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**Among the Children
Sunday School Teachers and Evangelical Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century Ontario**

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AMONG THE CHILDREN
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND EVANGELICAL WOMANHOOD IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY ONTARIO

By

Patricia Kmiec

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

Throughout the nineteenth century, the majority of children in Ontario received at least part of their education from the Sunday school. Much of this institution's success can be attributed to the dedication and commitment of its unpaid workforce. Sunday school teachers were expected to be virtuous, nurturing, moral and dutiful, and it is not surprising that this community of volunteers was made up almost entirely of women. Women's active participation in the Sunday school combined with its popularity made this religious and educational institution an important avenue in the (re)production of gender ideologies in nineteenth-century Ontario.

This thesis examines how women Sunday school teachers were involved in establishing their own gender identity by consciously accepting and rejecting ideals of womanhood. It argues that the roles, responsibilities, experiences and opportunities that women had in the Sunday school community allowed them to define their own model of evangelical womanhood. Women reinforced this new ideal to their pupils, but their influence extended beyond their classrooms. They authored and distributed literature found in libraries, participated in conventions with diverse crowds and established important networks of Christian women who campaigned for women's rights within and outside of the church.

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INTRODUCTION

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Ontario's women's movement was dominated not only by Christian women, but also by Christian principles.¹ The ideal Christian woman became synonymous with the ideal Canadian woman and values such as purity, respectability and virtuous morality defined female uniqueness. The acceptance of these attributes and an emphasis on motherhood was common, but this was not entirely limiting to women. In fact, their supposed superior morality and valuable role as familial caretaker often became the basis of their demands for improved rights. Women's claims for access to education, as well as social and political participation, were largely seen as unthreatening precisely because of their maternal role.

This maternal feminism directed the women's movement in English-Canada and was also common throughout the Western world. That is, early women's movements in North America and most of Europe did not explicitly challenge traditional gender roles, but rather worked within them. As a result, women's difference was emphasized over their sameness to men. The importance placed on family and community by Evangelical Christianity led many Canadians to glorify women's role as mother and nurturer even further, as their commitment to children and the community became a social, familial and religious responsibility.

This study investigates the experiences of women who taught in Protestant Sunday schools in Ontario.² It covers the period from the creation of the Sunday School

¹ For purposes of this thesis, "Ontario" will refer to what is now Ontario- understanding that during the period of study this area was previously both Upper Canada (1791-1841) and Canada West (1841-1867).

Union Society of Canada in 1820, to Toronto's hosting year of the International Sunday School Association's annual convention in 1905. Over these 85 years, the Ontario Sunday school went from a few young children educated in private homes, to a well established education system and the predecessor to the provincial public education system set up in the 1870s.

This thesis argues that women Sunday school teachers were active participants in the construction of the Evangelical woman ideal that emerged in the nineteenth century. Women teachers made use of the opportunities available to them within the Sunday school community to expand what were considered the appropriate roles, responsibilities and environments for Christian women. Discussions of the images and roles of women in the Sunday school, the new experiences and opportunities created by this community and their connections to women's involvement and activism in reform groups, reveal some of the approaches these women took in defining their own identity as evangelical women.

The formation of gender roles and ideologies in the period leading up to the women's movement is particularly significant. In the early years of the nineteenth century, women's supposed maternal, nurturing, moral and pure qualities were seen as valid reasons for their exclusion from public, political and many church activities. By the end of the century, these same "feminine" qualities became the foundation of successful political, social and religious movements advocating the advancements of women's rights. Thus, identifying women's agency in the creation of acceptable female ideals can reveal how women were expanding and resisting traditional gender roles in the

² The denominations studied here are those who participated in the activity of the Ontario Sabbath School Association and the Canadian Sunday School Union. These are mainly: Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, Congregational, Evangelical Association, Evangelical Lutheran, Reformed Episcopal.

generations leading up to the women's movements of the twentieth century. This can provide insight into the emergence, general acceptance and success of the early women's movements in English-Canada.

Gender ideals were defined and reinforced in a number of ways in nineteenth-century Ontario. Religion and education were two such avenues of producing and reproducing social norms. They often dictated what Canadians knew about womanhood and manhood. Although women had little access to positions of power and authority in most traditional religious and educational institutions, they were actively accepting and rejecting definitions of womanhood in more informal ways. This analysis of the work and lives of women Sunday school teachers is one example of how a community of women were (re)constructing their own gender identity within these hierarchical systems of religion and education.³

Women were involved in the Sunday school movement as students, parents and church members, but their work as teachers is especially significant. A study of women's participation in nineteenth century Sunday schools can help shed light on one of the very few areas of public life in which both married and single women were the majority, held authority and were respected by the community. An understanding of the role that the Sunday school played in the social, educational and religious development of nineteenth century Ontario necessarily involves an understanding of the women who were responsible for its success. Likewise, an analysis of the construction of womanhood in

³ It is likely that both the sources and the results of this research would be significantly different if the experiences of women of color or working-class women were included in the case study. Unfortunately, neither the time nor resources were available to explore any issues of diverse experience at length for this MA thesis. Thus, throughout this thesis, "women" will refer to white, middle-class women unless stated otherwise.

nineteenth century Ontario necessarily involves a close examination of the sites of education that existed for women and their role in the construction of social norms and gender ideals.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the majority of Ontarians received at least part of their childhood education from the Sunday school. By 1877, Ontario was home to a recorded 3,941 Sunday schools, educating at least 230,000 young pupils annually and led by over 15,000 teachers.⁴ In 1905, it was reported that Toronto Sunday schools were attended by almost 50,000 students, compared to the 35,000 who were enrolled in public schools.⁵ An institution initially created to control and instruct working class children in Britain in the late eighteenth century,⁶ the Sunday school was already well established in England and America before Canadian Protestants adapted its goals and structure to meet the needs of their newly settled, developing communities.

Sunday school teaching became a women's undertaking almost immediately upon its emergence in Upper Canada. Like the common school, the Sunday school classroom seemed an appropriate place for women, as ideologies of the time often glorified their supposed "natural" work and relationships with children. Unlike their secular counterparts, however, female Sunday school teachers, at least in the nineteenth century,

⁴ Sabbath School Association of Ontario. Proceedings of the Annual Provincial Sunday School Convention, (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1877), p.9.

⁵ International Sunday School Association, The Development of the Sunday School 1780-1905: The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention. (Boston: International Sunday School Association, 1905), p.126.

⁶ Robert Lynn and Elliot Wright. The Big Little School; Sunday child of American Protestantism. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p.12.

were not paid.⁷ Their commitment usually stemmed from a strong sense of Christian duty and the main qualification for Sunday school teaching was strong emotional and moral character rather than intellectual knowledge.

Women teachers in Sunday schools were almost never challenged precisely because this work appeared to be entirely within the prescribed gender role and the appropriate sphere for nineteenth-century middle-class Christian women. Ontario Sunday schools were organized on the same basis as the common school system, where hierarchal structures existed which ensured that the official leaders and decision makers were men. Women were suitable teachers however, because they were under the direction of these male authorities and complying with the biblical injunction of women not instructing or preaching to men, but only to children. With little controversy and no threat to the patriarchal social or familial order, women added the position of Sunday school teacher to the list of uncontroversial, maternal roles assigned to them. Or so it seemed. A closer look at the responsibilities, experiences and influence of Ontario Sunday school teachers reveals that women actively used the position that Sunday school teaching gave them to expand their proper sphere by defining for themselves what it meant to be an evangelical woman. Few English-Canadian historians have investigated the importance of the Sunday school, or its female teachers, yet its popularity and influence in nineteenth-century Ontario make it an intriguing institution through which to explore these issues.

Historical studies of the Sunday school in English-Canada are scarce, but related scholarship in a few areas has contributed greatly to the theory, approach and data used

⁷ For the period under study Sunday school teachers were not paid. However, they referred to themselves as workers and this thesis uses the same term.

here. The central questions of this thesis were inspired by the work of three historians. American scholar Anne Boylan applied the concept of evangelical womanhood to her research on Sunday school teachers. This concept is used in this project and is based on Boylan's model. Diana Pedersen's approach of using religious communities of women to examine how they expanded their proper sphere in nineteenth century Ontario has also contributed to this research in terms of adopting a similar approach to the case of Sunday school teachers. Mary Anne Macfarlane's work on Methodist Sunday schools in English-Canada has been valuable to this project, as it provides the most statistical as well as qualitative data on women and the Sunday school.

American scholars have been much more active in researching the significance of the Sunday school as both an educational and religious institution. Boylan is the most relevant here. Her book, Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution 1790-1880, and most of her other work, demonstrates the importance of the American Sunday school to this nation's social development.⁸ In "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: the Role of Women in Sunday Schools", she successfully argues that American Sunday school teachers made up one community of women who consciously created a new ideology of evangelical womanhood.⁹ Unlike earlier work, Boylan's study suggests that there was not only one acceptable ideal of femininity which all women attempted to achieve.¹⁰ She explains that evangelical womanhood was one of "several

⁸ Anne Boylan, Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution 1790-1880. (New York: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁹ Anne Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: the Role of Women in Sunday Schools." Feminist Studies 4 (1978) pp 62-80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.62.

distinctive lifestyles available to middle class women” and that it combined the traditional Protestant ideal of the virtuous woman with a new evangelical stress on action.¹¹ Her model of this concept is used in this thesis in order to determine if her conclusions hold true for women Sunday school teachers in Ontario in the same period.

Diana Pedersen’s work explores how English-Canadian women who took part in the early women’s movement and fought for improved rights did not explicitly reject their assigned gender roles.¹² While the majority of work by other scholars in this area uses the concept of maternalism to explain women’s participating in public social reform and political efforts, Pedersen centres her analysis on the influence of Christianity. In her studies on evangelical women and the YWCA, Pedersen suggests that more attention be given to “women’s conscious use of religious arguments to accomplish a similar effect.”¹³ Given the heavy influence of Christianity on almost all aspects of life in Ontario, her approach can be especially useful in uncovering women’s own understanding of both their religion and their gender. This approach will be applied to this study of women Sunday school teachers, whose responsibility as religious educators allowed them to expand their appropriate sphere in similar ways.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.62.

¹² Diana Pedersen, “The power of True Christian Women’: The YWCA and Evangelical Womanhood in the Late Nineteenth Century”, in Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada Elizabeth Gillian Muir and Marilyn Fardig Whiteley, eds (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 321-337

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.333.

Macfarlane's PhD dissertation on women and the Methodist Sunday school in English-Canada from 1880 to 1920 is also important.¹⁴ Macfarlane explores the role of Methodist education in the formation of ideologies of womanhood, arguing that women Sunday school teachers consistently reinforced the ideals of British hegemony and the patriarchal family as defined by the (male) church.¹⁵ Macfarlane's work contributed greatly to this thesis, as her research is the most extensive on the Sunday school in Canada so far and was very helpful in providing data and locating resources. Unfortunately, her study still only begins to uncover the history of the Sunday school in Canada. Her choice to explore only Methodist Church-run schools is unusual given the interdenominational organization of almost all Canadian Sunday school associations, from the local to international levels, until the early years of the twentieth century.

Records left by Sunday school associations reveal not only the connections between the Sunday school and the broader community, but also the often flexible relationship that existed among the Sunday school leaders, workers and participants. These relationships become especially important when evaluating the networks of women created through their Sunday school work.

The intentionally interdenominational approach used here also allows for a more general analysis of the purpose and functions of the Sunday school as an institution in its own right, rather than a tool used in furthering the goals of specific denominations. Sunday school leaders would have seen it as the former, while pastors and individual church leaders would use it as the latter. Those closely involved in the Sunday school

¹⁴ Mary Anne Macfarlane "Gender, Doctrine and Pedagogy: Women and 'Womanhood' in Methodist Sunday Schools in English-Speaking Canada, 1880 to 1920" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1991).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

community, however, very rarely promoted denominational goals over its broader objectives.

A few other historians have also indentified the importance of the Sunday school. Their work allows this study to explore new directions in the scholarship of this institution. Allan Greer, William Brown and others in their work on childhood religious education, have shown the significance of the Sunday school in the educational and religious development of Ontario.¹⁶ These studies provide useful quantitative data on the Sunday school and its contributions to literacy in Upper-Canada; not surprisingly, given the time of their publication, issues of women and gender are ignored.

More recent scholarship, specifically that of Lucille Marr, shows that the Protestant Sunday school in Canada has historically been dominated by women. Her research focuses mostly on post-WWI Sunday schools within the United Church of Canada.¹⁷ Her study, “Sunday School Teaching: A Women’s Enterprise”, demonstrates the importance of the Sunday school in the lives of its women teachers, and expresses a need for earlier schools and denominations to be analyzed to fully understand the relationship between Sunday school teaching and Canadian Protestant women.¹⁸

Official documents, including reports, notes, minutes and other records from local, provincial, national and international Sunday school associations and conventions

¹⁶ Allan Greer. “The Sunday Schools of Upper Canada.” *Ontario History* 67 (September 1975): pp.169-84 and William Brown, “The Sunday School Movement in the Methodist Church In Canada, 1875-1925” (M. diss, Victoria University, 1959) as discussed in Marr, “Sunday School Teaching: A Women’s Enterprise”.

¹⁷ Lucille Marr. “Sunday School Teaching: A Women’s Enterprise: A Case Study From the Canadian Methodist, Presbyterian and United Church Tradition, 1919-1934.” *Histoire Sociale* 26, (1993), pp.329-344.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.329-334.

were the most valuable source to this research project. They not only provided statistics and other quantitative data on teachers, administrators and students, but also the official goals, curriculum, instructions and limitations of Ontario Sunday schools and the positions that women held in these groups and at the conventions. These records were essential because, until the twentieth century, their interdenominational associations and not individual churches organized Sunday schools.

A variety of Church records including meeting minutes, member lists, sermons, finance records also provided insight into the goals and objectives of the Sunday school. They were helpful in identifying what ‘problems’ were present with Sunday school education and with women teaching. They also displayed some ways in which the meaning of womanhood changed over this period from the perspective of particular churches and what this meant to these communities.

Periodicals and newspapers were also used to find evidence of dominant ideologies of the time. Those intended for Sunday school students revealed how gender was portrayed specifically to young girls and boys. Periodicals and newspapers for a more adult church membership and community helped expose the relationship between Christian women, the Sunday school and the public.

While these sources are valuable, they also present a number of methodological challenges. The under-representation of women in many textual records can lead to misinterpretations of their activity and participation in a variety of venues. The church is certainly one place where women’s involvement has been selectively recorded for a few reasons. Women’s work, experiences and contributions within the church were generally seen as less significant than men’s; consequently, records reveal the ‘successes’ of male

clergy and male church members more often and in more detail. Documentation of women's own self-recorded achievements in Church communities has often also been ignored, rejected and lost or destroyed from even many well kept church archives. Another factor in women's rare presence in church histories is the fact that a great deal of their work was informal. Much of women's and children's church involvement existed outside of the church, consisted of volunteering in community venues or in homes, and received little formal recognition.

In addition to gathering information from church and church community records, a significant part of this research will focus on what women Sunday school teachers recorded by, and for, themselves. A key focus of this project is subjectivity; how these women saw themselves, their womanhood, femininity, gender relationships and religious identity.

Primary sources expressing women's own experiences and perspectives including, autobiographies, diaries and letters, were used to explore a more personal understanding of their role as Sunday school teachers. Records kept by women's organizations, specifically missionary societies of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches, the National Council of Women and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union provided evidence of women's position, power and authority as Sunday school teachers and how they brought their social, moral and political agendas into their Sunday school classrooms. They also helped discover how these women brought their experience as Sunday school teachers into the work of these groups.

Nonetheless, even documents written from their own perspective needed to be analyzed in many of the same ways as those written by men. Especially important was

identifying the context of when women were writing, for whom, and why. A letter between sisters did not expose the same information on the rejection of gender roles as a church lecture. However, personal documents analyzed along with public or published documents written by the same women often became quite revealing about their understanding and respect for dominant ideologies of womanhood. Autobiographies and past reflections also led to a more complete understanding of the limited and fragmented sources on women that do exist. Data collected from church records, newspapers, censuses were evaluated against the personal records of women, to help determine what their lived realities truly were.

The combination of published and unpublished records also attempt to more accurately expose the gap between what was expected of women and what was really experienced and lived. How women are portrayed when they appear in historical documents can often reflect expectations and ideologies more than realities. Although this can hinder an understanding and the accuracy of records available, it can also be advantageous when the study is in fact based on these ideologies and their significance.

This study on the construction of womanhood within religious education attempts to provide insight into complex questions of the formation of dominant discourse in religious communities and the influence of mainstream religion on social and political ideologies about gender. Another major field this project contributes to is the study of women and education. Contemporary scholars of education have noted that a great deal of women's education takes place outside of traditional, formal 'schooling', therefore the experiences of women who studied and taught in alternative ways need to be brought into the scholarship on feminist education and analyzed within the same framework as more

traditional forms of education. This project reintroduces the Sunday school as one such site, explaining the importance of education within the church to the lives of many girls and women in Canada, and eventually to the construction of gender ideologies dominant throughout nineteenth-century Ontario.

CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHING AN INSTITUTION: THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND ITS WOMEN
TEACHERS

The evangelical revival that occurred in North America at the turn of the nineteenth century provided the ideal religious and social climate for the successful establishment of the Sunday school in Ontario. These types of schools had first emerged a few decades earlier in Britain. While the British example was important for the development of Sunday schools in Canada, their objectives differed. Ontario schools did not function as charities serving only working-class children, as those in Britain did. In Ontario, the cornerstones of this period's Evangelical Christianity were personal conversion and a commitment to new life based on social involvement. The objectives, activities and curriculum of the Sunday school reflected this closely.

As positions for women became available within the Sunday school community, their participation was justified because it fit within dominant gender ideologies of women's nature and their proper sphere. Evangelical beliefs encouraged their work further as involvement in church activities; evangelism and a concern for social morality were now essentials of their faith. Women were desirable teachers because their unpaid efforts made the schools inexpensive to run. Women also expressed the more 'feminine' and emotional aspects of Christianity. Thus, their place among the children was considered natural and valuable.

Origins, Objectives and Organization

The Sunday school began in Britain. The earliest recorded formal Sunday schools were started by Robert Raikes in the late eighteenth century.¹⁹ Raikes' intentions were to provide a charity school for working-class children. The goals of his schools, and of the Sunday school movement in Britain, were to education and reform poor children in order to reduce crime and "immoral" activity.²⁰ The first official Sunday school organization was the Society for the Establishment and Support of Sunday Schools throughout the Kingdom of Great Britain, also created in the last decades of the eighteenth century.²¹

Historians have generally agreed that Robert Raikes was the "father of the Sunday school"²², yet they have been less interested in identifying its 'mother'. That title should most appropriately be given to teacher, writer and philanthropist, Hannah More. More's experience as a young teacher and religious activist helped her establish some the earliest Sunday schools in Britain. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, More, along with her sister Martha, had successfully organized a system of Sunday schools in Somerset, educating over 20,000 working-class children.²³

¹⁹ Robert Lynn and Elliot Wright. The Big Little School; Sunday child of American Protestantism. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p.4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

²² *Ibid.*, p.4.

²³ Anne Scott. Hannah More: The First Victorian. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) pp.105-106. For more on the life and work of Hannah More, see: Patricia Demers. The World of Hannah More. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996) and M.G. Jones. Hannah More. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968)

Charity schools for poor children remained the dominant form of Sunday schooling in Britain throughout the nineteenth century. In North America however, the Sunday school movement adopted this charity-based structure only in the early years. By the 1820s, Sunday schools were becoming increasingly popular not for only working-class children, but also for children of church members from higher classes.

According to historian Anne Boylan, the American evangelical climate of the Second Great Awakening resulted in a panic over the salvation of all people, including children, in the early decades of the nineteenth century.²⁴ Consequently, active evangelicals of all social classes wanted their children to experience conversion as early as possible.²⁵ The Sunday school was considered the ideal environment for this to occur.²⁶ General attitudes towards the Sunday school in Canada were very similar, as revivalist waves occurred almost simultaneously in both countries.

²⁴ The Second Great Awakening in North America is usually defined as the period from 1790 to 1835. Richard Allen's The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) is a very useful source in identifying the specifics of this movements as well as its influence in both the US and Canada, as Boylan does not discuss it in detail.

²⁵ The concern for children's salvation also emerged in Britain, but the Sunday school had already become so closely associated with working-class culture that it was not seen as an appropriate place for middle and upper class parents to send their children. A number of historians have explored how and why the British Sunday school became a working class institution and its significance as such. See; Thomas Walter Laqueur, Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), Phillip McCann, Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century, (London: Methuen, 1977), and Anne Digby and Peter Searby, Children, School and Society in Nineteenth Century England, (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1981)

²⁶ Anne Boylan, Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution 1790-1880, (New York: Yale University Press, 1988). pp.10-11.

The theological focus changed again in both Canada and the US around the 1860s. The idea of “Christian nurture”, or gradual spiritual development, was increasingly promoted in place of the urgent, emotional conversion experience.²⁷ Whether concerned with conversion or nurturing, North American Sunday schools and their affiliated churches, were much more focused on increasing church membership than those in Britain.

Charity was never the primary goal of Ontario Sunday schools, throughout the period under study here. Records show that a small number of “Union schools” existed in urban areas. They were established particularly to serve working class and immigrant children and made up less than 5% of the total Sunday schools in the province.²⁸ The children attending the Union schools were less likely to have received educational elsewhere so basic literary and math skills were taught to children of all ages. Other charity services were also provided at Union schools, such as the distribution of free meals and clothing. They generally functioned like the more mainstream Sunday schools in terms of organization, religious curriculum and affiliated activities. The majority of Ontario’s youth, however, received their Sunday schooling in more formal, church-based schools. While the more general schools were intended for the children of church members, there is very little evidence of these schools rejecting potential students on the basis of their class.

²⁷ This theory was the result of theologian Horace Bushnell’s 1861 book Christian Nurture, its influence on the American Sunday school and its women’s teachers is discussed in Boylan, Sunday School, pp.133-164.

²⁸ The Provincial Sunday School Report in 1886 reports an estimated 150 Union Schools, compared to almost 4,000 church-based schools. Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Proceedings of the Annual Provincial Sabbath School Convention, 1886. p.4.

While the specific objectives of the Sunday school differed between North America and Britain, women's participation and leadership was consistent in its establishment and development in both regions. Hannah More, her sister Martha, and children's author Sarah Trimmer remain the most prominent women leaders in the early British Sunday school movement.²⁹ After working in Scottish schools at the turn of the nineteenth century, American mother and daughter Isabella Graham and Joanne Bethune brought the tradition of women's involvement in the Sunday school movement to the US. Their earliest American school was established in New York around 1803.³⁰ Graham and Bethune are also credited with creating the Female Union for the Promotion of Sabbath Schools in New York in 1816.³¹ English-Canadian women emerged as teachers around the same time, leading home-based Sunday schools as early as 1801.³²

American women's Sunday school associations were fairly quick to extend their membership to Canadian women. Although most American Sunday school associations remained only national for their entire existence, communities run for and by women frequently became international by inviting Canadian women to join. The National

²⁹ Lynn and Wright, The Big Little School, p.9 and Lucille Marr. "Sunday School Teaching: A Women's Enterprise: A Case Study From the Canadian Methodist, Presbyterian and United Church Tradition, 1919-1934." Histoire Sociale 26, (1993), p.331.

³⁰ Lynn and Wright, The Big Little School, pp.12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

³² Marr, "Sunday School Teaching", p. 33.

Primary Union was one such group who included Canadian women after three years.³³

Additionally, both single and married Canadian women are frequently listed as being individual delegates at international, American and Canadian conventions.

Formal Sunday school organizations were established very quickly after the creation of the first schools in Canada. The Sunday School Union Society of Canada began in 1822; it became the Canadian Sunday School Union (CSSU) in 1838 and lasted into the twentieth century. The Sabbath School Association of Canada was founded in 1863, hosting provincial conventions and meetings until 1885 when it turned into the Sabbath School Association of Ontario (SSAO) which functioned until the early twentieth century.

Ontarians were also listed in the International Sunday School Association's (ISSA) activities, reports and conventions as early as 1872.³⁴ Local Sunday school associations also existed, including the Toronto Sabbath School Association and the Toronto Sunday School Teachers Institute, both active from the early 1870s into the twentieth century.

These associations aimed at creating structures through which Canadian Sunday schools could cooperate with each other. The major associations produced annual reports, frequently held conventions, distributed financial assistance, produced and distributed resources and provided other aid and assistance to new schools, as well as to growing schools. While these groups had greater control when uniform lessons and standardized

³³ International Sunday School Association, The Development of the Sunday School 1780-1905: The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention. (Boston: International Sunday School Association, 1905), p.20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.100.

teacher training became common in the early decades of the twentieth century, they were already significant during the period under study as they provided unity and cooperation among all Protestant Ontario Sunday schools.

The main goal of the Sunday school throughout the entire nineteenth century was to produce faithful, dutiful Christians. Initially, this goal was reached through conversion, but later a more gradual approach was used. In both cases, the desired results of creating a population of Christians depended on the success of some secondary goals.

Providing basic education, including literacy and simple math, was an early goal of Ontario Sunday schools. The teaching of literacy skills to children, and occasionally adults, continued in Sunday schools even after public schooling became compulsory. However, math and other more secular subjects became less important in Sunday schools as common schools attendance increased. Historian Allan Greer finds that Ontario Sunday school libraries were regularly ordering reading, spelling and “alphabet” books as late as the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁵ Literacy was directly connected to conversion; the ability to read the Bible independently was seen as essential for all Christians. Thus, literacy was a goal of Ontario Sunday schools because it was a crucial part of spreading evangelical Christianity.

Another secondary goal of the Ontario Sunday school was to assist in the development of a loyal, patriotic citizenry. Both ‘secular’ and Christian schools had the goal of securing loyalty to both the newly ‘settled’ colony and to Britain. Sunday schools however, made explicit the connection between obedience to God and obedience to the state; they were teaching that patriotism and loyalty to the country were Christian duties.

³⁵ Allan Greer. “The Sunday Schools of Upper Canada.” *Ontario History* 67 (September 1975): p.170.

While gender often dictated the forms of active patriotism, women, men, girls and boys were all expected to be faithful to both their church and their nation. At an 1886 convention, the question was raised if it was preferable to always use Canadian rather than American books in Sunday schools. The response of the main speaker, Mr. Bengough, made the goal of patriotism clear as he stated, "I would rather buy a Canadian book than an American book, even if the latter is a little better!"³⁶ He went on to explain that it was necessary to, "have books that introduce Canadian topics and make our young people loyal to this country."³⁷ His comments were supported as his answer was followed by audience applause.³⁸

Closely related to the previous goals of producing a literate and patriotic population, a third goal of the Sunday school was to produce a morally righteous population. By the mid nineteenth century, industrialization, urbanization and increasingly diverse immigrant populations had created a working-class, urban culture that often seriously worried middle class revivalist evangelicals. Great concern was raised over issues of factory work for women, single women traveling alone, prostitution, alcohol and gambling among others.³⁹ Sunday school leaders were particularly concerned with Sunday activity, immoral literature and crime involving youth.

³⁶ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Proceedings of the Annual Provincial Sunday School Convention, 1886. p141.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.141.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.141.

³⁹ For more on the moral panics of this period see; Mariana Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991).

The revival movements of the time created what has been called “Social Christianity”.⁴⁰ This approach to Christianity placed a high priority on the commitment to social morality by all Christians; a commitment to Christianity was a commitment to the moral well-being of society.

The Sunday school used a variety of methods to reach their goal of promoting moral righteousness. First, they educated students on the harms of immorality. This included explaining both the eternal consequences, in hopes of creating fear and encouraging conversion, as well as the immediate harms. Moral stories, both fictional and (usually exaggerated) true stories were the main tools used to demonstrate these harms, as well as to offer tips on resisting temptation. Secondly, the Sunday school was a strong supporter of reform groups. Recruitment for youth groups, affiliated with temperance, missionary and other reform organizations frequently occurred in the Sunday school classroom or other Sunday school events.

The final strategy used to promote proper morality was literally keeping children out of trouble on Sundays by occupying them with Sunday school classes and events. Ontario Sunday schools were less concerned with taking care of working-class youth than those in Britain. They did, however, encourage them to come to both Union and regular schools. They often offered rewards and incentives of new clothes, free food, books and other prizes.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Allen, The Social Passion, p.16.

⁴¹ There is evidence of this in the 1824 Annual Report of the Sunday School Union Society of Canada. American scholars of the Sunday school have also found that this was a common strategy used to attract students. See; Lynn and Wright, The Big Little School, and Boylan, Sunday School.

It was believed that if children were in the Sunday school or at Sunday school sponsored events, they would be kept away from the 'harmful temptations' of the city. The Sunday school was part of the reaction against the increasing 'immoral' activities of working-class people in nineteenth-century Ontario.

The last goal of the Sunday school was to increase church membership. As previously explained, the Sunday school movement in Ontario was interdenominational and although it was rare that Sunday school leaders would express preference for a specific denomination, they certainly promoted the importance of being a member of any one of the Protestant churches. Individual conversion was the ultimate goal, but being part of a church community was also important in terms of both leading to conversion, as well as fully experiencing a Christian life once converted. Being active in a Christian community was seen as necessary to building a strong moral and spiritual life. The Sunday school worked towards increasing church membership by teaching children the importance of church community from an early age. Sunday school students were not only part of their own class and school, but they were also part of the church and the wider Christian church community in a few ways.

Sunday school children participated in fundraising, awareness and recruitment campaigns for specific churches, missionary societies and other Christian groups. Many of these groups also relied on the efforts of children in their own events or youth groups. These youth chapters, more commonly known as youth bands, were usually officially affiliated with their parent organizations. Their primary purpose was to promote their campaigns to children, but they also served as social groups where young people could

connect with other Christians.⁴² In 1888, youth mission bands associated with the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church had 1,711 members making up twenty nine percent of the society's total membership.⁴³ Guest speakers from missionary groups, Christian associations and church leaders were frequent in the classroom. They made it clear that these children were part of a wider Christian community and that it was important that they continue to be. For teenagers and adults, involvement in the Sunday school as workers also became part of their church-work, demonstrating by example the importance of church members' activity.

In short, the ultimate goal of the Sunday school was to turn out strong, committed Evangelical Christians. This goal remained consistent even as interpretations and understandings of childhood salvation and evangelicalism shifted during the last half of the nineteenth century. In order to reach this goal, the Sunday school aimed to educate the population in basic literacy, create a patriotic culture, develop morally strong citizens and increase the membership of protestant churches.

Children of all classes were encouraged to attend Sunday school. Most often working class youth were in a separate class than children of middle class families. Occasionally they were assigned to separate schools if the local demand and resources were adequate. Contrary to their British counterparts, North American Sunday school leaders strongly encouraged middle class children to attend and serve as an example to working class children. Consequently, Ontario Sunday schools were attended by children

⁴² Sharon Anne Cook. Through Sunshine and Shadow: The WCTU, Evangelicalism and Reform in Ontario 1874-1930. (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1995), pp.38-40.

⁴³ Mrs. Deltor. Address of the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada, delivered at Guelph Conference held at Seaforth, June, 1888.p.6.

of all socio-economic classes and this form of schooling had an influence in the lives of most of English-Canadians.

Similarly, children of both sexes were equally invited to attend Sunday schools and almost all schools accepted both female and male students.⁴⁴ Segregation occurred occasionally if male teachers insisted on teaching only the boys' classes, but generally Sunday school leaders were instructed to "mix them all up", and for the most part they did.⁴⁵ In a few cases where space and volunteers were readily available, single-sex classes existed, but this was neither the norm nor the preference. The majority of Sunday school activities that occurred outside of the classroom were not sex-segregated either. Women were reminded that as Sunday school workers they were to exercise their influence on both young girls and boys "as in the family."⁴⁶

Bible classes for teenagers, on the other hand, were sex segregated. These were usually run by the Sunday school departments of individual churches, yet they functioned more as small group Bible studies than formal, classroom based lessons. Sex-segregation was desirable for these classes, as purity and sexual morality became especially important during adolescence.⁴⁷ Bible classes, however, were an extension of the core Sunday

⁴⁴ Records of individual schools reveal the ratio of female to male students. For example, the Metropolitan Methodist Sunday School in Toronto in 1898 reports having 300 female students and 265 males, with the average attendance being 177 girls and 149 boys. Metropolitan Methodist Sunday School, Eighteenth Annual Report 1898, p.5.

⁴⁵ This issue was discussed in the "Question Drawer" session of an 1886 convention, led by Rev.A.F. Schauffler. Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Proceedings of the Annual Provincial Sunday School Convention, 1886. p127.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.127.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.127.

school, and attracted fewer students than the standard school intended for younger children and pre-teen youth.

While the central function of the Sunday school was Sunday classes, other resources and activities were also offered. Most Sunday schools ran libraries. Historian Allan Greer has concluded that these libraries contributed greatly to the high literacy rate in nineteenth century Ontario, explaining that much of the population would not have had any access to reading materials if these libraries had not existed.⁴⁸ Sunday school libraries served the school, the church and the wider community and loaned fiction books, tracts, Bibles, periodicals as well as spelling and reading workbooks.⁴⁹ Individual schools, as well as Sunday school associations, placed a high priority on their libraries.⁵⁰

Sunday schools also organized events such as picnics and parades for children to encourage fellowship among the students. They also allowed parents, teachers and other church members to be participate in and keep informed on the youth community of their church. Community (Christian) youth groups also became a regular part of most Sunday schools. By the end of the century, the most popular youth groups were temperance associations' bands, including the Bands of Hope, and Mission Bands for support of missionaries.⁵¹ While there has been little research on these youth bands and their significance, it is clear from both records of Sunday school associations as well as

⁴⁸ Greer. "The Sunday Schools of Upper Canada.", pp.171-183.

⁴⁹ Author unknown, "Sabbath School Libraries" in The Canadian Independent, Vol XXI, No.5 (Nov 1874), pp.150-153.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 150-153.

⁵¹ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Proceedings of the Annual Provincial Sunday School Convention, 1886. p.127.

records of their parent organizations that provided the children involved with strong and important educational and social networks existed for the children involved in these youth bands and the Sunday schools.

Women and Sunday School Work

Throughout the nineteenth century, the majority of Ontario Sunday school teachers were women. It is impossible to know exactly how many women were teachers, however historian Lucille Marr has labeled twentieth century Sunday school teaching in Canada “a women’s enterprise”⁵² and there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that her conclusion also hold true for the nineteenth century.

According to the records of individual Sunday schools studied here, the average ratio of female to male teachers was four to one.⁵³ The National Council of Women estimated that in 1900, women made up about two-thirds of the Sunday school teachers in the Methodist Church in Canada.⁵⁴ If either of these rough ratios are accurate, it is

⁵² Marr, *Sunday School Teaching*, pp.329-344.

⁵³ While most schools and organizations did not distinguish between male and female teachers in their statistics, a few recorded the names of teachers in their annual reports. St. Andrew’s school in Fergus, Ontario and the Metropolitan Methodist Sunday School in Toronto were two that did in 1889 and 1898 respectively. They each reported almost exactly the 4:1 ratio of female to males. Metropolitan Methodist Sunday School, *Eighteenth Annual Report 1898*, p.5, A.D. Fordyce, *Our Sabbath School for Ten More Years: A Supplementary Narrative of Routine and Incidents, 1879 to 1889 in Saint Andrew’s Church Sabbath School*. Fergus Ont: Advocate, 1889.

⁵⁴ The National Council of Women of Canada, *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, (1900) p.304.

likely that by 1893, Ontario had somewhere between 30,000 and 35,000 women Sunday school teachers.⁵⁵

Male teachers almost always taught only the adult classes and Bible classes for older teenagers. Women had almost full responsibility for running classes for children aged sixteen and younger. Although men held most of the higher positions, women were not stuck in their role as teachers. They were also Sunday school officers in a few areas, most commonly for the primary and infant divisions, as well as for the temperance and missions departments.⁵⁶ Women also staffed Sunday school libraries and often led teacher-training sessions when these were organized.

Historian Mary Anne Macfarlane's research on women and the Canadian Sunday school revealed only one case of a woman holding the position of superintendent. However, there were six in the records examined here reveal.⁵⁷ It is possible that these schools were for girls only, or in small communities, as each had fewer than 40 scholars. It is nonetheless significant that at least a small number of women held the position of

⁵⁵ These numbers are both the 2:3 and 3:4 ratios applied to the total number of teachers recorded at the Provincial Sunday School Convention in 1893, which was 45,946. Sabbath School Association of Ontario. Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Provincial Sabbath School Convention. (Toronto: Sabbath School Association of Ontario, 1893).

⁵⁶ International Sunday School Association, The Development of the Sunday School 1780-1905: The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention. (Boston: International Sunday School Association, 1905).

⁵⁷ Five single women were recorded as superintendents in the report of the Canadian Sunday School Union in 1872. A sixth can be found in the organization's 1876 report (page unknown). These reports covered both Quebec and Ontario schools, and it is unclear that any of these schools were in Ontario. Canada Sunday School Union. Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Canada Sunday School Union 1872.(Montreal: Canada Sunday School Union, 1872), p.19.

superintendent. This also demonstrates that Anne Boylan's findings that American Sunday school superintendents were always male, does not hold true for Canada.⁵⁸

Women taught both boys and girls. They taught working class children, aboriginal children, immigrant children, as well as their own children. They taught in cities and in rural areas, in homes, schools, churches, and just about any corner of space they could turn into a classroom. They were both married and single, and taught infants, youth and adults. There was no typical or standard job description for Sunday school teachers. Their duties and responsibilities were determined by their circumstances and varied greatly.

It was acceptable for women to teach in the Sunday school because it was consistent with gender ideologies of the time. Womanhood was seen as different and complimentary to manhood. The qualities and characteristics assigned to both were seen to be natural and divinely assigned. This resulted in work with children, especially that which was centered in morality, being allocated to women. This type of work fell within the dominant understandings of women's nature and their proper sphere.

Sunday school teaching, and teaching children more generally, was seen to require maternalism, a so-called "natural" connection with children and strong moral character. These maternal and nurturing qualities defined women and were what made them different from men. The developing evangelical movement reinforced this gender distinction even further as it believed that gender differences were not only divinely inspired, but also the necessary foundation of a strong Christian society.

⁵⁸ Boylan, The Sunday School, p.72.

Beliefs in the desirability of the patriarchal family also contributed to the acceptance of women teaching Sunday school. Men were expected to have authority over women, and women to have authority over children. This was the power structure of most English-Canadian households. The church was similar except that God held ultimate authority above men. The Sunday school was structured in the same way. While male superintendents and pastors held official power, women only had authority over the children. Also, as in the home, women often did most of the management and organization of the areas assigned to them.

Women teaching children was also uncontroversial because it was biblically sound. Objections to women ministering and preaching to men were often rooted in Biblical literalism, and while this did not necessarily stop women from actively preaching, it did create controversy between and within denominations.⁵⁹ This type of disagreement or disapproval did not exist over Sunday school teaching precisely because the scholars were children.

The voluntary nature of Sunday school teaching was another important reason why this type of work was acceptable for women. Middle-class men and women were expected to operate in separate spheres. Women's sphere was limited to the private and domestic, thus, working for pay was assigned to men. The combination of working with children and not being paid placed Sunday school teaching firmly in the female sphere of the private.

Unlike more secular schools, however, Sunday school teachers were expected to be closely involved in the spiritual development of their scholars. At a time when

⁵⁹ Muir, "Beyond the Bounds of Acceptable Behaviour: Methodist Women Preachers in the Early Nineteenth Century," p.178.

evangelical Christianity was strongly defined by emotional experiences, the ability to be emotionally available was seen as a necessary attribute. These emotional qualities were associated primarily with women, making them desirable teachers.

Dominant gender ideologies on women's nature and their proper sphere made Sunday school teaching an appropriate position for women, evangelical beliefs reinforced this further. Nineteenth century evangelical Christianity place a new emphasis on conversion and social involvement. These changes resulted in the creation of new institutions, including the Sunday school, to spread this evangelicalism further. The Sunday school served as an emotional environment to facilitate both conversion and the fulfillment of a converted life. This made women voluntary teaching possible, acceptable and, eventually, necessary.

Emotional, evangelical revivals resurfaced in the early nineteenth century across North America, and for the first time in many parts of Ontario. The conversion experience was central to evangelical Christian faith. It was understood that regardless of background, an individual, emotional conversion was required to achieve salvation. This was to be based on repentance of past sins and would be followed by a commitment to a new, Christ-like life. At this time, conversion was an emotional rather than rational experience. Because of the focus on emotion rather than intellect, historians have noted that this was an especially "feminine" phase in evangelicalism.⁶⁰ Consequently, women were more involved than men.

⁶⁰ Boylan, Sunday School, p.116.

Women were very active in evangelical events including outreach and revival meetings.⁶¹ They had practice in simplifying and summarizing the basics of Christianity and they became familiar with approaches to conversion. It is not surprising then, that they were active in Sunday schools as well, as similar techniques and approaches to encouraging conversion were used.

Once converted, new Christians were expected to live out their faith and become evangelists in all areas of their lives. This evangelical duty was essential for both women and men. The goal of one's life after conversion was to serve God by converting others and by developing strong Christian communities in which they would be nurtured. Witnessing and evangelism became a necessary part of life for all evangelical Christians. This included intentional interaction with non-Christians and activity outside of the home, making public interaction with strangers of all sorts acceptable even for women.

As much as evangelism in the community was required by new Christians, so too was their participation in church work. Women's involvement in charity and church activities was nothing new by the nineteenth century. Previously, for most women, especially of the upper classes, charity was more philanthropic than physical.⁶²

For nineteenth-century evangelical women, the goal of almost all charity work was evangelization, protection from (and prevention of) immorality. Charities were no longer only a way for women to demonstrate their generosity, but were now used as tools

⁶¹ Whiteley, "Modest, Unaffected, and Fully Consecrated: Lady Evangelists in Canadian Methodism," pp.196-197.

⁶² For a detailed analysis on changes in women's charity work in nineteenth century Ontario see: Carmen Nielson Varty, "A Career in Christian Charity: Women's Benevolence and the Public Sphere in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canadian City," Women's History Review 14,(2005).

to create an ideal Christian society. Evangelical women created a number of groups to do just that, and by the last quarter of the nineteenth century Ontario had a number of Christian women's groups running orphanages, homes of working women, offering support for female prisoners and services for immigrants.⁶³

In both voluntary church work and charity work, women were expected to give more of their time and energy than men. They were assumed to have fewer other political, social, professional commitments than men, and to not have paid work interfere with their church life. So, although men also had a religious obligation, it was understood that women had more 'free' time to devote to these commitments.

Along with conversion and a commitment to church work, historian Anne Boylan identifies a third major element in the Evangelical Christianity of this period that resulted in a shift in appropriate womanhood. This was that evangelicals, including women, were to be active, involved and courageous in all areas of their lives. While qualities such as domesticity and passivity were idealized in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, these were simply no longer compatible with Evangelical Christianity.⁶⁴

⁶³ For more on some specific women's groups and the services they provided see; Carmen Nielson Varty, "A Career in Christian Charity: Women's Benevolence and the Public Sphere in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canadian City," Women's History Review 14,(2005), pp.243-264. Sharon Anne Cook. Through Sunshine and Shadow: The WCTU, Evangelicalism and Reform in Ontario 1874-1930. (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1995) and Diana Pedersen. "'The Power of True Christian Women:' The YWCA and Evangelical Womanhood in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Elizabeth Gillan Muir and Marilyn Färdig Whiteley, eds., Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) pp. 321-337.

⁶⁴ Anne Boylan. "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: the Role of Women in Sunday Schools." Feminist Studies 4,(1978), pp.65-66.

In fact, being idle, frivolous or overly elegant- qualities previously associated with womanhood- were all seen as the exact shortcomings that were to be rejected by all Christians once converted.⁶⁵ Evangelical women, therefore, had little choice but to create an alternative identity of appropriate womanhood that was based more on activity than passivity.

The ideal of evangelical womanhood that emerged in the nineteenth century combined traditional aspects of femininity with contemporary tenets of evangelical Christianity, particularly the emphasis on a new life once converted and the social duty of evangelism. Action was a key part of this ideal as evangelical women were expected to recognize their usefulness and avoid complacency. Involvement in church communities was important to achieving the self-improvement essential after conversion. Social interaction with non-Christians was necessary to encourage conversion in others. The ideal evangelical woman actively participated in both.

Evangelical womanhood was also an ideal that emphasized woman's difference from man and understood their social roles as complementary and divinely assigned. This ideal portrayed woman as nurturing, sensitive, compassionate and pious, making them best suited for charity work and teaching children. Those who reinforced this ideal made clear that women's influence over children was equal in value to the public influence of male leaders.

This new evangelical womanhood still included a maternal and emotional character, but it also required activity, confidence, strength and participation outside of the home. Thus, how women embraced this change, and how they themselves were

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.66.

involved in shaping their own identity as evangelical women are intriguing questions. They raise broader issues of how religious and gender identity overlap, particularly for women. These questions are worthy of greater historical analysis, and this thesis begins to explore them. Sunday school teachers are one case of women who were actively living as both women and evangelicals, even as they were often seemingly contradictory identities. The following chapters analyze how dominant ideologies of gender placed within changing religious discourse gave women the opportunity to shape, expand and define evangelical womanhood.

CHAPTER 2

IMAGES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: SUNDAY SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND PUBLICATIONS

The duties of a Sunday school teacher were never restricted to the classroom. From visiting students' homes to speaking at international conventions, women teachers participated in a variety of activities with varying audiences. Likewise, the teacher was not the only influence in the lives of Sunday school students. Publications including books, periodicals and tracts were influential in teaching the desired moral and religious education, as well as in teaching gender roles to their readers. This chapter examines women's involvement in Sunday school libraries and the portrayal of women in publications. The roles and responsibilities women had in libraries, as well as the images in publications, reflected the expanding definitions of evangelical womanhood produced during this period.

Roles and Responsibilities; Sunday School Libraries

The responsibilities that women had in Sunday school libraries fell within their duties as Christian women. Through their work in libraries, women held positions of leadership and authority and had access to resources for the purposes of educating themselves, each other and children in unparalleled ways. As librarians, authors, contributors and clients, Sunday school libraries gave women roles and responsibilities that helped them shape their gender identity.

Until at least the last decades of the nineteenth century, Sunday school libraries were one of a very few sites of free, literary resources in Ontario. In most communities

Sunday school libraries were the only place where books, from basic spelling and reading to advanced literature, were easily accessible to most people.⁶⁶ The work of women is especially significant given the importance of the library to the school, the church and the community. Most Sunday schools had affiliated libraries. More than 80 percent of the schools listed in 1871 by the Canadian Sunday School Union had libraries, none with fewer than a dozen volumes.⁶⁷ The majority of libraries had more books than students, with the largest reporting a collection of 430 volumes for a school of 181 students.⁶⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, individual Sunday school libraries were carrying as many as 1,665 books.⁶⁹

The objectives of Sunday school libraries were similar to the Sunday school in general and the broader evangelical movement. Mainly, the promotion of literacy for the purpose of reading the bible, evangelizing and converting non-Christians, increasing morality, and the promoting of national loyalty. Libraries carried books, tracts and periodicals related to these subjects for children, adults, males, females, Christians and non-Christians.⁷⁰ This gave the women involved in libraries exposure to diverse categories of people, as well as of literature.

⁶⁶ Greer, "The Sunday Schools of Upper Canada," pp. 183-184.

⁶⁷ Canadian Sunday School Union, Annual Report 1871, pp.23-25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.23-25.

⁶⁹ Metropolitan Methodist Sunday School, Eighteenth Annual Report 1898, p.5.

⁷⁰ Author Unknown, "Sabbath School Libraries", pp.150-152.; Yorkville Congregational Sunday School, Library Catalogue, pp.3-12.

The library was one of a few areas where women could be in charge within the Sunday school and the church. As librarians, their responsibility included the management and organization of the library and its contents.⁷¹ It also included participation in meetings and conventions as delegates or speakers. Librarians also had the authority to decide which publications were appropriate for their church members and children. Whether independently, or as a committee member, women librarians had authority and influence when it came to determining which publications would be on their shelves.⁷²

Women who worked in the library were often the only women on Sunday school committees and at meetings of school or church leadership. This provided women with the rare opportunity and experience to participate in the process of formal church meetings. The position of librarian was a leadership role that often involved delegating responsibilities to other workers in the Sunday school and occasionally church volunteers from other departments.⁷³

While there is no explicit evidence that shows either a positive or negative response to women in this position, it is clear that the library was a main source of pride for the Sunday schools, and its upkeep and management was consistently a top priority

⁷¹ Mary Anne Macfarlane "Gender, Doctrine and Pedagogy: Women and 'Womanhood' in Methodist Sunday Schools in English-Speaking Canada, 1880 to 1920" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1991), pp. 397-400.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.399.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.422.

for Sunday school leaders across Ontario.⁷⁴ It is unlikely that Sunday school and church leaders would have left such a highly valued department in the hands of someone who was either incapable of running it successfully or who was explicitly challenging the accepted gender roles of the church. Thus, women's work as leaders in libraries was accepted and encouraged as a normal responsibility for evangelical women.

Consequently, the characteristics associated with this work (leadership, organization, management, authority, etc.) became acceptable qualities for evangelical women as well.

Women participated in Sunday school libraries as contributors. They were both authors of many of the books and stories in the libraries, as well as some of their most active donors. Women's work as Sunday school periodical writers, as well as for their own books, is extremely important in understanding both their changing role as evangelical women and their influence in reinforcing these gender ideologies.

Canadian publishers, most notably William Briggs, strongly promoted and encouraged Canadians to write their own Sunday school material. As Canadian nationalism was growing throughout the nineteenth century, Canadian books were consistently preferred over American ones, and they were often cheaper than redistributed British ones.⁷⁵ During the time leading to the American Civil War, there were even calls for Canadians to boycott American publishers, including the American Sunday School Union and the American Tract Society, on the basis that neither

⁷⁴ Sunday school associations at all levels reported details on libraries from 1828 into the twentieth century. Libraries were also consistently a topic of discussion at conventions and meetings.

⁷⁵ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Proceedings of the Annual Provincial Sunday School Convention, 1886. p141.

organization had taken an official position on the slavery issue.⁷⁶ While it is hard to determine how Canadians responded to this boycott, it is certainly another indicator of the preference for Canadian material.

Women benefited from the push for Canadian writers to contribute to Sunday school literature almost immediately. Women who worked in the Sunday school had experience with teaching Christianity to children and knew what sorts of stories and images would get the attention of their youthful audience. Writing was also seen an appropriate work for women, leading those who had the skill and passion for writing along a fairly smooth path to getting their stories in libraries.

Nellie McClung and Lucy Maud Montgomery remain the most recognizable women authors of Sunday school literature; both either attended or taught in Ontario Sunday schools.⁷⁷ Although these two exceptional women published their major Sunday school literature immediately following the period under study here, women were writing their own books and contributing stories to periodicals throughout the nineteenth century as well. Books by Catherine Parr Traill were commonly found in libraries across the province.⁷⁸ Annie Swain and Margaret Murray Roberston were popular women authors who wrote religious based literature for children during this period.⁷⁹ Mrs. Briggs, the

⁷⁶ J.J.E. Linton, "Slavery-Republicanism", The Voice of the Bondsman (No.1, Dec 1856), p. 3.

⁷⁷ Macfarlane "Gender, Doctrine and Pedagogy," p. 408.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.408-409.

⁷⁹ Author Unknown, "Sabbath School Libraries", The Canadian Independent XXI, no. 5 (1874), pp.150-153.; Yorkville Congregational Sunday School, Library Catalogue, (Toronto: 1880), pp.3-12.

wife of William Briggs, also wrote material for children as part of her work with the Women's Missionary Society, and her books were commonly donated to Sunday school libraries. "Aunt Nancy" and "Cousin Mary" also authored a number of books found in Ontario Sunday schools,⁸⁰ as did "Mrs. Warner" and "Mrs. Charles", however, like many women writers of the time, their *nom-de-plumes* make it difficult to trace their real identity and late careers.⁸¹

Stories and books written by British women were also popular in Ontario Sunday schools. Hannah More, Sarah Trimmer and Hesba Stretton were the most familiar. So too were the women who wrote under the pseudonym ALOE (A Lady From Edinburgh), whose series of books were easily available to Sunday school students in Ontario through their libraries.⁸²

These women authors often received great praise from male leaders. Stretton's work was praised by the Canadian Independent as giving her "a place in children's light literature somewhat analogous to that occupied by Charles Dickens in the wider field of fiction."⁸³ Women who wrote religious books for children had a unique responsibility, as it was understood that books were "one of the most powerful influences for good or evil."⁸⁴ The high importance of providing morally appropriate reading material for young people at a time of social change created a need for modern Sunday school publications.

⁸⁰ Yorkville Congregational Sunday School, Library Catalogue, (Toronto: 1880), pp.8-9.

⁸¹ Author Unknown, "Sabbath School Libraries", p.151.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.151.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

The demand for new, Canadian resources, combined with women's experience with teaching children, led many Canadian women to author Sunday school literature and continued to promote the work of British women writers.

Women also contributed to Sunday school libraries through their relationship as donating partners, usually through women's groups. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was the most active group to use the Sunday school library as a main tool in their campaigns. Their familiarity with the Sunday school environment and the centrality of childhood education to their cause allowed for both the WCTU and the libraries to benefit from this relationship.

As libraries were extensions of the volunteer-run Sunday school, they were usually short of funds, especially in rural areas or small communities. Therefore they often depended on donated material to keep their libraries running at all. The WCTU, women's missionary societies and other groups, gladly fulfilled the need for current donations and regularly gave tracts, books and periodicals to the libraries to encourage the support they desired among as many people as possible.⁸⁵ These Christian groups were among the most desired donators as well, because their commitment to evangelism quelled any concern one could have about the morality of their literature.

The WCTU spoke openly about the need for temperance literature in the Sunday school and commonly used the libraries to distribute their tracts and books.⁸⁶ In schools that did not have a temperance department or official temperance lessons, even more

⁸⁵ Macfarlane, "Gender, Doctrine and Pedagogy," p.411.

⁸⁶ Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1887. p.68.

emphasis was placed on having this material available in the libraries. Local WCTU chapters kept detailed records of the Sunday schools in which they had “scattered literature” and of the ones they needed to visit.⁸⁷ Records of the WCTU show that they were active in dispensing pledge books, pledge cards, tracts and temperance books to Sunday school libraries from their early years through to the twentieth century.⁸⁸

Women also benefited, and contributed, to libraries as clients. Women teachers read materials to prepare their classes, to gain knowledge of different subjects and for leisure. The Sunday school library allowed women to gain literacy skills or to practice and improve them. These libraries gave women the chance to educate themselves in a way that was previously unavailable. Because of the close relationship between women’s missionary societies, temperance groups and Sunday school libraries, women could also keep informed and up-to-date on what was going on in their local women’s associations. They could follow up on financial contributions that they had made and see the benefits of their membership. Many books were about the lives of missionary women, further exposing both adult women and young girls to this non-traditional, non-domestic role.⁸⁹

Macfarlane found in her research that women and girls were actively making use of the Sunday school library. She explains that girls were more frequent visitors to the library than boys, and at many schools girls took out twice as many books as the male

⁸⁷ Toronto District Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, 1887. p.68.

⁸⁸ Toronto District Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, 1896. p.56.

⁸⁹ Yorkville Congregational Sunday School, Library Catalogue, pp.3-12.

students.⁹⁰ Libraries encouraged girls to read and learn, generally in the same ways as their brothers and male friends. They saw women librarians managing, delegating and organizing the libraries. They borrowed both classic and new books written by women who often received praise for their work. They read stories of missionary women, who were faithful and daring. They were exposed to the activities of women reformers, in their own communities and across the country. Women's positions in Sunday school libraries gave them an important role in the circulation of publications. As librarians, women had the authority to determine what material was suitable for students to read. As authors and donors, they produced the type of literature that reflected their interests.

Sunday School Publications

Images of women and girls in Sunday school literature were not consistent during the nineteenth century. In the first half of the century the message of most stories was direct conversion, and it tended to be fairly gender-neutral. Literature of the last half of the century was focused on morality and character building which strongly emphasized ideal gender roles. In both cases, however, the ideal woman was never portrayed solely in her domestic and familiar role, but always in her role as an evangelical Christian. Missionary women often appeared in Sunday school literature as independent, courageous and dutifully living out her faith. Although these characteristics were not seen as necessarily contradictory to the domestic and maternal ideologies of femininity, they did allow evangelical womanhood to be molded into an identity that could include both.

⁹⁰ Macfarlane, "Gender, Doctrine and Pedagogy," p.379.

From the earliest years, publications of various sorts were a crucial part of Sunday schools. Tracts were a key tool in nineteenth century evangelism, as their concise message and cheap production cost made it possible to bring the Gospel message to a large number of people in a short amount of time. Sunday schools also used tracts to recruit new students, to help current students in their own evangelism, to teach basic lessons in Christianity and to encourage conversion.⁹¹

Along with tracts, weekly and monthly periodicals also circulated widely in Sunday schools and church communities. As early as 1849, the most popular Canadian periodicals were; Happy Days, The Sunbeam, and The Missionary and Sabbath School Record.⁹² American periodicals were also commonly found in Ontario Sunday schools including; The Sunday School Times and The Sunday School Banner, which began circulating in the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁹³

Periodicals written specifically for Sunday schools were read by teachers, students, parents, Sunday school leaders and other community and church members. They were available in Sunday school libraries and classrooms, directly from publishers, at conventions and given as class prizes and at other school sponsored events.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Canadian Sunday School Union, Seventh Annual Report 1844, p.14.

⁹² Happy Days (Toronto: Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1886-1920). The Sunbeam (Toronto: Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1880-1906), The Missionary and Sabbath School Record (Montreal: Canadian Sunday School Union, 1849-1856).

⁹³ The Sunday School Times (1892-1912), The Sunday School Banner (1889-1920).

⁹⁴ The effectiveness of giving rewards and prizes to students was well debated throughout the nineteenth century. Official leaders tended to disapprove of this, but it seems that it was a fairly common practice among teachers. An example of this debate can be found in; Sabbath School Association of Canada, Proceedings of the Sixth Provincial Sunday School Convention, 1869. p.69.

Sunday school classrooms and libraries were also filled with books. From spelling guides to novels, these books covered an array of topics, were written by diverse authors and for audiences ranging from infants to adults.⁹⁵ As teaching basic literacy was one of the main goals of the Sunday school for most of the nineteenth century, having a large collection of accessible books was one of their priorities.⁹⁶

Tracts, periodicals and books came mostly from a handful of major publishers in North America, including William Briggs and the Methodist Publishing House in Canada, the Canadian Sunday School Union, the American Sunday School Union and the American Tract Society. Ontario schools and libraries carried publications from British, American and Canadian publishers.⁹⁷ Although Canadian books were the most desirable, the high demand for morally proper reading material and the easy accessibility to international resources resulted in broader collections.

The themes of Sunday school publications were generally the same. An overview of these themes reveals the gender roles that both teachers and students were exposed to and how they fit within the changing discourses of evangelical Christianity and gender identity.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Author Unknown, "Sabbath School Libraries", The Canadian Independent XXI, no. 5 (1874), pp.150-152.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.152.

⁹⁷ Allan Greer. "The Sunday Schools of Upper Canada." *Ontario History* 67 (September 1975): pp.179-180.

⁹⁸ A detailed content analysis of Sunday school literature is beyond the scope of this thesis. Such material has frequently been included in studies of children's literature in nineteenth and early twentieth century North America. For more see; Gillian Avery, Behold the Child: American Children and Their Books, 1621-1922, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1994), Anne Scott MacLeod, A Moral Tale: Children's Fiction and American Culture, 1820-1860, (Hamden, 1975.)

For the first half of the nineteenth century, Sunday school literature reflected the main goal of the schools at the time: conversion. The conversion experience was required for both boys and girls, and was encouraged in young children as early as possible. Literature that focused on conversion, eternal life and salvation, tended not to be explicitly gender specific, as the urgency for redemption was more important than gender differences.

The main subject of this conversion-focused literature of the early Sunday schools was death. Children were frequently reminded of the realities of both adult and childhood death. These stories were intended to make their readers face the question of where they would go after they died. They were told repeatedly about the fate of many ill-struck young people who had not converted before their early deaths. Child-size graves, death beds and heart broken family members were common images in these stories.

Books such as Light On Little Graves, published by the American Sunday School Union in 1848, could be found in Sunday schools across North America.⁹⁹ Stories and songs titled; “Death of a Pious Child”, “Triumph in Death,” and “The Fear of Death Removed,” were recited by children and teachers in Sunday school classrooms.¹⁰⁰ The focus on death, and the threat of an eternity in hell for all non-Christians was directly intended to scare children into conversion, as well as to stress the importance of evangelizing to others, including family members and other children who might otherwise be redeemed before death.

⁹⁹ Avery, Behold the Child, p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Lynn and Elliot Wright. The Big Little School; Sunday child of American Protestantism. (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p.42.

Themes in Sunday school literature shifted around the late 1850s, as ideas on childhood and approaches to childhood religious teaching diversified. The most influential person to oppose childhood conversion was American theologian Horace Bushnell. Bushnell's 1847 book Christian Nurture, and his theory of the same name, suggested that children's salvation and their commitment to the church were best achieved through nurturing, loving childhood experiences and a similar understanding of God.¹⁰¹

This gradual, nurturing approach to children's religious development was introduced into Sunday school education across North America. It can easily be traced through the changes made in Sunday school literature: the emphasis on death and conversion was replaced with moral teaching and character building lessons. Similarly, the gender neutrality of the conversion based literature was replaced with more gender specific lessons in purity, morality and personal example.

Morality-based publications for boys had a few common themes. Central to most stories were examples of responsibility for personal action and behavior. In books and tracts boys were shown as being greatly rewarded by wealth and status, for having made good moral decisions and for resisting temptation.

1880s catalogue records from a Toronto school reveal that these were the types of books that Ontario Sunday school libraries were carrying.¹⁰² Honesty is the Best Policy, Wrecked but not Ruined, From the Log Cabin to the White House and How Paul's Penny

¹⁰¹ Horace Bushnell, Christian Nurture (Hartford, Edwin Hunt, 1847.)

¹⁰² Yorkville Congregational Sunday School, Library Catalogue, (Toronto: 1880), pp.3-12.

Became a Pound were all books intended to teach morality to boys.¹⁰³ The stories of a newsboy named Ned Nevins were also popular during this period.¹⁰⁴ Written by American Rev. Henry Morgan, Ned Nevins' adventures included Sunday school and church work and he was depicted as a faithful boy. As young male readers followed his life from a working class boy to a sophisticated philanthropist, they were encouraged to adopt his motto, "If I do no wrong, something good will come to me".¹⁰⁵

Stories often showed young men getting rewards and praise for their good choices and strong Christian character. Young girls however, were usually encouraged to be nurturers, helpers and a positive influence on boys. Sunday school literature emphasized the high responsibility girls and women had in the development of their good moral character, as well as of their fathers, husbands, brothers and male friends.

Women were usually the authors of books and stories intended to remind girls of their moral influence.¹⁰⁶ These types of books included; A Child's Influence, and Rebecca the Peace-Maker.¹⁰⁷ Tracts and stories in periodicals also promoted these ideas with titles such as Female Influence and First Lessons in Gentleness and Truth.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp.4-12.

¹⁰⁴ Avery, Behold the Child, pp.111-112.

¹⁰⁵ Henry Morgan, Ned Nevins, The Newsboy (Boston, 1868) title page, as reprinted in Avery, Behold the Child, p.111.

¹⁰⁶ Yorkville Congregational Sunday School, Library Catalogue, (Toronto: 1880), pp.3-12.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.3-12.

¹⁰⁸ Avery, Behold the Child, p.106 and p.109.

Purity and innocence were also qualities of the young girls in Sunday school stories, but again this was generally for the purpose of leading others (males) to success rather than achieving it themselves. While self-sacrifice was a desirable quality in all Christians, women and girls were portrayed as having no needs, desires or interests of their own, and as serving God and their faith by serving men and children.

The main characters in stories aimed at girls most frequently were a young, innocent, faithful girl and her sinful (usually drunkard), widowed father who could only be led to salvation through his daughters purity, example and prayer.¹⁰⁹ While the reward for the girl would be the conversion of her father, the father would be rewarded by both earthly and heavenly goods.

Although she was both common and popular, the family-focused, maternal role model was not the only one available to girls in Sunday school literature. Stories of Biblical heroines and women missionaries were also well read. Biographies became increasingly popular for Sunday school reading in the last three decades of the nineteenth century as they were often “full of adventure and attractively written to please children.”¹¹⁰

The stories of Biblical women, such as Ruth, Esther and Mary continued to be taught to young girls as they were seen as ideal role models throughout the nineteenth century.¹¹¹ Women missionaries were also the subject of many Sunday school stories and

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.109.

¹¹⁰ Author Unknown, “Sabbath School Libraries”, *The Canadian Independent* XXI, no. 5 (1874), p.153.

¹¹¹ Yorkville Congregational Sunday School, *Library Catalogue*, (Toronto: 1880), pp.3-12.

biographies. While it is impossible to measure the influence that these stories would have had on their young female readers, it is important to note that Sunday school students were frequently exposed to women missionaries as guest speakers in their classes, or through their involvement in youth mission bands.¹¹² This relationship would have made women missionaries more realistic and practical role models than historical and biblical figures.

In contrast to the images of the domestic female who had little time or interest in anything beyond the home and the church, the missionary woman was usually portrayed as single, independent and adventurous.¹¹³ Missionary women were represented as especially faithful and dutiful women and praised for their dangerous yet necessary work. This image was used to encourage evangelism in young girls as well as to recruit children to the cause of mission work.

In terms of understanding gender roles, the image of the missionary woman revealed that womanhood could exist outside of the realm of domesticity. It also made clear that serving God was to be an evangelical woman's top priority, even if that meant neglecting or delaying the 'obligations' of motherhood and marriage. Women

¹¹² From as early as 1841 records of missionary women speaking in Sunday school classes exist. By the end of the nineteenth century the WCTU became the most detailed in their local records of women guest speakers in Sunday schools, many of whom were missionaries. See: Mrs. Leonard, The Child's Bible Expositor, or, Lessons and Records of the Sunday School Vol.1 No. 2, 1841. and Toronto District Women's Christian Temperance Union, Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union for 1895-96. (Toronto: Newton & Trelour Printers 1896), pp.55-56.

¹¹³ The Children's Missionary and Sabbath School Record included stories by and about women missionaries throughout its publication in the 1840s and 1850s, the Sunday School Guardian was also often filled with similar stories until it ceased publication in 1877, as did a number of tracts and papers printed by the Women's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

missionaries considered themselves to be “married to [their] work”.¹¹⁴ One young missionary reflected on the day of her departure into the foreign field and stated that she felt “as if this was [her] wedding day”.¹¹⁵ Missionary work was presented to children as an acceptable alternative to marriage. It was an important, long-term commitment that was not based on heterosexual relationships and domesticity.

An evangelical woman’s responsibility was portrayed as the care and protection of her family, but also of the community and even the world. The image of the missionary in Sunday school stories did not directly challenge gender roles within the church, society or the family. Even as missionaries, women were expected to be maternal and compassionate rather than intellectual. This image did, however, bring new possibilities to a generation of young girls. Women were no longer restricted to living out their faith as a Christian in the home and the church; they could do so across the country and across the world as well.

Through Sunday school publications, children were exposed to faithful, dutiful Christian women who were domestic, worldly, married, single, dependent, independent, helpers and leaders. It is not surprising that understandings of evangelical womanhood expanded given the diverse and multiple images of appropriate Christian women and femininity in Sunday school literature.

¹¹⁴ Eliza Bently. Precious Stones for Zion's Walls: A Record of Personal Experience in Things Connected with the Kingdom of God on Earth. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1897), pp.23-24.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.24.

Conclusion

Sunday school publications reveal images of women that were acceptable in nineteenth century Ontario. The ideal, domestic woman was seen as self-sacrificing and only concerned with the wellbeing of her family, and her church. However, this was not the only role that women played in Sunday school literature. The adventurous, missionary woman frequently appeared in stories to teach children the importance of evangelism and supporting missionaries.

As the image of the missionary woman became acceptable and promoted in Sunday school literature, her adventurousness, independence and strength became accepted for faithful evangelical women. Through their work in Sunday school libraries, as librarians, authors and donators, authority, decision-making, and leadership also became qualities appropriate for women.

Definitions of evangelical womanhood were expanding to include these characteristics and qualities as a result of the roles women took in stories and in their work in Sunday school libraries. Through publications and libraries, literacy and education were promoted for women and girls, and consequently, children were now exposed to women who were active outside of the home, with varying goals. The women featured in both fictional and true stories were a combination of traditional, domestic women and modern missionaries. Women authors used their position to contribute to Sunday school libraries through stories that displayed their interests. Women who were part of contributing groups demonstrated their social and public involvement through their literature and activity in libraries. Women who worked in libraries had various responsibilities, including leadership and managements.

Sunday school libraries allowed women to create an environment where appropriate evangelical womanhood was more fluid than it was fixed. Whether through stories or the example of real women, Sunday school pupils were taught that evangelical women had multiple roles and responsibilities. They were taught that definitions of womanhood could be interpreted and negotiated in order to make up a community of evangelical women who had diverse interests, experiences, responsibilities and goals.

CHAPTER 3

EXPERIENCE AND OPPORTUNITIES; SUNDAY SCHOOL CONVENTIONS

In the last half of the nineteenth century, women participated in Sunday school conventions in many ways. They attended as church members, teachers, parents, community members and visitors. Conventions were attended by laypeople and clergy, men and women, single and married. An analysis of the opportunities and experiences that women had at conventions is essential to fully understanding their position within the Sunday school community. Women's involvement as church delegates, speakers and representatives from other groups shows how they were taking advantages of the opportunities offered to them and, as a result, actively defining their own identity as evangelical women.

Ontario's first official Sunday school convention was held in Kingston, in February 1857.¹¹⁶ Canadian Sunday school associations had been active since the Sunday School Union Society of Canada was established in 1824, but their organization and meetings were less formal and smaller in attendance and size than the popular conventions of the last half of the nineteenth century.

From about 1850 onwards, Sunday school conventions were well attended and became the central meeting point of the interdenominational Sunday school movement. By the twentieth century, their frequency had increased and they had become very popular. The most significant conventions were held by the Ontario Sunday School

¹¹⁶ International Sunday School Association, The Development of the Sunday School 1780-1905: The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention. (Boston: International Sunday School Association, 1905), p.538.

Association and the Sabbath School Association of Canada. Delegates from Ontario also regularly attended international conventions, as they were usually held in American cities close to the border.¹¹⁷ Toronto hosted the International Sunday School Convention in 1881 and 1905.¹¹⁸

Sunday school conventions had a few main purposes. At conventions data, including budgets, statistics on schools, students, teachers, and libraries, was collected from the delegates for annual reports. Lessons and training for teachers was also provided. General and specific problems were discussed and questions on various topics related to the Sunday school were addressed. Support campaigns by other Christian organizations and communities were presented to Sunday school workers. Publications, teaching material and other resources were made available to delegates for personal use and for their Sunday schools.

Conventions were attended by a diverse community of Christians. Teachers, other workers, officers and superintendents made up most of the attendees. Church members involved in work outside of the Sunday school also attended, pastors often gave speeches and addresses at conventions. Members of other Christian groups also participated in conventions in order to support the Sunday school movement or to gain support for their causes. Other delegates included international visitors, local politicians and community members. Women participated in conventions in most of these ways. Most frequently, they were attending as delegates from their schools, as speakers, and as representatives from other groups, and sometimes in all three capacities.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.101-107.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.103-107.

Delegates

Women teachers attended Sunday school conventions in fairly high numbers. Records of provincial conventions demonstrate that women's attendance as delegates and visitors increased significantly in the last four decades of the nineteenth century, paralleling the increase in the number of Sunday schools and female teachers. Women made up 13% of the attendees at the provincial convention of 1868.¹¹⁹ In 1886, women represented 34% of the participants.¹²⁰ By 1900, they had become 45% of the conventions participants, with only 13 more men in attendance than women.¹²¹ Both married and single women attended regularly, many by themselves. Married women attended in slightly higher numbers than those who were single, yet both groups of women were active participants throughout the last half of the nineteenth century.¹²²

Conventions exposed women to speakers they likely would not have heard elsewhere and discussed issues and concerns that may have been new to them. Lectures on pedagogies and childhood were helpful to women teachers not only in their Sunday school classrooms, but often in their work as public school teachers, missionaries, mothers and as reformers who worked with children in other groups. Women were also often introduced to theological debates and discussions- knowledge that likely would

¹¹⁹ Sabbath School Association of Canada, Proceedings of the Fifth Provincial Sabbath School Convention 1868, pp.82-90.

¹²⁰ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Teaching and Training, being a record of the Proceedings of the Twenty First Provincial Sabbath School Convention 1886, pp.194-200.

¹²¹ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Reflected rays : Being a Record of the Thirty-Fifth Provincial Sabbath School Convention 1900, pp.130-131.

have helped women participate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century major changes in many Canadian denominations.

Convention addresses were also given on the history of the Sunday school, as any anniversary year would result in celebratory speeches praising the success of the movement in Ontario and internationally.¹²³ These history lessons were significant to women delegates as women leaders of the past were often praised. This included most often Hannah More, but also Joanne Bethune, Isabella Graham, Joanna Price and Hannah Hill.¹²⁴ These history lessons gave women awareness of great women leaders in the Sunday school movement.

At a time when Christianity was explicitly patriarchal, the public recognition of Christian women was fairly rare. The praise that these past women Sunday school leaders received at conventions would have been a valuable encouragement to women teachers in Ontario. Their success, and the recognition they received for their work provided a real example for women teachers, and showed them that their own work could be equally influential.

Women teachers were also reminded of their importance and praised for their contributions to the Sunday school at conventions. This was important because local churches tended to expect volunteers to commit without any recognition. The Sunday school was seen as a women's and children's area, and individual church leaders were rarely interested in keeping their volunteers motivated. Leaders in the Sunday school

¹²³ International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905, pp. 97-107.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.95.

movement and larger Sunday school associations, however, frequently acknowledged the hard work of their teachers.

The voluntary aspect of women's Sunday school work was often acknowledged. This issue was brought up at the 1905 International Sunday School Convention, held in Toronto. Charles Gallaudet Trumbull reflected on the value of unpaid Sunday school work in his address on the history of the Sunday school.¹²⁵ Using the average salaries of British and early American teachers, he concluded that volunteer teachers in North American Sunday schools were "contributing \$26,717,210 annually."¹²⁶ He insisted that their work was even more valuable, as Sunday school workers were "men and women whose services money would not purchase."¹²⁷

The importance of departments run by women were also emphasized at conventions. Primary departments were almost always entirely run by women and their work in this area was recognized as valuable to the future of the school. Delegates at an Ontario convention in 1886 were informed by a male leader that, "primary work is primary in the same important sense as the foundation of a building. It demands the best teachers, the most generous equipment and the widest possible information."¹²⁸ Women rarely received public recognition for their unpaid work in any area, and it is likely that many women continued to volunteer in Sunday schools because they knew that their work was appreciated.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8

¹²⁸ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Record of the Proceedings of the Twenty First Provincial Sabbath School Convention 1886, p.14.

Conventions provided instructions to both teachers and superintendents. Most conventions had at least one session dedicated to answering delegates' questions about the ways to effectively run a Sunday school. Leaders of Sunday school associations, usually clergymen, would use this time to identify what the central priorities in every Sunday school should be. Questions about women's place in the Sunday school were frequently raised. Generally, women were encouraged to take any positions available. When asked if it was acceptable for women to be Sunday school officers, Rev. A. F. Schaffler suggested, "if you appoint ladies, perhaps it will shame some of the men into doing something."¹²⁹ In response to a similar question, Rev. A.H. Munro explained that, "in many cases, [women] are more efficient than gentlemen."¹³⁰

These types of discussions were important to women for two reasons. They made it clear that women were capable of doing any type of Sunday school work. They also gave women support from experts and leaders in the movement, people with greater authority than their local superintendents or pastors who may have objected. It is evident that at the local level, the issue of women taking on leadership roles continued to be debated because these questions were raised at conventions through the turn of the century.¹³¹ However, the major leaders in the Sunday school continued to insist that women should not be denied any position as a consequence of their sex.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.125.

¹³⁰ Toronto Sabbath School Association. Second Sabbath School Teachers' Institute held in Knox Presbyterian Church, Toronto, 1871. Toronto: Dudley and Burns, 1872, p.39.

¹³¹ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Record of the Proceedings of the Twenty First Provincial Sabbath School Convention 1886; International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905.

Women Sunday school teachers used conventions as a site of networking. They took advantage of the opportunity to meet like-minded women from various locations. The relationships formed at conventions were important to women's work in Sunday schools, but they were also beneficial to their involvement in social and political campaigns. Ontario Sunday school teacher and temperance activist Letitia Youmans was able to establish the first branch of Woman's Christian Temperance Union with the help of both American and Canadian women she befriended at an International Sunday school convention in 1874.¹³²

Leaders often encouraged women to assist each other in their Sunday school work. An address on the success of temperance departments stated that it was necessary to "secure cooperation of Home and Primary Departments."¹³³ This cooperation between women-run departments ensured effective management of the school. It also created support systems for women who managed and worked in these areas. Communities of women teachers fostered both casual friendships and formal relationships. By the end of the century, the Primary Sunday School Teachers' Union of Toronto was officially affiliated with the National Council of Women of Canada.¹³⁴ Conventions were an important part in connecting women to each other and allowing these networks to develop.

¹³² Youmans, Campaign Echoes, pp.96-101.

¹³³ International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905, p.620.

¹³⁴ National Council of Women of Canada, Women Workers of Canada: Being a Report of the Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting and Conference of the National Council of Women of Canada. Toronto; National Council of Women of Canada, 1895, p.3.

Speakers

Conventions also provided women with the opportunity of giving lectures as well as hearing women speak. Although women were considered knowledgeable enough to speak only on a few subjects, and the majority of women teachers did not give public addresses, the experience of those who did is significant. Women teachers were expert enough to speak publically about areas of Sunday school work in which they most often held leadership positions; infant/primary education, teacher training, libraries, temperance and women's missionary departments. Nonetheless, in many cases, women were not given the same freedom as men, even if they were speakers. For example, at a provincial convention in 1886, Mrs. Chrysler opened the conference with a lecture entitled "Primary Work- Principles and Methods."¹³⁵ Questions from the audience followed her address; however, it was Rev. Schaffler, rather than Mrs. Chrysler herself, who answered the questions relating to primary work.¹³⁶

By 1905, women were speaking regularly at Sunday school conventions at all levels and appear to have been respected as much as the male speakers. At the International Convention held in Toronto in 1905, women gave over 10 addresses on subjects including teacher training, Sunday school history, primary and infant departments, and missionary and temperance work.¹³⁷ Even in the early twentieth century, this type of public speaking was a rare opportunity for women, especially within

¹³⁵ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Teaching and Training, being a record of the Proceedings of the Twenty First Provincial Sabbath School Convention 1886, p.142.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.142.

¹³⁷ International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905.

the Christian community where both formal meetings and teaching were led by men. The experience of speaking at Sunday school conventions was also very practical for women who were involved in other areas of church and social reform.

The women who worked as department heads participated in meetings with church leaders.¹³⁸ Women involved in other groups often used their communication skills in strategic social, political or networking activity. In both cases, the experience gained from speaking at conventions would have been put to use in other situations, often involving promoting women's rights within and outside of the church.

Delivering addresses at conventions also gave women an acceptable avenue to teach adult men. Although lectures on primary and infant departments were mostly attended by women, they were not restricted to women, and men, especially leaders and pastors, likely attended to catch up on the work being done in these areas.¹³⁹

Allowing women to give presentations on the work of their departments was also proof of the value attached to it. It was understood that women ran these departments successfully, that they took their work seriously, that they had current information in these areas and that they were knowledgeable enough to educate others, even men, on these issues.

In her autobiography, Letitia Youmans recalls that "the first lecture [she] had ever heard delivered by a woman" was at an 1874 Sunday school convention in Chautauqua, New York.¹⁴⁰ The address was given by Jennie Fowler Willing, a college professor,

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp3 619-624.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.19-24, 82-96, 619-624, 636-341.

¹⁴⁰ Youmans, Campaign Echoes, p.101.

suffragist and co-founder of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁴¹ Youmans remembers her speech as "eloquent", and described the other women attendees as being of "mental culture, good social position and deep piety."¹⁴²

Youman's memories of hearing a woman speak at a Sunday school convention are some of very few that were recorded, but they reveal that the Sunday school community was accepted women speaking publicly, which was still uncommon. These conventions provided a few Canadian women public speaking experience, and for a much more significant number, with the experience of hearing women speak to mixed crowds confidently and knowledgably.

There is no evidence of any objections to women speaking at Sunday school conventions in Ontario in the nineteenth century. There is also little evidence of women attempting to give speeches on issues outside of their designated areas. Within the Sunday school community, it was acceptable and common for women to speak publicly, in front of men and women, lay and clergy, with authority on issues of pedagogies, teacher training, management of certain departments and women's reform and missionary work. The experience women gained from speaking at Sunday school conventions demonstrates another way in which women were expanding the appropriate role of a Christian woman to include expertise, authority, and leadership.

The encouragement that women delegates received from these women speakers is also important. For the hundreds of women attending these conventions, hearing women

¹⁴¹ Sharon Anne Cook, Letitia Youmans: Ontario's Nineteenth-Century Temperance Educator, Ontario History 84, (1992), p.337.

¹⁴² Youmans, Campaign Echoes, pp.100-101.

give public addresses demonstrated the possibilities available to women within the Sunday school community, the church and society. These included being educated, knowledgeable, respected and confident teachers both in the classroom and beyond it. This exposure to intelligent and experienced women speakers allowed Ontario women to establish a broader understanding of their role as Sunday school teachers, and more importantly, as evangelical women.

Representatives

Women spoke at conventions not only as representatives from Sunday schools, but also on behalf of a number of women's groups and other causes. Conventions were ideal for the recruitment and promotion of a number of Christian women's groups and campaigns. Missionary and temperance associations were the most active. These groups used Sunday school conventions to promote their causes, to gain support through both finances and membership, and to network with Sunday school teachers, leaders and the Christian community.¹⁴³ Representatives came to conventions with information to share, literature to distribute and speeches to give.

While a closer look at the largest women's temperance and missionary groups and their relationship with the Sunday school is discussed in the next chapter, a few important points are relevant here. Firstly, at international conventions Ontario women were exposed to new and different causes and approaches to achieving their social and political goals. The most prominent example of activism stemming from conventions is the establishment of the WCTU in Ontario. The Canadian WCTU was established after

¹⁴³ International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905, pp.481-486 and 619-624.

founder Youmans attended a Sunday school convention.¹⁴⁴ At this convention, Youmans heard about the recent crusades for temperance led by Christian women in the United States. She established the first Canadian WCTU chapter upon their return.¹⁴⁵

On a more local level, the presentations and information given at conventions kept women informed on the activities of these women's groups in their own communities, as well as provincially and nationally. Sunday school teachers often gave time, money and resources to these groups and the updates at conventions allowed them to see how their contributions were helping the causes. Missionary Mary Foster Bryner received the largest financial donation from Ontario Sunday schools in 1905.¹⁴⁶ She kept her donors up to date on her work in Mexico by addressing them at the International Convention of the same year.¹⁴⁷

Lastly, being informed on women's issues outside of the Sunday school reinforced the importance of women's work as teachers. As social and moral reform was often the solution to many of the concerns of these groups, childhood Christian education was seen as especially important and valuable. These groups often discussed practical results of increased morality in children, usually lower crime rates and higher church membership.¹⁴⁸ Even if exaggerated, this would have given many women Sunday school teachers a sense of recognition for their work.

¹⁴⁴ Cook, Through Sunshine and Shadow, p.18

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁴⁶ International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905. p.444.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.481-486.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.619-624.

Conclusion

Women's participation in Sunday school conventions allowed traditional definitions of womanhood to be expanded to include an acceptable, active evangelical identity of womanhood and femininity. Conventions provided an avenue for networks and connections to be made between women from different denominations as well as different geographical locations. The diverse community of women participants demonstrated the multiple, acceptable interpretations of evangelical womanhood.

At Sunday school conventions, women were encouraged to be both educated and educators. They listened to lectures on history, childhood psychology, theology and the church. They gave lectures on pedagogies, teacher training, and organization of primary and infant departments, as well as libraries, missionary work and other women's groups. Women were acknowledged and valued for their work outside of the home as Sunday school teachers and were celebrated along with great women leaders of the past.

Women's activity at Sunday school conventions demonstrates the complexities of the identity of evangelical womanhood. While women were expected to be maternal, emotional and domestic, they were also encouraged and accepted as intelligent, experienced educators who could lead and succeed both inside and outside of the classroom. Their passive identities of wife and mother were now secondary to their valuable and active identity as dutiful evangelical Christians, influencing children, the community and other women and even male Christian leaders. Consequently, ideas of evangelical womanhood were shaped in part by the experience and opportunities that were available to women at Sunday school conventions.

CHAPTER 4

INFLUENCE AND ACTIVISM: PARTICIPATION IN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS

This chapter examines the connections between women's work in the Sunday school and their participation in women's organizations, both within and outside of the church. Women Sunday schools workers created a community of Christian women which gave them the opportunity to network, organize and succeed in both social and church-based activities related to their responsibility as evangelical women. Sunday school teachers were considered among the most dedicated church women and many also participated in Christian associations. By the end of the nineteenth century, Christian women's organizations had been created for a number of causes. Women's missionaries societies and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) both actively used the Sunday school in their campaigns. A closer look at women's participation in these groups and their relationship to the Sunday school will reveal how the organizations and the women involved both benefited. This chapter explores how women were actively using their role in religious institutions to further the advancement of women's rights. Necessarily, this meant expanding traditional understandings of womanhood based on domesticity.

Women's Missionary Societies

The Methodist and Presbyterian women's missionary societies, created in the 1870s, were two of the largest women's church-based organizations in Canada.¹⁴⁹ Their purpose was not only to provide the church with female missionaries but to facilitate their work through recruitment campaigns, fundraising and the collection of homemade clothing and other items. Membership included both the women missionaries themselves and a much larger number of local women who supported them.

Those who did participate in overseas and Western Canadian missions were generally assigned to work among other women and children, but there were exceptions.¹⁵⁰ Although both religious and social norms prohibited women from teaching men, educated women became preachers when there were not enough men for the job.¹⁵¹ Missionary work also provided women with an acceptable and respectable alternative to marriage and a life a domesticity. It allowed them to be active in a highly valued branch of church work from which they had previously been excluded.

Women members who did not work in the field benefited from their involvement in these societies as well. From local meetings to international conventions, women participated in organizational, administrative and leadership roles. They built friendship and business networks based on common goals which often proved crucial in their

¹⁴⁹ Wendy Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Towards Independence.", *Atlantis* 2, 2 (Spring 1977) p.61.

¹⁵⁰ Margaret Whitehead, "Let the Women Keep Silent: Women Missionary Preaching in British Columbia 1860-1940" in Changing Roles of Women Within the Christian Church in Canada, Elizabeth Gillian Muir and Marilyn Fardig Whiteley ,eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) . p 122-123.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.123.

campaigns. They managed the work and finances of local chapters, many with over one hundred members. The women in these groups were unlikely to have participated in the paid workforce, with the exception of a few years of teaching or nursing; the respectable and encouraging setting that missionary societies provided for expanding the experiences and skills of these women was thus quite rare.

The Sunday school was an important part of the lives of female members of missionaries' societies, whether of the missionaries themselves or the auxiliaries. Both the Sunday school and women's missionary societies benefited from the relationship and helped them meet their goals. It functioned mainly in three ways. First, the Sunday school served as a place where women missionaries could promote their cause. Secondly, the educational experience gained from Sunday school teaching proved invaluable to work in the missionary field. Finally, the practical leadership skills and pedagogical and Biblical knowledge developed through work in the Sunday school were also closely connected to their work in missionary societies.

The recruitment and promotion strategies of women's missionary societies varied widely. Different approaches were used in rural and urban areas, or by different denomination-based groups and were shaped by specific community concerns of local chapters.¹⁵² Regardless of these differences, the Sunday school was consistently used to expand awareness of women's missionary societies. Until the early twentieth century, Sunday school lessons were often conducted at the teacher's discretion. Teachers were encouraged to use ready-made lesson plans, but also to incorporate personal experience

¹⁵² Mitchinson, "Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Towards Independence," p.63.

into their weekly message.¹⁵³ Teachers who were members of missionary societies would often include stories of women missionaries or of their other local work in their classes. Teachers would also invite missionaries to speak at their Sunday school classes to give personal testimonies of their missionary work or to gain support before they left or as they passed through town.¹⁵⁴ The direct goals of these fairly frequent visits from missionary women and their supporters were to reinforce the importance of personal conversion, to encourage evangelism among those who were converted, to help fundraise from the families of the children, and to increase participation in the youth missionary movement, primarily through the joining of youth mission bands.¹⁵⁵ Less directly, these women were examples an acceptable vocation which did not include marriage and motherhood.

The missionary woman seen in Sunday school stories was presented as a sort of Christian heroine. Usually portrayed as a woman on a mission from God to save the most unfortunate, usually the most innocent, lost souls of the world, the woman missionary

¹⁵³ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, Teaching and Training, being a record of the Proceedings of the Twenty First Provincial Sabbath School Convention 1886. p.51; International Sunday School Association, The Development of the Sunday School 1780-1905: The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention. (Boston: International Sunday School Association, 1905), pp.49-80.

¹⁵⁴ From as early as 1841 records of missionary women speaking in Sunday school classes exist. By the end of the nineteenth century the WCTU became the most detailed in their local records of women guest speakers in Sunday schools, many of whom were missionaries. See: Mrs. Leonard, The Child's Bible Expositor, or, Lessons and Records of the Sunday School Vol.1 No. 2, 1841. and Toronto District Women's Christian Temperance Union, Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union for 1895-96. (Toronto: Newton & Trelour Printers 1896), pp.55-56.

¹⁵⁵ Mrs. Deltor. Address of the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church of Canada, delivered at Guelph Conference held at Seaforth, June, 1888. p.6.

was young, single, courageous and faithful. As she traveled the world, she was rewarded by admiration, respect and love of the women and children she had come to “liberate” as well as the community she left behind.¹⁵⁶ While it is not surprising that young girls would find this an exciting adventure, it is significant that this was promoted in a culture where motherhood, domesticity and purity were the most valued female traits.

There is no question that Sunday schools reinforced the importance of the traditional, patriarchal family through their overt teachings of hierarchal gender ideologies. However, the presence of women missionaries, and to a lesser extent, of women teachers, demonstrated that other options for women did exist, even within the church itself. The Christian duty argument was used to justify women’s active work outside of the home for a number of different causes in late nineteenth-century Ontario, and generally it was successful one. The participation of women in missionary societies was no different, as these women were usually seen as ideally obedient and faithful.¹⁵⁷ The Sunday school was not only a place where children could hear about women’s missionary societies, but where they could see first hand how a community of independent women was actively participating in a complex system of international evangelism that required not only faith, but leadership, communication and organizational skills.

¹⁵⁶ These types of stories are frequently found in a number of Sunday school periodicals from the nineteenth century including; Happy Days (1886-1900) , The Sunbeam (1880-1900), The Sunday School Banner (1889-1900), and The Sunday School Times(1892-1900).

¹⁵⁷ Mitchinson, “Canadian Women and Church Missionary Societies in the Nineteenth Century: A Step Towards Independence,” p.61.

It was not only the children's knowledge that increased as a result of missionary societies' participation in the Sunday school. Women missionaries also learned a great deal from their experience as teachers. Education was a major part of mission work both at home and abroad. The creation and management of schools were necessary in the communities in which they were evangelizing, as was the teaching of moral, religious and social expectations. In most cases, these schools were gender segregated and women were in charge of the girls' school, or the girls' section of the main school.¹⁵⁸ As a number of the duties assigned to women missionaries would be within the school, a high value was placed on their previous teaching experience and it was often put to good use. Many women who participated in missions, particularly overseas, had been Sunday school teachers earlier in their life.

The journeys of Lucy Margaret Barker, Margaret McKeller and Maggie Nichols followed this path. All three were committed to church work from an early age, attended Sunday school regularly and became Sunday school teachers themselves. Upon completing their own education, they began teaching in public schools until they each embarked in overseas missions.¹⁵⁹ Both Sunday school and public school teaching experiences provided missionary women with a great deal of practical knowledge on teaching young children. Canadian Sunday school teachers were usually used not only to

¹⁵⁸ Chone Oliver, Dr. Margaret MacKeller: The Story of Her Early Years, Toronto: Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1920.; Elizabeth Byers, Lucy Margaret Baker: A Biographical Sketch of the First Missionary of our Canadian Presbyterian Church to the North West Indians. Toronto: Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1920.

¹⁵⁹ See ,Chone Oliver, Dr. Margaret MacKeller: The Story of Her Early Years; And Elizabeth Byers, Lucy Margaret Baker: A Biographical Sketch of the First Missionary of our Canadian Presbyterian Church to the North West Indians.

teaching children of church members but also to getting involved with community mission Sunday schools, run for working class or immigrant children. Their involvement in these schools would have been especially relevant to their work in establishing schools for children elsewhere in the mission field.

The funds that Sunday schools donated to women missionaries were also important in supporting their causes. Whether through the influence of women teachers at meetings, or their own interest in collecting donations from their students, women missionaries received financial support from Sunday schools almost equal to male missionaries. The budget report on Ontario Sunday schools presented at a 1905 convention reveals that Mrs. Bryner was given only \$5.00 less than Mr. Lawrance for her missionary services and expenses.¹⁶⁰

Although it was generally voluntary, training for Sunday school teachers was widely available in Canada as early as the 1860s.¹⁶¹ Conventions commonly included lectures on pedagogical methods and the most modern approaches to childhood education. Literature from Sunday school publishers in Canada, the United States and Britain were also available through church libraries or at these conventions and commonly discussed different teaching and learning methods.¹⁶² The late nineteenth century produced numerous theories and understandings of childhood and childhood education. Many women who became missionaries would not have had access to this

¹⁶⁰ International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905, p.444.

¹⁶¹ By this time regular conventions that included teacher training were held by the Canadian Sunday School Union, the Sabbath School Association of Ontario, the International Sabbath School Union and local Sunday school organizations.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

type of information if they had not attended Sunday school conventions or read their publications.

Sunday school work provided women with skills and knowledge in a number of areas which were useful to the women who were active missionaries as well as to the local members of the missionary societies. As Sunday school scholars, and much more significantly as teachers, women acquired Biblical and theological knowledge. Bible stories were a key part of Sunday school lessons for both girls and boys, and familiarity with the Bible increased as one became a teacher. Women teachers were more likely to focus on studying the Bible and their knowledge of the role of women in the Bible was often used to their advantage when their missionary societies faced resistance from male clergy and church leaders.¹⁶³

The skills needed to preach to a crowd were also practiced by many women in the Sunday school classroom. Women's experience teaching children in the Sunday school was often very similar to their work in the mission field. The main goal of both was to convert their audience. Sunday school teachers had the skills needed to convey straightforwardly the basics of evangelical Christianity and to explain it convincingly to a group of people as well as to individuals.

Through Sunday schools, women's missionary societies achieved many of their goals, including promotion and recruitment. Women gained experiences and had opportunities through their Sunday school work that contributed to the success of missionary societies. These women networked and organized local societies to fight for improved rights and opportunities for women missionaries as well as for local, lay

¹⁶³ Whitehead, "Let the Women Keep Silent: Women Missionary Preaching in British Columbia 1860-1940," p. 119.

churchwomen. Their influence was important in reinforcing their expanding gender roles, as they actively worked among women and children as single, traveling evangelists. This type of visibility combined with their experience and knowledge contributed to the increasing acceptance of women's work alongside men in evangelism, preaching and other church work. Sunday school teachers had influence, responsibilities and opportunities that were essential to the successful creation and strength of women missionary societies.

Woman's Christian Temperance Union

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was a group of evangelical Christian women who were devoted to ending a variety of social problems, many of which they believed were caused by alcohol. While their main goal was temperance, through moral persuasion as well as prohibition laws, they actively supported a number of women's causes including enfranchisement, protection of women workers and prisoners, and increased legal age of consent.

When the first Canadian branch of the WCTU was established in 1874, Canadian women had very little political influence and, although they encouraged and supported legislative change, they knew that gender norms limited their ability to reach their goals. As a result, they had to develop unique strategies. The women of the Ontario WCTU made childhood education central to their social reform agenda, in an attempt to persuade the next generation of voters, as well as to reach parents and family through these

children.¹⁶⁴ They promoted their cause through the distribution of resources and by establishing youth bands and temperance departments at Sunday schools. The Sunday school also provided WCTU members with opportunities to gain experience in teaching, public speaking and leadership, all of which became crucial in their campaign for social reform.

The WCTU was present most often in three settings of childhood temperance education: the public school, youth temperance clubs and Sunday schools. Women were much more closely involved in what was being taught in the Sunday school classrooms than in public schools, as a standardized curriculum in Sunday schools was not common until the twentieth century.¹⁶⁵ Because of this freedom, Sunday schools provided a practical and convenient setting for temperance education. Many members were Sunday school teachers. The WCTU depended on these teachers to bring books and pledge cards to their classrooms and libraries.¹⁶⁶ They also expected them to form youth temperance bands at their schools and to encourage the creation of temperance departments.¹⁶⁷ In schools where these were already established, Sunday school workers associated with the WCTU were encouraged to take on leadership roles and report on the progress in these areas.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Sharon Anne Cook. Through Sunshine and Shadow: The WCTU, Evangelicalism and Reform in Ontario 1874-1930. (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1995)p.37.

¹⁶⁵ International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905, pp.49.

¹⁶⁶ Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1887. p.68.

¹⁶⁷ Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1892. p.30.

By the 1880s most local WCTU chapters had entire departments to deal with Sunday school work.¹⁶⁹ Sunday schools offered these women reformers a familiar environment, access to a large number of children, access to parents through these children, and the resources needed to develop an effective pedagogy to teach both temperance and evangelical Christianity. The WCTU was successful in drawing young people to support temperance through Sunday school teaching. The fact that in 1893 more than 4700 children signed temperance pledges in Ontario Sunday schools shows that these women were getting at least some of the results they desired.¹⁷⁰

WCTU members' work as Sunday school teachers allowed them to gain support for their cause. Additionally, it provided them with experience and opportunities that were applied to their social reform work. Their experience in the classroom gave them experience teaching children. This was important to their temperance work because educating young people was a key strategy used by the WCTU. Knowledge of children, pedagogies, and teaching resources contributed to their campaign for temperance lessons to be included in public school curriculum.¹⁷¹ It likely would have been important in

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.31.

¹⁶⁹ Ontario Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Report of the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Toronto: Woman's Christian Temperance Union. 1882.

¹⁷⁰ Ontario Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Report of the Annual Meeting of the Ontario Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Toronto: Woman's Christian Temperance Union. 1893. p.105.

¹⁷¹ Cook, Sharon Anne. "Educating For Temperance: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Ontario Children, 1880-1916." Historical Studies in Education 5, (1993) pp.251-277.

creating tracts and books for children to distribute through youth bands, or church activities.

WCTU members who were not Sunday school teachers also used the Sunday school in their temperance work. It was very common for women to visit schools and give addresses.¹⁷² They saw visiting schools whose teachers were not involved in the WCTU or actively promoting temperance as especially important. Their addresses to students covered the basic reasons why temperance was important and encouraged the young people to form youth bands.¹⁷³ WCTU visitors were also instructed to attend teachers' meetings while they were at the Sunday school to suggest forming temperance departments and incorporating formal temperance lessons.¹⁷⁴ It is hard to know how successful these visits were, but the WCTU found that they were, "much appreciated," "practical," and "interesting".¹⁷⁵

Women involved in the Sunday school, as teachers, visitors or temperance department superintendents also gained experience in public speaking to crowds outside of the classroom. They often spoke and addressed other teachers and church members, including men, at Sunday school meetings, within their church and Sunday school associations, and at Sunday school conventions, giving them practical experience with

¹⁷² Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1892-1896.

¹⁷³ Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1896. p.55.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.55.

¹⁷⁵ Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Report and Directory of the Toronto District Woman's Christian Temperance Union 1895. p.55-56.

public speaking. At the 1905 International Sunday School Convention in Toronto, Mrs. Zillah Foster Stevens spoke to the entire crowd on the subject of organized temperance work.¹⁷⁶ In association with this convention a conference entirely devoted to temperance in the Sunday school was also held.¹⁷⁷ Addresses at this conference were given by mainly clergy and lay women, lay men delivered only one of the ten addresses compared to the three delivered by women.¹⁷⁸ Opportunities for women to gain experience in public speaking were provided within the Sunday school community. This was a skill that many WCTU members used to their advantage as they fought for legislative change in local political meetings as well as addressing entire congregations as part of their temperance campaign.

The Sunday school also provided women with experience in leadership. Many women who were leaders of the temperance movement were previously Sunday school teachers. The most notable Canadian examples are Letitia Youmans, who was president of the Ontario WCTU and Addie Chisholm, who held the same position at the national level.¹⁷⁹ Both are exceptional in their work as major leaders of this organization, however, their relationship between Sunday school and WCTU were common. Youmans explains that her passion for temperance developed as a result of her compassion for

¹⁷⁶ International Sunday School Association, The Official Report of the Eleventh International Sunday-School Convention 1905, p.619.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.619-624.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.620-621.

¹⁷⁹ Sharon Anne Cook, Through Sunshine and Shadow: The WCTU, Evangelicalism and Reform in Ontario 1874-1930. (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1995), p 18, and p.228n21.

young children in the Sunday school who had experienced hardships as a result of their family members' intemperance.¹⁸⁰ The Ontario WCTU was founded after Youmans had heard of similar stories and women's reaction to them at an American Sunday school convention in the 1870s.¹⁸¹ Women who served as superintendents of temperance, primary or libraries departments of the Sunday school would have gained skills in management and organization. They were familiar with delegating work and attending formal meetings. These sorts of leadership skills would have been especially useful in successfully running a women's group at a time when these opportunities were rarely available elsewhere.

The Sunday school was an important part of the WCTU's campaign for temperance and social reform. Their cause was promoted by teachers in the classroom, resources in libraries and guest speakers. Women also gained experience of teaching, working with children, public speaking and leadership through their work in Sunday schools. The skills that women gained through the opportunities given to them by their Sunday school work were valuable to their work in the WCTU. While most Protestant Churches also officially supported the cause of temperance, a successful relationship between the temperance movement and Sunday Schools existed because women reformers dominated them both.

¹⁸⁰ Youmans, Campaign Echoes, pp.65-75.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.101.

Conclusion

Sunday school teaching presented unique opportunities to women, many for the first time. Sunday schools gave women the rare option to work as teachers outside of the home after marriage.¹⁸² Although the late nineteenth century provided opportunities for paid employment to many women for the first time in different professions, including teaching, women public school teachers had very little control over what they were teaching and were usually hired on short term contracts. In contrast, women who taught Sunday school usually continued to teach throughout their married lives and were given the important responsibility of nurturing a child's Christian faith, which allowed them to have much more freedom and power in Sunday schools. This demonstrated a pattern of long-term, permanent commitment by women to something other than the family.

Women missionary societies provided opportunities for women to work in the field along side Christian men and promoted equality within the church. The Ontario WCTU provided a suitable way for women to campaign for temperance and develop into a women's organization that fought for many women's issues, including suffrage. As Sunday school teachers who were involved in these campaigns these women had experience in public speaking, organizing and effectively teaching, but perhaps what is even more significant is that they had the opportunity of teaching young girls the importance of women's involvement outside of the home. The women involved in both of these groups taught Sunday school students the importance of their causes, but their

¹⁸² Lucille Marr. "Sunday School Teaching: A Women's Enterprise: A Case Study From the Canadian Methodist, Presbyterian and United Church Tradition, 1919-1934." Histoire Sociale 26, (1993), p.338.

leadership and accomplishments also provided examples of successful, active women to young girls.

During a period when women's value was so closely linked to their domesticity and maternalism, the use of religion to promote active work by both single and married women outside of the home demonstrates that women were conscious of their unique place within the church. More significantly, women were also conscious of how they could use religion so that their gender identity could be repositioned to increase women's equality and advance their rights through a number of church-based, social and political campaigns.

On the most basic level, the Sunday school provided a group of young listeners and future members for these organizations. The influence that these women reformers had through their example as mentors and role models is likely what drew even more young people to their causes.

CONCLUSION

At an Ontario Sunday school convention in 1886, Rev. Schauffler was asked if it was better for young boys to be taught by men or women. In his response he explained:

“It does not make a difference... Sometimes a woman gets along with a class of boys better than a man, and sometimes a man is better for a primary class than a woman; that depends on the amount of feminine tenderness in a man, and it depends upon the amount of masculinity in a woman.”¹⁸³

Schauffler understood that gender could be fluid and flexible. He discussed masculinity and femininity in terms of personal characteristics rather than biological determinates.

Unfortunately, even today, most mainstream Canadian historians continue to view gender as a clear dichotomy. They analyze their subjects as past men or women, whose behavior reflected the male or female ideas of their time. Until recently, there has been little interest in how these discourses of masculinity and femininity were shaped, and what these changes in gender ideology meant in terms of the social and religious lives of everyday Canadians.

The concept of evangelical womanhood analyzed in this thesis demonstrates one of the multiple and changing understandings of gender that were present in nineteenth century Ontario. Within evangelical Christianity, women found alternatives to previously defined female ideals. They became active, educated and socially involved, often directly rejecting the ‘female’ qualities of passivity, frivolity and domesticity. Through this

¹⁸³ Sabbath School Association of Ontario, *Teaching and Training, being a record of the Proceedings of the Twenty First Provincial Sabbath School Convention 1886*, p.123.

acceptance and rejection of gender defining characteristics, women shaped a new ideal of femininity; an ideal evangelical woman.

Evangelical women positioned themselves in a community that accepted their role as such and that provided them with the means to encourage these ideals and to develop and teach these values. Women created charity and social reform organizations, church groups, missionary societies and taught in various types of religious schools, which all worked with each other in supporting and promoting the ideal of the evangelical woman.

The Sunday school is but one case study of women's conscious involvement in establishing their own gender identity through their religious-based work. As Sunday school teachers, women had a great deal of power in determining how their pupils were taught gender roles. The images presented through stories they told or through literature found in Sunday school libraries, portrayed women in varying roles from domestic mothers to adventurous, single missionaries. Women served as role models for their students, demonstrating that both married and single women could have many commitments beyond their families and church. Teachers were often involved in missionary societies, temperance and social reform groups, many frequently bringing their campaigns to their classrooms and directly expressing and promoting their public and even political involvement.

The influence of women Sunday school teachers reached more than their students. The responsibilities women took on within the Sunday school, such as librarians and primary school superintendents, revealed to their church communities their leadership and management abilities. Sunday school conventions provided women with experience in public speaking and exposed them to various causes as well as campaigns for increased

women's rights within and outside of the church. Educational opportunities that were provided to women through conventions, libraries and training sessions became useful in other areas of their lives, particularly other areas of work with children. Within the Sunday school community, women created networks of friends, colleagues and supporters, establishing relationships that likely became even more important as the women's movement of the early twentieth century emerged. From the possibilities presented to them, women chose for themselves the roles and responsibilities they would take on within the Sunday school community.

The nineteenth century brought new interpretations of Christianity which made room for these changes to occur. As the conversion experience now required a new life rooted in social action, more opportunities became available to women. Women's resulting participation allowed them not only to establish and promote their view of acceptable womanhood, but also to expand the educational, social and religious opportunities available for women.

In arguing that women themselves were agents in defining their own gender identity, I am in no way implying that their actions were without limitations. Social positioning, familial and social patriarchies, hierarchies based on race and ethnicity, religious doctrine, political and nationalist ideologies all restricted women in complex and challenging ways. While the ways that each of these factors have historically influenced and intersected with the production of gender ideologies is worth further study, I hope to have demonstrated here that even with these real restrictions to their lives, this particular group of evangelical women actively used the influence and

opportunities they were given to create and develop a new ideal of evangelical womanhood.

Although this project sheds some light on both the construction of gender ideologies and the work of women Sunday school teachers in nineteenth century Ontario, there were many related areas that were outside the scope of this study, yet are in need of further examination. The influence of other religious institutions and communities on gender identity is one major area that remains understudied, particularly in terms of Christianity and changing definitions of masculinity. Similarly, an analysis of the role of the Sunday school in the production of other dominant discourses, such as race, class, nationalism, and childhood, could also reveal the importance of this institution.

The historiography of Ontario education could benefit from further research on the Sunday school as an educational institution. Very few historians of education have seriously considered the significance of the Sunday school, even though for most of the nineteenth century it served a greater number of students than the common school, and likely also had greater social influence. The voluntary nature of Sunday school teaching and married women's access to positions within the Sunday school should interest historians of women's work or women's volunteerism and charity work. Scholarship on children, the family and religion could also benefit from including the Sunday school in their research, as major changes in attitudes towards childhood psychology, religious education for children and the role of the family in religious instruction can all be traced through the progress of Sunday school.

This study was also limited to formally established Sunday schools and their teachers. Regrettably, the experiences of children who received similar instruction in the

home, in non-mainstream churches (such as the Salvation Army) or in other community settings could not be included. The choice to exclude these areas from this research was based on availability and accessibility of key resources. The history of religious education of working-class, non-white and non-mainstream denominations' children would not only be intriguing, but would also contribute greatly to the understudied histories of these communities in Canada.

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