

Women's Spirituality, Lived Religion, and Social Reform in Finland, 1860-1920

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Abstract. In the 19th century, women contributed to social work based on revivalist religious values. They founded orphanages, deaconess institutes and shelters for "fallen women." Even in the Lutheran, very homogenous context of Finland, the question of gender and religion was a multi-faceted issue. Religious reform movements both empowered women and defined proper fields of activity for both sexes. The Christian framework fostered several understandings of women's calling. The Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, founded in 1867, offered one interpretation of a woman's calling. Emma Mäkinen, who founded a shelter for "fallen women" in 1880, represented an alternative interpretation of a woman's calling. The third understanding can be found in the women's rights movement and in the White Ribbon. Both movements consisted of middle-class women who worked on a broad program ranging from moral reform to political participation.

Key words: Gender, calling, deaconate, revivalism, social reform

The Christian conception of humankind is explicitly based on gender difference. At creation God created two categories: men and women (Genesis 1:27). Over the centuries, the social understanding of gender difference has defined the lives of both sexes, and the arguments on appropriate gender relations have been based on those definitions. The notions of proper femininity and masculinity are constructed and negotiated in the social

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context of daily life. Furthermore, socially acceptable ways of being female and male depend on other categories like class and ethnicity. This has been obvious in churches and revivalist movements too. In 19th and early 20th century Finland, women actively contributed to social work based on revivalist religious values. They founded orphanages, deaconess institutes and shelters for “fallen women.” They engaged in philanthropic work among the urban poor and assisted deaconesses to rural villages and missionaries to other continents.¹ In these efforts they were both encouraged and discouraged. Some members of society felt that women’s activities threatened the existing social order while others looked upon them as cornerstones of a new social order. In this article I study the ways in which urban middle-class women in the Lutheran context of Finland redefined women’s social responsibilities and rights. I argue that women who were expanding their social activities challenged the social consequences of gender difference; yet, they based their arguments on differences between men and women.

Hierarchical gender relations placed women and men in different positions in the social processes by which Finnish society was constructed in the 19th century. The Evangelical Lutheran Church was the established church and Lutheranism was the official confession of Finland. Many leading members of the Lutheran clergy were inspired by the German theologian J. T. Beck, whose biblical view of Christianity was based on a literal interpretation of the Bible. One of the most prominent representatives of the Beckian theology was Bishop Gustaf Johansson

¹ Pirjo Markkola, “Promoting Faith and Welfare. The Deaconess Movement in Finland and Sweden, 1850-1930,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 25 (2000); Pirjo Markkola, *Synti ja siveys. Naiset, uskonto ja sosiaalinen työ Suomessa 1860-1920* (Helsinki: SKS, 2002); Inger Marie Okkenhaug, ed., *Gender, Race and Religion. Nordic Missions 1860-1940* (Studia Missionalia Svedica: Uppsala, 2003).

(1844-1930), who held that the women's rights movement was threatening the social order given by God. Biblical texts emphasizing women's obedience and subjection were often cited. To motivate their own social activities, women—and those men who supported women's visible role in the struggle against social problems—used other citations of the Holy Book. Women's active social role was both promoted and opposed through references to the authority of the Bible.² Contesting interpretations suggest that religion was used to legitimate different definitions of gender relations.

Interpretations of Christian gender relations had social consequences. To understand the role of religion in industrializing society, I use the concepts of "spirituality" and "lived religion." Both studies of spirituality and lived religion emphasize the daily life. Research on spirituality takes seriously women's self-understanding and experience.³ I do not claim, however, that we can reconstruct genuine "women's experiences"; instead, I argue that women's ways to give meaning to religious and social practices and to experience those practices are bound to the context in which they lived. In those contexts people practice religion in various ways. Research on lived religion is concerned with religious practices, which cannot be understood apart from the meanings people give to them.⁴ To take women's

² Maija Rajainen, *Naisliike ja sukupuolimoraali. Keskustelua ja toimintaa 1800-luvulla ja nykyisen vuosisadan alkupuolella noin vuoteen 1918 saakka* (Helsinki: Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura, 1973); Markkola, 2002, 178-188.

³ Johanna H. Stuckey, *Feminist Spirituality. An Introduction to Feminist Theology in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Feminist Goddess Worship* (Toronto: Centre for Feminist Research, York University, 1998), 5-8; Marguerite Van Die, "A Woman's Awakening: Evangelical Belief and Female Spirituality in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada," *Canadian Women. A Reader*, Wendy Mitchinson et. al. eds. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996), 51-52.

⁴ David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America. Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997); Marguerite Van

experiences seriously means here that I try to be sensitive to their spirituality and their ways of living religion.

The empirical narrative of my article is based on three groups of middle-class women who engaged in social work to uplift working-class women. The ways in which they chose to work were different. Some women found their vocation in a formalized context of deaconess movement; others devoted themselves to evangelical work among “fallen women,” whereas some other women began to argue for women’s rights and actively paved their way to politics. All these women extended their social work beyond the family, but they interpreted the religious vocation in differing ways. The concept of “woman’s calling” became central in women’s organizations and new female occupations in the 19th century. According to the Lutheran theology, women’s calling was to serve the social collective as mothers and daughters, i.e. in the households.⁵ At a time when economic changes were undermining the household unit, the definitions of women’s proper calling were re-evaluated.

Women and Social Change

Various forms of religious social reform—the deaconess movement, homes for “fallen women” and moral reform associa-

Die, Religion, Family, and Community in Victorian Canada. The Colbys of Carrollcroft (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 8-9, 188-189.

⁵ On Lutheran calling and 19th century women, see Inger Hammar, “From Fredrika Bremer to Ellen Key. Calling, Gender and the Emancipation Debate in Sweden, c. 1830-1900,” *Gender and Vocation. Women, Religion and Social Change in the Nordic Countries, 1830-1940*, Pirjo Markkola, ed. (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2000); Inger Hammar, *Emancipation och religion. Den svenska kvinnorörelsens pionjärer i debatt om kvinnans kallelse ca 1860-1900* (Stockholm: Carlssons förlag, 1999); On marriage as a calling, see Carter Lindberg, “Martin Luther on Marriage and the Family,” *Perichoresis* 2.1 (2004), 44.

tions—were a part of wide international reform movements. In Finland they were rooted in the social and political context in which the shift from an old, ordered society to a new civil society was conceptualized as an era of social question. The political relations were shaped by a growing nationalist movement and the “Russian question,” meaning the relations between Finland and Russia. Having been an eastern part of Sweden for centuries Finland formed a Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire from 1809 to 1917. The social structure and legal system remained Scandinavian during that period, as the Emperor recognized the Swedish laws, including Lutheran confession and the status of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a state-church. After 1917 the strong position of the Lutheran church was continued also in the independent Finland.⁶

Until the 20th century, Finland was an agrarian country in which the vast majority gained their livelihood from agriculture. In 1900 the share of agrarian population was still about two thirds. Despite late industrialization and the dominance of agriculture, the industrial working-class grew rapidly. The number of urban workers in 1910 was four-fold compared to 1870. The 1890s, in particular, spelled a quick growth of urban population; in a few years the number of city-dwellers doubled.⁷ The urban middle-classes who became active in revi-

⁶ On Finnish history, see David Kirby, *A Concise History of Finland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jason Lavery, *The History of Finland* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing, 2006); Max Engman and David Kirby, eds., *Finland. People, Nation, State* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1989); Merja Manninen and Päivi Setälä, eds., *The Lady with the Bow. The Story of Finnish Women* (Helsinki: Otava, 1990).

⁷ Pertti Haapala, “Työväenluokan synty,” *Talous, valta ja valtio. Tutkimuksia 1800-luvun Suomesta*, 232-233, Pertti Haapala, ed. (Tampere: Vastapaino, 1992); Pirjo Markkola, “Women in Rural Society in the 19th and 20th Centuries,” *Manninen and Setälä*, 1990, 18. The population of Finland in 1900 was

valist reform movements formed a small, but a steadily growing part of the population. They were seeking solutions to the problems of urbanization and industrialization. Social order based on households, in which the head of a household was responsible for the well-being and discipline of his household-members, could not meet the demands of the industrializing and urbanizing world.

Economic changes were intertwined with ideological changes, a combination which paved the way to the individualization of citizens. It was typical of the revivalist movements to emphasize Christianity as a choice guiding the deeds and minds of people, a choice which had both social and individual repercussions. Faith was no longer the collective, self-evident cornerstone of a Christian worldview. The pietism of the 18th and early 19th centuries had accentuated service and benevolence as Christian obligations towards fellow human beings. These ideas manifested themselves in a home-mission movement with the German Inner Mission as the most direct model. The goal of the home mission was to solve the social question through the renewal of popular piety. Home missions worked for the benefit of the poor; nevertheless, the ultimate goal was to save their souls.⁸ The involvement of women was understood to be crucial in promoting these goals.

The active members of the Lutheran church acted under two kinds of pressures while developing the home mission in Finland. On the one hand, the pressure of secularization mani-

2.9 million. The majority were Finnish-speaking, but the Swedish-speaking minority was active in many fields.

⁸ Markkola 2000; Nicholas Hope, *German and Scandinavian Protestantism 1700-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 409-417; Catherine M. Prelinger, *Charity, Challenge, and Change. Religious Dimensions of the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement in Germany* (New York-Westport-London: Greenwood Press, 1987).

fested itself not only as a budding neglect of church doctrine but also as a redefinition of the social division of labor. The Lutheran parishes and local municipalities were separated in the 1860s. In the new division of labor the poor relief became a responsibility of local municipalities. The construction of municipal poor relief challenged the churchmen to reconsider the role of Christian charity in changing society. On the other hand, evangelicalism created pressure on Lutheran Christianity. During the last quarter of the 19th century two newcomers to Finland, Free Church revivalism and the Salvation Army, engaged in social work and managed to recruit many women for their ranks.⁹ The Lutheran church met these challenges by developing church-based charitable work and establishing home-mission societies which worked in close co-operation with the Lutheran clergy.

In this context gender relations were in a process of transformation. Women's rights were gradually expanded; unmarried women gained majority in the 1860s, but married women were not freed from their husband's guardianship until a new Marriage Act was passed in 1929.¹⁰ The question of women's political rights became one of the issues. The parliamentary reform of 1906 abolished the old Diet of four estates and established the unicameral parliament—at that time the most modern representative body in Europe. Both men and women got

⁹ Eila Helander, *Naiset eivät vaienneet. Naisevankelistainstituutio Suomen helluntailiikkeessä* (Helsinki: Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura, 1987), 33-35; Nils G. Holm and H. Sandström, *Finlandsvensk frikyrklighet* (Åbo: Insitutet för ekumenik och socialetik vid Åbo Akademi, 1972).

¹⁰ These reforms were made in all the Nordic countries in the 1920s. Kari Melby, Anu Pylkkänen, Bente Rosenbeck and Christina Carlsson Wetterberg, eds., *The Nordic Model of Marriage and the Welfare State* (Copenhagen: The Nordic Council of Ministers, 2000); Anu Pylkkänen, "Finnish Understandings of Equality. The Agrarian Heritage and the Public," *Women in Finland* (Helsinki: Otava, 1999), 33-36.

the right to vote and to stand as candidates. Among the 200 members of parliament elected in 1907 were nineteen women. Many new female members of parliament came from women's organizations.¹¹ The impact of this parliamentary reform could be seen as a turning point in women's voluntary social work.

Vocation in a Suit

In the 19th century the deaconessate became a new opportunity for young Protestant women, who could join a deaconess institute and devote their entire life to the service of God. The model for this new Christian activity was found in the New Testament in which a woman called Phoebe had served in a Christian community.¹² The first deaconess institute was founded in a small German town of Kaiserswerth in 1836 by Protestant minister Theodor Fliedner and his wife Friederike Fliedner. The movement soon gained a foothold in the Nordic countries. The main line of work was to nurse the poor sick, but deaconesses were also involved in education and social work among the poor. Deaconessate was relatively widely accepted as a suitable calling for women; nevertheless, there was variation in the ways in which the female diaconate was organized.¹³ The

¹¹ Irma Sulkunen, "The Women's Movement," Engman & Kirby 1989, 178-191; Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Pirjo Markkola, eds., *Suffrage, Gender, and Citizenship. International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

¹² Romans 16:1-2; Jenny Ivalo, *Diakonian lukukirja* (Sortavala 1920); Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, ed., *The American Deaconess Movement in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York-London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1987).

¹³ On deaconess education see Catherine M. Prelinger, "The Nineteenth-Century Deaconessate in Germany. The Efficacy of a Family Model," *German Women in the Eighteenth, and Nineteenth Centuries. A Social and Literary History*, 215-225, Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres, and Mary Jo Maynes, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Prelinger, 1987, 18-23, 167-169; Ursula Bauman, *Protestantism und Frauenemanzipation in Deutschland 1850 bis 1920*

churches claimed repeatedly that deaconesses were not Protestant nuns, but the similarities were striking. *Diakonia* (service) represented a clearly marked choice to follow God: deaconesses belonged to the community of a deaconess institute, they wore a deaconess suit, and they were not paid for their work. The community took care of their daily needs and provided social security in case of illness and old age. However, the deaconesses were allowed to leave the community if they got married or found that the deaconessate was not their calling.

The first deaconess institute in Finland was founded by Aurora Karamzin (1808-1902), a benevolent widow, who also supported the philanthropic Ladies' Society. She was familiar with the Evangelical Deaconess Institute (*Evangelische Hospital*) in St. Petersburg; furthermore, in a visit to Kaiserswerth she was impressed by the work of German deaconesses. In the famine year of 1867 she bestowed money for the foundation of a deaconess institute in Helsinki and invited the Finnish sister Amanda Cajander (1827-1871) from *Evangelische Hospital* to become the first matron. Having lost her husband and both children by the age of 29, Sister Amanda joined the institute in St. Petersburg. She became the first deaconess in Finland and a leading pioneer in

(Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1992), 45-56; Almut Witt, "Zur Entwicklung kirchlicher Frauenberufe Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts," "Darum wagt es, Schwestern..." *Zur Geschichte evangelischer Theologinnen in Deutschland* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1994), 42-43; On the first deaconess institutes in the Nordic countries, see Ernst Lönegren, *Minneskrift till Svenska Diakonissanstaltens femtioårsjubileum* (Stockholm, 1901); Erkki Kansanaho, *Sata vuotta kristillistä palvelutyötä. Helsingin Diakonissalaitos 1867-1967* (Porvoo, Helsinki: WSOY, 1967); Gunnel Ekmund, *Den kvinnliga diakonin i Sverige 1849-1861. Uppgift och utformning* (Lund, 1973); Kari Martinsen, *Freidige og uforsagte diakonisser. Et omsorgsyrke voxer fram 1860-1905* (Oslo: Aschehoug/Tanum-Norli, 1984); Tuulikki Koivunen Bylund, *Frukta icke, allenast tro. Ebba Boström och Samariterhemmet 1882-1902* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994).

the field of nursing. Until Sister Amanda's untimely death, Aurora Karamzin offered her spiritual and material support, which extended from acquiring instruments for the hospital while travelling abroad, to buying a new house for the institute, when it was needed. These two women opened a new era in the field of Christian charity in Finland; they also managed to introduce a new idea of women's vocation, although their institute was very modest in the beginning. During the first years, the institute founded a small hospital with eight beds, an orphanage, and an asylum for female servants. In the wintertime it also ran a soup kitchen.¹⁴ The primary groups to be served were women and children.

In the beginning of the 20th century the goal of the deaconess institute was "to educate women, who, out of love for their Saviour have voluntarily chosen their calling in life the nurturing of the suffering, the sick and the fallen."¹⁵ The first matron initiated visits to working-class families, i.e. "the nurturing of the suffering and the sick." She searched out sick adults and neglected children and sent them to the hospital or the orphanage. Later on, this work was continued by Sister Cecilia Blomqvist (1845-1910), another pioneer in the inner-city mission. Her life history was traumatic. She lost her mother in her early childhood and was brought up by her father, who was a sea captain, and her stepmother, whom she also lost at a young age. At the age of sixteen Cecilia travelled to France and Italy with her fa-

¹⁴ *Amanda Cajander's letters to Aurora Karamzin, 1867-1870*. Aurora Karamzin's Collection. National Archives (KA), Helsinki; Pirjo Markkola, "Cajander, Amanda (1827-1871)," *Suomen Kansallisbiografia* 2 (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), 78-79; Marianne Tallberg, "Nursing and Medical Care in Finland from the Eighteenth to the Late Nineteenth Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 14 (1989): 274.

¹⁵ Paavo Virkkunen, "Uskonnolliset ja hyväntekeväisyhdistykset," *Oma maa* (Helsinki, 1909), 477.

ther. During the journey, which broadened the worldview of a girl from a small harbor town, she spent several months in Marseilles. After the journey she developed into an active member of the Ladies' Society, took up teaching at Sunday school, and additionally taught sewing to poor girls. During the severe famine in 1867-1868 she nursed people who suffered from typhoid. These benevolent activities, childhood experiences and—most importantly—religious revival made her open to deaconess work. After having read about the Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, she felt that she had found her calling. After her father's death in 1873 she could devote herself to it.¹⁶

The deaconess institutes wanted to recruit educated women from middle-class homes rather than daughters of working-class or rural families, who, it was feared, would join the institute in pursuit of upward social mobility. Due to her background Cecilia Blomqvist became a warmly welcomed student in the little institute still in the process of formation and, in fact, suffering from a lack of human and material resources.¹⁷ Albeit diaconate was defined to be humble and self-sacrificing service, the vocation offered many opportunities to talented women. In her humble service Cecilia Blomqvist turned out to be an innovative woman with a visible influence on the early history of the deaconess movement. For example, she was the first Finnish deaconess to work with a Lutheran parish—a line of work which was to become the most far-reaching part of female diaconate in the 20th century. In 1930 more than 600 deaconesses

¹⁶ Cecilia Blomqvist, "The Roll of Deaconesses" 1. The Deaconess Institute of Helsinki (*HDL*) Ba: 1. KA; Pirjo Markkola, "Blomqvist, Cecilia (1845-1910)," *Suomen Kansallisbiografia* 1 (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), 678-679.

¹⁷ Kansanaho 1967, 41-42, 50-51, 64. In practice the institutes attracted rural and working-class women. "The Roll of Deaconesses," *HDL*, KA.

worked outside the deaconess institutes, and at least 75 per cent of them were serving the Lutheran parishes.¹⁸

Sister Cecilia's work included nursing and social work. In the deaconess institute she was in charge of the hospital. Moreover, she visited working-class neighborhoods, nursed the sick, taught children and placed some of them in orphanages and foster homes. An important venue for charitable work was found in city missions, which were formed to fight against sin, misery and sickness. The City Mission of Helsinki was explicitly organized in 1883 to continue the missionary work started by Cecilia Blomqvist. The timing of this decision must be seen within the context of the social question—a central issue of the 1880s—for which solutions were sought all over society. Both religious and humanitarian groups paid increasing attention to the problems of urban communities.

Furthermore, at the age of 55, Cecilia Blomqvist accepted a new challenge when the health authorities invited the deaconess institute to found a leprosy hospital. She steered the hospital until 1910. On the whole, Sister Cecilia proved her competence and seemed to be in the right place at the right time. The deaconesses did not choose their work; they were sent to new fields by the director and the matron. Sister Cecilia did not conceptualize her work as a career. For her the work was a vocation, a calling given by God, and she repeatedly reflected on her

¹⁸ Pirjo Markkola, "Diakonissan mellan det privata och det offentliga. Kvinnlig diakoni i Sverige och Finland 1880-1940," *Den privat-offentliga gränsen. Det sociala arbetets strategier och aktörer i Norden 1860-1940*, 190-191, Monika Janfelt, ed. (Copenhagen: Nordiska Ministerråd, 1999). The more extensive work in parishes was initiated by the deaconess institutes of Sortavala and Oulu founded in the 1890s. They gave a short education following the Norwegian model. Hannu Mustakallio, "Emansipaatiota, diakoniaa ja filantropiaa. Pohjoispohjalaiset naiset diakoniaa ja hyväntekeväisyyttä edistämässä 1900-luvun alkupuolelle saakka," *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 104 (1999), 94-101.

insufficiency as God's servant. She complained for her lack of love and patience to suffering people around her.¹⁹ However weak she might have felt herself the calling led her to a remarkable career not only in the service of Christian social work but also health care in Finland. During her 37 years as a deaconess she made several excursions abroad and represented her institute at international conferences. At home she was among the first deaconesses to be elected to the board of the deaconess institute; furthermore, in 1889, as the first woman in Finland, she was elected to the municipal poor-relief board of Helsinki.²⁰ The example of Cecilia Blomqvist in fact shows the ways in which women in the religious context of deaconessate met challenges that may have seemed too difficult, yet their spirituality, which was based on the belief that they were called by God, empowered them to accomplish demanding tasks.

Deaconesses were visible representatives of the new understanding of a woman's calling. In the Lutheran theology parenthood and, especially, motherhood was given the status of a calling.²¹ Both the male and female leaders of the deaconess movement often drew an explicit parallel between motherhood and the work of deaconesses and explained that, as deaconesses, unmarried women attained a chance to be mothers to the motherless.²² Motherhood was thus put at the very centre of a deaconessate. When married women's calling was concretely defined through motherhood, the deaconess movement gave unmarried women a symbolic way to fulfill their womanly calling.

¹⁹ For ex. "Cecilia Blomqvist to Artur Palmroth" 14.9.1909, *HDL*, File 33, KA.

²⁰ Markkola 2003, 678-679.

²¹ Hammar, 1999, 25-26, 247-248; Lindberg, 2004.

²² For example Elsa Vennerström, "Diakonisskallet. Föredrag vid kristliga studentmötet i Sordavala," *Betania* 9/1916, 140-141.

Moreover, the leaders explained that they could not call anybody to become a deaconess; they could only support and strengthen those who got their calling from God.²³ The deaconessate was a vocation; women were called to serve. While the deaconessate opened up new opportunities for unmarried women to gain a livelihood, it was still strongly built on traditional models and Lutheran interpretations. According to the Lutheran conception of calling everybody was called to serve in his or her daily life. Women's calling was connected to the household; they were called to serve God as spouses, mothers and daughters.²⁴ The construction of a deaconessate and a deaconess vocation represented an extension of the traditional role of a Christian woman and in this respect it did not question the Lutheran mode of thought. The fact that the first deaconess institutes were defined as homes in which a deaconess had the role of daughter made it easier for the churches to approve the deaconessate as a way to make use of women's resources—and for women to enter the institutes.

In the Lutheran sense, however, a deaconess vocation was a serious calling. It had to be tried before a young woman devoted her life to the service of God. The serious nature of the deaconess vocation was often reflected in the ways in which many women chose to become deaconesses. Both sister Amanda and sister Cecilia had lost their mothers at a young age. Cecilia also lost her stepmother, Amanda's husband committed suicide. Those experiences together with a revivalist awakening paved those women's ways to the membership in a deaconess community, which gave spiritual support to those who were

²³ For example U. Nordström, "Diakonisskallet och förberedelsen därtill," *Betania* 5-6/1914, 80; Elsa Vennerström, "Diakonisskallet," *Betania* 9/1916, 134-141; Sam. Thysell, "Maallinen kutsumukseemme," *Koti ja kirkko* 7/1911, 8/1911.

²⁴ Hammar, 1999, 23-24.

ready to accept it, but could also create pressure on women who did not share the worldview of the institute. Deaconess institutes, which bound sisters into the community, were sometimes criticized for resembling monasteries. The dropout figures of the Deaconess Institute of Helsinki speak for themselves. The training usually took several years; an overwhelming majority of trainees left the institute before they were consecrated. The publications of the Finnish deaconess institutes repeatedly published articles warning young women from seeking the earthly honour or imagining that as deaconesses they would become more pious individuals. If the calling was not from God, attempts to serve as deaconesses were doomed to fail.²⁵

Evangelical Calling

Private charitable work represented another way for women to live religion. Giving alms had traditionally been a suitable form of women's charitable work. However, during the 19th century it was becoming less acceptable. Philanthropic ideals condemned unsystematic alms-giving; instead a strong emphasis was put on education and work. New establishments were founded all over the industrialized world. Convinced of the importance of education and practical training, Emma Åhman (1849-1915) opened a shelter for "fallen women" in Helsinki in 1880. She was not a wealthy woman but she was motivated by a strong vocation, a calling to serve suffering women. Emma Åhman belonged to the first generation of women who had access to formal education in Finland. In 1870 she graduated from the first teacher's training seminar, established in 1863,

²⁵ "Diakonissoiksi," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 5/1894; Elsa Vennerström, "Vilka särskilda faror medför diakonissans uppgift för utvecklingen av hennes personlighet," *Betania* 1/1914; "The Roll of Deaconesses 1," *HDL* Ba: 1, KA.

and became a primary-school teacher in Helsinki. The social question materialized to her through the living conditions of her pupils. She visited their homes and found a new world, which had been unfamiliar to a daughter of a lower civil-servant family.²⁶

At the same time the new Anglo-Saxon revivalist movement reached Finland. Famous international Free Church evangelists, among them Lord G. A. W. Radstock from England and the Swedish preacher Fredrik Tiseliu, visited Finland, held prayer meetings and helped to initiate the revivalist movement among the Swedish speaking Finns. Emma Åhman belonged to the first converts. Free Mission was organized in the form of voluntary associations or informal groups of friends, who shared the experience of conversion and emphasized Jesus' words "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Unlike Baptists and Methodists, the movement did not take advantage of the Dissenters' Act of 1889, which legalized the existence of Protestant churches in addition to the Lutheran and the Orthodox state-churches. They continued to work as a Free Mission movement, and many of the members managed to stay on good terms with the Lutheran clergy. The Evangelical Free Church of Finland was first organized in the 1920s when the freedom of religion was granted.²⁷

The emphasis on social work and home mission pushed many women to seek an active social role. The movement organized informal meetings, in which only re-born Christians participated.²⁸ The lack of formal structures strengthened the posi-

²⁶ Emma Mäkinen, "The Evangelical Free Church of Finland" (EFCF) I Ha: 4. Hämeenlinna Provincial Archives (HMA); "Mitä yksinäinen nainen voi saada aikaan," *Naisten ääni* 4/1909; "Emma Mäkinen," *Valkonauha* 15.2.1909.

²⁷ Simo Heininen and Markku Heikkilä, *Suomen kirkkohistoria* (Helsinki: Edita, 1996), 204-207, 224-225.

²⁸ Heininen and Heikkilä, 1996, 206.

tion of women. Moreover, many supporters came from the Swedish-speaking upper and middle-classes, a fact that guaranteed the presence of resourceful female members in the movement. The Lutheran concept of calling was extended: women were to become mothers to the suffering poor and the fallen sinners. Emma Åhman found her calling in Stockholm while visiting a women's shelter founded by Elsa Borg. She felt that such an institution was badly needed in Finland. After the excursion she quit her job, borrowed money from her friends in the Free Mission and opened a shelter for women in December 1880. Three years later she also founded a private orphanage which was connected to the shelter.²⁹ The Free Mission supporters were "free" also in the respect that they did not tie their benevolence to formal structures such as those which, for example, were clearly discernible in the deaconessate.

The aim of the shelter was to normalize "fallen women" into ordinary working-class women who could gain their livelihood in a decent manner. Prostitutes in fact formed a minority of the inmates during the first decade;³⁰ the majority consisted of other women, who were considered to be "fallen" or in need of protection. The idea of a "fallen woman" was wide-spread in the 19th century. A woman who lost her chastity, i.e., became sexually active outside marriage, was "fallen," and there was hardly any way back to decent womanhood; at the best the road was rocky and difficult. The Evangelical Christianity emphasized that everyone could be saved; for that purpose Evangelicals founded asylums and shelters for "fallen women" in Europe as

²⁹ The shelter was also known as a home for "fallen women." Emma Mäkinen. EFCF I Ha: 4, HMA; Miss Elsa Borg was well known in Finland, see Elsa Borg, *Valkonauha* 15.3.1909.

³⁰ Rajainen, 1973, 158; Antti Häkkinen, *Rahasta-vaan ei rakkaudesta. Prostituutio Helsingissä 1867-1939* (Helsinki: Otava, 1995), 201; Markkola, 2002, 235.

well as in North America.³¹ The process of uplifting was thought to be long and painful; one of the best medicines, in addition to God's word, was manual labor. In Emma Åhman's shelter "girls"—as they were called—worked in a laundry, learned household chores and made handicrafts for sale. The laundry in particular served the purpose of vocational training; the work trained women to wash, iron and starch which were useful skills for improving their position in the labor market. The youngest girls were less than 15 years old, but the majority was around the age of 20. Women older than 30 were usually not welcomed in the shelter because they were thought to be beyond all hope already.³²

The fact that women had to enter the shelter voluntarily was a key to the care ideology of the home. Women who enrolled to the shelter had to agree to follow the rules and regulations defined by the matron. Medical control was a prerequisite for entering the home. The rules prohibited inhabitants from leaving the home without permission—the newcomers were allowed to go out only if accompanied by someone whom the matron could trust, everyone had to take up any work given to her, alcohol and cigarettes were strictly forbidden, the matron decided whether guests would be allowed, the daily program was

³¹ For example Barbara Meil Hobson, *Uneasy Virtue. The Politics of Prostitution, and the American Reform Tradition* (New York: Basic Books Inc. Publishers, 1987), 110-115; Karin Lützen, Byen Tæmmes, *Kernefamilie, sociale reformer og velgørenhed i 1800-tallets København* (København: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1998); Larry Whiteaker, *Seduction, Prostitution, and Moral Reform in New York, 1830-1860* (New York-London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1997), 43-63; Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water. Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1991), 99-103.

³² Some former residents thanked for useful skills or asked for further advice in ironing and starching. For example letters of Tilta A. 11.2, 30.3 and 14.7 (no year mentioned) and Anna B. 6.9.1885 and 3.10.1885. Emma Mäkinen, *EFCF I Ha: 4*. HMA.

punctually organized and everyone had to attend prayers in the morning and in the evening. By giving their consent, women made a symbolic contract with moral reformists and legitimized their efforts.³³ The matron depended on their consent and could work with them only if they agreed to work with her.

The care ideology was further reflected in the ways in which Emma Åhman treated her inmates. She set the limits and demanded that they were respected. Some women suffered from alcoholism or simply thought that there was nothing wrong with having a drink; in fact there were problems with young women who escaped, drank and then wanted to return to the shelter. Sometimes the matron ended up calling the police. On the one hand she could not risk the order in the home by letting some individuals disturb the daily routines; on the other hand she had, in the name of her credibility, to punish those who broke the contract.³⁴ Her vocation was informed by philanthropic and revivalist Christian ideas that demanded self-discipline and obedience from those who were helped. It was not acceptable to give without demanding. There are also concrete examples of her struggle between patience and order in the home. One remorseful girl who sought refuge in the home was taken in although she was not sober. The first night Emma stayed up with her. The next day a doctor ordered the girl to a mental institution, but she needed to wait another day in the

³³ "Emma Mäkinen to Fredrick Caconius in 1895." Emma Mäkinen, *EFCF I Ha: 4*, HMA; "Fredrick Caconius to Emma Mäkinen" 4.2.1895. *EFCF I Fb: 3*. HMA; Anna Jansdotter has conceptualized the relationship of a moral reformist and a "fallen woman" as a power relation in which both had a certain degree of power. Anna Jansdotter, *Ansikte mot ansikte. Räddningsarbete bland prostituerade kvinnor i Sverige 1850-1920* (Stockholm/Stehag: Brutus Österlings bokförlag Symposion, 2004), 25-26.

³⁴ "Emma Mäkinen," *EFCF I Ha: 4*. HMA; Fredrick Caconius to Emma Mäkinen 4.2.1895. *EFCF I Fb: 3*. HMA; "Emma Mäkinen to Antti Mäkinen" 4.2.1903 and 15.8.1903. *EFCF I Fb: 5*. HMA.

shelter. In the evening the girl saw demons, swore and became paranoiac. The matron had to give up and call the police.³⁵ Police and hospitals were the earthly authorities she relied on in her rescue work.

In 1886 Emma Åhman married Antti Mäkinen (1857-1931), a student of theology, who interrupted his studies at the University of Helsinki and instead attained a training of a Free Church evangelist in London. Emma continued her rescue work among women and children, while her husband travelled around Finland as a home-mission preacher. The couple was in a position in which both had a capacity to support the other's work.³⁶ On the one hand, Emma had a longer history in the Free Mission and her friends around Finland could help the visiting evangelist, her husband, to organize revivalist meetings. On the other hand, the husband's journeys made his wife's shelter widely known. Free Mission friends and others involved in moral reform often asked if they could send women to the home.³⁷ The most remarkable partners were Hellman sisters in Vaasa, a small harbor town on the west coast. Being widely involved in the Evangelical revival they initiated many new forms of social work. A total abstinence movement, a seamen's mission and a prison mission were started by them.³⁸ Home mission was the mission of their life.

Prostitution was relatively widespread in the harbor towns. In the 1880s Vaasa, a town of less than ten thousand inhabitants, housed several brothels. Hellman sisters sought "fallen

³⁵ "Emma Mäkinen to Antti Mäkinen," 15.8.1903. *EFCF I Fb*: 5. HMA.

³⁶ Emma and Antti Mäkinen's correspondence. *EFCF I Fb*: 3-5. HMA.

³⁷ For example letters from Fanny Stenroth 17.8.1884, Olga Kronlund 20.3.1885, Frida Sjöblom 13.4.1886 and 19.4.1886, Lilli Fabritius 14.2.1892. *EFCF I Fb*: 3. HMA.

³⁸ "Alba, Hilda and Anna Hellman to Emma Mäkinen," Forsman-Koskimies Family, KA, Helsinki; Markkola, 2002, 238.

women" from the streets or met them in the harbor, when all of them were heading to the ships, Hellman sisters with their sack of Bibles, prostitutes seeking work. Their home soon became known among young women who needed help; the letters of Alba Hellman, one of the sisters, frequently tell about the visits of young prostitutes. Many of them were sent to Emma Mäkinen's home and Alba Hellman organized a group of local volunteers to pay their maintenance. The financial aid given by the group was an important contribution to the shelter. For example, in 1883-1884, about 60 per cent of its income was received in the form of donations. In 1885 the home was granted a state loan and in 1890 it began to get state support. Nevertheless, most of the time only 20 or 25 per cent of the budget consisted of public contributions. Women of the Free Mission were the financial backbone of the rescue work. They arranged annual bazaars and persuaded their wealthy relatives to contribute to the shelter. Furthermore, many "brothers in faith" gave both spiritual and material support to the pioneering work among marginalized women.³⁹

The question of state support tried Emma Mäkinen's vocation. She would rather have relied on God's help and was not sure if God would accept a state loan. Yet she stated that "so few Christians in Finland had more means to give"; their money was needed for many purposes and the state seemed to be willing to strengthen the work for moral reform. She struggled and prayed. Finally she took the step of accepting the state support.⁴⁰ The hesitation revealed important features of Emma Mäkinen's evangelical spirituality and showed the way in which she lived her religion. Her faith was more than a psycho-

³⁹ "Emma Mäkinen," *EFCF I Ha*: 4. HMA; Sefa Forsman to Toini Jauhiainen, 19.10.1899, 13.12.1899, 20.11.1900. Forsman-Koskimies Family, KA.

⁴⁰ "Emma Åhman to Antti Mäkinen," 13.7.1885. *EFCF I Fb*: 5, HMA.

logical or mental factor giving her strength; it was a guiding principle in her daily efforts. She discussed every decision in a prayer and sought guidelines for the practical social work from the Bible.

The religious worldview of women involved in moral reform has, in Finnish research, been interpreted as a barrier between prostitutes and their saviors. It has been claimed that the upper-class ladies did not understand the living conditions of the prostitutes and thus could not define realistic goals for their projects.⁴¹ No doubt there was a disparity between the living conditions of “fallen women” and those of the middle-class women who attempted to uplift them, but the lack of understanding among moral reformists should not be exaggerated. For example Alba Hellman gave very detailed descriptions of the young women she sent to the shelter and very clearly saw their situation in economic terms. Poverty and the lack of employment were often mentioned. She also discussed their health—including venereal diseases—and often commented on the brothels in which they had worked. Moreover, social aspects were taken into consideration. Women in small towns knew that a new life could be started only in a new environment—that is why they were sent to the capital city where their reputation as former prostitutes or “fallen women” was not known.⁴² The fact that many prostitutes returned to their old business, as Antti Häkkinen has shown, can better be understood by paying attention to the motives of the residents themselves. They were more than victims of “men’s passions” or of benevolent women’s moralism. Because they entered the home voluntarily, women could use it as a temporary shelter. Emma

⁴¹ Häkkinen, 1995, 204-205.

⁴² “Alba Hellman to Emma Åhman,” 10.6.1883 and 3.7.1883. “Emma Mäkinen,” Forsman-Koskimies Family. KA.

Mäkinen's correspondence shows that some women requested a place in the shelter when, for instance, they were released from the prison or if they wanted to move.⁴³ Numerically the rescue work failed, because many protégées sought a passing refuge, not a permanent correction or an eternal salvation, which in fact was the ultimate object of the religious moral reform.

Emma Mäkinen's shelter was also a private home. She opened her doors to "fallen women" and lived there with her mother, husband and sometimes mother-in-law too. In this respect she worked within the walls of a home and did not enter the wider society. The combination of private life and rescue work was not without problems. Emma Mäkinen's vocation was most severely tried in 1900 when she spent several months in a hospital. During that time her husband, who occasionally suffered from mental problems, had an affair with a woman in the shelter. The husband, who was one of the leaders of the Free Mission, was immediately sent away from Helsinki and later from Finland by the other leaders. He lost his position and a shadow was thrown over the home. Friends in the Free Mission demanded that the orphanage and the home for fallen women should be separated and the children moved away from the shelter. During the time the "fallen" husband stayed out of Helsinki, the couple wrote to each other almost daily.⁴⁴ He blamed himself, showed regret and expressed gratitude to his loving wife and merciful God. Emma did not approve her husband's behavior but from the very first letter after the catastrophe was discovered she was ready to forgive him. Bitter feelings were expressed a couple of times, but all the time her disappointment

⁴³ Häkkinen, 1995, 203; "Letters From the Inmates," Emma Mäkinen, *EFCF I Ha*: 4. HMA.

⁴⁴ "Emma and Antti Mäkinen's correspondence," March 1900-March 1901. *EFCF I Fb*: 4-5, HMA.

was subjected to her faith in the love of Jesus. She believed that in front of almighty God everyone was a sinner and needed mercy. Marriage crisis was turned into a spiritual experience which strengthened her evangelical conviction.

However, a woman who had devoted her entire life to uplifting “fallen women” had to confess that she had not been careful enough. She knew the risks involved in her work: “fallen women” represented a moral threat to people around them. According to a common understanding men were not able to control their sexuality in the same way as chaste women.⁴⁵ With her friends Emma Mäkinen openly discussed “his sin” and his weakness. Fellow believers often sent their regards to Antti and promised to pray for him. Emma welcomed her husband back, although some friends recommended that he should stay out of his home. The husband returned and after a while he was again employed by the Free Mission, but he could not gain the same position he had had earlier, partly due to his mental weakness.⁴⁶ Emma Mäkinen remained a respected member of the community continuing her rescue work until her death in 1915. She was convinced that evil powers were threatening everywhere and every soul. For her the life of a Christian was an ongoing struggle against sin which could be won only by staying very close to Christ.

Although Emma Mäkinen found her calling in the context of Anglo-Saxon evangelicalism and was even baptized in 1883, she had close contacts with many women from the Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, the matron being one of her friends. Some-

⁴⁵ On the ideas of chastity in Sweden, see Hammar, 1999, 173-177; Jansdotter 2004, 258-260.

⁴⁶ Antti Mäkinen’s weakness was discussed—without mentioning his name—in the weekly newspaper of the movement. John D. Kilburn, “Kristityitten lankeaminen,” *Suomen Viikkolehti* 19.4.1900.

times they held private prayers together.⁴⁷ There were also other deaconesses in close contact with Emma Mäkinen and her rescue work was respected among the Lutheran majority of moral reformists. In the early 20th century Emma Mäkinen was elected to a delegation which made the case to the high state authorities of the importance of female police officers in the work against prostitution and venereal diseases.⁴⁸ The fact that she was a religious dissident did not exclude her from moral reform.

Political Calling

In the 1880s and the 1890s, an increasing number of Finnish women felt that private charities and philanthropic enterprises could solve some problems but they could not cure the origins of social problems. For real improvements, women's battle against sin and vice needed changes in legislation. The first women's rights society, the Finnish Women's Association, was founded in 1884. In addition to women's right to work and women's legal rights, one of the goals was moral reform. To women's surprise, this part of their program gained the strongest opposition from some outstanding members of the Lutheran clergy, although many pastors openly supported women's attempts to uproot vice from Finnish society.⁴⁹ The crucial question seemed to be the way in which women's social role was understood.

⁴⁷ "Emma Mäkinen to Antti Mäkinen," 13.8.1889, *EFCF* I Fb: 5. HMA; About Emma's baptism Nanny Lundgren to Edvard Björkenheim, 1.7.1883. Edvard Björkenheim's correspondence, Orisberg, Finland.

⁴⁸ Frida Sjöblom, "Siveellistyön järjestäminen maassamme," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 12/1908; Rajainen, 1973, 174.

⁴⁹ Rajainen, 1973; *Excelsior* 1886. *Excelsior* was a yearbook published by the Women's Association.

Bishop Gustaf Johansson was the most prominent opponent of women's attempts to expand their fields of activity. In 1885 he presented his view of women's emancipation. He reminded the clergy of his diocese that both the state and marriage were God-given; therefore, human beings should not change the divine order. He underlined that women had the same human dignity as men and there were tasks for women beyond the scope of a family, but to grant them equal rights would be against divine social order, and, logically, to demand equal rights was to rebel against God's will. Following this reasoning he could not see any way to combine Christian faith and the women's rights movement. They were totally incompatible. Furthermore, the Bishop saw that the emancipation of women—by being in itself disobedience to God's will—promoted immorality and licentiousness.⁵⁰

Women who advocated moral reform found the Bishop's critique unjust and misplaced. The Women's Association replied directly to the Bishop clarifying their own position and explaining the contents of emancipation. They made clear that the women's rights movement was not rebelling against "divine social order"; instead, they were honestly trying to determine which rules were ordered by God and which rules were only said to be God-given. The Women's Association wanted to abolish social defects. It was also very clearly and polemically stated that the women's rights movement would give up its demands if someone could rationally prove that social defects were created and ordered by God. If that could not be proved, then it was obvious that it was a wrong judgment to claim that women's emancipation was "a rebel against God's order." Moreover, the Women's Association published both in Finnish and in Swedish a booklet by the Danish minister Hostrup

⁵⁰ "Piispa Johansson naisvapautuksesta," *Excelsior* 1886, 58-60.

which clearly laid the foundation of women's rights on a Christian basis.⁵¹

The representatives of the women's rights movement were also interpreting the Holy Bible. They underlined that the basic values of Christianity were freedom and equality. Women criticized Eastern, patriarchal ideology which, according to their understanding, was against the very message of the New Testament, but showed that the same Paulus, who told women to keep silence in the meetings or wives to be obedient to their husbands, had also promoted gender equality. "... there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus," quoted one of the local leaders of the Women's Association in 1905.⁵² Christianity was understood to be the founding principle of women's emancipation. This was repeatedly emphasized by Alexandra Gripenberg, one of the most prominent women's rights activists of her time. Looking back at the history of the women's rights movement, she stated that women's emancipation was a fruit of Christianity. For her all radical efforts to free women's emancipation from the burden of Christian religion were in fact endeavors to smuggle anti-emancipatory ideas into the women's rights movement. Women's emancipation had two basic principles: men and women should have equal rights, and they should be equal in terms of morality. The latter part was based on Chris-

⁵¹ "Piispa Johansson naisvapautuksesta," *Excelsior* 1886, 64-65; C. Hostrup, *Tutkistelemus, kuinka naisen vapauttamisesta kristillisesti on ajateltava* (Helsinki: Suomen Naisyhdistys, 1896).

⁵² "Eastern" referred to Middle East and the world of Old Testament. Iida Yrjö-Koskinen, "Mietteitä kirkkokäsikirjan johdosta," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 11/1905; "Piispa Johansson naisvapautuksesta," *Excelsior* 1886, 65-71; "Naisen toiminnasta," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 11/1898; Toini Topelius, "Mietteitä naisesta ja siveellisyyskäsitteestä," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 6-7/1892; "Naisasian nykyinen kanta Suomessa," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 7/1905; On similar arguments in Sweden, see Hammar, 1999, 130-141.

tian values which freed women from the prison of sexuality and which demanded the same purity from both sexes. Because equality in terms of morality was another cornerstone of women's emancipation, only Christianity could guarantee it.⁵³ Moral reform was threatened both by prostitution and the new ideas of free sexuality; as long as moral reform was not achieved, attempts to gain gender equality remained fruitless.

At the end of the 1880s the Women's Association made several attempts to put an end to prostitution in Finland. They wrote petitions and turned to the Diet of four estates. In the estate of clergy their first petition was presented by Bishop C. H. Alopaeus in 1888. The petition was signed by 3037 women and 2745 men. The discussion by the legislators showed the different understandings of women's calling. Bishop Johansson was unwavering. He claimed that the Women's Association polluted the moral atmosphere by spreading information about prostitution.⁵⁴ Two bishops held opposite views of women's social activism. While one of them supported the women's petition and their crusade against prostitution, another saw the crusade itself as an attack against God's order. Moral reformists should not talk about "fallen women" because, by making them visible, they endangered and offended decent women. The new issue was not easy for women either. In 1887 a small-town group of benevolent women discussed moral reform because they had received tracts on "white slavery." One of them could read only two pages; her friend bought one tract to support the

⁵³ "Suomen Naisyhdistys 1884-1904," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 3/1904; "Naisasia v. 1903," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 5/1904; "Mitä tarkoittaa 'naisasia vapaamieliseen suuntaan'?" *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 1 (1906): 2-3.

⁵⁴ "Suomen Naisyhdistys," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 3 (1904); Rajainen, 1973, 130-134. Women's petition was again presented by Bishop Alopaeus in 1891 and in 1897 by Bishop Råbergh.

cause but she was going to burn the disgusting text.⁵⁵ Not all women were ready to join moral reform movement.

The struggle for moral reform was further promoted by the Finnish branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). In many countries, including Finland, it was called the White Ribbon. Frances Willard, who was a key figure of the movement in the United States, was frequently quoted in the publications of the Finnish White Ribbon.⁵⁶ The first contacts with the WCTU were created in 1888, when the Finnish teacher Alli Trygg visited the United States and was very impressed by Frances Willard. As soon as she was back at home, she took the first attempts to organize a women's Christian temperance movement in Finland. In 1890 she invited Mrs. Mary Clement Leavitt from the World WCTU to speak about its work. However, the first efforts to start the work in Finland failed, partly because potential moral reformists were active in the Women's Association. More successful was a visit by the Danish speaker Mrs. Elisabet Selmer, who lectured in Turku in 1896. As a result of her visit, the first White Ribbon association was founded in Turku, the city of the chair of the Archbishop.⁵⁷ According to the statutes of the "Totally Abstinent Christian Women's Association" the aim of the new society was to work on the basis of God's word to uplift women mentally and materially and to promote total abstinence, moral purity and other Christian virtues "for the home, the native land and the humankind."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ "Elli Cajander to Emma Mäkinen" 25.3.1887, *EFCF I Fb*: 3. HMA.

⁵⁶ *Jumalalle, kodille ja ihmiskunnalle* (Helsinki, 1916), 3-8; Ann Firor Scott, *Natural Allies. Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

⁵⁷ Fanny von Hertzen, "Piirteitä Suomen Valkonauhaliikkeen synnystä ja kehityksestä v. 1896-1931," *Valkonauha 1896-1931 Juhlajulkaisu Festpublication* (Valkonauha: Helsinki 1931), 1-2; *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 11 (1895).

⁵⁸ *Ehdottomasti raittiin, Kristillisen Naisyhdistyksen Säännöt* (Turku, 1897).

By that time several temperance societies were very popular among women. The Labor movement was one of the strongest supporters of the temperance cause. Activist women in the labor movement organized in the Social Democratic Women's Association in 1900, and more women could be found in the ranks of the Social Democratic Workers' Associations.⁵⁹ The field around the temperance question was expanding but it was also in a turbulent state. The fact that the temperance movement was relatively strong influenced the ways in which the small White Ribbon, founded by middle-class women, found its very own field of work in Finland. When the national organization was established in 1905, several actual issues were discussed. The limited resources of the women's rights movement were bound to a fight for women's suffrage, and the temperance movement was believed to be on the edge of total prohibition. Nationalists, including women, struggled against the Emperor's efforts to change the status of the Grand Duchy of Finland. In the midst of all these burning issues, moral reform seemed to remain neglected.

During the national strike in 1905, meetings were held on moral reform. The White Ribbon prepared a petition to abolish prostitution and medical control of it (regulated prostitution), which was understood by many to legalize the trade. In the overall reform enthusiasm, women of the White Ribbon managed to collect thousands of signatures on an appeal which was presented to the Senate. This time the reformists were successful; regulated prostitution was abolished in 1907. However, the moral crusaders were not satisfied with the end result of the reform, because the old system continued in practice. Now it was made a duty of the medical authorities to control venereal

⁵⁹ Sulkunen, 1989, 178-191; Irma Sulkunen, "The mobilisation of Women and the Birth of Civil Society," *Manninen and Setälä* 1990, 42-53.

diseases among the prostitutes or women suspected to be prostitutes.⁶⁰ Women activists of the White Ribbon felt that they still had an enormous amount of work to do.

When regulated prostitution was abolished, the White Ribbon tried to arrange work for former prostitutes—though it soon became apparent that the reform did not cause remarkable unemployment among them. The White Ribbon founded shelters for “fallen women” and young girls in several towns. Most of them were small and lived a relatively short time, but they managed to put moral reform on the agenda of local decision-makers or to make them aware of the cause. The first one was originally initiated by a Lutheran minister in Turku in 1894. When a Swedish-speaking White Ribbon association was founded in 1904, the association continued to run the shelter. The little association planned to follow the leading principle of Frances Willard to “do everything,” which, in Turku, meant plans to start missionary work in the railway stations, hospitals and police stations; to demand female police officers; and to establish a home for female servants, a work exchange, and a youth club. However, the program was too ambitious as the work was already discontinued by 1909.⁶¹

The White Ribbon was an association based on Christian values. Many leaders supported feminist ideas of women's rights, which, according to their understanding, had a solid foundation in the Christian social order. Women's suffrage was an important issue for the movement. One of the local associations looked back to the year of the parliamentary reform and called it an anniversary for the people of Finland and, in partic-

⁶⁰ Rajainen, 1973; *Valkonauha 1896-1931. Juhlajulkaisu* (Helsinki, 1931).

⁶¹ *Valkonauha 1896-1931*, 9-15; “Helsingin Valkonauha. Pieni rengas suuressa mailmanyhdistyksessä,” *Valkonauha* 8-9/1916; Protokoll 27.1.1894, 18.4.1894, 22.5.1894. The White Ribbon of Turku (WRT) Cb: 3. Turku Provincial Archives (TMA).

ular, for the history of women. They were expecting a better future in terms of temperance and moral reform because women could now make themselves heard in the elections. One of the members even visited the unicameral parliament in order to see the new women members of parliament in action. In September 1907 she travelled to the capital, joined a long queue of visitors and finally entered the balcony of the parliament. The first women she saw among the parliamentarians were Alexandra Gripenberg and Hilda Käkikoski who were devout Christians and outstanding promoters of moral reform. The observer saw them, as well as the other women of the nationalist Fennoman party, to be hardworking, clever and mature members of parliament. The social democratic women—excluding Miina Siljanpää who looked intelligent—seemed shallow to her.⁶² The way in which the middle-class moral reformist saw the female members of parliament was determined by the parliamentarians' commitment to Christian social work. The more they were involved, the more reliable they looked to her.

Women's participation in parliamentary decision-making was now defined to be the fulfilling of their highest national duty. It was hoped that the parliamentary work, instead of being fruitless attempts to acquire more power, would be real work for women and the entire nation. Women's public role was accepted in the association although some Christian associations were very careful in terms of political participation. The White Ribbon had to address these doubts as well and explain that, by promoting women's rights and temperance among others, they already had entered the field of politics. Both causes demanded new legislation—that is why Christian women had to be involved in politics. The same message was repeatedly expressed by the Women's Association. Christian women were

⁶² Valkonauha, 6.2.1907, 30.10.1907. WRT H: 1. TMA.

needed in politics and women who had a Christian worldview should vote for candidates who promoted the right issues and shared the correct values. This was further emphasized by the women of the White Ribbon, who pointed out that the right choice was important. Not only did it promote common good but it also protected religion, abolished the curse of alcohol, promoted nationalism, uplifted the poor and suffering and made it possible for women to have more power in other sectors of society.⁶³ They built their arguments around the older Christian tradition which, in the name of God, could give women an opportunity to promote good cause.

Women's rights, spirituality, domesticity and nationalism were understood to support each other. In 1916 one of the national board members wrote that, by working for God, home and native land, the organization in fact was working for women. According to her, women were created equal and before God women and men were equal. To spiritually uplift women meant that they should be given an opportunity to come close to God, to find the real purpose of their lives. God's word provided the best spiritual tools for a young woman who could form an equal partnership with her pious husband. Being equal and valuable human beings they could bring up equal and valuable daughters and sons. Pious homes were a necessary condition for spiritual and ideological gender equality. However, the work for women demanded material reforms too. Women's

⁶³ Valkonauha, 5.12.1906, 19.2.1908. WRT H: 1. TMA; "Naisasian nykyinen kanta Suomessa," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 7/1905; "Hiukan äänioikeuspakinaa syrjäkylän torpassa," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 12/1905; "Naiset ja nykyhetki," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 11/1906; "Kristillismieliset naiset ja vaalit," *Koti ja yhteiskunta* 1/1910.

rights needed to be protected and their equal status promoted by passing similar laws for both sexes.⁶⁴

On some issues the White Ribbon developed an indirect feminist discourse in which women's status in Finland was contrasted to that of other countries. A good example was found in missionary work abroad, which was often motivated by referring to women's lower status in the heathen world. For instance the White Ribbon in Turku discussed missionary work in China. They asked if "we, who find the issue of women's rights precious, can calmly look at the miserable lot of women in China, their huge ignorance of the state of their souls in particular."⁶⁵ They underlined that female forces were needed in the China mission and emphasized the importance of women's support of the work. However—as in many other countries—this criticism of Chinese women's status referred indirectly to women's status at home.

Similar examples could be found on their own continent. In 1907 the low status of female teachers in Germany was contrasted to the education of women and the equal status of male and female teachers in Finland. After pointing out the positive achievements of Finnish women, the author could give a long list of unjust conditions which still demanded improvement: "exemption from her sex" needed in civil service, the missing rights of married women, women's right to work, etc.⁶⁶ Middle-class women of the White Ribbon were very careful not to give any reason to be blamed for too militant opinions but neither did they hesitate to demand full rights for women.

⁶⁴ Irene Rosenqvist, "Työ naisten hyväksi," *Jumalalle, kodille ja ihmiskunnalle* (Helsinki, 1916), 59-65.

⁶⁵ Valkonauha 2/1904. WRT H: 1. TMA; Eila Helander, "Miksi naiset lähtivät lähetystyöhön? Uskontososiologinen näkökulma anglosaksisen maailman naislähettien historiaan," *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 100 (1995), 544-545.

⁶⁶ Valkonauha 8.5.1907. WRT H: 1. TMA.

Conclusions

Various forms of Christian social reform were initiated almost simultaneously in Finland. The deaconess movement was introduced already in the 1860s but in practice it began to grow from the 1880s onward. Free Mission and social work inspired by Anglo-Saxon revivalism commenced in the early 1880s. Also the women's right movement was established in the 1880s. It started the first crusade against prostitution at the end of the decade. The three forms of women's participation in social reform movements presented here, in fact, represented the most important part of the moral reform in 19th and early 20th century Finland.

The examples of Christian social reform indicate that even in the Lutheran, very homogenous context of Finland, the question of gender and religion was a multi-faceted issue. Religious social and moral reform movements empowered women but at the same time they defined proper fields of activity for both sexes. The Christian framework fostered several understandings of women's calling. The Deaconess Institute of Helsinki, founded in 1867, offered one setting and interpretation of a woman's calling. Emma Mäkinen, who founded a shelter for "fallen women" in 1880, represented an alternative interpretation of a woman's calling. The third alternative can be found in the women's rights movement and in the White Ribbon. Both movements consisted of middle-class women who worked on a broad program ranging from moral reform to political participation.

In the Lutheran theology, a calling was connected to everyday life and applied to everybody regardless of age, gender or social position. Women's calling was to serve God as mothers, daughters and servants in the household. The deaconess movement followed most faithfully the Lutheran conception of calling. It expanded the limits of household, but it did not ex-

publicly enter the sphere of politics. Deaconessate offered women a formalized, systematic way of serving the suffering and being mothers to the motherless. By easing earthly misery they were witnessing the love of God and thus promoting the renewal of popular piety which was understood to be the true source of better social conditions. The threshold for entering the motherhouse community was made relatively high, a fact which suggests that the calling of a deaconess was a special vocation.

Women, who were urged by evangelical revivalism to help the suffering, expanded their social role by establishing private charitable enterprises. Emma Mäkinen's shelter is a good example of that kind of work. She worked to uplift "fallen women," and she wanted to help the prostitutes to become decent members of society. Her calling was based on a belief in the importance of personal awakening. Instead of social changes she focused on individual "betterment." Personal Christian faith was a key to better society.

The women's rights movement and the White Ribbon exemplify new challenges to the social definition of gender relations. They re-defined a woman's calling as extending into politics. By giving new interpretations of the Bible, they demanded changes in legislation. To reach their goals they found it necessary to participate in the political decision-making. They were convinced that women and the values represented by them were needed in politics and state affairs. Christian faith was a driving force behind their social participation, both in the moral reform and the women's rights movement, which by the early feminists were understood to be intertwined.

The women involved in Christian social reform gave new interpretations to gender relations. The deaconess movement, the evangelical moral reform and the feminist moral reform were all based on the notion of gender difference. Nevertheless, they

wanted to challenge the social consequences of the difference between men and women. Because God had created women and men equal but different, they felt that women and feminine values were needed in all sectors of society. Deaconesses and the women of the Free Mission were not involved in the struggle for women's political rights, but, as soon as the rights were gained, they used them. The first elections in 1907 brought women from all these groups to the polls. In this way even the deaconesses joined the category of *persona publica*, public person, which in the Lutheran tradition was reserved solely for men. Sister Cecilia Blomqvist already entered politics in 1889 when she became a member of the municipal board for poor relief. For her, the membership represented rather an extension of her work in the City Mission than an opportunity to gain influence in politics. The major difference between the women's rights activists and the other women involved in Christian social and moral reform was that the women's rights advocates were explicitly speaking for themselves. They tied the rights of the poor and the "fallen" to their own rights and claimed that there would be no changes if women were denied the access to politics.⁶⁷

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⁶⁷ This article is an updated and revised version of "The Calling of Women: Gender, Religion and Social Reform in Finland, 1860-1920" that appeared in Pirjo Markkola, ed., *Gender and Vocation. Women, Religion and Social Change in the Nordic Countries, 1830-1940* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2000).

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