

“Your Daughters Shall Prophecy”: Feminism in the Holiness Movement

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The American Holiness Movement was born in the reformist and perfectionist currents of pre-Civil War America as a product of the interaction of Methodism and American revivalism, especially that of Evangelist Charles G. Finney. It emerged in the 1830's in a reaffirmation of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection and a search for “experimental holiness” deeply nuanced by the new context of American revivalism. Though deeply rooted in American Methodism, this new movement had wide interdenominational impact, especially in the Revival of 1857-58 and the post-Civil War “holiness crusade” that found expression primarily in the National Campmeeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness. By the end of the 19th century, these currents had produced scores of new publications, independent evangelistic and mission movements, and a sizeable number of new denominations (typified by such groups as the Church of the Nazarene and the Pilgrim Holiness Church). In the 20th century these bodies have gradually regrouped themselves around the Christian Holiness Association (the successor of the National Campmeeting Association) and have emerged as a discernible tradition in the complex pattern of American denominationalism.²

At first glance, such a movement would seem a strange place to find feminist sentiments. It was in some ways a conservative movement in reaction to social and theological currents of the era. Neither its current character nor the popular caricatures the movement has generated prepare the observer for the extent to which the movement incarnated convictions that can be only described as “feminist.” In fact, the claim might well be made that the American Holiness Movement lifted feminism at least for a while to the level of principle and made it more important in its life than any other branch of Christianity. The general openness of

1. This paper is a revised and expanded version of a study paper entitled “Women in the Holiness Movement,” originally prepared as background material for a seminar led by Lucille Sider Dayton under the auspices of the Women's Aldersgate Fellowship and CHA Men at the 106th annual convention of the Christian Holiness Association, held in Louisville, Kentucky, April 17-19, 1974.

2. For an overview of the development of the Holiness Movement, cf. Donald W. Dayton, *The American Holiness Movement: A Bibliographic Introduction* (Wilmore, Ky.: B. L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary, 1971), new edition in preparation. The most detailed guide to the literature is Charles E. Jones, *A Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement* (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974). Cf. also Charles E. Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion* (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974) for the story of the movement within Methodism.

Methodism to new roles for women was amplified in pre-Civil War America by the close connection of the holiness impulse and the perfectionist reforms of the era (abolitionism, temperance, women's rights, etc.) As a result the holiness movement perpetuated well into the 20th century the conviction that women ought to have an equal role in the church and society and took major steps toward putting this conviction into practice. This paper will attempt to survey this development from its foreshadowing in early Methodism through its outworking in the 19th and 20th centuries to its decline in recent years.

Women in Early Methodism

The role women were to play in the Holiness traditions was foreshadowed in early Methodism. Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley, is often called the Mother of Methodism. She exercised a powerful influence over her 10 children as she taught them six hours a day in her "household school" and as she met each of them for private tutoring and prayer one evening a week.

When John left home, the influence of his mother went with him, and he sought her advice to the time of her death. It was her practical counsel to allow laymen to preach that led the way to his allowing laywomen to preach as well. It was her example of teaching the Gospel that convinced him other women could do the same. John Newton has suggested she also had major impact on Wesley's formulation of the doctrines of Christian Perfection, of Assurance and the witness of the Holy Spirit.³

Susanna Wesley exercised religious leadership outside the home as well. Exasperated about her limitations in the home, she wrote to her husband:

It came into my mind that though I am not a man nor a minister of the Gospel, and so cannot be employed in such a worthy employment as they were, yet if my heart were sincerely devoted to God, and if I were inspired with a true zeal for His glory and did really desire the salvation of souls, I might do something more than I do.⁴

Soon after this, she turned her Sunday family worship into an evening service which as many as 200 people attended. When her husband returned home, he questioned the propriety of a woman leading the service, but since he could not deny her success, he capitulated.

Under such maternal influence Wesley would have found it difficult to deny women a positive role in the religious life of the Evangelical Revival. From the beginning women took an active part in Methodism. In

3. John A. Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), pp. 186-193.

4. Quoted in F. Townley Lord, *Great Women in Church History* (London: Cassell and Company, 1940), p. 161.

1739 Wesley appointed women as leaders of classes in Bristol, and after prolonged consideration he allowed women to serve as local preachers and itinerant ministers, though they were never ordained. Since these early classes were comprised of more women than men, the women could have out-voted the men in the regional meetings.

Before Wesley, Robert Wearmouth explained, it was unheard of in England that women hold positions in government or in the Church. "It might be claimed that the emancipation of womanhood began with him."⁵ For he, more than any man in 18th century England, encouraged women in the service of Christ and humanity.⁶

One of the first women Wesley encouraged, though reluctantly at first, was Mrs. Sarah Crosby, who earlier in her ministry encountered resistance to her preaching. The question occurred unexpectedly when Mrs. Crosby found 200 people at her class meeting. The large crowd prevented an intimate discussion as was the custom, so Mrs. Crosby simply stood up and testified of her life with Christ. Wesley applauded her action although he requested that she not preach. Praying and giving short exhortations and testimonies were acceptable, Wesley advised, but taking a text and expounding it beyond four or five minutes was out of order.⁷ Two years later Mrs. Crosby's unusually successful ministry forced Wesley to change his mind and he gave her, as well as other women, permission to preach.

Another woman Wesley encouraged was Mrs. Mary Fletcher, who preached to crowds of 2,000 to 3,000 people. After the death of her husband John, Wesley exhorted her to preach as much as possible, and he described her preaching as, "fire, conveying both light and heat to all that heard her.... Her manner of speaking smooth, easy and natural, even when the sense is deep and strong."⁸

Mrs. Fletcher withstood much mockery in this work.⁹ On one occasion, when responding to criticism that it was immodest for a woman to preach, she retorted:

Now, I do not apprehend Mary could in the least be accused of immodesty when she carried the joyful news of her Lord's resurrection, and in that sense taught the teachers of mankind. Neither was the woman of Samaria to be accused of immodesty when she invited the whole city to come to Christ.... Neither do I suppose Deborah did wrong in publicly declaring the message of the Lord...¹⁰

5. Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (London: The Epworth Press, 1945), p. 223.

6. Lord, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

7. Thomas M. Morrow, *Early Methodist Women* (London: Epworth Press, 1967), p. 14.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

9. Henry Moore, *The Life of Mrs. Mary Fletcher* (New York: N. Bangs and T. Mason, 1820), p. 445.

10. Quoted in Phoebe Palmer, *The Promise of the Father* (Boston: Henry V. Degen, 1859), p. 11.

Also important in early Methodism was Mrs. Hester Rogers. She visited the sick and poor, instructed penitents and counseled believers. According to a biographer, she was leader of several classes and led hundreds to Christ.¹¹ We could go on and describe the work of Hannah Ball, Frances Pawson, Mary Taft, Sarah Bentley, the Countess of Huntingdon and others, but this is sufficient to indicate something of the openness of early Methodism to a new role for women.

By the early decades of the 19th century these women were being self-consciously appropriated in America as role models by women beginning to push for a fuller participation in church life. There are also signs of the impact of such practices on the teachings of early Methodist leaders. Adam Clarke, for example, supported such roles for women in his highly influential commentary on the Bible that began to appear in 1811. In commenting on Galatians 3:28, he said: "Under the blessed spirit of Christianity they [women] have equal *rights*, equal *privileges*, and equal *blessings*, and, let me add, they are equally *useful*."¹² At a time in Israel when many men were available, God called Hulda, a woman, to prophesy. Clarke believed God still called women to prophesy — to prophesy not just in the restricted sense of foretelling, but also in the broader sense of "preaching, exhorting, praying and instructing." At Pentecost the Spirit was poured out to the daughters as well as the sons and all prophesied and spoke in tongues. "The gifts," he insisted, "shall not be restricted to any one class or order of people."¹³ Least of all should they be withheld from women, for the influence of one woman, Clarke calculated, was equal to the influence of seven and one-half men.¹⁴

American Revivalism and Oberlin College

The tendencies toward fuller participation of women within Methodism were intensified on the American scene by contact with Revivalism and pre-Civil War reform movements. Revivalism itself, especially the forms practiced by Charles G. Finney, tended to give more prominence to the place of women. Apparently it was Finney's most famous convert and assistant, abolitionist Theodore Weld, who first

11. J. B. Wakeley, quoted in "Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers", *Our Excellent Women of the Methodist Church in England and America* (New York: James Miller, 1873), p. 94.

12. Cf. comments on Galatians 3:28 in Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible...* (various editions). This passage was widely quoted in the 19th century literature. Cf. for example, B. T. Roberts, *Ordaining Women* (Rochester, N. Y.: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1891), p. 59.

13. Cf. comments by Clarke on Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17, and related passages and their use in such contexts as John O. Foster, *Life and Labors of Mrs. Maggie Newton Van Cott* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1872), p. 306.

14. Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 98. Although Clarke argued strongly for the equality and rights of women, at one point he stated that there are some functions of the ministry of which only men are capable. He never explained what he meant by this. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

pushed Finney in this direction. Within a week of his conversion Weld testified and encouraged women to do the same, with the result:

that seven females, a number of them the most influential female christians in the city, confessed their sin in being restricted by their sex, and prayed publicly in succession at that very meeting.¹⁵

Such practices caused a great deal of discussion throughout Western New York and, in fact, became one of the "new measures" for which Finney was so severely criticized. It is worth noting that when the New Lebanon Conference was called in 1827 to reconcile Finney with the more conservative revivalists, this was perhaps the major bone of contention, and Finney refused to back down.

Revivalism coalesced with the rising tide of the "Holiness" emphasis on "Christian Perfection" in the early years of Oberlin College. Among the many reforms (abolitionism, temperance, peace movement, "physiological reforms," etc.) to which Oberlin was committed was "female reform" and it became the first co-educational college in the world. Asa Mahan, whose later writings were widely distributed and read in Holiness circles, was the first president, while Finney served as Professor of Theology before succeeding Mahan in the presidency. Earlier revivalist tendencies to give prominence to women were developed at Oberlin beyond Finney's inclinations. Finney insisted that the scripture did not prohibit the speaking or praying of women in mixed assemblies,¹⁶ and he, unlike some other professors, encouraged women to participate in class discussions.¹⁷ But he never went as far as Mahan in advocating that women give commencement addresses, etc. Of all the Oberlin faculty, Mahan apparently was the most ardent supporter of women. In his autobiography he suggested for a monument epitaph:

That I was the first man, in the history of the race, who conducted woman, in connection with members of the opposite sex, through a full course of liberal education, and conferred upon her the high degrees which had hitherto been the exclusive prerogative of men.¹⁸

A number of Oberlin graduates went even further and became some of the most important feminists of the period. Lucy Stone, the most well known of these, is notorious for working out a marriage contract which provided equal legal and personal rights for herself and her husband, Henry B.

15. Letter dated August 26, 1837, from Theodore Weld to Angelina Grimke in Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, (eds.), *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld and Sarah Grimke, 1822-1844* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), p. 432.

16. *Oberlin Evangelist*, April 23, 1845.

17. Robert Samuel Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College* (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin College, 1943), I, p. 293.

18. Asa Mahan, *Autobiography, Intellectual, Moral and Spiritual* (London: T. Woolmer, 1882), p. 169.

Blackwell.¹⁹ Also among these graduates were Antionette Brown, the first woman to be ordained,²⁰ and Sallie Holly, a famous anti-slavery lecturer.²¹

Phoebe Palmer and Her Impact

In the next generation Holiness leadership passed to Phoebe Palmer, Methodist laywoman, who, as evangelist and editor of *Guide to Holiness*, was the major force behind the mid-19th century Holiness revival. Being an organizer by nature, she was a founder of the Five Points Mission in New York. She was responsible for the establishment of a mission in China, which her physician husband, Dr. Walter C. Palmer, and friends supported, and she played a role in the establishment of Garrett Biblical Institute and Drew Theological Seminary.²²

More outstanding than her organizing skills was her ability to preach, and the "Tuesday Meeting", started with her sister Sarah Lankford in 1829 "for the promotion of Holiness", quickly expanded. Her revival work took her through Canada, the United States and Britain, where she claimed 25,000 converts. She fervently preached the doctrine of Holiness. As one Brooklyn minister reported:

She showed the church of God that there were mountain peaks of sanctification that it had never attained, and created in the souls of us who had not reached that elevation, a longing for the glorious ascent.²³

Mrs. Palmer, however, was not without opposition, and many churches still barred women from praying, speaking or preaching. Mrs. Palmer produced in response in 1859 a 421-page book, *The Promise of the Father*, a defense of the call and need of women to speak in public. She argued that the promise of the Father in Joel 2:28 was that in the later days the Spirit was to be poured out on the daughters as well as the sons, and both were expected and compelled to pray, prophesy and preach. This work and its basic argument apparently became the source of innumerable writings in the Holiness movement arguing the right of women to preach.

Mrs. Palmer tried to avoid the question of "Women's Rights" but she did note that "some reforms contemplated in recent movements may, in various respects, be decidedly advantageous,"²⁴ and that it would not be

19. Aileen S. Krador, (ed.), *Up from the Pedestal* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 149.

20. Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

22. Ernest Wall, "I Commend Unto You Phoebe", *Religion in Life*, Vol. 26, (Summer, 1957), p. 398.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

24. Palmer, *op. cit.* p. 1.

undignified for women to play a prominent part in legislative halls and church conventions. Though the ordinary way for women to serve was not in preaching and governing, she insisted, in unusual circumstances God breaks out of this pattern as is seen in the call of Deborah and Hulda to prophesy and Queen Victoria to govern.

In the first chapter Mrs. Palmer discussed the main objection to allowing women to speak: Paul's prohibition, "Let your women keep silence in the churches." She first pointed out the inconsistency of those who apply the prohibition. They apply it literally to preaching but not to other forms of participation, for they *do* allow women to sing, pray and respond in liturgies. She then examined the circumstances under which the prohibition was given, and found it was given to the church at Corinth which was experiencing disorder when people prophesied. "It was in reference to this...that Paul enjoins silence, and not in reference to the exercise of the gift of prophesy, which...he so plainly admits,"²⁵ when he says that every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head (1 Cor. 11:5). Mrs. Palmer added.

Surely it is evident that the irregularities here complained of were peculiar to the church of Corinth, and, in fact, we may presume, were not even applicable to other Christian churches of Paul's day, much less Christian churches of the present day, as no such disorders exist.²⁶

Passages such as, "I suffer not a woman to teach nor usurp authority over the man," and "if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home," Mrs. Palmer explained, do not pertain to the question of preaching but rather to the question of usurping authority which is wrong for both men and women. While saying this and while insisting that the New Testament raised the position of women, Mrs. Palmer still held to some distinction between men and women: "Adam was first formed, then Eve, and all the daughters of Adam must acknowledge man first in creation, long as time endures."²⁷

In the second chapter Mrs. Palmer stated the thesis of her book in terms of a question:

Has not a gift of power, delegated to the church on the day of Pentecost, been neglected? Or, in other words, has not a marked speciality of the Christian dispensation been comparatively unrecognized and kept out of use?²⁸

Mrs. Palmer next asked if the tongue of fire descended alike upon God's daughters as upon his sons and if the effect was the same? She answered with an emphatic "yes" because both daughters and sons received the cloven tongues and both then began to preach.²⁹ The only scriptural

25. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

difference between the preaching of men and women was that women were to be veiled and men were not to be. But this distinction, she explained, is no longer applicable since it was based on an obsolete Oriental custom.³⁰

Mrs. Palmer then lauded women for fearlessly serving the church. She discussed Phoebe, deaconness of the church of Cenchrea who propagated the Gospel in foreign countries. She noted the many women whom Wesley encouraged to preach but lamented the current trend to discourage women. She praised the Quakers for allowing women to speak, and she described many American women, who, after responding to the doctrine of Holiness, became great witnesses for Christ. She also noted that after men responded to this doctrine, their attitudes changed and they became much more open to allowing women to preach.

While Mrs. Palmer insisted on the right of women to preach, she never pressed for ordination. Her reason for this was not that women are not suitable for ordination, but rather that the whole system of ordination was unscriptural and vastly different from the New Testament church where everyone — man, woman and child — was called to preach the Gospel.³¹

In conclusion, Mrs. Palmer summarized her plea and concern:

The church in many ways is a sort of potter's field, where the gifts of woman, as so many strangers, are buried. How long, O Lord, how long before man shall roll away the stone that we may see a resurrection.³²

O, the endless weight of responsibility with which the church is pressing herself earthward through the depressing influences of this error! How can she rise while the gifts of three-fourths of her membership are sepulchred in her midst?

"Daughters of Zion, from the dust
Exalt thy fallen head;
Again in thy Redeemer trust.-
He calls thee from the dead."³³

The impact of Mrs. Palmer was felt throughout Canada, Britain and the United States. In Britain the most well known woman influenced by Mrs. Palmer was Catherine Booth, wife of William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. After hearing Mrs. Palmer preach Catherine Booth was overjoyed, but then appalled to read a pamphlet which denied on scriptural grounds the right of Mrs. Palmer and other women to preach. Catherine responded with a 32-page pamphlet on "Female Ministry" in which she described Jesus' humane attitude toward women, the work of the prophetesses in the New Testament, etc. She, like Mrs. Palmer, argued that at Pentecost,

30. Ibid., p. 45.

31. Ibid., p. 329ff.

32. Ibid., p. 341.

33. Ibid., p. 347.

the Spirit was given to the female as to the male disciple and this is cited by Peter...as the peculiar specialty of the later dispensation. What a remarkable device of the devil that he has succeeded in hiding this...but the time of her deliverance draweth nigh.³⁴

Soon after the pamphlet was written, Catherine, in a religious experience during an illness, promised to obey God whatever that might mean. She found what that meant a few Sundays later when she felt God telling her to go to the pulpit and confess her call to preach. She went and began a ministry which was to last the rest of her life.

William became sick soon after that and Catherine took his place in the pulpit. She wrote to her mother: "William is, of course, very pleased and says he feels quite comfortable at home minding the bairns, knowing who was supplying his place."³⁵ When William did not get better for some time, Catherine not only preached but she also carried out all his duties as Superintendent at Gateshead.

By this time William was thoroughly convinced of the right of women to preach and of the equality of men and women, but this was not so when he first met Catherine. "Woman has a fibre more in her heart and a cell less in her brain,"³⁶ he argued in a letter to her during their first argument after their engagement. Catherine denied this and insisted that lack of training and opportunity were solely responsible for woman's secondary place in society. Unless William would change, Catherine threatened, the engagement would have to be broken. Gradually William began to acquiesce and three years later, in 1855, they were married.

The following year, in her first published article in *The Connexion Magazine*, she pointed out that "Women were last at the Cross and first at the sepulchre," and she pled:

Oh that the Church would excite its female members to emulate their zeal and remove all undue restraints to its development.³⁷

I believe it is impossible to estimate the extent of the church's loss, where prejudice and custom are allowed to render the outpouring of God's spirit upon His handmaidens null and void.³⁸

In the next three years Catherine gave birth to two of her eight children and from the beginning she taught them equality:

I have tried to grind it into my boys that their sisters were just as intelligent and capable as themselves. Jesus Christ's principles were to put woman on the same platform as men, although I am sorry to say His apostles did not always act upon it.³⁹

34. F. De L. Booth-Tucker, *The Life of Catherine Booth* (New York: Revell, 1892), I, p. 348.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

In the Salvation Army, founded several years later, Christ's principles were clearly enforced. It emphatically declared that "no laws can be good in effect that profess to care for and guard the interest of one sex at the expense of the other."⁴⁰ After considerable debate women were admitted to all ranks, including those which had authority over men. In 1934 Evangeline Booth, daughter of Catherine and William, was elected to the highest office of the Army, that of General.

In 1861 Catherine and William broke from Methodism and travelled all over England conducting revivals. To double "their power for good," they often held separate meetings, and crowds thronged to hear Catherine. In Portsmouth the crowd averaged 1,000 people for 17 consecutive weeks, and at Hastings 2,500 attended nightly. Some attended just to hear a woman, for her advertisement read, "Come and Hear a Woman Preach." But more than curiosity, it was her remarkable powers as a preacher that sustained the interest of her listeners.

In contrast to William, Catherine was at ease with the rich as well as the poor. William was reluctant to tackle the intellectuals of London until her success there convinced them in 1865 to open a mission which became the Salvation Army in 1878. Catherine preached to royalty, she did not hesitate to lobby with Queen Victoria for changes in oppressive laws, and she fearlessly castigated the wealthy for their irresponsibility to the poor.

Catherine continued to preach and write (authoring half a dozen books), for the rest of her life. When she died at 61, all of England mourned and 50,000 filed past her coffin. William reflected at her death that she was indeed the Salvation Army Mother: "Other religious organizations cannot be said to have a Mother; their guides and authorities are all *Fathers*.... Woman has taken her place with man in the new kingdom...."⁴¹ While William was the creative organizer, she had the critical and analytical intellect. Today Catherine Booth's place in the founding of the Salvation Army is often ignored, but at her death her co-founder husband recognized the place that was rightfully hers.

Catherine Booth not only attained a position hitherto foreign to women, but she fought for the equality of all women. "She was to the end of her days an unflinching, unflinching, uncompromising champion of woman's rights,"⁴² declared her son-in-law biographer Booth-Tucker. "One half of her mission consisted in resurrecting the buried talents of her sex, the other half in humanizing...the spiritual in bringing religion out of the vague...into the area of practical politics."⁴³ And though much too optimistic, he claimed,

40. *The Salvation Army: Its Origin and Development* (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1951), p. 63.

41. Booth-Tucker, *op. cit.*, II, p. 644.

42. *Ibid.*, I, p. 123.

43. *Ibid.*, II, p. 676.

when an unprejudiced posterity distributes its award, surely no secondary place will be allotted to her who fought and won the Waterloo of woman's equal right to serve and save, cancelling the absurd monopoly of man, and banishing the perpetual and inglorious exile, the dicta of prejudice and pride.⁴⁴

Phoebe Palmer also had impact on Frances Willard, a woman deeply shaped by the Holiness movement though her ties in later life were not so direct. Miss Willard spent time in Oberlin while her father attended college there. For most of her life she was close to leaders of the Holiness wing of Methodism. As late as 1887 she related her religious experience in a new classic collection of "holiness testimonies". In that work she describes the impact of Phoebe Palmer in 1886 when the Palmers held meetings in her church for several weeks. After "Mrs. Palmer had spoken with marvellous clearness and power," she responded to an "altar call" for those who wished to enter "the higher Christian Life". Her consecration was at first hindered by her "simple bits of jewelry" but finally, she reported, "great peace came to my soul".⁴⁵ Over two decades after this, Miss Willard claimed that "since then I have sat at the feet of every teacher of holiness whom I could reach."

Frances Willard worked for awhile as assistant to D. L. Moody before giving her life more completely to the Temperance cause so close to the hearts of the Holiness people. Though perhaps weak in the interpretation of Willard's religious background, biographer Mary Earhart has shown how the W.C.T.U. (Women's Christian Temperance Union) became the vehicle for broader reform.⁴⁶ Among the most important was the work for suffrage. Miss Willard described her "call" to suffrage involvement in these words:

While alone on my knees one Sabbath, in the capital of the Crusade state, as I lifted my heart to God crying, "What wouldst thou have me to do?" there was borne in my mind, as I believe from loftier regions, this declaration, "You are to speak for woman's ballot as a weapon for protection for her home." Then for the first and only time in my life, there flashed through my brain a complete line of arguments and illustrations.⁴⁷

Miss Willard asked to speak about the woman's ballot at the next W.C.T.U. convention but was refused because "suffrage was too advanced and radical a thing, connected in those days with too much ridicule and scorn, a thing unwomanly and unscriptural, and to touch it was contamination." She backed off for a time, but then remembered her call and

44. *Ibid.*, p. 659.

45. This testimony is recorded in S. Olin Garrison, *Forty Witnesses* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1888), pp. 69-77.

46. *Frances Willard: From Prayers to Politics* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1944). One wonders if Frances Willard's background in the Holiness Movement is not a neglected source for some of her "radical" ideas about women and related topics.

47. Ray Strachey, *Frances Willard: Her Life and Work* (New York: Revell, 1913), p. 208.

said, "Woe is me if I proclaim not this gospel."⁴⁸

At the W.C.T.U. convention in 1876 she made her first important suffrage speech against the advice of all of her friends. Yet they could not disagree with her. Hannah Whitall Smith told about one elderly woman who listened silently to Miss Willard's speech, but after the meeting she burst into bitter crying: "Frances Willard has just convinced me that I ought to want to vote, and I *don't want to!*"⁴⁹

Among the many writings of Frances Willard was an argument for *Woman in the Pulpit*, published in 1888. In addition to the usual topics relating to the ordination of women, she discussed the use of "sexist language" in the churches, complaining that "preachers almost never refer to the women of their audiences, but tell about 'men' and what 'a man' was and is and is to be."⁵⁰ She called this a "one-eyed way of looking at an audience" and tells a story about a young preacher who kept saying "brethren" to an audience of mostly women:

When rallied upon this afterward, by a...lady of his parish, he very seriously answered, "Certainly, I said, 'brethren,' and if there had been no one present but women, I should have said 'brethren' still. I was so instructed in the theological seminary, and so I do." But it never occurred to this excellent young man, nor to his theological professors, that by parity of reasoning women should be included in every prerogative accorded to the "Brethren" by the New Testament.⁵¹

At the death of Frances Willard in 1898, some 1,000 memorial services were held and she became the first woman to be honored by a statue in Washington D. C. Among the tributes to her work was the following by W. T. Stead, British journalist and friend of the Booths of the Salvation Army:

Frances Willard stood for the capacity of women to do, to act, to plan all by their lone selves. She might have done more for temperance and other causes if she had allowed men to work in the W.C.T.U., but she would have done less for women. It was her great work—teaching women that they could do things by themselves. Women who knew, and those more numerous who felt the significance of the stand she made, felt toward her a *devotion* which no mere apostolate of temperance have evoked.⁵²

Other Mid-19th Century Holiness Women

Mrs. Maggie Van Cott, the first woman licensed to preach in the Methodist Episcopal Church, merits attention. Though she was a faithful Episcopalian, her friends entreated her to attend a Methodist class

48. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

50. Frances E. Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit* (Boston: C. Lothrop Co., 1888), p. 34.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

52. Anna A. Gordon, *The Beautiful Life of Frances E. Willard* (Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, 1898), p. 406.

meeting, where she was filled with the Spirit. She soon began to lead Bible studies and to visit the Five Points Mission in New York (founded earlier by Phoebe Palmer), which she was largely responsible for reviving.

A friend, hearing of her success in the city, asked her to preach near her home, but she replied, "I preach? Impossible. In a pulpit? Never."⁵³ The thought came to her, however, "What is a pulpit but a place where the speaker better sees the audience and the audience the speaker?"⁵⁴ She entered the pulpit soon after this, in 1868, and began to travel all around New England, where hundreds were converted under her preaching. She was not concerned about her ecclesiastical standing as a minister, but members of her class meeting were, so they gave her an Exhorter's License in September of 1868.

The next year she was asked if she had a license to preach. When she produced her Exhorter's License, she was informed that it did not allow her to preach from a text. She replied:

Don't it. Well, God allows it. I received my commission from him...and have used texts years before I ever saw brother Morehouse [who had given her the license] and God has honored the work in the salvation of hundreds of souls. I think what God owns and blesses, man has no right to condemn.⁵⁵

Shortly thereafter, though still not seeking it, she was given a Local Preacher's License. Upon receiving it she inquired, "Will this make me more efficient in winning souls for Christ?". When the reply was, "I cannot say that it will," she retorted, "Well then...I value it but very little."⁵⁶

Something of the impact of her work is indicated in the following statement by Bishop Gilbert Haven:

She is without doubt, today, the most popular, most laborious and most successful preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church. She has more calls, does more work, and wins more souls to Christ than any of her brothers.⁵⁷

Although the over-all reception of Mrs. Van Cott was positive, she and other women preachers were criticized by some. In response to this criticism D. Sherman devoted the Preface to Mrs. Van Cott's biography to a discussion of "Woman's Place in the Gospel." He argued that, "Christianity is emphatically the Gospel of woman....in other systems she holds a place below man; in this as his equal."⁵⁸ This principle of equality is clearly stated in Galatians 3:28, "In Christ there is no Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female." Sherman explained that these principles were not always carried out in the New Testament because the people were

53. Foster, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*, p. 219.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

57. *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

58. *Ibid.*, p. xxxi.

not ready to accept them. The institutions of slavery and the subjection of women were not openly attacked by Christ or the apostles although the principles for their freedom were laid down. Since the first century the Church has matured and thus has denounced slavery. Sherman then asked the church to continue to mature and to allow woman her place of equality in the ministry of the church.

Much more famous than Mrs. Van Cott was Mrs. Hannah Whitall Smith, a Quaker who emerged in the mid-19th century as one of the most popular Holiness teachers of the era. Her devotional classic, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, has sold millions of copies in numerous languages, but she was author of over a dozen other books as well. She and her husband, Robert Pearsall Smith, were the major forces in the extension of the "Holiness Revival" to England and the Continent where it found expression in the "Keswick Conventions" that originated in the 1870's.⁵⁹

Hannah Whitall Smith was deeply involved in the temperance movement, serving as confidante of Frances Willard for nearly a quarter of a century and holding several national offices in both the American and British branches of the W.C.T.U. Less well known are her feminist activities. She spoke at suffrage conventions and was an ardent advocate of women's education. A letter on the latter theme reveals the intensity of her feelings:

Girls have a *right* to a college education. They ought to be *made* to get it, even if it had to be done at the point of the bayonet.... I regret my own loss in this respect every day of my life, and the world has cause to regret it too; for as I *will* be a rather public character, and will *insist* on undertaking to teach, it is a monstrous pity that I have this great lack of want of education.⁶⁰

In this area Hannah Whitall Smith is often attributed influence on M. Carey Thomas who became president of Bryn Mawr. She apparently had similar impact on her granddaughter Rachel Strachey, chronicler of and participant in the British struggle for suffrage. In 1908, three years before her death, she wrote to the latter:

Thy account, Ray, of your enthusiasm over the suffrage victory (second reading passed) thrilled me through and through, and I actually wept some tears of joy to think that you girls have embraced the cause of Women's Liberty with such enthusiasm. I feel now that I can die in peace, and leave the Cause to your fresh and eager young hands.⁶¹

Hannah Whitall Smith must also be remembered for her discussion of "God as our Mother," to which she devoted an entire chapter in *The Open*

59. The best sketch of her life is by Earl C. Kaylor, Jr. in Vol. III of *Notable American Women 1607-1950* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 313-316. Cf. Robert Allerton Porter, *Those Transatlantic Smiths* (New York: Random House, 1959).

60. Logan Pearsall Smith, (ed.), *Philadelphia Quaker: The Life of Hannah Whitall Smith* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950), pp. 18-19.

61. Ray Strachey, *A Quaker Grandmother* (New York: Revell, 1914), p. 131.

Secret. Using as a text Isaiah 66:13: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem," she argued that,

There are many...ways in which God is like a mother, and a comparison of these points will, I trust, open our eyes to see some truths concerning Him, which have been hitherto hidden from our gaze.⁶²

She then compared the love, comfort, and sacrifice of a mother to that of God and cited verses in scripture which refer to God in traditional feminine imagery (Deuteronomy 32:11 and 12; Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 23:37, etc.) She concluded:

If God is only as good as the mothers He has made, where can there be any room left for a thought of care or of fear? And if He is as much truer to the ideal of motherhood than an earthly mother can be, as His infiniteness is above hers, then what oceans and continents of bliss are ours for the taking!⁶³

Another prominent Holiness Evangelist of this period is a somewhat neglected figure, Mrs. Amanda Berry Smith.⁶⁴ A black woman born in 1837 into a slave family that finally was able to purchase its freedom, Amanda Berry grew up with little formal education and spent the earlier part of her life as a house servant and washerwoman. Though converted in 1856, her real contact with the Holiness movement may be dated from her sanctification in 1868 under the ministry of John S. Inskip, first president of the National Campmeeting Association. This experience was also nurtured in Phoebe Palmer's "Tuesday Meeting," where the presence of a black tended to upset some of the "proper" ladies in attendance.

In 1870 she attended one of the National Camp Meetings, where she met the leadership of the Holiness movement and was gradually drawn into a ministry of speaking and preaching at such occasions — in spite of opposition to both her sex and her race. After eight years of such ministry, Mrs. Smith was called to England to preach at the Keswick Conference and elsewhere. From here she was launched into a profound international ministry that began with two years in India. Of her work there Methodist Episcopal Bishop J. M. Thoburn said,

That she was not only a woman of faith, but that she possessed a clearness of vision which I have seldom found equalled....During the seventeen years that I have lived in Calcutta, I have known many famous strangers to visit the city, but I have never known anyone who could draw and hold so large an audience as Mrs. Smith.⁶⁵

62. Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Open Secret* (Chicago: Revell, 1885), p. 119.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

64. A sketch of her life by John H. Bracey, Jr. may be found in Vol. III of *Notable American Women*, pp. 304-5.

65. *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, The Colored Evangelist* (Chicago: Meyer and Bros., 1893), p. vi. This volume is still available in "Holiness" reprint (Noblesville, Ind.: Newby Book Room, 1972) and a "Black Studies" reprint (Chicago: Afro-Am Press, 1964).

And of her personal impact on himself he commented:

I have learned more that has been of actual value to me as a preacher of Christian Truth from Amanda Smith than from any other person I have ever met.⁶⁶

This period in India was followed by eight years of evangelism in West Africa where she was with Methodist missionaries, especially Bishop William Taylor. After returning to the United States in 1890, Amanda Smith preached for awhile before devoting the last two decades of her life to work with black orphans. This gradually evolved into the Amanda Smith Industrial School for Girls, destroyed by fire in 1918. She died in 1915 of a stroke. Participating in her Chicago funeral were leaders of Chicago's black community, white leaders of the W.C.T.U., and church leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Feminism in Late 19th Century Holiness Literature

Toward the end of the 19th century the *Guide to Holiness*, the major Holiness magazine, contained considerable discussion about the role of women. As early as 1868 M. Annesley wrote, "The New Testament includes male and female as brethren, and that which applies to the one in Christian fellowship, applies to both....If we receive, we must also impart."⁶⁷ The Rev. L. H. Baker, in 1895, welcomed the new age that had dawned, where woman is no longer treated as "a beast of burden," or as a "soulless something". Woman, he explained, is a priestess and her ministry extends beyond the home into the church, into the educational institutions and even into politics.⁶⁸

In the following year a special two-page essay was written each month by Rev. J. Fowler Willing, "to glance over the fields where women are at work for our Lord....and help the silent two-thirds of the Church to see that there is a place for them in the ranks."⁶⁹ At the beginning of each essay, Willing quoted the prophesy from Joel, "Upon the handmaidens...will I pour out my Spirit," and then he described the work of women in various organizations.

One year later Mrs. Willing began to write these essays instead of her husband, and she soon became a regular Corresponding Editor. In her December, 1897 essay, she described God's model woman. This woman is full of power and mental energy; she is industrious, "not content to be a consumer, she becomes a producer"; she is a business woman who knows

66. *Ibid.*, pp. viii-ix.

67. M. Annesley, "Speaking in Meeting", *Guide to Holiness*, 7 (May, 1868), p. 145.

68. L. H. Baker, "The Priestess", *Guide to Holiness*, 64 (April, 1895), p. 152.

69. J. Fowler Willing, "Woman In Gospel Evangelism", *Guide to Holiness*, 64 (Jan., 1896), p. 22.

the laws that underlie the rise and fall of real estate. She is strong and serious and "feels too keenly the great work God has placed in her hands to indulge in silly dawdling, fainting at the sight of a mouse, pluming herself on her general feebleness."⁷⁰ The model woman "feels the nobility of labor" and realizes

that working for pay is no more beneath a woman's dignity than it is for a man....She loves to share his business, that he may share her studies and culture; and they twain are one in service and one in recreation.⁷¹

Mrs. Willing, like many other Holiness people, pointed to Pentecost as the beginning of the freedom of woman:

The Pentecost laid the axe at the root of the tree of social injustice. The text of Peter's sermon that marvelous day was the keynote of woman's enfranchisement.⁷²

When the Pentecostal light shines most brightly, women do the bulk of the common-school teaching. They are also principles, professors, college presidents, and are admitted to all the learned professions....When the light shines clearly, they have equal rights with men by whose side they labor for God's glory.⁷³

In a later essay Mrs. Willing declared Pentecost, "Woman's Emancipation Day." It gave woman the privilege to preach, and it even produced a woman who taught theology: Priscilla, whose name is usually mentioned before her husband's, "a strange thing among the heathen or Jews."⁷⁴ Mrs. Willing explained that Paul did not insist on the emancipation of woman at every point because the people were too prejudiced to be able to accept it. He gave rather, "axioms which believers would grow to apprehend, with now and then an illustrative side-light."⁷⁵

Mrs. Willing lamented in another essay the extent to which the Christian woman has fallen into the role society placed on her:

She contents herself with shining, like the moon, with borrowed splendor, as the mother, sister, or wife of the great so-and-so....She has left her talent in its napkin while she has been obeying the world's dictum by helping to make the most of his.⁷⁶

70. Mrs. J. Fowler Willing, "God's Great Woman", *Guide to Holiness*, 67 (December, 1897), p. 226.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

72. Mrs. J. Fowler Willing, "Woman and the Pentecost", *Guide to Holiness*, 68 (January, 1898), p. 21.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

74. Mrs. J. Fowler Willing, "Women Under the Pentecostal Baptism", *Guide to Holiness*, 70 (February, 1899), p. 52.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

76. Mrs. J. Fowler Willing, "Women and the Pentecost", *Guide to Holiness*, 69 (September, 1898), p. 87.

This series of essays in the *Guide to Holiness* indicates the seriousness with which questions about the role of women were discussed in the late 19th century Holiness movement. This concern is evident also in a pamphlet written by Holiness preacher W. B. Godbey in 1891 on "Woman Preacher." Godbey declared that, "It is the God-given right, blood-bought privilege, and bounden duty of the women, as well as the men, to preach the gospel."⁷⁷ The only requirement to preach is that the person be filled with the Spirit. A license or ordination was not necessary for either men or women preachers because that tended to create unnecessary distinctions between the clergy and laity.

The verse, "It is a shame for a woman to speak in the church," was given to keep order, not to keep women from preaching, and Godbey added, "I don't know a Scripture in all the Bible by whose pervision the devil has dragged more souls into hell than this."⁷⁸

Although Godbey believed that in the home the man is the head, he argued that woman is in some ways superior to man:

When God made man, he made him out of dirt. When he made woman, he made her out of a man. So woman is a double refinement....Man is physically stronger than woman....but woman is morally stronger than man. Oh, what a victory Satan won when he so awfully paralyzed the larger, truer and more efficient wing of the army.⁷⁹

Give the women a chance, he pleaded:

They will rob Satan of his whiskey, confront him on every ramification of the battle field, fill the saloons and brothels of Christendom, and the jungles of heathendom, with blood-washed and fire-baptized missionaries, march to the music of full salvation to the ends of the earth, belt the globe with the glory of God, and transform a world long groaning in sin and misery into a paradise.⁸⁰

Oh, brethren, for the sake of the souls Jesus bought with his blood, let us get out of the way of the women.⁸¹

Women in the Holiness Denominations

We now turn to several Holiness denominations to examine the participation of women and the discussions about that participation. We will not discuss the Salvation Army since we noted it above in the description of Catherine Booth.

The **Wesleyan Methodist Church**, founded in 1843 over the abolitionist controversy within Methodism, had very close connections with

77. W. B. Godbey, "Woman Preacher", (Louisville, Ky: Pentecostal Publishing Co., 1891), p. 1.

78. Ibid., p. 10.

79. Ibid., p. 12.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid., p. 13.

the mid-19th century women's rights movement. The principles of equality and freedom they so strongly upheld in regards to the slave were naturally transferred to include women also. When Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Stanton sought a building for their famous 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention, they went to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, knowing those who had opened their doors to blacks would also open their doors to women.⁸²

Four years later the Syracuse Men's Temperance Society invited "temperance societies of every name" to send delegates to a forthcoming convention. To their despair the women's temperance society sent two delegates, an act that brought chaos to the convention. One minister described the woman delegates as "a hybrid species, half man and half woman, belonging to neither sex."⁸³ Three men defended these women, one being a Wesleyan Methodist minister, the Rev. Luther Lee. When the three men were shouted down, and when the secretary announced he would not count the votes of the women delegates. Lee offered his church to the women for an evening meeting. That evening the church was packed, while the convention hall was almost deserted, and Lee, Susan B. Anthony and others gave stirring pleas for the right of women to work and speak for temperance.⁸⁴ Lee's involvement with women's rights is seen also one year later when he preached the ordination sermon for Antionette Brown, a Congregationalist who was the first woman ever to be ordained.⁸⁵

The question of the role of women was also discussed by Jonathan Blanchard, a Congregationalist who pastored the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Wheaton and was founder of Wheaton College. Blanchard said that, "the first alteration which Christianity made in the polity of Judaism was to abrogate this oppressive distinction of sexes."⁸⁶ In Judaism, "women had almost no rights; they were menials to their husbands and parents. They had no name in the church rolls, and could take no part in their worship rites."⁸⁷ Christianity, on the other hand, taught:

That while the husband is the head of the wife, yet in "Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female....Christ declared the husband and wife to be "one flesh," and set the woman in the family, by the side of her husband, as she stood when first created his helpmeet, and not his menial dependent.⁸⁸

82. Andrew Sinclair, *The Emancipation of the American Woman* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 61.

83. Ira Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony* (Indianapolis: Bowen-Merrill Co., 1899), I, p. 70.

84. Ibid.

85. Fletcher, *op. cit.*, I, p. 294.

86. J. Blanchard and N. L. Rice, *A Debate on Slavery* (Cincinnati: Wm. H. Moore, 1864; reprinted by Negro History Press, Detroit), p. 433.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

The question of the ordination of women was faced in the Wesleyan Methodist General Conference in 1864, after a woman was ordained an elder in the Illinois Conference. A resolution against the licensing of women to preach failed, and the Conference left the decision of the ordination of women to the local annual conferences.⁸⁹ At the 1887 General Conference the question was raised again, and after large numbers of the delegates had left for home, a resolution was passed forbidding the ordination of women.⁹⁰ In the next General Conference in 1891, however, this rule was repealed, although a resolution to encourage the ordination of women was not passed. "The whole subject was left as if there had been no legislation on the subject, and the conferences wishing to ordain women have done so on the ground that what is not forbidden may be done."⁹¹ By the early decades of the 20th century the practice had become rather widespread.

The Free Methodist Church, founded in 1860, apparently affirmed the right of women to preach, but hesitated at ordination. Founder B. T. Roberts presented a resolution in the 1890 General Conference in favor of the ordination of women and was keenly disappointed when it failed to pass. The question was debated again in 1894, but failed. It was taken up for a third time in 1907 and passed with one stipulation: that women be allowed to be ordained as deacons but not as elders.⁹² This stipulation was maintained until 1974 when the Free Methodists voted to allow women full ordination as elders.

B. T. Roberts articulated his reasons for his position in *Ordaining Women* (1891), one of the most radical of the Holiness books on the role of women. He argued that in the beginning God created man and woman equal, both being made in the image of God and both being commissioned to subdue and replenish the earth. Quoting from Adam Clarke, he noted that the word "help-meet" means "like, or as himself.... This implies that the woman was to be a perfect resemblance of the man, possessing neither inferiority or superiority, but being in all things like and equal to himself."⁹³ But at the fall, Roberts explained, woman transgressed first, and for a punishment she was made subject to her husband. Christ restored her, however, to her position of equality — to an equality which extends into the church, into society and even into the domestic realm:

The greatest domestic happiness always exists where the husband and wife live together on terms of equality. Two men, having individual interests, united only by

89. Arthur T. Jennings, *History of American Wesleyan Methodism* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Wesleyan Methodist Publishing Association, 1902), p. 113.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

91. *Ibid.*

92. Leslie R. Marston, *From Age to Age A Living Witness* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Light and Life Press, 1960), pp. 418-419.

93. B. T. Roberts, *Ordaining Women* (Rochester, N. Y.: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1891), p. 49.

business ties, daily associate as partners for years, without either of them being in subjection to the other. They consider each other as equals. Then, cannot a man and woman, united in conjugal love, the strongest tie that can unite two human beings, having *the same* interests, live together in the same manner.⁹⁴

Roberts showed that the objections to equality based on Scripture often arose from wrong translations or misinterpretations. The apostle Junia, for example, mentioned in Romans 16:7, was a woman according to the best texts, although many translations do not reflect this. In the New Testament women filled every office of the church: apostle, prophet, deacon, preacher and pastor.⁹⁵ In the Apostolic Church women took part in governing and women ministers were among those persecuted.⁹⁶ Roberts concluded:

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the provisions which it makes, and in the agencies which it employs, for the salvation of mankind, knows no distinction of race, condition, or sex, therefore no person evidently called of God to the Gospel ministry, and duly qualified for it, should be refused ordination on account of race, condition or sex.⁹⁷

Even though his views did not always prevail, B. T. Roberts was not alone among Free Methodists in his feminist convictions. A few years after Roberts' death, W. A. Sellew, later to be elected bishop, defended the ordination of women in *Why Not?* (1894). Sellew pointed out that the Church already allowed women to preach and govern and that this situation should be formalized by ordination. He also argued that men by virtue of superior physical power had seized the rights of women:

The men have *possessed* the *power* and they *have taken the rights*. But rights taken by force are rights still, and women the world over have been patiently waiting....for the glorious gospel of love, as taught by Jesus Christ and its attendant civilization, to restore to her those rights which have been taken from her by force...with quietness has this most blessed salvation been returning to woman those social, business, and religious privileges which God designed she should freely enjoy.⁹⁸

Sellew noticed that:

It is a most curious fact that the prejudice against the religious rights and privileges of woman is more strongly entrenched than that against her social and business rights.⁹⁹

Sellew argued that "woman in the social sphere was not only the equal but actually the superior of man" and it is therefore appropriate that "the social work of the world and of the church is largely where it belongs, in the

94. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

98. W. A. Sellew, *Why Not?: A Plea for the Ordination of those Women Whom God Has Called to Preach the Gospel* (North Chili, N. Y.: "Earnest Christian" Publishing House, 1894), pp. 6-7.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

hands of women."¹⁰⁰

In regards to business prejudice, Sellew noted with satisfaction that :

The law of force which took from woman any property she might have, or might have earned, and that stood between her and any occupation which man wanted to monopolize, and that compelled her to dig at the drudgery he did not desire to do, has been giving way, until now, nearly all occupations and professions are open to her, and laws prohibiting her from such are slowly but steadily being replaced with laws permitting her to earn and own property and manage her personal business affairs untrammelled by a class of men who think they possess superior knowledge on how a woman's money should be spent.¹⁰¹

Discussion of the role of women can be seen in the **Pilgrim Holiness Church** also. Founder Seth C. Rees, in his book, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church*, said that one of the fourteen marks of an ideal church is that it is without distinction as to sex. He accused :

Nothing but jealousy, prejudice, bigotry, and a stingy love for bossing in men have prevented woman's public recognition by the church. No church that is acquainted with the Holy Ghost will object to the public ministry of women. We know scores of women who can preach the Gospel with a clearness, a power, and an efficiency seldom equalled by men. Sisters, let the Holy Ghost fill, call and anoint you to preach the glorious Gospel of our Lord.¹⁰²

Among the women ministers whom Seth Rees encouraged was his wife Hulda, known as "the Pentecostal Prophetess." Having begun to preach at 16,¹⁰³ she continued until her death, accompanying her husband as co-pastor and co-evangelist. Her step-son, Paul S. Rees, said of her, "Like Catherine Booth, she was a balanced soul in whom domestic virtues and platform gifts developed apace."¹⁰⁴

Women played a prominent part in the early days of the **Church of God (Anderson, Indiana)**, founded in 1881 by D. S. Warner. Historian John Smith wrote that from its beginning, women were considered an essential part of the leadership and functioned on the same level as men. In a 1902 publication, *Familiar Names and Faces*, 50 of the 200 leaders of the church were women. Smith claimed :

Forty years before the time of woman's suffrage on a national level, a great company of women were preaching, singing, writing, and helping to determine the policies in this religious reform movement.¹⁰⁵

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid., p. 8.

102. Seth C. Rees, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church* (Cincinnati: M. W. Knapp, 1897), p. 41.

103. Byron J. Rees, *Hulda A. Rees: The Pentecostal Prophetess* (Philadelphia: Christian Standard Co., 1898), p. 15.

104. Paul S. Rees, *Seth Cook Rees: The Warrior Saint* (Indianapolis: The Pilgrim Book Room, 1934), p. 13.

105. John W. Smith, *Heralds of a Brighter Day* (Anderson, Ind: Gospel Trumpet Co., Church of God, 1955), p. 125.

It is probably safe to say that no other movement, either religious or secular, in this period of American history, except the suffrage movement itself, had such a high percentage of women leaders whose contribution was so outstanding.¹⁰⁶

Most well known of these women are Mary Cole, Sarah Smith, and Lena Shoffner, all of whom were preachers and evangelists. They faced considerable criticism, however. Mary Cole said she had to explain the Scriptural teaching on the subject of women preachers at almost every meeting.¹⁰⁷

The right of women to preach was not debated in the early days of the Church of the Nazarene because the matter was settled at its founding in 1894. The original constitution specifically stated the right of women to preach,¹⁰⁸ and the first woman to be ordained, Mrs. W. S. Knott, was among the 82 founding delegates of the church.

Women, in the Church of the Nazarene, were primarily responsible for starting the missionary work, the youth work and for founding Pacific Bible School, the first educational institution. The faculty roster the second year of its existence shows that the principal and five of the eight faculty members were women.¹⁰⁹

One entire conference from West Tennessee consisted for a time of only women ministers. These women were criticized severely and in 1905, twelve of them defended their right to preach in a book, *Women Preachers*, edited by Mrs. Fannie McDowell. Historian Timothy Smith found:

The women who carried on this independent gospel work seem to have combined piety and practicality to a remarkable degree. Between revivals they maintained a normal and apparently stable family life, if the few surviving letters may be taken at face value. Their husbands joined happily in their meetings when they were near home and accepted periods of separation without much protest. Only one of the women seems ever to have gone to extremes of religious emotionalism, and on that occasion the sound common sense of the others shook her out of it.¹¹⁰

The **Pillar of Fire**, a small sectarian Holiness body that originated around the turn of the century, had as its founder a woman, Mrs. Alma White, who claimed to be the first woman bishop in Church History. Mrs. White believed that in the old dispensation men filled the priestly office, but when Christ was crucified the veil was rent asunder, and both men and women were invited into the "sanctum sanctorum."¹¹¹

106. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

107. Mary Cole, *Trials and Triumphs of Faith* (Anderson, Ind.: Gospel Trumpet Co., Church of God, 1914), p. 85.

108. Timothy L. Smith, *Called Unto Holiness* (Kansas City, Mo.: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962), p. 113.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

110. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

111. Mrs. Alma White, *The New Testament Church* (New Jersey: The Pentecostal Union, 1912), p. 225.

At one point Mrs. White referred to women as the weaker sex and less qualified than men to be leaders.¹¹² But the position she most consistently advocated is reflected in her following statements:

Let Christ reign in the heart, and woman will take her place beside man and help to fight the battles of life, and not only be a helpmeet, but socially and mentally his equal.¹¹³

In spite of the decisions of men, it is impossible to invalidate that which God has decreed, and so long as the Holy Ghost is in the world, women will preach the Gospel.¹¹⁴

Great has been the loss the Church has suffered from the lack of proper teaching on this subject, but the world is no longer in darkness, women are now exercising their blood-bought privilege in wielding the sword of the Spirit.¹¹⁵

The Pillar of Fire published for years a paper entitled *Woman's Chains* that advocated the enfranchisement of women and their full participation in all levels of government (including the Presidency), in all sectors of society, and throughout the whole church. Some of this material was collected in a volume published in 1943 under the same title.¹¹⁶ Continued interest in this topic is revealed by the reprint in 1955 of *The Bible Status of Woman* by Dr. Lee Anna Starr. Starr had been pastor of the college church at Adrian College (Michigan) and the book had been originally published in 1926 by Fleming Revell, the publisher so closely associated with the Moody Revivals. Alma White had admired the work of Lee Anna Starr and the denomination keeps the work in print yet today as a tribute to that relationship.

Conclusion

The above material constitutes an overview of the feminist theme that permeates the Holiness Literature. This theme has varied in intensity from a reserved openness to women's religious activity (a shocking thing in its time) through a developed argument for the ordination of women, to, in some cases, an ardent feminism that insisted on a basic egalitarianism that extended into the home. Much more work needs to be done in this area to unearth related material, to establish interconnections among the various strands, and to analyze the relationships between these currents and those of the larger culture. But we hope that this study will provide clues for the reinterpretation of both the Holiness Movement and the history of women in the church. In conclusion we would like to make a few preliminary suggestions about some of the reasons for the connection of the Holiness

112. Ibid., p. 217.

113. Ibid., p. 227.

114. Ibid., p. 224.

115. Ibid., p. 230.

116. Alma White, *Woman's Chains* (Zarepath, N. J.: Pillar of Fire, 1943).

Movement and feminism and suggest reasons for the decline of feminism among Holiness people in the 20th century.

The reasons for Holiness openness to feminism are no doubt complex and manifold. As at least a partial explanation, we could draw attention to the following facts. (1) The Holiness Movement was born in the midst of pre-Civil War perfectionist reform movements. Religious movements often tend to pick up, incorporate and lock into their lives elements of the culture in which they originated. In this way, the Holiness Movement picked up and developed a certain feminist stance. (2) In this process particular emphasis should be placed on the correlation of feminism with abolitionism. Similar hermeneutical problems exist in understanding the Scriptural references to slavery and the subordination of women. Those who developed a "Bible argument against slavery" discovered that the same arguments provided clues for the development of a "Biblical feminism." The high degree of Holiness commitment to abolitionist doctrines, then, helped prepare the way for feminism. (3) A third factor was, no doubt, the role of Phoebe Palmer as a major figure behind the Holiness Revival within Methodism. After revivalism opened the way for new roles for women, Phoebe Palmer emerged. Her role in the Holiness Revival required justification, on the one hand, and provided, on the other hand, additional encouragement to other women. (4) Movements that emphasize the experience of the Holy Spirit tend to give a greater role to women by recognizing the autonomy of the Spirit to use persons apart from usual patterns of ecclesiastical ordination, theological training, and other types of certification. In this regard it is helpful to observe that Phoebe Palmer's defense of the right of women to preach (*The Promise of the Father*, 1859), was also an exposition of the meaning of Pentecost for a new age. (5) Finally, we should notice the Holiness perfectionist impulse that emphasized the power of grace to restore *in this world* the pre-fallen Edenic state. Opponents of both abolitionism and feminism were more oriented to the prevalence of sin in this world than to the power of redemption and argued that slavery and the subordination of women were a part of the curse of the fall not to be resisted in this life. Such fatalism and pessimism were anathema to the Holiness "utopian" vision grounded in an affirmation of the power of God to work out the Divine will for this world.

In view of such considerations, and the extent to which the Holiness Movement affirmed feminism in the 19th century, it is somewhat ironic that such sentiments have largely declined in the 20th century. Again the reasons are complex and require further study. But among the factors would be the following: (1) As time distanced succeeding generations from the reform currents in which the Holiness Movement was born, the original feminist impulse was weakened and the parallels with slavery dropped from consciousness. (2) One may trace the rising impact of

fundamentalism on the Holiness Movement and the consequent tendency to drop back into biblical literalism on the issue of women. (3) The shift from spirit-oriented spontaneity to more restrained patterns of institutionalism that follows most outbursts of spiritual creativity also took its toll on the place given to women. (4) The consequent professionalization of the ministry and the growth of seminary and other programs of education also helped to establish patterns that made it more difficult for women to break out of the more traditional roles. (5) Such currents were part of a strong tendency to cultural accommodation that have taken place in the Holiness churches, especially since World War II. The practice of having "women preachers" tended to decline with the abandonment of other "strange" practices (rejection of "make-up," distinctive dress patterns, etc.) that separated the Holiness Movement from the dominant culture.

Such currents have greatly reduced the number of women ministers in the Holiness denominations. At the founding of the Church of the Nazarene, for example, about twenty percent of its ministers were women. By 1973 this figure had declined to only six percent. Such a percentage is still astronomical by comparison with many other denominations, but it is clearly more the product of an earlier impulse than a present concern — though this situation may change with modern struggles with the women's movement and a renewed appreciation of a heritage now largely forgotten.

Wesley's Calm Address in America

In my article, "The Shaping of Wesley's *Calm Address*" (October, 1975, p. 3), I noted that "most of the few copies that did arrive [in America] were supposedly secured and destroyed by American Methodists," though I was unable to trace this tradition to its source. Dr. Frederick E. Maser has kindly pointed out what is almost certainly the earliest printed statement to this effect, in John Hampson's rare *Memoirs of the late Rev. John Wesley* (Sunderland, 1791), Vol. II., pp. 147-8: "A gentleman of that country alarmed for the safety of a people with whom he was connected, . . . laid violent hands upon it, and destroyed or returned the whole impression: so that, till a considerable time after this transaction, scarcely anyone had heard that such a piece had been published." Hampson added, "This incident was the salvation of Methodism in America." The latter statement, like that about the "whole impression," may be somewhat exaggerated, but an actual incident surely lies behind Hampson's narrative, which was faithfully transmitted in Southey's *Life of Wesley*, but has been somewhat elaborated by later writers, as in altering one friend of the Methodists into several American Methodists.

— — Frank Baker