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JEWELL IN CHINA, 1910–1914

Education of a Missionary Woman for School Administration

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On the eve of her birthday, August 14, 1904, the young Jewell Legett recorded in her diary that she had “been feeling so strange today ... 20 years old! What an age it is! Just the time to be a girl and learn to live” (Legett 1904). Her summer vacation from the 1903-1904 term at Baylor University was spent with her parents and brothers in Port Lavaca, Texas. After a summer of reflection, she would return to Baylor and declare her

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intent to be a missionary on a foreign field. Her excitement about her future, as well as her anxiety about what life would hold for her was weighing on her young mind.

I could wish that this were my 80th instead of my 20th birthday. By that time I will have finished my work. I will know when that day comes what the years have been holding in store for me. O, my God, give me strength to do thy will! Let me do what thou hast given me to do. ... Where will I be ten years from tonight? (Legett 1904, Aug 14)

The young college student could not possibly have known that ten years into the future she would be in Pingtu, China, taking arduous and sometimes dangerous trips in the country villages to spread the gospel message. Perhaps she could not imagine that, like her well-known predecessor Charlotte “Lottie” Moon, Jewell would operate a school for Chinese girls and a training school for “Bible women” who assisted Southern Baptist missionaries in evangelistic endeavors. Although she could not predict exactly what her future would hold, she knew she was preparing to respond to God’s calling to missionary work. Jewell’s education at two premier Southern Baptist institutions, Baylor University in Waco, Texas (1902–1907) and Woman’s Missionary Union Training School in Louisville, Kentucky (1908–1909), prepared her with formal and informal learning experiences that she would draw upon to teach Chinese women Southern Baptist ways.

Arriving in Shantung Province as a single woman in September 1909, Jewell collaborated with other single and married women in two types of work: traveling evangelism aimed at the village women in her area and the oversight of the Baptist schools for Chinese girls located in her region. The year 1914, ten years past her twentieth birthday, would be one of the most traumatic years in Jewell’s long life of 106 years. In February she married her Baylor friend and fellow missionary, Carey Daniel, transferred from Pingtu to Laiyang to work alongside him, and conceived their son by spring (North China Baptist Mission 1914, 6–15; Daniel n.d. a). That summer, four months after their wedding, Carey drowned in a flood as he returned on horseback from an evangelistic trip. In spite of her grief and uncertainty, the prayer she spoke on her twentieth birthday would guide Jewell throughout her life and work: “Let me do what thou hast given me to do” (Legett 1904, Aug 14). After Carey’s death, the North China Mission of the Southern Baptist Convention directed Jewell to return to Texas to give birth to their son, Carey (North China Baptist Mission 1914, July 6–15).

This analysis is based on Jewell’s personal diaries recorded during her student days and during her years in China. First we will outline Jewell’s college preparation at Baylor University and the Woman’s Missionary

Union Training School, analyzing retrospectively how her higher education in Southern Baptist schools prepared her for her life's work. Next, using her diaries and other primary source materials, we will recount her mission work in evangelism and supervision of girls' schools. Secondary sources provide the historical context for women's evangelical and educational work with Chinese women and girls. Finally, we will conclude by describing the impact of missionary efforts like Jewell's on the education of girls in China.

While students yesterday and today may have a general sense of how their education and credentials will prepare them for future work, they can only see in hindsight specific instances of a lesson influencing a particular decision or action. While in China, Jewell continued her theological study by reading the works of her Baylor professors, relying on language learning skills honed with her favorite Greek professor, and imitating the methods of evangelism she learned from her Woman's Missionary Union teachers. She remained devoted to Baylor and appreciative of her Baptist education, returning home in 1914 after her husband's death, to share her China experiences with Baylor students. Jewell's story provides an example of specific ways women missionaries drew on their higher education experiences, both inside and outside the classroom walls.

A CALLING CONFIRMED: BAYLOR UNIVERSITY, WACO TEXAS

Jewell attended two premier Baptist institutions to prepare for her life's work. She earned a bachelor's degree at Baylor University in her home state of Texas and, after a few months of school teaching, traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, to attend the Woman's Missionary Union Training School. Baylor University was established in 1845 at Independence Texas, moving to Waco in 1886. It offered a co-educational experience; an unusual choice for Southern Baptists of that era who generally preferred sex-segregated institutions (Baker 1987). In addition to coursework and dormitory living, Jewell invested herself in co-curricular activities that contributed significantly to her preparation as a missionary.

In Baylor's Foreign Mission Band (FMB), loosely affiliated with the world-wide Student Volunteer Movement (SVM),¹ she joined male and female students exploring a call to mission work (Parker 1998). Meeting monthly, the students of the Foreign Mission Band corresponded with missionaries, presented academic papers on missions in various regions of the world, and prayed for one another. Baylor women students spoke publicly to audiences of male and female students, which was an unusual and controversial practice for Southern Baptist women of this era. Jewell used her research, writing, and public speaking skills to present three aca-

demic papers at the Baylor FMB meetings between 1904 and 1907 (Baylor Foreign Mission Band 1906, April 23). As Patricia Martin (1983) points out, Texas Baptists were more open to women's public speech than Southern Baptists in other regions. For example, in Kentucky, where Jewell would take up graduate study a few years later, she learned that women were only allowed to address other women and children (Legett 1909, Jan 14). Through her involvement in Baylor's FMB, Jewell met esteemed Southern Baptist men of the Foreign Mission Board who would later serve on the selection committee determining her appointment to China (Baylor Foreign Mission Band 1906).

After graduating from Baylor in 1907, Jewell spent a few months in the Texas Panhandle teaching in Goodnight Academy, a private school established in 1898 by cattleman Charles Goodnight and turned over to Baptists in 1905. It was a coeducational industrial school in which students learned trades and paid part of their expenses by working the 340 acres of land. When Jewell arrived to teach in 1907, the school enrolled about 175 students (Reynolds 2013). Her brief experience at Goodnight would provide some practical teaching experience for later years when she would oversee several girls' schools in China.

During the 1908–09 academic year at Goodnight Academy, John Herrin, a Baylor classmate and fellow teacher, courted Jewell and proposed marriage. However, Herrin did not intend to serve as a foreign missionary. Jewell recalled in her diary, “for the first time in my life, I lost sight of that purpose [missions] enough to become engaged on the condition that one of us would give up to the other,—the one whom the Lord should direct to give up” (Legett 1909, January 3). Broken-hearted by the lost relationship, but determined to carry on with her calling, Jewell broke the engagement, resigned from her teaching job, and requested late admission to the fall term of study at the Woman's Missionary Union Training School (WMUTS).

MISSIONARY MODELS: LEARNING THE LIMITATIONS

At the WMUTS Jewell continued her preparation among women called to be missionaries both at home and abroad. When she arrived in 1909, the WMUTS was in its infancy, having been established in 1907. The school offered courses considered appropriate for women preparing for missionary work, such as music, elocution, domestic work, and a course called “personal work” in which women practiced visiting the poor, sick, and unfortunate. This “women's curriculum” designed by the school's founders, included a few carefully selected seminary classes with the all-male student body of the nearby Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, such

as church history and English study of the Bible. However, women were excluded from some classes at the Louisville school, for example, biblical Greek, which had been Jewell's favorite course of study at Baylor University. Founders feared that if women studied subjects such as Greek, Hebrew, Homiletics, and others related to interpreting scripture and preaching, they would be stepping out of their more limited sphere of Christian service (Scales 2000). Her daily studies and activities prepared Jewell for her life's work in China as she combined theological and biblical study at the seminary with practical training for missionary life. Her Baylor experiences with public speaking and piano playing for the Foreign Mission Band provided early practice for her elocution and music courses. Later, both public speaking and music would become a means of communicating with Chinese converts once she reached the mission field.

Some of Jewell's most challenging experiences were found in the practical work of visiting homes and evangelizing to Louisville's poor. Perhaps no other learning experience would so closely parallel the evangelism style Jewell would later use in China. The students volunteered in an urban mission and visited homes that Jewell declared were "places that make me sick to think of now, and dangerous ones, though we didn't know it at the time." One day while walking near the mission, Jewell and her classmate

happened upon an old woman who is sick and whose husband has been out of work for months. None of them are Christians. Before we left the dear old soul she gave her heart to Christ. I never will forget the prayer she offered after Miss Pendleton and I had prayed. "O Lord, I can't do nothin'; you do it fer me." (Legett 1909, April 4)

One month later, Jewell reported that the woman "came to the mission and brought her husband, who promised to seek Christ" (Legett 1909, May 9). The established pattern of visiting someone, listening to their stories and troubles, presenting the gospel message, closing the visit with a prayer, and then inviting the new convert to a church service or other type of meeting was a model Jewell learned and practiced in the Training School and would repeat again and again when she moved to the China mission field.

Outside the formal curriculum, Training School students like Jewell were being socialized to Southern Baptist ways. When she made a cultural blunder, Jewell found that Southern Baptists in Kentucky were stricter than Texas Baptists in terms of roles considered appropriate for women. One Sunday morning in January, she spontaneously decided to join with a Louisville congregation and told the congregation she felt God's call to missionary service. Later that afternoon, while talking with her friends, Jewell realized it had been a mistake to speak in public: "O I never

thought till this minute what I have done. I've disgraced the [WMU] Training School and Dr. Doolan's church, and myself. I forgot in my happiness that women never speak in mixed audiences in Kentucky!" (Legett 1909, Jan 14). Learning to adjust her behavior within the local culture, as she had to do in Kentucky, would become an important skill that Jewell practiced daily in China.

READY TO GO

After she completed one year of the two-year training program in Louisville, her principal, Maude McLure, recommended Jewell and Janie Lide—in response to an urgent appeal from the Foreign Mission Board for more women—to serve in China. Jewell's diaries took on a quite serious tone as she reflected on her pending departure. The idea of living alone worried her grandmother and her aunt who, "plead with me simply plead [*sic*], to be married before I leave America" (Legett 1909, Jan 25). Jewell wondered, too, about life without a husband. As she and her friend Janie spoke with a missionary couple visiting from China (her future colleagues the Owenses) Jewell realized that marriage would be unlikely once she sailed.

It sometimes makes me weep to look the matter right straight in the face and know that I am not my own best company—that I am not sufficient unto myself. [Janie] Lide is. She is one of those fortunate creatures, who never has to rely on others. The prospect down the years looks pretty bad tonight after the talk with Mrs. & Mr. Owen. (Leggett 1909, Feb 2)

Despite her worries, Jewell continued with her application for appointment as a missionary. Jewell and the other candidates interviewed with the all-male selection committee of the Foreign Mission Board. After a brief visit home to Texas to say goodbye to her family, Jewell and three friends from the Training School traveled to San Francisco in September of 1909 and set sail for China (Daniel, n.d.b, 3). Arriving to work in the North China Mission, Jewell would join a long line of Southern Baptist missionaries working in the area since the mid-nineteenth century. An overview of the project she joined will provide context for her educational work.

SHANTUNG PROVINCE AND SOUTHERN BAPTIST MISSIONARIES

Shantung, literal meaning "East of the Mountains," has been called the "Sacred Province of China." Home of the great sage, Confucius, Shantung

has always played a major role in China's history, influencing its culture and religion (Forsyth 1912). Situated on the eastern edge of the North China Plain, the Shantung peninsula extends far into the Yellow Sea, bringing Manchuria, Japan, and Korea into close proximity and, later on, serving as the port for foreign entry into China. The perilous Yellow River, which empties into the ocean through tributaries along the plain, has flooded violently at regular intervals, devastating lives and livelihoods with its subsequent famine. Depiction of life in Shantung by early Westerners indicated despair and poverty where people "can hardly be said to *live*; they merely exist" (Forsyth 1912, 4).

Southern Baptist's North China Mission was started in Shangtung Province by Reverend and Mrs. J. L. Holmes of Virginia who went to Chefoo in 1860, immediately after the port was opened to foreigners. Soon after, Reverend Holmes was murdered by the Tai Ping rebels. Undeterred by this setback, Mrs. Holmes continued mission work in Chefoo and was soon joined by Dr. and Mrs. Jesse Boardman Hartwell in Tengchow in 1861. By 1870 the mission had opened several small day schools and a boarding school in Tengchow (Southern Baptist Convention 1922).

About 115 miles from Tengchow was Pingtu. Despite numerous attempts, Pingtu remained opposed to foreign missionaries until 1873 when Lottie Moon won it over by her quiet, unobtrusive manner. Soon Pingtu became "the greatest evangelistic center in all of China," and many people came eager for the gospel message. "Not only the women came to her for instruction, but the men, Christians and heathen, flocked to her door" (Southern Baptist Convention 1922, 170).

The church members at Pingtu and all of Shantung Province lived through the frightening events of 1900 when almost 200 foreign missionaries and 20,000 native Christians were murdered (Varg 1958). By the late 1800s, anti-foreign sentiments had been gathering momentum following a series of unfair treaties, seizure of ports by foreign powers, and the granting of official status to Roman Catholic priests (Forsyth 1904, 2). Missionary endeavors were seen as western imperialism, and the Chinese saw little distinction between missionaries, merchants, diplomats, or the western army. A secret society known as the Boxers began to exhibit their hostility against foreign missionaries. Supported by the governor of Shantung, the Boxers murdered the first western missionary in 1899. Quickly repressed by the Qing government, the Boxers retreated from Shantung only to regroup in northern China and proceeded with the killings (Forsyth 1904). Though the Boxer movement lasted only a few months, it nevertheless revealed the incompetence of the Qing government in both its domestic and international policies. The weakened Qing dynasty would collapse just over a decade later during the 1911 Revolution. Missionary work, however, prospered in the years after the Boxer Rebellion and con-

tinued to spread throughout all eighteen provinces of China (Forsyth 1904, 495).

Taking her place in this narrative of Southern Baptist's missionary expansion in Shantung and perilous conditions for missionaries and Chinese Christians, Jewell Legett began her work in China when she landed on the coast in 1909. She was assigned to serve in Lottie Moon's beloved Pingtu; however, by that time, Miss Moon had retired to Tengchow, unable to withstand the grueling travel schedule and harsh conditions of rural work. Two years after Jewell arrived, Lottie Moon died on Christmas Eve in 1912 (Allen 1980, 61).

"TO CIVILIZE AND EVANGELIZE"

Missionaries who came to China around the turn of the twentieth century were involved with three main types of work: medical, educational, and evangelism. Paul Varg (1958) reports that missionary endeavors around that time shifted from a focus on the individual to society; from "rescuing the heathens from eternal damnation," to introducing "a spirit of regeneration" which could only be done as individuals become true believers of the Gospel (71). Hence the main goals of the missionary enterprise were to "civilize" and "evangelize." While the earliest missionaries approached China with the charge of rescuing her citizens from heathendom, the twentieth-century missionaries focused on uplifting the downtrodden, regenerating the human spirit, and introducing Christian conscience to protest social injustices (74). Missionary work in schools was further expanded, partly due to Chinese indifference to direct preaching (Rawski 1985, 136), and partly because education was highly esteemed in Chinese culture (Graham 1995, 1).

While Varg's discussion centers on the male-led missionary enterprise, historian of women's missions, Dana Robert, provides an analysis of women's understanding of their missionary task in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Establishing schools for both boys and girls was central to the mission work of Protestant women in China. For example, by the time of Jewell's arrival in China, the Methodist women missionaries were running 230 primary schools, nineteen high schools, and one college for women and girls. Robert notes that after India, China was the second major venue for "Woman's Work for Woman" a nineteenth and early-twentieth century missions philosophy based on the belief that "non-Christian religions trapped and degraded women, yet all women in the world were sisters and should support each other" (Robert 1997, 133). Protestant women, including Baptists, believed that creating high-quality

schools would lead to a literate church and that education would lead to social improvement for the girls and women of China (177).

JOINING THE NORTH CHINA MISSION

As we have seen, Jewell's experiences of college life and missionary work were woven together when she met her future colleagues, the Owenses, at her school in Kentucky. Jewell would continue to experience linkages between her Baptist schooling and her mission work when she encountered alumni from Baylor and the Training School on the mission field. Her diaries reflect many new and renewed acquaintances from her Baylor and Training school years, including her future husband, Carey Daniel, who joined the North China mission in 1910 (Legett 1910).

These connections to her formal schooling would undergird not only her relationships on the field, but her missionary methods, since Jewell and her colleagues were trained by the same teachers and mentors. This web of Southern Baptist students and friends added familiarity to a strange context and provided shared experiences to build a foundation for all the Baptist missionaries. During her first week in China, Jewell and her school companions Jane Lide and Floy White met Training School legend Alice Huey, who was stationed at Laichowfu. Huey was a part of the "Big Four," the beloved early graduates of the Training School who paved the way for later students like Jewell. As a remembrance of their Training School days, Jewell and Jane Lide dressed in their white commencement dresses brought from Louisville and sang a benediction for Floy's wedding that they had learned at the Training School (Daniel n.d.b, 3–6).

A few days after arriving in China, Jewell would travel from Tengchow, where Lottie Moon oriented all the new missionaries, to her new station at Pingtu. About 120 miles inland, and a four day trip by mule-cart, Pingtu had seven churches already established and two missionary couples to orient and support Jewell (Allen 1980, 151,155; Daniel n.d.b, 26). She was presented with loose-fitting garments to blend in with the culture, as well as a new Chinese name: Lan Jen Bao. Language study would be the first order of business and Jewell would draw on skills learned in her Greek class at Baylor University (Daniel n.d.b,10).

Within two years' time, the twenty-six-year-old Jewell had learned to function with the Chinese language and was living with two other missionary women in the home they called "House O' Joy." Ella Jeter, age thirty-three, hailed from Texas and had attended Baylor a few years before Jewell. Jeter was one of the "Big Four" pioneers, the first students at the Training School. Thirty-four-year-old nurse, Matilda Florence

Jones, from Missouri, whom the women called “Jo,” had also completed her graduate education at the Training School. Drawing from their common graduate school curriculum of WMU methods, the three women engaged in a variety of evangelical, educational, and medical activities. Jo managed all the medical care while Jewell and Ella engaged in evangelism. After two years in China, Jewell began supervising mission-run schools.

Evangelistic Work

While the primary focus of this article is on Jewell’s work with girls’ schools, a brief overview of her evangelistic work will explain how her time was spent. Jewell and her colleagues adopted the methods of evangelism typical of Protestant women missionaries in China. Chinese women were barred from listening to male preachers, so women missionaries visited in homes to share the Gospel. Traveling from village to village, the missionaries employed “bible women,” Chinese converts who provided access, credibility, and sometimes translation (Hunter 1984, 214). The objective was to be invited into the home of a woman of influence in the village. Sitting on the “kang,” a platform for eating and sleeping, with village women crowded around her, the missionary would provide a personal approach to sharing the Gospel narrative. This contrasted to the methods used by the Baptist male missionaries who preached to gathered crowds. Jewell and Ella were able to draw from their Training School experiences when visiting in the women’s homes. For example, while completing the requirements of her course in “Personal Work,” Jewell, Ella, and other Training School students had visited the homes of Louisville’s poorest residents (Legett 1909, April 21).

In April 1912, the two women went on a journey with their bible woman, Kiang-ta-sao, into rural Shantung. Their purpose was to tell the gospel story, visiting four villages in four days. Jewell and Ella experienced the highs and lows of some crowds responding positively and some villages giving them less attention. On a particularly good day she reported:

There were not the immense, unmanageable crowds that usually come, but just enough to hear well. They got interested early, and the whole day was good. As we were coming home I said, “Kiang-ta-sao, [paid Bible woman assigned to her mission], God heard us when we prayed this morning,” and she said simply, “Yes, His Spirit moved their hearts today.” (Daniel 1912, April 16)

Although women were their primary audience, Jewell and Ella sometimes had opportunities to teach and preach to men, a practice not typically tolerated in most Southern Baptist churches in the United States. In faraway China, Jewell and Ella experienced a rare opportunity to address male inquirers in their own mission compound and the gender dynamics were notable enough to record in her diary. Unusually eager to hear the gospel message, a group of men, women, and children first heard the missionaries in their own village, Kao-Kwan-tsrang, but then asked permission to follow them to Pingtu city to hear more (Daniel 1912). Jewell reported:

I played the organ for them which was a most wonderful thing, in their eyes, and then Ella began [with] the precious truths of the Bible. ... At first the men sat there with their eyes on the floor, as a perfect Chinese gentleman always does, with never a look into her face. O, I did love them for the respect they showed; but by-and by they forgot to be polite, they were so interested, and before long they were gazing straight into her eyes, having forgotten everything but the wondrous news she was telling. (Daniel 1912, April)

MISSION SCHOOLS FOR GIRLS

While country evangelism was an important part of the Southern Baptist's work with women, operating schools allowed the missionaries to prepare the next generation of Chinese Christians. In the glow of the "Woman's Work for Woman" philosophy embraced by Baptist women of the North China Mission, Jewell added school administration to her repertoire of outreach efforts. She could draw on her experience of teaching Sunday School while a student at Baylor and the Training School, as well as her formal experiences as a teacher at Goodnight Academy in Texas. Jewell felt like she found her true calling when she was appointed to supervise her area's girls' schools.

It was here that I began my real work,—the round peg slipped into the round hole, I believe. I spent a day with this little school, talking with the pupils and teachers, visiting the mothers, trying to get little feet unbound, trying to teach them and the teacher. (Daniel 1912, May 6)

In the spring and summer of 1912, Jewell visited all the schools under the care of the North China Mission to administer exams and acquaint herself with the teachers and procedures. Jewell was following in the train of several generations of missionary women who used education as a means of preparing Chinese Christians to read the Bible and share the

gospel message while also addressing cultural concerns such as foot-binding, superstition, and family life.

When mission schools first opened in China in 1819,² missionaries primarily recruited boys from poor families with the promise that Chinese classics would be taught to prepare the students for the imperial exam (Anderson 1943). The Chinese imperial exam, which had been conducted for centuries, was the sole vehicle for social advancement since those who excelled in the exam were chosen to hold important government posts. Theoretically, all Chinese males, regardless of their social status, had equal access to the exam; nevertheless, many were excluded due to the cost of education. While students could attend government sponsored schools after they successfully passed the county or provincial level of examinations, early teaching was available only to those who could afford private tutors (Graham 1995, 12). For this reason, early mission schools managed to attract boys from poor families who would otherwise not have the opportunity to take the imperial exam.

After a generation of educating Chinese boys, early missionaries began to shift their focus toward Chinese girls. What the missionaries saw was that many of the boys who finished in mission schools quickly fell back to old customs and beliefs after returning home to their non-believing mothers. Though women were not educated, Chinese mothers exhibited much influence in a traditional Chinese home at the turn of the century (Burton 1911, 13). Such realization galvanized the need to educate girls who would grow up to influence their families (Graham 1995, 19). However, the ambition to educate girls and the opening of girls' schools in China met with much resistance as eastern and western educational philosophies clashed (22). Ancient Chinese custom regarded females as inferior who lacked the intellectual capacity to learn. Subsequently, girls were routinely excluded from any educational endeavor. If there were any hint of literacy training at all, girls were taught by their own fathers, or by private tutors in the home, usually as incidental students alongside their brothers (Burton 1911, 26). Such training would cease altogether as soon as these girls reached puberty, at which time they were taught domestic skills to ensure they were worthy of marriage. While social customs prevented girls and women from being seen with anyone outside the family, practical reasons also precluded girls from schooling since they were married at an early age and became the property of their husband's family (32).

In addition to these obstacles, Chinese families at the time feared and distrusted foreign missionaries. They held strong superstitions against these "foreign devils" and many even believed that Chinese girls were killed to make medicine for foreign women or other purposes. Few would send their girls to mission schools despite the promise of food, clothing, pens and inks, and other materials (Graham 1985, 22). Faced with these

challenges, early missionaries were even more determined to “free” China’s girls from superstition and ignorance, and the horrendous custom of foot-binding.³ Finally, mission girls’ schools were able to attract the first few students after the schools offered to pay the families a small sum of money in addition to providing full support for their students. These early enrollees were usually the poor and destitute; many were slave girls, orphans, or “foundlings” with no one to go home to (Burton 1911, 45).

Resistance to girls’ schools and suspicion about the missionaries’ intentions finally began to ease after the first group of girls finished their studies and returned to their homes, well-fed and well-educated. By the end of the nineteenth century, China began to experience a sense of “widespread national awakening” in the education of girls (Burton 1911, 154). Many of the students were now self-supporting daughters of the rich, as opposed to poor peasant girls from an earlier period. In fact, the demand for girls’ schools was so great that reports were coming from various mission posts having to turn away applicants (55). Citizens from the nobility joined the movement to form their own private schools for girls. By 1906, the Chinese court formally mandated the establishment of government schools for girls, particularly in urban areas, while Western missionaries continued to operate village schools in rural areas (Burton 1911).

CURRICULUM AND METHODS FOR GIRLS’ SCHOOLS

By the turn of the twentieth century, there was a well-established system of education for China’s women. Primary schools were established at the village level to educate girls at the early stage of their intellectual development. Later on, these students were sent to “middle” or boarding schools at the mission station (Hunter 1984, 16). At the highest level, graduates of middle schools were then sent to one of three women’s colleges. At the village level, Chinese converts taught the students, while missionaries administered and conducted routine inspections of the schools. Jewell Legett came at a time when the supply of missionaries could not meet the demands for their schools and many of them gave up direct evangelism to devote to teaching (Graham 1995, 37). In 1912, Jewell found herself traveling regularly to oversee twelve girls’ schools in the region. One Friday in May she traveled to three girls’ schools in Wang Kia Tswang, Sra-ling, and Hwoa Bei. She spoke with students and teachers and noted in her diary that teachers were paid the equivalent of twenty-one dollars. Although she admired the dedication of the teachers, the conditions of the schools were disappointing, as Jewell noted, “I would be depressed to death if there weren’t so gloriously much to do” (Daniel 1912, April 20, May 6).

The reliance on native teachers, especially at the lower level, resulted in much rote memorization as the prevailing method of teaching. Students were taught to recognize characters and repeat passages until they could recite them with great speed. Jewel noted, “The children are taught to memorize and that’s about all. A fifteen year old can rattle off the book of John, two of the classics, her reader, and catechism” (Daniel 1912, May 6). The rote memorization method of teaching and learning encouraged little understanding, failed to develop reasoning and intellectual power, and was often criticized by the early missionaries as backward and inappropriate (Burton 1911, 68). Assessments of learning consisted of students reciting lessons in front of their teacher and other students. The first time Jewell witnessed a school recitation she was caught by surprise.

When two girls came up to recite, whisked about with their backs to the teacher, and said their lessons so fast I could not distinguish a syllable, I couldn’t help it—I exploded with laughter. From the sudden hush I gathered that I had blundered and that an explanation was due. Got Mrs. Oxner to say that Lan-Mang-me she was sorry she laughed but that in America she had never seen it done that way. (Daniel n.d. b, 15)

At the middle school level where missionaries played a bigger role in the actual instruction of students, they were more successful in introducing American subjects of study. Curriculum at the mission schools often included the Confucian “three character classic,” parts of the Bible, catechism, and later on arithmetic and geography (Graham 1994, 14; Hunter 1984, 16). A curriculum analysis of five representative mission middle schools around 1900 revealed that all the students were taught mathematics, Bible classes, Chinese classics, Christian doctrines, physical exercise, and physical geography (Burton, 1911, 71). Some of the students were taught music, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and other science courses. Though not listed as part of the formal curriculum, it was a common understanding that the girls were all trained in cooking and all areas of clothes making (Burton 1911, 74; Graham 1994, 26).

Jewell would continue to draw from her higher education experiences at Baylor University and the WMU Training School for the rest of her life of service. Returning for the last time to Texas in 1926, she continued responding to God’s call, living on a small pension from the Foreign Mission Board, speaking to Baptist groups and writing evangelistic materials. When she died in 1990 at age 106, she was still telling stories of her days in China (Towery 2000, 121).

MISSIONS AND EDUCATION: SOWING SEEDS

Just as the twenty-year-old Jewell could not have envisioned her life at thirty, she could not have possibly predicted the impact of her work during her short service in China. A century has passed since Jewell lived and served in China. We cannot credit Jewell alone with lifting millions of China's girls out of poverty, or ameliorating the educational inequalities faced by China's girls, though her daily work certainly changed lives. Jewell's story reminds us of a Chinese proverb, "If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people."

This Chinese proverb signifies the long-term impact of education. It also implies that the true fruits of education take a long time to bear. The impact of the work done by Jewell Legett was not immediately seen, especially since she only stayed a short time in China. Jewell spent nearly five years applying the knowledge, skills, and values she learned in two of the premier Southern Baptist institutions of higher education to her missionary work. As she evangelized in Pingtu, she and her women colleagues departed from traditional Southern Baptist practices by evangelizing to both men and women. As a teacher and supervisor of the regional girls' schools, Jewell met the challenge of providing the highest quality education she could manage with limited resources. Valuing her own education, Jewell and her women colleagues used evangelism and the establishment of schools to share with the Chinese women and girls the privilege of learning and build a foundation that would improve the lives of women for generations to come.

NOTES

1. The SVM was a cross-denominational collegiate effort emerging in 1886 to recruit and prepare college students for foreign missionary service with its famous watchword, "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation." See T. Laine Scales and Craig Clarkson (2011) for a description of Jewell representing Baylor's FMB at the 1906 world-wide SVM meeting.
2. The origins of the first mission school are uncertain. While Mary Anderson reported that the first mission school for boys was founded by Morrison in Macao in 1819 and the first girls' school founded by Mrs. Gutzlaff in Macao in 1835, Margaret Burton reported that the first girls' mission school was founded in 1844. Baptist Henrietta Shuck created a school sometime after 1842, but died before she could bring in students.
3. Although foot-binding was officially outlawed in 1907, the custom continued (Hunter 1984, 87–89; Robert 1997, 175–76).

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