

**“Our Calling to Fulfill”: Laura Haviland and Frances Willard Serving their
“Present Age” in Two Strands of Nineteenth-Century Methodism**

Frances Willard was a women’s college president while Laura Smith Haviland taught school to African Americans in the basement of churches. Willard fought for justice in the courts while Haviland labored in the trenches (almost literally). Willard agitated for the just treatment of women through channels of respectability while Haviland worked in dangerous and poverty-stricken areas for the very lives of ex-slaves. Out of love for God and a desire to see justice done, these two nineteenth-century Methodist women poured out their lives their “calling to fulfill.” How, we might ask, did they conceive of their calling? How did they justify their efforts for social justice to their conservative audiences and get others to embrace the call?

Willard, as educator and leader of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and Laura Haviland, as reformer and activist, resembled one another in significant ways, despite their different locations on the Methodist family tree. Most importantly, they each believed that working for the betterment of others’ lives was their Christian duty, so their political agitation and practical service flowed from their own Christian commitments. Despite their own involvement in radical efforts to ameliorate poverty, illiteracy and injustice of various forms, they each managed to stay connected to the conservative Protestantism from which they came. They differed considerably in the focus of their work, however; while Willard directed her energy to improving lives of women, Haviland mainly addressed her efforts to African Americans, both men and women, first as they navigated their escape from slavery and later as they sought to build new lives for themselves.

Since Willard is much more well-known, the discussion about her which follows will be largely limited to demonstrating that her passion was the improvement of women’s lives, and not temperance, per se. Haviland, on the other hand, is virtually unknown, if academic writing about her is any indication, and therefore much of the discussion is by way of introducing her life work to her kindred, Methodists of whatever stripe.

Frances Willard (1839-1898)

Those unusual people who have heard of Frances Willard usually picture her as a temperance advocate, more literally an abstinence advocate, a Victorian woman promoting an unwarranted reform in language typical of her times. After all, she was at the helm of the largest temperance organization in the world at the time of her death in 1898 and her arguments for temperance, stemming from a theologically conservative Protestantism, were couched in the language of preserving the home. However, this paper will argue that the temperance battle was for Willard a means to a more supreme end: “the uplift of women.” This can be seen in the diversity of the departments within the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) during her tenure as its president, as well as the ways in which she promoted women’s causes directly.

The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union

The WCTU formally came into being after a successful campaign against saloons in the winter of 1873-1874, dubbed the “Women’s Temperance Crusade.” Women church members in Fredonia, New York and in Hillsboro, Ohio gathered around the doors of liquor establishments to pray, sing hymns and ask saloon owners to close their shops. In Hillsboro, and other nearby Ohio towns, women visited the saloons and drug stores where liquor was sold, every day. If they gained admittance they knelt on the sawdust floors to ask God to remove the scourge of drink; if the door was barred against them, they simply knelt in the snow outside the entrance. Virtually all of the “dram shops” thus treated capitulated and closed their doors.¹ The press in Cincinnati, Chicago and New York, as well as other large cities, gave publicity to this new approach to temperance which caused the crusade to spread over twenty-three states within a year. The result was that thousands of places that sold liquor were closed all over the country, albeit some only temporarily. Discussions about the need for a national organization took place in Chautauqua, New York in the summer of 1874, while the first national Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) convention took place in November 1874 in

¹The WCTU web page: <http://www.wctu.org/crusades.htm>.

Cleveland, Ohio. At that convention Annie Wittenmyer was elected the first president,² and Willard was elected the corresponding secretary, though she became the president five years later. Tirelessly from the time she was elected president in 1879 until 1884, Willard traversed the country spreading the news about the need for temperance and organizing unions in all forty-eight states.

By 1886 the WCTU could afford to give salaries to the six women out on the road organizing unions in the United States. Women also traveled overseas to organize unions, the first one, Mary Leavitt, departing from the West Coast for points west in 1884, returning in 1891 after logging 100,000 miles in 43 countries.³ These six traversed thousands of miles on trains and even wagons giving public lectures on temperance, visiting Sunday Schools, running evening church services, attending state and district conventions and organizing interested local women into unions. The results of their work, along with that of others who joined them as organizers, are impressive. By 1890 there were unions in half of the counties in the United States. By 1898 the national Union employed nineteen women as organizers both domestically and internationally. Over 200,000 women were part of the WCTU in the US by that time making it the largest women's organization in the country.

Clearly, not all the women involved in the temperance movement had experienced first hand the ill effects of alcohol, which raises the question of the movement's appeal, both in the US and abroad. Sometimes the movement is seen merely as a nineteenth-century iteration of the war between the sexes in which women were simply trying to control men. Certainly the saloon was considered the villain in many families as it drew men away from family life, though for many temperance advocates, the saloon had no such effect, and the movement cannot be reduced simply to this motive. Others have suggested that these middle class women with their nativist tendencies feared the Irish and German drinking habits in particular, and hoped to control these foreigners.⁴ In either case the motives for involvement are simplified to the truism: "No tendency is

² Ten years earlier she had been working in the Sanitary Commission at the same time that Laura Haviland was engaged in that work.

³ Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 88.

⁴ Barbara Epstein, *Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), 103-106.

quite so strong in human nature as the desire to lay down rules of conduct for other people.”⁵ While there were, no doubt, discriminatory attitudes toward various immigrant groups, and while some women probably did hope to control the social habits of their husbands who were gone every night to the bars, this sort of explanation misses the mark. Frances Willard and hundreds of thousands of others were not simply moralists hoping to conform the world to their own image; they were reformers who attempted to make the world a safer place for women, and a better place for children.

The impetus for such a reform movement came in part from the large amount of alcohol being consumed. This was perceived as problematic for a number of reasons, but at the very least, simply because of the amount of money spent: Ruth Bordin observes that “Americans spent well over \$1 billion on alcoholic beverages in 1900, when they spent \$900 million on meat, \$150 million to support their churches, and less than \$200 million on public education.”⁶ But it was not just that alcohol purchase diverted money from feeding and clothing a family, it was that women in most regions of the country had no legal recourse to reverse the situation, even if the money being spent was what they themselves earned or inherited. A woman’s social status, as well as her very access to food and clothing for herself and her children, rested on her husband’s ability to earn and use money well, so if he became a serious drinker she and her children might be left destitute. Alcoholism symbolized, then, women’s powerlessness in society.

In addition, wife beating and child abuse grew in proportion to the amount of alcohol consumed, and again, women had no protection under the law. They could not leave their husbands without automatically losing their children, and abuse left them less likely to find ways to earn money. Often women’s rights advocates compared the state of matrimony to that of slavery because the male head of the house had all the prerogatives of a master over his wife and children. For instance, Susan B. Anthony painted a picture of the legal subjection of a virtuous woman to a drunken man at the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1875.⁷ Many of the women involved in temperance had been negatively affected by alcohol themselves through fathers, husbands or sons, or

⁵Attributed to William Howard Taft by Jack Kelly, “Gangster City,” *American Heritage* 46 (April 95): 66.

⁶ Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

knew someone who had been. But more than that, they could see the injustices of a society that fostered in women's lives a dreadful vulnerability. Soon the WCTU branched out to address many of these; of the 39 divisions when Willard died, 25 were not temperance-related.

Frances Willard's Campaign for Women

In many ways in the course of her work and writing, Willard demonstrates where her passion really lay: concern for justice for women. While it is true that as a child Willard pasted a temperance pledge in the family Bible and made her parents and siblings sign it, in her own telling of the story, the event was of little significance since abstinence from drink was the practice of her family already and temperance was a sign of being a "good" Methodist. On the other hand, Willard uses an entirely different tone when, quoting from her journal, she describes the day her brother and father went off to vote, and she (a sixteen-year-old) and her sister watched them leave. "Somehow, I felt a lump in my throat, and then I could n't [sic] see their wagon any more, things got so blurred. . . . [To her sister] 'Don't you and I love the country just as well as he, and does n't the country need our ballets?'"⁸

In her first teaching post five years later Willard mused on the meaning of women concealing their age while men felt comfortable revealing theirs. She concluded that women are trained to be dependent beings, relying on men for their lives, gaining affection through their appearance and youthfulness (hence the fear of aging and having age known), while men can grow old with impunity. Men are independent and do not have to worry about being physically pleasing in order to be sustained. She wrote at twenty-one: "I early resolved that I would not be dependent either, and later that I would try to help all other women to the same vantage-ground of self-help and self-respect. I determined, also, that I would set them a good example by always freely speaking my age, which I have not shunned to declare."⁹ Before she had taken her first job, then, she had already determined to help women learn to respect themselves, presumably in ways the society did not teach them. Her teaching efforts bear out this ideal; for example, she

⁸ Frances Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years: The Autobiography of an American Woman* (Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, 1889), 69-70.

⁹ Willard, *Glimpses*, 148.

encouraged her students at Evanston Female College to join literary societies with men, in a society unaccustomed to 'mixed' education.

The final example of Willard's commitment to women taking priority over the fight for a dry country was her response to those who wanted to know why men were not allowed to join the W.C.T.U. (or any other female philanthropic enterprise).

If men were at the front of these societies, as they would necessarily be if there at all, women would not develop so rapidly, or become so self-respecting... [Men] would not have received us on terms of equality if we had come to them before we could bring trained minds and well-seasoned experience. We must first show power, for power is always respected.¹⁰

She cared more about equipping women for equal participation in society, than about the temperance war per se, and used the temperance fight, in part, just to train and empower women.

The Rhetoric of Home Protection

If her aim was to help gain equality for women, one might ask why she chose temperance as her means of attaining that end, and why, with a feminist awareness surpassing most women (or men) of her time, she used the language of home and motherhood to marshal her troops, her "white-ribbon army" as she called them. The answer lies partially in her supreme ability, whether conscious or unconscious, to find signs (dress, actions and rhetoric) acceptable for women and to women, even those assigned to women, in Victorian society which she could reinterpret for the success of her program.

The primary rallying cry of Frances Willard was "Home Protection". The words "Yours for Home Protection" appear across her photo in the fly-leaf of her autobiography, and she dedicated the volume to the "One royal heart that never failed me yet," her mother. She fought for the right to vote with the "Home Protection Ballot" and the slogan, "For God and Home and Native Land" was the W.C.T.U. motto (changed to "Every Land" as the Union became international). She firmly identified herself and her

¹⁰ "Annual Minutes," 1892, as quoted in Epstein, p. 132. She had learned her lesson in the early 1870s when, in joining Evanston Female College with Northwestern University, she went from being a college president to dean of a school within a University, which would have suited her except the new president of Northwestern, her former fiance from a decade back, robbed her of all her power to do anything but police the female students.

causes with the home and with motherhood. In so doing she could gather conservative and progressive women alike, their culture having socialized them to be the “guardians of the home” already. The sound of “home protection” produced no dissonance with the inculcated ideas about women's roles or specific place, and furthermore didn't threaten their associated men the way, for instance, the language of women's suffrage often did. They had no need to defend what they were about because it appeared on the surface to be what society expected of them, and by extension, what God wanted of them.

However, though Willard's appeal sounded very traditional she had reinterpreted “home” subtly stretching its boundaries, and thus women's sphere of action, to include the whole world and every level of society. Because popular books such as *Getting on in the World*, usually suffered, she said, the same “obliquity of mental vision, which had led a writer so talented and wise to squint thus at the human race, seeing but half of it,” Willard wrote *How to Win: A Book for Girls*.¹¹ In it she encouraged women to be active in all different types of careers on the basis that

no true mother, sister, daughter, or wife can fail to go in spirit after her beloved and tempted ones, as their adventurous steps enter the labyrinth of the world's temptations...[W]e must bring the home to them, for they will not return to it. Still must their mothers walk beside them, sweet and serious, and clad in garments of power.¹²

Wherever woman went, they would automatically bring “home” with them; sobriety, industry, geniality, cooperation would accompany them. Willard here is taking the idea of the moral superiority of women, embedded in the “the angel in the home” and the “moral influence” rhetoric of her time, and re-appropriating it for her own purpose. What was originally an argument for women's confinement in the home, i.e., that her moral purity could not stand the vileness of the world, has now been turned to an argument for her necessity to leave the home, i.e., that her moral purity demands that her “occupations, pleasures, and ambitions” not be much different from men's in order that she work her positive influence in every area of life. Willard uses the rhetoric of separate spheres in order to effectively nullify it.

¹¹ Frances Willard, *How to Win: A Book for Girls* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1888), 12.

¹² *Ibid*, 56.

Not only is woman's realm of motherly influence extended to include the entire world, but her motherly job of protection is totally transformed in Willard's usage. Whereas guardianship of the home, in the writing of ministers and ladies manuals of the times, meant meek submission on the part of women to their husbands, and moral influence by their (angelic) example, Willard infused it with a responsibility to political action. She cites examples of staunch conservatives, the granddaughter of Jonathan Edwards, for instance, who would never have approved of, let alone advocated for women's vote, except now duty to the family demanded it of them.¹³ (Willard reasoned that women should be permitted to vote in order to elect prohibition-oriented candidates, thereby having a voice in the fate of "dram-shops.")¹⁴ In just 90 days, so writes her first biographer, she procured 200,000 signatures on a petition for the "Home Protection Ballot" presented to the Illinois legislature. Women, convinced of the need for political action, were the majority signers.

In addition, the rhetoric of self-sacrifice for the family or for society that women often heard, Willard diluted with instructions that women should act on behalf of themselves, and for women everywhere. Certainly her followers genuinely cared for "their" men and wished to diminish the negative affects of "alcoholic poison" on them, but at a deeper level, these women were, and were encouraged to be, working for their own protection. Willard plainly acknowledges this, claiming that "there is a class whose instinct of self-preservation must forever be opposed to a stimulant which nerves with dangerous strength arms already so much stronger than their own and, which paralyzes the brain so that the working hands are still."¹⁵ Although she continues that speech with a call to action based on love, the nerve had already been struck: that is, women's vulnerable position in the Victorian family and in society at large. A woman had no way to protect herself from physical abuse in the home, or from the loneliness and poverty that husbands' alcoholism brought; besides that, there were few laws that protected women from sexual abuse in the wider society, which were at best laxly enforced.

¹³ Anna Gordon, *The Beautiful Life of Frances E. Willard*. (Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, 1898), 121.

¹⁴This was her official policy at the beginning of her career. As her career progressed, she was more explicit about her early conviction that women should vote because justice demanded it.

¹⁵ Gordon, 118.

Willard, then, using the rhetoric of “Home Protection,” defended women's rights, i.e., to vote, to receive equal pay for equal work, to be protected in prison, and fought for women's protection through stricter laws regarding prostitution and rape. In 1888 a petition presented to nearly every state and territory, had to do with “The increasing and alarming frequency of assaults upon women,” and concludes “we call attention to the disgraceful fact that protection of the person is not placed by our laws upon so high a plane as protection of the purse.”¹⁶ This was not an exaggeration. As Bordin observes: “Prostitution in the lumber camps was literally white slavery, and when the Union [W.C.T.U.] began its campaign to change such legislation, the age of consent was set at a mere 10 in twenty states and only 7 in one state.”¹⁷ And Willard, quoting a shocking report of crimes against women, complained that “the law is framed to enable dissolute men to outrage girls of thirteen with impunity” and in Massachusetts and Vermont

it is a greater crime to steal a cow than to abduct and ruin a girl, and that in Illinois seduction [that is, rape] is not recognized as a crime, it is a marvel not to be explained, that we go on...too delicate, too refined, too prudish to make any allusion to these awful facts, much less to take up arms against these awful crimes.¹⁸

The concern with chastity, then, was not primarily a nineteenth century obsession with trying to perpetuate outmoded Victorian sexual mores, but a desperate desire to procure legal and social protection for women. The legal aspects were addressed through petitions, speeches, and letter-writing of the W.C.T.U.'s “Social Evil Reforms” department; the social aspects through the white ribbon campaign.

The little white ribbons pinned to women's dresses, a sign devised by Willard to signify moral purity and commitment to everything the W.C.T.U. stood for, functioned to gain respect for woman, especially self-respect. Though to some they probably seemed like a mere reaffirmation of Victorian mores regarding female chastity, to Willard and presumably to a great number of her followers, they symbolized women's heightened control over their sexuality and their bodies. Decision regarding sexuality were to be expressions of partnership in a marriage; sex was not to be a service performed by

¹⁶ Willard, *Glimpses*, 424.

¹⁷ Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 132.

¹⁸ Willard, *Glimpses*, 421.

women for their husbands. Not only did this mean an increase in self-respect, but it meant that women had more say in the number of children they would bear. This decreased their chances of dying in childbirth, (a very real fear for Willard -- and for how many others? -- who, when a child, knew of several women who died in labor), and smaller families left women more time to develop themselves intellectually, or to work or become philanthropists. Willard's call for sexual purity, while in part formed from Victorian mores regarding sexuality for women, was at least as heavily motivated by her concern for women's health, safety and independence.

Beyond the specific meanings given to the white ribbons, they functioned powerfully in a very different way. Whether or not with Willard's intention, they became the tangible sign of sisterhood. The isolation and accompanying vulnerability of middle class women in industrialized America, was countered by joining "the white-ribbon army." The sense of belonging, of doing valuable work, of having their convictions reinforced by thousands of other women all over the world, had a tremendous impact on Willard's followers. The W.C.T.U. foundation became strong, and the white ribbon workers branched out into a variety of social issues; many were not as socially acceptable for women's involvement as the temperance issue, but they could always argue that alcohol was the cause for whatever ill they set out to right. By 1885, forty departments made reports at the W.C.T.U. annual conference reflecting the "Do Everything" policy the organization had gradually adopted. The Union included such things as sensible, healthy dress for women (particularly the end of corsets, bonnets and high heels), prison reform, free kindergartens, labor reform, personal hygiene instruction in public schools, abuse laws, female police, relief for the poor, vocational training for "recovered" prostitutes,

day nurseries for the children of working women, federal aid to education as a way of compelling southern states to provide schooling for blacks, and a department of hygiene to study municipal sanitation and urge cities to establish boards of health to fight epidemics.¹⁹

One can only speculate how many women, consciously or unconsciously, fought in the war against the bottle and all its negative side effects, because through the white ribbon sisterhood, they had a powerful voice in society for the first time.

¹⁹ Bordin, *Biography*, 134.

It is likely that many first found that voice through seeing the ideal of American womanhood in Frances Willard. She herself encouraged this, calling her autobiography that of “an American woman” and often in its pages preaching independence and strength through her own example. She sought to break the social bonds on women by presenting an image of independent, articulate, publicly active womanhood that women could imitate, while at the same time using rhetoric of home and motherhood to ease the anxiety of rapid change. Using her life as a sign she pointed to the future ideal society in which men and women would be equal in every way; using traditional images she helped women swallow the pill of progress.

The ironies of her use of signs is tremendous: a woman argues for home and motherhood who had neither home in the traditional sense, nor was ever a mother; with rhetoric of home protection she encourages women to leave their homes (she even endorsed the ideas about communal kitchens and laundry to free women from housework), and teaches them to protect themselves; she transmutes female purity from a chain to the home sphere to a prod to progressive social action; she was perceived as modeling traditional Christian values though she herself was active in the Prohibition Party, in the Knights of Labor, in the fight for women's ordination, and joined the Fabian party in England, declaring herself a socialist in the 1890s. She was a progressive thinker and reformer, and someone who proved herself to be a master at managing cultural symbols to get people to think and act as she did. Symbols already prevalent in the culture she radically revised, and those she created, i.e., the white ribbon or her example, could appear traditional enough to be embraced by middle class Protestant women, despite the more radical intentions of their creator.

To make her appeal as broadly as possible Willard worked with people from a variety of Christian traditions. More than that, she was ecumenical at heart; she reports that she stopped working with D.L. Moody after he forbid her to share a stage with Unitarians.²⁰ But there were limits to Willard's ecumenicity. After visiting a Mormon community in Utah during a temperance trip, she registers infuriation and despair over

²⁰ She also explained to Moody, in her farewell letter, that the “women's meetings” he asked her to do were “a relic of an outworn regime,” which did not serve to advance women, and were therefore, odious to her. See Willard, *Glimpses*, 360.

the condition of women. She writes, “Partly I was grieved for them in their awful delusion,” meaning the perversion of Christianity, then continues, “But as a woman, my sense of outrage and humiliation was beyond language.... Woman becomes the servitor of man, having no promise of heaven save through her relations with him.”²¹ Because Mormon polygamy denigrated women so thoroughly, even robbing them of the hope of relief in the afterlife, in the end the W.C.T.U. would have nothing to do with those practicing it. When it concerned difference of belief, about fundamental Christian doctrines (Unitarian versus Trinitarian concepts of God), Willard could be tolerant focusing on the common work of fighting “demon rum,” but when it came to the ill-treatment of women, she drew the line. Something more important to her than temperance was at stake.

Laura Smith Haviland (1808-1898)

Whereas Willard played a very visible role in an established organization and has received considerable scholarly attention in the last twenty years, Laura Smith Haviland, lacking formal leadership role, still enjoyed considerable renown during her lifetime. Because of her relief work, for instance, there is a town named after her in Kansas and, further, she maintained connections with prominent abolitionists such as Elizabeth Comstock and Underground Railroad conductors, the likes of Levi and Catharine Coffin. The Adrian College website claims that she assisted between 40,000 and 100,00 people to freedom (though no source for the information is given, and an amateur family website, www.havilands.org, gives the same estimate). In any case, she was a very active participant in this operation in the decades leading up to the Civil War, so much so, that she was called “The Superintendent of the Underground Railroad,” in the time when Levi Coffin was called its “President.”²²

Another famous friend of Haviland’s was Sojourner Truth who describes being with Haviland during one of her altercations with streetcar officials in Washington, D.C. In fact, according to Jane Schultz, the longstanding friendship that developed between Truth and Haviland appears to have been somewhat unique among black and white

²¹ Willard, *Glimpses*, 326.

²² Mildred E. Danforth, *A Quaker Pioneer: Laura Haviland, Superintendent of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Exposition Press, 1961).

women relief workers, since white women's status was so precarious, most couldn't seem to set aside their race and class prejudices and treat black women as equals.²³

Haviland also appears in accounts of Henry Bibb's project to settle former slaves in a community outside of Windsor, Ontario, after the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 made it difficult for them to live at peace even in northern states. Bibb raised money to purchase 2000 acres of land from the Canada Land Co., to be broken up into parcels which settlers could buy over the course of a number of years providing they cleared it and farmed it. He also set aside ten acres for a school to which he and the rest of the committee running things, invited Haviland to be the first teacher.²⁴ She taught there for one year (1852-1853).

Her name is also connected with some famous slave escape stories, most notably the John (William) Anderson case. Anderson had fled the country and met Haviland in Canada in 1853, and requested her services in writing a letter to his father-in-law so that his wife and children could join him. She suspected a plot so she returned to Adrian, Michigan, and mailed a letter from there that instructed the father-in-law to come to Adrian, and ask for the widow Haviland. Sure enough, a short while later a white official of some type came to her house demanding to know Anderson's whereabouts, whereupon she informed him that Anderson lived in Chatham, Ontario, Canada; she did this, either because she felt it would be wrong to lie to the officials, or because she thought he would be safe in Canada, or perhaps both. In any case, she hurried to Adrian to send a telegram to Anderson in Chatham warning him to escape, which he did. He lived and worked for seven years in Canada before some local officials were convinced by Detroit lawyers to arrest him and hold him. His pursuers demanded extradition, since he was wanted for allegedly murdering his master, though under Canadian law his act was not deemed murder. Haviland wrote to the Governor of the Canadas, Lord Elgin, to lay out the facts of the case, and also to Gerritt Smith who was acting as Anderson's defense. The case went to the highest Canadian court which decided that he should be sent back to the US, because of certain clauses in an extradition law, despite editorials and public meetings held in many cities demanding that he be protected. Ultimately his case was scheduled to

²³ Jane E. Schultz, "Seldom Thanked, Never Praised, and Scarcely Recognized: Gender and Racism in Civil War Hospitals," *Civil War History* 48 (Spring 2002): 220-36.

²⁴ Fred Landon, "Henry Bibb, a Colonizer," *The Journal of Negro History* 5 (Oct. 1920): 437-447.

be heard at The Court of Queen's Bench at Westminster, though Anderson was acquitted before the case went to England. Canadian law was revised to specify that extradition agreements between the Canada and the US could not be used to aid and abet the evils of American slavery by returning fugitives to their suffering.²⁵

In Kansas, during what has been dubbed the "Exodus of 1879," Haviland and two other women were at the forefront of efforts of the newly formed Freedmen's Relief Association to help settle the people who had moved to Kansas and Missouri in that era. Scholars estimate that between 40,000-60,000 people came north that year because of the violence in the South against men who tried to vote, because of the lack of educational opportunities for the children, because of the system of practical peonage, in which tenant farmers bought things at exorbitant prices on credit from landowners, and because of their powerlessness in the courts to get justice for themselves. Critics claimed that it was also on account of the advertising that the Association and others did about Kansas as the new Canaan; even the V.P. of the Association commented that Elizabeth Comstock and Laura Haviland "had printed circulars of their own accord of which the Association did not entirely approve," that encouraged ex-slaves to leave the South and forge new lives for themselves in Kansas.²⁶

Most of what we know of her, however, comes from her autobiography which she published when she was in her early 70s, as a call to good Christian folk to participate in bettering the lives of African Americans, both in the south and in northern regions to which they had moved. Her book was published by a number of publishers early on, and then again in the last 40 years; most recently the Gutenberg Organization published it as an ebook.²⁷ But to date, there has been no critical edition of her book, nor careful study of her participation in and contribution to the abolition movement, the Underground Railroad, or relief work and education of African Americans before and after the war. Thus depictions of her have been largely general, popular level accounts designed to inspire, which is not all bad, but certainly not all accurate either.

²⁵ Fred Landaon, "The Anderson Fugitive Case," *The Journal of Negro History* 7 (July 1922): 233-242.

²⁶ John Van Deusen, "The Exodus of 1879," *The Journal of Negro History* 21 (Apr. 1936): 111-129.

²⁷ Early on five different publishers produced it in 1881, 1882, 1884, 1887, 1889, 1897 and again in 1902. In the 1960s and 1980s four other publishers put it out, and another did so in 2006. The eBook is available at www.gutenberg.org for no charge.

Some misconceptions

Most recently Haviland's autobiography has been included in a literary study by an English Professor, Elizabeth Grammer, of women itinerant preachers,²⁸ though the designation is not appropriate. Haviland did preach, particularly in the year that that she was teaching school in Ontario, but this was in the context of planting a church, not itinerating. Later she spoke words of encouragement to Methodist Episcopal Churches all over the south, particularly African American congregations, but she did not travel to towns in order to preach as the others in the study did.²⁹ Rather, Haviland traversed the countryside to care for the sick, to assist the fleeing slave, to set up schools and in relief work as the war commences, but she did not call meetings or set up a preaching schedule. She was not the main preacher when she did "take active part" in MEC meetings. She preaches as the occasion arises.

Further, while a literary approach may be helpful to remind us that the person and the autobiography are not the same entity, and that the author, to some degree, constructs a literary self, it would be a mistake to push this very far in the case of Haviland. For one thing, she publishes her book when she is 73 years old, which makes it unlikely she is constructing an identity as much as displaying it, and she certainly does not employ identities comprehensible to her readers in order to secure a place for herself in nineteenth-century society, as Grammer claims the women in her study do. To read Haviland's book in this way misses her primary identity, that of a reformer, someone who wanted to change society.

Rather than writing to indulge in self-articulation or self-promotion—the quintessentially twenty-first-century obsession evidenced by the blogging craze—Haviland wrote to call Christians to engage in direct action in helping newly freed people construct new lives, hence her words in the Preface to her autobiography:

praying the Lord of the harvest to arm and send forth more laborers, because they are too few, I ask an indulgent public to allow my deep and abiding sympathies for the oppressed and sorrowing of every nation, class, or color, to plead my excuse for sending forth simple unvarnished facts and experiences, hoping they

²⁸ Elizabeth Grammer, *Some Wild Visions: Autobiographies of Female Itinerant Evangelists in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁹ Those in the study were Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Nancy Towle, Lydia Sexton, Laura Haviland, Julia Foote, and Amanda Berry Smith.

may increase an aspiration for the active doing, instead of saying what ought to be done.³⁰ Near the end of the book she breaks out of the narrator mode to address readers directly: “Let every man, woman, and child arise and work for the refugees, who are suffering for food, fuel, and clothing. There is great necessity for immediate and vigorous effort, in taking the place of the Good Samaritan in caring for the robbed and bruised stranger, who find many priests and Levites passing by” (278). The book is not to promote herself, but a cause; it is a call to action both through words such as these and through the example of her life. Like Willard, she uses her life as a sign of what one person can do to help put things right in the world.

But more than that, her book is a challenge to white Christians to embrace African Americans as their equals. A huge proportion of the book is not about herself at all since she narrates story after story about African Americans she has met or heard about: their horrifying experiences in slavery; their courageous, though not always successful attempts at escape; their devastation at being separated from family members and their joy at reunion; their desire and ability to achieve academically; and, after the war, their hopes of finding a place to work for a living, and live at peace. She introduces literally hundreds African Americans to emphasize the common humanity of reader and subject, and to evoke compassion for them, as individual human beings caught in a huge and devastating situation.

Grammer concludes that homelessness is one of the themes, in fact, an anxiety-producing fact, of the itinerant preacher women’s writing. Haviland seems an unlikely candidate for this characterization since her home in Raisin Valley was packed with relatives: when she and her husband, Charles, migrated to the Michigan Territory in 1829 her parents and siblings and Charles’ parents, and two uncles and their families had already moved there. One glance at the cemetery records in Lewanee County show that many of these folks settled in the same small area. Once her children grew up—seven of whom lived until adulthood—many of them remained close by.

³⁰ Laura Smith Haviland, *A Woman’s Lifework: Labors and Experiences of Laura S. Haviland* (The Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2005), 2. Subsequent citations of Haviland’s autobiography will also be from the Gutenberg Ebook version, and will appear parenthetically in the text of the paper.

Furthermore, her house was so well-known that fugitives would simply have to ask for Widow Haviland's place in the next town over and be directed to her door. Before the war Haviland did not travel around, rather she settled in Cincinnati for months at a time (with one year in Ontario and six months in Toledo), returning to Raisin Valley when her teaching or care-taking responsibilities were discharged and the weather was more temperate. Even in the 1860s when she traveled in the south as a relief worker she returned to Raisin Valley in the summers, anxious, not for home, but to raise enough money and supplies to return to the field well-equipped the following fall. Furthermore, not only did she have a home in Raisin Valley herself, but also had responsibility for an orphanage there to which she began bringing children orphaned by the war. One could argue, then, that her propensity to travel did not produce anxiety about her own homelessness but engendered an ever deeper concern for the truly homeless.³¹

A far more widespread misconception of her identity, however, concerns her religious affiliation. Was Haviland, in fact, a Quaker? The only biography written about her is called: *A Quaker Pioneer: Laura Haviland, Superintendent of the Underground*³² and many "secular" websites identify her as Quaker, while many Quaker sites claim her. She was certainly brought up a Quaker, both her parents were approved ministers and she is buried in a Quaker cemetery. This last fact should be attributed, I believe, to the early losses in her life. In one six week period in 1845 a number of her family members died in an epidemic: her father, Reverend Daniel Smith, the first pastor of the Adrian Friends Meetinghouse (1835-41) later the Raisin Valley Friends Meeting House; her mother, Sene Smith; her husband, Charles; as well as their youngest daughter, the toddler, Lavina. A couple of years later her oldest son died as well. Despite the fact that the Smiths and Havilands had left the meeting house in 1841, all of these family members were buried in Raisin Valley Cemetery, on the grounds of Raisin Valley Friends Meeting House. When the elderly Laura Haviland died, 53 years later, having never remarried, it is only natural that she be buried with her spouse. Significantly, none of other her children are buried in

³¹ There is one occasion where Haviland bemoans the lack of a home to return to, after the Raisin Institute had been sold, though she simply stayed with her children, and worked out the building of accommodation for herself at the Raisin Institute after it had become a state asylum.

³² Mildred Danforth, *A Quaker Pioneer: Laura Haviland, Superintendent of the Underground* (New York: Exposition Press, 1961).

either of the Quaker Cemeteries in the town, though Laura's in-laws and many of their progeny rest in the Raisin Center Friends Cemetery.³³

If writers do acknowledge that in between her upbringing and her burial she had joined a different Christian group, they generally ascribe the change to Haviland's propensity for political activism which the Quakers, though abolitionists, did not approve of; in an effort to broaden the scope of her labors, the argument goes, she left the Quakers and joined a more reform-oriented organization.³⁴ A booklet on the Lenawee County Historical Museum website even claims that she and her family were forced to leave.³⁵ But this completely ignores her own spiritual journey and rejects the significance that she herself placed on her conversion. Further, it overlooks the consistent description of her participation in worship occasions of ME Churches throughout her travels in the south and her reliance on Wesleyan Methodist pastors at home, and in Ontario.

Haviland's conversion and church affiliation

Haviland's conversion story contains some of the hallmarks of nineteenth-century, Arminian conversion narratives. First there was the awakening of desire to get serious about faith, which she experienced at a Methodist prayer meeting at her Uncle Ira Smith's house; there she resolved to become a Christian. Like many other seekers, she felt a determination and yet a fear to admit this desire publicly, and attended a few more meetings before she could muster the courage to kneel down to symbolize her desire for conversion. She endured the ridicule of her friend: "Now, Laura Smith, be a little Methodist, will thee?"(10), and her parents, when they heard about it, forbid her to go again. She reports her father's sentiments on the matter: "This Methodist excitement is unprofitable, especially for children. They have an overheated zeal that is not according to knowledge, and we do not think it is best for thee to attend; we want our children at a suitable age to be actuated by settled principal, not mere excitement" (11). Her mother commented that her uncles were pulling her along, but she averred that not one of her four Methodist uncles had ever pressured her. Then she entered a time of protracted

³³ See the websites for Raisin Valley Quaker Church and Raisin Center Friends Cemetery.

³⁴ Kimberly Fox, Graduate Student, Ferris State University, Grand Rapids Campus, comments in a paper posted on www.learningtogive.org, "After her marriage to Charles Haviland she became involved in the Logan Female Anti-Slavery Society which led the Havilands to leave the Society of Friends." She cites Kratovich for this information, an article in *The Western Michigan Senior Times*, 1999.

³⁵ Charles N. Lindquist, *The Underground Railroad & Laura Haviland: Lenawee County, A Harvest of Pride and Promise* (Lenawee County, MI: Lenawee County Historical Museum, 1990).

struggle as she sought assurance of God's pardon for her sins, a struggle replete with tears, sleepless nights, stealing off to find solitude in which to read Scripture and pray, and finally despair. She came to think that there was no hope for her, but then on her way to her grandparents' house she stopped to consider a beautiful scene and was overcome by the love of God. This overwhelming sense of God's love resulted in a new outlook on the world, particularly a new ability to love others previously deemed difficult to love. In Haviland's case, this group was the Irish who were digging a portion of the Erie Canal through one of her father's fields, and who frightened her with their drunkenness.³⁶ Finally she desperately hoped to attend a Methodist prayer meeting and exhort her "young associates" to be serious about their souls, but her mother rejected her plea to go to Uncle Ira's and her father instructed her to never request permission to attend a Methodist prayer meeting again.

That she moved away from her Quaker roots in this conversion is not only demonstrated implicitly by her typical Methodist experience, but by her explicit indictment of Quaker theology and practices. Aside from the fact that her conversion made her want to be baptized and sing out loud, things not practiced among the Quakers of her acquaintance, she states that she had never tried to pray before, though her father was an approved minister and her mother an elder in Society of Friends. Further, though being a birthright member of the Society of Friends was what her parents requested for her, she rejected that idea and believed "that all members of the Church militant should become united by a heart-felt experience" (16). But being a "timid girl" of thirteen or fourteen, she submitted to her parents' wishes (which they later agree were erroneous) and, calling herself "a little prodigal" agreed to become a member of the Friends' Society rather than obey God, and become a Methodist. She follows this with a comment that "The greatest source of retrograding in the divine life is unfaithfulness in performance of known duty" (16). Finally, despite the fact that she and Charles were founding members of the society of Friends headed by her own father after they arrived in Michigan, she could write: "But no true peace was mine, I was still a wanderer from the true Church militant" (17). And because of this wandering, the verses in Hebrews 6

³⁶ This puts her conversion between 1815 when they moved to Lockport, and 1825 when the canal was finished.

about those once those who turn away cannot be restored suggested to her that, again, she was beyond the grace of God. She went into such despair that her husband and parents thought she was sick. Finally, she read the account of someone else's spiritual experience (carefully omitting the name), which turned out to be similar to her own and she was relieved and refreshed in her faith.

Having already stated that the Society of Friends was not part of the Church Militant, that joining it made her a prodigal disobedient to God, that participating in it turned her away from a fervent faith in God, it cannot be that she left the Society of Friends simply because of her anti-slavery activism. Rather, this is the thing that was most visible to other Friends and therefore the thing that caused, perhaps, the most discord. After she and Elizabeth Chandler formed the first abolition group in Michigan, the Logan Female Anti-Slavery Society, in 1832, all the differences she had with the Friends came to a head. (Though most contend that they started this anti-slavery group together, in Haviland's narrative Chandler organized it and she herself joined in.³⁷) In any case, she confided in Charles and her parents, who, along with her brother, Sala, and fifteen others withdrew, from the Raisin Valley Friends Meetinghouse, of which Daniel Smith, her father, was the leader. The stated reasons were primarily theological differences as the following demonstrates:

We, the undersigned, do say there is a diversity of sentiment existing in the Society on the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, the resurrection of the dead, and day of judgment, justification by faith, the effect of Adam's fall upon his posterity, and the abolition of slavery, which has caused a disunity amongst us (19);

The statement went on to say that there was no way to resolve these issues since the "ruling members" accorded authority only to the internal witness of ministers, which robbed Scripture of its capacity to test doctrine. Not surprisingly they Laura and Charles, at least, join the Wesleyan Methodist Connection which had newly formed in Michigan.

³⁷ Jennifer Rycenga corroborates this view arguing that Haviland and Chandler founded the society together; both women were involved in radical abolitionism that demanded immediate freedom for slaves, a position, Rycenga observes, which was typical of most women's abolition societies formed in the 1830s, though not necessarily true of the male abolition begun groups in that era. See Jennifer Rycenga, "A Greater Awakening: Women's Intellect as a Factor in early Abolitionist Movement, 1824-1834," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (21:2, 2005), 31-59.

The length of her conversion narrative and the specificity with which she recounts the stages suggest that she kept a journal of spiritual experiences, not an unusual activity, particularly in Methodist circles. However, the character of the account is anomalous for a couple of reasons: first, nowhere else in her narration does she focus on her own spiritual experiences, rather she describes religious meetings with summary statements, noting their encouraging or discouraging character. She makes almost no other mention of the shape of her own spiritual landscape, except to describe her worry regarding the salvation of her children (by which she means a crisis conversion of Methodist ilk). Secondly, throughout the rest of the book Haviland demonstrates an ecumenicity so thorough-going that when she plants a church she hopes that it can be simply Christian, rather than any particular denomination. However, right at the beginning of the book, she positions herself theologically and spiritually in the Arminian conversionist tradition. She explicitly rejects Quaker practices and theological assumptions for religious reasons before she ever mentions the tension surrounding her membership in an activist group, the Logan Female Anti-Slavery Society.

Why is it, then, that she is almost universally characterized as a Quaker? Perhaps scholars prefer Quakerism to revivalistic evangelicalism and therefore latch onto her Quaker beginnings and burial. The distaste for evangelicalism has only grown among academics in the last number of years (not without reason) and the conservative politics typical of so much of evangelicalism in the US now perhaps obscures the more radical versions of conversionist Christianity in the nineteenth century. At the same time, the assumption that Quakers have been involved in social justice causes may blind people to the narrowness and factionalism among Friends in the nineteenth century. Significantly, Prudence Crandall who turned her white female academy into an academy for black women in Connecticut in 1833, the Grimke sisters, Abbey Kelley Foster, along with Laura Smith Haviland, “quite intentionally and decisively removed themselves from the Friends’ jurisdiction.”³⁸ But this is not widely recognized and so Quakers have been credited with these women’s (and others’) radical reforms.

But perhaps there are deeper issues. First of all, in the writing of American history there is a habit of erasing religious influences as if religion is the dross that should

³⁸ Rycenga, 52.

be skimmed off the top before the real story can be told. Along with this often comes the Marxian assumption that religion, and conversionist Christianity in particular, is simply a conserving force, keeping everyone “in their place,” which for nineteenth-century women would obviously mean in the narrow confines of hearth and home. With this assumption the evangelical conversion of a radical reformer is rendered incomprehensible and therefore considered irrelevant to the story.

However, the inability to accord significance to the religious decisions made by a woman such as Laura Smith Haviland is to reject her own assessment that her conversion was pivotal for all that came after and, in fact, provided the impetus for all her radical commitments and activities. In the article noted above, Jennifer Rycenga compares the religious decision-making of four early anti-slavery women (Elizabeth Heyrick, Elizabeth Chandler, Maria Stewart, and Prudence Crandall), and notes the lack of attention paid to these women’s conversions by the scholarly community. She calls for a reassessment of these conversions as significant pieces of the women’s intellectual development. She observes: “Religious thought, however, is not a subterfuge nor a compensatory surrogate nor a place of tranquil repose for these women; instead it functions as a place of self-definition, often in direct defiance of familial and institutional male authority.”³⁹ (This is similar to the findings of Susie Stanley in her study of Holiness women preachers: their experience of sanctification empowered these women intellectually and spiritually to live lives that challenged the Victorian expectations for a good Christian woman.⁴⁰) The debate about the role of religious conversion in women’s lives parallels that of the black church: did conversion engender defiance or deference toward the master/mistress and the entire slave system?

Another indication that Haviland’s conversion was a radicalizing factor in her life was the church body she and Charles adopted afterward: the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. At that time the Wesleyans were just separating from the MEC, over slavery in particular, as well as the Episcopal form of church governance of the MEC since the abolitionist pastors felt misused by slavery-supporting bishops and presiding elders. In the first few years of their paper, *The True Wesleyan* (a paper retitled *The Wesleyan* soon

³⁹ Rycenga, 36.

⁴⁰ Susie C. Stanley, *Holy Boldness: Women Preachers' Autobiographies And The Sanctified Self* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004).

after Orange Scott, one of the founders, died) they addressed a wide range of “moral reforms,” such as slavery, intemperance, war, and Sabbath-breaking. Their stance on slavery was the similar to Haviland’s: that holding another human being was inherently sinful and therefore they called for immediate freedom for all slaves. They also sought to promote things such as personal holiness, including a peaceable attitude toward the MEC, a Wesleyan understanding of sanctification, and the education of all.

In 1844, at their first General Conference, the Wesleyan Methodists resolved to open a seminary in every conference, one that was for the education of both sexes and “whose advantages shall extend equally to all colors and conditions,”⁴¹ that is, to poor as well as those more well-off. With the Oberlin as their model, the Wesleyans determined to take a radical stand, to affirm the equal humanity of women with men, black with white, to train them all for Christ's service because they took seriously “we are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Of course, even Oberlin did not live up to these ideals fully since it prescribed a “Ladies’ Course” for women, although some women, such as Antoinette Brown and Haviland’s daughter, Laura Jane Haviland, took the “Gentlemen’s Course.”)

In addition to an early commitment to women's education, the Wesleyan Methodist Connection had some awareness of the special plight of enslaved women and took a vocal stand against it. In the third issue of *The True Wesleyan* Luther Lee wrote against slave rape in an age when the subject was completely taboo. He particularly condemned the resolutions passed by the MEC that forbid women giving testimony against a man. In effect, this meant a man could sexually abuse whomever he pleased, and the wronged women, even if loyal members of the same church, had no redress. The offender was immune from church censure on those grounds. At the same time, the MEC apparently argued against the manumission of slaves because marriages would be broken up. Lee was outraged!⁴² In her book, Haviland also frequently alludes to the sexual component of women’s slave experience.

In 1848, five years after the denomination’s organizational meeting, the Wesleyan Methodist pastor in Seneca Falls, Saron Phillips, opened his church for the first women's rights convention. (Someone in his church was against it because when they got there the

⁴¹ Quoted by Ira McLeister and Roy Nicholson, *Conscience and Commitment: The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America* (Marion, IN: The Wesley Press, 4th edition, 1976), 45.

⁴² *The True Wesleyan*, 1 (Jan. 21, 1843), 10.

door was locked and someone had to climb in the window to let people in.⁴³) Contrary to popular opinion, the main issue was not that women should have the vote, that was a merely a part of their overall demand for the end of “social and religious degradation” of women. The final resolution reads:

That being invested by the Creator with the same capabilities, and the same consciousness of responsibility for their exercise, it is demonstrably the right and duty of woman, equally with man, to promote every righteous cause, by every righteous means; and especially in regard to the great subjects of morals and religion, it is self-evidently her right to participate with her brother in teaching them, both in private and in public, by writing and by speaking, ...in assemblies proper to be held.⁴⁴

After the third annual Women's Rights Convention excerpts were printed in *The Wesleyan*, showing their endorsement of such things as just property laws, laws giving mothers guardianship of children and resolutions that women should be preaching the gospel.⁴⁵ Because Haviland was at heart a reformer, she needed to be in a group that endorsed the right of women to protest injustice; because she was a widow, with children and property, she was vulnerable before the law and likely endorsed the resolutions reprinted there, though she did not champion women's rights directly in her book. And of course, since she preached in a number of places and planted a church in Ontario, it was a good fit for her to be in a denomination where one of the leaders, Luther Lee, expressed his support of women's ministry in his sermon at Antoinette Brown's ordination in 1853.⁴⁶

However, the Wesleyan Methodists were not completely free from cultural ideas about women, neither were they free from racism. In 1848 a portion of a black preacher's letter was printed, in which he observed that he had studied theology and was

⁴³ Presumably Phillips did not lock the church; he signed the Declaration of Sentiments where men indicated their support of the movement. See *Woman's Rights Conventions, Seneca Falls & Rochester, 1848*, (New York: Arno & The New York Times, c1969).

⁴⁴ *Woman's Rights Conventions*, p. 7.

⁴⁵ *The Wesleyan* (Sept 22, 1853), p. 151. Publication name changed from *The True Wesleyan* to *The Wesleyan* in January 1853.

⁴⁶ However, this event does not receive mention in Lee's autobiography and *The Wesleyan* from that date is missing. The 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention seems to have escaped the editor's notice despite the fact that it took place in a Wesleyan Methodist chapel not far from the Syracuse publication office.

hailed everywhere as an excellent preacher ... [but the] Wesleyan Methodists cannot receive me, not on account of my want of education and abilities to do the work of the evangelist, but the color of my skin.... I know not of a white congregation of Wesleyans, in our Connection, who would receive a colored preacher as their pastor, whatever might be his qualifications.”⁴⁷

In these early issues of the paper, one can also find explicit nativist prejudice against Catholics, stirred up by the riots in Philadelphia in 1844.

With regard to women, they printed articles such as “Secret of Unhappy Homes,” in which the wife bore the blame for her husband's ill-treatment of children, his Saturday evening drinking bouts, his anger at her. They ask, “Why does man become so often a tyrant in his own home?... It is because woman does not truly appreciate her mission in domestic life.” She was supposed to be cheerful and attractive for her husband so that he didn't want to run away from home.⁴⁸ A month later a letter appeared signed “A Lover of Humanity, of whatever sex, clime, or color” which asked why the husband didn't have responsibility to cheer his wife up, particularly since it was she who often stayed up with the children half the night, and worked herself to the bone every day. The response? We were only talking about “bad” wives, not “good” wives such as the “fair correspondent” surely is.⁴⁹ Knowing that Haviland read voraciously and took it upon herself to correct things in city newspapers she felt were unjust, it is conceivable that this rejoinder came from her pen.

Haviland's Calling and Life-Work

Haviland is most well-known for her work in abolition and on the Underground Railroad, though after reading through her autobiography, one could say she had a “Do Everything” policy for herself as well. In addition to working for the freedom and just treatment of African Americans, she engaged in relief work with orphans, wounded soldiers, the displaced and the imprisoned; she started a number of schools and taught in more; she became advocates for the release of prisoners, one case taking her to the President of the US, and another into correspondence with the Lord Governor of Canada; and she evangelized at deathbeds and at houses of prostitution, preached to African American soldiers, “exhorted” at countless Methodist Churches and planted a church in

⁴⁷ J. P. Campbell, “Letter from Bro. Campbell,” *The True Wesleyan* 6 (April 22, 1848).

⁴⁸ *The True Wesleyan*, 6 (July 1, 1848): 106.

⁴⁹ *The True Wesleyan*, 6 (Aug. 5, 1848): 126.

Ontario. And always in the background was the school turned orphanage that she and Charles had started in the 1830s, and for which she still had some responsibility four decades later.

Early in her life Haviland learned of the terrible plight of slaves, both in the slave ships crossing the Atlantic, and in their fate when they arrived here, from reading John Woolman's history of the slave trade, which she borrowed from her father. She says she was so deeply impressed that time could not efface these early impressions (9). Not surprisingly, when the opportunity arose years later to join with others to *do* something about this cruel system, she was immediately interested. As noted above, in 1832 she and Elizabeth Chandler organized the first anti-slavery society in Michigan, which began raising people's awareness of the horrors of slavery and galvanizing the region in an anti-slavery stance. It is no coincidence that Lenawee County had a number of well-known stations on the Underground Railroad. Though Haviland mentioned a few times that critics thought she exaggerated accounts of slavers' cruelty, she also expresses complete confidence that no one in town would cooperate with those who came looking for escaped slaves; in fact, she had a tin bell that was rung only when fugitives in her house or ex-slaves living on her property were in danger, and she believed that people for a few miles in all directions would come to her assistance.

The Logan Female Anti-Slavery Society also raised money for food, and gathered and repaired clothing to outfit fugitive slaves as they settled there or continued on to Canada. (Even in the 1840s the goal was Canada because in the northern states their pursuers could kidnap them. In Michigan, a judge in Detroit required that supposed slaves had to be brought before him in order to determine whether the slave-holders really had a claim on them, presumably on the basis of the 1793 Fugitive Slave law. Before they could appear, they would be secreted off to Canada.) Haviland was apparently a fantastic fund-raiser, a convincing public speaker and developed into a fearless conductor on the Underground Railroad. She recounts one episode in which she suspects a plot to woo away and kidnap one of the families living in a cottage on her land. She plays along for a while, but when the would-be kidnappers discover that she has uncovered their plot, they threaten to kill her, her son, and their friend with them, both at their hotel and at the train station as they go to leave. Despite the posters they

circulate in Tennessee offering a reward for her capture, Haviland does return when she feels she must.

In late 1840s she spent months at a time in Cincinnati, partially on account of her own health, the weather being more temperate there than in Michigan in the winter, and partially because she wanted to be available to assist those who crossed the river from Kentucky into Ohio. She sometimes stayed in the home of her dear friends, Levi and Catharine Coffin, who were prominent abolitionists and workers on the Underground Railroad,⁵⁰ though mostly she lived in houses where someone was sick and needed care and companionship. Levi or Catharine Coffin would send her word about refugees who had just arrived in the city, and she would go visit them, in order to give them food, clothes, new names, and instructions (likely from Levi or Catharine) about what their next move was to be and when. But more than that, she listened to their stories, and recounts many of them in detail, laying the emphasis on the people's courage to escape and often to save loved ones in the face of great danger, their incomparable delight at being reunited with family, and their safe passage, which had been achieved through the efforts of many people along the way.

She performed other tasks when she met with the new arrivals. Sometimes she could help reconnect the newly escaped slaves with family members who had already traveled that same route, or whose whereabouts she had heard of. Sometimes she was part of the intricate maneuvering of assisting fugitives who were being pursued; other times she personally accompanied them out of Cincinnati. At other times, she helped lay plans with them to rescue their families; one woman in particular, Mary French who had nine children, wanted to brainstorm about how she could move them all to safety. She returned to Kentucky with a plan and months later Haviland heard that a mother with nine children had arrived in Cincinnati. She anxiously inquired whether it was Mary French but was told it was not. When they finally met, they fell into each other's arms, weeping.

At one point, a very light-skinned fugitive arrived and pled for help in saving his sister who was still enslaved in Little Rock, Arkansas. Despite the danger, Haviland

⁵⁰ They had moved there from Newport, Indiana in 1847, and as she began her traveling about then, she apparently only got to know them in Ohio.

decided to go herself, since she had so often heard critics accuse abolitionists of exaggerating their accounts, or of making too much of the few abusive masters. (Even her son-in-law thought that Haviland exaggerated accounts of cruelty to slaves until he saw the mangled flesh of some of the fugitives that came into her house, 132.) As precautions, she went by the name Mrs. Smith while she was there, since the name Haviland was fairly well-known in the south as someone who aided escaping slaves, and she addressed all her correspondence to friends in Covington, KY, from where Levi or Catharine Coffin would hand-carry the letters across river into Cincinnati and mail them from there to family and friends in Michigan. While staying in a boarding house in Little Rock, she met like-minded folk who are also heart-broken by the cruelty of the proprietor and her son toward their slaves, but fearful to say anything. All day long two boys hung from their wrists in the yard while the son of the proprietor sat in the parlor playing cards and drinking bourbon. Periodically he went out and beat them before returning to his fun. The boys' offense? They did not get the fires going before dawn, since the cook who usually woke them was sick and failed to get them up. Haviland could hardly stand to be there, witnessing such things with no means to change the situation, except to return home and redouble her efforts in fighting slavery through political agitation.

At various junctures in her narrative, Haviland identifies the underlying reasons for her thorough-going abolitionism: she understood human beings to be fundamentally equal in worth because of the doctrine of creation, that all were made in the image of God, and because of the doctrine of redemption: “[Jesus] shed his precious blood for the whole human family, irrespective of nation or color” (84). She also believed that it was incumbent upon Christians to imitate Jesus' compassion for the downtrodden. Her work for release of the captive was based on these ideas. So were her educational ideals.

Educational endeavors

Haviland's passion for and involvement in education lasted her whole life: she, along with Charles, founded the Raisin Institute in 1837 and over forty years later she was busy with a newly set up trade school in Kansas. In fact, she ends her book with a plea for support of this school which would allow people to forge new lives for themselves. In between the early days in Michigan and the end of her narration she was involved in a variety of schooling situations.

While teaching nine “indigent children” along with her own four in the mid 1830s, the idea for the Raisin Institute was born. She and Charles decided to open a school that educated blacks and whites, girls and boys. Her brother Harvey, recently educated at Oberlin, sold his farm of 160 acres and used the money to build the school that Laura and Charles wanted to start. (Later it seems that the Institute is on 160 acres, which suggests that perhaps the land was eventually given to the Havilands for the school.) The Raisin Institute prepared people to become schoolteachers, trained those who already were teachers, and prepared others for collegiate study. Quickly it became one of the most popular schools in the state, which one of their friends noted, it would be if it were not for the policy of educating the races together.

Founded in 1837, the school ran almost continuously until, near the end of the war, it was sold to a relief organization, the Freedmen’s Aid Society (and then to the American Missionary Association) to be run as an orphan asylum cum school.⁵¹ In the late 1840s Haviland put the Raisin Institute in the charge of her older children, who also ran the farm, while her younger children were in school there (62). For a few years it was closed as Haviland raised money for new buildings, but always on the side, since she had employment elsewhere. But for some years in late 1850s she stayed in Michigan, her time taken up largely in running the school of about 200 students, as well as running the farm, organizing and speaking at anti-slavery meetings, raising money for the anti-slavery society and assisting fugitives on their way to Canada. She comments that sometimes the load was very heavy: “But to see prejudice in our students melt away by an acquaintance with our work, richly repaid me for all my day and night toiling and cares, that seemed almost crushing at times” (130).

In fact, like many early abolitionists, she clearly wanted more than freedom for the slaves: she wanted to help white people overcome their racism. She recounts stories of white students whose attitudes towards blacks were completely changed through studying side by side with one another. One girl in particular, came to the school assuming that the student body would be all white and when she learned it was otherwise

⁵¹ Haviland returns home in 1867 with another fifteen orphans for the Raisin Institute. Asa Mahan’s wife becomes president of the asylum (or of the state American Missionary Association) and they successfully petition the state for money to turn the Raisin Institute into a State Orphan Asylum, which was what Haviland wanted all along.

she demanded her father come get her. He would not retrieve her and eventually she has an African American helping her in math and her heart has been changed.

On the other hand, where white and black mixed education was out of the question, Haviland focused all of her energy on the education of freed blacks, children and adults. As mentioned earlier, in 1852 she was invited to be the first teacher at a school in Ontario for re-settled ex-slaves. She ran a Sabbath-School for anyone wishing to learn to read and write, combined with one half hour religious instruction. In the weekday evenings she conducted a school for adults who only wished to become competent enough to read their Bible and hymnal,⁵² while during the day she held a traditional school for children.

Another year, she ran a school with her daughter, Anna, in Cincinnati, in the basement of an African American church. Ohio law required the state to run a public school for black children in every locality in which they lived, but none was held there. Not only did Haviland start one, but she kept agitating for the establishment of a public school to which African American children could go. At the end of the year, the Mayor relented, set up a public school and called her to be the salaried teacher. She declined, though she had arranged for an African American man who studied at Oberlin to do it. She also taught in Toledo for six months, in Memphis after the war when working as a relief worker as a long-term substitute for someone who became ill, and short-term in other places. Throughout her travels she visited schools for African American children in order to encourage them, and report to others the intelligence and diligence of the students.

In Kansas, at the end of the book, Haviland was still involved in education. She praises Christian organizations that have concerned themselves with educating black children: the Friends have done much for a school in Arizona, she observes, “but the Methodist Episcopal Church has done, and is still doing, a great work, as our figures will show, in building commodious schoolhouses in various States” (287). At the very end, she makes an impassioned plea for money for the agricultural, industrial and educational institute that Elizabeth Comstock is setting up in southern Kansas. (She herself was the

⁵² Many nineteenth-century folks used hymnals in their private devotional exercises, hence the pocket-sized versions.

secretary of the organization running it, 288). In this last plea she explicitly links education to the responsibility Christians have to the poor, by challenging her readers to not pass by on the other side.

Relief work

In addition to harboring and helping ex-slaves, and providing educational opportunities for them, Haviland's other charitable endeavors also spanned her life. This work included care for orphans, bedridden civilians, hospitalized soldiers, prisoners, and the displaced. While she honed her nursing skills before the war caring for the sick in Cincinnati, she visited people who requested her presence at their deathbeds, helping them prepare for eternity, and provided ways for women to escape prostitution on two different occasions.

When a well-known conductor on the Underground Railroad, Calvin Fairbanks, was imprisoned in Louisville the conditions were so bad he begged for friends to bring him things to ease his existence there. Since her life had already been threatened in Tennessee and there was a reward over her head there, Levi Coffin discouraged her from going, but she replied: "I find no geographical lines drawn by our Savior in visiting the sick and in prison" (80).⁵³ Though she spent a week or so in the city, she only got to see Fairbanks for ten minutes and afterwards was warned to leave Kentucky since the officers at the jail had noticed how the runaways were delighted to see her. They believed she should be in jail right along with Fairbanks. Daily there had been calls for her arrest in the Louisville paper, but she made one more trip there to meet with Fairbanks' lawyer to see if anything could be done for him.

When the war started, she got someone to be the preceptress of the Raisin Institute and set about getting ready to go to places of greatest need, which turned out to be the camps just beyond the battle lines. In preparation, she gathered two thousand sets of clothes as well as supplies for the soldiers in the hospitals, and procured letters from politicians such as Michigan Governor Austin Blair, U.S. Congressman F. C. Beaman,

⁵³ She notes that Melancthon Henry, a Wesleyan Methodist and a son and ex-slave of Patrick Henry, gives three silver dollars for Haviland to deliver to Fairbanks in prison. The reason for including this detail can only be guessed at: did she want to underscore her Wesleyan Methodist connections? Did she hope to impress by using a famous name like Patrick Henry? Or was she hinting at the tragic irony of a man famous for his cry, "Give me liberty or give me death," who not only held slaves, but used at least one of them sexually?

and others, endorsing her as a relief worker, and requesting free passage on the trains for herself and the supplies she was bringing. Thus began the relief work which was her full-time employment during the war.

Sometimes with the smoke of battle visible, she worked among ex-slaves who had made it behind Union lines and lived in encampments adjoining the army camps. The conditions for these people were deplorable, with little food and hardly enough clothes to cover their bodies, let alone keep them warm. She notes, however, that despite great deprivation, none of the slaves ever went back with the former masters or mistresses who showed up at the camps to entice them to return. She also notes the joy of the little girls who found ragdolls in the dress pockets “from certain little girls in Hudson, Michigan” (144), though the most “affecting scenes” were those of families being reunited, sometimes after decades of separation and silence.

In Memphis she visited hospitals, both to care for the wounded, but also to report on the conditions of the hospitals. (It is unclear whether she was doing this under the auspices of Sanitary Commission, or on her own.⁵⁴) In one hospital she had the surgeon in charge removed on account of his drunkenness and lack of capability to do the job. This was something the officers had wanted to do, but could not because he outranked them (147).

In 1863 Haviland returned home for the summer and “we found it a necessity for organized work, and formed a Freedmen’s Relief Association, in Detroit” to solicit far more supplies and clothing for her next year in the south (160). She and a woman from the Wesleyan Methodist Church back home, Letitia Backus, traveled as agents of the Freedmen’s Relief Agency to Vicksburg, Mississippi, distributing the clothes and blankets that were gathered. They also apparently worked closely with the Christian Commission which was involved in care for the wounded and relief work, just as they were.⁵⁵ She mentions preaching in a number of black Methodist Churches and passing

⁵⁴ The Sanitary Commission was set up on the model of Florence Nightengale’s work of inspecting hospitals to ensure sanitary conditions. Dorothea Dix trained women to do this work as well as to engage in nursing during the Civil War. See Juliann Sivulka, “From Domestic to Municipal Housekeeper: The Influence of the Sanitary Reform Movement on Changing Women’s Roles in America, 1860-1920.” *The Journal of American Culture* 22 (Winter 1999).

⁵⁵ Harper’s Weekly ran a piece about the Christian Commission in the August 20, 1864 issue (533-534). After a picture of women tending soldiers near the field of battle, the writer observed that neither the Sanitary Commission nor the Christian Commission were supported by the Government, “but by the

out tracts and Bibles to soldiers and those in hospitals, likely materials from the Christian Commission.

In her travels, Haviland found many occasions to advocate for justice and better treatment of people. For instance, she secured better treatment for black troops by going over the local officer's head, and exposed the injustice of a "Health Order" issued by an officer in New Orleans that basically forced blacks back to the plantations they had fled, or into squalid refugee camps. It appeared to be a case of a local officer having sworn allegiance to the Union, but still persisting in his old ways. He was let go and the order revoked. In her work directly after the war she gives examples of maltreatment that she tries to rectify, for instance, a soup kitchen in Virginia she discovered that whites were served first and were given healthy food, while the blacks had to wait and finally were offered bitter, inedible soup. In addition, she once learned of a prisoner in Michigan who sought a pardon, and she wound up meeting with the President of the US to secure it.

In a notable example, she and Sister Backus took a boat from New Orleans to Ship Island where 3000 Union soldiers were imprisoned. Perhaps Haviland had been tipped off to the injustice of the situation, but in any case, she inquired about the crimes of the prisoners.⁵⁶ Heart-broken, she learned that all the soldiers were serving time for such things as being late to roll-call, drunkenness and selling government property, i.e., trading rations for groceries such as sugar and tea; all were in irons attached to ankles or wrists, and some were sentenced up to 38 years. She observed to Captain Noyce, the officer running the prison, that normally she had seen these minor offenses handled within the soldier's unit, and he agreed, believing it to be a case of a Judge who had sworn loyalty to the Union but who, in this way, was acting to hinder the Union army. The captain's hands were tied since the judge outranked him, but Haviland copied out by hand the crimes and sentences of many prisoners on Ship Island and Dry Tortugas and tried at every level of the military ladder, all the way up to the general, to get the men released. At home in Michigan she contacted her politicians, sent reports to Washington, DC and declared herself ready to do whatever it might take to help free these men. The

people. As our Government is of the people, so is this war the people's war. And the people have taken it upon themselves to take care of the soldiers." Finally the article claims that the lower casualty rate in the Union army from disease was due to these ministrations. This may have been at least partially true.

⁵⁶ It is likely that her reputation as a fearless advocate for the imprisoned and for those being treated unjustly was widespread enough that someone put her onto investigating this prison.

Chairman of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, B. F. Wade, requested that she appear in Washington to argue for their release, but finally, on her way there she received word that the judge and the General in charge of him had been relieved of their duties and the imprisoned soldiers were beginning to be released (204). Her response: “I remarked that I never had been a shouting Methodist, but I felt more like shouting over these glad tidings than I ever had done in all my life. If I had not been spoiled for singing by being raised a Quaker, I would have sung the doxology” (204).

Most of the work was more person-to-person, however, and she described her work in Kansas during the war in this way: “With every day come new scenes, and yet such a similarity; investigating, relieving, reading Scriptures, advising, and often by the cot of the sick and dying” (228). But it was anything but mundane; in fact, after only a morning of visiting refugees from Missouri, the woman who had been her guide withdrew because their destitution left her head aching from weeping. The people were starving and only half-dressed enough for the elements. Haviland tried to help them find work, and discovered that the freed folks were willing to work, but some of the whites expressed with the same sentiments as expressed by one destitute mother: “I reckon we hain’t come down so low yet as to work,’ I told them they must come up high enough to work before I could do any thing for them, and left them to sit in their own filth and rage” (209). She made it clear in many places that her mission was to assist people to find work and support themselves, not to make people dependent on the hand-outs.

At the close of the book, in the late 1870s in Kansas again, she was attending to the needs of the huge influx of people migrating from the south into that region. She asserts that \$70,000 worth of supplies passed through her hands between Sept. 1879 and March 1881 (284), but that so much more is needed. Hence the book. After numerous stories of the violence in the south against freed people, and the difficulty they have in finding sustainable employments she comments that the first duty of government is protection, but if it is too weak for that then the second duty is to house, clothe and feed the refugees until they can take care of themselves. Christian philanthropic efforts, Haviland believed, should be coupled with responsible government action. She recognized that the magnitude of the need was staggering to the imagination, and always the pragmatist, called on Washington to put up money for this relief effort.

Evangelism and Ecumenical spirit

Another strand woven throughout Haviland's work was evangelism, begun even in the early days of the Raisin Institute. There was always a minister loosely associated with the school, sometimes mentioned specifically as Wesleyan Methodist, and at least once they experienced some sort of revival there. (Significantly she never refers to Quaker speakers or any other Quaker connections to the Institute.) Haviland hoped that students would experience conversion and engage in right living, including abstinence from alcohol and rejection of dance halls,⁵⁷ including as well a commitment to the ideal of the equality of all people before God. All of these things were more important to her than particular church membership, however, and students came from a variety of backgrounds.

In the years of being an agent for the Freedmen's Aid Commission and the American Missionary Association she sought out Methodist Episcopal churches to attend; sometimes she went to six services on a Sunday and in four of them took, what she called, "an active part" (197). No matter what else her work involved, she always took opportunities to encourage other Christians, and in this vein over and over again she mentions her participation in MEC services of black congregations. (She never writes of going to Quaker meetings, and there were precious few Wesleyan Methodist Churches in the South at this time, so it isn't surprising that she never mentions them.⁵⁸) In any case, she held together relief and reform work with the concern for the spiritual health and development of those around her.

Another example of her own spiritual proclivities and her desire to offer spiritual aid where she can is this: While they were on Ship Island off New Orleans where the Union soldiers imprisoned, her assistant Sister Backus spots a *Life of Orange Scott* on the table. (Scott was one of the founders of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection.) Backus exclaimed: "Sister Haviland, here is the life of Orange Scott! Isn't this home-like? away here in the Gulf of Mexico?" (186). The wife of Captain Noyce (the man running the

⁵⁷ On one occasion (at least), she suspended some students for failing to live up her standards—or perhaps the school standards—of sobriety and seriousness about their faith; they returned the next term repentant and ready to be diligent students.

⁵⁸ A couple of times she mentions visiting or seeing ME Churches that had been the site of slave auctions, for instance Zion MEC in Virginia, in what might have been her implicit argument for having been a Wesleyan Methodist in those years (241).

prison), then informed them that Orange Scott was her father, and that she and her husband were Wesleyans. They have a sweet time of fellowship, since they were all Wesleyans and this woman lonely and far away from her northern home.

Her evangelical ecumenical tendency is most fully displayed in the effort she made to found a generically Christian church on a model she attributed to Gerrit Smith. During the year she taught school in Ontario she organized worship and learning opportunities for Christians of many backgrounds.

There were in this colony a mixed religious element—Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Free-will Baptist—deeply interested in Sabbath-schools and class-meetings, open to all who wished to enjoy them. An organization was proposed. The proposition came from the Methodist element, but I did not deem it wise to organize from any one denomination, as divergent opinions would create controversy that would bring harm to many tender minds. Consequently I proposed to organize a Christian Union Church, without disturbing the Church relationship of any one (111).

The Rev. Charles Foote had also been ministering in the community, solemnizing marriages, performing baptisms, but the two worked closely enough together that some of the folks thought that either one could be called upon to perform marriages. His religious affiliation is not given, but that he was willing to work so closely with her may suggest that he was also a Wesleyan Methodist. At once point she closed evening school for two weeks to have revival meetings, at which a Baptist minister, Bro Campbell, preached.

The church experienced a crisis, however, when she was about to leave because three Baptist families and leader from Detroit wanted to convert the Christian Union Church into Baptist one. Much of congregation was sad about this situation but Haviland believed that unity could be maintained by having the Baptist preacher alternate weeks with a newly arrived licensed Wesleyan minister, Bro. Maglothin, who had come from Virginia to take over Haviland's Sabbath-schools and meetings. The week before her departure she presented this plan with a plea for unity, and a statement that as the next Sunday would be her last, she would count it her duty to explain the basis of the Union.

At her final service, she read 1 Corinthians 3, a text about unity, and made "remarks." Apparently some of the disunity was due to the fact that a woman had been leading the congregation, because she reports that after her "remarks" she "read the license from the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, acknowledging a qualification to

preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (113). This is the only time she even hints at opposition to her preaching and is the only mention of her preacher’s license she makes in the book. She also directs their attention to the permission the license grants her to organize a church, and then she reads the articles under which the “Union Christian Church” had been organized. After she spoke, the Baptist minister and a couple of deacons apologized publicly. Subsequent to her departure from Ontario, the Baptist work disbanded at the request of the Baptists, and the group organized into a Methodist Church.

Clearly, however, she was willing to work with the Baptists, even those who disrespected her right to preach, and on another occasion she praised a Catholic priest to the Irish in her neighborhood in Toledo. In fact, she acted as a chaplain in this community when those among them became sick and no priest was available to comfort them in their dying hours, and this in the face of rampant anti-Catholic nativism in that era (105).

But she drew the line when it came to slavery. While she was staying in a pro-slavery house, tending someone who was sick, she had conversations with the man of the house: “As I told you the other day, the negroes have the same rights from their Creator that we have, and no man or class of men has the right to take them away” (97). The man states that he would report runaway slaves and get the reward. She responds: “I am astonished to hear this from one who professes to be a follower of the Lord Jesus, a part of whose mission was to unbind the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free” (97). She is shocked particularly because he is a class leader in the Methodist Protestant Church. “I can not henceforth acknowledge you as a brother in Christ” (97).⁵⁹ She can minister among Irish Catholics but she refuses to recognize this man, from a similar branch of the Methodist constellation of churches, because of slavery.

As Willard rejected assistance of Mormon women because of the degradation of women among them, so Haviland rejects this Methodist Protestant man because of his attitude toward slavery. Not only was this due to her belief that the doctrines of creation and redemption required Christians to treat all humans as equals since all were equal in

⁵⁹ Haviland is not unusual in this stance. See Douglas Strong, “‘A Real Christian is an Abolitionist’: Conversion and Antislavery Activism in Early American Methodism,” in *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, edited by Kenneth Collins and John H. Tyson, (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 69-82, 266-269.

God's eyes, but also because of the accounts of brutality against slaves because of their faith.

Religious Persecution

Haviland felt the need to highlight an under-reported fact of the slave system: that people were tortured and killed for their faith. Obviously this was another piece in her rhetorical strategy to convince good Christians to come to the aid of freed slaves, but the implicit question is: How can someone be a Christian and be in favor of a system that brutalizes people for being Christian? For instance, she visits Bethel Methodist Church in New Orleans during their quarterly meeting, and hears accounts of former times

when ministers and people were hauled out of this church of their own building and taken to jail. The free people were compelled to pay twenty-five dollars' fine, and slaves were punished with twenty-five lashes on the bare back, well laid on. This persecution the authorities deemed necessary in order to keep these poor people from rising in insurrection. They locked up their churches two years and a half, until the Union soldiers unlocked them. Though the authorities forbade their meeting at all, they often stole away two and three miles and held little meetings in deep ravines and in clumps of bushes and trees, to hide from their cruel pursuers; but they could not even there long escape their vigilant enemies (181-182).

Later at a love-feast people expressed to Haviland their joy at being free to pray and talk of the love of Jesus, without someone keeping watch at the door. In Virginia after the war an older woman related to her the story of a young woman who was punished for going to a meeting: in a horrifying blend of blasphemy and sado-masochism the master made her strip naked and he whipped her himself. When she cried out to Jesus for help, he responded that *he* was her Jesus, *he* is her Lord, and continues "to ply the lash until thirty strokes were well laid on" (236). Haviland calls him an "inhuman persecutor"; he is not only not the divine Jesus, he does not even reach up to the level of human.

She spends a good deal of time with the story of an old man she met named Phil. He had been encouraged (by a Methodist minister) to seek God, way back when he was a child, but only comes to understand belief in an invisible God when another slave shares her faith with him. Excited by his new-found faith he begins to hold meetings for slaves, despite his parents' fear and his master's warnings, "You shall stop this prayin' and singin' in your cabin, or I'll whip you to death" (249). Finally one of their meetings is raided and Phil and his friend are hung up by their arms and asked, "Now you see you've

got to die or stop prayin'; will you stop this d----d prayin'?' 'O massa, do please let me pray to God, do please'" (250). Master Malachi ordered them to have twenty lashes with bull-whip and twenty smacks with paddle bored full of holes that raised blisters at every stroke. Then asked them again if they'll stop praying. They refused to say they would stop praying so they received another round of whipping and beating and then the friend was allowed to crawl home. Phil got at least another round, but did not know how much more since he goes unconscious and wakes in a pool of blood. Finally he and his friend staggered away. "When we pass de quarters all along, de old men an' women stood at their doors cryin'" (250). Then Master Malachi decided to shame Phil into silence by holding a big service on the plantation at which Phil will preach, only days after this beating. Phil limped up onto the makeshift platform and began singing, "My Savior, my Almighty Friend," so powerfully that people were brought to tears; he never had to preach but simply went down to pray with those under conviction. Twenty-three were converted that day and Phil's master, witnessing it all, vowed never to beat a slave ever again. Phil and his friend organized seven churches in the next four years, though Phil goes through a period of despondency because of all the suffering that people who joined these churches underwent.⁶⁰

Her accounts corroborate Albert Raboteau's assertion that the religious persecution of African Americans during slavery was the worst this continent has seen; it was brutal and widespread, producing thousands of martyrs.⁶¹ Why, he asked, do we ignore this aspect of the scourge of slavery? And how, but for the grace of God, did these persecuted ones see beyond the Christianity close at hand to the Christ that called them by name?

Position on women

Haviland was a pragmatist and therefore, I believe, stuck to the issue of racism and its effects, though the treatment of women had not escaped her notice. She desperately wanted to get people involved in helping freed slaves build new lives for themselves, and so she did not agitate directly for women's rights (nor for temperance)

⁶⁰ By the time Haviland met him he was old, and nearly blind, but they prayed together and she says, "I was often forcibly impressed while conversing with that aged saint" (253).

⁶¹ Albert Raboteau, "African-American Slaves, Christianity, and the Mystery of Suffering," Pruit Memorial Symposium of the Institute for Faith and Learning at Baylor University, Oct. 1, 2004.

anywhere in the book. The closest she comes is in claiming her right to preach in Ontario, and in her direct refutation of the surgeon in charge of a Memphis hospital who observes, “It is no place for a lady to step her foot over the threshold of a hospital.” She retorts: “I perceive you and I differ widely in that,” and goes on to claim that though she has no son there, “Every soldier is some mother’s son” (147). She also refused to take to heart the instructions of the creditor who told the newly widowed mother of seven, that she should get a man to handle her affairs.

On the other hand, after she had been doing relief work for years, after the thousands of dollars worth of supplies that she had carried, had purchased and/or distributed, the commissioners of the Freedmen’s Aid Society objected to \$500 being placed in a woman’s hands. They wanted a man to decide what supplies to purchase to send to the two orphanages in Michigan, one of them the renamed Raisin Institute! (It was called the Haviland Home for Homeless and Destitute Children, to which she was on her way with fifteen orphans.) The young man sent to oversee her purchases at least he had the decency to be ashamed that they had required him to supervise her. She told him, “I was thankful to get the five hundred dollars, and could waive their notions of woman’s inability very comfortably” (242). Yes, she could waive their notions because she not only got the money but in the next sentence she states: “He assented to all the selections I made...” (242). On another trip north, this time with twenty-five orphans, and five mothers to assist in their care, Susan B. Anthony sent provisions for her and Mrs. Lee, her assistant, for the entire journey (214).

She highlights many times in her text, the sexual abuse suffered by women in the slave system. In one place she met four generations of women/girls all fathered by the same person. Her disgust is not even thinly veiled. (The baby had just died and her teenage mother was not right in the head.) In another place she tells the story of white and black women tormented by the same man. The situation was described to her by the planter’s wife, who said that her husband brought a slave woman “to my apartments, and occupied my parlor bedroom with her for years—all to aggravate me. I didn’t blame the woman Molly. . . . She and I cried together over this state of things for hours, many a time” (177). Haviland observes that this was in no way an isolated situation, but happened with regularity. In an aside, she says she includes this detail to show how

slavery destroys not only the abused but those who perpetrate it, though obviously one subtext is the powerlessness of the women.

There are a few details she includes that give clues to her view of women: for one, she tells of meeting a female soldier in a Memphis hospital, someone who had been in both Bull Run battles as well as four others. Her sex wasn't discovered until she was hospitalized with typhoid fever (150). Haviland has a certain respect for her courage. On the other end of the spectrum, she gives her assessment of female coquetry after meeting a young woman on a boat bound for Norfolk.

Laura Hampton knew nothing of self-reliance. All she knew was to be a consequential young lady of distinction, full of exalted qualifying adjectives in the superlative degree. But she was not so much to blame as her parents for her simpering and tossing the head with overstocked affectation (240).

Haviland certainly rejected the view that women should be helpless and ornamental, demonstrated both by words such as these, but also by her life that was eminently useful, not to mention filled with exhausting, and at times, very dangerous, work.

She also includes the detail that her daughter, Laura Jane, had a scholarship to Oberlin, and took the Gentleman's course of study at there.⁶² Her statements, then, that African Americans could develop intellectually but they were never given a fair chance, may be loaded with implied arguments for women's education as well. At least when it came to higher education women, too, were never given opportunity to study either. The recently opened Oberlin was the exception, but even there women were supposed to take a course to fit them for their supportive roles.

Finally, one could wonder if she writes ironically when discussing the connection between freedom and the right to vote. Once when Sister Backus addressed some black troops she reminded them to learn so that when "their rights were established as citizens, they would be prepared to vote understandingly" (197). Did Backus say it and did Haviland write this ironically, they who did not have their rights established as a citizen?

⁶² Oberlin was the only co-educational college open to women at that time, and women were supposed to take a course of study that prepared them for their female roles. Women such as Laura Jane Haviland and Antoinette Brown took the classes required for the Gentleman's Course, though in at least Brown's case, her diploma was not sent for decades. Haviland makes no mention of Finney in the book and further research is needed to show whether or not it had anything to do with Laura Jane's choice of study at Oberlin.

Again in the 1870s Haviland quotes a preacher man who says: “I thank my Deliverer from the jaws of the lion of oppression, and praise the lord of hosts for a free country, where I can vote as well as preach according to the dictates of my own conscience...” (273). Are these not only joy at the freed man’s new rights, but implicit pleas for women’s enfranchisement?

Preliminary Conclusions

Haviland, no less than Willard, engaged in a constellation of reforms and activities as she perceived needs and ways to address them. Her efforts in abolition and advocacy, in education and evangelism, in reform and relief work of many sorts demonstrate the wideness of her calling. The difference between her “Do Everything” policy and Willard’s, is that Willard had thousands of members of the WCTU finding new ways to expand the vision and work of the organization, while Haviland carried on her work without that benefit.

When it comes to strategy, each person attempted to maximize her influence for the sake of the causes she was involved in. Willard employed culturally acceptable symbols, particularly of “home protection” to draw conservative women into the movement and send them out into society, while Haviland spoke much more directly to her audience, encouraging them to reject the safety and comfort of home to help the oppressed. Both approaches worked, and perhaps would work again.

Their conversionist religion did not make either one of them apathetic to social ills of their day, but spurred them into intense and life-long action. Their evangelical piety also did not result in an individualistic approach to these problems; in other words, they both understood the value of associations and networks of interrelated reform and relief workers who together could make a difference. And further, they both displayed a pragmatism born out of love: neither felt that the Church in general, or her church or denomination in particular, needed to solve the problems of poverty, illiteracy, sexism or racism alone, but that everyone should be involved, and that governments should also be working in these areas, to the relief of the oppressed. They both believed that individuals, churches, organizations, as well as the government should be working to help everyone live in safety, in peace, and in just relationship to each other and society.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bordin, Ruth. *Frances Willard: A Biography*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986.
- *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981.
- Cashin, Joan. "Black Families in the Old Northwest." *Journal of the Early Republic*, Special Issue on Gender in the Early Republic 15 (Autumn, 1995): 449-475.
- Collins, Kenneth. *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Danforth, Mildred E. *A Quaker Pioneer: Laura Haviland, Superintendent of the Underground*. New York: Exposition Press, 1961.
- Dillon, Merton L. "The Failure of the American Abolitionists." *The Journal of Southern History* 25 (May, 1959): 159-177.
- Epstein, Barbara. *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth Century America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1981.
- Gara, Larry. "The Underground Railroad: Legend or Reality?" *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 105 (June 27, 1961): 334-339.
- Gordon, Anna. *The Beautiful Life of Frances E. Willard*. Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, 1898.
- Grammer, Elizabeth Elkin. *Some Wild Visions: Autobiographies by Female Itinerant Evangelists in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Gusfield, Joseph. *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963.
- Hempton, David. *Methodism: Empire of Spirit*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.
- Kerr, Kathleen, "How Did the Reform Agenda of the Minnesota Woman's Christian Temperance Union Change, 1878-1917?" in *Women in Social Movements in the U.S., 1830-1930* (<http://womhist.binghamton.edu/wctu/intro.htm> posted 1993).
- Landon, Fred. "The Anderson Fugitive Case." *The Journal of Negro History* 7 (July 1922): 233-242.

- . "Henry Bibb, A Colonizer." *The Journal of Negro History* 5 (Oct. 1920): 437-447.
- Nogee, Joseph. "The Prigg Case and Fugitive Slavery, 1842-1850: Part I." *The Journal of Negro History* 39(July 1954): 185-205.
- Rycenga, Jennifer. "A Greater Awakening: Women's Intellect as a Factor in Early Abolitionist Movements, 1824-1834." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21 (Fall 2005): 31-59.
- Schultz, Jane E. "Seldom Thanked, Never Praised, and Scarcely Recognized: Gender and Racism in Civil War Hospitals." *Civil War History* 48 (Sept. 2002): 220-236.
- Sivulka, Juliann. "From Domestic to Municipal Housekeeper: The Influence of the Sanitary Reform Movement on Changing Women's Roles in America, 1860-1920." *The Journal of American Culture* 22 (Winter 1999).
- Strong, Douglas. *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tension of American Democracy*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999.
- . "'A Real Christian is an Abolitionist': Conversion and Antislavery Activism in Early American Methodism." In *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, edited by Kenneth Collins and John H. Tyson, 69-82, 266-269. Nashville: Abingdon, 2001.
- Van Deusen, John. "The Exodus of 1879." *The Journal of Negro History* 21 (Apr. 1936): 111-129.
- Willard, Frances. *Glimpses of Fifty Years: The Autobiography of an American Woman*. Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, 1889.
- . *How to Win: A Book for Girls*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1888.
- Woman's Christian Temperance Union website: <http://www.wctu.org>.