

SALVATION AND SOCIOLOGY IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL DEACONESS MOVEMENT

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Rather than being an American innovation which was spread to missionary contexts abroad, the deaconess movement in the Methodist Episcopal Church began on the Methodist missionary frontiers of India and Germany in the late 19th century. The appeals to General Conference in April 1888 to establish the office of deaconess originated in the Bengal Conference in India and the Rock River Conference in Illinois. Bishop James Thoburn, a well-known missionary from India, led the petitions through the intricacies of the General Conference with the urging of his missionary sister, Isabella Thoburn, who had recently joined forces with Chicago's Lucy Rider Meyer in their common cause to gain General Conference recognition of the deaconess movement.

Methodist churches in Germany were founded as a result of American Methodist missionary efforts in 1850. As early as 1864, five years before Isabella Thoburn went to India as a missionary, the minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church's Germany Annual Conference refer to a "Committee on the Establishment of a Deaconess Institution." The Methodists in Germany realized they were losing women to Lutherans and other denominations because they did not have an established deaconess role for women. The attempt to establish a deaconess movement in German Methodism initially failed in 1873 but succeeded a year later with the establishment of the *Bethanien Verein* (Bethany Society). In 1878 there were seven trained deaconesses of the Methodist church in Germany, ten years before the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church formally recognized the deaconess office.¹

Similar movements of "Methodist Sisters" occurred in Britain in the 1870s under the leadership of Katharine and Hugh Price Hughes, the most prominent Methodist preacher in Britain at the turn of the century. Katharine Price Hughes initiated the idea of a sisterhood which her husband deemed, "by far the most important departure of the Mission."² The term "deaconesses"

was not used for the West London Sisterhood since Hugh Price Hughes, "did not fancy the title."³

These deaconess movements are essential for understanding the context of the New England Deaconess Training School's development as the first Methodist deaconess school on the eastern seaboard. The New England Deaconess Training School was not an isolated development. The international deaconess movements likewise nurtured the founding of the Chicago and Cincinnati Deaconess Schools, the two North American Deaconess Schools which preceded New England.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the deaconess movement by examining the New England deaconess training school in light of the intellectual currents shaping the Methodist deaconess schools and the impact of the developing discipline of sociology in the United States. The developing field of sociology from 1889 to 1914 is of particular relevance for understanding the New England Deaconess Training School and the deaconess movement as a whole. The New England Training School's geographic proximity to Harvard University, the early leader in the definition of social ethics and sociology, makes the New England school important to examine for the way it interacted with the disciplines of sociology and social ethics.⁴ None of the thirteen Methodist deaconess training schools established the USA at the turn of the century received as direct an influence from academic centers as the deaconess school in Boston.⁵ The New England Deaconess Training School is also especially worthy of study given the central role New England played in the founding of women's missionary societies two decades earlier.⁶

Other scholars have documented the rise and decline of the deaconess movement in the USA, but little attention has been given to the deaconess movement in light of the developments in the field of sociology and social

¹Dorothea Price Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1904), 202. Lucy Rider Meyer visited England in the years preceding the establishment of the Chicago Training School in 1885, (Lee, 1963, 25). In England Meyer learned about the deaconess movement initiated by Theodore Fliedner in Germany. However, there is no evidence that Lucy Rider Meyer visited Germany and the Kaiserswerth institutions herself until 1896.

²To give the title of "disciplines" to the fields of sociology and social ethics is somewhat anachronistic. The fields of sociology and social ethics were virtually indistinguishable from one another in the late 19th century. Neither area of study had anything remotely resembling an established discipline when compared with philosophy, history, or theology.

³The Chicago Training School may have received influence from the University of Chicago at a later date but not in the early years of its founding. Jane Addams' Hull House was established nearly at the same time as the Chicago Deaconess Training School. Addams had an important role in the early years of the Chicago school of sociology in the early 1890s. Mary Jo Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892-1918* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, Inc., 1988).

⁴Dana Robert, "Holiness and the Missionary Vision of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1869-1894," *Methodist History*, vol.39(1), October, 2000, 15-27.

⁵Elizabeth Meredith Lee, *As Among the Methodist Deaconesses Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (New York: Woman's Division of Christian Service, Board of Missions, The Methodist Church, 1963) 21.

⁶Philip S. Bagwell, *Outcast London: A Christian Response: The West London Mission of the Methodist Church, 1887-1987* (London: Epworth Press, 1987), 29.

ethics at the turn of the century.⁷ Scholars who have documented the history of sociology and the Social Gospel have tended to overlook the deaconess movement.⁸ In cities with a less vigorous academic tradition the oversight of the field of sociology and its impact on deaconess institutions is perhaps understandable. For Boston, the formal and informal connections between academic centers and the churches' social welfare work are important areas of study.

I

The New England Deaconess Training School was begun in 1889 in Boston, "to train evangelistic workers in both home and foreign fields and to utilize the energies of Christian women in active religious work."⁹ According to the opening address given by Isabella Thoburn, the new school received fifty applications for admission within a few months. "Twelve of these, after careful consideration, were accepted and the probationers are now engaged in active work."¹⁰ The low acceptance rate at the school during its initial years is striking. One of the features of most Deaconess schools was that they, "outdid the more conventional [academic] institutions

⁷Surveys of deaconess work include the following: Virginia Lieson Brereton, "Preparing Women for the Lord's Work: The Story of Three Methodist Training Schools, 1880-1940," in Hilah F. Thomas and Rosemary S. Keller, *Women in New Worlds* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981); Mary Agnes Dougherty's *My Calling to Fulfill: Deaconesses in the United Methodist Tradition*, (New York: Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries, 1997); Elizabeth M. Lee, *As Among the Methodist: Deaconesses Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (New York: Woman's Division of Christian Service, Board of Missions, The Methodist Church, 1963); Jeannine E. Olson, *One Ministry, Many Roles: Deacons and Deaconesses through the Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995). Carmen Dressler Ward, "Contributions of Women," in Jerry Cook, *Roots and Branches: Historical Essays on Methodism in Southern New England* (Boston: New England Methodist Historical Society, 1989). There is also a recently discovered dissertation on deaconesses authored by Emilie Grace Briggs, daughter of Charles A. Briggs, of Union Theological Seminary (NYC). It was found among her father's papers. Sadly, the dissertation was never accepted by her doctoral committee.

⁸Arthur J. Vidich and Stanford M. Lyman, *American Sociology: Worldly Rejections of Religion and Their Directions* (New Haven: Yale University, 1985). Vidich and Lyman mention the settlement house tradition with some detail but make no mention of the deaconess movement. Arthur Mann's book on Boston's social reformers between 1880-1900 overlooks the city's deaconesses as does Sarah Deutsch's recent text. Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954); Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹From the incorporation minutes of June 21, 1889. *New England Deaconess Association Corporation Records: June 21, 1889 - January 22, 1924*. This archive is available at the New England Deaconess Association, Concord, Massachusetts.

¹⁰Undated newspaper clipping in *New England Deaconess Association Corporation Records: June 21, 1889 - January 22, 1924*. This volume contains the incorporation documents and other minutes from the first decade of the school's existence.

in extending a welcome to all possible students."¹¹ With a less than 25% acceptance rate, this was not the case in the initial year of the New England School. The reasons for this low rate of acceptance are unclear.

The Incorporation Minutes for the New England Deaconess Home and Training School list eight persons present for the signing of the documents which officially created the Deaconess School. Only two were women: Harriet Warren and Emma Watkins. Harriet Warren, the wife of Boston University President William Warren, served as the editor of the popular Methodist periodical, the *Heathen Woman's Friend*, from 1869 until her death in 1893.¹² Having served previously as a Methodist missionary in Germany, it is quite possible that she was the only member of the first Board of Managers who had experience in earlier proposals for Methodist German deaconess institutions.¹³ It is logical to assume that among the Board of Managers, she was most personally acquainted with the Lutheran deaconess movement in Germany. She and her husband were stationed in Bremen, just over a hundred miles from Halle's famous diaconal institutions and its theological faculty.

Emma Watkins was part of the initial organizing committee prior to the official incorporation of the school. She also served as the Board's secretary beginning in 1890. Her husband, T. C. Watkins, received his B.D. degree from Boston University in 1878. This committee was comprised (presumably by order of the annual conference) of "two ministers, two laymen, and three women."¹⁴ Harriet Warren was not part of the organizing committee but was brought on the Board of Trustees at the time of incorporation. Isabela A. Cushing also appears on the Board of Trustees list in later meeting minutes in 1889. She served as treasurer of the Board of Trustees beginning in 1890. The following year, eleven out of the nineteen directors were women, although three of the five officers remained male.¹⁵

The curriculum for the entering class in 1889 involved a two-year set of courses and recommended readings. The first year's study at the Training School was more practical in its orientation than the first year curriculum at Boston University School of Theology in 1889. Deaconesses were required

¹¹Brereton, 181.

¹²Dana Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 142-143.

¹³Harriet Warren may have been in Germany until 1866, the year her husband was appointed to the faculty of Boston University. As previously mentioned, the first German Methodist discussion of a deaconess office took place in 1864.

¹⁴Undated newspaper clipping found in the inside front cover of *Corporation Records, 1889-1924*. The names of the seven persons appointed to this committee are listed in a 1925 annual report of the school. These persons included William N. Brodbeck, William R. Clark, Warren P. Adams, Willard S. Allen, Mrs. J. W. Cushing, Mrs. Silsa Peirce, and Mrs. T. C. (Emma) Watkins.

¹⁵Meeting minutes from May 19, 1891 in *New England Deaconess Association Corporation Records: June 21, 1889 - January 22, 1924*.

by the 1888 *Book of Discipline* to have been involved in active service work for at least two years prior to being named a deaconess. It appears the curriculum from the start was oriented toward this two-year service requirement along with two years of courses and readings.

Later publications of the Training School seem to indicate that a two-year course of study was deemed unnecessary even though the 1889 catalog does not suggest this. A 1909 *New England Deaconess Journal* mentions that in 1897 the required course of study was lengthened from one year to two years.¹⁶ It is possible that the second year of study listed in the 1889 catalog was optional. The school's curriculum had two tracks in 1890, one for women preparing to become nurses and one for women who were not training to be nurses. The difference in the curriculum is predictable. Those training to become nurses received less training in church history and the Bible and were not required to study the Methodist Episcopal *Book of Discipline*. They received more "theoretical instruction prescribed by the faculty of any standard training school for nurses, together with practical work in the hospital wards under the direction of the head nurse."¹⁷

The first year's study (for those in the non-nursing track) curriculum listed the following courses with their accompanying authors:

English Bible, book by book. *The Discipline. Catechism No. 3. Theological Compendium* - Binney. *Smaller History of the Bible* - Smith. *Life of Christ* - Stalker. *Bible Geography* - Huribut. *Church History* - Hurst.

Dwight L. Moody's *How to Study the Bible* is among the books cited in the recommended reading list. In the second year of the curriculum, the following courses are listed for both nursing candidates and other students:

Life of Christ - Geikie. *Life of John Wesley* - Watson. *Life of Sister Dora, Women and Temperance* - Willard. *Women of Methodism* - Abel Stevens. *Outline of the World's History* - Swinton. *School History of the United States* - Ridpath. *How We Live; or the Human Body and How to Take Care of It, The Bible*, book by book.

These lists of courses for the two-year curriculum of the school in 1890 illustrate the practical dimensions of theological education along with a strong emphasis on women's and deaconesses' history. Of the eight books listed as recommended reading during the first year, four of them are about women and deaconesses in ministry. Abel Stevens' book, *Women of Methodism, The Life of Sister Dora, and Women and Temperance* by Frances E.

¹⁶The December 1909 *New England Deaconess Journal* documents this change in course of study length which occurred in 1897. Since the training school had not opened until November 1889 and the first graduating class was in the Spring of 1891, it is likely that the length of study was less than two years.

¹⁷*First Annual Report of the New England Deaconess Home and Training School*, (Boston: McDonald, Gill, and Co., 1890).

Willard were all required reading for the second year. *Deaconesses in Europe, and their Lessons for America* by Jane Bancroft was recommended reading during the second year as well. The emphasis on women in ministry in the Training School's curriculum is the greatest area of difference between Boston University's School of Theology and the Training School during this time. Boston University offered no classes with an emphasis on women during the 1889-90 academic year.

The 1888-1889 catalogue for the School of Theology also mentions that a course of lectures on missions had been given since 1872 and that they were "actively seeking funds in 1890 to expand" this course of lectures into a three year program.¹⁸ The catalogue further stated that "in 1889 the Bureau of Methodist Missions for Boston and Vicinity was organized with a view to the utilization of the students of the School in city missionary work and other forms of active cooperation with the churches in Boston."¹⁹ The initiation of these two efforts, an expanded missionary course and a local church ministry/settlement house component to the course of study, might illustrate some sense of rivalry or at least institutionally shared values between the Deaconess School and the School of Theology.

The cross-fertilization of ideas between the two Methodist schools becomes more subtle when the New England Deaconess Training School's mission is examined vis-à-vis the emerging field of sociology. Francis Peabody and Edward Cummings led the new fields of sociology and social ethics at Harvard University during the first decade of the Deaconess School's existence. Peabody had been appointed the nation's first professor of social ethics in 1879 at Harvard Divinity School. He had been trained at Germany's University of Halle, a place with a long tradition of deaconess institutions, Arminian theology, and Lutheran pietism.²⁰

Peabody's courses on "Practical Ethics" were a kind of "sociological Social Gospel" which were put into practice through Peabody's 1891 establishment of the Prospect Union. Through the Prospect Union, Peabody hoped his students would gain the practical experience to accompany the academic learning they received under his instruction. This new pedagogy for college students is similar to what one finds at Boston University School of Theology and the Deaconess Training School. The Boston University settlement house was the only one in the city that was explicitly evangelistic. However, the emphasis in these "secular" settlement movements is described by Arthur Vidich and Stanford Lyman in soteriological language:

By the act of identification with the poor and the destitute - a secular version of the Christian mandate to rediscover one's relationship with Christ - the college student

¹⁸A Department of Missions was not endowed at Boston University School of Theology until 1912.

¹⁹*Boston University School of Theology Catalogue and Circular for the Year 1888-1889*, (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1888).

²⁰Vidich and Lyman, 53.

could implement his own conversion, activate his own chance for salvation. The settlement house represented an extension of the Protestant principle of charity (now defined in terms of the relief of social problems), with its attendant claims for prestige through community service.²¹

Between 1891 and 1901 sociology at Harvard was largely in the vein of Peabody's work and the work of his student and colleague, Edward Cummings. They were optimistic, Peabody more so than Cummings, about the ability of their new science to solve the intractable problems they witnessed in Boston's urban slums during the economic depression of the 1890s. Followers of theirs, Robert Woods among the most prominent, were leaders in the settlement houses in Boston's South End.²² An 1897 deaconess publication lists Samuel Lane Loomis of Boston's Union Congregational Church and H. C. Talmadge of Harvard College as persons who enhanced the Training School's curriculum in the field of sociology.²³

The Methodist Episcopal Church's flagship parish on the East Coast, Morgan Memorial, was located in the South End and was often a site where deaconesses in training would go for ministry. In 1903 Morgan Memorial received the considerable sum of \$2,500 (the same amount given by the Boston Missionary and Church Extension Society) from the Unitarian church for its social welfare work.²⁴ Francis Peabody was a Unitarian.

The women at the New England Deaconess Training School also faced many internal challenges and discouragements. In the second year of its existence two of the ten students died.²⁵ As if that were not enough discouragement, on December 21, 1891, at the end of this tragic year, there was also a verbal attack made on the school by Seth C. Cary at an alumni gathering of the Boston University School of Theology.

Cary's article argued that the Training School should be open to everyone on the grounds that its exclusion of men was unnecessary and anachronistic.²⁶ He stated, "[I]f these same people had not been the foremost in demanding that the doors of all schools in the church should be opened to women. . . it would have been less of a surprise."²⁷ He believed these schools' education of a "few women" introduced unnecessary and unhelpful divisions in the educational system of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

²¹Vidich and Lyman, 61.

²²Woods was a national leader in the settlement house movement.

²³*The Message and Deaconess Advocate*, September 1897, in Dougherty, 115.

²⁴Morgan Memorial archives at Boston University School of Theology.
²⁵Brereton, 184.

²⁶Cary's article is formatted in such a way that it was clearly printed to be an article meant for wider distribution. It is unclear whether it was included in an alumni association mailing.

²⁷Seth C. Cary, *The Deaconess Training School of the Methodist Episcopal Church: A Plan to Broaden and Develop It, and to Transform it into Methodism's Greatest Need - A Training School for Christian Workers*, this paper was read before the Alpha Chapter (alumni of the School of theology) of Boston University, Dec. 21, 1891.

Now, this is one of the strange matters that you do not even see discussed in the papers of our church, though it would be difficult to find almost any other topic that is not ventilated, and I have waited long before beginning the agitation. But what is even more inexplicable, is the fact that a movement is on foot to create a Deacon's Training School [presumably, for men]. Why not be consistent, and have a separate training school for each grade, and both sexes, from Exhorter up to that of Bishop? That would at least be logical but then it only shows how strangely distorted some great questions may become.²⁸

Cary's choice of words suggests a degree of hostility toward the New England Deaconess Training School and its leaders.

The [deaconess] movement is doubtless in the line and trend of the age, and only needs a wise and conservative [male?] fostering to make it yield a rich fruitage to this time, so overburdened with solicitude and anxiety for the moral and social conditions that surround us. . . . And yet, it is a phase of our work, which like all others, must have wise guidance, great leadership, and a careful clinging to Providential indications [male virtues?]. Else it will result in freaks, and whims, and ill-advised action, [female vices?] that will cause sorrow rather than joy.²⁹

Cary goes on to say that Methodism in fact needs innovative institutions for training laypersons for effective and useful ministry. He says those institutions need to be structured under established seminaries which themselves need to continue to expand their curriculum, provide a "lengthened course, and higher requirements for matriculation."³⁰ Cary made no argument for ways to expand the inclusion of women at Boston University School of Theology. In 1890 the student enrollment list contained only five women, all special students, apparently not admitted to a degree program.

Change the name of the school and call it the Methodist Training school for Christian Workers, or something else equally comprehensive. Continue the present course of study for Deaconesses. Enlarge the basis of this course, so as to include the instruction of all workers, of both sexes, for all fields and variety of service, that are now called for under our greatly diversified and widely extending system. Let this become the school that would stand next below the best-equipped school of theology in the church. Here in Boston it might become a department of the School of Theology and thus receive the finest training that scholarly minds could impart.³¹

In future years much of Cary's proposal came true. The school was renamed the New England Training School for Christian Service by 1914 and in 1918 it was absorbed into Boston University.³²

II

Significant changes within the wider Methodist Episcopal Church occurred at the turn of the century which impacted the New England

²⁸Cary, 6.

²⁹Cary, 8.

³⁰Cary, 8.

³¹Cary, 9.

³²*New England Deaconess Journal*, June 1914.

Deaconess Training School. The deaconess movement was growing. Between 1890 and 1900 twenty deaconess schools had been established throughout the country and from 1900 to 1910 thirteen more were begun. To respond to this growth, the Methodist Episcopal General Conference authorized the creation of the General Deaconess Board in 1900 as a supervisory body over all Methodist Episcopal deaconess institutions.³³ The national supervision of the New England School would have changed its identity somewhat as a new institutional innovation. It is unclear what part of the national supervisory structure played in the school's eventual decline and absorption by other institutions. National instead of local supervision may have given local church leaders the impression that the school was more secure in its existence than was actually the case. The school was still heavily dependent on voluntary teachers who came from the local area.

The New England Deaconess Home and Training School was reincorporated as the New England Deaconess Association on March 28, 1901.³⁴ While a minor change, the more inclusive incorporation of the hospital, deaconess home, and training school may have served to direct attention from the training school. In the *New England Deaconess Journal*, training school news was often relegated to the last page in spite of the fact that the training school was the organizational entity responsible for producing the journal.

Organizationally, the Training School achieved a level of institutional maturity during the first decade of the 20th century which it did not have in its early years. A new building was purchased in 1906. Enrollment generally increased during this time for the New England School as it did for other deaconess schools in America. The peak enrollment for the New England School was in 1916 with a total of 50 women at the school and an additional 67 in an extension program. The peak for the Chicago Training School was in 1912 with a total of 248 women.

A deaconess (unnamed) spoke about the school at a local church gathering in 1908 and fielded questions about the curriculum and the number of women who attended. The September 1908 issue of the *Journal* tells this story with detail and nuance which is difficult to find in formal curriculum descriptions:

The questioner asks if many young women attend. The reply: Yes, their number increases. Two years ago we purchased a new building for the School. There is now scarcely room for all who have applied and another building will soon be a necessity. "Please tell me more about the studies," said the eager listener. "There is so much to tell in the little time we have. . . Of course, the most important is the Bible, the study of which continues

³³Lee, 39. The deaconess office in the Methodist Episcopal Church South was also established in 1902. There is a further illustrative name change in 1924 when the General Conference named the Board of Hospitals, Homes, and Deaconess Work as the successor to the General Deaconess Board. Deaconess work was literally tacked on to the end of a much larger organization.

³⁴1925 *Annual Report of the New England Deaconess Association*, 45.

through the two years. The very best of instructors with thorough knowledge and experience are eager to help the young women as they grasp the truths of the Word. The students grow and develop wonderfully. From those who have attended the testimony has been, "How very much the School had done for me. . . . Then they have a fine course in Sociology. The students do a great deal of reading in connection with their study, visit institutions of charity and philanthropy; mingle with other Christian workers connected with them, and listen to practical instruction and lectures by the great charitable leaders and workers of the city. . . . Then the Deaconess Hospital is just across the street, where the students have the privilege of attending medical lectures, and receive from the head nurse instruction in caring for the sick in their own homes. There is also a course of study in Domestic Science, where much is learned, enjoyed, and put into practice in the work of the household. . . ."

Two years later, the October 1909 issue of the *Journal* highlighted a number of curriculum developments. For example, "[t]he course in Sociology formerly given at the school will be pursued by the students at Simmon's College³⁵ under the noted professors of that institution. The study of Philanthropic Problems, now being taught there, is proving intense interest to the young women of the Training School."³⁷

The new emphasis on sociology, and particularly Francis Peabody's emphasis in fieldwork, is evident from a speech by Rev. J. W. Campbell reported in this same October 1909 issue:

The speaker emphasized the dignity of all labor, giving a large place to the motive of love in Christian service. Yet love is not sufficient. There must be broad knowledge of the conditions of society in general, and definite knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the needy in any community, and of the best means not only of relief but of prevention, that the causes of sin and misery might be done away with from the earth. Thus, love and knowledge in harmonious action shall be sufficient to carry forward the great work of lifting the world from misery to peace and well-being.³⁸

The "farming out" of sociology teaching to other institutions coupled with the school's introduction of "Domestic Science" may be indicative of an identity shift at the school. "Domestic Science" was new in the curriculum in 1909, the same year that sociology teaching leaves the school for Simmon's College. "[Domestic Science] has proved to be an important addition to the Course of Study." The article went on to say that, "[i]n]o art of the work of a deaconess can be of greater importance than that which is done in the homes of the people, and all added skill of knowledge on her part should be passed on into the lives of homemakers."³⁹ With the addition of Domestic Science to the curriculum the Deaconess School implicitly acknowledged the tremendous difficulty of systemic change which would have been emphasized more in sociology programs of the day. One may also argue that

³⁵*New England Deaconess Journal*, September 1908.

³⁶Simmons College was established in 1899 as a school for women.

³⁷*New England Deaconess Journal*, October 1909, 4.

³⁸*New England Deaconess Journal*, October 1909.

³⁹*New England Deaconess Journal*, December 1909.

this was a return to "Christian Home" mission theory within the Training School curriculum, a major part of early 19th century mission theory. Rather than being confined to the teaching of missionary children or other support tasks, women missionaries in the first half of the 19th century worked more intentionally with the indigenous women of foreign lands and began to model for them what they saw as the values of a Christian home.⁴⁰ The Domestic Science program likely had similar goals.

A February 1910 issue of the *Journal* featured Domestic Science as the lead front-page article. A large picture depicted students in white garb, a white tablecloth, and full place settings with at least four eating utensils at each place setting. This is a more elaborate domestic scene than a deaconess would confront in her work in the slums of Boston. A November 1912 issue highlighted the work of a student who had been asked to conduct two cooking classes for the Brookline Friendly Society. Brookline was a pleasant suburb in 1912 and rather different from the slums of the North End and South End which had dominated deaconess work a decade earlier. If Deaconesses may have still been working in these parts of the city such work was not highlighted in the *Journal*.

While there was an increased emphasis on both sociology and Domestic Science which was not seen in the initial years of the school's existence, this still did not overshadow theological training. In a 1906-1907 academic catalogue the preponderance of courses was still in Bible (150 hours), "Universal history," church history, and the history of Methodism received a total of 90 hours. Sociology and Christian ethics comprised 60 hours of the curriculum. The remaining courses were in "practical theology," methods (Bible teaching, methods of Christian work, the Sunday School lesson, etc.), physiology and hygiene, and systematic theology. When compared to the curriculum in 1889-1890 the new presence of sociology is immediately apparent. There also appears to be much greater attention given to methods courses.

Of the 82 special lectures given in 1906-1907 (which all students were required to attend) at the school, 50 lectures were specifically in biblical studies. The remaining 32 lectures were divided among the following topics: Home and Foreign Missions - 8 lectures, Home Nursing - 15 lectures, Junior League Teaching Methods - 3 lectures, and Sunday School Methods - 6 lectures. A March 1909 issue of the *Journal* also noted with considerable pride that, "A number of students, anxious to study Greek, have formed themselves in a class. Rev. Mr. Walker willingly consented to give them instruction and they are making fine progress."

In her review of training school curriculums around the country, Virginia Brereton has argued that the study, "of biblical languages was considered too time consuming and was thought to lead to a temptation to talk

⁴⁰Robert, 65.

above the heads of ordinary people -- a fault not unknown among male ministers."⁴¹ The fact that the study of Greek is documented and even celebrated in a publication of the New England School may be a revealing feature of the school's uniqueness when compared to other schools around the country.

In addition to the sociology courses in the formal curriculum, the special lectures also indicated increased attention to sociological analysis. Robert Woods provided a lecture in 1908 on the topic of Industrial Training. The Morgan Memorial Church was also involved in this effort and experimented in cooperative stores and industries which Woods advocated as a national spokesperson.

Woods and Peabody were both committed to university settlement house ideals. Woods opened Andover House in 1891 after returning from a year abroad in Britain where he learned about the university settlement movement in the London context. In 1901 Woods was praised as "one of the strongest influences for good in the city of Boston."

Yet a decade [1891-1901] had made the settlement-house worker less ambitious. In place of the goal of discovering the causes of poverty and removing them permanently from American life, he had come to believe in piecemeal reform, in patching the existing social order and not in changing it drastically. Knowledge of society and men reduced the settlement house to a scientific kind of philanthropic agency from which came the modern field of social work.⁴²

By the 1900s the work of Peabody was no longer as prominent at Harvard. Sociology at Harvard had become more interested in evolutionary theory and eugenics than in direct action for the purpose of alleviating human misery. Thomas Nixon Carver was the primary leader of this new field of sociology from 1900 to 1931. His work was far more abstract than Peabody and it eventually led to a kind of scientifically justified anti-semitism.⁴³ Peabody was still working at Harvard in the first decade of the 20th century but he was no longer on the forefront of academic leadership. He had a generously endowed department of social ethics where he continued his search for an "ethically grounded but semi-professionalized social welfare."⁴⁴

III

Perhaps riding on the enthusiasm of their sister training school in Chicago (Chicago had a peak enrollment in 1912) the New England School announced plans to build a new building for themselves which was to house 53 students. The decision turned out to be unnecessary since in 1918 the

⁴¹Brereton, 190.

⁴²Mann, 122.

⁴³Vidich and Lyman, 81.

⁴⁴Vidich and Lyman, 65.

training school was absorbed by Boston University. This was due to a number of factors including the new social milieu of America at war, increased institutional collaboration, competition, and overall financial difficulties.

The statements of purpose for both the Training School and Boston University School of Theology during an interim period are illustrative of the differences between the two institutions. A 1914-1915 publication of the Training School stated the following as its organizational purpose:

The aim of the School is to increase the efficiency of Christian service. Three things are emphasized: Mental equipment, practical experience in religious and social work, and the development of a personality radiant with the beauties of a Christ-like life.⁴⁵

A similar statement in the 1913-1914 Boston University School of Theology catalogue stated:

The cardinal and conscientious aim of the Faculty is to furnish . . . an adequate spiritual and intellectual preparation for the highly responsible and exacting duties of their sacred vocation as the religious guides of the 20th century.⁴⁶

In contrast to the Training School's emphasis on practicality, the School of Theology's most prized distinctive was the "intellectual preparation" for the "highly responsible and exacting duties" of the "sacred vocation."

The admission requirements for the 1914-1915 in the Training School indicate the minimum age requirement for the female students was reduced to age 18. In 1889 students had to be at least 23 years of age. It is unclear why the minimum age changed. Perhaps women's increased access to higher education necessitated the lowering of the minimal age requirements at the Training School in order for them to compete with their neighbors. It is also possible that the wartime work-force requirements pressured the school into accepting younger women who were not as needed in the war economy.

Virginia Brereton has argued that demands for higher training standards for missionaries prompted by the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference's publication of a "long list of desirable studies for prospective missionaries," left the training schools with too many areas of responsibility in an era of declining resources.⁴⁷ Some aspects of the missionary movement which had helped to give birth to the official recognition of the deaconess movement may have now begun to contribute to the deaconesses' demise.

In contrast, the Jubilee of the Woman's Missionary Movement took place in the same year as the Edinburgh Conference and likely had beneficial results for the deaconess movement as it ushered in a new era of ecumenical

⁴⁵New England Deaconess Association: *Training School for Christian Service, 1914-1915*, pamphlet.

⁴⁶Boston University School of Theology Catalogue, 1913-1914, 11.

⁴⁷Brereton, 192.

menical cooperation in mission. It prompted thousands of women to gather together and hear speeches by a traveling team of speakers on the half-century old women's missionary movement. Over a million dollars was collected for women's colleges in Asia through these campaigns.⁴⁸

These two missionary movements and their respective costs and benefits to the deaconess movement pale in comparison, however, with the horrors of World War I and its concomitant damage on the deaconess institutions. The optimism of the "Christian Century" and the deaconesses' "social gospel" was shattered by World War I. The increased need for women to join the workforce vacated by men in war-torn Europe took away applicants from the deaconess schools around the country.

No deaconess school escaped the war years unscathed, although the New England School appears to have been hurt the most. In 1918 the New England School was the second school to close its doors, or, in this case, be merged with a neighboring institution.⁴⁹ Lucy Rider Meyer's retirement from the Chicago Training School in 1918 was a symbolic event in the decline of the deaconesses throughout the USA. Increased professionalization in fields of Christian service, changing denominational policies toward deaconesses, financial difficulties, and even the accomplishment of women's suffrage in 1920, all may have played a role in the decline of the deaconess movement.

In 1918 The New England Training School for Christian Workers (note the change in name eliminating the term "deaconess") was placed under "cooperative direction" of Boston University "which will determine the course of study, the requirements for admission and graduation, and approve members of the faculty of instruction."⁵⁰ The use of the euphemism "cooperative direction" of Boston University is revealing. What cooperation could possibly exist if Boston University determined the course of study, admission and graduation requirements, and faculty appointments? The school became subsumed under Boston University's Department of Missions, Social Service and Church work. In 1920 this department was renamed the School of Religious Education and Social Work. Today, this is the Boston University School of Social Work. The repeated change in name is illustrative of a changing educational priority which is likely also revealed in the curriculum during these years.

The School of Theology nevertheless taught women who had previously gone to the Training School. Some of these women even organized themselves into a special group, the New England Deaconess Training School for Christian Service Alumnae Association. "The object of this

⁴⁸Robert, 255-257.

⁴⁹The Aldrich Memorial Deaconess Home and Training School of Michigan closed its doors in 1917.

⁵⁰New England Deaconess Association Journal, March 1918.

Association [was] to promote goodwill and fellowship among the graduates of the School."⁵¹

Deaconess who still wished to be consecrated in the Methodist Episcopal Church also had the option of going through an independent "course of study" reading list which was put together by the General Deaconess Board of the denomination. A book entitled, *Directions and Helps: Course of Study for Deaconesses*, provided study questions and synopses for the over 27 books or subjects comprising the course of study. Its purpose was to, "supply in some measure the help which the teacher affords in a class room. By question and suggestions they seek to make plain the meaning of each Course and how it should be studied."⁵²

In contrast to earlier curriculums this curriculum was far more weighted in the direction of the social sciences, social ethics, and methods/policy. Books by Walter Rauschenbusch (*Christianizing the Social Order*) and Francis Peabody (*Jesus Christ and the Social Question*) were reviewed in *Directions and Helps*. A book entitled, *Society: Its Origin and Development*, received a ten-page commentary, the second most lengthy description in *Directions and Helps*. The commentary on Methodist polity received an overwhelming amount of space in this study guide. Pages 93 to 151 are devoted exclusively to explications of Methodist polity.

A review of a book by Raymond Huse entitled, *Theology of a Modern Methodist*, illustrated that the fundamentalist/modernist controversy was well under way and that northern Methodists (or at least the General Deaconess Board) had gone the way of the modernists. Atonement is described to limit consideration of more fundamentalist interpretations. "The purpose of Calvary is not to balance the accounts with justice but to secure the moral transformation of us wayward children of the everlasting Father."⁵³ In the 1889 curriculum one finds reference to Dwight L. Moody as a resource for deaconesses' theological education. In the 1922 *Directions and Helps*, Moody and other fundamentalists would have likely been regarded as teachers in error.

IV

The New England Deaconess Training School weathered a tremendous amount of social, intellectual, theological, and ecclesiastical changes in the course of its 29 years of independent existence. The school's contribution ought not be underestimated when seen in the light of the university settlement movement and the evolution of the fields of sociology and social ethics.

⁵¹Dougherty, 116.

⁵²Wallace MacMullen, L. F. W. Lesemann, and A. M. King, *Directions and Helps: Course of Study for Deaconesses*, prepared by the study committee of the General Deaconess Board, (New York and Cincinnati: The Methodist Book Concern, 1922), 7-8.

⁵³MacMullen, Lesemann, and King, 180.

The school offered a challenging setting for young women to develop their own understanding and practice of the Christian life which likely influenced future generations of Christians to a greater extent than can be ascertained through the sources utilized for this article. The school's contribution of women deaconesses trained may not have been as high as its sister institution in Chicago, but it nevertheless served a profound role in shaping the religious social ideals of New England Methodism and the Social Gospel movement around the country.