

each has a different slant: Kohl's with Riley's feminist perspective, and Gerber's purporting to be only Bess's words.

Bess Corey's letters, with their detail about homesteading, show us that single women led full, active lives long before the end of the twentieth century. Gerber's entire volume, with its discussion of Corey's teaching career after her homesteading experience, tells us that women's lives have always been multidimensional.

*Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939*, by Peggy Pascoe. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990. xxiii, 301 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography. \$24.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY RUTH M. ALEXANDER, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

*Relations of Rescue* is an original and important work of scholarship about women's quest for empowerment. Peggy Pascoe's study of Protestant missionary women in the American West is driven by her concern about contemporary "cultural feminism"—a branch of feminism that rejects egalitarianism as a model for male-female relations. Today's cultural feminists emphasize the dissimilarities between men and women and seek to elevate "women's values" to a position of cultural authority. Similarly, Protestant missionary women tried to improve women's status by stressing difference rather than equality between the sexes. Hoping to discover whether it is possible "to promote 'women's values' without ultimately reinforcing limited definitions of womanhood" (xv), Pascoe investigates the strengths, limitations, and implications of missionary women's ideology and strategy.

Late nineteenth-century missionary women subscribed to a Victorian gender system that neatly divided the sexes, identifying women as the pious and pure guardians of the home, men as the worldly custodians of the political arena and marketplace. But then, making an ideological leap that "stretched these conventions almost beyond recognition" (33), evangelical women rejected the tradition of male dominance in social relations between the sexes. Arguing that men demonstrated little natural concern for women's welfare and did not deserve their obedience, these missionary women proposed that women's greater purity entitled them to moral authority over the opposite sex. Conditions in the American West gave the search for female moral authority particular urgency: unchecked by women's unerring virtue, the masculine populations of Denver and San Francisco indulged in prostitution and seduction, "exploiting" innocent women. Likewise, the Mormon patriarchs in Salt Lake City "abused"

women by permitting polygamy, and Indians treated their women like "drudges" and slaves. Oblivious to evidence suggesting that some "exploited" females were neither powerless nor unhappy, Protestant missionary women attempted to secure women's emancipation and empowerment by founding "rescue" homes throughout the West.

Drawing on organizational records, personal papers, and client files, Pascoe examines four cases of evangelical women's "rescue" work. Members of the Women's National Indian Association tried to "civilize home life" on Omaha reservations. The female founders of the San Francisco Chinese Mission Home attempted to "rescue" Chinese women who had been sold into prostitution. Evangelical women in Colorado founded the Denver Colorado Cottage Home to save unmarried mothers from social derision. Finally, Protestant women established the Salt Lake City Industrial Home as a refuge for Mormon women fleeing polygamous marriages.

Despite their faith and organizational zeal, emancipation and empowerment eluded the proponents of "woman's work for women." Protestant missionary women provided practical assistance to thousands of needy women, but failed to alter the imbalance of power in gender relations. According to Pascoe, the fundamental problem was ideological. Believing that women's claim to moral authority rested on women's role as wives and mothers, Protestant missionary women remained staunch defenders of the Victorian family; they refused to question women's economic dependence or legal subordination to men. Instead, evangelical women championed Christian conversion as the best route to female moral authority, ignoring male evangelical leaders' unwillingness to endorse women's empowerment.

Equally important, relations between reformers and mission residents defied evangelical women's vision of female "rescue." Residents of the rescue homes gratefully accepted the services that evangelical women offered: help in escaping prostitution and abusive marriages; care during illness; shelter from poverty or social condemnation. However, it was the exceptional resident who fully accepted the social ideology of missionary women. The web of gender and intercultural relations between "rescuers" and residents was too complex, and too badly marred by misunderstanding, to grant evangelical women the authority they desired.

If Protestant missionary women were disappointed in their lack of influence, Pascoe suggests that the fault was largely their own. The ideology of female moral authority assumed the superiority of white, middle-class, Protestant culture, and evangelical women did not try to comprehend the values of women who came from backgrounds other than their own. They stressed the existence of universal bonds

between women, but refused to treat non-white women as equals. Even the few mission residents who converted to Christianity ultimately became dissatisfied with their second-rate status among whites, questioning mission women's interference and advice.

*Relations of Rescue* provides a masterful analysis of feminist ideology, intercultural relations among women, and the dynamics of social control. Moreover, although Pascoe's book focuses on the West, it has obvious significance for other regions. Certainly, it demonstrates the value of local sources, especially institutional records and client case files. Most important, it invites historians to investigate further the ideologies and strategies that past generations of women have used in trying to improve their social status. Did the search for female moral authority find proponents in agricultural areas where the sex ratio was balanced, there were few non-Christians or non-whites, and women made a critical contribution to the economy? Were there instances in which women combined the pursuit of female moral authority with the pursuit of gender equality? Historians of Iowa and the Midwest might do well to ponder these and other questions.

*God's Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism*, by William Vance Trollinger, Jr. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990. x, 233 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$37.50 cloth, \$14.75 paper.

REVIEWED BY FERENC M. SZASZ, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO AND UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

The name of William Bell Riley is not widely recognized in American religious history. Riley never achieved the fame of revivalist Dwight L. Moody, the notoriety of Texas pastor J. Frank Norris, or the widespread acceptance of evangelist Billy Graham, even though his career overlapped with all three. William Vance Trollinger argues that Riley deserves to be better known. Through his numerous sermons and publications, his organizations, and, especially, the graduates of his school, William Bell Riley helped forge the contours of midwestern religious life.

Born in 1861, Riley grew up on a hardscrabble Kentucky farm. He graduated from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1888, and nine years later accepted the pastorate of the First Baptist Church in Minneapolis. Handsome, charismatic, a fine speaker, and a man who relished controversy, Riley became a virtual institution in Minneapolis, which remained his home until his death in 1947.

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