

[ CHAPTER FOURTEEN ]

FOURTH YEAR OF  
THE OREGON MISSION  
1839-1840

The fourth year of the Oregon Mission of the American Board was marred by growing dissension among its members; long letters of criticism about Spalding were sent to the Board. The two troublemakers were W. H. Gray and Asa B. Smith, both being unhappy in their respective stations within the Mission. The fact that both men had made spur-of-the-moment decisions to go as missionaries to Old Oregon reveals a certain instability of character and lack of good judgment. Some of the blame must also rest on the secretaries of the Board who approved their appointments with so little investigation of suitability.

GRAY DEMANDS A STATION FOR HIMSELF

The Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission for 1839 was held in Spalding's home at Lapwai September 2-5. Whitman, Spalding, Gray, and Smith were present. Walker and Eells were unable to attend. Hall and Rogers were made corresponding members. Spalding was again elected moderator and Smith, clerk. The first action taken rescinded the vote of the special meeting held the previous February, which called for Whitman to start a new station in a central location. Now he was permitted to remain at Waiilatpu, and Smith was authorized to open a station at Kamiah. "I do not approve of this," wrote Spalding in his

diary. "There should be a mission in the Cayuse tribe & the physician should be near the centre of the field."

Gray argued for a station of his own. After considerable heated discussion, the majority reluctantly granted permission for him to explore for a station, but again Spalding disapproved. This particular action of the Mission caused much subsequent trouble because Gray interpreted it to mean that he was authorized to establish a new station, and not merely to explore the possibility. In a letter to Walker dated October 15, Whitman wrote: "I thought it was clearly expressed by the meeting that he was not to locate for the year to come but make his home at Clear Water for that time."

As soon as possible after the Mission meeting closed on September 5, the Grays started on their tour of exploration. After being away from Lapwai for more than a month, they returned on October 18 and informed Spalding that they had selected a site "about a day above Walla Walla on a small stream putting in from the S.W."<sup>1</sup> Gray began immediate preparations to move. Spalding, with his characteristic bluntness, told him that the Mission had not authorized the establishment of a new station, but had only given him permission to explore. The argument became heated. Gray, thoroughly discouraged and smarting under what he felt was his inferior status in the Mission, decided to investigate the possibilities of finding employment elsewhere.

Gray left for Fort Vancouver on October 21 with the hope of finding some employment in the Willamette Valley and even possibly with the Hudson's Bay Company. Dr. McLoughlin refused to hire him as he could not produce satisfactory evidence that his withdrawal from the Mission met the approval of his associates. This rebuff by Dr. McLoughlin accounts in part for the caustic remarks which Gray later made on the Hudson's Bay Company. Also, Spalding's attitude explains Gray's severe criticism of him in several letters written to Greene during the winter of 1839-40.

Disappointed in his endeavors to find employment elsewhere, Gray returned to Fort Walla Walla and sent word to his wife at Lapwai to join him. Gray was so angry with Spalding that he refused to return to Lapwai. Mary Gray, with her seven-month-old baby left Lapwai on November 11 with only an Indian escort. During Gray's absence, Spalding wrote to Walker and Eells to find out how they would interpret the

action of the Mission regarding Gray. Both replied expressing full agreement with the position that he and Whitman had taken; thus the judgment of the four was unanimous against Gray moving. Had Gray been able to find employment elsewhere, the subsequent history of the Mission would have been far different.

Early in the week of November 10, Whitman left for Lapwai to attend Mrs. Spalding who was expecting to be confined about the middle of November. He reached the sandy beach on the Clearwater River, opposite the Spalding home, on Thursday night, the 14<sup>th</sup>, but being unable to attract Spalding's attention, had to spend the night sleeping on the sand. The little beach is still there.<sup>2</sup>

While Whitman was at Lapwai, word came from Gray demanding a special meeting of the Mission to clarify his status. Both Whitman and Spalding felt that this was impractical because of the cost and trouble involved. They wrote a joint letter, dated November 25, to Gray in which they pointed out the difficulties in holding such a meeting and "respectfully requested" him to proceed to Waiilatpu where Whitman was to provide him with living quarters and where he was to assist in the erection of buildings and such other work as "Doct. Whitman shall direct." Gray was infuriated when he received the letter. He replied on December 2, saying:

In regard to your orders or request, I have only to say: Gentlemen, I shall not yet nor shall I put myself under the control of any Committee of our Mission to answer individual demands any further than labor properly coming under the care and control of the Mission. The proposition to which you refer was gratuitous and does not relate to Doct. Whitman in any way except that he is bound equally with myself to assist the ordained Ministers (not Doct. Whitman) in building and furnishing their permanent houses... I protest against your right as a Committee of this Mission to order me to obey the private order or direction of any member of this Mission, or any body else in any way, shape, or manner.<sup>3</sup>

Whitman, on December 3, wrote to Walker: "What is to be the course of Mr. Gray, I know not. He is with his family at Walla Walla. I invited him here & offered to arrange a house for him... but he objected to all we propose..." Although Gray was embittered against Spalding, he was even more aroused over the "request" that he go to Waiilatpu and

work for Whitman. In another letter to Walker, dated December 27, 1839, Whitman wrote that Gray “has spent six to eight weeks at Walla Walla, much of the time... in playing chequers with Mr. Payette while I had no door to my house & of course, no chairs or any thing of furniture or windows but what Mr. Pambrun sent me.” Finally, Gray decided that returning to Lapwai was for him the lesser of two evils. Although Gray and his family arrived at the Spalding station on December 28, he sulked during the winter months, criticizing the constructive efforts Spalding was making, and in other ways causing trouble.

### THE FIRST INDEPENDENT MISSIONARIES

When Whitman had arrived at Lapwai on August 28 to attend the Annual Meeting of the Mission, he brought news of the expected arrival that fall of two missionary couples who were venturing into the Oregon country on a “faith” basis, without the support of any missionary board. Whitman had learned this from William Geiger, Jr., who had traveled with them as far as the Rendezvous and had then pushed on ahead. The couples were the Rev. and Mrs. John Smith Griffin and Mr. and Mrs. Asahel Munger. Spalding knew Griffin, for Griffin had helped him attach a top to the Dearborn wagon Captain Levi Hart had given his daughter and son-in-law in July 1835 before they started for their mission field which they then thought would be among the Osage Indians.<sup>4</sup> The Griffins and the Mungers expected to establish a self-supporting mission among some tribe of Oregon Indians—a highly impractical idea which at once aroused grave misgivings among all members of the Oregon Mission. They foresaw trouble and indeed trouble came.

Asahel Munger, a carpenter, had been a member of a colony of religious zealots who settled at Oberlin, Ohio, in 1833. John S. Griffin had entered the newly established Oberlin Theological Seminary in 1836, graduated in 1838, and shortly afterwards was ordained by the Congregational Church. Sometime in the summer of 1838 Muriger and Griffin had attended a meeting of the Oberlin Missionary Society when a speaker presented a thrilling report on missionary activities in Old Oregon. References were made to the Lee Party of 1834 and to the Whitman-Spalding party of 1836. Griffin was stirred by the message as he knew the Spaldings. According to Gray, Griffin decided shortly afterwards to go to Oregon as a missionary and persuaded Munger and his

wife, Eliza, to go with him.<sup>5</sup> At that time Griffin was unmarried.

The two men applied to the American Board for appointments. But the Board had just authorized the 1838 reenforcement, and was also in financial difficulties, so the applications were therefore rejected. Munger then applied to the Congregational Church in Oberlin for an endorsement of his plan to go to Oregon as a missionary but the church refused to give any funds saying: "Under present circumstances the church can not feel justified in recommending to Br. & Sister Munger to embark on their proposed missionary expedition."<sup>6</sup> As will be told later, Munger became insane after his arrival in Old Oregon; it may be that the Oberlin church was aware of some mental instability and for that reason refused to endorse or support his proposed mission.

Griffin and Munger then turned to the Congregational Association of North Litchfield, Connecticut, which agreed to furnish funds to buy their outfit. With this assistance, the two men decided to go out to Oregon in 1839 on an independent basis, foolishly believing that the Lord would provide. Out of their abysmal ignorance of conditions in Old Oregon, they cherished the hope that once there, they could establish a self-supporting mission, without any outside financial assistance.

While passing through St. Louis on their way west, Griffin, in February 1839, met Miss Desire C. Smith. After a whirlwind courtship, they were married on April 10. The four crossed the plains to the Rendezvous with a small caravan of the American Fur Company. Mrs. Griffin and Mrs. Munger were the seventh and eighth white American omen to cross the Continental Divide. Like the six who had preceded them, they rode horseback on sidesaddles from the Missouri frontier to the Columbia River. After leaving the Rendezvous, the two couples had the good fortune to travel with a small Hudson's Bay party to Fort Walla Walla under the command of Francis Ermatinger.

From several sources we learn that Griffin and Munger quarreled, especially after they left the Rendezvous. According to one report: "Munger blamed Griffin for the diet which made Mrs. M. unwell." Evidently Griffin was doing the cooking. Munger, who kept a journal his overland travels, made the following brief note for Monday, July 29: "This day we divided our mess."<sup>7</sup> There were other points of friction also. The dream they had cherished at the beginning of their journey that the two couples would live and work together in one station was

shattered. By the time they had reached Fort Boise, they were scarcely on speaking terms.

The missionaries learned much from Ermatinger. As they drew near Fort Walla Walla, they became increasingly aware of the realities of their precarious situation. Munger's journal reflects the uneasiness he felt regarding his future. How would they be able to support themselves without funds in a wilderness? In the Grande Ronde Valley, they learned from the Cayuse Indians that the Whitmans were at Lapwai attending a Mission meeting. After obtaining some directions regarding trails, the Griffins struck out alone without a guide for the Spalding mission. On September 9, Spalding noted without enthusiasm in his diary: "Mr. Griffin & wife arrive unexpectedly." He had no alternative but to receive them.

On his way back to Waiilatpu, following the Mission meeting, Whitan stopped over at Fort Walla Walla where he met the Mungers. On the morning of September 10, he entered into an arrangement with Munger by which he agreed to furnish board and room for the couple and pay Munger \$8.00 a month until March 1, 1840, for his services as carpenter. Whitman needed help as Compo and his family had left for the Willamette Valley the previous May. Being able to hire a carpenter was one bright aspect of the unexpected burden of taking care of indigent missionaries so suddenly thrust upon the members of the Oregon Mission. Whitman was in urgent need of a qualified workman to assist in the erection of his new house, especially after Gray had refused to help; Munger seemed to be an answer to his prayers. The Mungers moved into the room which the Smiths had occupied, and within a month Munger finished a room for the Halls.

Edwin O. Hall, who had been at Lapwai to set up the printing press, returned to Waiilatpu after the Mission meeting. His wife, being an invalid, was taken down the Snake River in a canoe and carried from Fort Walla Walla to Waiilatpu in a hammock. On November 5, she gave birth to a baby girl. The Halls remained at Waiilatpu until March 1, 1840, when they left to return to Hawaii.

## SECRETARY GREENE ADVISES REGARDING INDEPENDENT MISSIONARIES

When Secretary Greene heard about the intentions of Griffin and Munger to go out to Old Oregon on an independent bases, he wrote to Spalding on October 15, 1838, saying: "You should conduct [yourselves] toward them, as of course you will be disposed to do, with all Christian courtesy & kindness... But do not permit the affairs of your mission & theirs to become entangled, so that you shall in any manner be deemed responsible for what they do." <sup>8</sup> Although the members of the Oregon Mission had pronounced differences of opinion regarding some policies, they were unanimous in deploring the coming of the independent missionaries and were in full accord with the advice Greene had to give.

In a letter to Greene dated September 13, 1839, Smith wrote: "The least that can be said is that they have brought themselves & the cause of Christ into disgrace... We must feed them for the winter, or the H.B. Co. must have mercy upon them or they will starve." <sup>9</sup> Spalding expressed himself in a similar way in his letter to Greene of October 2 when he wrote: "We shall probably furnish them with labor enough for their support this winter. But I am sure they cannot succeed in their proposed self supporting Mission." <sup>10</sup>

The straitened circumstances in which the Griffins and the Mungers found themselves is further revealed in a letter written by Sarah Smith to Mary Walker and Myra Eells dated from Kamiah on December 18, 1839. She wrote: "What is best for us to do about giving to Mrs. Griffin? What they can do I know not, or how they can get things to make them comfortable I know not, unless some one gives them. I would give with all my heart if it is right. Mr. Smith, Mr. Hall & others say that they have come in opposition to the Amr. Board & ought not to be assisted. But the poor woman has come without a sheet or pillow case, & how they will get them I don't know. Mrs. Spalding while I was there gave her three *broken plates*... & enough wide striped cotton to make a pair of sheets. If husband will consent I shall give her some things... She has more neck dresses than she will ever need & all *very pretty*. Mr. G. has enough. But *sheets, pillow cases, paper & crockery*, they need. Would you give them: Shall you do it?" <sup>11</sup>

When Munger's term of service ended on March 1, 1840, Whitman rehired him for another six months and raised his wages to £3 per month. "He is a good house carpenter," wrote Whitman to Greene on

March 27. "In that time I hope he will finish our house & make us some comfortable furniture & some farming implements." Writing on May 2, Narcissa said: "It seems as if the Lord's hand was in it in sending Mr. and Mrs. Munger just at this time, and I know not how to feel grateful enough." Mrs. Munger was able to help Narcissa with the housework. On June 25, 1840, she gave birth to a daughter. The Mungers continued to live at Wailatpu until the spring of 1841 when they moved to the Willamette Valley. More will be said of them in a later chapter. As also will be indicated, three more independent missionary couples arrived at the Whitman mission in August 1840.

### FIRST NATIVE CONVERTS

Should the success or failure of a mission to American Indians be judged by the number of baptisms recorded? If so, then the Oregon Mission of the American Board could not be called a success, especially when its record of baptisms is compared with that of the Roman Catholic missionaries who, during the same years, were baptizing natives by the hundreds in the upper Columbia River Valley.

Of the four ordained men in the Oregon Mission, only Spalding reported any baptisms. Walker and Eells lived at Tshimakain for nine years without having had a single native convert. The records of the First Presbyterian Church in the Territory of Oregon show that during the years following its organization to the time of the Whitman massacre, Spalding baptized twenty-one native adults, of whom one was a Cayuse, and fifteen were children.

A fundamental difference in the theology of baptism separates the Roman Catholic Church from most Protestant denominations and this, in part, explains why the Catholic priests, working in the same general area as the missionaries of the American Board, were able to baptize so many more natives than did Spalding. To the Catholics, baptism is necessary for salvation, even for infants, whereas for the average Protestant, baptism is the initiation rite into church membership. For Protestants, infants are baptized on the announced faith of one or both Parents; later these children become full church members on their own confession of faith. The Roman Catholics would baptize adult natives after they had received, what the Protestants considered to be, minimal religious instruction. The American Board missionaries, on the other

hand, expected evidence of a change of hearts and a good understanding of Christian doctrine.

According to Presbyterian polity, the pastor of a church together with one or more of his elders constitutes the session, which has the authority to receive and dismiss members. Spalding, taking advantage of the presence of Whitman at Lapwai during the middle of November, called a session meeting and presented two Nez Perce chiefs, Joseph and Timothy, and a mountain man, James Conner, as candidates for church membership. Joseph and Timothy had been converted in the revival meeting held at Lapwai the previous January. Spalding entered the following record in the minute book of the church: "Nov. 17, 1839 [Sunday], on profession of their faith in Christ & by the decision of the Pastor & Elder the following persons were admitted to the First Presby. Church in Oregon Territory, having been examined as to the grounds of their hopes some 10 months before, viz. Joseph Tuitakas the principle Nez Perce Chief some 37 years old. Timothy Timosa<sup>12</sup> a native of considerable influence, some 31 years of age, And James Conner..." Eight years had to pass following the arrival of the Nez Perce delegation in St. Louis before the first natives made public confession of their faith and became members of a Christian church. James Conner was the mountain man who had been hired by the 1838 reenforcement to assist them in traveling from the Rendezvous to Waiilatpu.

On that same Sunday, the jubilant Spalding copied into his diary the prayer that he evidently had used at the baptism of the two Indians and the mountain man: "Oh Lord thou knowest the hearts of all men, thou knowest the hearts of these three, who now stand before thee to take the solemn vows of God upon them. I know they are not sheep, but I would hope they are lambs. Feed them, O thou kind Shepherd." Following the reception of the new members, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper<sup>13</sup> was served. "Oh what a glorious thought," wrote Spalding, "that we have lived to see two of the sons of the Red men brought into the fold of Christ. To God be all the praise forever & ever. Amen."

On the following Sunday, Spalding baptized the two sons of "Timothy & Tamar Timosa" and three daughters and a son of "Joseph & Asenath<sup>14</sup> Tuitakas." On Sunday, April 12, 1840, Spalding recorded the baptism of his son, Henry Hart; a son and a daughter of James and Mary Conner; and another son of Joseph and Asenath,

age “3½ months” whom Spalding christened “Ephraim.” Since Young Joseph, one of the leaders in the 1877 Nez Perce uprising, claimed that he was born in 1840, it is possible that he is the one whom Spalding baptized and called Ephraim. Of the first two native converts, Timothy was more faithful in his endeavors to live according to Christian principles, both during the mission period and in after-years, than was Joseph. Old Joseph lost faith in the white man when the United States Government in 1863 excluded his beloved Wallowa Valley in creating the Nez Perce reservation. He then reportedly renounced his Christian faith.

Several years after Conner became a member of the church, Spalding added this note after his name: “James Conner was suspended from the church for the sin of Sabbath breaking, neglect of religious duties & fighting, Febr. 4, 1843. It has since [been] proven that he has been guilty of polygamy, sending a challenge to fight a duel, and vending liquor.”

### THE VISIT OF THOMAS J. FARNHAM

After returning from the fall Mission meeting of 1839, Whitman wrote a report of the year’s activities for the American Board. He mentioned the death of his little girl; the action taken regarding Smith’s move to Kamiah; the coming of the two independent missionary couples; and acknowledged the arrival of twenty-eight boxes of goods for the Mission which were then still at Fort Vancouver [Letter 70]. In this letter Whitman objected to the dual role he was obliged to play at Waiilatpu. He wrote: “I do not think it proper for me to hold the most difficult & responsible station in the mission where all contacts with Traders, Catholics, Travellers & adventurers of every description come in immediate contact & where I have to discharge all the duties of Minister & Physician to the Mission.” When Whitman selected the Waiilatpu site in the late fall of 1836, he was only dimly aware of its strategic location. Now, three years later, a fuller realization of its importance was apparent. Narcissa in her letter of May 2, 1840, to her mother, after emphasizing the fact that their home was on “the highway between the States and the Columbia River,” added: “[it is] a resting place for weary travelers, consequently a greater burden rests upon us than upon any of our associates.”

Those who visited Waiilatpu in the fall of 1839 were but the vanguard of a great host who followed. Geiger and Johnson were the first to arrive

and then came the Mungers. On September 23, Thomas J. Farnham arrived with three companions—Robert Shortess, Sidney Smith, and A. M. Blair. The Farnham party had started from Peoria, Illinois, with at least fourteen young men who had the avowed intention of establishing a settlement in the Willamette Valley. The expedition was torn by dissensions with the result that only the four here mentioned reached Old Oregon. This shows that the missionaries were not the only ones who quarreled while making the difficult overland journey. Shortess entered Whitman's employ for the winter of 1839–40 for \$6.00 a month; Smith continued on to the Willamette Valley with Farnham; while Blair went to Lapwai where Spalding hired him.<sup>15</sup>

After Farnham returned to the States, he published in 1841 his *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, which contained the first printed description of Waiilatpu and of the multitudinous duties being carried on by Dr. and Mrs. Whitman. Farnham found Waiilatpu bustling with activity when he and his companions dismounted on that Monday morning, September 23. He found Whitman shouting at the top of his voice “to some lazy Indians who were driving their cattle out of his garden.” A team of oxen was being yoked preparatory to being driven to the mountains to get timbers for the new house. Hall appeared with an axe on his shoulder. Munger came out of the house which was being constructed, pulling the shavings out of his plane. Farnham wrote of his welcome: “All seemed desirous to ask me how long a balloon line had been running between the States and the Pacific.” The reason for such an inquiry remains a mystery.

Farnham's narrative for September 24, after mentioning the parched earth, so dry and dusty, says: “And yet when the smoking vegetables, the hissing steak, bread white as snow, and the newly-churned golden butter graced the breakfast table, and the happy countenances of countrymen and countrywomen shone around, I could with difficulty believe myself in a country so far distant from, and so unlike my native land, in all its features. But during breakfast, this pleasant illusion was dispelled by one of the causes which induced it. Our steak was horse-flesh! On such meat this poor family subsist most of the time. They do not complain.”<sup>16</sup>

Following breakfast, Whitman took his guests on a tour of the mission grounds. “The garden was first examined,” wrote Farnham, “its

location on the curving bank of the Wallawalla; the apple trees, growing thriftily on its western border; the beautiful tomato and other vegetables, burdening the grounds.”

After inspecting a new house being built, Whitman took the party to his corral where they saw “a fine yoke of oxen, two cows, an American bull, and the beginning of a stock of hogs.” After that, Whitman proudly escorted his new friends to his mill. Of this Farnham wrote: “It consisted of a spherical wrought iron burr four or five inches in diameter, surrounded by a counterburred surface of the same material. The spherical burr was permanently attached to the shaft of a horizontal water-wheel. The surrounding burred surface was firmly fastened to timbers, in such a position that when the water-wheel was put in motion, the operation of the mill was similar to that of a coffee-mill. It was a crazy thing, but for it the doctor was grateful. It would, with the help of himself and an Indian, grind enough in a day to feed his family a week, and that was better than to beat it with a pestle and mortar.”

Farnham, as an impartial observer, had great praise for what had been accomplished at Waiilatpu. Of the doctor, he wrote: “The industry which crowded every hour of the day, his untiring energy of character, and the very efficient aid of his wife in relieving him in a great degree from the labors of the school, are, perhaps, circumstances which will render possibility probable, that in five [sic] years one man without funds for such purposes, without other aid in that business than that of a fellow missionary at short intervals, should fence, plough, build, plant an orchard, and do all the other laborious acts of opening a plantation on the face of that distant wilderness; learn an Indian language, and do the duties, meanwhile, of a physician to the associate stations on the Clear Water and Spokane.” That was high praise indeed, especially when we note that Farnham thought that the Whitmans had been there for five years when in reality it was only three.

Farnham attended a session of the school and then wrote: “Forty or fifty children between the ages of 7 and 18, and several other people, gathered on the shady side of the new mission-house at the ringing of a hand-bell... The Doctor then wrote monosyllables, words, and instructive sentences in the Nez Perce language, on a large blackboard suspended on the wall, and proceeded first to teach the nature and power of the letters in representing the simple sounds of the language, and then

the construction of words and their uses in forming sentences expressive of thought." Whitman did not believe in trying to teach the natives the English language. Rather, he concentrated on teaching in the native tongue. Farnham noted that the pupils were using a Nez Perce primer which had been printed on the Mission press at Lapwai the previous May. This little eightpage booklet was the first to come from the American press on the whole Pacific Slope of what is now the United States. Farnham called Mrs. Whitman "an indefatigable instructress."

Farnham also described the manner in which Whitman conducted his worship services. On Saturday evening, Whitman would call one of the most intelligent of the Cayuses into his home and go over a passage of scripture with him and explain in detail the doctrines involved. He would ask the Indian to repeat what he had been told to make sure that he understood. "This was repeated again and again," wrote Farnham, "until the Indian obtained a clear understanding of its doctrines." At ten o'clock Sunday morning, the Indians assembled in the open air for their worship service. Farnham wrote: "The exercises were according to the Presbyterian form; the invocation, the hymn, the prayer, the hymn, the sermon, a prayer, a hymn, and the blessing; all in the Nez Perce tongue. The principal peculiarity about the services was the mode of delivering the discourse. When Dr. Whitman arose and announced the text, the Indian who had been instructed on the previous night, rose and repeated it; and as the address proceeded, repeated it also by sentence or paragraph till it was finished."

Farnham gave A. B. Smith the credit for translating or composing the Nez Perce hymns which were sung. As has been stated, Spalding was also working on this project. "Everything," wrote Farnham, "was conducted with much solemnity."

On the whole, Marcus and Narcissa were pleased with the response of the Cayuses during the winter of 1839-40. The school was continued through the winter although Whitman reported that the average attendance fell to ten. In the spring the attendance went up to about fifty when many of the Indian families returned to Waiilatpu to prepare for the spring planting [Letter 74]. Both Whitman and Spalding found it extremely difficult to carry on school work when the Indians were so much on the move. Whitman was encouraged to see an increased number of natives planting crops in the spring of 1840. The more they depended

upon cultivation for subsistence, and the less upon the hunt, the easier it would be to educate and evangelize them.

## THE NEW MISSION HOUSE

Farnham's description of the new house shows that Whitman had been able to make considerable progress in its building after Smith had finished the first room during the first week of December 1838. Farnham's account follows: "Then to the new house. The adobe walls had been erected a year. These were about 40 feet by 20, and one and a half stories high. The interior area consisted of two parlors of the ordinary size, separated by an adobe partition... Above were to be sleeping apartments." Farnham was describing the top arm of the T-shaped building which, in addition to the two "parlors," contained a bedroom for the Whitmans. This was the room at the south end that the Smiths had used. A larger room, located at the north end, was the Indian room, to be used as a schoolroom or for such other purposes as religious services. The center room was the Whitmans' sitting or living room. "To the main building," wrote Farnham, "was attached another of equal height designed for a kitchen, with chambers above for servants. Mr. Munger and a Sandwich Islander were laying the floors, making the doors, etc. The lumber used was a very superior quality of yellow pine plank." When Munger began his work on the building during the first week of September, he noted in his diary that Whitman had on hand a supply "of good pine timber seasoned and piled up in the house ready to finish it off."<sup>17</sup>

In her letter of April 30, 1840, to her carpenter father, Narcissa said: "We still live in the house we first built although we built one of adobe the year our reenforcement arrived. Various hindrances prevented our getting into it, or attending to finish it. Indeed, there was no one to do it until last fall. The Lord sent us a good mechanic from Oberlin, Mr. Munger... A part of the house is nearly finished and will be a very comfortable and clean house to what this has been. Father cannot realize the difficulty and hardship we have had in getting what timber we must have for doors, floors, shelves, etc., for our house. No durable wood near us of any kind except alder, which we are trying to make answer for our tables, bedsteads, etc... All our boards are sawed by hand with a pit saw, which dear father must know is very hard work, and besides this,

the smoothing, daubing, and whitewashing of an adobe house is very tedious work and requires much time and labor. Husband is now engaged in it, preparing it for painting. We feel ourselves highly favored that we could obtain oil and paint enough and at a reasonable price, to paint the wood work and floors, so as to save my strength and labor.”

Since the window glass which Whitman purchased from the Hudson’s Bay Company was thin and expensive, he made shutters (referred to as Venetian blinds) to protect the windows. The shutters together with outside woodwork were painted green, thus giving the building with its whitewashed walls some resemblance to the neat colonial-type buildings in New York State which were usually painted white and trimmed in green. Regarding lime, Narcissa wrote: “There is no lime stone to be obtained near us and our alternative is to burn clam shells” [Letter 75].

After living for about three and one-half years in the first adobe house, Narcissa was eagerly looking forward to moving into the new house with its promise of more space, greater warmth in the winter time, and much desired privacy. In her letter of May 2, 1840, to her mother, she commented: “Could dear mother know how I have been situated the two winters past, especially winter before last, I know she would pity me. I often think how disagreeable it used to be to her feelings to do her cooking in the presence of men sitting about the room. This I have had to bear ever since I have been here—at times it has seemed as if [I] could not endure it any longer. It has been the more trying because our house has been so miserable and cold—small and inconvenient for us—many people as have lived in it. But the greatest trial to a woman’s feelings is to have her cooking and eating room always filled with four or five or more Indians—men—especially at meal time.”

She reported that when they would move into the new house, the Indians would not be permitted to go into their private quarters but would be restricted to the Indian room which had its own entrance. “They are so filthy,” Narcissa wrote, “they make a great deal of cleaning wherever they go, and this wears out a woman very fast. We must clean after them, for we have come to elevate them and not to suffer ourselves to sink down to their standard. I hardly know how to describe my feelings at the prospect of a clean, comfortable house, and one large enough so that I can find a closet to pray in.” Narcissa complained about the fleas and lice which the Indians always brought into her home.

“They are exceedingly proud, haughty and insolent people,” she wrote, “and keep us constantly upon the stretch after patience and forbearance. We feed them far more than any of our associates do their people, yet they will not be satisfied. Notwithstanding all this, there are many redeeming qualities in them, else we should have been discouraged long ago. We are more and more encouraged the longer we stay among them.” How interesting! Narcissa called the Indians “exceedingly proud, haughty.” Following the massacre, H. K. W. Perkins claimed that the Indians considered her to be “haughty” and “very proud” [See Appendix 6].

### THE WHITMANS JOURNEY TO TSHIMAKAIN

In May, when Dr. Whitman was called to Tshimakain to attend Mrs. Walker, Narcissa decided to go with her husband. This was her first visit to the Spokane station. Tiloukaikt, the principal chief living in the vicinity of Waiilatpu, could not understand the consideration that Whitman gave to his wife. “Why do you not go alone?” he asked. “What do you make so much of her for?” This gave Whitman a chance to explain the Christian conception of marriage. “This has often been brought up by them,” wrote Narcissa, “the way I am treated, and contrasted with themselves; they do not like to have it so; their consciences are troubled about it” [Letter 76].

The Whitmans reached Tshimakain on Thursday, May 14. Mary Walker gave birth to a daughter on Sunday, the 24<sup>th</sup>, who was named Abigail.<sup>18</sup> The Whitmans began their return trip on the 26<sup>th</sup>. During their visit at Tshimakain, the Whitmans rode to Fort Colville which was the first time either had been there. Upon their return to Waiilatpu, they moved into their new home to Narcissa’s great joy [Letters 78 & 76a]. The old house remained standing for nearly two years and was sometimes used by visitors. It was torn down early in 1842 and the adobe bricks used to build a blacksmith shop.

### SECOND ARRIVAL OF HOME MAIL

On the first of June 1840, an Indian messenger from Fort Walla Walla arrived at Waiilatpu with letters from home for the Whitmans. These were the first they had received from the States since the memorable July 11, 1838, to which reference has been made. Although the

Whitmans had retired when the Indian arrived, they quickly arose, lighted a candle, and read and reread the letters from loved ones so far away in both time and distance. The news the letters brought was then about a year old. One letter was from Narcissa's mother, the first she had received. Narcissa was overjoyed. "It was enough to transport me in imagination to that dear circle I loved so well," she wrote in reply, "and to prevent sleep from returning that night... O, could my dear parents know how much comfort it would be to their solitary children here, they would each of them fill out a sheet as often as once a month and send it to the Board for us" [Letter 78]. It is hard to understand why there was an interlude of about two years between these two deliveries of home mail. Since the letters that Marcus wrote to his family are not known to be extant, we cannot tell how often they wrote.

### "THE MAN WHO CAME WITH US"

Would that it were possible to write the history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board without describing the discord within it. The problems came to a focus in 1840, but the effects were not felt until the early fall of 1842. There were many reasons for the dissension including honest differences of opinion regarding mission policies, personality clashes, frustrated hopes, and the physical hardships connected with their primitive living conditions. Also involved was a certain feeling of resentment which Spalding harbored toward Narcissa because of her rejection of his proposal for marriage. Although Spalding, before he left for Old Oregon, had reassured Judge Prentiss that he harbored no ill will toward Narcissa, the hurt feelings remained. The consequences of the dissensions which troubled the Oregon Mission of the American Board, especially during the years 1839–41, were too far-reaching to be overlooked.

The members of the 1838 reenforcement soon became aware of the strained feelings which existed between the Whitmans and the Spaldings after their arrival on the field. Why had the two couples established separate stations 120 miles apart? When asked, Spalding tactlessly replied: "Do you suppose I would have come off here all alone a hundred & twenty miles if I could have lived with him or Mrs. Whitman?"<sup>19</sup>

On July 9, 1840, Spalding wrote in his diary regarding a quarrel that broke out at the Mission meeting: "...the Doct rose in great agitation

& said that either himself or me must leave the mission. That the root of all the difficulties in the Mission lay between us, viz, in an expression I made while in the States respecting his wife before she was married to Doct. Whitman, viz, that I would not go into the same Mission with her, questioning her judgment, but which we had certainly settled four times before.”

Smith, in a letter to Greene dated September 3, 1840, referred to this incidence and claimed that Whitman had accused Spalding of publishing “from town to town before he left the States that he would not go on a mission with Mrs. Whitman.”<sup>20</sup> Gray, likewise, in his letter of October 14 to Greene, wrote: “Dr. Whitman stated that he thought, or believed, that the whole difficulty originated between him and Mr. Spalding before they left the States... He felt that he had been injured by Mr. Spalding by the reports he had circulated from town to town in the United States.”<sup>21</sup>

Narcissa blamed Spalding for the action taken by the special meeting of the Mission held at Lapwai in February 1839, when the Whitmans were asked to turn Waiilatpu over to the Smiths and open a new station in some central location. At first the Whitmans indicated a willingness to consider moving but after some investigation, decided not to do so. Several years passed after her arrival in Oregon before Narcissa felt free to tell her family of the difficulties they were experiencing with Spalding. In a letter to her father dated October 10, 1840, Narcissa wrote:

Our trials, dear father knows but little about. The missionaries' greatest trials are but little known to the churches. I have never ventured to write about them for fear it might do hurt. *The man who came with us is one who never ought to have come.*<sup>22</sup> My dear husband has suffered more from him in consequence of his wicked jealousy, and his great pique towards me, than can be known in this world. But he suffers not alone the whole mission suffers, which is most to be deplored. It has nearly broken up the mission.

This pretended settlement with father, before we started, was only an excuse, and from all we have seen and heard, both during the journey, and since we have been here, the same bitter feeling exists. His principal aim has been at me; as he said, ‘Bring out her character,’ ‘Expose her character,’ as though I was the vilest creature on earth.

At the end of this letter, Narcissa added: "Part of the contents of this sheet, ought not to be circulated; it may do hurt. I do not wish to make it public, for any one to make ill use of it." This is the only reference in Narcissa's extant writings to her rejection of Spalding's suit and here the reference is indirect.

#### OTHER CRITICISMS OF SPALDING

For a variety of reasons, Spalding became the object of criticisms from all of the other members of the Mission except Walker and Eells. Of these, Gray and Smith were the most caustic in their letters of complaint sent to Greene. When the reenforcement of 1838 arrived at Waiilatpu and plans were made as to where each couple was to live, no one wanted to live with the Grays. He had been too overbearing on the overland journey. It was Spalding's misfortune to have had the Grays assigned to live with him at Lapwai. As has been mentioned, Gray became unhappy because he was not permitted to establish a separate station for himself. Gray blamed Spalding for the decision of the Mission. After spending some weeks during the fall of 1839 in idleness at Fort Walla Walla, and after refusing to assist Whitman in building at Waiilatpu, Gray returned to the Clearwater with his family during the latter part of December. Hall warned Spalding about receiving him back again "as his disposition rendered him unfit to be associated with any one."<sup>23</sup> But there was no alternative for either Gray or Spalding, so Spalding let him return.

Spalding's diary for the first half of 1840 contains repeated references to his difficulties with Gray. On April 2, for instance, Gray suddenly informed Spalding that "by the authority of the Mission," he was taking possession of the premises and even forbade Spalding "to cultivate any of the land." After a little more than two weeks, on April 19, Gray turned the premises back to Spalding and indicated his readiness to work with him as "an associate."

As has been noted, Smith blamed Spalding for writing such optimistic letters about the eagerness of the Nez Percés to receive Christianity, lengthy extracts of which had been published in the *Missionary Herald*. Smith claimed that such reports had been the main reason why he had volunteered so suddenly to join the 1838 reenforcement. Spalding had no critic more bitter than A. B. Smith.

All this is the background of the Annual Meeting of 1840.

## ANNUAL MEETING OF 1840

The Annual Meeting of the Oregon Mission for 1840 was held at Lapwai beginning on Saturday, July 4. All of the men were present and three of the women—Narcissa Whitman, Mary Gray, and Eliza Spalding. Spalding's diary throws much light on the strained feelings which existed even before the business meetings began. Walker and Eells were always a moderating influence and never caused trouble. They arrived on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Gray had by this time erected a log cabin for himself and his family and was thus prepared to receive guests. Walker was invited to stay at the Grays while Eells was entertained by the Spaldings. The Whitmans with Chief Joseph came on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The Whitmans were also received by the Grays as were Rogers and Smith who arrived the following day.

With the majority of the voting members of the Mission in the Gray home before the meeting was officially opened, it may be assumed that several decisions were agreed upon in the absence of Spalding. It is evident that Gray was adamant in his demand that he be permitted to open a separate station. He had selected a site, called Shimnap,<sup>24</sup> located near the mouth of the Yakima River where it flows from the northwest into the Columbia. Some of the Walla Walla Indians lived in that vicinity. The site is near present-day Richland, Washington. It is probable that Gray laid down an ultimatum: either he be allowed to move or he would leave the Mission. One of the first items of business on Saturday, the 4<sup>th</sup>, was to grant Gray permission to locate a mission at Shimnap.<sup>25</sup> No doubt Spalding disapproved.

Another action taken, which was aimed directly at Spalding, was that no Nez Perce be received into the First Church of Oregon except by vote of all missionaries working in that language. Here a point of ecclesiastical polity was raised. When Spalding and Whitman had met as a session on November 17, 1839, and voted to receive Joseph and Timothy on confession of their faith, they were acting in strict accord with Presbyterian polity. Smith, who was a Congregationalist, had strongly objected. He felt that the two natives were not sufficiently indoctrinated to become church members. According to Congregational polity, all members of a congregation had the right to vote on the reception of new members. Smith's views were accepted; this implied a censure, especially for Spalding. Although Spalding had a number of

natives he felt were ready for church membership, he felt obligated to postpone suggesting their names for consideration.

On Sunday, Spalding conducted religious services for what he called a "great number" of Indians who had assembled on the plain near his home. No doubt with the hope that the testimony of Joseph and Timothy would impress his associates, he invited the two chiefs to speak. Spalding wrote in his diary that they spoke "with much feeling." Instead of receiving words of commendation from his associates, Spalding became aware of a spirit of hostility. That day he wrote in his diary: "There seems to be a labor. I know not what it means."

### SPALDING CRITICIZED

Spalding's entries for July 7 and 8<sup>26</sup> indicate that the Mission was in a crisis which threatened its continuance. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Spalding wrote: "It was proposed to have a conference, quite unexpected but not unacceptable. I perceive that the brethren feel that I am some what in their way. A strange doctrine was advanced, viz. that if one did not agree with the multitude he of course is in error & should be dealt with. I objected & said that God was always right, but not the multitude." Before going into the meeting of that day, Eliza, knowing that her husband would be the object of much criticism, urged him to hold his temper. "My dear wife," wrote Spalding in his diary, "had furnished me with several portions of select scripture on which I kept my eye almost constantly." Thus he sat in silence as one after another poured out criticisms of what he had said or done. Spalding closed his entry of the 7<sup>th</sup> with the words: "I went home with a sick soul."

On Wednesday, July 8, Spalding wrote: "Confessions again. [The meeting] had scarcely opened when the Doct. rose in great agitation & said that either himself or me must leave the mission." Whitman, beginning with Spalding's statement made before they left the States for Oregon regarding not wanting to go into the same mission with Narcissa because he questioned her judgment, rehearsed the history of their quarrel. "During the whole talk which [was] long," wrote Spalding, "I kept silent with my eyes on my portion of scripture. After several had spoken, plainly betraying their object, I was requested to speak, but I saw clearly that the time had not come & consequently kept my eye fixed on my paper, a long silence ensued. Doct. Whitman's

storm began to abate. He thought a reconciliation could be had, & began to admit that he might sometimes have said things that he should not have said. Mr. Eells said the object of this interview was to have every thing settled forever. I, for the first time, inquired, do I understand you to say forever? My inquiry was understood, as the matter to which Doct. W. referred had been settled several times. The Doct. saw his nakedness & apparently melted & declared he would henceforth strive with me & all the brethren in our common work." Whitman's spirit of penitence moved others to express similar feelings, with but one exception. Smith remained unrepentant and unforgiving. Spalding closed the entry of that day in his diary by writing: "I feel that our sins are the greatest obstruction to our work & for the honor of the cause we ought to be united. After several prayers, we separated."

Walker, Eells, and Smith left for their respective stations before the week closed but the Whitmans decided to remain at Lapwai over Sunday to avoid traveling on that day. On the following Monday, July 13, the Whitmans with Gray and Rogers left for Waiilatpu. After the turbulent meeting, the Spaldings were glad to be alone; Mary Gray was their only guest and she was living in her own cabin. After arriving at Waiilatpu, Gray made some preliminary investigations regarding the possibility of establishing a station at Shimnap that fall and decided that it was too late to do so that year. He would have to wait until the following spring. In the meantime Gray made a second attempt to enter the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, applying by letter to Dr. McLoughlin for the position of schoolteacher. According to Spalding's diary, Gray received a reply on August 26. There was no opening for him at Vancouver. This second rebuff only increased Gray's feeling of hostility to the Hudson's Bay Company.

### GRIFFIN'S FAILURE TO ESTABLISH A MISSION

When the Whitmans returned to Waiilatpu, they found Mr. and Mrs. Griffin there. The Griffins had left Lapwai on March 16, with six animals carrying supplies obtained from Spalding, for the Snake River country where they hoped to establish a self-supporting mission. They suffered incredible hardships while crossing the mountains which separate what is now northern Idaho from its southern part. The snow was still deep at the higher elevations so early in the season.

Writing to Mary Walker on July 25, Narcissa said: "On our arrival we found Mr. and Mrs. Griffin here & were rejoiced to see them alive, for we had given up nearly all hope of it. It would be in vain to attempt to describe the dangers of the way through which they forced themselves. We can only say that they have escaped with their lives." In a letter dated November 16, 1840, Griffin described his experiences for a friend in Honolulu: "Our Indians left us in the mountains where we were obliged to remain alone without seeing a human form but once for about sixty days & not until I [we] was able to escape by crossing the mountains upon 15 ft. of snow in the last part of May, & travel a hundred miles or more through a most dreadful region of mountain & glen & swollen rivers which threatened our lives daily, were we permitted to behold the face of even a savage."<sup>27</sup> Thus ended Griffin's attempt to establish an independent and self-supporting mission. He finally realized how impractical and impossible was the venture he had so idealistically envisioned. He had evidently planned to establish a mission among the Snake Indians somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Boise.

### MORE INDEPENDENT MISSIONARIES

On August 8, the faithful Joseph Maki, the Hawaiian, died of "inflammation of the bowels," evidently appendicitis [Letter 78]. This was a great loss to the Whitmans as he had been a most faithful assistant. Another grave was dug in the little mission cemetery at the foot of the hill to the northeast of the Whitman home. Marie Maki was sent back to Honolulu in December of the following year.

About the middle of August 1840, six more independent missionaries unexpectedly arrived at Waiilatpu. They were the Rev. and Mrs. Harvey Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin T. Smith, and Mr. and Mrs. Philo B. Littlejohn. Narcissa had known Mrs. Littlejohn before leaving for Old Oregon as Adeline Sadler [Letter 217]. Of all the missionaries, Mrs. Littlejohn was the only one whom Narcissa referred to by her given name. As has been mentioned, the custom of the time among educated people was to refer to others by the proper title and the last name. There is no evidence that even in the hours of closest fellowship, either of the Whitmans ever called Mr. Spalding, "Henry," or Mrs. Spalding, "Eliza." The formalities of their Eastern training forbade such familiarities. The fact that Narcissa referred to Mrs. Littlejohn as Adeline

indicates a former acquaintance of a friendly nature.

Nothing definite is known as to why these three couples, who hailed from Quincy, Illinois, decided to go to Oregon as independent missionaries. Since they are believed to have been members of the Congregational Church, they would have been readers of the *Missionary Herald* and therefore influenced by the optimistic reports of the Oregon Mission which appeared so frequently in that publication during the years 1837–39. The three couples crossed the prairies and the Rockies during the spring and summer of 1840 under the protection of the caravan of the American Fur Company. The rendezvous that year was held again on Green River and was the last of the series which began in 1825. The mission party took two wagons with them as far west as Fort Hall.

The three women of this party also deserve special mention; their feat in crossing the Continental Divide opened the doorway to Old Oregon a little wider for the countless emigrants who were to follow. Altogether eleven missionary women—six under appointment by the American Board and five on an independent basis—had crossed the Rockies before the great Oregon emigration of 1843 rolled through South Pass.

#### INTRODUCING FATHER PIERRE JEAN DE SMET, S.J.

Among those present at the 1840 Rendezvous was the Belgian Jesuit priest, Father Pierre Jean De Smet, who was on his way back to St. Louis to obtain associates for a mission he had established among the Flathead Indians in what is now western Montana. In a letter addressed to the Hon. J. C. Spencer, who served as Secretary of War in President Tyler's cabinet, dated March 4, 1843, Father De Smet gave the following account as to how the Jesuit mission to the Indians of Old Oregon was started:

It is now about 24 years ago since the Indians of the Flatheads acquired a slight knowledge of the civil institutions of Christianity through the means of four poor Iroquois Indians who had wandered beyond the Rocky Mountains. Anxious to obtain instructions, they sent about 20 years ago [i.e., in 1823] a deputation of three of their chiefs to St. Louis. They were carried off by sickness. As their Deputies did not return, they appointed five others who were massacred in passing through the territory of

the Sioux. In 1834 a third delegation arrived, an Iroquois accompanied it bringing with him his two children over a long and dangerous route. Owing to a want of means and members connected with the University of St. Louis to which application was made, their urgent request for proper persons to return with them could not be complied with.

In 1839 they deputed other missionaries to communicate their wishes. It was on this occasion that I was requested to accompany the deputies on their return in order to ascertain the disposition of the nation.<sup>28</sup>

After spending several months with the Flatheads and after selecting a site for his mission station in the Bitter Root River Valley, De Smet was on his way to St. Louis for reinforcements when he attended the 1840 Rendezvous. His account of the various delegations sent to St. Louis by the Flatheads makes no mention of the 1831 Nez Perce delegation which gave rise to the Protestant missionary thrust into Old Oregon.<sup>29</sup>

Although the three independent missionary couples were at the same Rendezvous with Father De Smet, there is no evidence that any of the mission party actually talked with the Catholic priest, due to a strong antiCatholic spirit rampant in that day throughout the Middle West among many Protestants. The Jesuit order was especially suspect.<sup>30</sup> Without a doubt, however, the three couples would have informed Whitman of what they had heard at the Rendezvous of Father De Smet's intentions.

#### THE FIVE INDEPENDENT MISSIONARY COUPLES AT WAILLATPU

Also at the 1840 Rendezvous was the mountain man, Robert or "Doe" Newell, with whom Whitman had traveled from the Rendezvous to the States in the summer of 1835. With the discontinuance of the Rendezvous and the break-up of the American fur trade, the mountain men were forced to scatter. Several, including Newell, decided to migrate to the Willamette Valley. Since the mission party needed an escort, they entered into an agreement with Newell to take them to Fort Hall. By the time the party reached there, the horses pulling the two wagons through the dense sage were so exhausted that the missionaries found it best to abandon the wagons and continue their journey on horseback.

Instead of receiving cash for his services, Newell agreed to accept the discarded wagons and the harness and to trade some fresh horses for the worn-out animals of the missionaries. Mention will be made later of Newell taking these wagons through to the Columbia River Valley. In company with the Joel P. Walker emigrant family, the three missionary couples continued their journey to Waiilatpu.

The Walkers and the missionaries arrived at Waiilatpu about the middle of August, shortly after the arrival of the Griffins from their ill-fated attempt to establish a mission in the Snake River country and after the return of the Whitmans from the Lapwai meeting. The Whitmans were now the reluctant hosts for all five of the independent missionary couples at the same time. Also present at Waiilatpu were the Grays who had moved there from Lapwai during the first week of September. A baby girl, named Caroline, was born to the Grays on October 16. No wonder that Narcissa in her letter to her mother dated October 9 said: "We are thronged with company now and have been for some time past and may be through the winter... As we are situated, our house is the missionaries' tavern, and we must accommodate more or less the whole time." Fortunately for the Whitmans, the new house was ready to receive some of the visitors so that they could still enjoy the privacy of their own quarters. The first adobe house was also still being used.

Secretary Greene had warned the members of the Oregon Mission against being too friendly with the independent missionaries; however, when these people arrived destitute, what else could the Whitmans and Spaldings do but receive them? Narcissa explained to her mother something of their problem: "We cannot sell to them, because we are missionaries and did not come to be traders; and if we did, we should help them to establish an opposition Board [i.e., a competing mission]. But we can give to them, and report to the Board, which is not agreeable to them." One solution which appeared acceptable was to hire the men as day laborers.

Although the last three couples to arrive exercised poor judgment in believing that they could establish self-supporting missions in Old Oregon without the financial backing of an established mission board, otherwise they seemed to have been sensible Christian people. None of the three men had the instability of Munger or the fanaticism of Griffin. "They are excellent people," wrote Narcissa, "and we wish

they were under the Board, for we need their labours very much.”

Faced with the necessity of making some provision for the new arrivals to tide them through the coming winter, it was finally agreed that the Littlejohns and the Clarks should remain with the Whitmans, and the Alvin Smiths should go to Lapwai. When the Smiths left Lapwai in August 1841, Spalding wrote to Greene regarding Alvin: “His kindness & patience & industrious habits & good judgment & ardent but consistent zeal, I have never seen combined in one man before.” Not one of the five couples was received into the membership of the Mission church, perhaps because of Greene’s advice regarding the treatment of the independent missionaries. The women, however, were made members of the Columbia Maternal Association.

### “SOME DIFFICULTIES FROM THE CATHOLIC PRIEST”

No history of the Oregon Mission of the American Board and no biography of Dr. Marcus Whitman would be complete without references to the conflicts and tensions which existed between the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries working in the same field in Old Oregon at the same time. We must consider the religious rivalry which existed then, not in the spirit of the interfaith tolerance which is so common in our generation. In that generation the Protestants in the eyes of the Roman Catholics were heretics doomed to eternal damnation, while the Catholics were to the Protestants bigoted teachers of error. The claims and counterclaims were most confusing to the natives. As will be shown, this religious rivalry was one of several causes of the Indian unrest which preceded the Whitman massacre.

For two years the Protestant missionaries in Old Oregon had worked with the natives without any competition from the Roman Catholics. When Fathers Blanchet and Demers arrived in the fall of 1838, the situation began to change. Whitman in his letter of May 10, 1839, to Greene commented: “The prospects of [doing] good to the Indians are as favourable as ever if we are permitted to labour without molestation from the Catholics.” Here is the first indication in Whitman’s letters of his concern regarding the presence of the Catholic missionaries in Oregon.

During the summer of 1839, Father Demers spent a month at Fort Colville and vicinity and two weeks at Fort Walla Walla teaching and baptizing the natives. On September 19, Spalding wrote in his diary: “Doct

speaks of *some difficulty from the Catholic priest*. He is now at Walla Walla calling the Indians & telling the Indians that we are false teachers because we do not feed & clothe the people; that we have wives as other men, & wear pantaloons as common men & not frocks as he does. The people are told not to come near the Doct as he is a bad man, & has made no christians as yet but he [i.e., the priest] will fix them all for heaven soon.”<sup>31</sup>

In his letter of August 27, 1839, to Greene, Smith had the following to say about Father Demers’ visit to Walla Walla: “Catholicism is now making its appearance, & the errors of that church are beginning to be diffused among this people. As this very moment, the Catholic priest is at Walla Walla instructing the people & the Indians are gathering together there to listen to the false doctrines which he inculcates. Already has the priest denounced us because we have wives & the people told that they are going to hell because they are unbaptized.”<sup>32</sup> Narcissa wrote in one of her letters: “A Catholic priest has recently been at Walla Walla and held meetings with the Indians and used their influence to draw all the people away from us. Some they have forbidden to visit us again, and fill all their minds with distraction about truths we teach, and their own doctrine; say we have been talking to them about their bad hearts long enough, and too long—say we ought to have baptized them long ago, etc., etc. The conflict has begun what trials await us we know not” [Letter 68].

An echo of Father De Smet’s work among the Flatheads and Nez Percés in the Bitter Root Valley is found in Smith’s letter to Greene of October 12, 1840:

A Catholic Priest from St. Louis has been in the buffalo country this season & from the accounts of the Indians, the Lawyer especially, he has already accomplished ten times as much as has been effected from the opposite quarter [i.e., by Father Demers]... A considerable number, the Indians say, a great many children both Flat Head & Nez Percés have been baptized & have been presented with the image of the cross or other emblems of Popery.

The Lawyer saw him two days & he says they tried to get the cross on him. He heard considerable from the priest & says the priest inquired of him about the mission [i.e., Spalding’s] & according to his account, he defended the mission very well... When they pretended that the cross was God, he said it was only

*Kiswi*, like the ring on his finger. He denied to the interpreter the saving efficacy of baptism, & when the priest said it was bad for us to have wives, he in a sarcastic manner asked the interpreter how the priest came into the world? If it was not by means of a father & mother? When the priest pretended that when he got established, he should give the people a plenty of food, he said to the interpreter: "I am very glad, my servant, I will come here & do nothing & load my horses with provisions & go home again." So the Lawyer tells his story.<sup>33</sup>

Whitman in his letter to Greene of October 15, 1840, also referred to Father De Smet's activities but felt that the natives in the vicinity of Waiilatpu and Lapwai were "better prepared now to understand the truth than at any former period." Since by that date, Father Demers had returned to the Cowlitz and Father De Smet had gone back to St. Louis, Whitman added: "We shall now have another year without further interruptions from the Catholics."

Both Nez Perce Ellis and Spokane Garry, who, as has been stated, had been students at the Red River Mission school, joined Lawyer in his opposition to the coming of the Roman Catholic priests among their respective tribes. On December 12, 1841, Walker, writing from his station at Tshimakain to the Rev. William Cochran at the Red River school, stated: "Spokane Garry, though a most profligate wretch, has ever opposed the priests & they tried hard to bring him under their influence but cannot succeed."<sup>34</sup>

### IN SUMMARY, 1839-1840

Marcus and Narcissa had their share of difficulties and heartaches during their fourth year of residence at Waiilatpu. The dissension within the Mission became so distressing that Whitman again seriously considered leaving. The coming of the uninvited missionaries brought problems which involved the Whitmans more than it did any of their associates. Also during the year under review came the first conflicts with the Roman Catholic priests which aroused fears of greater difficulties to come.

On the other hand, Marcus and Narcissa could look back upon a number of achievements which gladdened their hearts. The new house which had been completed provided them with more room, greater

comfort, and above all more privacy than they had previously enjoyed. The observations of the visitor, T. J. Farnham, tell much about the material improvements at Waiilatpu. In spite of the wandering habits of the natives, real progress had been made in the school where now a Nez Perce primer was available for use. Religious services were conducted regularly so long as natives were available. The Indians continued to be friendly and cooperative.

Perhaps the brightest aspect of the year's work was the increased interest the natives were showing in farming. It is a mistake to think of the Cayuses of that day as herdsmen. They had no herds before the white man came except their horses. Neither were they farmers, but they quickly learned that it was far better to depend upon the products of the soil than to follow their age-old custom of depending exclusively on hunting, fishing, and digging for roots. On March 27, 1840, Whitman wrote in a letter to Greene: "There is no abatement in [their] interest in cultivation. A spirit of independence is manifesting itself among them which is seen in a desire to purchase ploughs & hoes for themselves, if they could be obtained." Then he added the following significant statement: "They appear not to feel now as they used to formerly that it was to accommodate *us* that they plant & cultivate their lands."

CHAPTER 14 FOOTNOTES

- 1 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 277.
- 2 A son, Henry Hart, was born to the Spaldings on Nov. 24. When I first began my researches in the history of the Oregon Mission in the summer of 1934, I called on the widow of Henry Hart Spalding, who was then living at Almota, Washington. I secured from her at that time eight original Spalding letters, dating back to 1833, which are now in the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia.
- 3 Copy in Coll. O.
- 4 See section "Spalding Appointed by the American Board," Chapter Seven.
- 5 Gray, *Oregon*, p. 185, states that Griffin was "the getter-up" of the mission.
- 6 Information from Robert S. Fletcher, "Oberlin, 1833–1866," ms. in Oberlin College Library, pp. 98 & 216.
- 7 Munger's overland journal appeared in *O.H.Q.*, VIII (1907): pp. 387–405.
- 8 A copy of Greene's letter to Spalding is in Coll. A.
- 9 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. III.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 276, fn. 72.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 117. Italics in the original.
- 12 A painting of Timothy by Rowena Lung Alcorn, made from a photograph, was reproduced in color in Drury, *Spalding*, p. 214. A collection of Mrs. Alcorn's portraits of Nez Perces, painted in the 1930s, including this of Timothy are now on permanent display in the Indian Exhibit at Rocky Beach Dam, a few miles north of Wenatchee, Washington. Mrs. Alcorn painted a second portrait of both Timothy and Lawyer which are now at Whitman College, Walla Walla.
- 13 For reference to the communion silver, see Chapter Seven, fn. 46.
- 14 Asenath was the name of the Egyptian woman who became the wife of Joseph, Gen. 41:45.
- 15 Spalding to Greene, April 22, 1840: "Last. Oct. a miserable old man came to me, apparently in a state of starvation. On inquiry he proved to be one of a party of 16 who left Missouri last spring for this country." Blair proved to be a skilled workman and helped Spalding build both a sawmill and a gristmill during the winter of 1839–40. In addition to Blair, Spalding had Gray, Conner, and Griffin assisting him. Perhaps during this winter, Gray built a log cabin for himself.
- 16 Thomas J. Farnham, *Travels in the Great Western Prairies*, Cleveland, 1906, I:336.
- 17 Munger's journal, *O.H.Q.*, VIII (1907):404.
- 18 A reproduction of the painting of Abigail made in November 1847 by John Mix Stanley is in Drury, *Walker*, p. 202. Abigail was married on Sept. 14, 1868, to James A. Karr. They became the parents of twelve children. One of her daughters, Mrs. Ruth Karr McKee, served as regent of the University of Washington, 1917–26.
- 19 Walker to Greene, Oct. 14, 1840. Coll. A.
- 20 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 164.
- 21 Original letter, Coll. A.
- 22 Italics are the author's.

- 23 Spalding to Greene, Oct. 15, 1842, Coll. A. Spalding quoted Hall as saying: "A man may do very well as a mechanic who would not do at all as an equal or associate."
- 24 The name Shimnap has variations in spelling as Chinnapums, mentioned by Lewis and Clark; Chamnapum in Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 2 vols., London, 1831; A. J. Allen, *Ten Years in Oregon*, 1850, p. 211, speaks of Tshimnap; Mrs. W. H. Gray spelled it Samnap, Drury, *F.W.W.*, I:254.
- 25 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, pp. 155 ff., gives Smith's letter to Greene of Sept. 2, 1840, which contains the minutes of the 1840 Mission meeting.
- 26 Spalding made a mistake of one day in his entries. His entry, for instance, for July 8 is in reality for the 7<sup>th</sup>. Corrected dates are here given.
- 27 Griffin to S. N. Castle, Nov. 19, 1840. Coll. H.
- 28 Original De Smet letter in Archives of Indian Affairs, Oregon Superintendency, 1842–80, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- 29 Father De Smet's statement disproves the much later claim made by Father L. B. Palladino, *Indian and White in the Northwest*, Baltimore, 1894, p. 10, that the Indians who went to St. Louis in 1881 were Flatheads.
- 30 See Chapter Eight, fn. 2, for reference to antiCatholic sentiment of that generation.
- 31 Italics are the author's.
- 32 Drury, *Spalding and Smith*, p. 110.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 193.
- 34 A copy of Walker's letter to Cochran, in Walker's handwriting, is in the Rosenbach Foundation Library, Philadelphia, Pa.