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SEPARATE SPHERES OR SHARED DOMINIONS?

Introduction

The language of “separate spheres” has become a metaphor, which historians have increasingly used to analyze women’s role in history and society. It has been used to describe the marginalization of women into their own separate sphere, their own “proper” sphere, separate and distinct from the sphere of men. “Public and private”, “the angel in the house”, and the cult of true womanhood are also part of the language and concepts which attempt to describe and analyze the state and role of women in 19th century Britain and America. The ideal Anglo-American woman of the 19th century was to be pious, pure and domesticated – able to present her home as a model of pious domesticity and a spiritual haven from a materialist world. The “proper” sphere of women was to be in the home while men were to be in the world. Aileen Kraditor has contrasted men’s autonomy with women’s “proper sphere.” She wrote, “Strictly speaking men have never had a ‘proper *sphere*,’ since their sphere has been the world and all its activities.”¹

I would like to briefly explore how this metaphor developed in 19th century Britain and how an evangelical worldview not only reinforced it but also (unwittingly?) sabotaged it. I will then discuss how this ideology shaped and was shaped by two CMS missionary wives - Elizabeth Colenso and Kate Hadfield.

The Industrial Revolution in Britain and evangelical theology did much to reinforce this understanding of “separate spheres.” The prospect of creating and furthering commerce led to the creation of a particular male culture. The creation of a peculiarly female culture accompanied this. Hilda Smith has claimed that two major developments at that time significantly harmed women. They were professionalization and industrialization.² The transformation of the economy and the elaboration of a public male sphere depended on the parallel creation of a female sphere within the home. In this strange and sometimes hostile environment, home became a haven and a place of retreat. For women, the focus was on the domestic - the ideology of domesticity was taking shape.

Men became more associated with the world of work outside the home while women remained within a family and domestic context. Masculine identity was becoming identified with the emerging idea of “occupation” while women were confined within a familial framework. Middle class homes were being built on the concept of men working in the public world and depending on women’s labour, both conjugal and servant, in the private realm of the home.

¹ Quoted in, Linda K Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History,” *The Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 12.

² Hilda Smith, “Feminism and the Methodology of Women’s History” in *Liberating Women’s History Theoretical and Critical Essays*, ed. Berenice A Carroll (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 382.

The Role of Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism in 19th century Britain seemed to reinforce this ideology of “separate spheres.” As well as being concerned with personal piety, in the late 18th and early 19th century evangelicals were very concerned about the moral laxity in English society. Leading evangelicals wrote serious tomes on proper and appropriate behaviour for the good of society, especially addressing these to the middle and upper classes such as Henry Venn’s *The Complete Duty of Man* (1763), Thomas Gisborne’s two volume manual *Enquiries Into the Duties of Men in the Higher and Middle Classes of Society* to which he added a sequel *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797).³ Hannah More also published two important books on the proper conduct for women.⁴ The aim of these manuals was to teach people proper conduct and responsible behaviour.

Three major occupations were suggested for married women: promoting the general comfort and well-being of the family, moulding the minds of the young and improving the level of manners in society by their influence and example. An intellectual life was not to be aspired to. Education for the middle-class girl meant the attainment of fashionable accomplishments as well as such virtues as chastity, temperance and submission. A woman’s intellect was considered to be inferior to that of a man’s for any serious learning.⁵ Even Hannah More’s aim in educating women was not to improve their intellect but rather to improve their conduct, usefulness and service within the domestic sphere.

The evangelical view of womanhood reinforced this understanding of “separate spheres.” The traditional emphasis on Eve as temptress gave way to seeing women as the virtuous sustainers and repositories of religious values in a way that was not true of men. Evangelical religion began to offer a clear definition of the woman’s sphere. The Rev. Thomas Gisborne, in his two volumes, understood the role of women in the following three ways.⁶ Firstly, a woman’s task was to contribute daily and hourly to the comfort of all those around her in the domestic circle; secondly, she was to shape and improve the manners and behaviour of men by her society and example; thirdly, she was to model the human mind in its early stages of growth, caring especially for girls until they became women and could then take on this same role of endless virtue, selflessness and dependence on others. For Thomas Gisborne, home was the epicentre: “Home is the centre around which the influence of every married woman is principally accumulated.”⁷ The devout wife and mother was a woman who could

³ The Rev. Thomas Gisborne (1758 - 1846) was a conservative, evangelical Anglican clergyman and vicar of Yoxall, Staffordshire. He first drew attention to the appalling conditions endured by children working in factories in 1794. His *Enquiry into the Duties of Men* was intended to show the importance of the professions and the responsibility attached to them. He also called on husbands to leave the gaming clubs and “join the family circle in the winter evenings.” See I Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), 179.

⁴ *Strictures on Female Education with a view of the principles and conduct prevalent among women of rank and fortune* (1799) and *Hints towards forming the character of a young princess, addressed to Princess Charlotte* (1805).

⁵ For further elaboration of this see Alan Deacon and Michael Hill, “The Problem of ‘Surplus Women’ in the Nineteenth Century: Secular and Religious Alternatives,” in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, ed. D Martin (London: SCM Press, 1972), 87-101.

⁶ Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of Men*.

⁷ Quoted in J Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism, Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780-1860* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 90.

sanctify her husband by her godly character. William Wilberforce in his *A Practical View* discussed this at length:

This is more especially affecting in the female sex, because that sex seems, by the very constitution of its nature, to be more favourably disposed than ours to the feelings and offices of Religion; being thus fitted by the bounty of Providence, the better to execute the important task which devolves on it, of the education of our earliest youth. Doubtless, this more favourable disposition to Religion in the female sex, was graciously designed also to make women doubly valuable in the wedded state: and it seems to afford to the married man the means of rendering an active share in the business of life more compatible, than it would otherwise be, with the liveliest devotional feelings; that when the husband should return to his family, worn and harassed by worldly cares or professional labours, the wife, habitually preserving a warmer and more unimpaired spirit of devotion than is perhaps consistent with being immersed in the bustle of life, might revive his languid piety.⁸

As Gill has highlighted, it is worth noting how the woman's role is defined in relation to male need and how sharp a distinction there is between the public and the private spheres.⁹

Rev. Henry Venn,¹⁰ in *The Complete Duty of Man*, published in 1763 and which was considered "a sort of manifesto of the evangelical views" upheld a wife's duty to obey the will of her husband.¹¹ He wrote, "It is therefore nothing less than an open resistance to the ordinance of God; it is nothing less than a proud and self-exalting contempt of the word of God, in a wife to affect to rule, or to refuse to submit to the authority of her husband."¹² He maintained that this still applied even if she were more intelligent and better informed than her husband.¹³

This prevailing ideology of the time influenced the evangelical understanding of womanhood and it was this ideology and understanding of womanhood and wifehood that influenced the wives of the CMS missionaries. Henry Venn's book was especially influential in CMS circles and the books by Gisborne and More were widely read by evangelicals.

⁸ William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious Systems of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country, Contrasted with Real Christianity* (Halifax: William Milner, 1843); 75-6. First published in Britain in 1797.

⁹ Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London: SPCK, 1994), 30-1.

¹⁰ The Rev. Henry Venn (1725-97) was an evangelical vicar of Huddersfield. He was the father of John Venn, one of the founders of the CMS and the grandfather of the influential Rev. Henry Venn (1796-1873), the Clerical Secretary of the CMS from 1841-72.

¹¹ Gill, *Women and the Church*, 14.

¹² Henry Venn, *The Complete Duty of Man or A System of Doctrinal and Practical Christianity to which are added Forms of Prayer and Offices of Devotion for the Various Circumstances of Life* (Bath: Hazard & Binns, 1808), 229.

¹³ "To attempt therefore to gain the place of authority, or contend for it on account of gifts and parts, is to abuse them to the subverting that order, which the Sovereign Giver of them has himself established." Ibid, 230.

Seeds of Subversion

However, it is my contention that this very ideology of “separate spheres”, also known as “the angel in the house” phenomenon, led to some ambiguity in the working out of women’s role and identity within an evangelical worldview.¹⁴ It was clear that women were supposed to be subordinate and that home and children were their sphere, yet they still had influence. In fact many women argued that if they were the upholders of Christian values they should be able to use their influence outside the home in philanthropic activities and in social reform. It was a small step from the love of family to the love of the larger human family and this step was made easier by Christian teaching. Female reformers hailed Christianity as an emancipating influence which could give enormous scope to woman as wife and mother and by extension, to society. This philanthropic impulse was readily linked with an evangelistic motive. Others such as Sarah Lewis, in her book *Woman’s Mission* (London, 1839) extolled woman’s missionary spirit as “the flow of maternal love.”¹⁵ She also stated that women were God’s instruments “for the regeneration of the world.”¹⁶

So while this ideology of domesticity was at one level deeply conservative, at another, it held within it the seeds of its own subversion. Within the home women could exercise a certain amount of power. As Davidoff and Hall comment: “If the moral world was theirs, who needed the public world of business and politics?”¹⁷ It was believed that women were the moral regenerators of the home and the nation and this could have wider ramifications as women became involved in philanthropic activities and engaged in mission service. Although evangelical theology was conservative and limiting in terms of a woman’s role, it also provided an effective justification for women’s involvement in social reform and philanthropy in the public arena as an extension of their moral and spiritual activities in the home. This influence was even acknowledged at the time so that by the middle of the nineteenth century one writer in *The Christian Observer* commented:

By maintaining the most kindly intercourse with the poor, by alleviating sorrow beyond the little circle of home, by guiding the work of education, by using life for its highest and most beneficent purposes, by self-dedication to God, by labours in the mission field as well as in their own country, women are employing an influence scarcely acknowledged until we see it in detail, but the aggregate of which entitles it, when comprehensively surveyed to rank

¹⁴ This is the title of a Victorian poem by Coventry Patmore where the woman is extolled as having traditionally feminine virtues such as love, intuition, virtue and beauty. “As Patmore’s title suggests, the angel brings a more than mortal purity to the home that she at once creates and sanctifies, for which her mate consequently regards her with a sentimental, essentially religious reverence.” C Christ, “Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House,” in *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women*, ed. M Vicinus (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1977), 146.

¹⁵ Quoted in F K Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 7.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷ L Davidoff and C Hall, ed. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 183.

amongst the highest human agencies which a merciful God is blessing to the benefit of men's souls and bodies.¹⁸

The increasing emphasis on separate spheres had another interesting consequence. It led women to reach out to other women in sisterhood, in solidarity, on the common ground of domesticity. They would create friendships with other women and within this lay the beginnings of many women's organizations which over time developed and flourished in a more formalized way.¹⁹

Women's involvement in charitable endeavours grew remarkably during the course of the nineteenth century. This has been referred to as the "angel out of the house" phenomenon which recognized women's role in a wider context.²⁰ Anglican social campaigner Josephine Butler, in 1869, also claimed that "the extension beyond our homes of the home influence" would regenerate society and thereby serve to enhance family life.²¹ Anne Summers described women's philanthropic work as a "home from home."²² Women were involved in a wide variety of charitable activities.²³ Some of the most notable were: Sunday school teaching, Girls' Friendly Societies, missionary auxiliary societies seeking to raise funds for overseas mission work, the temperance movement; a network of penitentiaries and houses of refuge for prostitutes and parish visiting where spiritual and physical need were ascertained and met.²⁴

And so "the angel in the house" becomes "the angel out of the house" and maintaining the ideology of "separate spheres" becomes increasingly problematic. This brief review of women's increasing involvement in regenerating the moral tone of the nation through their influence in the home, as well as their increasing involvement in philanthropy outside the home, in anti-slavery and temperance campaigns and in mission both at home and abroad, during the course of the 19th century, makes this ideology increasingly difficult to sustain.

And of course we could also wonder if a public face did not in fact mask a private reality. As Keith Wrightson has so appositely asked, "[Did] theoretical adherence to the doctrine of male authority and *public* female subordination [mask] the *private* existence of a strong complementary and companionate ethos?"²⁵ In other words,

¹⁸ Quoted in Gill, *Women and the Church*, 79.

¹⁹ Note, for example, the growth of women's mission boards in the USA during the 19th century so that by the end of that century nearly half of the mission boards in the USA were Women's Boards. Over 3 million women were involved, and by the early 20th century this had become the largest Women's Movement in the USA. Unfortunately their existence was relatively shortlived and by the 1920's their demise was complete.

²⁰ E K Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets, and William Veeder, "Sarah Lewis and Woman's Mission," in *The Woman Question, Society and Literature in Britain and America 1837-1883 Volume One: Defining Voices*, ed. Elizabeth K Helsinger, Robin Lauterbach Sheets, and William Veeder (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), xi-xvii.

²¹ *ibid.*, 131.

²² Quoted in A Summers, "A Home from Home – Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century," in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. S. Burman (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 33.

²³ See Linda Wilson, "'Constrained by Zeal': Women in Mid-Nineteenth Century Conformist Churches," *Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 2 (1999), 190.

²⁴ Kate Hadfield became a founding Vice-President of the Girls' Friendly Society in Wellington in 1883.

²⁵ Quoted in, Amanda Vickery, "Golden Ages to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 2 (1993): 385.

what it may look like from the outside, may in fact be experienced very differently from within. Amanda Vickery, in an important footnote, makes a plea for historians to use as many different sources as possible, “for it is often in the discrepancies between different accounts that interesting conclusions are drawn.”²⁶ It seems that the spheres are perhaps more porous than strict adherence to the ideology allows and this we shall see as we briefly consider the lives of both Elizabeth Colenso and Kate Hadfield.

Elizabeth Colenso (1821-1904)

Elizabeth was born and brought up on mission stations in New Zealand so she was used to mission life from the beginning. Elizabeth saw both her parents as working missionaries and her mother was a strong role model for Elizabeth, especially after Elizabeth returned home from her schooling at Paihia to work alongside her mother. By 1842 Elizabeth was running her own school with its own curriculum and programme, at nineteen years of age – unrecognised and not remunerated by the CMS. It was Bishop Selwyn who, on a brief visit to Maraetai shortly after arriving in New Zealand, realized and appreciated the worth of this young missionary teacher. In a letter to William regarding his proposed marriage with Elizabeth, Selwyn wrote that “she will be of great assistance in the revision of the New Testament.... I have already told you that my short visit at Maraetai would prepare me to be glad of any opportunity of extending my acquaintance with her.”²⁷

In 1843, she agreed to marry William Colenso, the CMS printer who was ten years older than her, and whom she had probably known as one of the Paihia missionaries while she was at school there briefly.²⁸ Perhaps it was William’s sense of duty and service that attracted Elizabeth to this marriage. It is clear that William wanted a partner in his work – a “working Missionary” as Elizabeth’s mother had been. William explained in a letter to a friend that for him Christ was primary, and that his need was for “a helpmeet for me being also devoted, or willing, to devote herself, to the same blessed Service.”²⁹

Immediately after their marriage they went to St John’s College, Waimate where Elizabeth worked extremely hard at the infant school. In fact William believed that she was so valuable to the Bishop that he delayed William’s ordination on account of not wanting to lose Elizabeth. However, eventually William was ordained deacon and they were sent to Ahuriri, a remote and desolate spot. During her eight and a half years at Ahuriri, Elizabeth experienced several major floods sweeping right through her home, earthquakes and finally a fire. Housekeeping in these conditions was arduous but Elizabeth was resourceful and not only managed the house but also started schools. The school and chapel were built across the river but Elizabeth remained undaunted and “as soon as lessons were begun, Elizabeth had to paddle

²⁶ Ibid, footnote 111, 413-4.

²⁷ Letter from Bishop Selwyn to W Colenso. William Colenso, “Letters,” (WTU: qMS-0491-0492, 1834-1853), 17 March 1843.

²⁸ Sargison asserts that she may have “seen him perhaps only twice in her life.” Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold, and Bridget Williams, ed. *The Book of New Zealand Women Ko Kui Ma Te Taupapa* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991), 146.

²⁹ William Colenso, “Letters,” letter from W Colenso to R Maunsell, Paihia, 4 April 1842. Underlining in original.

across every day to teach her classes.”³⁰ She worked tirelessly and William commended her work there, “She too had a heart for her Station work in the Girls’ and Infants’ schools in which she did good service and was always an excellent mother to her children.”³¹ It is intriguing to note that here William affirms her mission service ahead of motherhood – an unusual tribute from a husband at that time. So Elizabeth was working well outside the “proper sphere” of women, exercising her talents for teaching.

Moreover, she was often busy overseeing the mission station because William was away travelling so much. According to William, after the birth of their second child in 1845, Elizabeth wrote to him declaring “that it would not be her fault if anything of that nature ever again occurred...so, from that time, or even long before, we never again cohabited together as man and wife.”³² In 1848 William began an affair with Elizabeth’s househelp, Ripeka, which resulted in the birth of a baby boy, Wi, in 1851. During this period William often slept in his study, a separate building in the garden – a testimony to the reality of the physically separate spheres he and Elizabeth were inhabiting. At this time, she removed her wedding ring and put it in William’s writing desk – a gesture unnoticed by him at the time. For a woman of evangelical heritage, this was a serious gesture and signified the end of the marriage and perhaps also Elizabeth’s determination to live in a “separate sphere.” This is an example of a woman constructing her own “separate sphere” for her own purposes. Here, Elizabeth is the one who has taken control by determining to no longer sleep with William, by later returning her wedding ring and so living in her own “separate sphere.”

She desperately wanted to leave her unhappy marriage and finally in 1853, after a visit from Bishop Selwyn she left for Auckland, taking baby Wi with her and promising to care for him. However, once she arrived in Auckland, her father would not let her in the house with the baby and Elizabeth wrote to William expressing her deep relief at having escaped her unhappy marriage and that she never wanted to see him again. She accused William of “ten years intense misery and suffering on my part, solely and most deliberately caused by you.”³³ William replied by accusing her of turning aside from her path of duty and of being an inadequate wife but Elizabeth remained firm and never saw her husband, nor Wi, again.

She carved out for herself a life of ongoing missionary service. Initially she spent seven years at the mission station at Taupiri where, according to her daughter, she “was appointed by the Church Missionary Society to help in the Rev. B Y Ashwell’s school at Taupiri...”³⁴ If this is correct, it was a highly unusual decision taken by the CMS to appoint a married woman, let alone a separated married woman, to a position by herself without her family.³⁵ Here again, we see the ideology of “separate spheres” and private realms breaking down, as Elizabeth was not confined to a life of private

³⁰ *ibid.*, 13.

³¹ William Colenso, “Autobiography,” 38.

³² William Colenso, “Autobiography,” 36-8.

³³ William Colenso, “Letters from his wife,” Otahuhu, 27 May 1854. Underlining in original.

³⁴ Mrs W H Simcox, “Recollections of Early Days in New Zealand 89-241-4,” in *Research Files*, ed. P A Sargison (WTU, 1844-1928) 28.

³⁵ However, the CMS minutes for this period make no reference to this. She is only mentioned indirectly as part of William’s “family” offered a passage to England or elsewhere. Church Missionary Society, “Church Missionary Society Minutes 1851-1854, Australian Joint Copying Project M187,” (Kinder Library MIC 014, 1851-1854) See 31 May 1853.

solitude but rather she embarked on ongoing missionary service in her own right. She may even have been paid a salary by the CMS but this is unclear.³⁶

In 1861, she and her two children sailed for England where she was a devoted church worker, Sunday school teacher, advocate for Maori in England and temperance supporter. She also worked on revising portions of the Maori Old Testament with George Maunsell as well as writing a book of her own in Maori. In 1866 she returned to New Zealand and settled in Paihia where she was equally active. “I had free school daily for the Maori children, and a few children of English settlers within walking distance use to attend. I also held Sunday School for the Maori women.”³⁷ In 1876, Elizabeth sailed for Norfolk Island where she stayed until 1898 when she returned to New Zealand to live her remaining years with her daughter and family. There she devoted herself to the work of the mission and translated many works into Mota, the common language of the Melanesian Mission.

Elizabeth’s facility with the Maori language, her familiarity with Maori culture and her previous teaching experience probably enabled her to be more easily engaged beyond the immediate confines of her home. Although her home was initially the *locus* of her mission service, it eventually extended well beyond her home. During her years at Taupiri, she was fully involved in teaching and during her time in England she was engaged in a myriad of public activities – philanthropic, reformatory and educative.

How far does Elizabeth conform to the ideology of “separate spheres” or “the angel in the house”? Elizabeth may well have turned the ideology on its head and married William for her own ends – in order to leave her unhappy family home, follow her vocation and engage in missionary service. She also turned it to her own advantage, as after the birth of her second child, she was, according to William, quite happy to live in a “separate sphere” – apart from any sexual contact with William. For many women, the stigma of being an estranged wife may well have prohibited further service and meant leading a discreet and quiet life, far from the sort of public involvement Elizabeth subsequently had in three countries and several different contexts.

Catherine (Kate) Hadfield (1831-1902)

Like Elizabeth, Kate was born into a CMS family in the early days of the CMS mission in New Zealand. She too saw her mother as a role model, teaching and training Maori women and girls. Kate too was an accomplished teacher by the time she left her family home at the age of twenty to assist her brother and his wife in their missionary work at Otaki. Less than a year later she married the resident missionary there, the Rev Octavius Hadfield. Unlike Elizabeth, Kate had a long and happy marriage. Kate found in her husband an equal partner with whom she could share the work of the mission. Following her mother’s example, she expected to be an equal

³⁶ There is no record in the CMS minutes of a salary being paid to Elizabeth unless she comes under the category of “European Catechist” or “2 European Schoolmasters” listed in the CMS “Estimated Expenses for June 1855.” Church Missionary Society, “Church Missionary Society Committee Minutes,” Reel 16, M188.

³⁷ Elizabeth Colenso, “Recollections of Mrs Elizabeth Colenso 89-241-4,” in *Research Files*, ed. P A Sargison (WTU, 1899) 22.

partner in the mission work, as well as raising a large family of nine children, offering hospitality and at times accompanying her husband on his travels.

After her marriage her routine continued much the same with the addition of managing her own household as well as being involved with the mission school. Kate worked hard, both while at the mission station at Otaki and later after their removal to Wellington in 1870 when Octavius became bishop. She offered much hospitality and her daughter noted that, “Mrs Hadfield was a kind hostess and an open door was kept.”³⁸ She took a keen interest in the disadvantaged and marginalised. According to her daughter, “People who were ‘down and out’ turned at times to the Bishop’s wife and told her their difficulties.”³⁹ This was proven in her position as the first Vice-President of the Girls’ Friendly Society (GFS), an organization founded by women, serving women and run by women. This was work that Kate undertook independently of her husband and was very much in a “separate sphere” devised and developed by women.

Kate wanted to support her husband and travelled with him quite often. Her most famous journey was as the first white woman to make the arduous overland journey from Auckland to Otaki. For many women, this would have been a daunting journey – travelling by litter and foot, sleeping in Maori villages and eating local food, exposed to all weathers, and finally travelling by canoe down the Wanganui River with its rapids but at the end of the journey Kate remained undaunted. She also made two journeys to England with her husband – both of these undertaken for Octavius to rest and to recover from ill health.

Kate was a courageous person as was shown in her standing beside her husband as he endeavoured to address the flagrant injustice of the land sales in Taranaki. He wrote to the CMS in London to explain the veracity and the gravity of the situation and enclosed an English copy of a Maori petition asking for the Governor’s recall. As the situation worsened and the Government’s position became increasingly entrenched, Octavius wrote a series of three pamphlets in which he expressed himself very forcefully in these pamphlets. He wrote in the strongest possible terms on the stupidity of Governor Browne, leaving himself open to the charge of being labelled a traitor.

These pamphlets created quite a stir in England where they were published. A heated debate began between E Harold Browne, the Governor’s brother and a divinity professor at Oxford, and Octavius’ brother, Charles who supplied the press with Octavius’ writings. Kate faithfully supported Octavius in this battle. She made an extra copy of his first pamphlet for the Chief Justice, Sir William Martin, who was so impressed that he published a 120 page booklet entitled *The Case Against the War in Taranaki* which supported all of Octavius’ claims.⁴⁰

Kate also openly sided with the Maori and helped them formulate a petition. Like her husband she too did not avoid political involvement in matters of injustice and was

³⁸ Amelia Caroline Hadfield, “A Short Account of the Life of Catherine Hadfield,” (WTU: qMS-0893, 1952), 9.

³⁹ A Hadfield, “A short account,” 8.

⁴⁰ Christopher Lethbridge, *The Wounded Lion Octavius Hadfield 1814-1904 Pioneer Missionary, Friend of the Maori and Primate of New Zealand* (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1993), 193.

prepared to act as their advocate. Kate must have known that they were making themselves highly unpopular with the settlers and the government but this did not deter her from pursuing a just cause. According to her daughter, Kate:

assisted them [the Maori] with a petition to the Hon. J C Richmond, Minister for Native Affairs. She helped with the forming of it and put it into English. Mr Richmond read it and realizing the unseen hand remarked ‘the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hand is the hand of Esau.’⁴¹

Here Kate is certainly operating in the public sphere – the most public sphere in the country by being involved in politics and in making petitions.

The 1860’s were troubled times for the country and for the Hadfields. The mission and the schools were declining but Kate and Octavius did not consider abandoning the mission for a safer location.⁴² Indeed it was thanks to their benign influence that a worse fate was avoided, according to the Rev James McWilliam in a sermon he preached on Octavius’ retirement:

Few are aware that it was the ready tact and well won influence of the Bishop and Mrs Hadfield that prevented the Ngatiraukawa and their related tribes from joining the King movement, and thereby perhaps saved the lives of all the settlers from Otaki upwards to Taranaki.⁴³

He noted not only Octavius’ but also Kate’s influence in this matter. Bishop Abraham also commented on her shared involvement in a letter to Octavius at the time of Kate’s death

You so exactly shared alike the great interest of your lives...it was a great thing for both English and Maoris you were in good health enough to grapple with the need of both races, in all of which her wisdom and experience and good sense must have been invaluable.⁴⁴

Kate was certainly not a missionary wife who was marginalised into a “proper sphere” for women. Kate was both “an angel in the house” providing home and hearth for husband, children and friends as well as “an angel out of the house” travelling with her husband, supporting him in his work as well as pursuing her own ventures in the GFS and advocating for justice in the political sphere. Kate was a woman who easily moved between the private and the public. In her position as the Bishop and then Archbishop’s wife, Vice-President of the GFS, and as an advocate for justice, she was very much in the public sphere and was acknowledged as such. She was also a wife and mother who provided home and hospitality for her family and friends.

⁴¹ A Hadfield, “A short account,” 7. Was this the copy of the petition which Octavius sent to the CMS in London?

⁴² “Algar Williams Collection, Williams Family Papers,” (Auckland War Memorial Museum Library, Te Papa Whakahiku, hereafter AR: MS91/75, 1783-1965. Henry Williams observed, “How sad the state of the Mission, once so fair and flourishing” letter from H Williams to O Hadfield, 8 February 1864.

⁴³ Barbara Macmorran, *Octavius Hadfield* (Wellington: David F Jones Ltd, 1971), 133.

⁴⁴ A Hadfield, “A short account,” 17. Letter from Bishop Abraham, The Vicarage, Bakewell, Jan. 1902.

Conclusion

“Separate spheres or shared dominions?” From a brief study of these two missionary wives, we can see that they were able to manipulate the “separate spheres” ideology for their own purposes. These women had their own vocation to missionary service which they were determined to work out in their own way. Because of their evangelical worldview and the ambiguities inherent within it, they were able to engage in mission service beyond their immediate domestic sphere. Their evangelical commitment also meant that they longed for the salvation and moral uplift of the Maori. Their horizons were broader than their immediate domestic sphere and their outlook beyond their home and hearth. In this way they were able to mould the ideology and move between spheres. At times, this meant sharing in their husband’s sphere as Kate worked with her husband on advocacy issues. At other times, it meant creating their own separate sphere, as Elizabeth did when she withdrew from William or as Kate did in her involvement in the GFS. Perhaps it is now time to move beyond the “separate spheres” terminology and allow “new categories and concepts [to be] generated, and this must be done with more sensitivity to women’s own manuscripts.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Vickery, “Golden Age”, 413.