"Substitute in this army of the Lord"

Missionary Parents, Their Children, and the Conflicted Nature of Missionary Work

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During the mid-nineteenth century, religious tracts, sermons, and missionary societies attempted to recruit children to the missionary cause. In Dr. Scudder's Tale for Little Readers about the Heathen, published in 1849, the author, John Scudder, implored boys and girls to devote themselves to the conversion of "heathen" around the world by donating money, or, better yet, by becoming missionaries. "In view of all this darkness—in view of the need of more than half a million of ministers of the Gospel to preach the news of salvation to them," Scudder wrote, "I want you, my dear boys, to ask yourselves whether it may not be your duty, after you grow up, to become ministers, and go and preach the Gospel to them." Almost as an afterthought, he asked "my dear girls, to become missionaries also." Evangelical literature for children like Scudder's book portrayed missionary workers as "heroic" and attempted to persuade children to devote themselves to missionary service. Only through active proselytizing could children secure their own spiritual welfare.2 In sum, the missionary press told "little angels" to convert "little heathen."3

^{1.} Scudder, Dr. Scudder's Tales for Little Readers about the Heathen (New York: American Tract Society, 1849), pp. 177–78.

^{2.} Rennie B. Schoepflin, "Making Doctors and Nurses for Jesus: Medical Missionary Stories and American Children," *Church History* 74 (Sept. 2005): 570; Karen Sánchez-Eppler, "Raising Empires like Children: Race, Nation, and Religious Education," *American Literary History* 8 (Autumn 1996): 414. For other information on nineteenth century evangelical print culture, see Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America,* 1789–1880 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Mary Kelley, "'Pen and Ink Communion': Evangelical Reading and Writing in Antebellum America," *New England Quarterly* 84 (Dec. 2011): 555–87; Ashley E. Moreshead, "'Beyond All Ambitious Motives': Missionary Memoirs and the Cultivation of Early American Evangelical Heroines," *Journal of the Early Republic* 38 (Spring 2018): 37–60; and David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

^{3.} Sánchez-Eppler, "Raising Empires like Children," p. 408.

While mid-nineteenth century Christian literature worked to recruit future missionaries, the evangelical press assumed that the children of missionaries would naturally follow in their parents' footsteps, as they had been "born into the missionary inheritance." The fact that they spent their formative years in the mission field purportedly gave them unique knowledge, skills, and qualifications that ideally suited them for missionary work. A biography of John P. Williamson, the son of one of the founders of the mission to the Dakota Indians run by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), claimed that "the circumstances of his birth and training" uniquely allowed him to understand the Indian "and his difficulties." An earlier article went further, stating that Williamson was "born into the missionary kingdom."6 Likewise, Thomas Riggs, another son of a Dakota missionary, "grew up surrounded by the ethos of Christian evangelism and service." One publication similarly portrayed Riggs's sister, Isabella, as "a born missionary, for she was always wanting to do some one good."8 The same account declared that the children of missionaries came from "a goodly Heritage."9

In addition to possessing an innate desire to "do good," missionary children supposedly had a unique ability to forge strong bonds with potential converts. Many evangelical publications called missionaries' children "friends" or even "kin" of the "heathen." One author described John P. Williamson as "a friend and helper of the Indians. He shared their hardships, their sorrows, and their joys." Another article called Williamson "one of the best friends the Indians had at this

^{4.} Isabella Riggs Williams, By the Great Wall: Letters from China (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1909), p. 13.

^{5.} Winifred W. Barton, John P. Williamson: A Brother to the Sioux (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1919), p. 5.

^{6.} Stephen Riggs, "In Memory of Rev. Thomas S. Williamson, M.D.," in *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, vol. 3 (St. Paul: By the Society, 1880), p. 379.

^{7.} Thomas Lawrence Riggs, Sunset to Sunset: A Lifetime with My Brothers, the Dakotas (Pierre: South Dakota Historical Society Press, 1997), p. vii.

^{8.} Williams, By the Great Wall, p. 45.

^{9.} Ibid., p. 13.

^{10.} Effie Florence Putney, "The First Teacher of the Sioux," in *South Dakota Country* (Mitchell, S.Dak.: Educator Supply Co., 1922), p. 119.

^{11.} Frances H. Relf, "Notes and Documents: Removal of the Sioux Indians from Minnesota," *Minnesota History Bulletin* 2 (May 1918): 421.

time."¹¹ Echoing this theme, the author of Williamson's biography titled her work *John P. Williamson*: A Brother to the Sioux. Similarly, Thomas Riggs's autobiography, Sunset to Sunset: A Lifetime with My Brothers, the Dakotas, portrayed him as "a friend to the Dakotas."¹² A later historian would describe Alfred Riggs as an "old friend and mentor" to American Indians. Our Martha lauded Martha Riggs for having hundreds of "Indian friends."¹⁴

- 12. Riggs, Sunset to Sunset, p. vii.
- 13. Raymond Wilson, Ohiyesa: Charles Eastman, Santee Sioux (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), p. 26.

14. Anna Jane Riggs, *Our Martha*, pp. 11, 12, 18, in White Missionaries and Teachers, Notes and Clippings, 1870–1877, Folder 9, Box 13, Oahe Mission Papers, Center for Western Studies, Augustana University, Sioux Falls, S.Dak. (CWS). The CWS holds an extensive collection of papers related to the Riggs family and their multigenerational missionary work. For a summary of resources on missionary work and the Riggs family held at the CWS, *see* Harry F. Thompson, "Dakota Resources: The Riggs Family Papers at the Center for Western Studies," *South Dakota History* 22 (Spring 1992): 65–74.



John P. Williamson, seen here as a college student in the late 1850s, initially resisted missionary work but eventually followed his parents into the field.

As seen in the numerous religious books and articles written about the second generation of Dakota missionaries, evangelical literature of the era touted the Dakota mission as proof that missionary children were born and raised to continue their parents' important work. The children's actual experience, however, illustrates that their lives were more complicated than the effusive hagiographies available to evangelical readers. While the press presented these children as uniquely trained to be missionaries, their parents—especially their mothers worried about raising them in "heathen" environments where they would encounter Indians. Indeed, training their children for missionary work was rarely foremost in the parents' minds; they simply wanted their children to become educated, active members of their communities and church. More important, missionary children had doubts about whether they should devote themselves to missionary work. Their decision whether or not to join the ABCFM was not an unthinking one based on birth, but rather a deliberate and calculated choice made after careful thought. Contrary to contemporary evangelical literature, growing up in the mission field at times predisposed them against missionary work, even if they ultimately decided to join their parents' cause. Those children who chose to continue their parents' legacy harbored no illusions about the nature of life in the field and the difficulty of converting Indians to Christianity.

Examining parents' and children's views of missionary work with a focus on second-generation Dakota missionaries offers several insights into missionary-Indian relations. First, it challenges historians to not take antebellum religious literature at face value. Both missionary parents and their children rejected the romantic and heroic vision of missionary work in the field that the evangelical press promoted. Second, historians such as Jennifer Graber have criticized "friends of the Indians" for their "civilization" and Christianization programs, which attempted to destroy American Indian culture and religion. Graber argues that the missionaries' self-designation as friends should not obscure their role in violent expansion. Indeed, as Graber argues, the Dakota missionaries played a key role in promoting settler colonialism

^{15.} See Jennifer Graber, The Gods of Indian Country: Religion and the Struggle for the American West (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 12.

and imperialism. While the missionaries supported many of the goals of federal Indian policy, they also responded to and questioned several aspects of the "friend of the Indian" rhetoric. Those who became, as Isabella Riggs proudly told her mother, "your substitute in this army of the Lord," did not link their own work with dispossession or loss; instead, they viewed missionary work as offering salvation and hope. ¹⁶ While Isabella Riggs accepted the call to proselytize, she knew that the job would not be easy, heroic, or straightforward, as other promotional literature published by "friends of the Indian" promised.

Isabella Riggs came from a family dedicated to missionary work. In 1837, her parents, Stephen and Mary Riggs, joined the ABCFM's mission to the Dakotas, established two years earlier. The Dakota mission began in July 1835 when Thomas Williamson, Jedediah Stevens, Alexander Huggins, and their families arrived in Minnesota to proselytize to the Dakotas. These missionaries joined Samuel and Gideon Pond, who had come to Minnesota on their own two years prior and established a mission near Lake Calhoun in present-day Minneapolis. The Stevens family constructed their mission near Lake Harriet, also in present-day Minneapolis. Meanwhile, Thomas Williamson, Alexander Huggins, and two years later, Stephen Riggs, opened a station at Lac qui Parle, about 150 miles west of St. Paul. By the 1850s, the ABCFM's Dakota mission had opened and, in some cases, closed eleven different stations throughout southern Minnesota and employed over twenty-five missionaries.¹⁷ The ABCFM also established several stations among the Ojibwe, who lived to the north of the Dakotas in Minnesota.

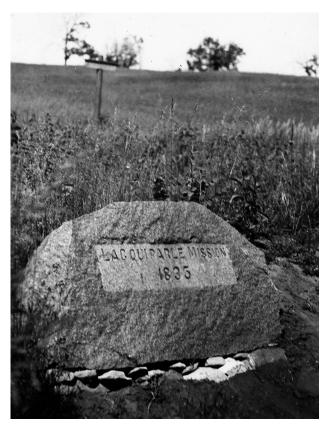
After the 1851 Treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota, in which the Dakotas ceded all their lands in Minnesota in exchange for an impermanent reservation along the Minnesota River, the majority of AB-CFM missionaries resigned their posts and left the Dakota mission. The treaties themselves played a relatively minor role in this mass exodus.

^{16.} Riggs, By the Great Wall, p. 46.

^{17.} For a handwritten list of missionaries associated with the Dakota mission, see Stephen Riggs, A Tableau of the Families, and single Persons, Connected with the ABCFM in the Dakota Mission, During the Quarter of a Century from 1835 to 1860 (1861), Box 1, Stephen R. Riggs and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul (MHS). For a brief history of the early Dakota Mission, see Bruce David Forbes, "Presbyterian Beginnings in South Dakota: 1840–1900," South Dakota History 7 (Spring 1977): 115–17.

Isabella Riggs grew up the daughter of missionaries to the Dakotas in Minnesota. She later chose to work as a missionary in China, which many of her contemporaries considered a more prestigious post.





The engraved stone pictured here marked the former location of the Lac qui Parle Mission in far western Minnesota. A reconstruction of the church, built in the mid-twentieth century, now stands at this site.

Rather, longstanding issues, especially the refusal of most Dakotas to convert to Christianity, led to the resignations. Thomas Williamson, Stephen Riggs, and their families, however, believed that the Dakota field still had promise and reestablished their missions in 1854–1856 at Hazelwood and Yellow Medicine on the newly created upper reservation. In 1860, John P. Williamson, the son of Thomas Williamson, joined the ABCFM and opened his own station on the lower reservation. By the 1860s, the association's Dakota mission had declined from its high point of dozens of missionaries and numerous stations to just three missionaries and their families, located at three small stations.

If previous history was any indication, the three remaining mission families had a difficult task ahead of them. Although missionary publications used optimistic phrases like "planting seeds for the future," after over two decades among the Dakotas, the ABCFM missionaries counted only eighty-three converts, many of whom did not attend church on a regular basis. ¹⁹ They also noted that while the missionaries worked with "diligence and fidelity," at best, their missions had euphemistically experienced "quiet progress." ²⁰ The low conversion numbers reflect an overall resistance to the missionaries' efforts to Christianize all Dakotas.

The missionaries' work became even more difficult in the aftermath of the U.S.-Dakota War. Violence broke out on 18 August 1862 at the Lower Sioux Agency, about forty miles from Thomas Williamson's station at Yellow Medicine. Numerous factors led to the war, including land loss; a lack of food, supplies, and rations; corrupt Indian agents; and aggressive "civilization" and Christianization programs that both government agents and missionaries forced on the Dakotas. During the six weeks

^{18.} These longstanding issues included, among others, missionary objections to Dakota polygamy, displeasure with U.S. Indian policy that they claimed worked against the Dakotas' civilization and Christianization, and anger at the ABCFM's leadership for failing to adequately condemn slavery among the southeastern tribes. For a summary of the reasons each individual missionary chose to stay or leave the Dakota mission after 1851, see Linda M. Clemmons, Conflicted Mission: Faith, Disputes, and Deception on the Dakota Frontier (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014), pp. 135–47.

^{19.} Stephen R. Riggs, Mary and I: Forty Years with the Sioux (Chicago: W. G. Holmes, 1880), p. 42; Annual Report of the ABCFM (Boston: T. R. Marvin and Son, 1862), p. 167; Missionary Herald 59 (Jan. 1863): 10.

^{20.} Annual Report of the ABCFM, p. 167.

of the conflict, between four hundred and six hundred white settlers and soldiers and around sixty Dakotas died in the fighting. The number of Dakota casualties, however, grew substantially following the war. While the military phase ended relatively quickly in early September, the war's legacy influenced the treatment of the Dakotas for years to come. Following the war, settlers and officials in Minnesota demanded the immediate exile of all Dakotas, if not their complete extermination as a people.²¹

In the upheaval following the war, the ABCFM Dakota mission ceased to exist in Minnesota. Even if they had not participated in the war, Da-

21. In a chapter entitled "The Dark Hour," Stephen Riggs described the beginning of the war from the missionaries' viewpoint (Stephen Riggs, Tah-Koo Wah-Kań: Or, The Gospel Among the Dakotas [Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1869], pp. 280–303). Numerous books cover the 1862 war, including its aftermath. See, for instance, Gary Clayton Anderson, Massacre in Minnesota: The Dakota War of 1862, the Most Violent Ethnic Conflict in American History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019); Kenneth Carley, The Dakota War of 1862: Minnesota's Other Civil War (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001); Colette A. Hyman, Dakota Women's Work: Creativity, Culture, and Exile (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012); and Waziyatawin, What Does Justice Look Like?: The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland (St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2008). The number of settlers killed during the war has been debated since 1862. See Carol Chomsky, "The United States-Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Injustice," Stanford Law Review 43, no. 13 (1990): 21.

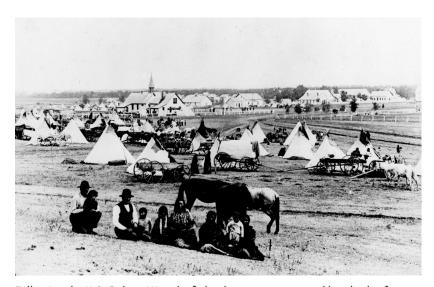


This image shows a group of settlers, reportedly led by Stephen Riggs, fleeing Minnesota during the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.

kotas were imprisoned, their treaties were abrogated, and they were exiled. Military officials transferred hundreds of Dakota men to a prison in Davenport, Iowa. Dakota families, mainly women, children, and the elderly, were removed to Crow Creek reservation in present-day South Dakota. After the war, the ABCFM's Dakota mission shifted between Iowa, Dakota Territory, Nebraska, and Montana, following the exiled Dakotas through multiple removals.

Especially following the U.S.-Dakota War, the evangelical press portrayed the Dakota missionaries as heroic and "voluntary martyrs to the Christian faith."²² Even before the war, however, the missionaries had challenged this image of their work. Those who had actually participated in missionary work for decades noted that their day-to-day experience was often frustrating, difficult, and physically and emotionally draining. In addition, missionary parents—especially mothers—worried that raising children near Indians would somehow "corrupt" their impressionable sons and daughters.

22. J. E. Godbey and A. H. Godbey, Light in Darkness: Missions and Missionary Heroes (St. Louis: Holloway & Co., 1887), p. 612.



Following the U.S.-Dakota War, the federal government moved hundreds of Dakotas—mostly women and children—to what would become the Crow Creek Indian Reservation near the big bend of the Missouri River. This photograph of a Dakota family on the reservation dates to the 1880s or 1890s.

The cautionary tale of Henry Riggs, born in Minnesota in 1849, summarizes many of the challenges and worries missionaries experienced bringing up their children near Dakota communities prior to their exile from Minnesota. Mary Riggs had little time to monitor Henry, her sixth child. In a letter to her eldest son Alfred, Mary worried about the potential negative effect that the Dakotas might have on her younger son's development. She informed Alfred that he had not been allowed to play outside as a child for fear that the Indians would influence him. By the time Henry arrived, however, she could not keep him and his brother Thomas inside. She worried that while this promoted their "physical development," it came "at the expense of their manners, if not their morals." Living and interacting with "Dakota boys," she argued, "is not to be desired."²³

Popular ideals about childrearing intensified Mary Riggs's fears about raising her children near American Indians. The nineteenth century witnessed profound changes in adult attitudes toward children.²⁴ By the beginning of the century, parents viewed children as malleable and as easily shaped by impressions received early in life, especially regarding religion. Horace Bushnell, a Congregational minister, promoted this interpretation of childhood. He explained in his 1847 book *Christian Nurture* that "children need not be converted, but rather, if properly reared, could be true Christians from birth."²⁵ As Bushnell famously stated, "The child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as otherwise."²⁶ Thus, moralists told parents (mainly mothers) to create environments conducive to raising pious, moral, and educated children. Historian Anne Boylan explained that evangelical mothers

^{23.} Maida L. Riggs, ed., A Small Bit of Bread and Butter: Letters from the Dakota Territory (Prairie Village, Kans.: Ash Grove Press, 1996), p. 223.

^{24.} For information on nineteenth century child-rearing practices, see Priscilla Ferguson Clement, Growing Pains: Children in the Industrial Age, 1850–1890 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997); Nancy Cott, "Notes toward an Interpretation of Antebellum Childrearing," in American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook, ed. Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 111–52; and Jacqueline S. Reinier, From Virtue to Character: American Childhood, 1775–1850 (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

^{25.} Sánchez-Eppler, "Raising Empires like Children," p. 409.

^{26.} Quoted in Margaret Bendroth, "Horace Bushnell's Christian Nurture," in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William Eerdmans, 2001), p. 350.

needed to train their children to live useful, Christian lives.²⁷ Mothers would do this by creating "little churches" within their homes where impressionable children could absorb Christian teachings and morality.²⁸ In sum, mothers needed to create protected spaces where their children could develop, as historian K. Elise Leal describes, "innate sensitivity and goodness."²⁹

As the emphasis on creating an ideal environment for children increased in importance, missionary parents worried that raising their children in a supposedly heathen and uncivilized setting might corrupt their young minds and lead them down the wrong path. In the worst-case scenario, the children might even adopt Indian gender roles and other cultural and religious attributes. This fear was not unique to the Dakota mission. Missionaries in Hawaii, for instance, dreaded the "moral pollution" of their children by the Native Hawaiians. In Hawaii and on the Minnesota frontier, missionary parents, as historian Mary Zweip explains, believed that it was "moral death" for their children to be influenced by those they came to convert. 32

In her letters, Mary Riggs frequently wondered if growing up near the Dakotas negatively influenced Henry and his older brother Thomas. Indeed, trouble followed the boys from an early age. Every family memoir mentions that they accidentally burned down the family's home at the Lac qui Parle mission station in March 1854. ³³ According to this story, the brothers had been sent down to the cellar to collect vegetables

^{27.} Anne M. Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Women in Sunday Schools," Feminist Studies 4 (Oct. 1973): 66.

^{28.} Bendroth, "Horace Bushnell's Christian Nurture," p. 356.

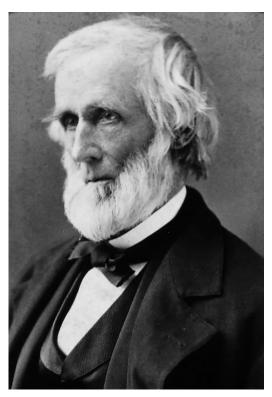
^{29.} Leal, "'All Our Children May be Taught of God': Sunday Schools and the Roles of Childhood and Youth in Creating Evangelical Benevolence," *Church History* 87 (Dec. 2018): 1072.

^{30.} For a more detailed discussion of missionary fears about raising their children near Indians, see Clemmons, "'Our children are in danger of becoming little Indians': Protestant Missionary Children and Dakotas, 1835–1862," Michigan Historical Review 25 (Fall 1999): 69–90. See also Clemmons, "'We find it a difficult work': Dakota Borders and Protestant Missionaries, 1835–1862," American Indian Quarterly 24 (Fall 2000): 570–600.

^{31.} Jennifer Fish Kashay, "Problems in Paradise: The Peril of Missionary Parenting in Early Nineteenth-Century Hawaii," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 77 (Summer 1999): 86.

^{32.} Zweip, "Sending the Children Home: A Dilemma for Early Missionaries," Hawaiian Journal of History 24 (1990): 46.

^{33.} For example, see Riggs, Sunset to Sunset, p. 16; Williams, By the Great Wall, pp. 16-17.



The prominent author and minister Horace Bushnell, pictured here around 1870, helped shape nineteenth-century attitudes about childrearing.

for dinner when the flame of their candle set some straw on fire. The boys quickly put out the flames, but then deliberately ignited the straw again to see what would happen. This time, they could not put out the flames and the fire spread throughout the home. The family lost almost everything. In his memoir, Stephen Riggs chastised the boys for their "carelessness" and "thoughtlessness." Their behavior did not seem to improve over the years. In 1861, Mary and Stephen discussed sending Thomas to live with a Presbyterian pastor in St. Anthony, Minnesota, to isolate him from the "corrupting" influence of the Dakotas. Henry, however, remained at home. The set of the straw of the straw of the straw of the set of the Dakotas.

Mary must have questioned her decision to keep Henry at home, as his problems increased several years later. Following the 1862 War,

^{34.} Riggs, Sunset to Sunset, p. 16.

^{35.} Riggs, Mary and I, p. 151.

^{36.} Riggs, A Small Bit of Bread and Butter, p. 225.

178 • South Dakota History • Vol. 51, No. 2



Missionaries Stephen and Mary Riggs pose together in this undated photograph.

Mary settled with her youngest children at a rented home in Beloit, Wisconsin. During this time, her husband, Stephen, was away from Beloit more than he was home. From 1863 to 1864, Stephen accompanied troops during the government's punitive expeditions against the Dakotas, ministered to the Dakota prisoners incarcerated in Davenport, and traveled around Dakota Territory evaluating locations for the ABCFM's new mission stations. Mary wrote numerous letters to her husband

during his long absences. While these messages covered several topics, one of her main concerns was Henry. She never worried about Henry's future as a missionary but instead had more fundamental concerns about his poor character, work ethic, and most alarming, his lack of religious devotion.

Historians have noted that many in the early nineteenth century viewed youth, then loosely defined as the period before a child turned fourteen years old, as a critical period. Observers during this time believed, according to Anne Boylan, that "the mind generally takes a decided turn, and the happiness and usefulness of the character is ensured or destroyed."37 Mary worried incessantly that she had failed Henry during this critical period, perhaps because of her inability to properly isolate him from contact with the Dakotas. According to her observations, Henry thought only of himself and his immediate wants—a charge that the missionaries constantly leveled against the Dakotas. For instance, he did not perform chores properly, if at all. He haphazardly stacked the corn, which put it in danger of spoiling.³⁸ Another time, she told Henry to get water for washing before going skating. Henry did not get the water. Instead, he went skating, proceeded to fall into the pond, and came home dripping dirty water all over the clean floor. Henry readily admitted to neglecting his duties; for example, he informed his father that he had received a letter but had "neglected to answer it from mere laziness."39

Without Henry's help, his sister Martha was forced to shoulder more of the burden at home, as her mother was often ill and unable to perform many household chores. As Martha complained to her oldest brother Alfred, "Henry is a great care . . . he is not doing well at all. . . . It makes it much harder for me—for I am often out of wood—and water. . . . Pray for him." Martha resented the fact that, as a woman, her family expected her to pick up the work of her wayward brother. More important, she put her own dreams of missionary work on hold. "No one can honor the ministry with its hard work and little pay, more than I do," Martha informed Alfred. "But there is not even anything like that

^{37.} Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century," p. 68.

^{38.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 5 Oct. 1864, Stephen R. Riggs and Family Correspondence, concerning Lac qui Parle Mission and other Matters, typescript, MHS.

^{39.} Henry Riggs to Stephen Riggs, [n.d.] 1870, Alfred Riggs Papers, CWS.

open for me—and that is because I am a woman, you know."⁴⁰ Martha felt "as if I should have gone as a missionary and yet... [t]here is need for work at home."⁴¹ Indeed, Martha's mother called her "our indispensable helper, and housekeeper."⁴²

In addition to shirking his duties at home and keeping his sister from missionary work, Henry failed to hold a job. Mary had "hoped at least to be able to say that Henry had found a place to work, but vain hope, he doesn't seem willing to seek earnestly enough to find."⁴³ She eventually found Henry employment at their local church, but the minister soon let him go. Mary informed her husband that Henry "was relieved from duty as Sexton yesterday. It was a great disappointment. It seems he has not been particular and careful enough in keeping the church neatly."⁴⁴ After losing his job, he spent his evenings playing cards.⁴⁵

Henry's inability to perform chores at home or in the church showed a troubling lack of character. Mary called Henry "defiant and determined." He always seemed "bent on doing just as he pleases and making every one in the family do the same. He teases the children and worries everybody. I have seen this spirit growing more and more intolerable for a long time, but have felt unable to root it out. . . . He will do just as he chooses, and he generally chooses his own ease and gratification." ⁴⁶ Mary even contemplated sequestering Henry from her two youngest children, Robert and Cordelia, to "avoid tainting them with his ungovernability," just as she had considered isolating Henry from the Dakotas years earlier. ⁴⁷

Mary's complaints about Henry's supposed character flaws provided the background for her concern about his lack of religious devotion. Her most important task as a mother was to "see all our children walking in the narrow way to life eternal." She worried that she failed to

^{40.} Martha Riggs to Alfred Riggs, 23 Nov. 1864, ibid.

^{41.} Martha Riggs to Alfred and Mary Riggs, 1 June 1867, ibid.

^{42.} Mary Riggs to Alfred Riggs, 30 Mar. 1864, ibid.

^{43.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 19 July 1866, Stephen R. Riggs and Family Correspondence.

^{44.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 10 Sept. 1864, ibid.

^{45.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 28 Feb. 1868, ibid.

^{46.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 5 Nov. 1864, ibid.

^{47.} Riggs, Sunset to Sunset, p. xi.

^{48.} Mary Riggs to Alfred Riggs, 8 Jan. 1867, Stephen R. Riggs and Family Correspondence.

instill religious devotion in Henry. She informed her eldest son that Henry "is yet a great grief to me. Although he united with the church last winter, I fear he is yet a rebel against God and a stranger to grace." In another letter, she worried that "the Devil has great power over him . . . I pray that he [the Holy Spirit] will spare H[enry] and by whatever means he sees best, bring him to repentance before it is too late." Mary's concern about Henry's lack of piety went so deep that she did not want anyone outside her family to know about her failings as a mother. Following a long discourse on Henry's sins to her absent husband, Mary ordered him to "burn this [letter]. I have written this, sorry to pain you yet desiring to help you to see that we have failed in training up our boys 'in His way they should go.'" Si

As the situation became more trying, Mary thought up numerous suggestions to save her son. Most importantly, she dutifully sent Henry to church each week. She hoped that doing so would change his behavior, noting, "It seems as though the goodness of God must lead us all to thankfulness—even Henry." She also decided that he needed to marry a good, Christian woman. Perhaps "the love of a pure minded affectionate woman would rouse his [Henry] better nature." A devoted wife would help to "conquer . . . the brutal spirit" and "bring him to a participation in love Divine." Mary had "great faith in the power of love over our poor weak sinful natures."

Finally, Mary implored her husband to come home to deal with Henry. Stephen could provide "a firmer and more watchful government" that would save Henry from "such grievous rebellion against their parents and their God." As historian William McLoughlin notes, evangelical parenting books of the era warned that the absence of fathers away on business, or in the Riggs' case with the military and Dakotas, often led to inadequate discipline for children. Periodicals of the era lectured that there "was no substitute for the father's authority." As such,

^{49.} Mary Riggs to Alfred Riggs, 10 Oct. 1864, ibid.

^{50.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 24 Nov. 1864, ibid.

^{51.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 5 Nov. 1864, ibid.

^{52.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 1 June 1865, ibid.

^{53.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 17 Aug. 1868, ibid.

^{54.} Mary Riggs to Stephen Riggs, 5 Nov. 1864, ibid.

^{55.} William G. McLoughlin, "Evangelical Childrearing in the Age of Jackson: Francis Wayland's Views on When and How to Subdue the Willfulness of Children," *Journal of Social History* 9 (Autumn 1975): 22.



Thomas Riggs stands at center of this image taken near Fort Sully, Dakota Territory, in 1871, not long after he arrived to set up the Hope Mission.

Mary's plea for Stephen's return reflected gender roles of the era that placed most of the burden of rearing children on women but carved out a role for fathers as disciplinarians.

In 1872, Mary finally embraced missionary work to turn her wayward son around. She sent Henry to Dakota Territory to help his older brother Thomas establish the Hope Mission, one of the first Protestant missions to the Lakotas. ⁵⁶ At Hope Mission, located across the Missouri River from Fort Sully, Henry performed manual labor, helping to build the mission home, church, and school. ⁵⁷ When Henry's work with his brother finally seemed to turn his life around, Mary probably breathed a sigh of relief. After leaving the Lakota mission, Henry worked with another brother, Alfred, at the Santee Normal Training School in Nebraska. He married Lucy Marie Dodge, a teacher at the school, in 1878, and continued in his role as farm superintendent and steward until 1882. ⁵⁸

^{56.} Riggs, Sunset to Sunset, p. vii.

^{57.} Thomas and Henry Riggs established Hope Station, later called the Oahe Mission, in Dakota Territory in 1872. See Roger Holtzmann, "Apostles on the Plains," South Dakota Magazine (Nov./Dec. 2010), southdakotamagazine.com/apostles-on-the-plains.

^{58.} For information on Henry Riggs's missionary work and marriage, see American Missionary Association, Santee Normal Training School, Santee Agency, Nebraska for the year

Mary sent Henry to the Hope Mission to provide him with direction, hard work, and religion. At the same time, however, she did not want her children to feel obligated to choose missionary work because of their upbringing. When Stephen attempted to give Alfred advice about becoming a missionary, Mary quickly warned that he should "not influence you [Alfred] in any way whatever." Stephen must have taken Mary's warning to heart, as he later claimed that he never used any "special influence . . . to draw [his children] into the missionary work. . . . But we certainly did desire—and our desire was not concealed—that all our children should develop into the most noble and useful lives." 60

ending June 30, 1881, digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=santee_school; American Missionary Association, Santee Normal Training School, Santee Agency, Nebraska for the year ending June 30, 1882, digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=santee_school. Henry Riggs married Lucy Marie Dodge on 24 September 1878 in Santee, Nebraska. See Riggs, Mary and I, pp. 367–68. 59. Stephen Riggs to Alfred Riggs, 19 Jan. 1867, Alfred Riggs Papers. 60. Riggs, Mary and I, p. 251.



Stanley J. Morrow photographed several structures at the Santee mission—located on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River near Yankton, Dakota Territory—in 1870, the same year that Alfred Riggs founded the Santee Normal Training School.

While Stephen may not have pushed missionary work on his children, he had no compunction about offering advice if they expressed an interest in his work. When Alfred approached his father about becoming a missionary, Stephen counseled his son to not join the Dakota mission. Rather, he encouraged Alfred to consider a more prestigious foreign appointment in China or Turkey, telling Alfred that a placement in one of these countries "will meet with my most hearty approval—and my blessing shall go with you. I do not think that the question of going to the Dakotas should at all obstruct your pathway to other fields." Stephen's comments indicate the higher prestige afforded to missionary work outside of the United States, and his own disappointment that he had not received one of these choice positions at the beginning of his own career. "If China had been then open to the gospel, as it was twenty years afterward," he opined, "I should have probably elected to go there."

Whether in China or Minnesota, missionary parents ironically worried that their children might not be able to deal with the privations that came with establishing new mission stations on the frontier. Building new settlements from the ground up was hard work: it involved constructing homes, barns, a church, and a school; clearing and planting crops; and establishing a domestic routine, all without sufficient monetary support. Stephen Riggs mused that his children would not be "as well contented in such circumstances now as we were then. And I am not sure that any of our children would willingly put up with so many inconveniences." Thomas Williamson noted that his daughter "had seen enough of missionary life to know that the call was to a life of toil, with a salary barely sufficient to meet her current expenses."

Riggs and Williamson realized that missionary life was difficult on many levels. They worried about the social, emotional, and especially religious development of their children in the mission field. They also fretted about how much to guide their children and how much they should let them make their own choices. When their children came of

^{61.} Stephen Riggs to Alfred Riggs, 12 Feb. 1867, Alfred Riggs Papers.

^{62.} Riggs, Mary and I, p. 5.

^{63.} Stephen Riggs to Alfred Riggs, 6 Dec. 1865, Alfred Riggs Papers.

^{64.} Thomas Williamson, "Obituary of Miss Julia LaFromboise," 7 Nov. 1871, mss. 309, ABCFM Papers, MHS.

age, missionary parents tried to balance their desire to continue that work with their adult children's demands for autonomy. Of course, all parents, then and now, worry about a myriad of issues as their children grow and mature. The unique challenges of raising children in the mission field, however, heightened parents' anxiety, leading them to constantly worry about their children's development and choices.

The children of missionaries also experienced their own anxiety over missionary work as they neared adulthood. Despite these concerns, all of the children who grew up at the ABCFM stations in Minnesota embraced their parents' evangelical Protestant religion. The existing records of the Dakota churches show that many of the missionary boys and girls underwent conversion experiences and joined the church at early ages. 65 According to his father, Alfred Riggs experienced a saving change at the age of eleven, whereas most of his cousins back east did not convert until their late teens. 66 Alfred attributed his early conversion to being raised in the mission field. "Our missionary homes are in reality better than others. And there is reason for it," he wrote. "By reason of the surrounding heathenism, the light and power of Christianity is more centered and confined in the home. And then, again, its power is developed by its antagonism to the darkness and wickedness around it. For either its light must ever shine clearer, or grow more dim until it expires."67 Like Alfred, John P. Williamson also was "received to the communion of the church at Kaposia" at a young age. 68 Eliza Huggins fervently prayed for her conversion at the age of fourteen. She "knelt by the bed [and] resolved to remain there until she felt she had made a full surrender and been accepted."69

^{65.} For a list of church admissions at one mission station, see "Names of Church Members of Baptized Children at Lac Qui Parle," Box 1, Alexander G. Huggins and Family Papers, MHS. See below.

^{66.} Stephen Riggs to Selah Treat, 13 Dec. 1848, ABCFM Papers. For the typical age of conversion, see Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century," p. 326.

^{67.} Riggs, Mary and I, p. 247.

^{68.} Thomas Williamson, "Planting the Gospel in Minnesota and among the Dakotas, Sermon," 3 Sept. 1876, Thomas Williamson Papers, microfilm ed., Reel 2, MHS. I was unable to find the exact date of Williamson's conversion, but since he was born at Lac qui Parle in 1835 and the Kaposia mission was open from 1846–1852, his conversion most likely occurred between the ages of eleven and seventeen.

^{69.} Mary Huggins Kerlinger, Reminiscences of Missionaries Among the Dakotas, pp. 161–62, Box 1, Alexander G. Huggins and Family Papers.





He acquired the Indian point of view.

He played with the Indian boys around his home.

Biographer Winifred W. Barton described John P. Williamson as a "friend," "brother," and "helper" to the Dakotas. The images in Barton's John P. Williamson: A Brother to the Sioux, such as the ones seen here, reinforced that message.

As their early conversions illustrated, most missionary children accepted their parents' religious beliefs and became active members of their church, despite, or perhaps because of, being raised near the Dakotas. Even for Henry, who caused his mother such anxiety during his early teenage years, these conversions lasted well beyond childhood. Thomas Williamson observed that the eight Riggs children, "all survive and are all communicants of churches."70 In addition, Williamson proudly stated that, of the thirty-three surviving children of the Dakota mission, "not one is immoral or uses intoxicating drinks and I think not one uses tobacco." Mary Riggs and the other missionaries could take pride in the fact that their "children are the Lord's, and that

^{70.} Thomas Williamson, "Planting the Gospel in Minnesota and among the Dakotas, Sermon," 3 Sept. 1876, Thomas Williamson Papers. 71. Ibid.

they are doing his work and walking in the path he has marked out for them." 72

In addition to accepting their parents' religion, the children of missionaries wholeheartedly agreed that the Dakotas needed to be Christianized and civilized, in that order. Alfred Riggs remembered that his "first serious impression of life was that I was living under a great weight of something; and as I began to discern more clearly, I found this weight to be the all-surrounding, overwhelming presence of heathenism, and all the instincts of my birth and all the culture of a Christian home set me at antagonism to it at every point." The solution to ending "heathenism" was conversion. Francis Huggins, the daughter of Alexander Huggins, one of the first missionaries to the Dakotas, wrote that "some people think we don't need to send missionaries to the Heathen . . . others think they can't become Christians and go to Heaven. Neither of which I believe . . . all who accept the Bible as the word of God . . . shall be saved."

Missionaries believed that converting Indians was a moral imperative and would literally save lives. Like their parents, missionary children saw conversion and "civilization" as an antidote to federal Indian policy, which frequently focused on taking tribal lands through violence and military campaigns. In the minds of missionaries and evangelical publications, they were truly friends to the Indians. According to his biographer, John Williamson always acted as a "dear friend" to Indians by working to assure that "all the aborigines of our country may soon be brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." One supporter even went so far as to call Williamson "an emancipator of Sioux Dakota." Martha Riggs, meanwhile, "had so many Indian friends" because she "lifted [them] up and made ready for heaven."

The evangelical press also depicted missionary children as pious, self-sacrificing, and uniquely suited to become missionaries. Alfred

 $^{72.\} Mary$ Riggs to Mrs. Drake, 16 Mar. 1868, Stephen R. Riggs and Family Correspondence.

^{73.} Riggs, Mary and I, p. 245.

^{74.} Francis Huggins Pettijohn, "A Family History," Box 1, Alexander G. Huggins and Family Papers.

^{75.} Barton, John P. Williamson, p. 222.

^{76.} Ibid., p. 261.

^{77.} Riggs, Our Martha, p. 18.

Riggs's "early life and special training" supposedly "gave him a clear view of the interests of the entire field." An article published in *The Evangelist* mentioned that Thomas Riggs was "peculiarly fitted" for missionary work because as a boy he "had grown up among the Dakotas, speaking their language, understanding their customs, and identifying himself with their best interest." Likewise, Isabella Riggs was an "exceptionally equipped missionary" because she had been raised to have the "faith and the patience of the saints." Missionary children were "born into a home of high and holy ideals, where devotion to duty regardless of personal desire or physical discomfort was ever uppermost, trained in an atmosphere of asceticism and self-repression."

These publications were correct on several points. The second generation of missionary children possessed several unique skills that set them apart from other missionary candidates. Most of them recognized the necessity of manual labor on the frontier, spoke fluent Dakota, and were familiar with the tribe's cultural and religious practices, despite evaluating them negatively. Their parents had also raised them to be passionate evangelical Christians. This passion convinced them of the desperate need to convert and civilize all non-Christians. As Isabella Riggs summarized her unique upbringing, "This idea of helpfulness came early into our lives. We learned to read Dakota in order to help with the singing at Indian meetings, and we dearly loved to sing those good Dakota hymns."

During the 1860s and beyond, second-generation missionaries—and even third and fourth generations as well—proselytized to the Dakotas, Lakotas, and Nakotas of Minnesota, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska. Alfred and Thomas Riggs, as well as John P. Williamson, labored as missionaries throughout their careers. Other missionary children, including Hugh Cunningham, Sarah Williamson, Edward and Mary Hopkins Pond, Martha, Anna, Henry, Robert, and Cornelia Riggs, and several Huggins children, also continued their parents' work. Isabella Riggs even participated in an arranged marriage, just as her

^{78.} Riggs, Sunset to Sunset, p. 20.

^{79.} Ibid., p. 46.

^{80.} Williams, By the Great Wall, p. 5.

^{81.} Riggs, Sunset to Sunset, p. 5.

^{82.} Williams, By the Great Wall, p. 15.

mother had done decades earlier, with Reverend Mark Williams, which allowed her to travel overseas for missionary work in China. ⁸³ Thus, Isabella, rather than her brothers, fulfilled her father's desire for a Riggs to obtain a prestigious overseas post.

The ABCFM's Dakota mission was not an anomaly; children affiliated with other ABCFM missions also became missionaries when they reached adulthood. In 1852, the children of ABCFM missionaries formed the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society to support a new mission in Micronesia. The six sons of Peter and Fanny Gulick, ABCFM missionaries in Hawaii, entered the profession after finishing their schooling.⁸⁴

83. Into the present day, many children of missionaries continue to become missionaries upon reaching adulthood, albeit in much smaller percentages than in the nineteenth century. Depending on the study, sociologists estimate that between 9 and 20 percent of missionary children become missionaries in the modern day. *See* Jeanne Stevenson Moessner, "Missionary Motivation," *Sociological Analysis* 53 (Summer 1992): 196.

84. Patricia Grimshaw, "'Christian Woman, Pious Wife, Faithful Mother, Devoted Missionary': Conflicts in Roles of American Missionary Women in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii," Feminist Studies 9 (Autumn 1983): 511. See also Joy Schulz, Hawaiian by Birth: Missionary Children, Bicultural Identity, and U.S. Colonialism in the Pacific (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017).



In 1874, Thomas Riggs established the Oahe Mission just north of Pierre. The chapel and Riggs's residence, seen in this 1928 photograph, remained there for decades. The chapel was relocated when the construction of the Oahe Dam inundated the site in 1962.

Maria Whitney, whose parents were also stationed in Hawaii, returned to the islands as a missionary at age twenty-three. ⁸⁵ Even when the children of Hawaiian missionaries returned to the mainland to complete their education, they "almost without exception" planned to return to the islands. ⁸⁶ Myron Eells, the son of ABCFM missionaries Cushing and Myra Eells, proselytized to Indians in Oregon and later established his own mission on the Skokomish Indian Reservation on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington Territory. ⁸⁷

Other children of missionaries ultimately selected a different path. The number of children from the Dakota mission who followed in the footsteps of their parents looks less impressive when considering the large size of most mission families. Gideon Pond, for example, had sixteen children, only one of whom, Edward, chose missionary work. Gideon's brother Samuel had four children, none of whom worked as missionaries. Only one of Thomas Williamson's three sons became a missionary. Agnes and Robert Hopkins had three children; only Mary, who married Edward Pond, continued in the path of her parents. Four of Riggs's eight children spent their entire lives as missionaries; two spent several years as missionaries but left for other vocations; and two never considered becoming missionaries. The children of other Dakota missionaries, including Alexander Huggins, Moses Adams, and Jedidiah Stevens, also opted for other vocations.

Eli Huggins spoke for many of the missionary children who respected their parents' zealousness but took different paths for themselves. Although Huggins admired his father's commitment to the Dakotas and to Christianity, he realized that he did not have the same religious devotion. Huggins explained that his father "would have gone to the stake for his religion." However, he "could not do so. . . . I would burn a little incense if necessary . . . and would find some salve for my conscience and I would hope to repent and be forgiven for my apostasy." Instead

^{85.} Zweip, "Sending the Children Home: A Dilemma for Early Missionaries," p. 61.

^{86.} Joy Schulz, "Crossing the Pali: White Missionary Children, Bicultural Identity, and the Racial Divide in Hawai'i, 1820–1898," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 6 (Spring 2013): 210.

^{87.} Biographical Note, Myron Eells Papers, 1850-1897, Pacific University Archives, nwda. orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv32708, accessed 10 Apr. 2018.

^{88.} Eli Huggins, "Boyhood Reminiscences of General Huggins," p. 12, Alexander G. Huggins and Family Papers.



Students at the Oahe Industrial School, started on the grounds of the Oahe Mission in 1883, write on the chalkboard in this undated photograph.

of missionary work, Huggins joined the Second Minnesota Infantry Regiment in 1861 and enlisted in the Regular Army after the Civil War. He served in that branch for the rest of his career, eventually being promoted to brigadier general.⁸⁹

For those who did sign on for missionary labor, their choice was not an easy or unthinking one. Indeed, they all realized the challenges of proselytizing to Indians and pointedly rejected the romantic view of missionary work that the evangelical press promoted. John P. William-

89. For a short biography of Eli Huggins, see Cynthia Jorgenrud, "Eli Lindy Huggins," Minnesota Medal of Honor Memorial, minnesotamedal of honor memorial.org/wp-content/up loads/2017/12/Huggins-Eli-L.-Bio-July-16.pdf, accessed 12 Aug. 2020.

son explained that "there was no glamour or romance in spending a lifetime with the 'Noble Red Man.'" He knew that missionary work meant giving up "the comforts and refinements of civilization, the companionship of cultured people, the ambition to win and name and fame as a preacher, for a life of privation and hardship with few to know or care."90 While he eventually decided to pursue missionary work, he did so after careful thought and prayer.

Thomas Riggs also rejected the romantic version of missionary work. He did not originally want to "follow in the footsteps" of his parents. He reported that his boyhood experiences "were such that I looked elsewhere." He realized that it was "rather strange that the children of missionaries should have to go through such a time of uncertainty," but believed that the process was "perfectly natural." He observed that for the second generation, "There is nothing of the unknown for them. Their decision must be made in spite of the facts with which they have been most closely associated." Similarly, as Mary Huggins acknowledged, "Mission work has both dark and light sides."

Likewise, Martha Riggs had similar doubts about entering missionary work. In the late 1850s, Martha left Minnesota to attend the Western Female Seminary in Oxford, Ohio. While at school, she experienced a crisis of sorts about her upbringing and her identity as a missionary's daughter. Because her parents were missionaries, Riggs felt compelled to try to convert her fellow classmates. She also worried about being ungrateful and wayward, among other self-described failings. She fretted that she would never "become good enough and patient enough to do what I want to." When faced with these impossible standards, Martha wrote an acquaintance that she wished she "had not been born a missionary's daughter." After her brief crisis of faith, however, Martha called her upbringing as a "poor missionary's daughter" a "blessing," arguing that it kept her from becoming "a woman like those whose character I so thoroughly despise, for I feel that I have it in me to be

^{90.} Barton, John P. Williamson, pp. 44-45.

^{91.} Riggs, Sunset to Sunset, p. 40.

^{92.} Kerlinger, Reminiscences of Missionaries Among the Dakotas, p. 110, Alexander G. Huggins and Family Papers.

^{93.} Martha Riggs to Lucy Drake, 13 Feb. 1859, Stephen R. Riggs and Family Papers.

^{94.} Martha Riggs to Lucy Drake, 4 May 1858, ibid.

proud, vain, and heartless."⁹⁵ After leaving school, Martha married and eventually worked as a teacher at the Goodwill Mission, located on the Lake Traverse Reservation, in Dakota Territory.

Like his peers, Alfred Riggs struggled with the decision to become a missionary. He explained this internal debate in a lengthy passage printed in his father's history of the Dakota mission:

Of late years the children of missionaries have everywhere furnished a large portion of the new reinforcements. This is both natural and strange. It is natural that they should desire to stay the hands of their parents, and go to reap what they have sown. On the other hand, they go out in the face of all the hardships of the work, made vividly real to them by the experiences of their childhood. They are attracted by no romantic sentiment. The romance is for them all worn off long ago. . . . [T]hose of us on this field know the noble red man of the poet to be a myth. We know the real savage, and know him almost too well. Thus those who follow in the work of their missionary fathers do not do it without a struggle—often fearful. 96

95. Martha Riggs to Lucy Drake, 28 Apr. 1860, ibid. 96. Riggs, Mary and I, pp. 249–50.



Photographer H. J. Smith captured this image of the Goodwill Mission, located near Sisseton, Dakota Territory, in 1885.

John P. Williamson, Alfred, Martha, and Thomas Riggs, and Mary Huggins also questioned becoming missionaries. While all five would eventually embrace missionary work, they realized that it would not be an easy life. It involved proselytizing to Indians who often did not want to hear their message, living on the frontier with limited resources, and raising their own children under these trying conditions. Still, some of these second-generation missionaries, just as their parents had decades earlier, believed their sacrifices would be worthwhile if they could convert the Dakotas and save them from perishing.

Although the evangelical press promoted missionary work for all Christian children, the authors who penned these pleas did not feel the need to focus their efforts on the children of missionaries, assuming that they would follow in the footsteps of their devoted parents. The reality of growing up in the mission field, however, was more complicated than evangelical literature led readers to believe. Missionary parents—especially mothers—worried that raising children on the frontier and close to Indians would make them less pious. These fears rubbed off on their children, who carefully considered whether to continue their parents' work with the ABCFM once they reached adulthood. Many rejected their parents' choices, instead choosing to be teachers, lawyers, soldiers, or ministers to Euro-American congregations. Even those who ultimately signed on as "friends of the Indian," resolutely rejected rose-colored descriptions of missionary work and acknowledged the difficulties of working with Indians who often rejected their message.

Of course, missionary children's struggles were one-sided. The second generation of missionaries, like their parents, did not ask the Dakotas—or any Native peoples—whether they wanted missionaries building churches, schools, and farms on their lands. These two generations (and eventually, in the case of the Riggs and Williamsons, third and fourth generations) assumed that they knew what was best and that the Dakotas just did not realize this yet. They believed whole-heartedly in their own cultural and religious superiority and wanted to save those who had not yet accepted Protestantism. Indeed, they hoped to use their unique knowledge of the Dakotas' culture, language, and religion to irrevocably alter it. In the end, despite their parents' fears, missionary children—even if they did not become missionaries themselves—supported the call to fight and spread Christianity around the world.

Thus, as historian Joy Schulz explains, "The children themselves became parts of the imperial process, their American parents constructing and transmitting a colonial agenda for them." A eulogy celebrating John Williamson's long life and missionary work linked the first and second generation's work among the Dakotas. Williamson's career, the message declared, "is an outstanding demonstration of Home Missions preparing the Western frontier for civilization, which ever follows closely the blazed trail of the missionary."98

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97. Schulz, "Crossing the Pali," p. 209.
98. Barton, John P. Williamson, p. 266.
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