Genovese, “The Divine Saction of Social Order: Religious Foundations of the Southern Slaveholders’ World View,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 211-234.

⁴⁶ Ann Meade Page, Annefield, VA, to Mary Custis, Arlington, VA, nod., Mary Custis Papers, VHS.

Like her sisters, Susan and Lucy Meade, Page supported colonization from its inception. Page, a staunch Episcopalian, also believed religious duty and benevolence to slaves were inseparable. She viewed it as “the work of God,” and as such set out to convince others. Her biographer, Charles Andrews, believed that she “more than any other person in Virginia” promoted interest in colonization. He remembers traveling through Virginia in 1836 and hearing “the remark from many persons, that they had never felt any particular interest in the condition of slaves, or had their conscience awakened respecting them, until they heard of the efforts of Mrs. Page.” Ralph Gurley likewise credited Page with building popular support for colonization in Virginia. Page contributed to the ACS, by “funds given and procured in conversation, by correspondence with a large circle of her friends, and the circulation of the interesting information upon the subject.”⁴⁷

When Matthew died in 1826, leaving her heir to a heavily encumbered estate, she sold more than one hundred of her slaves. Although advised by friends to sell the remainder and be relieved of the burdens of slaveholding and indebtedness, Page retained as many as possible. She mortgaged her remaining slaves to creditors in the hope of eventually sending them to Liberia. “My friends would advise me to relieve myself from this bondage in which I outwardly live, and which, in their kindness for me, they have thought would ere now have ended my days,” she wrote, “but by faith...let me not be put off by these things, from my settled purpose of doing them [her slaves] good.” Despite a sincere belief that she was seeking the good of her slaves, her ability to choose which slaves to sell and which to retain reveals the level of

⁴⁷ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 14, no. 4 (April 1838): 126; *Colonization Herald* 11 (August 1844); Andrews, 45-49. Ann Page, Millwood, VA, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, D.C., 24 March 1831, ACS Papers.

control she possessed. After several years Page succeeded in sending thirty-three of her slaves to Liberia with twelve months provisions at three different times beginning in 1832.⁴⁸

Page considered colonization a providential plan of God. For Page, slavery was part of “the wonderful economy of providence” that turned the “darkest deeds of man to good.” It was because of slavery that “the fathers came with chains of iron upon their arms, and the stronger chains of darkness and idolatry upon their hearts.” Because of colonization “the children are returning with Bibles in their hands and their souls made free by the truth.” Indeed, Page focused on the evangelical possibilities of colonization. She wrote to Custis, “O to see Western Africa seasoned with divine salt, from American christians! O to send our best trained servants to help to lay the foundation. This, this, is what my soul longs for.” Moreover, she considered her role in colonization a divinely prescribed task. “Some persons are evidently pointed to a particular course of duty in the Lord’s vineyard,” she explained, and “I am called to train servants for him.” She compared herself to Israel’s King David who “prepared materials for Solomon his son to build a house to thy name.” So, she prayed, “let thine handmaid, O lord, prepare this family to become a house to thy name.”

From Page’s perspective, the most qualified emigrants were the pious. Page often performed religious tasks reserved for men. When she could not procure a minister or another man for the morning prayer and bible study with her slaves, she “did not hesitate to expound the scriptures and offer prayer” before an audience of

⁴⁸ Charles Andrews, *Memoir of Mrs. Ann R. Page* (Philadelphia: Herman Hooker, 1844): 26-27; 45-49; *Colonization Herald* 11 (August 1844).

adult men and women. She would “read over a number of times (before prayer) a few solemn and instructive passages of scripture, and follow them with a few striking remarks.” An expressly forbidden act among adult whites, Page found no incongruity in praying and preaching to adult black men. This was because, as black men, Page viewed them not as adults but children. “Do thou put into the souls of my children thy fear,” she prayed, “that they may go and possess the good land, and leave it for an inheritance to their children after them throughout all generations.”

Conclusion

Evidently many Virginia women shared Page’s notion of benevolent duty. They endorsed colonization as both benevolent and missionary. They unambiguously connected the work of women in colonization to the building of an African republic and extending the Christian empire. By 1830, Virginia women had formed scores of auxiliaries, manumitted hundreds of slaves, donated thousands of dollars to the ACS, and in 1832 sent two separate petitions to the Virginia legislature. Like many other reform-minded females of their day, they insisted that they were simply fulfilling their mandate to protect domestic harmony and exercise benevolent femininity, but they were, in fact, engaged in the public politics of slavery and race. These women were not radical anti-slavery advocates. They were conservative liberators who even in manumission maintained their power and privilege. Even so it would be wrong to dismiss their efforts as inconsequential. Their support of colonization was full of social, political and personal implications.

By the mid-1830s, however, female colonizationists faced new challenges. On the one hand, the rise of abolitionism and its critique of colonization turned many of Virginia's women against the colonization movement. Increasingly, southerners viewed abolitionist rhetoric as fueling slave rebellion and disunity in the Union. The scandal of vocal female abolitionists further discouraged white women from public debate on slavery. At the same time, women in Virginia faced a public increasingly callous to the conditions of slaves in the aftermath of Nat Turner's insurrection and fears that abolitionists would incite more. In short, colonization became more and more difficult to promote in Virginia as sectional rhetoric and suspicion increased.

Chapter Two **“Africa Stretches Forth Her Hands Unto You”**

Early in the 1850s, the Pennsylvania Colonization Society solicited portraits of prominent colonizationists for a gallery in their Philadelphia office. Some of the most well-known artists in the country, such as Jacob Eicholtz, Thomas Sulley, and John Neagle, contributed to the collection that would eventually hold nearly 50 paintings of “the founders, pioneers and promoters” of colonization. The gallery included the portraits of former American and Liberian presidents, former U.S. chief justices and senators, prominent ACS leaders, and pioneering colonists. All of those chosen for inclusion in the exhibition were esteemed for “their zealous labors and sacrifices for the elevation of the people of color...[and] eminent in the foundation and growth of African Colonization and of Liberia.” Among the portraits are those of two women: Lydia H. Sigourney of Hartford, Connecticut, and Margaret Mercer of Maryland. Given the nature of the gallery—that it showcased influential public leaders associated with a highly political movement—it is not surprising there was a scarcity of females. But what made these two women stand out to ACS leaders?¹

From the late 1820s through the 1830s, few women played a more active and influential role in the colonization movement than Sigourney and Mercer. Each gave monetary support, and formed and led auxiliary groups. Mercer directly participated in the colonizing process by emancipating her own slaves and preparing them for emigration. Sigourney employed her pen, writing scores of poems and articles on the advantages of colonization. For both women the benevolent and religious objectives of the cause were extremely important. They believed colonization would benefit not only black and white

¹ *The African Repository* 42, no. 1 (January 1866): 26.

Americans but native Africans as well. Each called for gradual emancipation at the same time they rejected abolition as dangerous and wrongheaded. The women were convinced that black Americans' true home was in Africa, and thought African Americans would always remain strangers in America.

In a time of growing controversy over slavery and debate over women's activity in the anti-slavery movement, Sigourney and Mercer articulated, in word and deed, a proper role of women in the slavery debate. In fact, the ACS, eager to promote its goals as the sensible alternative to abolition, increasingly looked to women's participation as evidence of its benevolence. One revealing article in the *Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom* refuted the southern charge that colonization was a "subtler plan" for abolition by publishing letters from Sigourney and Mercer that showed the true character of the ACS. "We cannot deny ourselves the pleasure," wrote the editor, "of giving one or two extracts from documents of a more private nature which have been communicated to us." The private nature of the documents coupled with the words of "a more pious gender," it was argued, demonstrated the authenticity of the opinions expressed and endorsed the good intentions of colonization.²

An examination of Sigourney's and Mercer's complex, and at times contradictory, views on colonization, slavery, and race will provide insight into the thinking of other northern and southern female colonizationists who shared a desire both to assist African Americans and to remove them from American society. Sigourney and Mercer, like most female colonization supporters, affirmed the humanity of African Americans and assigned to them the building of a Christian republic in Liberia. Both believed that human bondage was a flawed institution and considered colonization the only remedy. In different ways, they

² *The Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom* (February 1834): 295-96.

challenged societal expectations and challenged traditional notions of race and the meaning of freedom.

Lydia Huntley Sigourney

Lydia Sigourney was born Lydia Huntley in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1791, the only child of Ezekiah Huntley, a gardener and former soldier in the Revolutionary War, and Zerviah Wentworth. Her childhood was spent on the estate of her father's employer Jerusha Lathrop, a widow who encouraged her intellectual pursuits. After Lathrop's death in 1806, Lathrop's nephew, Daniel Wadsworth of Hartford, continued to support Sigourney's intellectual pursuits. In 1814 she moved to Hartford and opened a school for upper-class girls in Wadsworth's home. She also taught a free school held twice a week for poor children, one class of which was all African Americans. A year later Sigourney published her first book, *Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse*, financed by Wadsworth. In 1819, Huntley married Charles Sigourney, a prosperous widower with three children, who disapproved of her literary efforts. Nevertheless, she continued to write anonymously. By the mid-1820s Charles Sigourney was suffering serious financial losses, and from then on Sigourney's literary work provided the family's income.³

During her lifetime and throughout the nineteenth century, Sigourney served as a role model and inspiration for many women writers throughout the century. At her death in 1865 she was the best-known woman poet in the United States.⁴

³ Gordon Haight, *Mrs. Sigourney, The Sweet Singer of Hartford* (New Haven: Yale University, 1930) is the only one full-length biography on Sigourney.

⁴ Her reputation has suffered calumny in the twentieth century. "The mere mention of Sigourney's name suffices to invoke a caricature," writes Nina Baym, that "exemplifies the worst aspects of domestic sentimentalism." In "Reinventing Lydia Sigourney," *American Literature* 62, no. 3 (September 1990): 387.

However, Sigourney wrote a great deal more than poetry. In fact, about two-thirds of her published books are prose. She wrote American and religious history, biography, fiction, and educational and instructional manuals. In her writing she discussed politically controversial topics such as temperance, war and peace, Native Americans, and slavery.

In many ways, Sigourney was the typical conservative female reformer of the period. Despite her humble beginnings, she affirmed the traditional class structure and the cultural assumptions of the middle class. She was an evangelical Episcopalian who emphasized experiential religion and the inexorable demand to spread the Christian message to others in order to reshape society.⁵ In the 1820s and 1830s Sigourney was the leader of Hartford's benevolent activity. Besides colonization, she supported temperance, prison reform, female orphanages, and the institutionalized care for insane. She supported African-American schools and was an early benefactor of Thomas Gallaudet's Hartford institution for the deaf.⁶

By the nineteenth-century a complex web of forces had redefined the image of the antebellum woman. Piety and moral virtue had come to be associated as female qualities. Women had long dominated Protestant church congregations but now a distinctly feminine sensibility came to characterize the language and theology of Protestant faith. Nineteenth century religion had become "feminized." The

⁵ Raised in the Congregational Church, she joined the Episcopal Church when she married Charles Sigourney, a leading figure of Christ Church in Hartford. She welcomed the denominational change. In her autobiography published posthumously, she wrote: "It was not long ere I accounted this change a privilege, so impressive was the solemnity of its Liturgy, the hallowed beauty of its Ordinances, and its systematic commemoration of events in the Life and Death of our Divine Redeemer." Lydia Sigourney *Letters of Life* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1866), 283.

⁶ Haight, 26-33, 102, 169. Katherine Kish Sklar argues that Beecher's attention went mostly to her school, while Sigourney led Hartford's benevolent activity, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 98-99.

assumption of women's higher standard of virtue infused antebellum Protestant descriptions of their society. While men occupied the public sphere of work and politics, women's place became the world of the home and family.⁷ Sigourney endorsed this rhetoric. "The unerring Creator has assigned different spheres of action to the sexes," Sigourney wrote, "He hath constituted one as the priestess of the 'inner temple,' committing to her charge its veiled shrine and sacred harmonies." To violate providence's "natural" order would not only hinder a woman's happiness and wreck families, it would threaten the success of the nation and hamper God's millennial plan to bring liberty and Christianity to the world. Nineteenth-century men and women viewed separate spheres as a God-ordained hierarchy. "The sexes are intended for different spheres, and constructed in conformity to their respective destinations," Sigourney wrote, "but...*disparity* does not *necessarily* imply *inferiority*." In other words, the roles of men and women may be different in society, but those roles were of equal value.⁸

The seat of female authority was in the home specifically in their role of mother. "The love of children, in man is a virtue," asserted Sigourney, "in woman, an element of nature." Mothers were, in fact, "next to the Creator" in rank because of the tremendous influence they had over the moral, spiritual, and intellectual teaching of children. But rather than confining women's influence to the home, the conflation

⁷ The literature on women, reform, and separate spheres is vast. Some of the more important works include Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Christine Stansell, *City of Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: the Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁸ Lydia Sigourney, "The Two Sexes" *Lady's Book* (November 1830): 276; "Woman's Sphere," *Monthly Literary Miscellany* 7 (November 1853): 503; *Letters to Mothers* (Hartford: Hudson & Skinner, 1838), 10-18.

of femininity and morality actually encouraged female involvement outside the home. Men and women in antebellum America believed women naturally embodied traditional Christian virtues like piety and submission and that it was their duty to spread these virtues through their moral and maternal influence. Women, it was argued, had a special moral obligation to transform America and the world.⁹

While Sigourney embraced women's benevolent activity, she, like Catharine Beecher and other conservatives, also politicized the traditional female sphere of the home and assigned to it national and international influence. Sigourney viewed writing as an acceptable forum for addressing national issues, effectively nullifying the distinction for women between the public and private. Much of her work was, in Nina Baym's phrase, "activist and interventionist."¹⁰ In the context of the increasing political and social turmoil of the 1830s, Sigourney used her writings to assert that the United States stood at a crossroads and that mothers were desperately needed to be a "barrier to the torrent of corruption, and a guard over the strong holds of knowledge and of virtue." Sigourney reiterated Catharine Beecher's contention that the democratic process alone was not sufficient to maintain the health of the United States. "It has been discovered that there are signs of disease in the body politick, which can be best allayed, by the subordination taught in families, and through her

⁹ Lydia Sigourney, *Letters to Mothers*, 10, 17, 48. On Catharine Beecher see Sklar's definitive biography, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*. On Emma Willard see Alma Lutz, *Emma Willard, Pioneer Educator* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

¹⁰ Baym shows how Sigourney's writing on Native Americans had a public intention and was in fact "political—in a fairly conventional sense of the term—in implication" in "Reinventing Lydia Sigourney," 389, 391. Paula Bernat Bennett argues that nineteenth-century women used writing, particularly poetry, to achieve political ends and "demand, model, imagine, produce, and defend reform." Paula Bernat Bennett, *Poets in the Public Sphere: The Emancipatory Project of American Women's Poetry, 1800-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 10.

agency to whom is committed the moulding of the whole mass of mind in its first formation.”¹¹

The first international cause that captured her attention was the Greek Revolution of 1821. For Sigourney, Greece was one act in God’s great drama to crush “pagan” faiths such as Islam and bring Christianity and republicanism to the globe. Like the colonization of Africa, Sigourney envisioned the events in Greece as part of God’s divine plan to bring America’s faith and form of government to the world. The Greeks’ attempt to overthrow the Ottoman rule of four centuries immediately claimed the sympathy of many Americans. With the American Revolution fresh in mind, a reverence for all things Greek, and a disdain for anything Muslim, Americans commended the Greeks’ aspirations for freedom. The horrible devastation and atrocities that followed the first military operations, as well as the appeal from Greek leaders, inspired substantial aid by Americans to the Greek cause. Pulpits throughout the country rang with sermons and orations in tribute of the Greeks and appealed for supplies. Universities and colleges held enthusiastic meetings and raised funds. In cities like Boston and New York committees of “distinguished gentlemen” formed and solicited contributions. Special benefit performances were given at theatres; prominent men debated issues and charged admission fees to aid Greek committees; merchants donated a percentage of their profits; auctions offered goods at inflated prices; and children donated their pennies. Leaders of the movement also called on “the matrons of America...to use their influence in exciting a general and powerful emotion, in behalf of the sufferers in a war like this.”

¹¹ *Letters To Mothers*, 12-14.

American efforts were intensified from January 1827 to March 1828, when nearly one hundred thousand dollars in relief was sent. In addition to distributing relief in Greece, the committees brought a number of Greek orphans to America for adoption by American families. One such orphan was Demetrius Stamatiades, a native of Samos, who worked in Charles Sigourney's hardware store and lived for several years in the Sigourney house as he attended a small college in Hartford. Stamatiades and Lydia Sigourney developed a close friendship. After his return to Greece they maintained a correspondence in which he would write long letters beginning "My dear American mother."¹²

Women eagerly joined the cause, forming groups in New York, Boston, Baltimore, Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and Hartford. Their purpose was to assist "the famishing women and children of Greece." To this end, they held fairs at which "the fancy articles, the works of their own hands, are exposed for sale, the avails to be applied to the Greek fund;" they also made clothing, bought and shipped food, and established and subsidized girls schools.¹³ As secretary the "Greek Committee of Ladies," in Hartford, formed in 1828, Sigourney canvassed the town for subscriptions. Contributions poured in and in just three weeks the group collected nearly \$1,200 in money and materials for clothing. The women then made nearly 2,000 garments and bought 100 barrels of kiln-dried meal. When everything was ready to be sent, Sigourney wrote her *Letter to the Ladies of Greece from the Ladies*

¹² For more on America's involvement in the Greek Revolution see Edward Meade Earle, "American Interest in the Greek Cause, 1821-1827," *The American Historical Review* 33 (October 1927): 44-63; Theodore Saloutos, "American Missionaries in Greece: 1820-1869," *Church History* 24 (June 1955): 152-174; Haight, 32.

¹³ "Greek Fair at Baltimore," *Saturday Evening Post* 6 (28 April 1827): 2; "The Ladies of Pawtucket, to the Ladies of Greece," *The New-York Mirror* 5 (10 May 1828): 347; *Episcopal Watchman* 2 (8 November 1828): 272; 2 (24 January 1829): 359; 3 (28 March 1829): 45

of *Hartford*, which was reprinted in various newspapers. In it she expressed the hope that Greece would reclaim its freedom from “the horrors of Turkish domination,” and win “the struggle...for liberty.” That “His Cross, and the banner of your land may rise together over the Crescent and the minaret,” so that their sons “may hail the freedom of Ancient Greece restored.”¹⁴

Sigourney’s plea for the Native American likewise originated in her missionary perspective and confidence in the superiority of American culture. Even as she affirmed the inferiority of their society and the need for Christian conversion, she insisted that Christians must see all people of “one blood,” however “other” they may be. It was humanity’s shared spirituality, as God’s creation, that made missionary efforts imperative. The poem “Difference of Color” provides a commentary on her views:

God gave to Afric’s sons,
 A brow of sable dye, —
And spread the country of their birth
 Beneath a burning sky, —
And that a cheek of olive, made
 The little Hindoo child,
And darkly stained the forest tribes
 That roam our western wild.

To me, he gave a form
 Of rather whiter clay, —
But am I therefore, in his sight,
 Respected more than they?
No! — ‘T is the hue of deeds and thoughts
 He traces in his Book—
‘T is the *complexion of the heart*,
 On which he deigns to look

¹⁴ *The Connecticut Courant* (1 April 1828), (22 September 1829); Lydia Sigourney, “The Ladies of Hartford, Connecticut, to the Ladies of Greece,” *The Ladies Garland* 4 (April 1828): 170-71. The letter was printed in at least three other newspapers: *The New-York Mirror* 5 (12 April 1828): 318; *The Connecticut Courant*, (8 April 1828); and the *Episcopal Watchman* 2 (5 April 1828): 23.

Not by the tinted cheek,
 That fades away so fast,
But by the *color of the soul*,
 We shall be judged at last.
The righteous Judge, will look at me
 With sorrow in His eyes,
If I, my brother's darker brow
 Should ever dare despise.¹⁵

The subject of Native Americans was a dominant theme in her literary work.

Sigourney condemned white American behavior toward Native Americans. She identified the treatment of Indians as a national crime, and urged Americans to stop destroying the Native Americans by murder and relocation. Toward the end of her life she would write, “our injustice and hard-hearted policy with regard to the original owners of the soil...[was] one of our greatest national sins.”¹⁶

In 1829 Sigourney helped Catharine Beecher write the “Ladies’ Circular,” a widely distributed appeal to women to join the political struggle against removal by sending petitions to Congress. In so doing, she was a leader in the first national women’s petition campaign that opposed Andrew Jackson’s request to Congress for federal monies to remove Southeast Indians beyond the Mississippi River. But the call for women to sign petitions met with resistance. Sigourney recalled in 1849:

¹⁵ *Parley’s Magazine* 2 (Jan 1834): 132. Also printed in *The Liberator* 4 (February 1834): 30; *The Friend* 9 (June 1836): 280.

¹⁶ *Letters*, 327. Her writings include, “Traits of the Aborigines of America,” Sigourney’s first work about the Native American. In 1824 she published *Sketch of Connecticut, Forty Years Since*, in which nine of the eighteen chapters are about the Mohegan remnant living on reservations near Norwich, Connecticut. She wrote a collection of poetry entitled *Zinzendorff* after Count Zinzendorff, the founder of the Christian Moravian sect who settled Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and centers on Zinzendorff’s mission to the Indians of the Wyoming Valley. She also wrote “Pocahontas,” a 504-line poem that recounts the life of Pocahontas as a memorial to the princess’ life. In 1854, she wrote another long poem, “The Western Home,” about a pioneer family that settles in Ohio and features a stalwart Indian woman whose medical expertise saves the life of one of the settler’s children. For more on Sigourney and Native Americans see Baym’s “Reinventing Lydia Sigourney.”

The plan of the Ladies' Society, who had made me their Secretary, was to obtain the signatures of their sex, as generally as possible in New England, and to present a petition to Congress, in behalf of our Aborigines. This was eventually overruled, as too bold, and too political.¹⁷

Sigourney did not, however, give up the conviction that women possessed a political voice. For Sigourney it was a matter of proper expression, or how women articulated their voice. Two years after the "Ladies Circular" was published, Sigourney once again appealed to American women. Using a nearly identical title as the 1829 appeal, Sigourney asked, "Shall this nation commit robbery...shall murder be perpetrated...shall perjury be practiced...by senators, statesmen, counsellors, and chief magistrates of our nation?" Confronted by such a crisis Christian women must act, but not as they did in 1829 by petitioning Congress. Instead, women should act through private entreaty. "Every woman in the land who has knowledge enough to read her Bible, is a full and competent enough judge, and has a right to declare her opinion in every mode which does not so violate the laws of propriety." Sigourney argued, in the case of Native Americans, that females could, "industriously circulate correct information." Then let the "father, brother or friend...speak to the rulers."¹⁸

Sigourney was not unique in advocating a seemingly contradictory position that sought to incorporate Native Americans into American society and remove African Americans.¹⁹ Many of those who opposed the Jacksonian measure did so for

¹⁷ Haight, 27; Lydia Sigourney, Hartford, to Hannah Porter, Boston, 14 May 1849, Lydia Huntley Sigourney Papers, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut (hereafter CHS).

¹⁸ "To the Benevolent Ladies of the United States," *Connecticut Courant* (31 January 1831).

¹⁹ Mary Hershberger argues that opposing removal was central to some reformers rejection of African colonization in favor of immediatism. Certainly opposition to Indian removal effected some reformers ethical and moral development, but one still needs to explain why there remained many individuals who were deeply committed to African colonization and not Native American colonization. That some colonization supporters of the 1820s shifted their allegiance from colonization to abolition had less to do with the Indian removal and more to do with other factors such as the strong African American

political reasons. To conservatives and social elites, Jackson represented the demise of American society. The era of the common man, as it came to be known, threatened to destroy the old social order and ruin America. Opposition to Indian removal, then, was opposition to the Democratic Party. Moreover, Indian removal simultaneously dispossessed Native Americans and increased demand for slave labor in the seized territory. For those who abhorred the notion of the expansion of slavery, Indian removal and its consequence—millions of additional acres for an intensified slave labor system—symbolized the triumph of aggressive commercial injustice and represented a great political loss.²⁰

Yet it would be far too simplistic to attribute the opposition to Indian removal only to politics. For most reformers, there were social and religious motivations as well. First, unlike the African American population, the Indian population did not threaten white hegemony. The Native American population was numerically negligible, dependent, and powerless. “Can any danger arise from allowing this small remnant of a singular and peculiar race to exist in the midst of us...Can the millions

critique of colonization that helped contribute to a paradigm shift in abolitionism, the growing moral ambiguity and indifference to race prejudice and slavery of the ACS in the 1830s, and the decisive efforts of William Lloyd Garrison. Mary Hershberger, “Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle Against Indian Removal in the 1830s,” *The Journal of American History* 86 (June 1999): 15-40. On the political, religious and social factors that led to immediate abolitionism see among others, Ronald G. Walters, *The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism After 1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Aileen Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York: Random House, 1867); Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, eds., *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women’s Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Robert Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Richard Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Staudenraus, 188-206.

²⁰ On the politics of Indian removal see Ronald N. Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976); Michael D. Green, *The Politics of Indian Removal* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); Robert V. Remini, *The Legacy of Andrew Jackson: Essays on Democracy, Indian Removal, and Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Long, Bitter Trail: Andrew Jackson and the Indians* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

of our nation fear any evil from their numbers or their power?" asked Sigourney in the "Ladies' Circular." In contrast, conservative reformers like Sigourney feared the growing slave population in the South and the freed black community in the North. A major rationale promulgated by ACS supporters was the fear of the growing African American population in the North and South. "The danger is not so much that we have a million and a half of slaves," lamented the seventh annual report, "as that we have within our borders nearly two millions of men who are necessarily any thing than loyal citizens—nearly two millions of ignorant and miserable beings who are banded together by the very same circumstances by which they are so widely separated in character and in interest from all the citizens of our great republic." So while conservative reformers were committed to ending slavery, they feared the prospect of millions of blacks claiming the full privileges of citizenship. With regard to the Native Americans there was no such concern.²¹

Another reason reformers opposed removal is that most antebellum Americans believed in a form of scientific racism that assigned "races" to a particular land.²² For American slaves, Africa was the "fatherland," and for Native Americans, America. The ramification of this thinking was that black Americans did not belong in America, while Native Americans had a legitimate claim to the land. Colonization, it was thought, rectified the terrible wrong perpetrated on Africa and America. It gave Africa back its people while simultaneously ridding America of its "strangers." Colonization, argued members of the Powhatan colonization auxiliary, "takes him from the land in which he is an alien and an outcast, and restores him to the country

²¹ *Seventh Annual Report of the ACS*, 92.

from which his fathers were originally torn...it opens before his vision a bright prospect of usefulness and happiness, and freedom. In a word it translates him from 'darkness into light.'" Conversely, the great sin of Indian removal was that it continued to violate the "rights of the Aborigines to their country." In the minds of supporters, both efforts were attempts to rectify past and present transgressions.²³

Finally, reformers believed their actions were in agreement with Christian principles. If the Native American moved west, the massive missionary enterprise would be irreversibly disrupted. Relocating Native Americans away from a Christian republic would obstruct the evangelical mission to convert the Native American and hamper evangelical efforts to conquer the world. Indeed, Catharine Beecher claimed she resolved to write the petition to Congress after she talked with a missionary who feared the harmful effect removal would deliver on the progress of Christianity among the Indians.²⁴ Sigourney, likewise, saw the efforts among the Native Americans as part of God's great redemptive drama. Across the globe, Sigourney urged Americans to plant, "Undaunted Freedom's stainless streamer, / And bear to those who grope in the night, /Glad tidings of a blest Redeemer."²⁵ Conversely, the colonization of freed African Americans in Africa appeared to accelerate the creation of a worldwide Christian kingdom. With the aid of white missionaries, African Americans would carry evangelical religious ideas back to Africa and revolutionize the African continent by establishing "a candle on a hill."²⁶

²³ *Twelfth Annual Report of the ACS*, 54; "Domestic Summary," *Boston Recorder* (January 1830): 1.

²⁴ Catharine Beecher, *Educational Reminiscences and Suggestions* (New York: J.B. Ford, 1874), 62.

²⁵ "On the Union of Ladies of Great Britain," *Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom* (November 1833): 203.

²⁶ Elliot Cresson, n.p., to Rev. Ralph Gurley, Philadelphia, November 18, 1830, ACS Papers. This seems to be a paraphrase of Jesus and Jonathan Winthrop. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives

Just as religious conviction and the principle that females must be involved in national concerns informed Sigourney's advocacy for the Greeks and Native Americans, so these ideals formed the basis of her support of African colonization. Sigourney opposed slavery on religious and political grounds. Slavery, she argued, was incompatible with "the free and just spirit of the Gospel, and [of] a nation so conspicuously professing freedom, and promising equal rights to all." Sigourney repeatedly condemned slavery in her writings. Her works warn of God's judgment, the sin of slavery, the horrors of the slave trade, the hypocrisy of the north, and the spiritual equality of all humanity.

Her writings on slavery read like abolition rhetoric. In fact, many of her poems on the evils of slavery were reprinted in abolitionist newspapers and in at least four anthologies: from Maria Weston Chapman's *Songs of the Free* in 1836 to George W. Clark's *Harp of Freedom* in 1856. Jairus Lincoln's *Anti-Slavery Melodies: For the Friends of Freedom*, written in 1843, included several of Sigourney's poems set to music. But Sigourney was no abolitionist; she believed the "indiscriminate zeal" of abolitionists dangerous. Slavery could "not to be suddenly or slightly exterminated like a rootless weed," she argued, "the very magnitude of the evil demands judgment in the choice of the remedy." And that remedy was colonization, the only safe and Christian way to end slavery. Sigourney always stressed the importance of a peaceful and lawful resolution to slavery at the same time she emphasized the missionary implications of colonization.²⁷

light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." -- Jesus, from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:14-16. "For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses . . ." --John Winthrop, aboard the Arbella, 1630.

²⁷ *The Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom* (February 1834): 295.

Like her friend and colleague Catharine Beecher, who also became involved in colonization, Sigourney wanted women to “save” the nation. Sigourney also wanted American women to “save” the world. Colonization would help women fulfill this dual mission. Female colonizationists would help stem the tide of American decay and turn away divine judgment, and, at the same time, help create a Christian world by converting Africa to Christianity. In a widely reprinted Fourth of July address, Sigourney outlined the primary duty of women in the colonization cause. There were, she declared, three reasons female should support colonization. First, the character of women should incline them to support a cause that would heal the distress and sorrow produced by slavery; second, women should permeate the nation with their appeal for colonization through their influence as teachers and mothers; and third, as participants in God’s redemptive plan, women had a patriotic duty to their nation and God to aid colonization.

Females of the United States! Your country hath the honor of devising this magnificent scheme of benevolence. Out of it springs a duty for you to perform as blessed as it is imperative. It is not enough that you give your pity to the slave, your good wishes to the enfranchised...On the natal day of our country’s freedom, while you recount to your sons the blessings of liberty, incite them to an alms for her who hath worn in solitude and bitterness the fetters of every nation. Prompt your daughters, your servants, every female within the circle of your influence, to work one evening in each week, and dedicate this produce of their skill, their industry, or their genius, to the Schools of Liberia...charge your offspring to persevere in these labors of love, until in every hamlet of unregenerated Africa, the school house and the church spire shall be seen in hallowed brotherhood, and the voice of the instructed child, and the hymn of the joyful saint, ascend in mingled melody to the throne of God.²⁸

²⁸ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 7, no.1 (March 1831): 13-15; *Zion’s Herald* 5 (3 June 1831); *Religious Messenger* 1 (July 1831).

Sigourney's petition echoed missionary rhetoric that affirmed the necessity of females for missionary success. Mission boards, ministers, and church leaders encouraged women to support overseas missions with their money and time. They also looked to females to fill the ranks as missionaries. The motive for sending women overseas as missionaries was woman's nature—as wife, mother, homemaker, and teacher. It is in the context of evangelical missionary rhetoric that Sigourney made her appeal and connected female benevolence to the building of an African republic. Just as evangelicals envisioned a Christian empire contingent on female participation, so too did Sigourney.

One of Sigourney's first acts in support of colonization was the formation of the Hartford Female African Society in 1830.²⁹ The purpose of the group was to aid black women in their passage to the colony and develop educational opportunities for them in Africa. Working in conjunction with the African Mission School Society in Hartford and an all female African American group called the "The Charitable Society in the African Sunday School at Hartford," the Society supported a girls' school in Monrovia as well as several African American missionaries and teachers. On the first anniversary of the formation of the Female African Society, the *African Repository* reprinted an address Sigourney had delivered to the group.

Sigourney's address to the Hartford Female African Society was a sophisticated condemnation of slavery in which she asserted that domesticity and

²⁹ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no. 6 (July 1830): 150-154. Several years before this, in 1827, she formed a society made up of her former students that donated a box of books to the girls' school in Monrovia, Liberia. Sigourney handpicked the books for the benefit "of those whom we hope hereafter be the teachers and mothers of regenerated Africa." The year before, she proposed boarding a seventeen year-old African American in her home while he trained to become a physician for Liberia. This desire, it appears, was not realized. *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 4 (June 1826): 124; 3, no. 6 (August 1827): 189-90.

Christianity were profoundly linked, even indistinguishable. Sigourney employed the common evangelical assertion that Christianity was especially good for women because wherever Christianity was absent, “it seems to be the fate of our sex to sink the deepest in wretchedness, and lowest in the scale of community.” African women, “our African sisters” needed “that holy light which cheers the journey of life and the slumber of the grave.” Sigourney believed that the colony of Liberia, the “city of refuge,” was the spot where the “knowledge of salvation” would be “disseminated over benighted Africa,” and that colonization would, in consequence, lead African women “to his throne.” In other words, colonization would lead to conversion, which in turn would improve African women’s lives even as it secured their future salvation.³⁰

The Hartford Address also provided an alternative to female abolitionist rhetoric concerning slavery and domesticity. Like abolitionists, she began with the premise that the home was a universally experienced institution that recognized no geographical or racial boundaries. The issue of slavery was the business of white women because of the terrible wrong it perpetrated against the domestic sphere. Since the domestic sphere was woman’s allotted province, “it is natural that we should be deeply susceptible to whatever disturbs its tranquility, or destroys its honour.” Sigourney, like abolitionists, argued that the system of slavery in America destroyed a black woman’s ability to exercise her duties in the domestic sphere. The conditions of slavery, she argued, produced “an incapacity of correctly discharging toward their offspring, either the duties of physical care, moral example, or religious education, thus depriving the maternal heart of its dearest privilege and highest

³⁰ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no. 6 (July 1830): 153-154.

solace.” Unlike abolitionists, Sigourney was careful to point out that the relationship between master and slave was not destructive. On the contrary, most slave owners “create an interchange of generous and grateful sentiment, and lay the foundation of warm and lasting attachment.” For Sigourney, as for the females of Virginia, it was slavery itself that produced the problem.³¹

Sigourney’s most original modification of abolitionist rhetoric and domesticity was her application of the idea to Africa. The destruction of the female African home by the slave trade concerned Sigourney deeply,

Who is that wretched woman, whom we discover under yonder lofty tree, wringing her hands, as if in the agonies of despair? Three days has she been there to look and to watch. This is the fourth morning, and no tidings of her children yet. Beneath those spreading boughs they were accustomed to play. But alas! The savage man-stealer interrupted their innocent mirth, and has taken them for ever from her sight.³²

Indeed, it was Africa and the African woman that captured the attention and sympathy of Sigourney. She wrote dozens of poems about Africa and African women. For Sigourney, the twofold effect of the slave trade and the lack of Christian influence plunged African females into “the deepest wretchedness.” Sigourney firmly believed that their degraded state was not inherent or permanent. But in order for change to occur, African women needed Christianity and black American females needed their “native” homeland.

Virginia’s female colonization supporters used similar domestic language to discuss slavery. After the Nat Turner revolt in August of 1831, women colonization supporters in Fluvanna, Fredericksburg, and Augusta wrote petitions to a special

³¹ Ibid, 152-53.

³² Ibid, 152.

legislative committee that was charged with recommending a course of action to Virginia's General Assembly meeting in 1832. Unlike Sigourney's appeal that stressed the domestic discord slavery created for Africans, the petitions argued that slavery threatened the domestic tranquility of white families because it left white women vulnerable to harm from slaves. The petitions challenged the popular image of the obedient slave happily serving the patriarchal household—an image Sigourney affirmed in her writing. Instead, the women argued that blacks and whites lived in a state of imminent domestic warfare. Without help from the state, the petitioners argued, women could not fulfill their obligation to preserve domestic harmony.³³

A few southern women retained their sympathy for slaves even after Turner's revolt. Mary Blackford of Fredericksburg, Virginia, for example, detailed the atrocities in her diary and then concluded, "though I have recorded fearful wickedness in this insurrection, we must remember how few those have been, and how ignorant and deluded the Negroes who joined it were...And I am sure that with an hundredth part of the wrongs they suffer we white people would have risen in arms fifty times." Blackford also wrote a petition to the Virginia's General Assembly. Like the other petitioners, she alleged that slavery left women in a "defenseless state," and evoked martial imagery to defend female intervention. She also urged the legislature to empathize with the slave: "we would not amid a crowd of selfish considerations, forget the interests of an unfortunate people," she asserted. "We would supplicate for them, from your body, such an attention to their welfare and happiness." Her petition never made it to the legislature. Like Sigourney and other

³³ For an excellent analysis of the petitions see Elizabeth Varon's *We Mean To Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

northern women who found petitioning Congress on Indian removal “too bold, and too political,” Blackford could not put aside her fears of upsetting propriety to solicit signatures. Blackford did, however, record in her journal her prayer that God would intervene for her: “O thou Almighty King! Look down in pity on those forsaken ones, forsaken of almost all but Thee, and open a way for their deliverance. Thou governest the hearts of men. Grant that the approaching meeting of the legislature may be productive of good to them [slaves] and fix some date to their misery. Show the people their sin and let them not go on until Thy judgments over take them.” Blackford’s empathy for the slave, however, did not translate into a vision of equality. She, like most white Americans, could not envision an America where black and white lived side by side in peace.³⁴

Taken together, the northern and southern discussions of colonization and slavery illuminate how females shaped the public discourse over slavery. While Sigourney and Blackford and Virginia colonizationists came at the slavery issue from different viewpoints—Sigourney and Blackford evinced a qualified sympathy for slaves while most of Virginia’s female colonizationists exhibited hostility toward the slave—the discourse used similar language to justify female involvement in the politics of colonization. All suggest that slavery made women—black and white—unable to fulfill their obligation to foster domestic accord. Sigourney argued that women should engage in the slavery debate because slavery was disturbing the tranquility and destroying the honor of the domestic sphere of the African. The Virginia women justified their political intervention on the basis of the threat of

³⁴ L. Minor Blackford, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954): 28; Mary Blackford, “The Memorial of the Female Citizens of Fredericksburg,” 1831, Blackford Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina.

slavery to white domestic life. Both Sigourney and the Virginia women, however, defended their own superior status as white women. The Virginia woman represented black women as a threat to white domesticity. Sigourney and Blackford characterized black Americans as an anomaly to be pitied.

Margaret Mercer

Margaret Mercer was one of the South's most famous female colonizationists.³⁵ Mercer and Sigourney were similar in many ways. Both were devout Episcopalians, involved in a multitude of charitable and reform organizations, and were educators. Mercer, like Sigourney, did much to advance the colonization cause. As a southern slave owner, however, she directly participated in colonization. When her father, a former Governor of Maryland, died in 1821, she inherited "Cedar Park," as well as approximately twenty slaves whom she freed and sent to Liberia in 1829. Mercer then converted her family's mansion into the boarding school, the Cedar Park Institute. She sold her remaining property in order to repay the debt she had amassed by emancipating her slaves as well as to take care of the "old and the worn out" slaves she still owned. In the following years, she purchased the freedom of other slaves, educated them and then sent them to Liberia. The ACS promoted Mercer as an example of self-sacrifice and encouraged other southern women to measure their own willingness to suffer economic hardship for their country and God. Northerners pointed to Mercer as a sign of hope for the colonization cause. Elliott Cresson, a prominent Philadelphia Quaker and colonization leader, predicted in 1836

³⁵ In 1831, the ACS commissioned the schooner, the "Margaret Mercer." The schooner was named "in honor of a lady of Maryland, of distinguished reputation, and who to her many virtues, adds that of deep affection for the cause of the Society." *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 7, no. 8 (October 1831): 251.

that Mercer would “descend to posterity as one of the illustrious of the age.” His comment came in the context of harsh attacks by abolitionists who charged that colonizationists only pretended benevolence. Mercer’s acts, he argued, proved colonization’s authenticity. Other northern colonization supporters looked to Mercer as proof that southerners were interested in emancipation and the cause of colonization. Mercer seemed to confirm “the best interests of the slave may be freely and fully advocated in any legitimate form without exciting the alarm of hostility of their influential classes there.”³⁶

Despite the grim reports back from Liberia and the disapproval of many in her community, Mercer supported colonization to the end. She was convinced that circumstances in the United States would forever keep black Americans “in a state of thralldom and servitude, even though liberated from the galling chain of hopeless bondage.” Convinced that colonization was the “most blessed of Christian institutions” and the “only means of reconciling the South to emancipation,” she encouraged her students to aid colonization. She organized them into the “Cedar Park Liberian Society” to help promote education in Liberia. Over the years, the group used thousands of dollars raised from annual fair proceeds to support several schools in Liberia.

Not all the money the Cedar Park Institute raised went to the ACS. In the early 1830s Mercer recommended that the membership of the society devote its funds to subsidize the education of two black boys living in Liberia and selected by Liberian officials at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. To raise the funds

³⁶ Frederick Freeman, *Yaradee; A Plea for Africa* (Philadelphia: J. Whetham, 1836; reprint New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 339; *Colonization Herald* 2, no. 19 (October 1846).

necessary for such an enterprise, she solicited the support of former and current students, appealing to female Christian duty. She exhorted her students to remember how “assiduously and affectionately” she had worked to “instill a deep sense of your responsibility...for the faithful performance of the duty enjoined upon us to give the gospel to the heathen, and to do good to all men as we have the opportunity.” The plan was abandoned when another appeared more promising. With her society’s approval, Mercer directed the funds raised by the women to a fraudulent agent who said he represented the efforts of the New York Colonization Society to establish a high school in Liberia. The money was never recovered.³⁷

Mercer’s efforts among her students had lasting benefits for the ACS. Mary Sawyer, a former student and assistant at Cedar Park who later became a missionary to Cape Palmas in Liberia remembered that, “She talked freely...again and again” on the subject that “was to her mind the greatest cause on earth—colonization of the free blacks.” As a result, many of her students became “the warmest friends of African Missions and Colonization.” The most prominent was Sawyer. A Baltimore native and member of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, she married Lancelot Minor, an Episcopal priest and missionary from Virginia and brother of Mary Blackford, on January 23, 1840. The two left for Africa as missionaries less than a month later. On hearing that some of Sawyer’s friends and family did not approve of her decision to marry Minor and accompany him to Africa, Mercer said she believed it was “essential” that Sawyer go to Africa where God had clearly called her to go. Were she younger, Mercer wrote, “I should like to go to Africa.” Like Sigourney, Mercer believed in God’s redemptive plan for Africa: “I should love to have you always with

³⁷ Morris, 113, 121-123, 129.

me, but my imagination is already with you in your mountain school, where I see you, seated in the midst of your pupils singing sweet hymns of praise, and teaching them to lisp the words of prayer.” Three years of missionary labor returned Mary Stewart Minor to America, a widow. When the two met again, the former student remained captivated by Mercer. “She was then the most interesting female I have ever seen...I left her saying to myself, ‘This is Christianity.’”³⁸

Like Sigourney, Mercer linked female benevolence to advancing the Christian kingdom. She believed that the progress of Christianity depended on abolishing slavery in America and evangelizing Africa. Practically, Mercer looked to influence the efforts of colonization by assisting in education in Liberia. Despite her almost never solvent economic situation, she personally underwrote the education of several African American men, among them one William Taylor. Mercer helped Taylor obtain a medical education at the Medical College in Washington in order to go to Liberia as a physician and missionary. Taylor went to Liberia in 1836 despite efforts to deter him by his family and friends. “My purpose is fixed,” he wrote Mercer, “I have the welfare of my fellow-men at heart...The cause is good, my motive pure; with the approbation of heaven, I have nothing to fear.” He sailed to Liberia where, after three years of labor as a physician and missionary, he died.³⁹

Mercer’s strength of conviction concerning slavery and colonization precipitated a move that would have great ramifications for a small community in Virginia. Mercer’s brother’s family demanded more space in the Cedar Park mansion that they shared with Mercer after her father’s death. To oblige him, Mercer would

³⁸ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 4, no. 12 (February 1829): 380; Morris, 98-110; 154-160.

³⁹ Morris, 109-112.

have had to reduce the number of students. Mercer refused and in the fall of 1836 purchased Belmont plantation, a badly maintained farm, in Leesburgh, Virginia, and began a new school. Whether she refused to accommodate her brother for financial reasons or more personal ones is unclear. Both reasons may very well have influenced her. As a single woman who insisted on maintaining financial independence, Mercer had few options. Her biographer insisted that Mercer moved to Belmont because she did not want to “diminish the extent of her usefulness, and abandon the pursuit to which she had consecrated her life and devoted her energies.”⁴⁰

Mercer moved into a community unlike any she had resided in before. It was populated primarily by poor sharecroppers, small tenant farmers, and former slaves. The area was plagued by frequent outbreaks of disease and an unusually low life expectancy because of poor drainage and an abundance of marshland. Mercer described her new home as a “missionary station,” a “desolate portion of the Vineyard.” After she discovered that there was no church of any denomination within miles, and “the habits of the people heathen—their ignorance of the way of salvation utter,” she started a Sabbath school in her home and began plans to build an Episcopal church. In 1841 she personally oversaw the construction of Belmont chapel, raising money and then persuading an Episcopal bishop to make regular visits. Besides building a church, she convinced the community to drain swamps to create farms and move or deepen contaminated wells. She also urged all local

⁴⁰ *Colonization Herald* 2, no. 19 (October 1846); Ella Rodman Church, “Margaret Mercer,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine* 99 (September 1879): 258-59.

children to attend Sunday school, and allowed them to attend the school's free classes in primary subjects and in agriculture.⁴¹

Mercer's charity work at Belmont served several functions. It confirmed her elite standing in the community despite her tenuous economic status; it verified her moral and religious superiority and reinforced her respectability; and it expanded her authority in the community as a leader even as it concealed her power within notions of true womanhood. In the beginning, the local community viewed Mercer with suspicion. Her insistence that women study the sciences and agriculture challenged the community's thinking on the role of women. Her hostility to slavery caused friction with many. In fact, she violated Virginia law teaching the African Americans in her employ as well as those working as sharecroppers on neighboring lands to read and write. She also welcomed them at religious services. Moreover, she was an ardent Episcopalian in an area where her faith had only a handful of adherents. Over time, however, many in the community embraced Mercer. "Ten years of residence at Belmont," wrote a former student, "made a civilized place of it, and changed enemies into friends; her school prospered, and the dark cloud of poverty was lightened." Indeed, her school developed into a kind of community, centered around the school and the church in which residents came for advice on familial, social and economic issues. Mercer died at Belmont in 1846 at fifty-five after a life-long battle with tuberculosis.⁴²

Shortly after her death, Casper Morris, a leader in the colonization movement, published a biography of Mercer that did much to enshrine her in nineteenth century

⁴¹ Church, 258-59; "Margaret Mercer," *American National Biography* 15 (New York: Oxford University Press): 331-32.

⁴² Morris, 160ff; Church, 259-60.

colonization and evangelical hagiography. The biography did for Mercer what poetry did for Sigourney. It moved her opinions and actions from the private to the public sphere, albeit after death. By 1840, the female memoir—compiled by husbands, daughters, mothers, or friends—had become a literary staple for female readers. Staying close to written sources—letters and spiritual journals—the memoir idealized deceased females as models of true Christian womanhood who labored for the cause of Christ as teachers and missionaries. The primary purpose behind the publication of the highly sentimental memoir was not simply to elicit in the reader an emotional response but to instruct and admonish on how one should behave in this world while keeping an eye on the next. In other words, the memoir had a didactic purpose.⁴³ Mercer’s memoir, like so many others, worked hard to show her as an ideal American woman. She was a patriot concerned for her country, a soldier for Christ who sacrificed everything for liberty and truth, a true woman who sought to influence the world through moral suasion.

⁴³ See Joanna Bowen Gillespie, “‘The Clear Leadings of Providence’: Pious Memoirs and the Problems of Self-Realization for Women in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 5 (Summer 1985): 197-221; Irene Quenzler Brown, “Death, Friendship, and Female Identity During New England’s Second Great Awakening,” *Journal of Family History* 12, no. 4: 367-387; and Lisa Joy Pruitt, “‘A Looking-Glass for Ladies’: American Protestant Women and the Orient in the Nineteenth Century,” (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt, 1998) for a discussion on missionary memoirs. Joanna Gillespie notes in her analysis of Protestant female memoirs that most scholars dismiss the once-popular pious memoir as irrelevant, “failed autobiography.” She argues that the genre, far from being of no consequence, is in fact a repository of historic import. The study of these literary remains offers a social-historical glimpse of life in the early nation as well as shows a newly emerging sense of female self-empowerment. Gillespie notes the role the memoir played in constructing a new type of spiritual autonomy predicated on religious rhetoric. Irene Quenzler Brown’s study of female friendship asserts that while the entire genre functioned as consolation literature, missionary women’s memoirs had an expressly didactic purpose more characteristic of the eighteenth century Enlightenment than of the nineteenth-century Romanticism that informed other types of female religious autobiography. Pruitt emphasizes the didactic function of missionary memoirs. The women found in the pages of the memoirs an ideal standard for American women to emulate, and, perhaps most importantly, the potential of the female Oriental Other if American women fulfilled their duty by extending to their sisters in Asia the same benefits that they enjoyed in Christian North America.

She looked abroad with the eye of a patriot woman, and felt with the ardent enthusiasm of one devoted to the good of her country, and especially that section of it in which her own...Miss Mercer was a patriot woman, and lived and suffered, and virtually bled and died in the service of her country; serving it in sphere of action the most important...standing at the very fountain of influence, and casting in there the healing branch which shall cause pure waters to flow over the wide domain.⁴⁴

Much of the biography discussed slavery and colonization, and extolled her behavior as proof of colonization's good intentions even as it attempted to convert readers to the cause and motivate others to act on colonization's behalf:

Margaret Mercer was during her life, and will be so long as her memory shall endure, a shining testimony of the fact that the society was countenanced in its origin and supported to the present hour by those who were ready at any cost, —nay more, at any sacrifice of personal comfort, —to promote the good of those in whom they recognized the traits of common brotherhood...

The ACS hoped the biography would “cure any nervous lady or mawkish sentimentalist who mourns over imaginary ills and cannot bear the shocks of this rough world.”⁴⁵ Ironically, in extolling Mercer as the ideal southern female colonizationist, ACS leaders implied true womanhood might require a woman to endure economic distress and become a self-supporting, independent female. “She fearlessly, and with more than the devotion of a Roman matron, gave up her own possessions,” asserted a reviewer of the biography in the *Colonization Herald*, “emancipated all her slaves, and by this act coupled with the measures take to prepare them for freedom reduced herself from affluence to absolute dependence on her own exertions for maintenance.” While there may be some question as to the extent of her

⁴⁴ Morris, 108-109.

⁴⁵ *Colonization Herald* 2, no. 36 (March 1848).

poverty, she clearly chose a life of economic scarcity over a life of affluence, and certainly coveted her independence.⁴⁶

Some of Mercer's most important words on slavery and colonization are in letters she exchanged with Gerrit Smith that were reprinted in the memoir. Mercer and Smith began a correspondence in the early 1830s when the two shared a passion for colonization. Smith was then the ACS's largest contributor. They maintained a correspondence until 1835 when Smith publicly renounced colonization as a lost cause and became an abolitionist. Mercer reacted sharply to the news that he had adopted the immediatist position. She admonished Smith with a harsh rebuke, "This very morning I have prayed that your dogmatical, opinionated, persecuting spirit might be changed for one more calculated to do good."⁴⁷

The harsh words exchanged between Mercer and Smith reveal the complexity of the slave debate in antebellum America. Both Mercer and Smith wanted the slaves freed. Both even believed that colonization would benefit the African American. Smith wrote in his letter dissolving his connection with the ACS that he continued to believe the idea of colonization was a "benevolent and delightful work" that would give black Americans a "happy home." Smith held that the colonization and emancipation did not necessarily go hand in hand. Colonization was not mandatory, nor was it contingent on emancipation. Rather, colonization was for "the free people of color in our country to escape from the unrelenting prejudice and persecution under which they suffer." Smith's problem with the ACS was that he believed it had conceded too much to gain southern support. He wanted an ACS in which "members

⁴⁶ Morris, x. See also Dickes, 94-101.

⁴⁷ Morris, 133.

may be free, on the one hand, to be slaveholders; and on the other, to join the Anti-Slavery Society.” Now, he argued, a colonization supporter cannot “advocate the deliverance of his enslaved fellow-men” without being accused of inconsistency.⁴⁸ Mercer also believed that the obstacles that stood in the way of “the full development of the Negro character” in America were great. Prejudice, injustice, degradation and struggle would follow the African American as long as there were two “distinct races of men dwelling on the same soil.” From her viewpoint, however, colonization was the only way to ensure emancipation. Colonization and emancipation were inseparable.⁴⁹

Yet even Mercer did not advocate sending every free black person to the colony, but only those who were Christian, educated, and desired to go. In fact, several of the slaves Mercer freed refused to emigrate. Unsure of her duty toward those former slaves who wanted to remain in the United States, she permitted a family to move to Baltimore and a female slave to migrate to a free state. In permitting some of her former slaves to remain in America, Mercer acted against her conviction that American blacks would be kept “in a state of thralldom and servitude, even though liberated from the galling chain of hopeless bondage.” At the same time, however, she could justify her actions by claiming that not all African Americans were suited to immigrate to Liberia. If Liberia was to succeed, she argued, its citizens must be the most “virtuous and wise and capable of governing themselves.” Mercer’s policy of voluntary emigration was part of a larger ideology that interpreted manumission as an expression of religious disinterested benevolence. Her individual

⁴⁸ *The Philanthropist* 1, no. 14 (1 April 1836); *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 1 (January 1836): 35-37.

⁴⁹ Morris, 108

act of liberating slaves was part of her Christian duty to convert “heathen nations,” and help God turn “evil into good.” Mercer declared, “I will never turn away from the promotion of the *first wish of my soul, the abolition of slavery in the United States*, any more than I will turn away from the duty of persuading all men to be reconciled of God.” For Mercer her joint mission seemed to come together perfectly in colonization.⁵⁰

Mercer and Smith agreed that slavery was a sin that had to be eradicated. Yet each accused the other of missing the mark. Smith believed Mercer did not possess enough empathy for the slave. He could not understand how someone as philanthropic as Mercer had yet to “plead the cause of the slave, because he is wickedly, most wickedly, wronged, trodden down, and despised.” The magnitude of the sin of slavery was so great, asserted Smith, that it allowed no room for compromise. “Slavery is sin—nay, more, is heinous wickedness—nay, more, is the most wicked system that the avarice and lust and tyranny of the human heart ever devised.” But rather than be ruthlessly opposed to slavery, Smith argued, Mercer vacillated. “You have a vague and unsettled notions of the moral character of American slavery,” he wrote, “now half-condemning it—now excusing it.”⁵¹

Mercer, on the other hand, argued that Smith did not have sufficient compassion for the slaveowner. She charged that Smith made gross generalizations and “injudicious epithets of contemptuous obloquy” regarding them. Mercer conceded that slavery might be a sin, but not the sin abolitionists made it out to be. Suppose, argued Mercer, “A son is left the inheritance of slaves and debts, and the

⁵⁰ Morris, 113-14, 131; Margaret Mercer, Cedar Park, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, 22 September 1833, ACS Papers.

⁵¹ Morris, 135.

law compels him to pay the debts, before he can liberate the slaves. He may sell them, it is true, and enrich himself; but he is perhaps as humane as Gerrit Smith, and he *loves*—ay, he loves his servants, and he struggles through a life of hardships to prevent their being sold.” How, she asked, could Smith call this slave owner a thief?⁵²

As a southern woman who had to act on her convictions and not merely talk about ideas, Mercer believed she was more opposed to slavery than Smith: “Sir, from the bottom of my heart, I believe at this moment that I am *more* opposed to slavery *than you are!!!* I believe that I would do more, if personal sacrifice would avail, to put an end to African slavery.” Mercer accused abolitionists in general and Smith in particular of impatience because they refused to allow God to work: “...because the work does not go on to please you, Jehu-like, you would seize the reins, and drive the chariot of the sun out of heaven.” Rather than ameliorate slavery, their action served to strengthen “the hands of oppression,” and fill “a nation with rancour and deadly enmities.” As much as Mercer opposed slavery, she rejected more the methods of the abolitionists.⁵³

In her letters to Smith, Mercer appealed to domestic imagery to assert the merits of colonization and the errors of abolition. Mercer argued abolitionism threatened white domestic tranquility. She denounced the abolitionist who would “throw the firebrand into the powder magazine, while all are asleep,” and then stand “at a *distance* to see the mangled victims of his barbarous fury.” She believed that abolitionism had put the southern family in imminent danger for it had turned slave

⁵² Morris, 137.

⁵³ Ibid, 136-137.

against slaveholder. Mercer pleaded to Smith, “I pray you, dear sir...to conceive the state of families...think of the mother of a family startled from her sleep by some unusual noise, and seized with the horrid apprehension of the scene which may await her in a few minutes.” Like the Virginia petitioners who wanted the state to intervene to end slavery to protect the domestic sphere, Mercer challenged the validity of the peaceful plantation. Indeed, the faithful slaves and kind masters were now at the mercy of the “lawless and vicious” slaves who, incited by abolitionist propaganda, would massacre men, women, and children, black or white, “in their sleep.”⁵⁴

It is unclear how effectively the biography of Mercer convinced people of the merits of colonization. It is clear, however, that it helped establish her as a model woman in nineteenth-century memory. Mercer was remembered as a devoted teacher and educator, a missionary, reformer, and a true patriot. One writer compared her to Mary Lyon, the founder of Mount Holyoke, a school that promoted female missionaries and female piety. She was featured in *Women of Worth*, a book for girls that featured the lives of prominent women from Europe and the United States. *Godey's Lady's Book* praised her in 1849 and again in 1879 as the ideal woman. “Margaret Mercer may justly be termed a domestic heroine and philanthropist, accomplishing in a quiet, dignified and womanly way, a vast amount of good, and triumphing at last over all obstacles that had marred the process of her benevolent plans.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Morris, 130-131.

⁵⁵ Dickes, 94-105; *Godey's Lady Book* (May 1849): 366; *Godey's Lady Book and Magazine* 99 (September 1879): 256-260.

Conclusion

Despite the immense popularity of Mercer and Sigourney in colonization circles, history has remembered them for their less controversial benevolent efforts. Even so, both women reflected this era's complex, and at times contradictory, views on colonization, slavery, and race. Both Sigourney and Mercer were not antislavery radicals but in different ways, both challenged societal expectations and challenged traditional notions of race and the meaning of freedom.

Sigourney and Mercer also reflected the general characteristics of female colonization supporters. Most were from the middle and upper class and involved in benevolent activity outside of colonization. Female colonizationists called for gradual emancipation at the same time they rejected abolition as dangerous and reckless. The majority of female colonizationists used the tenets of evangelicalism and the ideology of benevolent femininity to justify their participation in colonization. They often expressed their support of colonization in domestic terms. Some argued that women should engage in the slavery debate because slavery was disturbing the tranquility and destroying the honor of the domestic sphere of the African. Others justified their political intervention on the basis of the threat of slavery to white domestic life. In their use of domestic imagery, they defended the universal nature of womanhood even as their language obscured their belief in white racial superiority. Indeed, colonization women were convinced that African Americans' true home was in Africa, and believed African Americans always would remain inferior outcasts in America.

Chapter Three

“God Bless You, Ladies”

Initially, colonization leaders gave little thought as to how women might contribute to the cause. Despite its posture as a religious and benevolent organization, the colonization society promoted itself as a political movement. The group headquartered in the nation’s capital, held annual meetings in the Hall of the House of Representatives, and boasted of the political elite who served as leaders. For two decades they aggressively sought federal support. Intent on securing federal funding, the society made only weak attempts to build local organizations. By 1825, with only limited assistance from the federal government and much more funds needed, the ACS finally turned to the public. Leaders continued to press the federal and state legislatures for endorsements and money but by the beginning of the 1830s, they had recast colonization as a national benevolent movement and appealed especially to ministers and women. They asked ministers “to give their countenance and patronage” to the plan and designated “the anniversary of our independence as an appropriate occasion, for explaining the objects of American Colonization Society, and receiving contributions to its funds.” Their appeal to females was more vague. They sought the “patronage” of women and asked them to “exercise their feelings, their talents, and their influence.” As the 1830s progressed and the slavery debate intensified, however, a more defined role for women took shape that articulated what members and observers alike understood as the reasons for their association with colonization and revealed the cultural values and assumptions of the colonization

supporter of the 1830s. In short, the arguments advanced were not new but recast old ones that adapted the ideology of benevolent femininity to the new realities of intense debate over slavery.¹

This chapter examines the brief but intense period of the 1830s when volunteerism, moral suasion, and women's role in colonization took precedence over politics. At the same time that the ACS was losing its centrality in the political imagination, benevolent activity became more compelling to the organization. Although leaders recognized the importance of political activity and continued to seek the support of state and federal governments, they also believed that the success of colonization depended on changes brought about by moral suasion. The colonization movement shows that antebellum benevolent activity did not mechanically move from volunteerism into institutional settings. Antebellum men and women did not view "politics" as a necessarily more advanced form of participation. The colonization movement challenges the historical model that privileges politics over volunteerism and government over charity, which implies that "volunteerism" was a less sophisticated activity. The ACS started with a federal and political focus and over time and, by necessity, fit itself squarely into the benevolent empire format.

That benevolent activity became more compelling over time helps explain the belated and relatively weak female organizing in the ACS. Female involvement in colonization in the 1820s was confined to a few geographic areas, primarily in the Upper South. By the mid-1830s, women's colonization efforts had expanded into the

¹ Staudenraus, 19-22, 34-36, 48-58, 99-103, 110-113, 169-87; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 1 (March 1826): 25-26, 4, no. 9 (November 1828): 285.

north and west, and had become more associational. By 1840, females had formed nearly fifty associations on the local, county, and city level, and Virginia was home to a statewide female colonization society. Many of the auxiliaries disbanded within the decade, although new associations continued to emerge in the following decade. Besides forming auxiliary groups, women banded together to raise money for colonization through their churches and various benevolent societies. Individual women gave small and large sums of money to city and state colonization societies and directly to the ACS. Still others formed African educational societies. By the end of the 1830s, the ACS had come to rely on all types of female support. Their money helped fill the often-empty coffers, and perhaps more importantly, female cooperation vindicated the colonization platform and reinforced the moral and religious claims of the society. At a time when female abolitionism was at a high water mark, female colonization supporters helped legitimize the assumption then being fiercely debated among radical abolitionists that women had a duty to bring their moral principles concerning race and slavery into the public sphere.

Motivations for Female Colonization Support

The concept of moral duty was a critical factor motivating female colonization support. Documents and reports from the 1830s and 1840s reveal that colonization women took seriously their assigned role as the principal moral and religious authority, and accepted their responsibility to act on behalf of the helpless. Often female contributors remained anonymous. “Motives of delicacy” encouraged women to be listed simply as “a lady,” or “the ladies.” Colonization societies generally formalized their societies under separate headings, with single-sex boards of

directors, and business meetings. Most female societies did not run their own meetings. When they met for an annual gathering, ministers and male colonizationists called the meeting to order, read the women's annual report, and gave the speeches and sermons to the audience.

As auxiliaries, colonization groups—male and female—were by definition secondary to the parent society. Many female organizations construed their roles very narrowly, collecting funds or otherwise assisting the men's societies. For example, in November 1837, after hearing of the civil war that erupted between colonists in Bassa Cove and native Africans, the Ladies' Colonization Society of Wilmington, Delaware, sent "several hundred dollars in money and various other useful articles," to Pennsylvania's male colonization society for shipment in the reinforcement brig *Independence*. Earlier that year, the board of managers of the Pennsylvania society noted the "timely aid furnished by the ladies societies of Pittsburgh and Wilmington, and the newly formed Baptist society, together with the Ladies' Liberian Association." Many female colonization groups joined one of the three major female associations headquartered in Philadelphia, New York, or Virginia. As satellite groups, these female auxiliaries gave up the responsibility of logistics such as finding teachers, building facilities and sending supplies, and promised only financial aid. Still other female auxiliaries donated clothing and thousands of dollars to the national organization.²

A few female organizations took on fairly broad roles independent of a male group. The Philadelphia Ladies' Liberian Association developed a national association with auxiliaries around the country. As the largest female association, the

² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 4 (April 1836): 126.

Philadelphia women claimed alliances in Columbia, Northumberland, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Athens, Xenia, Columbus, Springfield, and Cincinnati, Ohio; Hartford, Connecticut; Washington, D.C.; Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts; Burlington, New Jersey; and Wilmington, Delaware. The exceptional organizational skills of several dozen women sustained two girls' schools for colonists, a school for African children and adults, a manual labor school for boys, and a high school for young men thousands of miles away. In addition, the women hired both male and female teachers, paid for their passage to Liberia, and once they arrived financially supported them. The group managed the schools with the help of Liberian agents whom they hired and dismissed.³

The Philadelphia Liberian Association leaders pointed with pride to their impartiality regarding slavery and fit unequivocally within the separate spheres ideology that defined women's role as domestic and private, separate from the worlds of public life. The object of their group, they asserted, was to promote education in Liberia, a cause "every American" could support. Regarding the efforts of the ACS, they had "no concern." The next year's annual report repeated in more bold terms the society's claim to impartiality. "While it belongs to the male part of a population to determine the political institutions of a country," they argued, "it falls chiefly into the hands of females, by early education and domestic training, for giving these

³ Prescribed gender rules were breached in more substantive ways. In a highly unusual act that violated the precise standard of propriety so carefully followed by colonizationists, at least three auxiliaries in Tennessee had mixed leadership. In 1830, the Covington, Shelbyville, and Winchester, Tennessee auxiliaries list alongside the male president, vice-presidents, secretary, and treasurer the names of four married and two single female managers. According to ACS practice, a manager was an officer that was elected annually by the society. The manager's role was to help promote the cause of colonization in the community. It is unclear what responsibility the Tennessee women enjoyed. There are no records to help illuminate these unconventional groups. Perhaps most intriguing, however, is that the *African Repository*, the primary voice of colonization sentiment, published their names. *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no. 6 (August 1830): 178-181.

institutions permanence.” They concluded, therefore, that their efforts would produce “no prejudices...against them,” and they hoped “to enlist the sympathies of all, as the importance of education is universally acknowledged.”⁴

Yet, at the same time they alleged to be neither for nor against colonization, their work was clearly linked to the movement. In fact, they worked intimately with ACS leaders and Liberian leaders. Several of the women were the wives or daughters of leaders in the Pennsylvania Colonization Society. Colonization leaders such as Rev. John Breckinridge, the president of the Young Men’s Colonization Society of Philadelphia, spoke at their annual meetings. Article 2 of the constitution stated that their funds would be applied to the promotion of education or other purposes connected with the colony in Liberia with the *consent of the ACS*. Their name, even, revealed the close ties it had with the ACS: The Ladies’ Association, Auxiliary to the American Colonization Society. Even after they changed their name sometime in 1834 to the Ladies’ Liberian School Association they remained connected to the colonization movement, working closely with the newly formed Young Men’s Colonization Society of Philadelphia, the group that superseded the older Pennsylvania Colonization Society and emerged as an aggressive exponent of separate local action.⁵

Beulah Biddle Sansom founded the Ladies’ Liberia Association of Philadelphia in 1832. Sansom, a Quaker involved in numerous benevolent causes,

⁴ *First Annual Report of the Ladies’ Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1833) 3; *Second Annual Report of the Ladies’ Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1834), 10. The annual reports are located at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).

⁵ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 8, no. 6 (August 1832): 190; *First Annual Report of the Ladies’ Liberian School Association*, 3; *Third Annual Report of the Ladies’ Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1835), 9. See chapter 4 on the close connection between the YMCS and the Philadelphia Ladies’ Association.

established two female schools in Monrovia and Caldwell, Liberia, with her own funds and the resources of a few acquaintances in 1831. When a female colonization association was formed in Philadelphia for African education, she agreed to become the president on the condition that the group take over the responsibility of her schools.

Sansom was the typical reformer of the period in her interest in multiple benevolent activities. When she died in 1837 she left the following sums to various institutions:

1. Distressed families and individuals--\$500
2. "Indigent Widows" and single Women's Society of Philadelphia—\$200
3. Friends' Asylum for the Insane—\$200
4. Friends' Reading Room Association—\$200
5. Colored Infant School—\$50
6. Adelpia Colored Infant School—\$50
7. Four coloured Individuals—\$100
8. Abolition Society of Pennsylvania—\$200
9. Sundry individuals at Bassa Cove, Liberia—\$100
10. Ladies' Liberian Association—\$100
11. Colonization Society of Pennsylvania—\$1,000

As her will indicated, Sansom, like Margaret Mercer, Lydia Sigourney and many other female colonizationists, did not view colonization and the abolition of slavery as contradictory. In her will she acknowledged that she "always approved of colonizing the coloured people of the United States in Africa." At the same time she believed in "promoting the abolition of slavery and the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage." Yet the assertion by these women that they hoped for an end to slavery did not mean that they were abolitionists. Colonizationists believed that slavery would end a natural death, the result of voluntary action by slaveholders, which they hoped to speed up through persuasion and peaceful accommodation.

Colonizationists stressed that they differed from abolitionists because they refused to interfere with the legally entrenched institution other than by encouraging owners to manumit their slaves for the purpose of colonizing them in Africa. In the end, colonizationists may have deplored slavery but believed it a better option than setting hundreds of thousands of African Americans free to take up residence across the United States.⁶

Sansom's Philadelphia Ladies' Liberia Association had ambitious plans for Africa and expected those working for them to share their aspirations. In 1837 the women replaced the colonial agent with a group of four superintendents because they believed the agent was not giving enough attention to their cause. On several occasions schools went without teachers because the women were not satisfied with the quality of prospective teachers. The source of their lofty aspirations was their conviction that just as they had an obligation to "assist in the intellectual and moral training of those of our own country who require aid," so too did they owe their services to the colonists. Not only did the women want to improve the moral and spiritual character of the country; they wanted to create a republican Liberia. When the women decided to establish a high school at Bassa Cove in 1838, they did so because they believed the colony lacked "educated men" for the "various offices at the colony." So they built "an institution of higher character" that they hoped would

⁶ Beulah Sansom, "Last Will and Testament," 13 October 1837, Book 12, no. 182, Albert M. Greenfield Microform and Media Center, HSP.

“have an important bearing...upon the interests of Liberia,” and would serve as an example to surrounding areas.⁷

Yet for all their independent activity, the group did not push beyond a limited definition of benevolence. The women of the Philadelphia Liberian Association did not run their meetings. Nor did they seek incorporation as other traditional female organizations did. When the group determined to build the high school it needed the support of the Pennsylvania and New York Colonization Societies that claimed the land. On April 2, 1839, the male colonization societies granted “to the Ladies’ Liberia School Association, such portion of land as may be necessary for the object in view.” More specifically the male societies directed the land be “made over to trustees for the uses of the Association.” For the society’s remaining years the annual reports list the names of six male advisers below those of the female officers and managers.⁸

Similar to the Philadelphia organization, The Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa claimed to operate from disinterested benevolence alone. The group insisted on its complete autonomy because the tension and unrest caused by the subject of slavery made it necessary to “keep our Association independent of all others.” Theirs, they asserted, was a missionary enterprise, a cause every true Christian and American patriot could support. “Every real friend of Africa, of his country, and of Christianity,” the women resolved in their

⁷ *Sixth Annual Report of the Ladies Liberia Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1838), 7; *Seventh Annual Report of the Ladies Liberia Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1839), 5; *The Friend; a Religious and Literary Journal* 11 (16 June 1838): 296.

⁸ *Ninth Annual Report of the Ladies’ Liberia Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1841): 6; Elizabeth Morris, Germantown, to Walter Lowerie, New York, 7 August 1846, Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, *Africa Letters: Liberia Mission*, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereafter PHS).

Fourth Annual Report, “may consistently maintain this Institution, no matter how much they may differ in policy, or even in principle, on other great questions which are agitating the World in reference to this portion of our fellow men.” Of course, the “great questions” to which the report alluded were issues associated with the slavery debate. The New York women claimed to be “free from all party or sectarian spirit,” and boasted an executive committee “composed of ladies from various denominations of Christians.” The Executive Committee consisted of one or two women from each denomination (Episcopal, Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, Quaker, and Baptist). Each denomination had the power to appoint its own teacher if its congregants could support him or her. The religious makeup of the New York society as well as the Philadelphia Ladies Society is a testament to the pragmatic side of colonization. Although religious motivation drove the movement, doctrine was not of much concern.⁹

But like the Philadelphia women, their claim to neutrality did not ring true. At annual meetings, the women were “stimulated to more vigorous efforts” by addresses from important male colonization leaders such as Rev. Alexander Proudfit, the corresponding secretary of the New York City Colonization Society, Thomas Buchannan, an agent of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society at Bassa Cove, and the Rev. John Breckinridge. The elite group closely cooperated with the NYCCS, and a substantial number of the members of the female society were associated with the NYCCS. At least eleven leaders of the female society were constituted life members of the NYCCS by the donation of thirty dollars or more, and ten of the fourteen

⁹ *Fourth Annual Report and Constitution of the Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa* (New York: J. McLoughlin, 1838), 3; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10, no. 5 (July 1834): 149.

founding officers were either life members of the NYCCS or married to leaders of the NYCCS. Still others were the wives or daughters of men who financially supported the ACS or were officers for the New York State Colonization Society.¹⁰

Documents frequently justified women's participation in colonization as an extension of their natural capacity as educators. "The Creator," argued the editor of the *American Ladies Magazine*, had especially "assigned her" the work of education. It seemed appropriate, therefore, that women engage in this "holy cause." Women agreed that in the work of education in Africa "our own sex can co-operate " without "infringing on the moral delicacy which her nature and her station in society alike impose on her." The most effective female colonization societies focused on the "feminine" project of education in the colony. By the mid 1830s, the majority of women's groups looked to societies like the Philadelphia Ladies' Liberia Association as their model and focused their efforts on education in Liberia, a field described as "pure, peaceful and pious." In a speech before a ladies' auxiliary in Wheeling, Virginia, Richard Henry Lee confirmed the way women's role in colonization had narrowed to primarily one responsibility. "There are various forms in which you may apply any pecuniary aid you may be able to command. It may be applied to support common schools in the colonies, for children of colonists and natives; or schools for females alone; or to assist in erecting churches; or to educate colored men for

¹⁰ *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Liberian Association of New York*, 4-10; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 11, no. 7 (July 1835): 214-221; *Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom* (1834): 355; *Fifth Annual Report of the Colonization Society of the City of New York* (New York: Mercein & Post's Press, 1837): 34-47; *Sixth Annual Report of the Colonization Society of the City of New York* (New York: Mercein & Post's Press, 1838): 23-40; *Seventh Annual Report of the Colonization Society of the City of New York* (New York: Mercein & Post's Press, 1839): 23-46. See chapter 4 for the connections between the NYCCS and the women of New York's Liberian Association.

missions among the native tribes.” Lee’s speech, given in 1844, simply echoed what had become the reality for women’s associations by the mid 1830s.¹¹

Colonizationists explained that educational efforts in Africa were peaceful and reflected disinterested benevolence in contradistinction to the divisive and combatant efforts of abolitionists. In her famous debate with Angelina Grimké over slavery, Catharine Beecher argued that abolitionist activity was inappropriate for females because it bound women in partisan politics and “throws a woman into the attitude of a combatant.” Into the 1830s, it seemed to many that the power of evangelicalism could bring a peaceable end to the slave system, as it had done in Britain. Colonization would allow the country to avoid a civil war and keep fragile denominations united, and female colonization efforts would help foster accord and harmony. Unlike abolitionist women who stepped outside the bounds of propriety, colonization women acted on “principles which furnish no matter for anger and strife, and fierce denunciation and hate; nor are they...susceptible of causing agitation and alarm among the fellow citizens in other parts of the union.” According to Beecher, female colonizationists did not aim to abolish slavery or establish colonies. Instead, their educational efforts in the colonies would make “those who by any means may receive the boon of freedom, *wise and good.*” No one, she concluded, could oppose this type of benevolent activity.¹²

¹¹ “Education in Africa” (n.p., n.d.), 2, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts (hereafter MHS); *Colonization Herald* 2, no. 42 (17 December 1836); *Second Annual Report of the Ladies’ Liberian Association of New York*, 12; “Education in Africa,” *American Ladies’ Magazine* 9 (November 1836): 655-56.

¹² Catharine Beecher, *An Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism with Reference to the Duty of American Females* (Philadelphia: H. Perkins, 1837), 46, 102; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 13 (July 1840): 202-206.

Female participation in African education reveals the ways antebellum gender identification worked to construct a universal womanhood that cut across racial lines and transcended continents. As Lydia Sigourney explained, women must be interested in raising the standards of other women for, “wherever moral or intellectual degradation exists, it seems to be the fate of our sex to sink the deepest in wretchedness, and lowest in the scale of community.” American women, on the other hand, enjoyed the privilege of being men’s “equals and companions.” Despite the empathy that colonizationists had for the African women and ideas of shared humanity they were unable to transcend their racial arrogance.

Female participation in education was concurrently within the confines of gender propriety and at variance with it. On the one hand, it reflected an extension of woman’s “natural” role as moral guide and guardian. At the same time, however, by linking female benevolence to the building of a Christian kingdom and extending the gifts of democracy colonizationists inextricably fused female obligation to the advancement of America’s global mission “to hasten the day of blessedness, and glory foreseen by the eye and foretold by the lip of ancient prophecy when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth, and all flesh shall seek his salvation.” Women’s reports and constitutions expressed the widely shared belief that education in Africa was not only God’s cause but also the cause of freedom. The emphasis on liberty and the principles of Christianity also revealed gender assumptions that were fundamental to the ways in which these women understood their obligations.¹³

¹³ *Second Annual Report of the Ladies’ Liberian Association of New York*, 9; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no. 6 (July 1830): 153.

Female support legitimized colonization as abolition forces gained strength. Colonization leaders argued that female participation in colonization proved the righteousness of colonization efforts. “There is a delicacy in the perception of woman’s heart, which seizes, with the certainty of instinct, on that which is good, and shrinks from that which is wrong,” proclaimed George Bethune. “When I remember that the [Colonization] Society has been assailed by those who have done us cruel wrong, though they have not been able to destroy us, my heart goes up to heaven thanking God that he has given us the testimony of these faithful women, and they are not a few, that we are right, and that our opponents are wrong.” Thus, the participation of women helped justify colonization at the same it condemned abolitionists.¹⁴

Colonization writers, editors, and lecturers adopted a gender and class-based strategy that emphasized a female patriotism that was politically neutral and uninterested in partisan matters. When Rev. George Bethune addressed the New York City Colonization Society, he encouraged the women in his audience to feel a special and exalted status in colonization efforts. He compared them to the women of the Roman republic when the Romans and the Sabines went to war.¹⁵ The Roman women “threw themselves between the enraged parties, and by their success... placed

¹⁴ *Colonization Herald* 1, no. 27 (21 May 1836): 136.

¹⁵ The Rape of the Sabine Women is a mythological event from just after the founding of Rome. The young city of Rome had granted citizenship to criminals and lawless persons to grow quickly, and was therefore winning the wars against its neighbors, but a lack of women made it clear that the greatness of the city was in danger due to lack of male offspring. The neighboring town refused Roman requests to marry their women, but accepted an invitation to a huge religious celebration in honor of Neptune. In the middle of the party, the Romans rushed in, abducted the Sabine women, and were forced to marry their rapists. The Sabines, horrified at this open breach of the rules of hospitality, went home to prepare for war. When they later returned in arms to take back their women by force, the Sabine women had reconciled with their new husbands, and stopped the commencing battle before it started by placing themselves between the two groups. The Romans and the Sabines were reconciled and the city of Rome prospered.

the foundations of the Roman greatness beyond the possibility of being shaken.” Likewise, female colonizationists “throw themselves between the North and the South,” “pacify” the sectional tensions, and “allay those quarrels which threatened to shake our republic to its foundations.” Others pointed to the “disinterested benevolence” exhibited in the educational work of women in Liberia as evidence that colonization advocates were interested in the well-being of African Americans, not simply seeking to “rid the United States of coloured men.” “It had been thundered against the friends of the colony, that their only object is to rid the United States of coloured men,” noted an editor of the *Colonization Herald*, most likely Eliot Cresson. But the advantage “the colony must reap from such disinterested benevolence” refutes such an assertion and led colonization leaders to “exclaim, ‘God bless you, ladies.’”¹⁶

So, while colonization rhetoric argued that female colonizationists were uninterested in the politics of slavery, the very presence of female supporters legitimized the assumption that women had a duty to bring their moral principles concerning race and slavery into the public sphere. Colonization rhetoric, then, upheld traditional concepts of womanhood even as it asserted that women shared with men an intense interest in racial relations and the well-being of the country. In other words, because colonization was the only certain way to ensure the health and safety of the nation, it was the patriotic duty of women to support it.

Women who joined colonization societies agreed that maternal responsibility had global implications and consistently combined the rhetoric of Christian

¹⁶ *Colonization Herald* 1, no. 27 (21 May 1836): 136; 1, no. 14 (24 October 1835).

womanhood, colonization, and the gifts of democracy—liberty and freedom. In an appeal for African missionary support, an anonymous woman put it this way:

My dear sisters: The station we are permitted to occupy in the world, and in the Church, is at once interesting and important...Do we sufficiently reflect on the influence Christianity has exerted in our own behalf? By contemplating the state of degradation, servitude, and misery in which many of our sex are found, do we not learn the value of the elevating, equalizing spirit of the Gospel, and the importance of sending its joyful tidings...Let us, then, conscious of the debt our country owes to...the sable sons of Africa, make an effort to send them that Gospel which is rest—is freedom.¹⁷

A corollary effect of this grand religious vision was that it constructed a participatory view of the female citizen. The anonymous writer goes on to link a female's duty to God to her obligation to country: "Are we aware of the obligations that rest on us as Christians of the nineteenth century, as citizens of America, as members of a Church whose exertions in the cause of mission, though fettered by want of pecuniary aid, have yet been crowned with distinguished success!" The Ladies' Baptist Colonization Society interpreted their efforts as having global ramifications. Shortly after forming in 1836, the group circulated an address to "The Females of the Baptist Churches." In it they solicited the co-operation of Baptist women, noting that "there is a claim upon us—the vast Peninsula of Africa lies in thick darkness, it must be civilized, and evangelized." Colonization, they asserted, was the best means to accomplish this work. "The dark-browed race treads our soil, but it is to them a stranger's land and a home of degradation. Can we, who enjoy the blessings of

¹⁷ *Christian Advocate* 6, no. 20 (13 January 1832).

liberty, the light of that gospel which alone places woman in her proper sphere... withhold our aid from Africa's sons and daughters."¹⁸

Indeed, women colonizationists believed that the United States was a specially blessed place and saw their own sex as exceptionally privileged. This status encouraged them to act as the conscience of the nation in all places judged morally inferior. Just as benevolent women might extend their concern to the poor, the widow, and the orphan in America, so too might women legitimately engage in moral and religious reform in locations outside America. "Your course is a noble one," asserted the *Colonization Herald*, for women colonizationists seek to "knock the shackles from the fettered...[and] liberate the imprisoned soul...enlarge its capabilities, and pour in upon it the light of science and of God." Such disinterested benevolence directed at the United States would be benevolence deserving praise, the newspaper argued, "but when leaping the boundaries of state and nation...such disinterested benevolence begs praise and defies description."¹⁹

For colonization women, the obligation to act was a clear extension of religious faith. Often women turned to religious terminology to describe the nature of their cause. Their word choice revealed the magnitude of the change that they sought to produce and the sacred process in which they felt engaged. The managers of the Female Society of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa instructed their first two teachers that in "guiding so many immortal souls into the paths of righteousness, and instructing them in the things pertaining not only to this life, but that which is to come... we send you forth as leaders to the blind, and a light to those who are ready

¹⁸ *Colonization Herald* 2, no. 41 (3 December 1836).

¹⁹ *Colonization Herald* 1, no. 14 (24 October 1835).

to perish for lack of knowledge.” While they were anxious for the intellectual improvement of the students, the women were more concerned that “the great principles of evangelical truth be carefully and perseveringly instilled,” so that all their instructions “should have reference...to moral and religious improvement.”²⁰

Their word choice also revealed that they perceived their efforts to be part of the triumph of American, white evangelical Protestantism in the world and with it the values that evangelicalism embraced. Indeed, they were part of the larger evangelical culture that projected America’s millennial role in the world in their own image. In effect, then, the New York women’s goal was the ascendancy of white Protestantism in a black Africa. At the same time, they hoped to contribute to America’s preeminence. Many historians have pointed out that antebellum evangelicalism longed for the millennial age of spiritual purity, material wealth, and social and political tranquility in America, and abhorred individuals, groups, or institutions that threatened their vision of American’s future. Evangelicals feared the harmful influences of Catholic immigrants, Mormons, prostitutes, Sabbath breakers, and alcoholics on the moral character of country and the stability of society. Many evangelicals also believed African Americans threatened the welfare of the body politic. So, rather than educate and uplift African Americans in communities in America, the women looked to send them to Africa and, with them, qualified African American teachers. Here, in “the homes of their fathers,” Africa’s “emancipated children” would “exult in the full fruition of their rights, social, civil, and religious.”²¹

²⁰ *First Annual Report of the Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa* (New York: D. Panshaw, 1835): 6-7.

²¹ *Second Annual Report of the Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa* (New York: H.R. Piercy, 1836): 6.

The Formation of Female Colonization Societies

The formation of female societies might result from the efforts of a visiting lecturer. In the spring of 1831, the women of Lexington, Kentucky, invited Robert Finley to address a meeting in the McChord Presbyterian Church. Impressed by the “object and success of the Society,” they resolved to “make a special effort to raise more for the purpose of aiding to send out a vessel with a company of emigrants to Liberia from Kentucky.” Similarly, after Quaker Elliot Cresson’s lecture in the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, a female colonization society formed.²²

Though a compelling outside lecturer could inspire the formation of an auxiliary, often an association emerged when a woman or a group of women encouraged her friends and relatives to establish a female society. In Urbana, Ohio, some ladies of the village formed a society, “believing that in scope of usefulness, no charity of the present day can at all compare.” Within a few months, the women had transmitted \$150 to the ACS “with the hope that our next annual remittance will be much larger.” The *African Repository* praised the women: “instead of waiting for the example of others, they have themselves become examples.” In 1836, Sarah Van Buren (or Van Beuren), a long-time manager of the Philadelphia Liberia Association, decided to start a colonization society among Philadelphia’s Baptist women.²³ On November 1, approximately fifteen ladies gathered at the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia and unanimously resolved to form the Ladies’ Baptist Colonization Society, auxiliary to the Young Men’s Colonization Society of Pennsylvania. They

²² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 7, no. 3 (May 1831): 94; 12, no. 6 (June 1836): 193

²³ Van Beuren remained a manager of the Ladies’ Liberian Association after she formed a separate group. It appears Van Beuren wanted an auxiliary that contributed funds directly to the Pennsylvania’s’ state society.

signed their names under the society's constitution and over the next eight months increased their membership to sixty. By their second annual report, 120 members had joined the group.²⁴

Less impressive in terms of numbers but similar in terms of dynamics was the experience of women in Pittsgrove, New Jersey. An anonymous woman from the Presbyterian congregation of Rev. George Janvier, an agent for the ACS in New Jersey, became concerned about the depressed conditions of Liberian Presbyterians after reading an article in the *African Repository*. In response she and two other women decided to collect money "for the purpose of erecting a house of worship" for Presbyterians in Liberia. Janvier sent the \$3 the women had collected to the ACS with the hope that "others more able" would follow their example. By 1834, the women of Pittsgrove had formed a female colonization society and elected Janvier's wife as its treasurer.²⁵

Colonization served as a social movement as well as a political one. Often, gatherings involved speeches, reports, parades, and singing concurrent with July fourth celebrations. In 1837, the male and female auxiliaries of Greene County celebrated their seventh anniversary with a parade down the streets of Xenia. The group gathered at the Hollingsworth Hotel and marched to the Methodist Episcopal church accompanied by the city's band. The two societies gathered in the church and

²⁴ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 3 (February 1840): 44; *Colonization Herald* 2, no. 38 (5 November 1836); 2, no. 41 (3 December 1836); 2, no. 42 (17 December 1836); 3, no. 56 (15 July 1837); 1, no. 28 (11 July 1838).

²⁵ George W. Janvier, Philadelphia, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, D.C. 29 November 1830, ACS Papers; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 11, no. 1 (January 1835): 32.

opened the meeting with prayer. Then the two societies listened to a reading of the Declaration of Independence and each group's annual report.²⁶

After a group of women formed a society, the organizers had to make several important decisions. The first concerned the business of drafting a constitution. For many male auxiliaries this could be a mechanical task. The ACS provided a standard constitution in which a new society only needed to fill in its name and the annual subscription fee. Women's societies, however, altered the standard constitution to better express the "feminine" objects of a female auxiliary. Rather than have their sole object be the monetary aid of the ACS, women used their organizations for more specific purposes, usually to promote education and religion in Liberia. The Pittsburgh women who decided to begin a colonization society in 1836, for example, drafted a constitution that included a twofold objective. First, the women would train adult African Americans as teachers in order to promote "by all legal and constitutional means, the intellectual and moral improvement of the African race." Secondly, the women looked to provide material help for the colonists, in the form of supplies, clothing and other necessities." Similarly, the Ladies' Liberia Association of Cincinnati decided its sole object would be "education and religion in Africa." The Female Liberian Association in Concord, New Hampshire, claimed in 1843 that from the group's inception in 1835, the only object of the society "has ever been to promote education at the colony."²⁷

Beyond drafting a constitution that outlined their goals, the organizers selected a committee of officers and began canvassing the community to secure

²⁶ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 13, no. 9 (September 1837): 293-307.

²⁷ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 7 (July 1836): 207-208; 16, no. 13 (July 1840): 202-206; 19, no. 8 (August 1843): 234.

signatures to the document and financial donations. Sometimes women would solicit subscriptions to the *Colonization Herald* or *African Repository* with the hope that the subscription would convert others to the colonization message. Often the colonization newspapers reported the successful organizing efforts of women and printed a society's constitution to serve as an example to other women. Other times, a female society would publish its own circular in an attempt to recruit women to the colonization cause. In a circular entitled "Ladies of the West," the Ladies' Colonization Society of Pittsburgh urged women to take up colonization because "charity has the widest sphere ever yet presented to her for missionary, education, and benevolent operation of all kinds." More specifically they encouraged women to follow a fourfold strategy. Women should gather donations of tools, clothing, and manufactured goods for the Liberian community, organize committees in their churches in order to procure life memberships for pastors, secure teachers for the colony, and obtain subscriptions to the *Colonization Herald*.²⁸

How many women joined colonization societies is unclear. Many female colonization groups chose to work with the male auxiliary of the town, city, or state in which they lived, and, consequently, had little or no contact with the ACS. This was the case both before, and especially after the state independence movement that culminated in 1838 with a complete overhaul of the organizational structure of the ACS into a federation of state auxiliaries. Pennsylvania, for example, had seven female colonization societies, yet only three appear in the records of the ACS. This is because the other four—Columbia, Northumberland, Ladies' Baptist and Methodist

²⁸ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 8, no. 6 (August 1832): 190; 12, no. 7 (July 1836): 207-208; 16, no. 13 (July 1840): 202-206; 16, no. 16 (August 1840): 248-249.

Episcopal—worked directly with the Philadelphia Ladies’ Liberian Association and the Pennsylvania Colonization Society.

The women of Baltimore, Maryland, determined to work with the state society instead of the ACS, no doubt a disappointment to the ACS. Before the Maryland state society formed in 1831, the Baltimore women gave the ACS its largest one time donation from a woman’s auxiliary. In November of 1829, the women hosted a fair that featured items made by scores of individuals and raised \$2,552 for the ACS. The Baltimore women had developed their skills at organizing fairs in their efforts in behalf of Greece in previous years. The exact details of the fair remain unknown, but one result was a renewed interest among Baltimore men and women in colonization. “The contagion of benevolent feelings and sympathies spread from the fair vendors to crowds of purchasers, and hundreds became, for the first time, interested in the success of a Society of which they had before known nothing but the name, or which they had considered a chimerical in its object and inefficient in its results,” reported John H. B. Latrobe, Maryland’s indefatigable colonizationist.²⁹

²⁹ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 12 (February 1830): 382; *Twelfth Annual Report of the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour of the United States*, x-xi. Interest continued to build in Maryland so that early in 1831, Maryland formed a new state society. The state society soon after dissolved its formal connection with the ACS and founded its own colony at Cape Palmas in 1834. When the ACS granted total independence to Liberia allowing it to become a republic in 1847, Maryland Colonization Society imitated the ACS’s example and granted independence to Cape Palmas. “Maryland in Africa” remained a separate republic until 1857 when a native war nearly wiped out the Cape Palmas settlement and Liberia and Cape Palmas united. Early on the Maryland Colonization Society recognized that women would constitute an important element of the society, and stipulated in one bylaw that female subscribers could vote by proxy at all elections for society officers. At the same time, the Maryland society did not view female participation as important as the support of the male professionals and, especially, the state legislature. Maryland colonization leaders clearly viewed colonization as an endeavor that appealed to “the sterner sex—to the patriot, statesman, or divine.” Yet, the initial reluctance to enlist females (and the clergy) changed as it had for the ACS when financial problems forced the society to look to other sources beyond the state.

Much of what we know of female activity in colonization comes from the information that ACS contribution records provide. For example, no records for the Middletown, Connecticut, society exist other than the ACS contributions, even though the group was one of the earliest and most consistently active female auxiliaries. The women of Middletown formed a colonization society sometime before 1828 and remained active until the 1840s. Undoubtedly, its longevity was due to strong leaders like Eliza Ward, who served as the group's secretary and personally gave hundreds of dollars more to the ACS. For over a decade Ward and the group submitted funds annually to the ACS.³⁰ In the mid-1840s the society restricted its donations to Connecticut's State Society. Individuals like Eliza Ward, however, continued to contribute money to the ACS during this time. Group interest in colonization revived for a short time between 1850-1853 when they raised over \$200 and asked that the ACS constitute long-time supporters Mary Hulbert, Sarah Whittelsey, and Sarah Spencer life members.³¹

Massachusetts had several female societies in Brookfield, Danville, Sherburne, Newburyport, Springfield, Andover, Dedham, and Boston. Yet very little is known about these groups as well. Brookfield, Danville, and Sherburne seem to have existed for a short time in the early 1830s. Interest in Andover did not commence until the end of the 1830s, after which the women primarily gave their small sums to the Massachusetts Colonization Society and its educational efforts in Liberia. Newburyport women organized in 1833 at the same time a male auxiliary formed. From 1837 to 1849, the Newburyport women contributed annually between

³⁰ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 14 (July 1840): 224.

³¹ *African Repository* 26, no. 12 (December 1850): 381; 28, no. 4 (April 1852): 125; 29, no. 1 (January 1853): 31.

\$30 to \$60. They would continue to give money to the ACS into the 1870s but less frequently. Harriet Sanborn led the group for over three decades, serving at different times as secretary and treasurer. She bequeathed \$70 to the ACS at her death 1887. In the 1840s the group selected four prominent women as life members. Zilpah Grant, the nationally renowned educator and resident of Newburyport, was made a life member in 1849. That same year Mary Greenleaf was made a life member. Greenleaf would leave \$300 to the ACS when she died in 1854. Harriet Sanborn and Jemima Titcomb were also made life members along with Rev. Jonathan Stearns, Rev. William Horton, and Rev. W.W. Ells.³²

The Springfield, Massachusetts, female auxiliary organized in 1832.

Significant interest did not begin, however, until 1839, when “several Ladies...much interested in the Colonization cause” held a fair on New Year’s Eve. Without much advertisement the event was well attended, and the group raised more than \$200. In the coming year, the women raised another \$80, giving \$60 to the Ladies’ Liberian Association in Philadelphia for education in the colony and \$210 directly to the ACS. The next year’s New Year’s Eve fair raised \$350 of which they donated \$70 to the Ladies’ Liberian Association. The success of the Springfield women’s fundraising led the ACS to praise their “noble work” and the sacrifices made “to promote the welfare” of the colonization effort as well as earning the public thanks of the Ladies’ Liberian Association for aiding the association in “the time of their greatest need.”³³

³² *African Repository* 13, no. 10 (October 1837): 328; 18, no. 23 (December 1841): 367; 20, no. 11 (November 1844): 350; 24, no. 1 (January 1848): 30-31; 25, no. 11 (November 1849): 351; 30, no. 10 (October 1854):319; 46, no. 8 (August 1870): 249; 64, no. 2 (April 1888): 74.

³³ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 3 (February 1840): 44; 16, no. 11 (June 1840): 166; 17, no. 2 (January 1841): 27-28; *Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies’ Liberia School Association*,11; *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies’ Liberia School Association*, 10.

Like the Springfield women, the women of Dedham and Boston gave to both the ACS and educational efforts in Liberia. They did not declare themselves to be colonization auxiliaries, however, but educational associations. The “Dedham Female Society for educating heathen youth in Africa” began donating money to the ACS or the Massachusetts Colonization Society in 1834 and continued to raise small amounts of funds until 1848. In 1836, the Boston women united with the women of New York, both of which were auxiliaries to New York City’s Colonization Society (NYCCS), to promote education in Liberia. According to their first annual report, the purpose of the “Boston Ladies’ Society for promoting Education in Africa” was to “support one teacher in the...High School” in Liberia.

The women of Boston supported the efforts of colonization through its connection with the Massachusetts Colonization Society, New York City’s Colonization Society, and the Ladies’ Liberian Association. Like most female colonization societies, the Boston society claimed some of Boston’s most respected citizens. Their president was the wife of Episcopal bishop and Massachusetts State Colonization Society leader, Rev. Alexander Griswold. Its secretary was Sarah Hale, the editor of *Godey’s Ladies’ Book* and author of numerous books including *Liberia*, a novel that explicitly promoted colonization. For a time, Hale also served as manager of the New York City female society, although a resident in Boston. A fact that illuminates the importance female societies placed on having prominent women associated with their cause. The eight vice presidents of the Boston group were the wives of Boston’s leading clergymen. In 1839, the society held its third annual meeting at which Bishop Griswold presided and Eliot Cresson, the leader of

Pennsylvania's colonization society, gave the address. The last known donation came in 1840, when the Boston women gave \$100 to Philadelphia's Ladies' Liberian Association. It is unclear what happened to the group after 1840. It is conceivable that the society continued to raise money for the Massachusetts Colonization Society's efforts for education in Liberia.³⁴

Female Fundraising Efforts

The monetary contributions of females, while mostly small, collectively provided important assistance to a movement that was often plagued by debt and controversy. James Finley, son of the Rev. Robert Finley, acknowledged the financial debt the colonization movement owed to women even in the 1820s. "The American Colonization Society is indebted to female benevolence and influence, for much of its success; without their aid it would hardly have been sustained," he insisted. At the beginning of the 1840s, male leaders continued to acknowledge the important pecuniary role of women. "Nothing has afforded us more encouragement...in this time of universal distress for money, when men's hearts are failing them, and we had begun to fear that our resources would be cut off" than the generosity of the "ladies' societies." The *African Repository* singled out the Female Colonization Society of Georgetown, D.C., and saluted their "ardor and determination of spirit" during a time of "great changes and fluctuations...in the monetary affairs of

³⁴ *Colonization Herald* 2, no. 42 (December 17, 1836); *First Annual Report of the Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa*, 4; *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Liberian Association of New York*, 4; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10, no. 5 (July 1834): 149 "Education in Africa," 1-3.

our country.” The women had just paid the seventh installment of \$100 on their pledge of \$1,000.³⁵

As women did throughout the 1820s, individuals continued to support colonization with large and small donations, although large legacies and gifts remained one of the most important fund-raising sources for the ACS. Women in New York City gave over \$2,000 to the male New York City Colonization Society (NYCCS). In the years 1837-1839, women conferred another \$2,500 in individual donations to designate themselves life members of the NYCCS. Elizabeth and Sarah Waldo, unmarried sisters from Worcester, Massachusetts, inherited a sizable fortune from their merchant father. By 1827, each was worth more than \$35,000. Known for their piety and intellect, the two devoted thousands of dollars to the Massachusetts Colonization Society. In 1844, they gave \$2,000, “for the purchase of territory” in Africa in which to build a college. The following year at the annual meeting, the leaders of the Massachusetts Colonization Society publicly thanked the women and passed a resolution that “their example deserves the serious consideration of all to whom Divine Providence has entrusted the ability to give liberally.” When the sisters died, they left a total of \$13,000 to the ACS.³⁶

³⁵ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 3 (February 1840): 44; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 2 (January 1840): 27.

³⁶ *Fifth Annual Report of the New York City Colonization Society* (New York: Alexander Gould, 1837), 41-42; *Eighth Annual Report of the New York City Colonization Society* (New York: Alexander Gould, 1840), 35-37. *Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1846; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 7; *Thirty-fifth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1856; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 6. For Elizabeth and Sarah Waldo’s contributions see the *Annual Reports of the Massachusetts Colonization Society, 1842-1847* at the Massachusetts Historical Society; Carolyn J. Lawes, *Women and Reform in a New England Community, 1815-1860* (Lexington: University of Press of Kentucky, 2000), 11. Lawes discusses the Waldo sisters in reference to their controversial petition to remove the pastor of the First Congregational Church in Worcester in 1815.

Regardless of the size of the donation, the *African Repository* would list individual contributors in its magazine pages. Printing the names of small and large donors encouraged the image of a national benevolent movement in which women of all classes might participate—from the sewing circles in obscure villages to the wealthy New York City elites. In one issue Betsey Scott of Minot, Maine, was listed next to Francian Cheston from West River, Maryland. Scott gave twenty-five cents and Cheston six hundred dollars, but each had the pleasure of being acknowledged in print.³⁷

Women supported colonization in a variety of ways other than through individual contributions or joining female colonization auxiliaries. Some women worked through mission societies to support colonization efforts. As a natural extension of church activity, this activity required no radical deviation from traditional expectations of women's obligations. Indeed, women aided missionary efforts around the globe in a variety of ways. For example, in 1831 the Methodist Female Missionary Society of New York City donated \$100 to the Young Men's Missionary Society of New York with the expressed purpose that "it be expended in the contemplated mission to Liberia." Tying together women's role in global missions, New York's corresponding secretary, Gabriel Disoway, equated female assistance of the Native American with that of the African. "From the shades of domestic privacy," delighted the corresponding secretary Gabriel Disoway, "we rejoice in their exertions," for just like the "red man of our forests" Africa has not "stretched forth her hands in vain." The Young Men's Missionary Society of New

³⁷ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 8, no. 11 (January 1833): 350.

York City, an auxiliary to the Missionary Society of the Methodist Church, directed all its attention and funds to “the colony of Liberia.”³⁸

Nevertheless, many of these missionary groups were an extension of colonization efforts. The president of the New York missionary society, Dr. David M. Reese, was a manager of the NYCCS, and Gabriel Disoway sat on the executive committee of the NYCCS. Other members of the mission society were equally fervent colonization supporters. Manager John Newland Maffitt, for example, New England’s spell-binding Methodist preacher, compared colonization’s “radiant influence” to a rainbow, “insufferably bright, spanning the sombre clouds of human wrong that have accumulated on the horizon of our country’s prosperity.”

Some women chose to support colonization through established female organizations. Benevolent ladies societies, gleaning societies, sewing circles, charitable societies, schools, and education societies gave small sums of \$5 to \$30 annually. Sometimes, however, they contributed large amounts. In 1831 a group of ladies in Morristown, New Jersey, held a fair that raised \$200 for the ACS, and three years later the Female Education Society of New York gave \$800 to the ACS. Often groups of churchwomen raised \$30 or more to make their minister a lifetime member of a state society of the ACS. The New York City Colonization Society received, for example, a total of \$6,450 “principally by the ladies of their respective churches” to constitute their ministers life members of the NYCCS society.³⁹

³⁸ John Newland Maffitt, *A Plea for Africa: A Sermon delivered at Bennet Street Church, in behalf of the American Colonization Society, July 4, 1830* (Boston: Putnam & Hunt, 1830), 11.

³⁹ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 7, no. 7 (September 1831): 291, 10, no. 5 (July 1834): 160, 17, no. 2 (January 1841): 27; *Eighth Annual Report of the New York City Colonization Society* (New York: Alexander Gould, 1840), 40-43.

Male colonization leaders suggested that women exemplified spiritual decorum and gender propriety by making a minister a lifetime member. Moreover, leaders looked to this form of fundraising as a way to enlist ministerial support. Rev. George Bethune best summarized this attitude when he asserted that women “have not merely flung their money into our treasury, but with true woman’s tact and delicacy, they have associated their gift with the persons of those who have broken to them the bread of life; and who, under the Divine Spirit, have taught them to practice these deeds of mercy.” Bethune compared the minister who had been “honoured and blessed” by the women of his congregation to a medieval knight. As a knight went into battle with the scarf of his lady as a reminder for whom he fought, so the minister “bears a scarf upon his arm, which pledges him to labour and conflict in this good cause.”⁴⁰

It appears that many ministers valued life membership in the ACS, and membership worked to enlist ministerial supporting local churches. Rev. John Cookson, Middletown’s Baptist minister, was so anxious to receive his lifetime member certificate that when he had not received it for some months, he wrote a letter to Rev. Thomas Gallaudet, the secretary of the Connecticut State Colonization Society, asking him if he might have the “means of obtaining the certificate.” In the years following 1830 several of Middletown’s ministers raised money in their churches for the female colonization society. Rev. John R. Crane, the pastor of the

⁴⁰ *Colonization Herald* 1, no. 27 (21 May 1836): 405.

First Congregational Church, was especially helpful, raising several hundred dollars in offerings in 1832, 1833, 1835, and 1837.⁴¹

In their efforts to recruit women, colonization agents and leaders intentionally concentrated on churches, addressing ministerial associations, speaking from the pulpits of all denominations, and soliciting ministers to do the same. Utilizing sacred space legitimized the colonization platform and reinforced the moral and religious imperative claimed by its advocates. It also ensured that women would hear the message. There was no more desirable venue for encouraging the female presence than a lecture at church. Women were the majority of most congregations, and felt comfortable in the space. Furthermore, support of colonization through a local church required no departure from conventional assumptions of women in connection with Christian duties. In the fashion of itinerant preachers sent out to spread the gospel message, agents canvassed the nation spreading the message of colonization. Although the percentage of money given by women remains unknown, thousands of dollars were raised each year in churches of all denominations.

⁴¹ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 6 (August 1829): 190, 6, no. 7 (September 1830), 224, 8, no. 9 (October 1832): 254, 9, no. 11 (January 1834): 350, 10, no. 7 (September 1834): 224, 11, no. 10 (October 1835): 320, 12, no. 11 (November 1836): 360, 13, no. 10 (October 1837): 328, 16, no. 1 (January 1840): 16, 16, no. 15 (August 1840): 240; John Cookson, Middletown, CT, to Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, Hartford, CT, 27 November 1830, ACS Papers.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1830s, colonization had gained a substantial female following. Male and female colonizationists argued that women were indispensable participants in the effort to colonize Africa and should play a public role in promoting the cause of colonization. Colonization rhetoric upheld traditional concepts of womanhood even as it asserted that women shared with men an intense interest in racial relations and the well being of the country. Moreover, female colonization supporters interpreted their role in global terms. Just as women had an obligation to extend benevolence to America's disadvantaged, so too, women had a duty to minister to the moral and religious condition of those in locations outside America.

However, over the 1830s enemies of colonization multiplied both in the North and South, and internal strife plagued the society. During the 1840s female interest in colonization declined as overall public concern declined and the strife-torn, debt-ridden ACS fought for its existence. Financial problems beleaguered the society, abolition organizing successfully damaged its solutions, and African Americans were virtually united in their opposition. It is in this context that female participation began to unravel. Some female groups continued to gather donations, but annual receipts fluctuated and many groups dissolved.

Chapter Four “She Has Done What She Could”

The mobilization of white women that began in the late 1820s peaked in the 1830s and culminated, not in the formation of a widespread colonization movement among women, but in active support of denominational missions to Africa. During the 1840s women struggled to make sense of their role in colonization. By the end of the decade only a handful of female societies continued to operate, and group remittances by women became rare in the 1850s. Most women’s organizations disappear from the historical record in the 1850s. Those that continued found that *The African Repository* no longer publicized their work. That women seem to “disappear” from colonization records parallels the larger trend in reform work in the 1850s in which women, in general, were less prominent. Female reform groups increasingly became institutionalized and looked to government—state and federal—for aid. Yet, despite the growing invisibility of women in the colonization movement, women’s work for colonization did not end. Wealthy females continued to leave large legacies, and individual women continued to send financial donations to state societies and the ACS.

Several factors unique to the colonization movement help explain the rise and decline of female patronage. A detailed look at female societies in two northeast cities and one community in the West show that the rise and decline of female auxiliary support for colonization in the north must be understood within several contexts: the rising level of racial hostility in northern cities and towns, the militant antislavery agitation initiated by William Lloyd Garrison in the 1830s, an impecunious and strife-

torn ACS forced to restructure and redirect its energies, and the growth in denominational mission activity in Liberia. All these factors contributed to the societies' focus and ultimately weakened its ability to maintain female auxiliary support for the colonization movement.

The Context

In 1825, five years after the first settlement was established in Liberia, the ACS approved a constitution that gave the organization full governing powers over the colony. Liberia, then, was neither an American protectorate nor a sovereign state. The ACS, a private corporation, administered the colony and appointed colonial agents whose appointment neither the government nor the public controlled. As such, Liberia occupied an anomalous position in the international world, and its unusual status created friction between the United States and other countries as well as conflict between the ACS and the United States government. In 1846 the ACS withdrew all political connections with Liberia. In 1847 Liberian leaders drew up a Declaration of Independence and a new constitution modeled on the documents of the United States. It was adopted July 26, 1847, and ratified on September 1, 1847. The first president of Liberia took office on January 3, 1848.¹

The move to grant Liberian independence was in part a response to growing international tensions regarding the relationship between the United States and Liberia. For example, when Liberia tried to exercise the right to levy taxes and control trade, it encountered hostility from Great Britain. The British Minister wrote the U.S. Secretary of State, "in order to avert for the future serious trouble and

¹ Charles H. Wesley, "Recognition of Haiti and Liberia as Independent Republics," *The Journal of Negro History* 2, no. 4 (October 1917): 369-386.

contention...Her Majesty's government should be accurately informed what degree of official patronage and protection, if any, the United States Government extend to the colony of Liberia." In response, the Secretary of State said that Liberia was to the United States "an object of peculiar interest," but it was also responsible for its own acts.²

Liberian independence also freed the ACS of its greatest financial liability, Liberia, and inspired its leaders to more focused work. The organization adjusted its message to accommodate its new role as an emigration agency rather than a colonizing project. Leaders stressed the political and economic benefits rather than the missionary aspects of colonization and touted the remarkable progress of the new nation. While the ACS continued to appeal to benevolence, after 1847 the emphasis shifted in a decidedly political direction.³

State governments showed renewed interest in the ACS plan and backed up their support with legislation and funds. In 1850 the Virginia Legislature appropriated \$30,000 annually for five years to support emigration. In 1852 several free state legislatures made appropriations to aid colonizing efforts. New Jersey set aside \$1,000 a year for two years, and in 1855 increased the appropriation to \$4,000. Pennsylvania agreed to give \$2,000 to emigration efforts. The General Assembly of Indiana passed a bill placing \$5,000 at the disposal of the state authorities for the

² Quotations in J.H. Mower, "The Republic of Liberia," *The Journal of Negro History* 32, no. 3 (July 1947): 268.

³ For example, the thirty-seventh annual report concluded that Liberia occupied an honored place among nations and that "its welfare is desired...its commerce is valuable and sought after...its productions are rich and abundant...[and] money may be made there and fortunes accumulated." J.B. Latrobe came to a similar conclusion. He argued that the extension of American commerce and the opening of another market for American productions and manufactures would encourage the federal government to take an interest in the nation. At the same time, the prospect that "money may be made...and fortunes accumulated" will inspire African Americans to emigrate. *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 12, 29.

purpose of removing African Americans from their state. The Maryland legislature renewed its aid in 1852, reserving \$10,000 a year for six years to aid Maryland's colonization society. In 1855 Missouri passed an act appropriating \$3,000 a year for ten years to help the Missouri's state society. In 1856 the Kentucky legislature pledged \$5,000 annually, without limitation of time, to aid colonization.⁴

Inspired by the state legislatures' actions, the ACS once again looked to the federal government for aid. The society was jubilant when prominent politicians like Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, and Henry Clay publicly commended the society's work and called for federal appropriations for African colonization. The ACS appealed to Congress to make a mail contract with the society to support a steamship line that would carry both freight and emigrants four times a year to Liberia.⁵ The society also pressed the United States to recognize the newly independent republic of Liberia. The ACS did not succeed in either of these efforts but did persuade Congress to continue to appropriate money to the Navy to resettle recaptured Africans from seized slave ships. In 1855 Congress also agreed to establish a consulate at Monrovia.⁶

At the same time, Liberian independence encouraged some African Americans to reassess their views on colonization even as a series of devastating

⁴ *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C., 1854; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 10-12; *Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C., 1857; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 6; *Fortieth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, Washington, D.C., 1858; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 8.

⁵ The ACS proposed two options. First, the government would pay the ACS to deliver the mail to Liberia four times a year. The ACS would use the money to build its own steamship. Second, the Navy would make four voyages a year to Liberia carrying mail, allowing room for emigrants. *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 11. The U.S. finally recognized Liberia in .

⁶ Staudenraus, 246. The United States recognized Liberia as an independent republic in 1862. England recognized Liberia in 1848 and France in 1852.

political defeats prompted others to question their future in the United States.⁷ From 1848 to 1854 the ACS chartered forty-one ships and sent nearly 4,000 African Americans to Liberia. Between 1848 and 1860, the ACS sent 5,856 emigrants, one thousand more than the society had sent during the previous twenty years. Annual receipts increased from \$29,000 in 1847 to \$97,000 in 1851 and \$160,000 in 1859.⁸

At the same time that the ACS looked toward government and away from benevolence, Liberian missions developed and progressed. After twenty-five years of hardship, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, and Baptists had established viable mission stations and were devoting tens of thousands of dollars each year to the cause. In 1851 the Methodist Church appropriated \$22,000 to Liberia, twice the amount given to their other foreign mission stations. That same year, the Episcopal Church devoted \$14,226, nearly half its total foreign mission income, to Liberian missions. Education was an important aspect of mission activity in Liberia, and supporters believed it foundational for mission work to succeed. “I scarcely need to say,” wrote Melville Cox, a Methodist missionary in Liberia, “that in all uncivilized countries, but little progress can be made in religion or learning unless they go hand in hand.” Male and female missionaries started schools immediately upon arriving in Liberia. *The Biblical Repository* reported “four times as much missionary money is

⁷ The most important political defeats that accelerated emigration include the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, and the Dred Scot decision in 1857.

⁸ *Thirty-Second Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (Washington, D.C.: 1849; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 23; *Thirty-Third Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 15; *Thirty-Fourth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 33; *Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 36; *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 32; *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 43; *Thirty-Eighth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 47; *Thirty-Ninth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 25; *Fortieth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 29; *Forty-First Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 60; *Forty-Second Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 43; *Forty-Third Annual Report of the American Colonization Society*, 51; Staudenraus, p. 251.

laid out upon their [West Africa] schools...as upon any other people of the same size on the face of the earth.” In 1852, Methodists reported fourteen day-schools with nearly 300 students; the Southern Baptists reported six schools with over 350 students. Joseph Tracy estimated that the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and northern Baptist missions in Liberia operated another nineteen schools with approximately six hundred students as well as three high schools.⁹

Colonization in the City: Philadelphia and New York City

Generally the most active northern colonization societies were in cities along the Atlantic seaboard from Philadelphia to New York City to Newburyport, Massachusetts. While there were colonization organizations in rural communities, villages, and small towns, it was the larger communities with greater numbers of “ignorant, vicious and unhappy” African Americans that attracted the strongest colonization support.¹⁰ If abolitionism most often flourished in the country—the rural villages and towns—where few, if any, African Americans resided, colonization thrived in areas with large or growing numbers of free African Americans and in cities where a close economic connection existed with the South.

Philadelphia, for example, had a large and growing African American population that was becoming more organized and vocal in the 1830s. As the southernmost northern city, thousands of African Americans freed from slavery or fleeing it came to Philadelphia. By 1830, Philadelphia was the most important urban

⁹ *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal* 22, no. 21 (21 May 1851): 82; *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion's Herald* 7, no. 47 (July 1833); “Missions in West Africa,” *The Biblical Repository and Princeton Review* 30, no. 3 (July 1858): 440; *The African Repository* 28, no. 6 (June 1852): 177; *Proceedings of the Board of Missions of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society* (Hartford, CT, 1851): 23, ECA.

¹⁰ This is Ralph Gurley's estimation of free African Americans, see Staudenraus, 117.

center of free blacks in the country. The city also was a major manufacturing center with deep economic connections with the South. Philadelphia was a center of cotton textile production and the home of a multitude of manufacturers who depended on cotton textiles from the South. The city also supplied southerners with machines and manufactured goods. Philadelphia even claimed slave owners as residents. Although Philadelphia was the home of the first abolitionist society, founded in 1775, the economic link that developed between the city and the South in the first quarter of the nineteenth century sapped Philadelphia's antislavery impulse. Complicating matters, the city was suffering the consequences of rapid growth and industrialization including religious, ethnic, and racial tensions. Fueled by racial prejudice from the middle and upper classes, tensions ignited in the 1830s and flourished in the 1840s as immigrants and African Americans vied for work in Philadelphia¹¹

The city's Quaker population instigated Philadelphia's early antislavery impulse. Nearly all American Quakers opposed slavery during the nation's early years, yet two different approaches to solving the problem of slavery emerged in the 1820s. Differences over how to treat slavery emerged as a result of some Quakers who had made their accommodation with the emerging industrial world or had softened their stance as residents in slave owning states. Differences also emerged in the context of an internal battle within the Society of Friends. In 1827, American Quakers experienced a bitter schism, known as the Hicksite schism, after a group of Quaker reformers separated themselves from the main body of Friends and formed their own independent meeting during the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in April. The

¹¹Gary Nash, *First City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 144-171; 176-198. For more information on Philadelphia see Emma Lapsansky-Werner, *Neighborhoods in Transition: William Penn's Dream and Urban Reality* (New York: Garland, 1994).

Philadelphia schism reverberated around the country. By the end of the decade there were two factions of Quakers with two different responses to slavery. The majority, known as the “Orthodox” party for their attachment to traditional Protestant doctrines, embraced colonization as a means of gradually ending slavery. The other faction acquired the label “Hicksite” for their sympathy with the ministry and teaching of New York Quaker Elias Hicks. Hicksite Quakers nearly universally opposed colonization and commonly served as the core of immediate abolition societies.¹²

In Philadelphia, Hicksite Quakers were prominent among those joining Garrison’s American Anti-Slavery Society, and comprised between sixty and seventy percent of the known Quakers in Philadelphia’s antislavery societies during the 1830s.¹³ Philadelphia’s Orthodox Quakers, on the other hand, were prominent among those joining the Pennsylvania Colonization Society and the Ladies’ Liberian Association. Other prominent Quaker families such as the Cope, Perot, Morris, Wistar, and Coates families supported the Ladies’ Liberian Association.¹⁴ Perhaps the best-known Quaker colonizationist was Eliot Cresson. Born in Philadelphia in 1796, he acquired a fortune as a merchant and then made colonization his life work. He was the leading figure of the Pennsylvania Young Men’s Society at Philadelphia, the state’s independent colonization movement. He also served as an agent for the American Colonization Society.¹⁵

¹² Bruce Dorsey, “Friends Becoming Enemies: Philadelphia Benevolence and the Neglected Era of American Quaker History,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 1 (Autumn 1998), 395-96.

¹³ Jean R. Soderlund, “Priorities and Power: The Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society,” in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women’s Political Culture in Antebellum America*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John Van Horne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 69-70; Dorsey, 425.

¹⁴ See the *Ladies’ Liberian Association Annual Reports*, 1833-1841.

¹⁵ Kurt Lee Kocher, “A Duty To America and Africa: A History of the Independent African Colonization Movement in Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania History* (April 1984): 118-153.

It is in the context of Philadelphia's religious and economic realities, racial violence, and the growing organizational efforts of abolitionists that the American Colonization Society thrived in the 1830s and early 1840s. Most white Philadelphians supported colonization and were appalled by the militant antislavery agitation spreading across the north and the violence that had erupted in their own streets. To raise money the Philadelphia colonization societies exploited white northerners' fears. John Breckinridge, president of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society in Philadelphia and secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, argued that it was their duty to "stave off the Goths and vandals of Garrisonism."¹⁶ As Gary Nash has noted, few Philadelphia ministers after 1830 preached against slavery because their congregations were filled with southern-born parishioners and individuals whose well-being depended on slave labor. Instead, many ministers adopted the position of Albert Barnes, the pastor Philadelphia's First Presbyterian Church, who argued that slavery was one of several evils plaguing America and that ministers should focus their sermons on issues "which are near and not those that are remote."¹⁷ The Presbyterian Synod of Philadelphia condemned abolitionists as "reckless of consequence, and desperate in spirit," and warned that abolition success would "rend the Church and the Union in twain." The synod urged pastors and churches to unite behind the "great redeeming cause of African colonization."¹⁸ By the middle of the 1830s, Philadelphia was the headquarters of an energetic

¹⁶ Staudenraus, 235.

¹⁷ Nash, 189; Quoted in Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Philadelphia Protestantism and Social Reform," *Pennsylvania History* 30 (1963): 197.

¹⁸ *The Philanthropist* 1, no. 1 (1 January 1836).

independent state colonization society and the home of at least three separate women's colonization groups.

The story was much the same in New York City. Despite the great differences in culture and history, New York City and Philadelphia were similar in many ways. Like Philadelphia, New York City was a large city with a constant stream of European immigrants and manumitted and fugitive slaves arriving in the city to compete for jobs. Like Philadelphia, New York City had a large free black population. Although later overtaken by the Philadelphia black community, for the first few decades of the nineteenth century, New York's black population was the largest in America.¹⁹ The city also endured race riots. During the summer of 1834 riots exploded in New York City. On July 4, whites broke up an antislavery meeting in Chatham Street Chapel shouting colonization vows. Five days later a slavery debate in Clinton Hall ended in rioting. The next day, rioters demolished Lewis Tappan's house, destroyed black homes and three churches, including St. Philip's where pews and organ were burned in the street. The riots invigorated abolitionists who blamed the ACS for the new wave of anti-black sentiment even as New York City colonization supporters denied any responsibility for the riots which, they argued, were the natural consequence of abolitionists' dangerous and incendiary practices.²⁰

The abolitionist onslaught that both cities experienced encouraged their city's colonization societies to pursue independent action from the ACS in late 1834.

Leaders of the New York City Colonization Society (NYCCS) and the Young Men's

¹⁹ Ralph Donald Carter, "Black American or African: The Response of New York City Blacks to African Colonization, 1817-1841" (Ph.D. diss., Clark University, 1974), 44-46.

²⁰ Staudenraus, 227-228; Richard, *Gentlemen of Property*, 43, 69, 113-122

Colonization Society of Philadelphia (YMCS) believed the ACS's reluctance to broaden its constitutional objectives to include the gradual abolition of slavery had alienated many of its northern constituents. They hoped to attract the support of those who were dissatisfied with the ACS's confusing position on slavery and disturbed by the radical tactics and uncompromising attitude of the abolitionists. YMCS and NYCCS leaders believed a compromise position would guarantee the allegiance of thousands of northerners who remained uncommitted to either colonization or abolition. The only way to assume a more vigorous antislavery stand was to separate from the national organization. John Breckinridge recognized the ACS could not "come out against slavery" without departing from its "single, simple sublime idea of colonizing free blacks on the African coast," and maintained that free state colonizationists could take a firm antislavery stand "without involving the parent society" in any embarrassment "with the south."²¹

Inept financial management was another factor that drove colonization supporters in Philadelphia and New York toward autonomy from the ACS. They did not want their resources applied to the enormous debt of the ACS. When the seventeenth annual meeting of the ACS convened in January 1834, the ACS managers confessed that the society's debt exceeded \$40,000, and donations were dropping too. To restore public confidence and increase collections ACS managers admitted the society had overextended its treasury in chartering ships, buying supplies, and transporting hundreds of emigrants. In 1832, 796 emigrants sailed to Liberia, the largest number the society would ever send in one year. The managers

²¹ John Breckinridge, Philadelphia, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, 15 January 1835, ACS Papers; Staudenraus, 234-35.

also conceded that they overestimated public benevolence and bemoaned the economic panic that had swept the country because of the national bank crisis. Rather than quell discontent, however, colonizationists in Philadelphia and New York City resolved to separate from the ACS and establish their own settlement in Liberia. The societies pledged continued loyalty to the ACS, but refused to remit any money until their new settlement was thriving. By the end of 1834 the YMCS and NYCCS had founded Bassa Cove.

The ACS opposed such a step toward independence. Maryland had already removed itself from the national movement, and ACS leaders feared the consequences of losing the funds raised for colonization from the two states. After extensive negotiations in Washington, the Philadelphia and New York societies agreed to remit 30 percent of their collections to the parent society. In addition, they promised to increase their annual contribution to 50 percent after Bassa Cove was securely established. In exchange, the ACS recognized the area of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania as the exclusive fund-raising domain of the YMCS and NYCCS.²²

The YMCS and NYCCS approached their new responsibilities with remarkable fervor. On May 11, 1835, the two societies officially united in their object to establish a “new and model Colony on the coast of Africa” located at Bassa Cove. Each group hired agents to canvass their state for financial contributions and rally support. The YMCS published their own newspaper in 1834, the *Colonization Herald*, designed to communicate a stronger antislavery position than the *African Repository*. Agents and the newspaper were not the only source of publicity that the

²² Staudenraus, 234-237.

groups employed. They distributed circulars, urged other newspaper editors and ministers to promote the cause, and took out advertisements in the papers.²³

Male leaders of the YMCS and NYCCS looked to secure female support and encouraged women to engage in colonization activity as an attempt to gain the favor of northern moderates. Women would also help establish a colony of high moral character by supporting educational efforts. Elliott Cresson, the founder of the YMCS, believed women were crucial to their success and wanted maximum effort expended to organize women for “the various features of our enterprise—some for missions—some for schools—some for erecting a particular Church.” The *Colonization Herald* filled its pages with accounts of women’s work for colonization such as the YMCS’s 1837 annual report that noted “wherever the voice of humanity calls, there is woman to respond like a ministering angel, to pity and relieve.” In an address to the New York City Colonization Society, Rev. George Bethune compared the New York women’s generosity to the woman who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume. “We may say of these ladies,” asserted Bethune, “what one said to a woman who had done him [Jesus] a sweet service—‘She has done what she could’... these Christian ladies have rocked the cradle of a nation.” In a circular, Alexander Proudfit, the agent and corresponding secretary of the NYCCS appealed to female church members to designate their pastors either life members or directors of the NYCCS. “Will you not, madam, strengthen our hands, and aid the cause of Colonization,”

²³ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 11, no. 7 (July 1835): 214.

asked Proudfit, “and thus you may bring on you and yours the blessing of many an African ‘who is ready to perish, without God, and without hope.’”²⁴

The two most influential northern female colonization societies were auxiliaries of the YMCS and NYCCS. Their respective state societies encouraged and aided the Ladies’ Liberian Association of Philadelphia and The Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa. Often the state society worked closely with the female auxiliary. For example, Quakers Edward Y. Hankinson and wife were among the first white settlers sent to Bassa Cove. The Philadelphia Ladies’ Liberian Association sent the couple as teachers of a new manual labor school, but Edward Hankinson was also to assume the position of governor of the colony. Early that year, the women of New York sent two male teachers to Bassa Cove. One teacher was Josiah F.C. Finley, a graduate of Princeton and son of Robert Finley, the ACS founder. The other was Israel Searl, a graduate of Amherst College, who had been “appointed to take charge of the new settlement” by the NYCCS. Apparently, Searl died soon after arriving in the colony so that Edward Hankinson was sent as the next governor, a position in which he would serve from 1834-1836. Another example of the state society aiding the female auxiliary occurred in 1835 when the New York women employed Dr. Washington Davis as a teacher in one of their schools in Bassa Cove. Davis, an African American, had been educated by the ACS and went to Liberia under the sponsorship of the NYCCS as a physician. Through their close association with the NYCCS, the women heard of Davis’ qualifications and subsequently employed him. A final example took place in

²⁴ Freeman, *Yaradee*, 337; *Colonization Herald* 1, no. 27 (21 May 1836); *Colonization Herald* 1, no. 24 (19 March 1836); Elliot Cresson, Woodstock, VT, to Samuel Wilkeson, New York, 28 November 1838, ACS Papers.

February 1839; the Philadelphia Ladies' Association employed Thomas Buchanan, the Pennsylvania-New York agent who was headed to Bassa Cove to serve as the colony's Governor, to oversee building their high school.²⁵

The Ladies' Liberian Association of Philadelphia

The Ladies' Liberian Association assembled for their first annual meeting on May 7, 1833, in a spirit of optimism. Membership had increased in one year from thirty to nearly 100 women. The early success of the group encouraged leaders to interpret their efforts as part of God's providential plan whereby "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God." They believed their work would lead to a future time when the children of emigrants, trained and nurtured in the "paths of religion and virtue," would spread their faith to the surrounding country and help convert the continent to Christianity.²⁶ Throughout the 1830s the group added to its membership. Between 1834 and 1839 the group averaged 41 new members a year and took in approximately \$1500 per year in donations and subscriptions. Initially the majority of the members and donors were Orthodox Quakers, although Presbyterians and Episcopalians figured prominently.

The first annual report boasted of three schools under the care of the Association, two prosperous female schools with over 100 students, and a recently

²⁵ *Third Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1835), 12-15; *Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1839), 10; *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1841), 7, 10-11; *Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1842), 10-11; *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Liberian Association of New York*, 4-10; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 11, no. 7 (July 1835): 214-221; *African Repository* 48, no. 8 (August 1865): 244.

²⁶ *First Annual Report of the Ladies' Association, Auxiliary to the American Colonization Society* (Philadelphia: Lydia A. Bailey, 1833), 1-8; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 8, no. 6 (August 1832): 190.

established school for Africans rescued by American troops from slave ships. Elizabeth Johnson Thomson and Elizabeth Caesar, two African American teachers with connections to Lydia Sigourney and The Hartford Female African Society, headed the female schools in Monrovia and Caldwell. The Association had also recently employed James Eden, a freedman from Charleston, South Carolina, to operate the school for recaptured Africans in New Georgia. Before leaving South Carolina, Eden was the chairman of a group of free African Americans in Charleston contemplating emigrating to Liberia. Eden was convinced that Africa held the most promise for African Americans. At a meeting on December 6, 1831, he told the group that “the sacrifices that will be made here [Africa] are not worth a thought, when compared with the advantages we will have in Africa. There we and our children will enjoy every privilege, as well as civil and religious liberty.”²⁷ The next year 157 free men, women and children, including Eden, his wife and seven children, left Charleston for Liberia on the ship Hercules. They arrived at Monrovia on January 16, 1833.²⁸ Not long after, the colony’s governor Joseph Mechlin appointed Eden teacher of the school at New Georgia on condition that the Ladies’ Liberian Board approved the governor’s selection. The women confirmed the governor’s choice and by the spring of 1834 the school had over sixty male and female students and

²⁷ *The Friend* 5, no. 38 (30 June 1832).

²⁸ Within ten years at least forty percent of the immigrants had died, including four of Eden’s children and a brother. Tom W. Shick, *Roll of the Emigrants to the Colony of Liberia Sent by the American Colonization Society from 1820-1843*, 1996, available from <http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/Liberia/index.html>; Internet; accessed 15 November 2005; Tom W. Shick, *Liberian Census Data, 1844*, 1996, available from <http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/Liberia/index.html>; Internet; accessed 15 November 2005.

construction had begun for a thatched schoolhouse. Eden would stay at the school until he moved to Monrovia in 1839.²⁹

Confident in their cause, the women began plans to build a high school on Factory Island, a fifty-acre island off the coast of Bassa Cove. At the time, the country had numerous primary schools but no secondary institution. In February 1839, the association gave \$650 dollars to Thomas Buchanan before he left for Bassa Cove to begin building the school.³⁰ In an effort to broaden support for the high school, the association issued a circular that encouraged women throughout the United States to form societies to help raise funds for the school. Issued in May 1839, the circular appealed to female benevolence and explained that all women could embrace the cause regardless of their position on colonization because it was an impartial benevolent cause. Whatever women's "difference of opinion existed on the subject of African colonization," the circular asserted, "few would object to any intelligent plan for elevating the intellectual and moral condition of those already settled on the shores" of Africa.

As a harbinger of things to come, the circular failed to secure the anticipated support. Nevertheless, the women remained confident that "the ladies of America will unite more generally in bestowing their contributions for the cause of education." The ninth annual report believed the lack of support was a consequence of the severe economic depression the country was experiencing in 1839. While they regretted "that but few societies or Associations have been formed from which they may expect

²⁹ *Second Annual Report*, 14-16; *Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1840), 10-12.

³⁰ *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association*, 7-11.

any regular aid in future,” they continued with their plans, believing that women would support the cause when they were able.³¹

The high school on Factory Island was finally in operation in the spring of 1842. By then, however, the Ladies Liberian Association had lost momentum. The society had underestimated the difficulties of building a school thousands of miles away. Dr. Wesley Johnson, a white physician from New York who had first gone to Bassa Cove under the direction of the New York and Pennsylvania colonization societies, was hired as the principal of the school at a salary of \$1,000 a year. Just one year later, in May of 1843, Johnson returned to Hillside, New York, for health reasons; he died two months later.

The women encountered staffing problems as well. After Johnson died, the school was suspended and put under the care of George Seymour, who would later become a well-known African American explorer of Africa. Seymour lived in the building for nearly two years as the society searched for a teacher and raised funds. After almost two years, the society finally found its new teacher named Ishmael Locke, an African American originally from Salem, Massachusetts, and educated at Cambridge University with support from the Society of Friends.³² Immediately upon his arrival at the school in 1845, however, he reported that he was “dissatisfied with

³¹ *The Friend* 12 (May 25, 1839): 272; “Liberia High School,” *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 13 (1 June 1840): 164-169; Elizabeth Morris, Germantown, to Walter Lowerie, New York 7 August 1846, PHS.

³² Before leaving for Liberia, Locke taught school in Salem, Massachusetts and New Jersey. While in Liberia he met and married Sarah Shorter Hawkins, who was from Kentucky. Locke and his wife returned to America around 1849 where he served as headmaster of a school in Providence, Rhode Island and principal of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia. He died in 1854. Locke’s grandson, Alain LeRoy Locke (1885-1954) was a distinguished philosopher who was the first African American Rhodes Scholar and important figure in the “Harlem Renaissance.” See Michael R. Winston, “Locke, Alain LeRoy,” in Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston, eds. *Dictionary of American Negro Biography* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1982) 398-403.

every thing connected” with the school. Locke recommended spending two to three hundred dollars to repair the building. Discouraged and disappointed, the association limped along for another three years, ultimately giving up its educational efforts in Africa in 1848.³³

The Ladies’ Liberian Association had been in slow decline since 1840. That year only ten new members joined the group. The next year only eight joined. While annual subscribers continued to contribute their \$1 annual fee, and a handful of auxiliaries made small payments, donations to the general fund fell off. The group had transferred control of the two girls’ schools and the school in New Georgia to the Methodist mission in 1840. This was done in part to allow the women to focus their efforts on the high school. Certainly financial deficiencies also contributed to the transfer. After the poor report from Locke, the Ladies’ Association offered to transfer the high school on Factory Island to the Presbyterian mission in 1846. The Presbyterian foreign mission board declined the offer to buy the land and school, most likely because of strategic issues related to where the mission board wanted to locate mission stations in Liberia. Instead, the property and school was turned over to the Pennsylvania State Colonization Society in 1848 on condition that it be used for educational purposes. But by 1849 the schoolhouse was in rapid decay. An Episcopal missionary reported that weather and, especially, ants had severely damaged the roofs

³³ “The Ladies’ Liberia School Association, of Philadelphia,” *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 13 (1 June 1840): 167; *Ninth Annual Report of the Ladies Liberia School Association*, 3-8; *Twelfth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies’ Liberia School Association* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1844), 1-10; Elizabeth Morris, Germantown, to Walter Lowerie, New York, 7 August 1846, PHS; *Colonization Herald* 17 (26 February 1845). On George Seymour see James Fairhead, *African American Explorations in West Africa: Four Nineteenth Century Diaries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

and floors, and the formerly well-cultivated grounds were overgrown with bushes, weeds, and brambles.³⁴

The Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa

The rise and decline of female support for colonization was similar in New York City. The Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa formed on December 30, 1833. The group's object was to "prepare and support Christian teachers for the missionary settlement" in Bassa Cove, the newly established colony founded by the New York City Colonization Society (NYCCS) and the Pennsylvania Colonization Society. Like the Philadelphia women, the female society claimed to operate as neutral bystanders in the slavery controversy. They claimed their only interests were missionary and religious benevolence to Africa. Like the group in Philadelphia, their organization was filled with women of prestige. Presiding was Hannah Caldwell, the wife of John Caldwell, one of the founding members of the ACS, and his sister, Esther, the wife of Robert Finley. Other members were Sarah Hale, Mrs. William L. Stone, the wife of the editor of *The Mirror*, Mrs. James Boorman, the wife of the merchant mogul and one of the founders of the Bank of Commerce, Miss Duyckinck a member of the well-known publishing family, and Olevia Phelps, the wife of a Anson Green Phelps, a wealthy merchant who devoted huge sums to benevolent causes including colonization. For officers the New York women selected, among others, Joanne Bethune. Bethune had started the first Sunday School in New York with her husband Divie Bethune, an

³⁴ Elizabeth Morris, Germantown, to Walter Lowerie, New York, 7 August 1846, Mission Correspondence and Reports, Liberia Letters, PHS; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 25, no. 9 (September 1849): 279.

eminent merchant and philanthropist. She was also the mother of Rev. George Bethune, a leader in the NYCCS. Other leaders included Mary Gilbert Colgate, the wife of the rich soap manufacturer who gave large amounts of money to benevolent associations, and Mrs. David Codwise, the wife of the master of chancery at New York City's Franklin Bank.³⁵

During the first several years of existence, the female society prospered. At the end of the first year, the New York women supported four teachers in Liberia. From 1834 to 1837, they collected anywhere from \$1000 to \$1500 annually. The society worked with the women in Philadelphia and Richmond, Virginia, as well as formed auxiliaries in Fishkill, New York, and Concord, New Hampshire. In 1838, the society employed three teachers who collectively taught between 200 and 300 students and helped the Philadelphia Ladies' Liberian Association support Elizabeth Thompson in Cape Palmas. They predicted that their efforts would prove "sufficient to win over the enemies of this blessed cause, and to silence the objections of the most faithless."³⁶

The women supported one school in Monrovia that was taught by Benjamin Van Rensselaer James. James was an African American educated at the Teachers' Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts, who emigrated to Liberia in 1837 as a missionary of the American Board of Foreign Missions. He became highly successful in the colony as a teacher and printer and in 1844 transferred allegiance to

³⁵ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10, no. 5 (July 1834): 149; See also the *First, Second, and Fourth Annual Reports of the Female Society of the City of New-York, for the Support of Schools in Africa*.

³⁶ *Fourth Annual Report of the Female Society of the City of New York, for the Support of Schools in Africa* (New York: J.McLoughlin, 1838): 9.

the Presbyterian Mission. In 1845, the New York women hired James and his wife to teach a school in Monrovia.

By 1847, however, the women struggled to raise money. That year, Joanna Bethune, the director, appealed to New Yorkers: “The question as to whether these labors shall be continued depends on the liberality of the friends of Africa.” Two years later, the women appealed directly to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions for funds. “Much has been said on the difficulties and discouragements of labors for Africa,” wrote Jane McLaughlin the society’s secretary. “This Society appears before you NOT with humiliation, but with thanksgiving.” Yet they needed the Presbyterians’ money. To build a case for support, McLaughlin quoted portions of a letter from B.V.R. James that warned, “We can not depend on this people to do much more for education than they are now doing. They are generally very poor, and very ignorant. Uneducated themselves the majority do not appreciate the importance of education for their children.” Moreover, the new republic was in no position to financially support the school. “To throw this school on the colony now for support,” argued James “would be to destroy it.” Nor could the women simply stop supporting the school, asserted James. To do so would “inflict on this community, one of the greatest injustices it has sustained since the settlement of the Colony.” Equally important, the women found it increasingly difficult to raise funds. In a letter to James, McLaughlin told of the group’s “most strenuous exertions” on behalf of the school. In reply, James hoped that the women would be able to diffuse a “philanthropic spirit into the hearts of those you are associated with in your benevolent works and that you will not in future meet with too much difficulty in

raising adequate means.” McLaughlin and the society hoped that James’s observations concerning the precarious situation of the school as well as the poor financial situation of the New York society might convince the Presbyterian Board to help. Whatever aid was raised was not substantial enough to encourage the women to continue. On April 4, 1850, the Female Society of the City of New York for the Support of Schools in Africa transferred their school to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions.³⁷

An important factor in the decline of both the New York City and Philadelphia female societies was the growth in African missions. Women in both groups understood their role in colonization as principally religious. So as religious bodies increased funds toward education in Liberia and opened and operated more schools, it appeared to the female societies that their own efforts were poor imitations of more successful mission schools. Moreover, the competition for funds made it increasingly difficult for the women to sustain their efforts. Denominations with large memberships, more money, and an established organization did with relative ease what took small, female led groups years to accomplish. For example, it took the females of Philadelphia years of hard work to establish a high school. The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions completed a high school in little over a year. In 1848, the mission decided to begin a high school at Monrovia. One year later, an ironclad building was raised with a library of two thousand volumes of all kinds of historical, scientific, and Latin and Greek classics.³⁸

³⁷*New York Evangelist* 21 (9 May 1850): 74; Jane McLoughlin, New York, to Walter Lowerie, New York, October 1849, PHS.

³⁸*The African Repository* 26, no. 9 (September 1850): 284; 27, no. 1 (January 1851): 3.

Changes in the organization of the ACS also contributed to the decline in female support in Philadelphia and New York City. In 1839 the YMCS and NYCCS agreed to return the ACS under a new constitution that changed the institution from a national organization to a federation of semi-autonomous societies. After the state societies agreed to return the ACS under the new constitution their goals changed.

Initially, the confident YMCS and NYCCS had very high standards for their colony. Only those of high moral character and strong work ethic would be allowed to settle. The code of regulations for Bassa Cove prohibited slavery and the slave trade, the manufacture or sale of alcohol, as well as weapons. The colonists had to provide a certain amount of physical labor to the colony and build houses for the next emigrants. The expectations of relations with the natives was equally stringent, requiring emigrants to treat the natives “with justice and kindness,” educate their children, and pay them fairly for their labor. The aspirations of the YMCS and NYCCS proved unrealistic. The first settlers were not prepared for a surprise attack led by natives that destroyed the settlements in June 1835. Twenty colonists died in the attack, and the rest of the settlers fled to Monrovia. By 1838, the colony was restored but it never thrived. When both societies agreed to return to the ACS under a new constitution, Bassa Cove colony became part of the ACS controlled commonwealth of Liberia. Bassa Cove retained its character as a state-supported venture, and the YMCS and NYCCS reserved the right to appropriate their funds, but the citizens were under the central government headquartered in Monrovia.³⁹

³⁹ Kocher, 131-35; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 15, no. 1 (January 1839): 25; Staudenraus, 241.

After the YMCS and NYCCS returned to the ACS their goals changed. Rather than establish a model colony full of moral, temperate, educated, and religious citizens, the state societies reduced their efforts to sending African Americans from their respective states and supporting the parent society. The reorientation of the YMCS and NYCCS affected women's role in the state societies. Education had been of paramount concern in building the colony. The YMCS and NYCCS looked to females to assist them in this endeavor. But education diminished in importance as the societies narrowed their ambitions.

The West: Greene County, Ohio

In the 1830s the growing number of free African Americans and growing abolition agitation made colonization a popular cause in parts of Ohio. Auxiliaries were located throughout the state, primarily in the lower half of the state in Champaign, Clark, Greene, Miami, Greene, Warren, Clermont, and Hamilton counties in the southwest and Ross, Hocking, Perry, Muskingum, and Licking counties in south central Ohio. White citizens in cities such as Springfield, Dayton, and Cincinnati also supported colonization. In Cincinnati, for example, support for colonization was widely held in the late 1820s and early 1830s as white fears of the rapidly growing black community escalated. Cincinnati's leaders implemented harsh legal pressures to force African Americans out of the city even as white citizens resorted to violence.⁴⁰ However, by the mid-1830s abolitionist efforts in Ohio had created problems for colonizationists. The *African Repository* reported that the

⁴⁰ The most notorious attempt at expulsion came in 1829 when authorities ordered African Americans to pay \$500 good behavior bonds or leave the city within thirty days. Thousands of Cincinnati's African Americans would migrate to Canada and found Wilberforce Colony as a result of the legal measure.

“hostility of abolitionists has been exerted with singular perseverance and violence in Ohio and their efforts have doubtless prevailed to impede, to a certain extent, the progress of Colonization, and to diffuse doubts, suspicions, and sometimes prejudices.” In response, Ralph Gurley toured Ohio to try to muster support for the struggling colonization efforts in the state and “disabuse the public mind of...errors” disseminated by abolitionists. In Cincinnati Gurley found a receptive audience, raised two thousand dollars, and managed to enlist the support of the “wealthy and liberal” as well as the “accomplished ladies.” Gurley wrote, “I am happy to state that many of the very sensible and accomplished ladies of Cincinnati, of various communions, have united in a society to aid the cause of African Colonization.” Gurley predicted “blessed effects” from the formation of the female organization, noting that its leader, Catharine Beecher, had already addressed letters to Governor Buchanan, missionaries in Liberia, and the Ladies’ Liberian Association in Philadelphia inquiring how women in Cincinnati could best aid Liberia.⁴¹

After receiving replies to the letters, Beecher formed the Ladies’ Liberia Association of Cincinnati, and served as its secretary. The group expected to operate as a western counterpart to the Philadelphia association, raising money to support a primary department in the high school being built on Factory Island. The responsibility of directing “the plan of instruction, the selection of teachers, and the general affairs” of the primary department would be “assumed by the Ladies of the West.” In the end, however, the group did not generate interest. Instead, the Cincinnati women contributed funds directly to the Philadelphia association and soon disbanded. In 1842 the “Ladies’ Society of Cincinnati” contributed just \$4 to the

⁴¹ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 15, no. 8 (1 May 1839): 129-130.

effort.⁴² Female auxiliaries were more successful in Springfield, Urbana, and Rutland, Ohio and Greene, Ross, and Warren counties.

The record is silent as to the reasons Beecher's efforts failed in Cincinnati. In general, Cincinnati had a robust contingent of colonization supporters. One possibility is the shadows cast over her by her other activities in the community. Catharine had come to Cincinnati with high hopes to start a school for females that would be a "model to the West," but in the process she had antagonized many of the middle-class and socially ambitious families in Cincinnati to whom the ACS would have appealed. Her father, Lyman, had also alienated religious Cincinnatians with his criticism of what he considered the extravagances of the wealthier families, and his rejection of Old School Presbyterianism. Perhaps colonization was another attempt to restore her damaged image, and when that failed, she abandoned colonization for other projects—specifically writing and developing a program for education in the West.⁴³

One of the Ohio's most reliable auxiliaries was located in Greene County, sixty-five miles north of Cincinnati and fifty-five miles southwest of Columbus. Greene County's African American population was never more than 5.6 percent of the total population. Nevertheless, a significant portion of the white community expressed deep concern over the African American presence in the county. Their anxiety may have been triggered by the fact that since 1810 the African American

⁴² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 13 (1 July 1840): 202-206; *Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association*, 10-11; *Tenth Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Ladies' Liberia School Association*, 10-11.

⁴³ Milton Rugoff, *The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 171-185; Sklar, *Catharine Beecher: A Study in American Domesticity*, 115-26; 168-183

population in Greene County had increased 100 percent every ten years while the white population averaged only a 20 percent increase. White residents living in Xenia, the county seat of Greene County about 20 miles south of the state capital, witnessed an even greater African American growth rate. According to the federal census, Xenia's African American population increased by 462 percent between 1830 and 1850. In 1830, they constituted just 1.8 percent of the city's population. By 1850 African Americans made up 12.3 percent, and in 1860 they comprised 17.2 percent of Xenia's population. While still a minority, these numbers are much larger than major northern cities such as Philadelphia whose African American population never exceeded 10 percent and, in fact, decreased from 8.3 percent in 1830 to 4.8 percent in 1850.⁴⁴

Greene County attracted free African Americans in part because of the anti-slavery sentiment of many of its residents. Greene County boasted multiple stops on the Ohio Underground Railroad, including Wilberforce College, founded in 1856 as the first black-administered institution of higher education in the nation. The Reformed Presbyterian churches that dominated the area in the antebellum years sought action against slavery from the county's beginning. In 1808, Rev. Robert Armstrong—who had left Kentucky with most of his congregation over the issue of slavery—presented a petition from the Greene County Presbyterian congregations at the synod meeting in Philadelphia asking that it consider a resolution to exclude slaveholders from communion. The synod, which included southern congregations in Kentucky and Tennessee, considered the overture without achieving consensus. At

⁴⁴ *The Negroes of Xenia, Ohio: A Social Study* (n.p, n.d), 1011, Greene County Public Library (hereafter GCPL). W.E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1996), 17, 50.

the next synod meeting in 1811, Armstrong publicly responded to the question of whether manumission of slaves by its members should be a precondition for churches that wanted to be considered in communion with the denomination. He argued, “I would as soon dispense the sacred symbols of our holy religion, to the drunkard, the horse thief or debauchee, as to the inveterate and determined slaveholder.” When the question arose in 1826 whether presbyteries and sessions ought to deal with those buying and selling slaves or dealing in bequeathal rights, the Greene County presbytery voted yes, and indicated its disgust that a minister in Tennessee, Rev. James Kennedy, should own slaves. In 1832 the Xenia session supported a synod request for funds to buy the freedom and then support the religious education of Titus Basfield, a black slave.⁴⁵

Antislavery sentiment brought two other prominent Presbyterian pastors out of the South and into Greene County. One was Hugh McMillan, the minister of a Presbyterian church in South Carolina since 1821. His views on slavery encouraged McMillan “to propose to some of his congregation to remove to one of the Free States.” In 1828, he moved with his wife Mary Ann and the antislavery portion of his congregation—eighty in number—to Greene County, where he became pastor of the United Congregations of Xenia and Massie’s Creek Reformed Presbyterian Church.⁴⁶ Rev. Andrew Heron also came to Greene County on account of slavery. A long-time pastor in Rockbridge, Virginia, Heron publicly condemned his congregation’s attitude toward slavery and affirmed the 1831 resolution of the Reformed Presbyterian

⁴⁵ Virginia Rainey, “Into Greene Pastures: Massie’s Creek, Sugar Creek, Xenia Associate Presbyterian Churches, 1798-1991,” unpublished essay, September 1992, pp. 77, 78, 99, 100, GCPL; *Xenia Associate Presbyterian Session Book*, 30 August 1832, GCPL.

⁴⁶“Hugh McMillan Obituary,” *Presbyterian Historical Almanac* 3 (1861): 218; *Xenia Daily Gazette*, 19 April 1888.

Church that declared, “slavery is clearly condemned by the law of God.” Unable to impose his views on the congregation, he resigned his post and accepted the call of Caesar’s Creek Reformed Presbyterian Church in Greene County.⁴⁷

But antislavery sentiment did not translate into radical abolitionism for most Greene County residents. Like so many individuals in northern antebellum communities, many Greene County residents favored ending slavery, but were not anxious to include African Americans in their communities. In fact, McMillian and Heron supported colonization. For over a decade, they led the Greene Country’s Male Colonization Society. McMillan served as president and Heron as secretary.

Typical of colonization supporters, Greene County’s colonization society enjoyed a strong following among the elite. The Greene County papers, *The Gazette* and the *Torch-Light* openly advocated colonization and denounced abolitionism. In fact, the *Torch-Light* editor, Albert Galloway, was a manager of the male colonization society. “The plan of immediate emancipation...as urged by the more zealous abolitionists,” he argued, “we look upon as fraught with infinite mischief and disaster; and, as such, we heartily disapprove of and condemn.” Galloway asserted in 1841 that only “a very small portion of our citizens are able to discover that the policy of immediate emancipation is well grounded; and we class ourself among the members who honestly believe that the efforts of northern abolitionists have only resulted in delaying the day when that blot will be removed.”⁴⁸

Colonization benefited from the support of religious leaders as well. Leaders of the Greene County Colonization Society included Presbyterian ministers as well as

⁴⁷ In 1831 his congregation held 97 slaves, of which 64 regularly worshipped at the church. “Andrew Heron Obituary,” *Evangelical Repository* 12 (1873); Rainey, 100.

⁴⁸ *Torch-Light*, 7 January 1841.

Presbyterian deacons, elders, and clerk of session. Xenia's Methodist Episcopal ministers advocated colonization throughout the 1840s, hosting the annual meeting in their church beginning in 1836. The male society also included prominent citizens such as Alfred Trader, elected County treasurer in 1839 and leader in the Methodist church, and James Gowdy, a wealthy merchant who helped finance three Presbyterian churches in Greene County and served as treasurer of the colonization society for twenty-three years.

The leaders of the female society, likewise, were the wives of prominent Presbyterian ministers and leaders. Jane Steele, the wife of Presbyterian minister and colonization leader Rev. John Steele, served as directress from 1830 until 1837 when she was replaced by another Presbyterian minister's wife. Mary Ann McMillan, the wife of Hugh McMillan, served as secretary for over a decade and managers included Martha Galloway, the wife of James Galloway, the clerk of session in the Sugar Creek Presbyterian Church and a prominent leader in Greene County, Jane Gowdy, and the wife of Rev. Andrew Heron.

Margaret Hyslop was another Presbyterian woman active in Greene County's female colonization society. Hyslop, a woman with a "fine sense of propriety," was a manager of the Female Colonization Society in Greene County. As a manager, her most important role was to encourage others to participate in the society as members and donors. Hyslop's reputation in the community made her an ideal manager. Men and women called Hyslop "the oracle of the neighborhood," because women looked to her for advice on matters of fashion, hospitality, and social concerns. Women

counted on Hyslop's propriety as well as her honesty; she was remembered as not afraid to "speak her mind," even on controversial issues.⁴⁹

Like so many Greene Country colonizationists, Hyslop had ties to the South and slavery. Margaret Greenwood Hyslop was born near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. When she was four, her father moved the family to Rockbridge County, Virginia, in search of more prosperous land. Her father purchased a farm of "considerable value" near the Catawba River and in sight of the Blue Ridge Mountains, but would "have no ownership in slaves." When a slave was left to him as an inheritance, it was recalled that he "unlocked the chain and gave liberty to the captive." A few years after her father died in 1812, she moved with her mother and three sisters and brother to Greene County. The move was precipitated by the belief that slavery had created an "imperious and defiant" situation that left them, as non-slaveholders, in a "perilous" situation. Five years later, she married George Hyslop, an immigrant from Scotland who had become a prosperous farmer in Greene County. His views on slavery are unknown. He was not a member of the local colonization society. Nevertheless as a member of Rev. Robert Armstrong's Associate Presbyterian congregation he would have been inundated with anti-slavery sentiment. George died in 1843 leaving his family "not without comfort" and with "no debts on the estate."⁵⁰

Several female colonization leaders besides Margaret Hyslop had lived in a slave state prior to moving to Greene County, or continued to have familial connections in Kentucky and Virginia. This more intimate connection with slave

⁴⁹ Nancy Hyslop Collins, "Hyslop Family History," (n.d., n.p.), GCPL.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

women may have prompted leaders to draw attention to the African American female. Indeed, the Greene County Female Colonization Society explicitly sought to relieve the condition of the female slave, a distinctive position among northern colonization women who tended to overlook the plight of the slave and focus on African women. “The condition of the colored female in slave countries, and even in free states, is one of heart rending consideration,” asserted the female society in 1836; “Colonization is a work of mercy.” The women believed that just as African American men could not achieve full manhood in America, African American women would only recover their true womanhood in Africa. In their sixth annual report, the women asserted that, “Colonization is a work of mercy towards the colored female...it establishes the relations of domestic life, and elevates the mother to all the sympathies of a parent, and excites her to all the persevering exertions, necessary to the training of the rising generation.” Yet like all colonizationists such sympathy for the African American originated in the conviction that emancipation without colonization was doomed to failure. The Greene County women believed that colonization provided the “only door of hope” for the “free negro...[who] ever has been, and is likely ever to be a stranger, while remaining in this country.”⁵¹

Support from the press, religious leaders, and prominent men and women helped the Greene County Colonization Society raise over \$2,500—or an average of \$116 annually—by 1848. This figure does not include the money individual churches collected in the county. In 1834, for example, the Greene County male and female auxiliaries contributed \$104. That same year Greene County’s Associate Presbyterian churches donated \$121. According to the managers of the male society,

⁵¹ *Torch-Light* 14 July 1836.

the key to the society's longevity was the "female effort" which had "done much to sustain the cause of colonization in our midst."⁵²

Nevertheless the society struggled to enliven the interest of the majority of residents. In 1837 *The Gazette* appealed to the friends of colonization to be more active. "The scheme of colonization recommends itself as a remedy for slavery, not only by its benevolence and equity; but, especially, in that it is practicable, lawful, and...adequate to the treat and proposed—the gradual emancipation of our slave population." In 1841, the annual report of the Greene County society stated that residents in general were not actively supporting the Society.⁵³

The central problem was not that people disagreed with the principles of colonization. The majority of white residents rejected immediate abolition. Xenia's first anti-slavery convention in 1836 provoked strong opposition. A hostile group of white residents collected across the street from the meeting and was stopped only by the action of John McClelland, a blacksmith and pump maker, who stood with a club in hand and guarded the meeting. Although McClelland rejected abolitionism, he believed the group had the right to free speech. The leader of the anti-slavery movement in Xenia was Rev. Samuel Wilson, a one-time colonization supporter and the only Greene County Presbyterian minister who supported abolitionism. Acting against Associate Presbyterian protocol that maintained a meetinghouse was reserved exclusively for worship, Wilson had tried to hold the anti-slavery meeting in his church. After church leaders discovered his plan, they protested and published a signed notice in the local newspaper that read, "We are astonished to see that

⁵² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10, no. 7 (September 1834): 224; 10, no. 8 (October 1834): 256; *Xenia Torch Light*, 11 July 1844.

⁵³ *The Gazette*, 10 January 1837.

Meeting-House selected as the place of meeting...permission has not been given...We mean no disrespect to our brethren or fellow-citizens who differ with us in opinion; but our house cannot be used for any meeting that is calculated to produce political excitement.”⁵⁴ In the end, the meeting was held in Wilson’s backyard.

Another anti-slavery riot occurred in 1841 after a local abolitionist tried to lecture at the Court House in Dayton, ten miles east of Xenia. The mayor and others were able to temporarily restrain the mob, but fighting followed the lecture and several people died in the ensuing violence.⁵⁵

Despite opposition, abolitionists were relentless campaigners and publicists and succeeded in bringing James Birney, William Lloyd Garrison, and Salmon Chase to speak in Xenia. Colonization leaders in a nearby county complained to headquarters concerning the persistent appeal of abolitionism. William Richards of Licking County, two counties northwest of Greene, pleaded for more agents to be sent to his community.

It is a remarkable fact that in our township, containing about two thousand inhabitants there have been taken the past year 694 periodical papers religious, political, scientific, profession and abolition emanating from 120 presses...and but one copy of the African Repository and no other colonization paper at all. Considering this fact and also that the Anti slavery lecturers have for several years past visited us every few weeks or months; sometimes remaining a week or two and lecturing as often as they could collect a congregation it is not to be wondered at that they have gained a strong footing amongst us.

Most damaging, Richards believed, was the false impression the zealous abolitionist left in the community. “At times their clamour has been so great as to induce some to

⁵⁴ Colonization meetings were also forbidden to meet in Presbyterian churches, although on at least one occasion they meet on the lawn in back of one of the Presbyterian churches. Until 1848, the Methodist church hosted the annual meeting.

⁵⁵ *The Gazette*, 25 August 1836; George F. Robinson, *History of Greene County, Ohio* (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1902), 710-712.

suppose that they had a majority of the township. Yet we find...that they have less than ninety male members.”⁵⁶

Colonization leaders understood that the only answer to abolition was an equally intensive campaign. The problem, however, was that the ACS simply could not match the grassroots campaign of the abolitionists. Too much money, energy, and time remained tied to the logistics of colonization—funding expeditions to Africa and supporting the colony. Moreover, the abolitionist challenge hurt the ACS’s efforts to obtain contributions. Their forceful denunciations of colonization neutralized many who had previously favored the cause and convinced some ministers to deny the use of their pulpits to ACS spokesman for fear of antagonizing parishioners and provoking discord. Many ministers also discontinued collecting donations for the ACS on the fourth of July. The closing of church doors was a serious impediment to agents in search of money. In 1831, the ACS collected almost \$11,000 from Fourth of July collections. In 1836 the figure had declined to just under \$3,000, and in 1838 was \$1,530. After 1838, the ACS stopped accounting for church donations.

Often local leaders were required to take matters into their own hands. The Greene County auxiliary passed a formal resolution in 1836 stating “that in the opinion of the Board, a visit from an able and experienced agent of the A. Col. So. is greatly needed, in the West in general, and especially in the State of Ohio.” The request fell upon deaf ears. Ignored by the national society, the auxiliary commissioned William Banks, a physician, to travel through the county and address

⁵⁶ William Richards, Granville Licking County, Ohio, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, 28 March 1838, ACS Papers.

the people on the importance of colonization. But by the late 1830s, colonization loyalists in Greene County were fighting an uphill battle against abolition forces.⁵⁷

Colonization efforts continued to narrow and weaken throughout the 1840s. Female organizers in particular struggled to maintain interest in the cause. In 1848 the group raised just seventeen dollars. The last known meeting of the female colonization auxiliary in Greene County was held on July 4, 1849, in which the members donated \$25 to the ACS. Local papers grew more cautious as abolitionist excitement increased. By the end of the 1830s, papers that had enthusiastically supported colonization printed articles and letters from subscribers critical of colonization and colonization supporters throughout the country.

The colonization revival during in the late 1840s inspired leaders to appeal to Ohioans. The project was known as “Ohio in Africa,” and it emphasized state action. The goal was to encourage Ohio’s African Americans to emigrate to a specially designated portion in northern Liberia, and this plan would need the financial support of Ohio’s legislature. ACS agent David Christy spoke before Ohio’s General Assembly in 1849 and the following year at the Ohio Constitutional Convention. It was apparent by 1852, however, that “Ohio in Africa” was failing to garner the necessary support to assure success. By 1855, the ACS was dead in Ohio.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Hugh McMillian, Greene County, Ohio, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, 21 March 1836; William Banks, Clifton, Ohio, Ralph Gurley, Washington, 15 December 1838, ACS Papers.

⁵⁸ Thomas David Matijasic, “Conservative Reform in the West: The African Colonization Movement in Ohio, 1826-1839” (Ph.D. diss., Miami University, 1982).

Conclusion

The ACS's confrontation with abolitionists damaged colonization's reputation and led to a deterioration of harmony at the local and national level. This confrontation also affected female colonization support. First, abolitionism encouraged male colonizationists to secure female support to prove their efforts were benevolent and non-confrontational. Moreover, abolitionism encouraged male leaders to identify the kind of female participation they valued. Leaders encouraged women to focus their efforts on supporting schools, churches, and missions in Liberia. They should act as peacemakers, using their influence to promote social consensus and conservative principles. Finally, male colonization leaders looked to secure female support to prevent women from enlisting in abolition. There was a fear among many male colonization leaders that women were especially vulnerable to the immediatists' cause. Elliot Cresson argued, "The calls are so loud & frequent, that if the Ladies are not enlisted with us, we shall find very many of them carried away by their feelings & made very efficient foes."⁵⁹

The rise of an organized abolition movement greatly reduced southern enthusiasm for colonization as well. As abolitionism and sectional tensions increased in the 1830s and 1840s, it became increasingly difficult for female colonizationists to convince their communities that the ACS could extend benevolence toward slaves without interfering in southern affairs. Indeed, after the General Assembly debate on slavery in 1832, Virginia's female colonization supporters experienced disappointment and rejection. The auxiliaries in Richmond and Manchester,

⁵⁹ Elliot Cresson, Woodstock, VT, Samuel Wilkeson, New York, 28 November 1838, ACS Papers.

Albemarle, Rockbridge, Fredericksburg, and Louisa and Powhatan counties that had flourished in the late 1820s and early 1830s attracted a fraction of the support by 1840 and had disappeared by 1850. Important female leaders such as Anne Page, Mary Blackford, and Margaret Mercer were dead and as was their vision for the gradual dismantling of the institution of slavery. Mary Blackford's position that women were the victims of the slave system gave way to the consensus that white women were the special beneficiaries of slavery, and Margaret Mercer's argument that women had a public duty to work for the gradual dismantling of the institution of slavery was replaced by the notion that they had a public duty to defend slavery.⁶⁰

Yet by the 1840s colonization's primary threat was no longer abolition but itself. Financial difficulties encouraged leaders to turn inward and focus on the general business of reducing expenses and restoring the health of the institution. Agents were told to ignore abolition agitators and concentrate on collecting money. Internal bickering plagued the society as well. Liberia's independence in 1847 encouraged leaders to view their work in more narrow terms. The ACS was strictly an emigration agency. Efforts to improve Liberian society were increasingly viewed as issues for the Liberian government. Moreover, missionary efforts in the country made the focus of female colonization efforts redundant. In short, the ACS's reorganization and reorientation diminished male colonizationists' enthusiasm for female colonization support.

Female support, then, had come full circle. In the early years of colonization when the ACS promoted itself as a political movement, women primarily supported

⁶⁰ Elizabeth Varon, "'We Mean To Be Counted': White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1993).

colonization through individual action. For a brief but intense period during the 1830s and early 1840s, while the ACS was in tremendous turmoil and struggling to maintain its centrality in the nation's political imagination, the movement recast itself as a benevolent organization and privileged volunteerism over politics. Leaders continued to recognize the importance of political activities but they also encouraged female participation even as they promoted the centrality of female values in the movement. With the rise of abolition, two competing visions emerged concerning women's civic duty toward slavery. Colonizationists condemned women who acted as political agitators and maintained that woman, as moral exemplars, should use their influence to promote consensus, unity, and peace. In the 1850's female colonization support shifted once again as the ACS looked to government for aid. Male leaders no longer praised or publicized the work of female auxiliaries. Women's auxiliaries disappeared from the historical record. Instead, women contributed to the cause as individuals and looked to state and federal institutions to accomplish their goals.

Even as the ACS declined as a dynamic movement, interest in Africa intensified. Ironically, the idea of colonization as a solution to the race question remained popular even as the society was not. So while many rejected the feasibility of colonization, they nevertheless embraced colonizationist discourse that normalized the foreignness of African American men and women even as it painted Africa as the promised land for black Americans.

Chapter Five “That Bereaved Mother”

In 1853 the illustrated edition of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the most widely read book ever produced on the subject of race relations, entered circulation. The novel’s final illustration captures the mythical quality Africa had come to enjoy for many Americans. The picture shows thousands of unidentified freed slaves in Africa prostrate with hands lifted toward heaven. In a sunburst of light above the mountains are the words: “Freedom to Africa.”¹ The novel portrayed Africa as the promised land of the ancient Exodus narrative: the place of black redemption. Stowe’s protagonist, George Harris, explained it this way: “I want a country, a nation, of my own...As a Christian patriot, as a teacher of Christianity, I go to *my country*,—my chosen, my glorious Africa!”² In many ways, Stowe’s portrayal echoed the conclusions of Edward Dorr Griffin who thirty-six years before had spoken of Ethiopia stretching forth her hand to the United States. Stowe, like Griffin, employed a biblically infused conception of manifest destiny in which African Americans would speed Africa along its preordained path to glory. To many white Americans, this image of Africa as the “promised land” for black Americans helped soothe racial fears even as it spiritualized a profoundly racist dream of an all white society. This chapter examines the appeal of this image to white Americans and the role colonizationists played in promulgating it.

¹ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, illustrated edition. Original Designs by Hammat Billings; Engraved by Baker and Smith (Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1853).

² Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 467-470.

The Context

Much of America's early conception of Africa had its roots in the melioristic perception of English reformers. Images of Africa had long played a role in European societies that had been engaged in the slave trade and slavery itself. In England, anti slavery foes such as John Wesley, Granville Sharp, and William Wilberforce led the charge to remake those images. While accepting the customary low esteem in which African culture was then held, these men rejected the idea that Africans were an inferior race of humanity; such a notion seemed to reject the truth of scriptures that God had made all men "of one blood."³ Instead, they argued that Africa had been made savage by the evil influence of the slave trade coupled with a prolonged absence of Christian influence. Africans were according to Wesley "far more mild, friendly, and kind to strangers than our forefathers were."⁴ English novelists developed the literary convention of the "noble savage" in which Africans are described as unspoiled children of nature whose descent into bondage made them weak and wretched.⁵ Other writers, such as Anthony Benezet, an American Quaker, took the literary convention of the "noble savage" and made it "fact." In his classic treatise *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, Benezet chose passages from earlier

³ A reference to Acts 7:26.

⁴Quoted in Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 58. These and other reformers believed that if the slave trade were to blame for African barbarism, its abolition would be the first step in bringing about the cure. The next step was the introduction of legitimate trade. The panacea of commerce rested on the assumption of existing social theory and the superiority of commercial societies. If Africans were at the agricultural stage, then commerce was the missing element to raise them to a higher level. If lack of commerce held Africa back, then introduction of a legitimate commerce could propel Africa forward. Finally, Africa's progress depended on a proper introduction of Christianity. American colonizationists adopted this viewpoint that commerce, Christianity, and republican government would elevate Africa.

⁵ See for example, Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave* (London: Will. Canning, 1688); Thomas George Street, *Aura; or The Slave* (London: J. Stevenson, 1788); Anna Maria Mackenzie, *Slavery: or The Times* (London: G.G.J. & J. Robinsons & J. Dennis, 1792).

European travel accounts to promote the idea that the African possessed qualities of strength, intellect and virtue.⁶

In the 1820s and early 1830s, however, a distinctively American image of Africa emerged in response to the overwhelming force of missionary sentiment and growing northern support for African colonization. The sheer quantity of publications that flooded the public in the early nineteenth century supporting Christian missions and colonization in Africa, and the lack of a competing discourse, ensured the supremacy of the image.⁷ The imagery always held in tension Africa's present degradation and future promise. It also focused on Africa, not the United States. By concentrating on Africa, colonizationists obscured the conditions of slavery in the South and the status of free blacks in the North. In contrast to abolitionists whose movement would emerge in the following decade, colonizationists rarely wrote or spoke about the individual African American. On the topic of Africa, however, they were effusive. Through the providential instrument of colonization, degraded, dark, "bleeding" Africa had also become a promised land for American blacks, an Eden-like land of prosperity where "every valley...shall bloom again with living green and sweet-smelling flowers...and all her deserts of sand shall

⁶ Eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century American fiction writers employed the English literary convention of the noble savage portraying Africans as gentle and sensitive noble savages. On the image of black characters in American literature see William L. Van Deburg's, *Slavery and Race in American Popular Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1984), 10-24; Mukhtar Ali Isani, "Far from 'Gambia's Golden Shore': The Black in Late Eighteenth-Century American Imaginative Literature," *William and Mary Quarterly* 36 (July 1979): 353-72; Jack B. Moore, "Images of the Negro in Early American Short Fiction," *Mississippi Quarterly* 22 (Winter 1968/69): 47-57.

⁷ A title search of over 900 periodicals between 1825-1830 indicates the intense interest Africa held for missionary advocates. There are nearly twice as many articles about Africa as any other country, including those with strong missionary interests such as the Sandwich Islands, India, China, and Turkey. A title search in American Periodicals Series Online between 1825-1830 produced 256 hits for Africa; India, 172; Sandwich Islands, 121; China, 46; Turkey, 45; Asia, 26; Persia, 12; Japan and Siam, 3.

become fruitful fields”⁸ Like an expectant mother, wrote Ralph Gurley, America, “the land of liberty,” would not disappoint a sorrowful mother, “panting for the return of her absent sons and daughters.”⁹ Or as George Bethune asserted, only on Liberian shores, will “Afric’s sons” find “their toils and tears shall cease” and they will “weep no more.”¹⁰

The discourse reduced Africa’s complex history and varied cultures into a uniform and continuous story of degradation, and, at the same time, cast African Americans as displaced children orphaned in America. Perhaps colonization’s most enduring influence is that it normalized the foreignness of African American women and men and contributed to a political environment unwilling to include African Americans in their vision of an American democratic society. Indeed, over the course of the next three decades the American image of Africa hardened even as the cause of colonization weakened and the efforts of abolitionism gained strength.¹¹ By the 1850s, the public had come to reject the feasibility of colonization, yet embraced the image of Africa put forth by the movement. The image made popular in the 1820s and 1830s by colonization supporters continued to be affirmed in the popular and religious press, children’s books, Sunday school tracts, and, even, among a growing number of black Americans in the 1850s.¹²

⁸ *Christian Advocate*, 5, no. 40 (June 3, 1831).

⁹ Quoted in Staudenraus, 21.

¹⁰ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 11, no. 4 (April 1835): 104; 11, no. 7 (July 1835): 222.

¹¹ This follows Joanne Pope Melish argument in *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and ‘Race’ in New England, 1780-1860*. She argues that “the rhetoric of colonization constituted the dominant discourse of “race” in New England” for over a decade, and made a “major contribution to naturalizing the undesirability of free people of color” in New England. She asserts that that the discourse effectively led white New Englanders to see black Americans in New England as anomalous and helped erase the historical memory of New England and its participation in slavery.

¹² Black Americans were virtually united in their opposition to colonization before the late 1840s. Liberian independence in 1847 and a series of devastating political defeats prompted many black

Recent scholars have noted evangelicals' reluctance to embrace abolition because it did not fit comfortably within the traditional concerns of the evangelical establishment. When they did consider slavery, as Robert Abzug puts it, they conceived it as a horror "marginal to the American experience or used to bolster causes evangelicals found more compelling."¹³ Yet evangelicalism was, and many evangelicals were, a powerful force within the ACS.

One measure of the importance of evangelical ideology on the colonization movement is the centrality of African missions in colonization discourse. The missionary aspect of colonization was especially important in garnering the support of non-evangelicals and those more skeptical of colonization claims. Individuals like Philadelphia Quaker Robert Vaux, who supported emancipation but doubted that colonization could exert significant influence over the institution of slavery, defended the movement because of its constructive influence on Africa. Vaux who had at one time denounced colonization as "a hypocritical measure, proceeding from a quarter utterly destitute of any good feelings toward that abused race" became an advocate of the plan because "Abroad the colony has offered the opportunity for planting civilization and Christianity on the soil of Africa, and [I] consider it to be the dawn of a bright day for her benighted children."¹⁴ Yale professor Benjamin Silliman questioned the efficacy of colonization as an antislavery scheme, yet he aided the

Americans to reassess their position in America. Between 1847 and 1848 migration to Liberia grew tenfold. The Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Compromise in 1854, and the 1857 Dred Scot decision each helped accelerate Liberian emigration. Between 1848-1860, the American Colonization Society sent nearly 6,000 colonists, over a thousand more than it had sent in its first 30 years. Thousands of others embarked for Canada and the West Indies. For the change in African American sentiment see David Brion Davis, *In the Image of God* (Yale University Press, 2001), 80-83.

¹³ Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*, 139.

¹⁴ Robert Vaux to Thomas Clarkson, 1 May 1820; Robert Vaux to Charles Minor, 26 January 1830, Vaux Papers, HSP.

movement because he thought it might be the means of restoring “to Africa the light of civilization and Christianity.”¹⁵ Even those who perceived non-religious advantages beneath the froth of religious phrases chose to frame their support in religious terms. Politicians who supported colonization, yet rejected any idea that colonization should even indirectly menace slavery, promoted the image put forward by religious advocates. Henry Clay, in a widely publicized speech at the society’s inaugural meeting, enjoined Finley and others to avoid the “delicate question” of emancipation altogether and focus instead on Africa:

Can there be a nobler cause than that which, whilst it proposes to rid our country of a useless and pernicious, if not dangerous portion of its population, contemplates the spreading of the arts of civilized life, and the possible redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted quarter of the globe?¹⁶

A summary of the aims of the society in a letter issued by the Board of Managers in 1823 also reveals the impact of religious ideology. The letter was sent out with an urgent plea for financial assistance to accommodate emigrants who wanted to go to Liberia:

Christians! The object of our Society is to rescue the free coloured people of this country from degradation, from ignorance, and vice, and to confer on them in the land of their ancestors, true freedom, the knowledge which civilizes and exalts, and the religion that saves the soul; to kindle a light on a dark and barbarous shore, and to plant the Cross there; and thus emancipate from superstition, innumerable tribes and bring them to adore and obey the living God...

Whether supporters looked to colonization as a remedy for the growing free black population, as a commercial opportunity, or as a step toward gradual abolition, colonization advocates could agree on the centrality of African missions.

¹⁵ Benjamin Silliman to Ralph Gurley, Washington, 18 March 1827; ACS Papers.

¹⁶ Quoted in Staudenraus, 28.

Shaping An Image: The Press and Pulpit

By 1830, colonization supporters had developed a range of publications designed to carry their message to all groups and classes of their supporters.¹⁷ For colonization leaders, clergy, and financial supporters, the *African Repository* carried a particular view of Africa. It published poetry and articles about Africa and Africans. During the first five years of publication, the periodical devoted more space to descriptions of African history, geography, culture, religion and government than to any other topic. The publication went to great lengths to advocate the potential of the African race and the former glory of Africa, and rarely discussed American slavery, individual slaves, or free blacks in the North. When the periodical did discuss slavery, it concentrated on the slave trade, shifting the focus away from America and toward Africa.¹⁸

For broader support, the ACS looked to secular newspapers and periodicals. In fact, the movement received widespread support in northern newspapers such as the New York *Commercial Advertiser*; Boston *Recorder*; Windsor Vermont *Chronicle*; Philadelphia *United States Gazette, Intelligencer*; Connecticut *Courant*; and *National Intelligencer*. Colonization essays were printed in serial publications such as the Princeton Seminary's *Biblical Repertory*, Boston's *New-England Magazine*, and *North American Review*, Philadelphia's *American Quarterly Review*,

¹⁷ My argument that the press was essential to the colonization movement challenges Staudenraus who argues that "printing propaganda, essential in the antislavery movement, was only incidental to the Colonization Society's work" (215). Staudenraus fails to acknowledge the important role of the religious press in antebellum America and ignores the role of women writers, juvenile literature and fiction played in propagating the colonization message.

¹⁸ The first five volumes of the *African Repository and Colonial Journal* (March 1825-February 1830) devoted, on average, nearly one-quarter of its text space to articles on Africa. This does not include articles on Liberia, letters from missionaries, colonists in Africa, or the discussion of Africa that took place in sermons, reports, etc. reprinted in the journal.

and New Haven's *Quarterly Christian Spectator*. The secular press popularized and transmitted the colonization movement's view of Africa to a wider public.

Colonization reached a more diverse audience through fictionalized stories that communicated the core tenets of colonization, such as Frederick Freeman's *Yaradee, a Plea for Africa*, a book popular enough to go through four editions, and the highly acclaimed pamphlet by Catholic Mathew Carey, *Letters on the Colonization Society*, reprinted thirteen times. Both authors devoted a substantial portion of their books to a discussion of Africa and repeated the standard claims of the colonization movement regarding the continent: Africa's ancient glory, the degrading influence of slavery and miserable condition of its current inhabitants, Africa's future destiny, and the moral and intellectual equality of blacks. The authors also address the objections offered to the colonization plan by abolitionist proponents. In 1836, Mary Griffith published *Three Hundred Years Hence*, a utopian vision of America in 2136. The book, which was prescient in terms of women's rights, technology, and economics, envisioned the end of slavery, not through "the premature attempt...[of] emancipation," but as a result of colonization efforts. Griffith predicted that the government would transplant "the whole of the negro population to Liberia, and other healthy colonies." Similar to colonization claims, she believed that black emigration would be on a voluntary basis and, "in the course of twenty or thirty years, their descendants gradually went over to their own people."¹⁹

The influence of the colonization movement in shaping a collective image of Africa can also be measured through the new denomination-based periodicals of the

¹⁹ Freeman, *Yaradee*; Mary Griffith, *Three Hundred Years Hence* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1836; reprint, Boston: Gregg Press, 1975), 125-126.

1820s and 1830s, which developed an early and decisive pro-colonization message. The religious press boasted by far the widest circulation at the time, retaining a readership far larger and more diverse than that of the traditional party and secular periodicals, whose subscriptions rarely exceeded 1,500 copies. At a time when the *North American Review* had a subscription of 3,000, thirty religious periodicals reported subscription lists of 3,000 or more, and fifteen of those boasted a circulation of over 5,000. *The Christian Advocate* had a subscription of 25,000, the *Missionary Herald* 14,000, the *New York Observer* over 6,000, and the *Religious Intelligencer* and *Boston Recorder* over 5,000 subscribers each.²⁰

The religious press provided critical support to colonization advocates by portraying Africa as a dark and degraded land. As English explorers traveled into the heart of Africa and reported the mysteries of the continent to Europeans, portions of their published narratives were reprinted over and over again in American periodicals, especially in religious ones. In the religious press, the purpose of relating these extracts besides offering readers exotic adventures was to encourage missionary support. “The eyes of the Christian world are now turned toward this quarter of the globe,” reported the *Christian Advocate*. “Every thing relating to the geography of the country, and the religion and manners of its inhabitants, must be interesting, not only to the missionaries who are sent, but to all who are concerned in sending them, or are in any way concerned in the success of the enterprise.” Religious periodicals

²⁰Gaylord P. Albaugh, *History and Annotated Bibliography of American Religious Periodicals and Newspapers* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1994); Frederick Hudson, *Journalism in the United States from 1690-1872* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873). On print culture and popular religion see Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 9-12, 141-46; David Paul Nord, “The Evangelical Origins of Mass Media in America, 1815-1835,” *Journalism Monographs* 88 (1984): 1-30.

also emphasized the complete corruption of the country and its people, believing that “from a few extracts from ‘Landers’ Discovery of the Termination of the Niger’ . . . we cannot but indulge the belief, that no one will rise from the perusal of these statements without an overwhelming sense of the exceeding misery and degradation of the poor African.”²¹ It was not enough that Africans were eternally doomed as followers of false gods. They were also doomed on earth to a horrible existence filled with cruelty, injustice, and barbarism. Initially, missionary proponents reprinted extracts from British travelogues to buttress their argument; later they drew information from the accounts of colonists and missionaries in Liberia. The conclusion was the same: Africa was hopelessly degraded.

As evidence for the depths of African debasement writers selectively used explorers’ accounts to describe the sordid and savage way of life in Africa—from tales about ferocious African lions and terrifying serpents to stories of Devil-men, cannibalism, and men who descended on defenseless huts and doomed their fellow African to slavery. To emphasize African depravity, authors frequently pointed to the plight of the African female. Sometimes, she was the victim of cruelty. “In the middle of a wild country,” reported a missionary traveling in the interior of Africa, “we met with an old woman who had been left to perish by her companions, among whom were her own children, on account of the infirmities attendant on old age. It was proposed to remove her to another tribe; but she refused, because the people there would do the same to her as her own friends had done.”²² Just as frequently, African females were the transgressors as mothers without maternal instinct. Jehudi

²¹ *Christian Advocate* 7, no. 36 (3 May 1833).

²² *The Guardian, or Youth’s Religious Instructor*, 3, no. 3 (1821): 106.

Ashmun, colonial agent of Liberia in the 1820s, observed that an African mother's "fondness never displays itself in building the impetuous passions, in restraining the mischievous and vicious propensities...She lavishes, like other mothers, her useless caresses...But some present advantage is the only thing she aims at. The dog that shares her child's mat...receives the same discipline."²³ The religious press reported on those aspects of African culture most likely to be shocking to their readers, and no better proof existed for a society's degradation than the corruption of its women.

The juvenile press likewise put forward a picture of a degraded Africa. Africa was portrayed as an exotic "wild country" in desperate need of evangelization. "Christian children!" asked *The Guardian*, "will you refuse to add your mite towards evangelizing these wretched wanders of the desert?"²⁴ At the same time, the juvenile press emphasized the religious potential of the natives who were "mild and inoffensive, for rude children of nature."²⁵ The literature linked American missionary efforts in Africa to the Puritan errand in America. Like the Puritans' New England, Liberia "promises to prove a blessed asylum for a wretched people. It is already to the African tribes, like a 'city set upon a hill which cannot be hid.'" As a "city on a hill," the colony would help end the "bloody and accursed" slave trade and extend the Christian gospel throughout the continent.²⁶

²³ *African Repository* 1, no. 2 (April 1825): 56-62.

²⁴ "In the middle of a wild country," says a missionary traveling in the interior," *The Guardian, or Youth's Religious Instructor* 3, no. 3 (March 1821): 106.

²⁵ "Liberia," *The Guardian and Monitor* 7, no. 8 (August 1825): 256. See also, "Kindness of the Africans," *Juvenile Miscellany* 5, no. 2 (November/December 1833): 110-118; "Letter from a little girl in Edinburgh, to a little African girl in Liberia," *The Child's Newspaper* 1 (July 22, 1834): 58-59.

²⁶ "Liberia," 257. Other articles that discuss the slave trade include Theodore Dwight, "African Distress," *The Juvenile Port-Folio* 1, no. 54 (October 23, 1813): 216; "The African—a sketch," *The Juvenile Port-Folio* 2, no. 2 (January 15, 1814): 5-6.

Similarly, juvenile geography books were filled with lurid tales of savage Africa. Geography was an essential part of antebellum education, and geography books were an extremely popular form of literature. Samuel Goodrich's *The Tales of Peter Parley* geographies were "the period's best-selling volumes."²⁷ In *The Tales of Peter Parley about Africa*, Goodrich portrays Africa as a strange land full of exotic animals, dangerous terrain, and mysterious people. "In all respects," Goodrich asserts, Africa was "the least favored quarter of the globe." Goodrich split Africa's inhabitants into two groups: the weak "negroes" and the Arab, "the most despotic and remorseless of the human family," and then compared the state of African society to African animal life. "The lion, the leopard, and the panther, feasting upon the vast herds of antelopes that graze over the central waters of Africa," he writes, "afford a striking analogy to the state of human society; the weak, the timid, and the defenseless being made, without mercy or scruple, the prey of the daring and the strong."²⁸

Like the Peter Parley tales, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Primary Geography for Children* was enormously successful. It went through "four editions in three months, and a fifth a few months later," and was reissued in 1855 as the *First Geography for Children*.²⁹ The textbook stigmatizes Africa as "the most degraded and uncivilized" area "of any of the four quarters of the globe." Stowe and her co-author and sister, Catharine Beecher, models of gentility, seem to delight in the lurid tales of savagery

²⁷ Bruce A. Harvey, *American Geographics: U.S. National Narratives and the Representation of the Non-European World, 1830-1865* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 21.

²⁸ Samuel Goodrich, *The Tales of Peter Parley about Africa* (Boston: Gray & Bowen, and Carter & Hendee, 1830); Goodrich, *Lights and Shadows of African History* (Boston: Bradbury, Soden & Co., 1844), 6.

²⁹ Joan Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 70.

and barbarism in Africa as they point to Liberia as the best example of progress. “In Africa, there is one little republic of free Africans at Liberia...All the other countries are despotisms.”³⁰ In this way the authors related the incorporation of American Christianity and republican government to Africa’s progress.

At the same time, mission advocates insisted on the spiritual and racial equality of all people, that God had made of “one blood all nations.” It was slavery, they argued, that had denigrated Africa and Africans. This notion was especially important in colonization discourse. The colonization movement has conventionally been treated as part of a “segregationist” project that undermined claims of entitlement to citizenship. Clearly, colonization supporters—whatever their motives for supporting the cause—seriously doubted the possibility of assimilating African Americans into American society. Colonizationists, like most mission supporters, believed that they were hopelessly degraded in America because of slavery and in Africa because of the lack of Christian civilization. “They are wretched and dangerous, and should be removed,” argued Gabriel Disoway; “the danger arises, not because we have thousands of slaves within our borders, but because there are nearly two millions of coloured men who are by necessity any thing rather than loyal citizens.”³¹ And yet many colonizationists, echoing English anti slavery proponents, were among the first in America to insist upon African racial equality. Colonization leaders evoked images of a glorious African past lost in antiquity to show the future

³⁰ Quote from Harriet Beecher Stowe, “Government,” in Cynthia Reik, ed., *The Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader* (Hartford: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1993), 278.

³¹ Gabriel P. Disoway, “Sermon delivered July 4th at the Methodist Church at John Street New York,” *Christian Advocate*, (17 July 1829).

prospect of success in Christianizing and colonizing Africa. In 1825, the first article in the first issue of the *African Repository* asserted,

To those who are at all acquainted with the early history of mankind, it must afford a curious commentary upon the mutability of human affairs, to hear the strange conjectures which are sometimes indulged about the origin of the Negro race. In defiance of all our records of antiquity, both sacred and profane—they are contemptuously spoken of as a distinct order of beings; the connecting link between men and monkeys. Those who talk in this way, do not recollect, or perhaps do not know, that the people whom they traduce, were for more than a thousand years...the most enlightened on the globe.

The article concluded that one of the primary objects of colonization was to return to Africa “the blessings which...were received from her.” Africa “may be persecuted, she may be degraded...they may deny to her the very nature of humanity—but still she has a heart to feel, and an immortal soul to be saved.”³² Even those like Leonard Bacon who denied the claims of prior achievement nonetheless affirmed the innate capacity of Africans and black American. “They are men indeed, and when individuals from among them have been placed in circumstances favourable to the development of their powers, they have fully vindicated their title to all the honour of our nature.” Alluding to Psalm 68, Bacon concluded that only in Africa could the black American man reclaim his dignity and “in the consciousness of manhood...stretch out his hand unto him [God] who had made of one blood all nations.”³³

The binary message of degradation and equality was not unique to the discourse concerning Africa. Reports about major mission operations in India, Persia, and Hawaii repeated the message of “heathen savage” whose social system was

³² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 1 (March 1825): 7.

³³ Leonard Bacon, *A Plea for Africa, Delivered in New Haven, July 4, 1825* (New Haven: T.G. Woodward, 1825), 10, 16.

defective in every feature and yet whose people and society could be transformed by the power of the gospel. Africa differed, however, in one important way. Africa held the distinction of being the most degraded of all countries, with people “the most ignorant and debased of the human family.”³⁴ Part of the explanation for this distinction is pragmatic mission theory. In the context of mission societies dependent on voluntary contributions for their success, the darker the depiction of African depravity, the more necessary the work of the missionaries appeared. American missions established a clear link between publicity and fund raising early in the century, evident in the sheer number of publications by missionaries for public dissemination. Often, missionaries were required to send correspondence to the home society that outlined their work and items of interest to the general public. Home societies would then forward extracts of the letters, reports, and accounts to various denominational newspapers. The thousands of missionary letters printed and reprinted in religious publications testifies to the important role publications played in missionary endeavors.

Another common form of publication was an edition of letters and journals of a single missionary, either put together by the missionary or compiled by a relative or the mission society itself. These accounts combined story telling and reflection with exhortation to support missions. While these were first and foremost mission books, they also functioned as expositions on race relations and slavery. Each explicitly connected slavery, evangelism, and America’s obligation to Africa, arguing that a Christian republic in West Africa would expedite the end of the slave trade and, in turn, slavery itself. After health problems forced Harriett Brittan to leave her post as

³⁴ John Cameron Lowrie, *A Manual of Missions* (New York: A.D.F. Randolph, 1854), 26.

an Episcopal missionary in Liberia, she penned *Scenes and Incidents of Every-Day Life in Africa*, in which she aimed to “rouse one feeling of interest, one hope, one prayer, for Africa’s redemption” and “press upon” the American people their duty “for her, her children, and her teachers.”³⁵ Episcopal missionary Elizabeth Hening authored a history of African missions in Liberia while on sabbatical. Like Brittan, Hening put forward an image of Africa that upheld conventional opinion. Africa was a barbarous land and the African came from “the lowest depths of ignorance and superstition” whose “habitual contact with vice, in its most debasing forms, has blunted, and nearly obliterated, the moral perception.” At the same time, she reported the need for “more fervent prayer and liberal effort” for Africa and lauded the great success of the mission.³⁶ Another Episcopalian missionary to Liberia was enshrined in female hagiography in the memoir, *Life of Virginia Hale Hoffman*. After Hoffman’s death, Rev. George Cummings compiled the memoir to argue for the special role of females in mission work. He wrote, “the accomplished and highly intellectual female may be seen meekly yet firmly devoting herself to a distant and arduous career—vying with the hero in his defiance of dangers, and with the martyr in the endurance of them,” as well as point to the great need and good of missions in Africa.³⁷

³⁵ Harriett Brittan, *Scenes and Incidents of Every-Day Life in Africa* (New York: Pudney & Russle, 1859), 353.

³⁶ E. F. Hening, *History of the African Mission* (New York: Stanford & Swords, 1849), 79.

³⁷ Rev. George D. Cummings, *Life of Virginia Hale Hoffman* (Philadelphia: Linsday & Blakiston, 1859), 23-24. The missionary memoir was a literary staple for female evangelical readers in the nineteenth century. Staying close to written sources—letters and spiritual journals—the mission memoir idealized young, deceased female missionaries as models of true Christian womanhood, martyrs for the cause of Christ. The primary purpose behind the publication of the highly sentimental memoirs was not simply to elicit in the reader an emotional response but to instruct and admonish on how one should behave in this world while keeping an eye on the next.

Children's books and magazines, likewise, sought to teach the superiority of Protestant Christianity and the important role of missions. The Massachusetts Sabbath School Society commissioned Sarah Tuttle in 1830 and Helen Knight Cross in 1850 to author historical accounts of the colonization movement. Tuttle also authored a series of children's mission books on Africa in the 1830s. The combined effort of these mission publications sought to carry their message to all groups and classes of supporters. Yet, mission publicity alone does not explain why Africa—not China, India or any other group—was labeled the most depraved country.

In some measure the image was an expression of geographical ignorance. Despite the flood of new data that poured in from coastal travelers and explorers, vast amounts of the African interior remained unexplored by Europeans. Also, accounts of explorers were often culture-bound, inaccurate, and even contradictory. European explorers traveled quickly through the land and spent long periods incapacitated with sickness. Philip Curtin concludes, "They were therefore in no position to check facts or work to a critical standard, even if they wanted to do so...Very often little of Africa emerged, beyond a rather flat backdrop to set the scene."³⁸ Adding to ignorance was the problem of survival. Explorers who ventured too far into the unknown interior often perished, the victims of hostile natives or of deadly disease. In fact, Africa came to be known as "The White Man's Grave;" a place white people could not live or work. The unknown and deadly nature of Africa fostered fear and mystery, which in turn encouraged a bleak view.³⁹

³⁸ Curtin, 208.

³⁹ P. D. Curtin, "'White Man's Grave: Image and Reality, 1780-1850,'" *The Journal of British Studies* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1961), 94-110.

The image also reflected American cultural and religious assumptions and values, the most important of which was the notion that Christianity was interconnected with all the other attributes of normal and proper societies. “You know, better than I can declare to you,” asserted Jonathan Wainwright to the Episcopal congregation in Hartford, Connecticut, “that civilization without christianity is valueless...To be civilized, a country must have religion, and this religion must be christianity.” So, Wainwright concludes, “The call is loud for African Missionaries” to go to “dark, degraded, ignorant Africa.” The overwhelming consensus of the American press—religious and secular—was that Africa was completely devoid of true Christian influence, and African religion the lowest form of religion. The *African Repository* outlined the deficient religions of Africa. “The religion of the Northern half of Africa...is almost entirely Mahometan...In Africa, it assumes its worst aspect, and fully exhibits the extreme of its cruelty...A kind of corrupt christianity prevails in Abyssinia; and relics of the Catholic faith and practice, exist in Congo, and a few other places...natives generally are distinguished for their superstitions, above all other people in the world.”⁴⁰ It is this last description of African superstition that is repeated and propagated in the America press and pulpit. John Lowrie’s *Manual of Missions*, for example, argued that Africa is the “darkest part of the world” because “paganism in Africa appears under a peculiarly low and debasing form. It has no order of Brahmans, no lofty temples, no sacred books.” But Africa is also degraded because of the slave trade “and all the cruelty, oppression, and loss of life which follow in [its] train.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, 4, no. 12 (February 1829): 56-57.

⁴¹ Lowrie, 28.

Indeed, the slave trade and slavery itself are key components to the missionary image of Africa. This is because they believed slavery and the slave trade were to blame for Africa's destruction. Lowerie writes,

The marauding excursions, the midnight attacks on sleeping villages, the burning houses, the screams of terror from helpless women and children, the murder of aged and feeble persons, the breaking up of families, the savage treatment of captives, the hurrying and cruel march to the sea-coast, the heartless sale to heartless foreigners, the horrors of the "middle passage,"—these are scenes better worthy of hell than of earth, and the actors in them should be only the devils themselves.⁴²

For Lowerie, the only cure for "long oppressed, miserable Africa" is the "Christian settlements of Sierra Leone and Liberia." Settlements which "God has planted...on the borders of this dark continent, and enlisted for their prosperity the sympathies and prayers of so many of his people..."⁴³

Moreover, the majority of evangelicals saw slavery as a moral albatross around the neck of American society and missionary activity in Africa as a means of repentance. "It may be that repentance may be granted America," proclaimed John Maffit to the Young Men's Missionary Society in New York. "It may be the plan of that wonder working Providence...out of evil to induce good, to make humble, repentant America carry back the men and the women and the babes she has stolen, and with them send back immortality and the mountain nymph of freedom." In fact, many had come to believe that the guilt of slavery, and God's dissatisfaction, rested on North and South alike, an idea popularized by colonization leaders to garner Northern support. "We are all...involved in the guilt of injustice towards this much suffering people," argued Jonathan Wainwright. Frederick Freeman picked up this

⁴² Ibid, 28.

⁴³ Ibid, 29.

line of argumentation as well. In his fictional account about colonization, the father says to his children, “The evil is ours as well as theirs [southerners]...There can be no good reason...we should not aim to promote the cause of patriotism and humanity, in civilizing and converting Africa, and in rendering mutual benefits to the oppressed among us, and to our beloved country.”⁴⁴ Freeman then has the reader listen in to the recitation of a poem by Lydia Sigourney, a staunch supporter of colonization. The poem entitled, “An Appeal to New England” implicates the North in slavery. “The frown of deep, indignant blame,/Bend not on *Southern climes* alone,” but “to dark Slavery’s yoke severe,/Our fathers helped to bow her neck.” At the same time, however, the focus of the poem is not on American slaves or ending slavery but on the obligation of all Americans—because of slavery—to support missions to Africa. Sigourney ends by asserting that if “the suppliant plead in vain” or if northerners “mock his tears” they should expect “the judgments of the skies.”⁴⁵ Typical of evangelical sentiment, Sigourney pronounces the wrongs of slavery, but makes no direct appeal for emancipation. Instead, she argues that northern guilt should facilitate mission support. God’s judgment, then, is a consequence of ignoring the spiritual needs of Africans, a result of Americans’ failure to end slavery itself.

Sigourney’s condemnation of the North was not a new idea. In 1773 Samuel Hopkins, a Presbyterian minister in Newport, Rhode Island, proposed sending educated Christian blacks to Africa as missionaries. Hopkins hoped the scheme would stimulate a large-scale voluntary emigration of African Americans to Africa, while speeding the end of the slave trade. Hopkins’s principal objective, however,

⁴⁴ Jonathan Wainwright, *A Discourse, on the occasion of forming the African Mission School Society* (Hartford: H.& F.J. Huntington, 1828), 18; Freeman, 141.

⁴⁵ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 5, no. 1 (March 1829), 31.

was to remove the guilt of slavery from American society. He and his co-religionists, inheritors of New England Puritanism firmly believed that a just and stern God would not forever tolerate the injustices of slavery. In 1801 *The New York Missionary Magazine* printed “A Dialogue between Africanus, Americanus, and Benevolus,” in which three fictional characters debate the merits of missionary work to Africa. Africanus, the progressive Christian, sets forth what would become the standard message concerning Africa. “The numberless deaths, the excruciating tortures, the overwhelming sorrows and miseries of individuals, the calamities, desolations, injuries and evils, which have been the effect of this detestable trade, are far beyond all calculation.” But, Africanus asserts, God has provided a way for Americans to make restitution. “We have a rich treasure which we can send to them...which will do more towards compensating them for the injuries we have done them, than if we could give them mountains of silver and gold...no people under the sun are under so great obligations...or so loud a call to propagate the gospel among the heath, as the Americans....”⁴⁶ Appearing nearly two decades before the swell in missionary efforts and the growth of the colonization movement, the fictional dialogue outlined the principal argument of both missionary and colonization supporters. By the early 1830s, the view that the emigration of black Americans to Africa promised to “regenerate” Africa and restore America had become so normalized it was considered scriptural.

⁴⁶ “A Dialogue between Africanus, Americanus, and Benevolus,” *The New-York Missionary Magazine* 2, no. 1 (1801): 29.

Shaping An Image: Male and Female Colonizationists

If the religious press emphasized the message of the degradation of Africa and God's providential design to redeem the country using black Americans, colonization publications stressed Africa as the true home of African Americans. Often utilizing biblical imagery, colonization supporters depicted Africa as the promised land. Just as the Israelites had found freedom from slavery in Canaan, so African Americans would find their freedom in Liberia. In a prayer before the Young Men's Colonization Society of Pennsylvania, for example, George Bethune implored:

Oh, Thou who built Jerusalem
For Israel's wandering race,
And yet in love wilt gather them
Back to their dwelling place—
Smile on our efforts—who would fain
Redeem each outcast slave,
And waft them to that land again,
Thou to their fathers gave.⁴⁷

Others were less biblical, but equally lyrical. In Felicia Hemans' "Song of Emigration," a female voice rhapsodized:

We will rear new homes, under trees that glow
As if gems were the fruitage of every bough;
O'er our white walls we will train the vine,
And sit in its shadow at day's decline...

All, all our own shall the forests be,
As to the bond of the roebuck free!
None shall say, 'hither, no farther pass!'
We will track each step through the wavy grass...

We will give the names of our fearless race
To each bright river whose course we trace;
We will leave our memory with mounts and floods,
And the path of our daring in boundless woods...⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 11, no. 4 (April 1835): 104.

⁴⁸ Felicia Hemans, "Song of Emigration," *Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom* (May 1833): 54.

Hemans' Eden-like vision of Africa typified colonization rhetoric. In evoking a glorious future for the country, colonizationists strengthened the contention that Africa was the promised land for African Americans and that they belonged in Africa. Similarly, Sarah Hale asserted in the preface of her novel, *Liberia*, that her story would "show the advantages Liberia offers to the African, who among us has no home, no position, and no future."⁴⁹

African Americans not only belonged in Africa, but without their return Africa would remain in a "stupor—amused with her dreams of ignorance and superstition."⁵⁰ In other words, God had used the institution of slavery in America to introduce republican ideals and Christianity to African Americans, and colonization would establish these values in Africa. The *Christian Advocate* may have offered the most comprehensive summary of what colonizationists advocated:

We in our beloved America hold the destinies of the wide continent of Africa in our hands, like a casket of jewels... We hold the moral power which shall renovate that vast sepulcher of ancient kingdoms, filling it with life and beauty... Through us the blessed Sabbath shall be given again to Africa, and all her deserts of sand shall become fruitful fields, waving with corn, and fragrant with spices. Through us, every benighted son and daughter of that injured and despised land shall know the Lord, and shall rejoice in the salvation of the gospel... The descendants of Africa who are in the midst of us... compose two millions and a half of missionaries, whom we have been educating in the school of servitude, for the regeneration of their native land. They now stand to us in the relation of the faithful servants of the cause of freedom, whom we may culture and send at our bidding into the heart and throughout all the extremes of a magnificent continent, whose immense relative importance the Creator of all worlds has acknowledged in his blessed promise, that Ethiopia shall yet stretch out her hands in the praise and adoration of heavenly worship.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Sarah J. Hale, *Liberia; or, Mr. Peyton's Experiments* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), iv.

⁵⁰ "Tyson's Address," *Colonization Herald* 1, no. 3 (May 2, 1835).

⁵¹ "Fourth of July," *Christian Advocate* 5, no. 40 (3 June 1831).

Ironically, the same African Americans who were colonizationists' allies against the African foreign were also hopelessly degraded in America. Most colonizationists agreed that the degraded condition of African Americans resulted principally from their status as orphaned children.⁵² This belief that African Americans were at the same time hopelessly degraded in America and destined for greatness in Africa represented, as George Fredrickson has noted, "a radical extension of environmentalism."⁵³ Only in Africa, it was believed, would African Americans reach their human potential, because they would no longer be hampered in their efforts to improve themselves by white prejudice and discrimination.

But colonizationists' commitment to Africa went beyond their belief in ineradicable prejudice in America. Colonizationists were more than social conservatives with a powerful sense of the limitations of reform to solve all problems like racial prejudice.⁵⁴ Like abolitionists they, too, were idealistic Christians and applied their idealism globally. The spiritual and millennial vision of evangelicalism pushed many colonization advocates away from national distinctions and toward global revolution. In fact, evangelical preoccupation with converting the world generally, and Africa specifically, encouraged a skepticism of abolition, which seemed to them only concerned with American affairs.⁵⁵

⁵² Melish uses the term "strangers." The most popular image, however, was that of orphaned children, the "sons and daughters of Africa."

⁵³ George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 16.

⁵⁴ See Fredrickson, 18-21.

⁵⁵ On millennialism see Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985); Curtis Johnson, *Redeeming America: Evangelicals and the Road to Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993); Martin Marty, *Protestantism in the United States: Righteous Empire*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986); Johnson, *Shopkeeper's Millennium*, Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling*.

Colonization advocates advanced an argument that linked black manhood and republican greatness in Africa. The link between manhood and republican greatness in the “land of their fathers” relegated African American masculinity—and all the civic rights and privileges of manhood—in Africa, and simultaneously undermined their claims to citizenship. While colonizationists assigned to African American men a providential role in elevating Africa and building a world-wide Christian empire, they refused to include African Americans in their vision of American society. “She [Africa] teaches him self-government, she bids him rear cities, and build ships, and spread abroad his commerce, and lay deep and extended, the foundation of his social and political institutions, and thus give practical demonstration, to his oppressors and despisers, that he is ‘a man and a brother.’”⁵⁶ Helen Cross developed a similar argument in her book, *A New Republic*. In Liberia, she insisted, “they have their own laws, legislators, their own houses and lands, their own wives and children...with none to molest or to make them afraid. They are in their father-land, on their own soil, where they have a chartered birthright, with all the means and appliances of becoming a great and powerful nation.”⁵⁷

Such images legitimated the contention that African Americans were orphaned children in America and, at the same time, promoted colonization as a masculine endeavor. This discourse argued that slavery and oppression made African American men incapable of attaining true manhood in the United States. Only in Africa would they be men. In America, it was argued, the African American male remained a child. “In infancy, he finds himself...the scorn of his playmate...In youth

⁵⁶ Wilber Fisk, *Address Delivered before the Middletown Colonization Society* (Middletown: G.F. Olmsted, 1835), 15.

⁵⁷ Helen Cross Knight, *The New Republic* (Boston: Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, 1850), 245.

he has no incentive to prepare for an active and honorable manhood...In maturer years, he has little motive to industry.” But in Africa, African American men would be placed in an environment in which they could thrive as men—as citizens and Christians.⁵⁸

Colonizationists ignored that the overwhelming majority of free and slave African Americans had ancestors whose residence in America stretched back over a century. They insisted that only in the “land of their forefathers” would the “sons of Africa” become men and fulfill their providential destiny of republican greatness. A poem in “Voice from Africa,” a primer produced by Moses Sheppard, a member of the Society of Friends in Baltimore, and used in schools for free African Americans in the north, captures the link between colonization and manhood:

Land of our fathers, Af-ri-ca,
We turn our thoughts to thee—
To gain thy shores we’ll gladly bear
The storm upon the sea.

We’ll live, where flow the rivers by,
Which were our fathers’ ride,—
And die beneath the same blue sky,
‘Neath which our fathers died.

Then welcome day, and welcome hour,
When on the sea we roam,
Our guide, the God whose word is power,
To gain our fathers’ home.

Only in the land of their fathers would the exiled sons find a home. In America they would remain politically powerless “boys.” William Hammett made this insinuation when he remarked, “A gloom hangs over them [African Americans] through which

⁵⁸ Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City*, 136-194; John Saillant “Missions in Liberia and Race Relations in the United States”, 13-28; *Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society For Colonization the Free People of Colour of the United States* (Washington D.C., 1824), 87.

they can never hope to penetrate...No individual effort, no system of legislation, can in this country...raise them to the level of the white man, nor secure to them the privileges of freemen.” But in Liberia they are “cultivating among themselves all the arts of civilized life, and securing to their families all the blessings of well-ordered society.” So great is the African American prospect in Africa, asserted Hammet, that these men are “the germ of an empire that may one day rival our own.”⁵⁹

At the same time that colonizationists viewed the effort to colonize in masculine terms, they represented Africa itself as feminine. Unlike other nineteenth century colonization literature, Africa was nearly universally portrayed as a mother who had lost her children. In this way, the image of African Americans as “sons of Africa” was complemented by the widespread depiction of Africa as a mother.⁶⁰ “What has Africa done,” asked John Moffit in a sermon at Bennet Street Church in New York, “that her children should blacken beneath a heavier, more lasting curse, than ever rested on any other nation! What hath she done to thee, great America, that thou holdest her sons, her daughters, her feeble infants in bondage, and refuseth to let them go?” Methodist missionary Rev. Melville Cox imagined Africa as a wailing mother who “pleads in the strong wailings of suffering humanity” to induce African Americans to return to Africa. “Will not her sons in America hear? Have they forgotten the mother that bore them?” he asked. Leonard Bacon, alluding to Jeremiah

⁵⁹ *The Christian Advocate* 7, no. 27 (1 March 1833).

⁶⁰ On masculinity and colonization see Bruce Dorsey “A Gendered History of African Colonization in the Antebellum United States” *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 1 (2000): 77-103. Dorsey argues that the American Colonization Society assumed a masculine character and utilized sexual conquest imagery to depict colonizing as a masculine endeavor that promised independent manhood. Dorsey’s thesis fails to explain the overwhelming presence of motherly imagery associated with Africa, and the concomitant image of African Americans as “sons and daughters.” Much of what he interprets as sexual is maternal. It is clear that colonization is a masculine effort, but not a sexualized one. Dorsey also underestimates the significance of casting African Americans as children. These are not men colonizing Africa; rather they are boys and sons.

31:15 that depicts the biblical figure Rachel weeping for her children, asserted, “There is weeping and lamentation, under the palm trees of Africa; for mothers have been plundered of their children, and will not be comforted.”⁶¹ Frederick Freeman, likewise, utilized the well-known biblical text. Caroline, the female child in *Yaradee* lamented, “Poor Africa! what has she suffered! I do not wonder that that wretched continent has been represented as a widow, sitting beneath her own palm-trees, clothed in sackcloth, and weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted.”⁶²

Female colonizationists were especially focused on the image of Africa as a mourning mother. Like female abolitionists, female colonization supporters typically employed sentimental, feminine images. In fact, they engaged in maternal, emotional language more frequently and more forcefully than their male counterparts who, at least initially, preferred masculine imagery in their sermons, polemics and poetry. In part, this difference can be explained as a function of literary genre. Female colonizationists chiefly utilized poetry in public discourse and antebellum poetry tended to be sentimental and emotional. But it is also clear female colonizationists understood they were engaged in a larger public debate with female abolitionists. Female abolitionists concentrated on the sorrowful slave mother who longed for the return of her absent sons and daughters. Female colonizationists, on the other hand, personify Africa as a mother who laments her lost children. Africa “sits a weeping mother in the dust, /With outstretched arms and voice of mournful sound,/ Calling her

⁶¹ Leonard Bacon, *Plea for Africa*, 11

⁶² Freeman, *Yaradee*, 60.

absent son, the loved, the lost,” wrote an anonymous woman to “the Free Coloured Population of the United States.”⁶³

In casting Africa as a lamenting mother, female colonizationists attempted to elicit female support for the cause. In an appeal to “the females of the United States,” Lydia Sigourney compared white American mothers to Africa, “that bereaved mother, so long bowed down by a double mourning; *for the dead, and for the living.*” She asserted that white mothers whose children are free to “blossom in beauty, and cheer your hearts with the promise of intellect and wisdom” were obligated, at the very least, to financial support colonization. “While you recount to your sons the blessings of liberty, incite them to an alms for her who hath worn in solitude and bitterness the fetters of every nation. Prompt every female within the circle of your influence to work one evening, and dedicate this produce of their skill...to the *Schools of Liberia.*” Similarly, another anonymous woman pleaded the cause of Africa in maternal and sentimental language:

Yes, see her kneeling on the lonely shore,
And from her lips escape, as with her eye
She follows o’er the surge, the slave-ship’s track,
And shrieks aloud for help—but shrieks in vain!⁶⁴

The author concluded that white women, and specifically mothers, had an obligation to respond to the tragedy, “Come, Mothers! Here with mothers shed your tears...Yes—weep...wake, weep and pray.” In a lengthy poem entitled “Africa,” Ann Evans condemned slavery even as she promoted female obligation in the cause

⁶³ Mrs. G., “A Voice From Africa,” *The Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine* 1, no. 2 (February 1835): 47.

⁶⁴ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no. 6 (August 1830): 187.

of colonization. Evans portrays Africa as a queen and empress whose glorious past of flourishing cities and mines of riches had been made desolate:

Ah! Why does she who lately stood a queen,
Now stand in sackcloth, spurn the hand of pity,
Refusing to be comforted?—She weeps
Her captive sons, rent from her bleeding bosom,
And leaving there a grief “*that will not heal.*”
A demon hand tears from the mother’s arms
The smiling babe, and gives the years of manhood
To toil, and bitterest woe.

Slavery, according to Evans, demolished a country and destroyed both African womanhood and manhood. But there is hope for Africa and her “children” for benevolent women have heard Africa’s weeping: “For thee Affection breathes her gentle sigh; For woman’s heart, in its deep, pure tenderness,/ Remembers Africa.” In time, the “children of Afric” will return “To thy maternal bosom/Thy captive sons shall flock, as weary doves,/ And find repose.”⁶⁵

Evans and other female colonizationists proposed a grand religious vision for Christian womanhood that inextricably fused female obligation to the advancement of America’s global mission “to hasten the day of blessedness, and glory foreseen by the eye and foretold by the lip of ancient prophecy when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the whole earth, and all flesh shall seek his salvation.”⁶⁶ Nevertheless, female colonizationists remained committed to a God-ordained hierarchy of class, race and gender that assigned to them—white middle-class women—a special role in the cause of colonization and the advancement of Christendom. By shifting the focus away from African American women and toward a personified motherly Africa, they refused to identify with African Americans and, like their male counterparts, ignored

⁶⁵ Ann Evans, “Africa” (Andover: Flagg & Gould, 1826).

⁶⁶ Second Annual Report of the Ladies’ Liberian Association of New York (New York, 1836), p. 9.

the claims of black men and women to citizenship. At the same time, they appealed to middle-class, evangelical female sensibilities. Rather than see their own oppression mirrored in the experiences of slaves, as many white women abolitionists did, female colonizationists represented African Americans as orphans in America.

Conclusion

The result of the flurry of words in the religious and secular press on Africa was that by the end of the 1830s, the general public possessed an image of Africa that was, in large part, shaped by colonizationist ideals. Colonization advocates viewed Africa as the solution, the promised land of the ancient Exodus narrative: a place of black redemption as well as a land full of hostile enemies in need of regeneration. Colonization rhetoric shifted the focus away from America and slavery and toward Africa and Africans. In contrast to abolitionists, colonizationists rarely wrote or spoke about the individual African American. On the topic of Africa, however, they were effusive. By concentrating on Africa, colonizationists obscured the conditions of slavery in the South and the status of free blacks in the North. Male and female colonization supporters telescoped free black and slave into a single monolithic “childlike” condition and represented them as orphans in America, native only to Africa. In so doing, they normalized the foreignness of African American women and men, and contributed to a political environment unwilling to consider African Americans in its vision of an American democratic society. Ironically, colonization supporters assigned to “degraded and ignorant” African Americans a unique and providential role in building a world-wide Christian empire alongside white men and women missionaries. This effort redrew lines of status along national and religious

lines—American blacks and whites became allies against the African foreign and is the subject of chapter six.

Chapter Six “An Instrument in His Hands”

“I have heard the wild native of Africa testify that God hath power on earth to forgive sin,” proclaimed Methodist missionary Eunice Moore. “Rejoice, then, ye daughters of benevolence! The Judge of all the earth is answering your prayers in behalf of the poor benighted Africa,” she wrote a friend on January 12, 1838. Moore believed God was rewarding missionary efforts in Liberia. Now, she asserted, “the way is opening for the poor native who is now worshipping devils” to begin to worship “the true and living God.” As a veteran missionary in Liberia, Moore’s desire to convert the native population is not unexpected. Her obvious condescension for African people is likewise predictable. More surprising, perhaps, is that Moore was an African American.¹

The same racial prejudice that fueled colonization and encouraged white Americans to view black Americans as foreigners, ironically, encouraged black missionaries to stress the “otherness” of the indigenous population. Black missionaries shared with white missionaries a belief in the inferiority of native Africans and sought to uplift Africa through the introduction of Christianity. These shared beliefs often aligned black and white missionaries against the native population. Women, like Moore, brought to Liberia preconceived notions regarding Africa and its people as well a sense of their own spiritual and cultural role in Liberia. By examining the way missionary women—black and white—in Liberia constructed their identities, interpreted their responsibilities, and perceived African people and their cultures, this chapter illuminates the tangled web

¹ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 14, no. 3 (March 1838): 73-74.

of religious and racist thinking that characterized both black and white Americans even as it describes the complex relationship between colonization and missions.

The Context

From the outset, colonization supporters linked their efforts with Christian missions. Likewise, mission supporters often connected their ambitions for Africa with colonization. White mission advocates described African Americans as God's intended evangelists to Africa. African American men were "destined to be the principal agents in communicating the arts of civilization and the ever-blessed Gospel, to the long neglected and degraded tribes of Africa."² To put it another way, God had ordained slavery as the mechanism of raising a new African elect into civilization and Christianity. The providential discourse concealed, however, their interest in sending black Americans away. "Who can doubt that to this Nation the interests of the African race are, by Providence, especially entrusted," asserted Ralph Gurley. "Her exiled children in the midst of us, are waiting to return to her, not as they came, ignorant and enslaved barbarians, but free and instructed Christians, capable with the aid that we can give them, of founding upon her shores civilized institutions, [and] of becoming teachers and guides to her people."³

All the major missionary agencies exerted an intensive effort in Liberia during the years 1830-1850. Liberia was the first overseas mission location for the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal denominations. Presbyterians, Methodists, and Episcopalians sent one hundred and forty-nine mostly white Americans to Liberia as

² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no. 2 (April 1830): 47; 4, no. 7 (October 1828): 198.

³ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 8, no. 12 (February 1833): 3.

missionaries between 1833 and 1861.⁴ Women made up at least fifty percent of the missionary personnel, and a substantial number of single white women—primarily Episcopalian and Methodist—went to Liberia as missionary teachers. The combination of married and single female missionaries often meant women outnumbered men. The Episcopalian mission, for example, sent fifty-five white missionaries between 1835 and 1861, the largest number of missionaries commissioned by any one denomination to Liberia. Thirty-two of these missionaries were women and eighteen of them unmarried. Between 1834 and 1854, half of the thirty-four white missionaries sent by the Methodists were women. Nine women were missionary wives and eight single women. Methodists commissioned another four unmarried African American females as teachers in Liberia.⁵

Liberia was also the first location all the major denominational mission boards recruited and employed black American missionaries. The Presbyterian mission was the earliest denomination to use a substantial number of home-commissioned African American missionaries.⁶ Of the forty-one missionaries sent to Liberia between 1833 and 1861, twenty-six were African Americans. In 1846 the Southern Baptist Convention also began sending home-commissioned missionaries. Mission boards employed scores of emigrants who had previously moved to Liberia. The Methodists alone engaged fifty-two men as preachers and teachers before the Civil War.⁷

⁴ Arthur Judson Brown, *One Hundred Years* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1936), 1127-1128; Eddie Stepp, "Interpreting a Forgotten Mission: African-American Missionaries of the Southern Baptist Convention in Liberia, West Africa 1846-1860," (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 1999); Lizzie Rose Foster, *An Historical Sketch of the African Mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A* (New York: Foreign Committee, 1884), 61-66; Eunjin Park, *White Americans in "Black" Africa: Black and White American Methodist Missionaries in Liberia, 1820-1875* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 198-204.

⁵ The Presbyterians, on the other hand, did not send any unmarried white woman to Liberia, although it did not hesitate sending married white women and unmarried African American females.

⁶ This number does not include African American missionary wives who, unlike white missionary wives, were not listed in official roll of missionaries.

⁷ Park, 198-204.

One practical reason whites declared black Americans Africa's "natural" evangelists was that most believed white people were unsuited to the African climate and more vulnerable to disease and death. "The white man, as we are convinced from melancholy proof, cannot endure that climate," asserted Rev. Jonathan Wainwright. More than this, it was believed that Africans associated white people with disease, which rendered them "unfit for usefulness among most of the tribes."⁸

Indeed, Liberia was deadly for white missionaries. Even Episcopalians, who started sending missionaries later than the other denominations in 1836 and escaped the most deadly period in Liberian history, nevertheless experienced an extremely high death rate. Over one-third of white Episcopalian missionaries in Liberia died within two years of arrival, the majority in the first year. Another one-fourth permanently returned to America within the first two years of arrival. Between 1836 and 1860, almost three-fourths, or thirty-five of the forty-eight, white missionaries to Liberia either died or returned to America within four years of their arrival.⁹ The considerable number of deaths and life threatening illnesses confirmed white Americans' conviction that Africa was a "white man's grave." But Liberia was just as deadly for African Americans. One scholar has labeled the period between 1820 and 1843 as "catastrophic" for African American settlers. Indeed, Liberian immigrants experienced one of the highest death rates on record between 1820 and 1843, and had substantially lower life expectancies than black populations in the southern United States or the British Caribbean.¹⁰

⁸ Wainwright, *A Discourse*, 21.

⁹ In the first year, eleven missionaries (four males, seven females) died and three more (one male/two females) returned to the U.S. In the second year, six missionaries (two males/four females) died and eight others (four males/four females) returned to the U.S. In the third and fourth year, seven missionaries (three males/four females) returned. Only seven missionaries served more than ten years. Foster., 61-62.

¹⁰ Antonio McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: The Mortality Cost of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Despite the deadly climate, white women were considered essential to the missionary effort in Liberia.¹¹ The motive for sending antebellum women overseas as missionaries was woman's nature—as wife, mother, homemaker, and teacher. Women, it was thought, had a unique and natural responsibility for reaching out to their heathen sisters. Just as American men and women distinguished between each sex's contributions to society, so the rhetoric of evangelical missions discriminated between men's work—church planting, preaching, sacraments—and women's—domestic, teaching, woman to woman. Women missionaries had a special part to play in reaching out to their heathen sisters. When the pioneer group of foreign missionaries from the United States departed from India in 1812, Rev. Jonathan Allen in his missionary charge commanded the women—Harriet Newell and Ann Judson—to evangelize women to whom their husbands could get little access and teach women that they are “rational beings” who are not “an inferior race of creatures; but stand upon a par with men.” According to Rev. Allen, the missionary wife was to be an educator, an evangelist of women, and an advocate for America's gender roles.¹²

Twenty years later, the Methodist Foreign Missionary Society outlined its motivation for supporting white female missionaries in Liberia. First, the society argued, women were vital as wives. In this role they helped overcome the great difficulties of men engaged in missionary work. Male missionaries were “invariably subject to

¹¹ Most women went with their husbands as “assistant missionaries.” This phrase conceals the fact that many of these women identified themselves as missionaries in their own right and had decided to become missionaries independent of their husbands, often as single young adults. I am making a distinction between overseas missions and domestic missions. Hundreds of single women traveled to the West and South as teachers in communities as well as on Native American reservations. Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Converting the West* (Norman, OK; Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Clifford Merrill Drury, ed., *The Mountains We Have Crossed* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

¹² For the text of Allen's sermon, see R. Pierce Beaver, ed., *Pioneers in Mission: The Early Missionary Ordination Sermons, Charges, and Instructions: A Source Book on the Rise of American Missions to the Heathen* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 268-78.

disappointment and consequent depression.” Moreover, the change of atmosphere and mode of preparing food in foreign lands left men vulnerable to mental and physical deterioration. Female companionship—and culinary skill—helped ward off this danger. Secondly, women were necessary in Liberia in order to model Christian families. The contrast between the missionary family and the indigenous family would be so “glaring that they [natives] could not refrain from being moved by it.” Finally, women—married and single—were essential to the mission because, “a male missionary cannot have sufficient access to the female portion of the community.” Antebellum mission theory asserted that the conversion of women was the key to Christianizing another culture. In Liberia, “The success of missions depends mainly upon the assent and co-operation of heathen females...[but] these as a whole, can be moved only...by means of persons of their own sex.” The Methodist Foreign Mission and Rev. Allen, although separated by twenty years, came to a similar conclusion. Women as wife, mother, and teacher serve as advocates for America’s gender roles and as evangelists of women.¹³

What mission boards, missionaries, and church leaders failed to acknowledge as they made a case for the role of white women in Liberia and waxed eloquent on the importance of African American missionaries in Liberia was that establishing Christianity did not have to wait for missionaries. Although the majority of African Americans rejected the colonization scheme, there were some sympathetic black Americans who believed that they were ordained to carry Christianity and civilization back to Africa. These early colonists were their own missionaries. African American settlers provided their own religious leadership, formed their own religious societies,

¹³ *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion’s Herald* 7, no. 32 (5 April 1833).

built their own churches, supplied teachers for their schools, and evangelized the indigenous population.

Although the nature of immigration made many settlers informal missionaries, some settlers went with a clear missionary purpose. In 1820 the Baptist General Conference commissioned Lott Cary and Collin Teague, both former slaves, as missionaries to Liberia. The two men and their families embarked for Liberia on an ACS ship January 23, 1821. Plans to go to Liberia, however, began years before. Around 1815, Carey organized the Richmond African Baptist Missionary Society for the sole purpose of evangelizing Africa. By the time Carey and Teague left for Liberia the society had raised \$700 that was used by Carey to start a school for indigenous children at Cape Mount. Once there, Carey founded Providence Baptist Church. Rev. Coston M. Waring and Rev. John Lewis, who came in 1823 and 1824 respectively, added to the Baptist leadership. By the time of Carey's death in 1828 the membership of Providence numbered about one hundred. By 1832 it was necessary to organize the Second Baptist Church of Monrovia.¹⁴

African Americans from other denominations went to Liberia as religious leaders. Daniel Coker, one of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) sailed to Liberia in 1820. Coker joined the first party to go to Liberia. Soon after arriving in Africa, he and most of the emigrants went to Freetown, Sierra Leone, and there built a Methodist church. Even though Coker removed to Sierra Leone, the Methodist church prospered in Liberia. When Melville Cox, the first official missionary

¹⁴ James B. Taylor, *Biography of Elder Lott Cary, Late Missionary to Africa* (Baltimore: Armstrong & Berry, 1837); Thomas Hendrix, "The Love of Liberty": A Study of the Religious Factor in the Nineteenth-Century Settlement of Afro-Americans in Liberia Bangs," (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1985).

of the Methodist church, arrived in Liberia, he found settler clergy at work in various locations. At least eighteen African Americans, who had served in some capacity as Methodist clergy in the United States, had immigrated before Cox arrived.¹⁵

The First Female Missionaries

African American settlers provided the first religious work by females in the early years of settlement. Very little is known about their efforts, however. The pervading sentiment among settlers in Liberia was that men were the religious leaders and women fulfilled domestic obligations. After a settlement was established, the settlers usually constructed a church and a schoolhouse. These two buildings served as the center of the community social life, and the preacher and the teacher were respected male leaders of the community. The role of women in secondary roles, such as Sunday school teachers, is unclear.¹⁶ Certainly, the hardships of establishing a settlement, the effect of disease, and hostile neighbors, kept many women preoccupied with mere survival. Yet in December 1825 John Ashmun, the ACS's colonial agent, noted that the encouragement "afforded by the intelligent females of the settlement" contributed greatly to the early and successful completion of two churches in Monrovia.¹⁷

More is known of the African American women sent by American religious groups beginning in the 1830s. The first African American women sent as paid missionaries to Liberia were Elizabeth Caesar and Elizabeth Mars Johnson, later Elizabeth Thomson. Both women had connections with Hartford's Episcopal African

¹⁵ "Coker, Daniel," Richard R. Wright, *Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: Book Concern of the A.M.E. Church, 1916), 68; Hendrix, 299; Park, 69.

¹⁶ Before the Civil War, Sunday schools were established throughout Liberia and taught thousands of children. The role of women as teachers and managers in Sunday school programs becomes more prominent over time. See Debra Newman, "The Emergence of Liberian Women in the Nineteenth Century," (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 1984), 317-336.

¹⁷ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 2, no. 2 (May 1826): 4.

Mission School, and were named as members of “The Charitable Society in the African Sunday School,” an auxiliary to Lydia Sigourney’s Female African Society. The Charitable Society and African Society were committed to the colony of Liberia. Sigourney wrote of Elizabeth Mars Johnson:

The young woman who holds the offices of Treasurer, and third manager in this Society, is to go on to Liberia, the approaching Autumn, at the same time with three young men from the African School in this City, two of whom will officiate as Missionaries, and one as a Teacher. Betsy Mars, will I think, be a valuable inhabitant and assistant in the New Colony, being a capable and intelligent woman, and having been for some time engaged in the instruction of children of her own colour.¹⁸

These women’s connection with the African Mission School came through their husbands. The school was a short-lived effort by Connecticut Episcopalians to develop a black leadership for the church in Liberia. The Episcopal Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society Board planned to send William and Elizabeth Johnson to Liberia with Gustavus and Elizabeth Caesar after the men had been trained at the mission school. In 1830 the mission board wrote concerning the prospects of sending two women:

The Board have...the satisfaction of announcing that much valuable assistance to the mission is anticipated from the labours of two females connected with it. One of the, the wife of Mr. Caesar, has for a year past received the benefit of the school; while the other is now engaged in one of the infant schools in Hartford...The value of having two female assistants, of highly respectable attainments and exemplary piety, to aid in conducting the primary schools, cannot be too highly appreciated; and the Board view with great satisfaction this addition to the effective strength of the Mission.¹⁹

Problems developed, however, when the mission committee raised questions about the men’s academic qualifications. Eventually the mission board revoked its

¹⁸ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 6, no. 6 (July 1830): 151.

¹⁹ *Report of the Board of Directors of the African Mission School Society* (Hartford: G.F. Olmstead, 1830), 4-5.

connection with the Caesars and the Johnsons. Nevertheless, the two couples resolved to go to Liberia. In spite of the fact that Gustavus Caesar was no longer under the care of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, he was ordained on September 6, 1830, by Bishop Thomas Brownwell of Connecticut.²⁰ Caesar clearly understood his role in Liberia as evangelistic. “I find myself standing upon the threshold of a stupendous field, all white for the harvest...the spiritual interest of the poor natives is wholly neglected.” The Caesars left for Liberia in August 1831 and were followed in November 1832 by William and Elizabeth Johnson and their infant son, William. Gustavus served as a minister in Caldwell, Liberia, until his death in 1834. William Johnson went to Liberia as a catechist and schoolmaster but died, along with his infant son, within two weeks of arriving in Liberia.²¹

Both women went to Liberia as teachers employed by the Ladies’ Liberia School Association of Philadelphia at a salary of \$200 a year. Caesar began a girls’ school in Cadwell in December 1831, and Elizabeth Johnson started a school in Monrovia after her arrival the next year. Both schools were immediately popular among the inhabitants and white observers praised their schools, as “the soul and spirit of education in the Colony.” Johnson complained that her school was too well attended. “The number continues quite large, entirely too large for one teacher. Justice is not done to either class.” Johnson’s school averaged seventy students, ages 6-15, and Caesar’s school around sixty. Although

²⁰ Only five African-Americans had been ordained in the Episcopal Church before him.

²¹ After his death, on June 24, 1835 Elizabeth Caesar married A.W. Anderson a Baptist minister and teacher in Caldwell. Clifton Hartwell Brewer, *A History of Religious Education in the Episcopal Church to 1835* (New Haven: Yale University, 1924), 243-246; Randall Burkett, “Elizabeth Mars Johnson Thomson (1806-1864): A Research Note” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 55 (March 1986): 23-24; Jackson Kemper, Philadelphia, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, 29 January 1831, ACS Ppaers.

both teachers requested an assistant, the Ladies' Association did not have the funds to acquiesce.²²

For almost four years, the women labored in overcrowded and undersupplied schools. Both experienced sickness and faced the death of loved ones yet remained committed to their schools and the colony. Johnson stated confidently, "You doubtless have heard of all my afflictions and misfortune that I have met with...[yet] I have never regretted one moment coming to this place." She believed God had made her "an instrument in his hands of doing good."²³ Elizabeth Caesar's teaching career ended with her death on December 24, 1835, almost four years to the day after she had opened her school in Caldwell. She was thirty-eight years old. In one of her last letters, she expressed gratitude to Beulah Sansom, the founder of the Ladies' Association, for her efforts to help Liberia: "You have set a good example in Liberia; I hope the rising generation will follow your good works...I hope God will reward you an Hundred fold, for what you have done for our race."²⁴

In 1834 Elizabeth Johnson married James Thomson, an Episcopalian who had emigrated to Liberia in 1832 from Demerara (British Guyana). The couple moved to Cape Palmas where they served as teachers in an Episcopal mission school for indigenous children.²⁵ Elizabeth Johnson Thomson would go on to become a major

²² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10, no. 3 (May 1834): 89, *Second Annual Report of the Ladies' Liberian School Association*, 4-5.

²³ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10, no. 6 (August 1834): 187.

²⁴ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 10, no. 3 (May 1834): 89.

²⁵ E.F. Hening, *History of the African Mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 22-24. James Madison Thomson was born around 1806, was educated in England and lived in New York City where he was a member of St. Philip's Church.²⁵ Before leaving for Liberia, Rev. Peter Williams, Jr., the African American rector of St. Philip's, provided Thomson with books so as "to enable him to introduce the Episcopal service" in Monrovia. Thomson served as lay reader to the small group of Episcopalians in Monrovia, who formed themselves into a religious society under the title of St. James Church in Monrovia. A scandal involving her husband in 1838 forced her to resign that same year. After her husband's death,

figure in early Liberian education and mission history. Her unusually long tenure in Africa earned her the title the “Mother of Missions.”²⁶ Indeed, it was clear from the beginning that Elizabeth Johnson would benefit the colony. A letter written by Jackson Kemper, secretary of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society in December 1830 anticipated Elizabeth’s usefulness. Writing to Ralph Gurley in an attempt to convince the ACS to support the Johnsons, even though the Episcopal Church would not, Kemper wrote, “Mr. Johnson...is as yet, unqualified to aid in that capacity [teacher]. His wife [Elizabeth] however is a well educated young woman and is spoken of in high terms...will your Society engage her services and send her out as an infant school teacher?” A few months later Kemper was more direct about the qualifications of Gustavus Caesar and William Johnson and their wives. “Both men are dull but worthy. They will make good settlers. Their wives I expect will prove to be by far the best teachers in the colony.”²⁷

Elizabeth Johnson Thomson remained a teacher and missionary for the Episcopal Church until her death in 1864 at the age of fifty-six. The detailed account of her death and funeral attests to the extraordinary respect that the community felt for her. The *Cavalla Messenger* reported that the attendance at her funeral was so large that a procession through the streets from her residence to St. Mark’s Church was necessary to accommodate all the mourners. Like other educated settler women she helped form and

she returned to the mission staff at Cape Palmas. Penelope Campbell, in her book *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland State Colonization Society 1831-1857* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971) reports that James Thomson was accused of having seduced colonial and African girls. Although acquitted for lack of evidence, he was popularly considered guilty (p. 169). Elizabeth’s relationship with the Board was strained after she returned to the mission staff in 1842. She, in fact, returned to America in 1845. The Foreign Board refused to send her back to Liberia in 1846, but relented for unknown reasons in 1849. She returned to Cape Palmas as a teacher where she would remain until the end of her life.

²⁶ Harriette G. Brittan, *Scenes and Incidents or Every-Day Live in Africa*, 79.

²⁷ Jackson Kemper, Philadelphia, to Ralph Gurley, Washington, 29 January 1831, ACS Papers; Burkett, 30.

lead benevolent and charitable societies, encouraging Christian values among settlers and the African population. At her funeral three societies led the procession: the Ladies' First and Second Mutual Relief Society, the Union Sisters Society, and the Daughters of Temperance Society.²⁸

Eunice Sharp Moore was another celebrated African American teacher whose lengthy stay in Africa allowed her unequalled influence in the religious and intellectual development of Liberia. In 1834, Moore became the first black Methodist female missionary to go to Liberia. She went as a single woman under the auspices of a group of white women members of the Vestry Street Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City. Like the majority of African American missionary teachers, she was born free in the North. She grew up in Vermont. It is unclear how or where she obtained her education, but the Vestry Street's female missionary society would describe her as "well-educated." The women acquired an appointment for Moore as a teaching missionary from the Missionary Society of the Methodist church and sent her on the ship *Jupiter* in May 1834. She arrived in October. Eighteen years later, she wrote of her school and her role as a teacher: "My school is like a little Church, wholly made up of children. I cannot describe my feelings while setting in my school-room and silently contemplating the peaceful, quiet, and happy countenances...it does really seem to me that the Messiahs' kingdom is set up in their young hearts. But O what a trust is committed to me! The care of so many precious jewels! To be nurtured up for God." She died in 1858 in Liberia.

²⁸ *Cavalla Messenger* 29 (August 1864): 215; Burkett, 21-30.

The first white female missionaries arrived in Liberia on the first day of 1834, part of the first group of Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries sent there.²⁹ The Presbyterians included John B. Pinney, who was also serving as the colonial agent for the ACS, Matthew and Harriet Laird, John Cloud, and an African American named James Temple. The six Methodist missionaries were Rufus Spalding and his wife, Samuel and Phebe Wright, and Sophronia Farrington, the first single female missionary to Liberia. Within one year Matthew and Harriet Laird, Samuel and Phebe Wright, and John Cloud were dead, and the Spaldings and James Temple were forced to return to America because of poor health. Only Pinney and Farrington remained in Liberia. Farrington stayed against the wishes of her friends and the Methodist Missionary Society in order to see “the mission established.” “I laid my life on the altar on leaving America,” she wrote in March 1834, “and I am willing that it should remain there.” She stayed fifteen months until the next white Methodist missionaries, John and Ann Seys, arrived. Pinney also returned in 1835 because of poor health.³⁰

²⁹ John B. Pinney first arrived in Liberia on February 16, 1833 under the care of Western Foreign Missionary Society (WFMS), the first society devoted solely to the missionary work of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Less than one month later, the Methodist Melville B. Cox ill with tuberculosis and having recently lost his wife, baby, and several family members in America, landed on Liberia’s shores. Cox died soon after his arrival and was heralded by Methodists as a martyr for Christian missions. One year later, on November 6, 1833, the first group of Methodist and Presbyterian missionaries set sail aboard the *Jupiter* along with fifty-two emigrants.

³⁰ Nathan Bangs, *A History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, vol. IV (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1839): 58; Brown, *One Hundred Years*, 205; Harriet Laird, Ship *Jupiter*, to Elizabeth, n.p., 16 November 1833, Harriet Laird Correspondence, PHS.

Similarities Between White and Black Female Missionaries

Despite the wide differences in their backgrounds and denominational affiliations, black and white female missionaries in Liberia concurred on a number of fundamental issues. These included their belief in Protestant Christianity as the ultimate expression of religious truth and the certainty that they were participating in God's providential plan to produce a Christian Africa. Cecilia Van Tyne, an African American Presbyterian missionary wrote, 'I do not repent it that I came [to Liberia], nor will any true Christian repent going whither so ever his Master shall call him...in his [God's] own time and for his own dear son's sake he will make here his holy aim, and Africa shall see the salvation of the Lord.' Eunice Sharp Moore celebrated the educational progress of her students and viewed their conversion as a sign pointing to the ultimate triumph of Christianity. "I have heard them tell me the nature of a noun, conjugate a verb, and tell how many times one number is contained in another; but all this was not half so entertaining to me as when I saw them crowding to the altar of God...it appears to me the day is beginning to dawn, and the day-star is rising on this dark division of the earth...none, I believe, have run in vain, nor labored in vain." Similarly, white missionary Harriet Laird believed "the voice of our Saviour...calls us to Africks tawny tribes... if we can be among the means that tend to alleviate the sufferings and promote the well being of those who have sat for ages enshrined in the most gross darkness, what a delightful reflection!"³¹

Black female missionaries shared with white missionaries a discourse that stressed the "otherness" of the African population and emphasized the clashes between "civilized" nations and "uncivilized," indigenous people. Female missionaries stressed

³¹*African Repository and Colonial Journal* 14, vol. 3 (March 1838): 73-74; Cecilia Van Tyne, Settra Kroo, to Walter Lowerie, New York, 14 July 1842, Liberia Letters, PHS, Harriet Laird, Ship Jupiter, to Esther Emeline Myer, Bradford County, Pennsylvania, 23 November 1833, Harriet Laird Correspondence, PHS.

the absence of Christianity as evidence of the inferiority of Africans. After a year in Liberia, Cecilia Van Tyne reported that the Kroo people “are heathen...in the full sense of the word, and act as such...They have no religious principles to govern their unholy feeling.” Mary Elizabeth Parsons, an African American Presbyterian missionary, called Liberia the “land of moral and religious night” and believed its inhabitants “a down trodden race” and despaired that those living further inland appeared spiritually “hopeless.”³²

Female missionaries often condemned the emigrant population as well. In a complex interface between race, culture, and denomination, Liberian missionaries embraced certain assumptions regarding proper Christian belief and behavior, which allowed for little flexibility and no recognition of the way a society shapes religion. Any variation on its tenets suggested a repudiation of the faith. When some colonists, particularly the Methodists, appeared to be reshaping Christianity, some missionaries became quite disturbed. Elizabeth Hening reported to the Episcopal Foreign Committee of Missions in 1845: “The depth and fervour of all true piety is supposed to consist in the delirious excitements of animal feeling. Their nightly conventions resemble more the frantic orgies of a Bacchanalian revel than the rational and solemn worship of God.”³³ Three years before, five male missionaries, including one African American, representing the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and American Board of Foreign Missions, joined together to express their disapproval of emigrant behavior. They reported that colonists “seem to think, that a loud profession, punctual attendance upon their various meetings, & a hearty

³² Cecilia Van Tyne, Settra Kroo, to Walter Lowerie, New York, 14 July 1842; Mary E. Parsons, Greenville, to Rev. John L. Wilson, Philadelphia, 28 February 1855, Secretaries’ Files, PHS.

³³ Elizabeth Hening, n.p., to The Foreign Committee of Missions, New York, 15 November 1845, Liberia Records, ECA.

participation in the extravagant excitement which ordinarily accompanies what they call *revival-meetings*, form the essentials of true piety.” But their behavior “is such as to bring their whole profession...into the utmost disrepute.” They provide numerous examples to substantiate their claim. “Will it be believed that [in] these meetings adult-women are reduced to a state of almost entire nudity?” Colonists believed public dancing immoral but found “no difficulty in reconciling falsehoods, pilfering, adultery & the like, with a creditable profess of religion,” and one self-professing Christian woman was “carried about on this coast for several months on board of [an] English vessel for the...object of gratifying the base passion of the Captain.”³⁴

White and black female missionaries confronted an assortment of beliefs and practices concerning women that further justified their assumptions about the inferiority of African culture. Both black and white female missionaries stressed the need for western dress and names, and the abandonment of polygamy and folk religious practices. Mary Ball, a white Episcopal missionary, witnessed a woman accused of witchcraft survive drinking poison, and, as a consequence, be declared innocent of the charge. Afterwards Ball wrote, “Poor daughters of Africa your lot is indeed hard...To the cause of your freedom from the tyranny of Satan will I devote my powers of body and mind; for thee my tears shall fall.” Another white missionary, Catherine Sawyer, witnessed a mother with her dead infant in her arms surrounded by twenty to thirty other women. “Caring upon the lifeless frame of the dear little infant, hearing the wild shrieks and calls of the frantic Mother,” she wrote, “while the mournful howling from the females in the house, mingled its almost deafening sound with the bitter cries, my heart exclaimed...O!

³⁴ “Resolution of the Missionaries of the Protestant Episcopal, American and Presbyterian Boards,” n.p., 1842, Liberia Letters, PHS; John Payne, Cavalla, to John Vaughn, New York, 7 April 1842, Liberia Records, ECA.

the Horrors of Heathenism!” Ann Wilkins judged “the men absolute and tyrannical masters in everything.” As a missionary in Liberia for twenty years, she came to the conclusion that the reason many females were not allowed to attend school was because the men were afraid the women would become “too knowing...to be kept in fearful subjection by the false and cruel ceremonies practiced.” In particular, Wilkins lamented the ceremony of the “devil-bush” in which a disguised man came out of the bush and beat a woman with clubs. “He is so disguised by the frightful costume that the poor victim of the blows cannot even recognize him...while in reality it is more commonly her own husband.”³⁵

Believing that Christianity should grant women an especially high status in society—as it did in the United States—female missionaries were especially concerned with the plight of young girls born in the local villages. Missionaries abhorred the dowry system that existed in African culture. Elizabeth Thomson called it a “horrid custom.” Parents betrothed their daughters while still infants, and at the request of the husband turned over their daughters, regardless of the girl’s age, which was often very young. The custom proved a serious obstacle to establishing female schools. The few girls who were allowed to attend school were liable at any time to be withdrawn from the school and “forced to swell the retinue of a heathen polygamist.” In response to the situation, some denominations attempted to purchase or “redeem” girls in order to allow them to experience a more “civilized” life. Elizabeth Hening wrote of the Episcopal policy, “all girls now received into the Mission, are either secured by the payment of the betrothment money to the parents, or redeemed from a former purchaser. At the same time, a written

³⁵ Mary Ball, Cavalla, to n.n., Kensington, 31 May 1854, Liberia Records, ECA; Catherine Sawyer, Settra Kroo, to Daniel Wells, n.p., 11 September 1843, Liberia Letters, PHS; *Christian Advocate and Journal* 18, vol. 19 (20 December 1843): 75.

pledge is given by the missionary for her support and education, promising also, that as soon as she reaches a suitable age, she shall be disposed of in marriage.” The husband the missionaries supplied were among the Christian young men trained in their mission schools.³⁶

Mission boards and missionaries believed female education the most important area of missionary activity among women in Liberia. Schools for girls were, as missionary John Seys reported, “the nursery of the church.”³⁷ Nearly all female missionaries taught in some capacity either in day schools, boarding schools, orphanages, or evening schools in their homes. Yet it remained difficult getting and keeping girls in schools and only a few achieved a degree of longevity and stability. Alexander Crummell addressed the issue of female education in an 1870 letter:

You can do no large great work for God in Africa unless you make female influence a prominent influence. Woman keeps Africa low and degraded; and hence only woman, under God, can raise Africa up...Men, ministers, must lead in missions; but I should say, send two female missionaries to one man. Let the women teach the native school, visit native women, and force respect for woman upon these native chiefs and kings; and train the boys to respect womanhood.³⁸

The indigenous tribes were reluctant to allow their daughters to leave their tribe to attend school because it almost certainly meant they would not return. Missionaries believed that once educated and Christianized, Africans had to remain removed from their traditional environment or risk being drawn back into “heathenism.” Instead, they were expected to live in Christian villages established near mission stations.

³⁶ Hening, *History of the African Mission*, 28-31.

³⁷ *Fortieth Annual Report of the American Colonization Society* (Washington D.C., 1857), 15.

³⁸ *The African Repository* 47, no. 1 (January 1871): 15.

Equally frustrating to missionaries, African American immigrants did not encourage the education of females beyond the primary level. Only the female elite sought higher education and usually traveled outside Liberia to attain it. In an 1860 Independence Day speech, Alexander Crummell lamented “the general frivolousness of the female mind” in Liberia and feared a “moral shipwreck” if women were not better educated. “When I look at the severe and rugged aspects of actual existence in this young country, I find it difficult to understand how it is that Parisian millinery can maintain such a tyrannous control over the sex, from Cape Mount to Palmas.” He surmised that women were drawn to attire because of the paucity of fine art available to them in Liberia. It was the one way women could express their sophistication in a culture devoid of luxury. This indifference for higher education resulted in no permanent institution for higher education for women until the twentieth century.³⁹

Missionaries had the greatest educational success among Africans who had been sent to Liberia after they had been seized on slave ships. With no prospect of returning home these dislocated females were more willing to be westernized. For example, in December 1845 the U.S. Yorktown captured a slave ship, the *Pons* of Philadelphia, with over seven hundred slaves of both sexes on board, a large portion of whom were between the ages of eight and eighteen.⁴⁰ The recaptured slaves were taken to Monrovia and

³⁹ Alexander Crummell, *The Future of Africa*, (Reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 43. On female education in Liberia see Newman, “The Emergence of Liberian Women in the Nineteenth Century,” 268-316.

⁴⁰ The *Pons* had come to Africa from South America under the command of American James Berry. Once on the coast of Africa, Berry gave up the ship to John Galana, a renowned Portuguese slave trader who had been a passenger on the ship. It then took on board over nine hundred slaves and set sail for Brazil using the American flag. The vessel was captured three days after it left the African coast. The crew of the ship consisted of Spanish, Portuguese, and Brazilians. Not one American was on board. However, Charles Bell, Commander of the Yorktown, based on the testimony of the crew believed that Berry and Galana arranged the whole affair at Rio in South America before the ship sailed for Africa. “Naval Journal,” *Niles National Register* 20, no. 3 (21 March 1846): 35.

placed in the care of different families. The Methodist mission viewed the forty-seven girls on board with great excitement and played a critical role in the relief efforts, taking in numerous children. Susan Benham, a married white missionary, described the girls as a “great acquisition” because of the difficulty in obtaining indigenous girls for their schools. Benham asserted that the mission schools would direct “every attention...to the unfortunate girls’ moral and physical training.” Benham and her husband, John, adopted four children, two boys and two girls. It was her responsibility to teach her “family of recaptives” in an evening school. Ann Wilkins took a “goodly number,” approximately twelve to fifteen, into her home in order to teach “them the sacred principles of our holy religion and the arts of civilized life.” In all, the Methodist mission selected about one hundred children for the several mission schools.⁴¹

The practice of taking children into one’s home was viewed as a primary way to reform African culture. Rev. Anthony D. Williams, a black emigrant-preacher, and his wife raised two African girls who as children converted to Christianity and became members of his church. As he reflected on their conversion he wrote, “it fills me with joy to hear them tell of the goodness of God and shout forth his praise.”⁴² Elizabeth Thomson adopted numerous children during her lifetime. She wrote in 1840 about a revival that began with her adopted daughter and spread to the girls and boys schools in Mt. Vaughn. She expressed elation that four African boys, two girls, “and my adopted child that I had in my family when the school was first established, come over to the

⁴¹ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 22, no. 5 (May 1846): 151; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 22, no. 5 (May 1846): 150; *Christian Advocate and Journal* 20, no. 37 (22 April 1846): 147.

⁴² *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 12, no. 3 (March 1836): 96-91.

Lord's side." Thomson was so pleased that she said, "I think I have been doubly repaid for what I have done and suffered in Africa."⁴³

Foster children—as well as indigenous children attending mission schools—were expected to learn and abide by American cultural and moral values. One important step in civilizing the children included proper dress. Catherine Sawyer argued the right clothing was "indispensable to the establishment of civilized habits," or else "all our efforts toward christianizing are unavailing." Susan Benham asked the women of the New York missionary society to send "thin materials for pantaloons, and unbleached muslin, and calico for dresses" as well as "cheap bonnets." She preferred the women send material rather than dresses so that "the girls may be taught to make their own clothes."⁴⁴

Giving children American names was also considered essential. Usually, the children were named after a benefactor, minister, or missionary. The children taken in by Susan Benham were named John Wesley and Charlotte Matthias at the request of the children of the Nazareth Methodist Sunday School in Philadelphia.⁴⁵ The other boy and girl were named after the Rev. David Shepherd and Maria Shepherd of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Although the two boys were known to be brothers, there was no attempt to recognize their kinship through a shared last name. Ann Wilkins named one of her girls Lydia B. Lane, after the corresponding secretary of the New York Female Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁴⁶

⁴³ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 16, no. 20 (October 1840): 313.

⁴⁴ *Colonization Herald* 15 (1 January 1845): 2; *Christian Advocate and Journal* 20, no. 37 (22 April 1846): 147.

⁴⁵ John Wesley was the founder of Methodism. Matthias is the Greek name for Matthew, one of the apostles and the author of the New Testament book named after him.

⁴⁶ *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 22, no. 5 (May 1846): 150.

Differences Between White and Black Female Missionaries

Despite their agreement on a number of issues, black and white female missionaries in Liberia differed in significant ways. While sharing a desire to Christianize and civilize Africa, female missionaries expressed different motives and justifications for entering missionary service. White female missionaries interpreted their role in pietistic terms, and believed they were most fully realizing female submissiveness and pious self-sacrifice in missionary work. In part, they were responding to the image extolled by ministers, mission boards, and, especially, the religious press that portrayed female missionaries as the model of true Christian womanhood and as martyrs for the cause of Christ. Sophronia Farrington, for example, was celebrated for her heroism after she refused to return to America after the death of her missionary party and her own ill health. Her “sacrifice to the holy cause...was the spirit which must be abroad in the church,” asserted the *Western Christian Advocate*. It was argued her sacrificial example would “prepare the hearts of the young and vigorous to go, incline their friends to yield them up with joy, and the settled and established to contribute to their support.”⁴⁷ Newspapers, Sunday School literature, and the highly popular missionary memoir promoted female missionaries as romanticized culture heroes whose self-denial, often poignantly culminating in calm resignation in the face of death, emphasized the propriety of the female missionary leaving all for Christ. For many antebellum females, the pious, self-sacrificing female missionary represented a spiritual yardstick by which women

⁴⁷ *Western Christian Advocate* 1, no. 3 (16 May 1834): 10.

measured the fidelity of their own willingness to endure physical, emotional, and spiritual hardship for their God.⁴⁸

White women insisted that their call to missionary service came independent of any man or woman. The white female missionary clearly understood that since God was the ultimate authority, a claim to God's call allowed her to lay some claim to decision making regardless of gender.⁴⁹ Harriet Laird had an eye toward foreign missions years before she embarked for Liberia. In 1825, she wrote in her journal, "I have read interesting accounts from our missionary stations this week almost wishing and hoping that God in his providence would in a future day transplant unworthy me to some distant land where Jesus and his love would be my constant theme."⁵⁰ Her opportunity came in the marriage proposal of Matthew Laird eight years later.

White women time and again positioned their desire to become missionaries within the context of true piety. They were acting out of a selfless desire to serve God and were willing to endure any form of hardship for their God. After Sarah Henderson heard of Harriet's death in 1833, Henderson continued to feel strongly about her duty to God. She wrote to the secretary of the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board, "I believe I am as willing as ever to leave all and find a grave in that unhealthy clime—for Christ's sake, and those perishing immortals, that wander there in sin's dark mazes."⁵¹ In the fall of 1841, Maria Chapin attended an evening lecture on Episcopal missions and Africa.

⁴⁸ For a discussion on missionary memoirs see Dana Robert's *American Women in Mission* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996);

⁴⁹ Marilyn Westerkamp argues likewise in her examination of female religious leaders in the early republic. She asserts that women's reliance on the Holy Spirit was the primary pathway to spiritual authority in a society that assumed hierarchies of class and gender. Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in the Early Republic* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁵⁰ Diary of Harriet Laird, 1825, Harriet Laird Correspondence, PHS.

⁵¹ Sarah Henderson, Steubenville, OH, to E.P. Swift, Pittsburgh, PA, 31 July 1834, Secretaries Files, PHS.

Not long after, Chapin, a teacher from Derby, Vermont, who had worked for a time at Lowell Mills, decided God was calling her to missionary service in Liberia. “My mind is now settled as to the duty,” she wrote to Rev. Dr. Vaughn, secretary of the Foreign Committee of the Protestant Episcopal Church. She concluded that the affection and opinion of family and friends could not be considered in contemplating her call. She even must disregard her own feelings. She reported feeling inadequate to decide a question of such importance “as that of leaving all that the heart holds most dear on earth, to encounter the toils and hardships of a missionary life.” Only divine assistance was trustworthy. “I have been enabled, by the eye of faith, to discover the finger of God, pointing me to the benighted African, and have heard his voice saying, with the affection of a Father and the authority of a Sovereign, ‘Come, follow me.’” Chapin arrived in Cape Palmas in April 1841 where she served as the superintendent of a girls’ school and, “actively engaged in efforts for the salvation of the people around her, both colonists and natives.” Two years later she died assured that God had directed her to Africa. “I could have wished to live longer, that I might have done more for this degraded people,” she said on her death bed, “but the will of the Lord be done.”⁵²

The claim that God’s providence was responsible for the decision to risk life and health to go to Africa as a missionary was especially helpful in the face of opposition. Black missionaries did not have to convince the white public that they should leave the United States, but white women did. Virginia Hale Hoffman decided by the age of sixteen that she wanted to be a missionary in Africa. However, she met with severe resistance. “I visited one of my friends last week, who spoke very harshly about my

⁵² J. Clement, *Noble Deeds of American Women* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1869): 171-174; Hening, *History of the African Mission*, 105-106, 120-121.

going away,” Hoffman wrote to a friend. “Her principal objection was that...*I was too pretty to go among the heathen in Africa*. She seemed to forget the great end and aim of the establishment of missions.” Hoffman’s guardian also objected on the grounds that she was too young to make a decision that would lead to certain death. Hoffman acquiesced to her guardian’s wish that she remain in America for two years. Her opportunity to leave came in the marriage proposal of Cadwalader Colden Hoffman, a missionary to Liberia. The two married in the summer of 1850. “I go with him, God willing,” she wrote in June 1850. “Never for a moment have I doubted that I have chosen the path of duty; and the consciousness that I go for Christ’s sake makes all sacrifice light.”⁵³

Divine intervention also helped ease the burden of failure. In 1857 Harriett Brittan of Brooklyn, New York went to Liberia as a missionary teacher under the Episcopal mission society. Less than two years later poor health forced her to return to America. Her strong commitment to missionary service is recorded in a letter lamenting her departure from Africa:

⁵³ Cummins, *Life of Mrs. Virginia Hale Hoffman*, 36, 50. Virginia Hale Hoffman died in Liberia in 1856, two months after her two-year-old daughter died. Her husband remarried Caroline Hogan, a single missionary who had come to Liberia in 1857. He would remain in Liberia until his death in 1865. Two years later Caroline Hogan Hoffman returned to the United States where she remained until her death in 1876.

Would that it were in my power to write you many a letter from there [Africa]. But our Heavenly Father has otherwise ordered it. He has caused me to pass through a sore and bitter trial. I do not allude to the sickness and suffering, (though I have suffered much, but that I expected) but my having to leave my loved home, my loved work, oh! It was a sad, sad day for me. It was the sorest trial I ever had in my life...My days in Africa were the happiest in my life.⁵⁴

Elizabeth Hening received comfort that the “dispensations of Providence” were behind the death of all three of her children. “The Lord gave and Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,” she wrote to her sister-in-law. God’s providence, then, was responsible for both the negative and positive aspects of missionary service.⁵⁵

African American women also articulated a strong desire to serve God that culminated in a call to missionary service. However, they often expressed an additional burden for the success of the colony and themselves. When it appeared that the Protestant Episcopal Mission Board was not going to reappoint Elizabeth Thomson to Liberia as a missionary in 1846, Thomson experienced “deep anxiety and regret.” She desperately wanted to return to Liberia, in part because she was the first Episcopal missionary in Cape Palmas and had started a school there. “Having been engaged, and deeply interested in the Mission since early in the year of 1836, taught the first native school, witnessing its first risings with interest, being a partaker of its joys and sorrows and ever being ready to lend a helping hand while others have been sinking around me.” She also felt an obligation to return her children to the country: “My children being

⁵⁴ Harriette Brittan, Nottingham, England, to L.D. Denison, New York, 25 April 1859, Liberia Records, ECA.

⁵⁵ E.F. Hening, Brooklyn, to Eliza Schermerhorn, n.p., 9 October 1849, Liberia Records, ECA. In 1862, Brittan went to Calcutta under the Women’s Union Missionary Society of America where she started a day school for girls and an orphanage and high school. Sarah Platt Doremus organized the Women’s Union in 1860 for the purpose of sending single women to countries where women were completely segregated from men and therefore inaccessible to male missionaries. In 1880 she went to Yokohama, Japan with the Methodist Protestant Board of Missions and established the denomination’s mission station there. She died in 1897. She also wrote several books about Africa and India.

acquainted with the language and being consecrated to the Mission by their father [are] looking forward to secure the means of a good education.”

Indeed, African American missionaries—male and female—felt a special responsibility for the success of the colony and its inhabitants, even as they condemned Liberia’s indigenous and emigrant population for non-Christian behavior. Thomas Wilson, an African American Presbyterian missionary, wrote of both the deficiencies and the potential of the colonists and concluded that despite his personal hardships and the difficulty of his work, “I can say not only that it is my hearts desire that Africa may be saved, but that I have a great weariness and continual sorrow of heart, for my brethren, my kinsmen.” Eunice Moore Sharp rejoiced in the conversion of her students because she saw with her own eyes “the salvation of God upon my own people.” In reference to the indigenous population, James Priest expressed the firm belief that “no officer of the board or committee can have a greater interest in them than the coloured missionary. Their elevation is our devotion.”⁵⁶

The most important difference between white and African American female missionaries resulted from the inability of mission boards and white missionaries to treat African Americans as equal partners. Mission discourse portrayed white missionaries as temporary, merely preparing the field for African American evangelists in Africa. In reality white missionaries were reluctant to turn over control of churches and mission stations to colonists. Indeed, throughout most of the antebellum period white missionaries maintained supervisory control of the Liberian churches and mission

⁵⁶ Thomas Wilson, Sinou, to Walter Lowerie, New York, 14 June 1846, Liberia Letters, PHS; Susan Wilds Macarver, “‘The Salvation of Souls’ and the ‘Salvation of the Republic of Liberia,’” in Wilber Shenk, ed., *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 145; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 14, no. 3 (March 1838): 73.

stations, appointing African American clergy, assigning teachers, supervising schools and missions among the natives. “Coloured missionaries doubtless are desirable; but with these a few white men must be sent,” wrote Daniel Wells, secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. “Though our chief hope might be in coloured men yet I fear the hope is without a good foundation unless the labors of the coloured missionaries are superintended and directed by white men.”⁵⁷ Similarly, Methodists, Episcopalians and Baptists exercised firm control over Liberian churches and pastors, mission stations, and missionaries.

Racial prejudice is evident in the discrepancies in material resources given to white and black missionaries. American black missionaries and emigrant teachers and preachers were paid less than whites. As a result, they lived from paycheck to paycheck and depended on mission supply ships. While white missionaries experienced the deprivations of missionary life in Liberia, white men and women maintained a relatively comfortable living. Typically, white missionaries lived in stone homes within the confines of the mission station, and generally came to Liberia with more American goods. For example, Harriette Brittan and Eliza Ball brought their bedroom furniture. Others brought trunks of clothes. Black missionaries, however, often complained that they lacked the mere basics. After Ann Priest and her family moved to King Wills Town they rented a house that was “so small that 3 persons could not turn around in comfort. We had then 8 in family.” Later they moved to another house that was “very open and cold and we are obliged to hang up all the blankets and quilts that we can spare to keep the wind out. I don’t know wether [sic] the Board will build us a frame house or not, but

⁵⁷ Daniel Wells, New York, to Oren Canfield, Princeton, New Jersey 16 January 1839, Secretaries’ Files, PHS.

we greatly need one.” She went on to say she had run out of clothes and had no thick shoes so that “I cannot keep my feet dry...[and] suffer much with chills and fever.”

Elizabeth Thomson wrote to her mission board requesting a stove because, “there was a stove allowed to most of the mission houses or missionaries.”⁵⁸

While African American missionaries were constantly concerned about their material resources they often lacked, they were also concerned about the fate of their families if the husband died. Mission policy stipulated that married couples received one salary, that of the male missionary. When a single woman, regardless of race, married she no longer received a salary, even if she continued to teach.⁵⁹ As a consequence, married women were dependent on the income of their husband, and dependent on the mission board upon his death. After a white male missionary died, the mission board assumed the widow and children would return to America. Typically the board brought the widow and children back to America. With African American missionaries, however, mission boards seemed to assume that the family should remain in Africa. Boards were less likely, if at all, to pay for the passage of a missionary widow to return to America

⁵⁸ Ann Priest, King Wills Town, to Hannabell Henry, Philadelphia, 20 December 1844, Liberia Letters, PHS.

⁵⁹ A good number of African American missionaries taught as husband and wife teams. B.V.R. James and his wife, M.E. James, taught sixty to seventy students in a well respected school in Monrovia. Her class varied from fifteen to twenty-five students, although she struggled “hard to keep up the school and attend to my domestic concerns.” Ann Priest assisted her husband, James, at their Presbyterian funded boarding school for boys and girls in King Wills Town. Mary Parsons reported that her work at the Presbyterian School of Sinou, “occupies the most of my time; this, I do not regret, being able to say,” while her husband superintended the “very fine” Sabbath school. Methodist bishop Frances Burns and his wife, Lucinda, were both teachers at the Methodist Mission School. Georgiana Williams, a teacher for the Episcopal mission at Cape Palmas, married Rev. A.F. Russell and then moved with him to Clay-Ashland where they taught a day school for twenty receptive students. The wife of Stephen Britton was singled out as a “fine sister” for her work as a teacher at her husband’s school in New Georgia. *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 25:8 (August 1849): 238; M.E. James, Monrovia, to Jane McLoughlin, Philadelphia, 12 November 1849, Liberia Letters, PHS; Ann Priest, King Wills Town, to Hannabell Henry, Philadelphia, 20 December 1844, Liberia Letters, PHS; *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 38 (June 1862); *African Repository and Colonial Journal* 42 (July 1866): 200-201; Stepp, 111.

and were slow in responding, or did not respond at all, to the needs of the widows and children who remained in Liberia.

Finally, black and white missionaries differed in their understanding of the missionary power structure that often elevated the status of white women above the black male missionary. Black men viewed the usurpation of their authority by white women as an affront to their leadership. Thus, they insisted on racial equality and the gender privileges that racial equality necessarily included. Perhaps no women in the Liberian mission reflected the tangle of race, gender, and authority more than Presbyterian missionary Catherine Sawyer Connelly.

Catherine Sawyer, a white woman from New York, arrived in Liberia with her first husband Rev. Robert Sawyer in December 1842. In November of the following year, Thomas Wilson, a black missionary, left alone with several children after his wife's early death, sent his three daughters to live with Sawyer so that he could do mission work in a more remote community. Two months later Wilson insisted that the children be returned. He had discovered that Sawyer had segregated his daughters from her household and dismissed the girls from her dining room table and "put them in the kitchen to eat." Wilson wrote Sawyer, "I don't suppose the church whom under we both serve believe they have a missionary in their employ [sic] who is degraded enough to bring the children of a brother missionary down to the degradation [sic] of the heathen." Insulted and humiliated, he concluded: "I wish you to know that my children have not eaten in kitchens in America and I feel myself able with God's assistance to keep them out of [the] kitchen here." Sawyer retaliated in a letter to the Presbyterian Board in which she reported she was sending Wilson's daughters home "according to his request.

He proves himself to be a very imprudent man, to say the least.” Several years later she “commanded” him to send his teaching assistant to her. “If I may judge from the letter she sent me she thinks she has a right to take help from me, when she pleases.” He asserted that such action inhibited his missionary efforts because it promoted “the inferiority and incapacity of colored missionaries” among the indigenous population.⁶⁰

Robert Sawyer died in December 1843, leaving the mission with no white male. Rather than return to America Catherine remained in Settra Kroo even though she was “a widow in the midst of 30,000 heathen...The only white female within three or four hundred miles.”⁶¹ She testified to her commitment to the mission: “It never was my intention to leave the Mission.” Soon after her husband’s death, she took command of the station. In the process, she came into conflict with James Priest, an African American missionary, who insisted on his right to leadership as a male missionary. “He is desirous of coming in & taking charge of this station,” she reported. Sawyer refused to even consider the idea that Priest, the only male missionary on the field, might become the leader. “Dear Brethren when this is the case, if ever, I must leave. He is not competent, or qualified...[the natives] regard him as they do *all coloured men*.” Sawyer denigrated Priest at every possible occasion in her letters to the mission board and tried to assert her own authority. On one occasion acting the role of her deceased husband divided supplies between herself and Priest’s family: “Of the provisions etc. sent out, I have divided to him about one third, which gives him [Priest] a full supply. It is my most earnest request...that Mr. P’s supplies be sent out separately.” Priest responded to her attacks

⁶⁰ Thomas Wilson, Sinou, Liberia, to Catherine Sawyer, Settra Kroo, 2 January 1844; Catherine Sawyer, Settra Kroo, to Walter Lowerie, New York, 1 January 1844; Wilson, Sinou, to Lowerie, New York, 27 May 1846, *P Liberia Letters*, HS.

⁶¹ *Colonization Herald* 15 (1 January 1845): 2. She married James Conolly in December 1844. They returned to American in 1849.

with his own. “The condition of the Mission is somewhat precarious, there are not other missionaries in view as I know of & I have concluded that if the Mission is not conducted under a Presbyterian form instead [of a] a gynarchy to return home & labor in my native land.”⁶²

Conclusion

From the outset, missions were an essential part of the colonization effort and colonization was, in turn, linked with the larger ambitions of Christian missions. Religious periodicals noted the convergence of the goals of the missionaries and the colonizationists, and American foreign mission boards connected their activity with the Liberian experiment. Missionary advocates attempted to demonstrate their elevated view of African Americans by assigning to them a unique and providential role in building a world wide Christian empire alongside white men and women missionaries. This effort redrew lines of status along national and religious lines—black and white Americans became allies against the African foreign. But at the same time, mission boards and white missionaries maintained the clear and certain notion of white superiority, unwilling to consider African Americans as equal partners.

It would be a mistake, however, to view antebellum missionary efforts in Liberia solely along racial lines. Female missionaries often divided along racial lines over issues of motivation, goals and authority. But they were also united on a number of issues. Female missionaries articulated, for example, a desire to uplift Liberia—its emigrants and natives—even as they insisted on the inferiority of the indigenous population and

⁶² Catherine Sawyer, Settra Kroo, to Walter Lowerie, New York, 16 January 1844; James Priest, Settra Kroo, to Lowerie, New York, 2 April 1844, Liberia Letters, PHS.

condemned the beliefs and behavior of many emigrants. African American missionaries also shared with white missionaries, mission boards, and congregations—black and white—a strong sense of expansionist Christian ideology that sought to introduce Christianity to western Africa and the world. The story of female missionary efforts in Liberia, then, reveals the complex, even contradictory, thinking that characterized both black and white missionaries' views about gender, race, and religion.

Conclusion

Colonizationist sentiment declined for a variety of reasons. In addition to poor management, constant pecuniary shortages, and damaging reports from Liberia, other societal influences and historical circumstances worked against the ACS. During the 1830s two distinct and increasingly combative groups emerged. On the one hand, proslavery forces had grown more forceful and vocal concerning slavery in national affairs. On the opposite end of the political spectrum, abolitionists were calling for the instantaneous emancipation of slaves without removal or recompense. In response to the growing antagonisms, the ACS attempted to position itself as a centrist friend both of the North and South, and the slaveowner and antislavery proponent. At the same time, the ACS also tried to redefine itself both as a political movement and a benevolent organization; a society for men and women. Colonizationists attempted to balance these ideas concerning slavery and its own structure, but discovered that the middle ground was quickly disappearing. Increasingly, colonization's promises of compromise and moderation were rejected as subversive and the ACS received condemnation from both sides. As a result, female colonizationists found it ever more difficult to promote colonization as a benevolent cause that embraced female values such as peace, consensus, and unity.

Colonization experienced a renaissance of national interest during the 1850s. But national interest in colonization did not translate into increased female support. Female colonization support had, in fact, precipitously declined since the mid-1840s. One reason for the decline in female participation is that the ACS no longer tried to balance between

volunteerism and politics. Male leaders looked squarely to government for support. As a consequence, women struggled to make sense of their role in colonization. Another reason for the decline in female participation is that female colonizationists traditionally interpreted their role as primarily religious. With the development of denominational missions in the 1850s, women found it difficult to raise funds and maintain interest in a cause that in so many ways paralleled the efforts of the larger and better-funded mission boards.

Whatever promises the ACS offered as a solution to slavery dissipated with the Civil War. The war greatly impeded financial contributions and hampered the ability of the national society to coordinate between North and South. More than this, the ACS inspired the antipathy of the majority of African Americans. Ironically, as the ACS faded to the background, interest in colonization actually intensified among African Americans. Black leaders eager to make a distinction between colonization and emigration looked to Haiti, Mexico, and even the Niger Valley.¹ Abraham Lincoln and many in Congress maintained dreams about a black exodus. In December 1861, Lincoln urged Congress to recognize Liberian independence and establish official relations with the republic. Since Liberian independence in 1847, southern congressmen had stonewalled such an initiative, arguing that black Liberian emissaries must not be allowed to associate with white dignitaries. Lincoln argued that recognition would spur commercial advantages as well as increase black emigration. In the end, the measure passed. On June 5, 1862, after thirteen years of independence, the United States finally recognized the republic of Liberia. In March 1862, Congress passed a resolution that established a Select

¹ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1978).

Committee on Emancipation and Colonization and earmarked federal money for emancipation. The following month, federal legislators passed the District of Columbia Emancipation Act, a law that paid Washington slaveholders for their slaves and set aside \$100,000 for colonization.²

As the tide of freedom swept the North during the summer of 1862, Lincoln investigated several emigration projects to New Granada and Haiti, and in December 1862 devoted nearly two-fifths of his address to Congress to the subject of compensated emancipation and colonization. As part of his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln offered financial assistance to states that wanted to end slavery and colonize their black populations. Ultimately, Lincoln repudiated the idea that the liberation of black Americans required their subsequent removal. Congress, too, turned against colonization. Several bills that proposed setting aside western territory for black settlement were defeated in 1864.³

Interestingly, African American interest in emigration in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War intensified to levels equal to the years leading up to war. Over three thousand black Americans went to Liberia between 1865 and 1871.⁴ When Democrats regained control in the South, interest among African Americans intensified once again. By this time, however, the ACS was bankrupt. So even though applications continued to increase, the society sent ever-smaller numbers of African Americans to Liberian

² Burin, 160-167.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Between 1848 and 1860 over five thousand African Americans went to Liberia. Between 1817 and 1899 over half of all emigrants went in the years between 1848 and 1860 or 1865 and 1871.

throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Finally, in 1904 the ACS admitted defeat, having sent over fifteen-thousand African Americans to Liberia.⁵

Just as the ACS was deteriorating, white Protestant missions in Liberia was also experiencing decline. Beginning in the late 1850s, persistently high death rates among white missionaries, coupled with persistent conflicts with colonists and natives, and the meager results of attempts at the evangelization of native Africans, encouraged Protestant denominations to either abandoned their activity in Liberia or turn the mission over to Liberian leadership. In 1858 settler leadership took charge of the administration of the Methodist Liberia Mission, culminating in the election of its own bishop. White Northern Baptists abandoned the mission in 1856 and the Southern Baptists did likewise in 1875. Presbyterians sent their last white missionary in 1866. The Episcopal mission was the only mission to have achieved relative success with white missionaries, in part because white missionaries concentrated their efforts on one group of indigenous peoples at Cape Palmas and deliberately avoided the settler community. The fixed prejudices and mind-set of the American mission board, which prevented them from understanding the mission's needs and circumstances, encouraged denominations to reinstate white leadership in the twentieth century. Liberia, however, would never regain the interest of Protestant missions. Just as white Americans abandoned Reconstruction efforts in the South after the Civil War, so too did they relinquish religious efforts in Liberia.

⁵ Staudenraus, 251. This number does not include recaptives conveyed by the Colonization Society to Africa or colonists carried to Liberia by the independent state societies.

APPENDIX A

FREEDOM TO AFRICA: ILLUSTRATION FROM *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*



Headpice illustration by Hammat Billings for *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Illustrated Edition. Original Designs by Billings; Engraved by Baker and Smith. (Boston: John P. Jewett and Co., 1855). Caption: Freedom to Africa. Unidentified freed slaves. Clifton Waller Barrett Collection, University of Virginia.

APPENDIX B

Female Colonization Societies and Liberian Associations by State

<u>Connecticut</u>	<u>District of Columbia</u>	<u>Delaware</u>	<u>Kentucky</u>
Hartford	Georgetown	Wilmington	Lexington
Middleton	Washington city		Louisville
Norwich			Reading
New Haven			Winchester
<u>Massachusetts</u>	<u>Maryland</u>	<u>New Hampshire</u>	
Andover	Annapolis	Concord	
Boston	Baltimore		
Brookfield	Cedar Park		
Danville	Petersburg		
Dedham			
Newburyport			
Sherburne			
<u>New Jersey</u>	<u>New York</u>	<u>Ohio</u>	
Burlington	Fishkill	Athens	
Pittsgrove	New York City	Chillicothe	
Rochester	Cincinnati		
	Columbus		
	Dayton		
	Putnam		
	Ross County		
	Springfield		
	Urbana		
	Warren County		
	Xenia		
<u>Pennsylvania</u>	<u>Vermont</u>	<u>Virginia</u>	
Andover	Rutland	Albermarle	
Columbia		Essex County	
Danville		Fredericksburg	
Florence		Jefferson County	
Northumberland		Louisa County	
Philadelphia		Petersburg	
Pittsburgh		Richmond	
		Rockbridge	
		Warrenton	

APPENDIX C

Female Missionaries to Liberia, 1831-1861

Episcopal Female Missionaries

Name	Marital Status	Arrival	Withdrawal	Reason
Elizabeth Thompson ⁺	Married	1831	1864	Dead
Anna Payne	Married	1837	1857	Dead
S. Metcalf Savage	Married	1839	1840	Dead
Mrs. George Perkins	Married	1839	1850	Return
Mary Stewart Minor	Married	1840	1843	Return
Martha Coggeshall	Single	1842	1842	Dead
Maria Chapin	Single*	1842	1843	Dead
Mrs. M. Appleby	Married	1844	1848	Return
Elizabeth Hening	Married	1844	1852	Return
Catherine Patch	Widow	1844	1846	Dead
Elizabeth Rutherford	Single*	1844	1846	Return
Martha Williford	Single	1850	1869	Return
Virginia Hoffman	Married	1851	1856	Dead
Mrs. George Horne	Married	1852	1855	Return
Alice Colquhoun	Single	1852	1855	Return
Mrs. Hugh Scott	Married	1853	1853	Dead
Eliza Freeman	Single	1853	1854	Return
Mary Rambo	Single	1853	1855	Dead
Mrs. William Wright	Married	1853	1855	Return
Sophia Smith	Single	1853	1854	Dead
Mary Ball	Single*	1853	1863	Dead
Anna Steele	Single*	1853	1856	Return
Isabella Alley	Single	1854	1856	Dead
Harriette Brittan	Single	1856	1859	Return
Caroline Hogan	Single*	1857	1867	Return
Mrs. H.H. Messenger	Married	1859	1861	Return
Mrs. George Hubbard	Married	1859	1860	Return
Hermine C. Relf	Single	1859	1861	Dead
Marion Melville	Single	1859	1860	Return
L.L.K. Spaulding	Single	1859	1860	Dead
Emily Griswold	Single*	1860	1866	Return
Mary Merriam	Single	1861	1861	Return

⁺African American

*Later married in Liberia

Methodist Female Missionaries

<u>Name</u>	<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Arrival</u>	<u>Withdrawal</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Eleanor Barton	Married	1/12/35	5/23/39	Return
Sarah Miller Bastion	Married	9/19/49	3/18/50	Dead
Lydia Ann Beers	Single*	7/28/37	2/26/50	Dead
Susan Benham	Married	12/18/45	1/ /48	Return
Caroline M. Brown	Single**	12/16/54	5/6/56	Remove
Laura Brush	Single	1/6/47	/ /59	Return
Sophrina Farrington	Single	1/1/34	2/15/35	Return
Lucinda Hazard ⁺	Single	12/ /57	1860	Married
Julia Terzo Horne	Married	2/ /56	8/22/57	Return
Mary Hoyt	Married	12/8/45	8/ /46	Return
Lavinia Johnson ⁺	Single	1844	1850	Dead
Margaret Kilpatrick	Single	12/16/54	1/ /65	Return
Eunice Sharp Moore ⁺	Single*	10/18/34	1858	Dead
Sarah Reynolds ⁺	Single	1/6/53	1855	Dead
Ann Seys	Married	8/12/35	4/26/41	Return
N. Spalding	Married	1/1/34	5/ /34	Return
Maria Staunton	Single	12/16/54	2/ /56	Return
Ann Wilkins	Single	7/28/37	4/ /57	Return
Elizabeth T. Williams	Married	12/8/45	4/ /46	Return
Phebe Wright	Married	1/1/34	2/4/34	Dead

⁺African American

*Later married in Liberia

**Married an African American emigrant

Presbyterian Female Missionaries

<u>Name</u>	<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Arrival</u>	<u>Withdrawal</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Catherine Alward	Married	1839	1841	Return
Charlotte Canfield	Married	1840	1842	Return
Louisa Coke ⁺	Single	1847	1848	Married
Rachel Eden ⁺	Married	1843	unknown	Unknown
Mrs. Simon Harrison ⁺	Married	1854	1872	Husband death
Mrs. Amos Herring ⁺	Married	1854	1873	Husband death
Mrs. B.V.R. James	Married	1849	unknown	Unknown
Harriet Laird	Married	1833	1834	Dead
Mary Parsons ⁺	Widow	1855	1858	Withdraw
Mrs. James Priest	Married	1843	1880	Dead
Catharine Sawyer	Married	1841	1849	Return
C. Strobel ⁺	Single	1850	1864	Dead
Ceclia Van Tyne ⁺	Single	1841	1844	Withdraw
Mrs. White	Married	1855	1856	Return
Mrs. David Wilson	Married	1850	1858	Return

⁺African American

APPENDIX D

U.S. Commissioned Missionaries Length of Service 1831-1861

		> 1 year	1-2 years	3-4 years	5 + years	Total
Methodist						
	White Male	6	6	4	1	17
	White Female	4	6	1	5	16
	Black Male				4	4
	Black Female*		1		3	4
	Total	10	13	5	13	41
Presbyterian						
	White Male	3	1	3	3	10
	White Female	2	2		3	7
	Black Male	2	1	2	12	17
	Black Female*	1		2	4	7
	Total	8	4	7	22	41
Episcopalian						
	White Male	4	6	3	7	20
	White Female	10	8	5	8	31
	Black Male			2	6	8
	Black Female*				1	1
	Total	14	14	10	22	60

*In many cases, records do not include the wives of black male missionaries. Undoubtedly, the number listed here is too low.

Source for Appendix A and B: Arthur Judson Brown, *One Hundred Years* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1936); Eunjin Park, *“White” Americans in “Black” Africa: Black and White American Methodist Missionaries in Liberia, 1820-1875* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Lizzie Rose Foster, *An Historical Sketch of the African Mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.* (New York: Foreign Committee, 1884).

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Wharton Family Papers
Grotz Collection
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Wister Family Papers
Gratz Collection
Matthew Carey Papers
Vaux Papers
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Moses Sheppard Papers
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Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, Secretaries' Files
Mission Correspondence and Reports, Liberia Letters
Harriet Laird Correspondence
Pennsylvania State University Library
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Mary Fizhugh Custis Papers

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Adjunct Instructor, Lycoming College, 2003-2005.
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Presbyterian Historical Society Fellowship, Philadelphia, Fall 2004.
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RELATED EXPERIENCE

Managing Director, Richards Civil War Era Center, Pennsylvania State University, August 2006-present.
Managing Editor, *Civil War Journal*, Kent State University Press, August 2006-present.
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PRESENTATIONS AND CONFERENCE PAPERS

Civil War Era Center Lecture Series, Penn State, "The Image of Africa in Antebellum America," January 2005.
Newberry Library's U.S. Religious Seminar, Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois, "American Colonization in Antebellum America," Spring 2004.
Citizenship and Gender Seminar, Penn State, "'Ethiopia Shall Stretch Out Her Hand': Female Antebellum Colonizationists," Fall 2003.

PUBLICATIONS

"Congregational Women," "Methodist Women," Presbyterian Women," "Unitarian Women," "Baptist Women," Women and the American Colonization Society," Entries for *Women in the American Civil War: An Encyclopedia*, forthcoming.
Review of Peg A. Lamphier, *Kate Chase & William Sprague: Politics of Gender in a Civil War Marriage*, in *Civil War History*, Fall 2004.
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