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Pentecostal Women and Religious Reformation in the Progressive Era: The Political Novelty of  
Women's Religious and Organizational Leadership

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A thesis

presented to

The faculty of the Department of History

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in History

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by

Sherry Kaye

August 2020

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Tom Lee, Chair

Jennifer A. Adler

William Douglas Burgess

Keywords: Progressive Era, Pentecostal Women, Religion, Reform,

## ABSTRACT

### Pentecostal Women and Religious Reformation in the Progressive Era: The Political Novelty of Women's Religious and Organizational Leadership

by

Sherry Kaye

The Progressive Era in America from 1870 to 1920 introduced unprecedented change in the way Americans lived, worked, and thought about themselves in relation to the rest of the world. New platforms of charitable benevolence, religious activism, and legislative reform were enacted to meet the changed demographic landscape initiated by waves of new immigration from Europe. The tenor of religious worship shifted in mainstream and evangelical churches to reflect not only new ways of response to these changes, but new ideas of women as authoritative leaders in secular and religious institutions. Charismatic evangelical women influenced by an era of change worked to establish autonomous ministries un beholden to clergymen who declined to accept their scriptural authority to preach or occupy the pulpit. Women who identified within Holiness and Pentecostal traditions were no longer content to preach from street-corners or rented meeting rooms. Instead, women who considered themselves prophets and preachers established ministries that supported their initiatives of religious reform and advancement of women.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The production of this thesis has been a long and difficult project that could not have been accomplished without the help, guidance, and advice of Committee Chair, Tom Lee. Indeed, the very idea of using the Progressive Era in America to contextualize the changing political and religious landscape was his. It has been a rare privilege and pleasure to work with Tom who brought a much needed professionalism and high standard of academic accountability to the task of historical research. I would also like to thank Jennifer Axsom Adler for her timely advice on the religious history of women in America and for her service on the Committee. As a highly respected leader in the field of religious studies, Jennifer contributed her knowledge of religion to shaping the issues surrounding women, power, and religious authority. My thanks to Jennifer for her keen editorial review and commentary that has greatly improved the academic quality of this study. Finally, I would like to thank William Douglas Burgess for his critical review, keen insight, and good humor in his comments on the text and for his service on the Committee. As an editor, Burgess performed the task with patience and good-will refining the text to meet the high standard required of historical writing. I also want to acknowledge the generous contribution of Holston Conference Archivist Daniel Ferkin, Tennessee Wesleyan University Library, Athens, Tennessee for his time, effort, and diligence in providing documents needed for this paper. As well, a special thank you to Archivist Steve Zeleny, Heritage Archives Department, Foursquare Church, Los Angeles, California for his cooperation and provision of primary documents used in the production of this paper. These archivists epitomize the professionalism of their occupation. Last, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the staff of Sherrod Library, East Tennessee State University for their cooperation in procuring the many books needed to write this paper.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the early twentieth century in the torpid heat of a late August afternoon in 1904, the female evangelist Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter held an assembled crowd of hundreds enthralled. A staff writer for the *St. Louis Dispatch* stood watching in disbelief as those who kneeled before the dais on which Etter stood became rapturous with visions and fell into a trance. Woodworth-Etter was the star attraction of the Pentecostal Holiness revival that was currently being held under the huge tent in St. Louis, Missouri where she had been preaching since April. As the tent filled to capacity eager shouts of “Amen” And “God help us,” could be heard from the attentive audience as Woodworth-Etter spoke to them inveighing against the wages of sin.<sup>1</sup>

The gospel tent remained full to overflowing throughout the long summer of 1904. The curious came to see the miracles of faith reported in the newspapers and hear testimony by those who claimed to have been saved even as the evangelist demurred her role to insist “It was simply the power of God that had been exercised.”<sup>2</sup> In what has become known as an age of social and political reform, Woodworth-Etter typified the public involvement of women into the political and religious venues of social activism. Advancements in communication, transportation, and industry made possible the stunning transformation of the early twentieth century. In addition to secular institutions many religious institutions reformed under social directive of a transformed Christianity that called for progressive resolutions to the social ills of poverty, low wages, and industrial exploitation of land and human resources. Further reformation came as the political novelty of women in authoritative positions of power, usually reserved for men, took place.

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua J. McMullen, “Maria B. Woodworth-Etter: Bridging the Wesleyan-Pentecostal Divide,” in *From Aldergate to Azusa Street: Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal Visions of the New Creation*, ed. Henry H. Knight (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 205.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Clergy and laity in the Progressive Era were hopeful of sponsoring the regeneration of social salvation.<sup>3</sup> This study will investigate the link between Pentecostal/Holiness groups and the religious reforms brought about by changes in Methodist doctrine of the Progressive Era. Specifically, this study will inquire into the roles women such as Maria Woodworth-Etter, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Alma Bridwell White performed to promote and further reform in an era restructured by rampant industrialization, labor strikes, and new policies on immigration. Religion has the capacity to reflect and define the society that shapes it and, in return, is shaped by it. The women in this study as ministers of religion share that capacity to mirror and represent change and are seen to epitomize the often controversial nature of change in the Progressive Era. To foreground change to the lives of average Americans ushered in by a nascent industrial era, attention is given to the interest of secular institutions in orchestrating the social goals of reform.

The study investigates the challenges presented by the industrial transformation of American society in context with the subsequent reformation of religious practice and social reform. Emphasis is given to the venues of social and religious activism that opened for both secular and religious women. In addition, this project explores how women who identified within the Pentecostal-Holiness movement challenged the traditional theology of the Methodist Church to instigate new ideas and modes of practice within the charismatic movement that characterized Christianity in the early twentieth century. I contend Pentecostal women of the Progressive Era introduced and promoted reforms that advanced the initiatives of women's authority in the church. While historians have recorded the activism of religious and secular women during the Progressive Era few, if any, focus on the role Pentecostal women assumed within the church.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John F. Woolverton, *Robert H. Gardiner and the Reunification of worldwide Christianity in the Progressive Era* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 3. Social salvation reflected the goals of a reformed Christianity.

<sup>4</sup> There are many excellent works on women's historical involvement in the religious and social affairs of their communities, a few of the best are: Priscilla Pope-Levinson, *Building the Old Time Religion: Women*



In this paper I will attempt to rectify that omission while exploring their positive contributions to women's advancement in the church. Pentecostal-Holiness women were among the first to introduce new practices in pneumatological interaction and to expedite their theology via new advances in media such as newspapers and radio. For the purpose of this review I propose to define the Progressive Era as a controversial and contradictory era of reform, social and legal advancement, and municipal and industrial growth. The same era increased poverty, exploited immigrants, and incited racial and ethnic prejudice. Beginning in 1870 and extending into the 1920s the Progressive Era was complex in character. While it was certainly an era of reform, the secular and religious motivation that spurred reform remains disparate and diffuse.

The reform efforts of the men and women who populated this era remain as individual as were the goals that directed their efforts. Divisions of class and social status directed which goals of reform would be pursued while separation of secular and religious affiliation tended to inform the ways and means used. The Progressive Era was a complicated era in American history that ignited challenge to the way reform was enacted. The men and women profiled in this review should be understood as acting in accord with their individual reaction to the imperative of those reforms occasioned by a novel industrial commercial complex and socially transformative era.<sup>5</sup> Scholars of the Progressive Era contend that an activist laity exercised extraordinary power as agents who shaped the social gospel of reform into a "malleable context" through their

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*Evangelists in the Progressive Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2014)., Ruth Crocker, *Mrs. Russell Sage: Women's Activism and Philanthropy in Gilded Age and Progressive Era America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006)., Ann Braude, *Sisters and Saints: Women and American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001)., Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> In the introduction of their work Cocks, Holloran and Lesoff state "Progressivism was an extraordinarily diffuse phenomenon, full of variations and contradictions." Catherine Cocks, Peter C. Holloran, and Alan Lesoff, *The A to Z of the Progressive Era* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), xxxv: See also Brian R. McGee who argues "Definitions are contingent and fluid categories subject to revision and renegotiation," in "The Argument from Definition Revisited: Race and Definition in the Progressive Era," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 35, no. 4 (Spring 1999), 141-158.

participation in organizations of reform.<sup>6</sup> Women who formed an activist laity shaped issues of gender prioritizing definitions of the social good drawn from their own convictions that affected policymaking.<sup>7</sup> As social reformers women, secular and religious, performed work to restore neighborhoods, provide health and educational programs, and lobbied civil government into providing municipal services for their communities in the process of which women became informed and organized to agitate for their own rights.

The fifty-year span between 1870 and 1920 resulted in a commonality of shared experience across the industrialized cities of America that offset individual differences of sectional geography. In many cities across America industrial growth was accompanied by a “concomitant growth of poverty” with a subsequent consolidation of wealth in a monopolized economy that ignored the problems of the poor and elderly.<sup>8</sup> Despite the prospects rendered by industrial growth, opportunities for employment, and sustained economic progress cities and people faced a host of new challenges that threatened to lower the standard of living for the average worker. Common problems shared by many cities included: haphazard growth, municipal corruption, substandard housing, inadequate enforcement of public health codes, poor sanitation, and corrupted water supplies.<sup>9</sup> The spiraling growth of industrial cities expanded into the neighborhoods of the middle-class and generated a desire for city services that extended the influential reach of municipal authorities.<sup>10</sup> Spatial growth and the subsequent enfranchisement of suburban voters would have implications for municipal reform that would result, despite the

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<sup>6</sup> Keith A. Zahniser, *Steel City Gospel: Protestant Laity and Reform in Progressive Era Pittsburg* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ruth Crocker, *Mrs. Russell Sage: Women's Activism and Philanthropy in Gilded Age and Progressive Era America* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 235.

<sup>8</sup> Michael H. Ebner and Eugene M. Tobin eds. "Introduction" in *The Age of Urban Reform: New Perspectives on the Progressive Era* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1977), 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

lack of homogeneity among suburban residents in cities such as Chicago or New York, in the reform of municipal government.<sup>11</sup> The era of progress and industrialization in America that existed from 1870 to 1920 has been identified by historians as much for the dislocation and displacement it caused among the residents of rural America as for the conflicting initiatives of social and political reforms that were enacted within the industrial cities of the Midwest and Northeast.<sup>12</sup> It would be difficult to overstate the rapid and novel transformation of American society that took place at the turn of the century leaving many Americans unprepared and uncertain about the future course of the nation.<sup>13</sup> Americans who wanted a return to traditional values of individual worth shared an ideology that was evidenced by greater church attendance.

The Progressive Era was transformative in the way religion was practiced, perceived, and performed. The rise of new religious expression in the latter part of the nineteenth century may have been due to how Pentecostal women chose to interpret scripture.<sup>14</sup> The tension that marked their performance and their ministries became emblematic of persistent questions that surrounded many female evangelical preachers. For example, how did women rise above their sphere of influence within cults of domesticity that assigned women a status of subordination to become religious leaders in a culture that discouraged such activity?

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<sup>11</sup> Michael P. McCarthy, "New Metropolis: Chicago, the Annexation Movement and Progressive Reform," in *The Age of Urban Reform: New Perspectives on the Progressive Era*, 45.

<sup>12</sup> Among the many historians that have identified this period in American history as exceptional are: Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1973); John A. Garraty, ed. *The Transformation of American Society, 1870-1890* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> Hays, "Transformation," page number?

<sup>14</sup> The late nineteenth century on the cusp of the twentieth witnessed a remarkable transformation in the way religion was perceived and practiced with the introduction of radical new ideas on the nature of divinity and ways of interaction with the divine, see: Henry H. Knight ed. *From Aldersgate to Azusa Street: Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal Visions of the New Creation* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2001)., Elaine J. Lawless, *God's Peculiar People: Women's Voices & Folk Tradition in a Pentecostal Church* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988)., Gary B. McGee, ed. *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1991)., Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Again, how did women whose lives were touched by scandal, divorce, and charges of corruption become so influential to challenge the structure of patriarchal religion? How should religious organizations consider such women who refashioned themselves to build and lead large congregations without benefit of formal theological training or ordination? For women such as those profiled here the answer may well be that it was because of their distinctive style, unusual practices, and deep sincerity of purpose that enthralled audiences wherever they traveled despite the caustic and hostile response of their male brethren. At a time when the nation confronted the challenge of a burgeoning intellectual rationalism that questioned the very foundation of divine authority with inquiry into the evolution of life, charismatic women such as Woodworth-Etter, McPherson, and White responded with the religious reassurance evangelical Christians sought.

The Progressive Era was an amazing epoch in American history due to innovations of technology that appeared in rapid succession to one another fostering giant leaps in the national economy and in the way the world was perceived. Fortunes were made by enterprising financiers and old money of social nobility was supplanted by the ostentatious new wealth of Standard Oil, Railroads, Steel, and Real Estate. Despite the rampant corruption in government and business, gospels of morality took hold of people who sought to enact social and legislative reform to alleviate the poverty and ignorance that accumulated in the tenement slums of cities. At the same time an influx of immigrants dramatically altered the demographic complexity of white America startling native populations, many of whom reacted with alarm and nativist bias toward the ethnic and religious challenge posed by immigrants. The same scientific rationalism that had questioned the order of the natural world gave rise to a growing sentiment of superiority based on race and ethnicity. Women, too, were creating news with their demand for suffrage and legal recognition as full citizens with equal rights under antiquated laws modeled on coverture that

declined to recognize married women apart from their husbands. Charismatic Christian and evangelical women challenged traditional understandings of church doctrine to inquire why they were not permitted access to the pulpit when they responded to the divine inspiration to preach. Many such women transgressed against established church doctrine, their husbands, and the advice of their pastors to fulfil their convictions and follow the dictates of their conscience.

For women new opportunities of work opened in factory mills across America that enabled many women to earn their own money and to live independent of their families, many for the first time, and served to establish new routines of freedom and autonomy for women. New adventures in local and long distance travel afforded by technological advancement in private conveyances such as the bicycle freed them to travel and to explore on their own and led to practical changes in the way women dressed for work and leisure. Mechanization enhanced production in the factory mills that were transformed by new technologies making the work faster, more productive, and less costly. The *laissez faire* attitude of government toward industrial regulation reflected Republican goals of allowing self-regulatory corrections to take place and sponsored an attitude of benign neglect toward business.<sup>15</sup> Work schedules for wage-earners frequently demanded long hours with few breaks and exacted a toll on women and children many of whom worked alongside their parents as wages were low. Provision of municipal services by government run agencies were frequently inept or corrupt leaving many communities without the basic services of clean drinking water, sanitation, or food inspection. Protestant and Catholic Churches provided many of the schools and women's groups sponsored orphanages and charities.

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<sup>15</sup> In the Progressive Era, *laissez faire* constituted an economic policy of non-intervention by the government into the free market exercise of capital labor and "the owners of business and industry allow the rules of competition and the conditions of labor to develop as they naturally evolve without government regulation or intervention." Cynthia Clark Northrup, *Encyclopedia of World Trade: From Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 575.

Benevolent societies created by the socially privileged sponsored legislation to provide for the less fortunate and opened missions to serve those in need. Settlement houses run by college educated white elites opened in the cities to alleviate the crises of homelessness, hunger, poverty, and unemployment brought on by immigration, low wages, and few jobs despite a booming economy excited by new technologies and unparalleled industrial growth. In the United States, Protestantism was undergoing another transformation becoming more accessible, democratic, and inclusive. An evangelical approach to Christianity took hold on the hearts and minds of men and women who searched for answers to an inarticulate yearning to be close to God—a search that found no relief in traditional forms of Protestant response.<sup>16</sup>

In 1906, a small church opened in Los Angeles, California that became instrumental in the evangelical expression of faith and practice. The little church was inclusive, welcoming African American, Hispanic, and white visitors to sit and worship together. The church was known as the Azusa Street Mission and would play a prominent part in the history of charismatic ministry and the evangelical outreach of women. That women chose to become ministers and preach to mixed audiences was not new, what was different were the methods by which they did so, incorporating their own emotional experiences of connection to divinity.<sup>17</sup> The Azusa Street Church signaled a new approach to religious expression that diverged from traditional Protestant doctrine by its acceptance and practice of new oral traditions. In keeping with these new practices of faith, news spread of a “weird babel of tongues,” in the church on Azusa Street

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<sup>16</sup> The metamorphosis of a charismatic, evangelical form of worship that evidenced in the late nineteenth century had roots in earlier outbursts of rebellion against organized routines of religious expression in traditional Anglican churches that left their constituents seeking ways to have a closer, more fulfilling relationship with God. Evangelical Christianity was frequently led by a gifted, but not theologically trained, lay individual characterized by noisy uninhibited expressions of worship and, in the case of Pentecostals, by new forms of religious expression. See: William Kostlevy, *Holy Jumpers: Evangelicals and Radicals in Progressive Era America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 8-10., Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1734-1984* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 51.

<sup>17</sup> For a more complete description of women who chose to become preachers see Catherine A. Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998).

performed by a black minister who preached a holiness gospel of sanctification.<sup>18</sup> Although the Holiness Movement was not new, with a small coterie of believers circulating in England and the United States since John Wesley's visit in 1738, the advent of a Pentecostal ministry touting the emotional and empirical experience of faith in Los Angeles was new.

In 1906, the Azusa Street Church witnessed a startling new development in the doctrine of the Pentecost with the inception and practice of *glossolalia* delivered by William J. Seymour. Charles Fox Parham has been credited with being among the first in the United States to preach the doctrine of tongues and it was his followers who brought the message to the Azusa Street Mission. It was his ministry that established the doctrinal foundations of the new Pentecostal movement and whose personal testimony made *glossolalia* an established part of the service, rather than some curious by-product of religious enthusiasm.<sup>19</sup> More than any other doctrine the gospel of tongues epitomized the diversion between the conventional teachings of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the experiential deliverance of religion within the Pentecostal-Holiness Movement. Even within the Pentecostal movement not all who proclaimed the Holiness doctrine accepted the tenets of *glossolalia* speaking out against it as a false doctrine that mislead people in the wrong direction with lies and deception.<sup>20</sup> The Pentecostal-Holiness Movement from its earliest inception invited and welcomed the testimony of women who believed that those who had received the blessing of sanctification must testify or risk losing their own salvation.<sup>21</sup> In response to this belief many women overcame their fear of public censure and stood to deliver their testimony in churches, on street corners, and, for some, from the pulpit.

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<sup>18</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Holiness Pentecostal Movement in the United States* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 95.

<sup>19</sup> Synan, "Holiness-Pentecostal Movement," 99.

<sup>20</sup> Alma Bridwell White, *Demons and Tongues* (Bound Brook: Pentecostal Union Publishing, 1910), 164.

<sup>21</sup> Mollie Alma White, *Looking Back From Beulah: The Sanctified Life* (Bound Brook: Pentecostal Union Publishing, 1910), 140-154. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t9280617z&view=2up&seq=12> (Accessed July 30, 2019).

Chapter two of this study will review an extensive historiography of the Progressive Era to provide the context within which the American transformation of social and religious life took place and to give a sense of the controversial and contradictory nature of change and reform. The chapter will be subdivided into sections that reflect how change was perceived in various sectors of American life and how reformation of secular and religious life was initiated by such change.

Chapter three investigates the social activism, events, and personalities that shaped the Progressive Era from temperance and settlement houses to initiation of labor legislation to correct the unchecked exploitation of men, women, and children in capitalist industries. The chapter reviews the exorbitant expenditure of wealth and power held by industrialists and the resulting philanthropy and corruption that followed. Immigration, Catholicism, and Protestant initiatives of control and exclusion constitute the focus in this chapter with cultural constructions of religious reaction to the influx of foreigners. Ethnicity and race become factors in national policies shaping inclusion and allocation of social welfare and material resources.

Chapter four examines the extent of women's authority and reviews the ways women presented to their audiences within traditions of Pentecostal-Holiness Movement. This chapter builds on the preceding chapters to reveal the role religious women performed in concert with and in reaction to the revolutionary changes taking place within the social sphere. Women, as performers of culture and religion, instigated and reacted to changes in society as both reflections of social apprehension and as leaders of reform. The way religious women informed the cultural and social milieu as leaders, worked to build influential ministries, and challenged conceptions of their gender reveals the sociological function of religion as a social determinate and its value in history as a measure of change. Chapter five offers analysis and summary.



## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

Richard Hofstadter referred to the Progressive Era as the Age of Reform in a much reviewed and contested assessment written in 1955.<sup>1</sup> Hofstadter redefined the parameters of the age to extend from 1890 to the Second World War. Since then historians have reviewed, redefined, and attempted to confine the Progressive Era within arbitrary boundaries that fail to allow for the carry-over of influence from previous eras.<sup>2</sup> In this review the parameters chosen to indicate the Age of Urban Reform began in 1870 and carried well into the 1920s with directives aimed at social and political reform.<sup>3</sup> The boundaries chosen account for the precedence of ideas that formed in the aftermath of the Civil War when efforts of economic recovery began with Southern Reconstruction and continued with the resumption of international trade, agricultural production, and domestic manufacturing. In 1901 political luminary Theodore Roosevelt noted in his first annual presidential message “No human wisdom could foretell the sweeping changes, alike in industrial and political conditions, which were to take place by the beginning of the twentieth century.”<sup>4</sup> Woodrow Wilson concurred with that opinion in his presidential speech in 1912 to state that “This was nothing short of a new social age,” in which formed “A new era of human relationship.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform from Bryon to F.D.R.* (New York: Vintage, 1955).

<sup>2</sup> Debate on the temporal parameters of the Progressive Era vary widely depending upon the agenda of the historian for instance the editors' foreword in one anthology admits the exact range is “Questionable.” Catherine Cocks, Peter C. Holloran and Alan Lessoff, *The A to Z of the Progressive Era* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009 ), xi. Others include, Michael E. McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003)., Lewis L. Gould, *America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Michael H. Ebner and Eugene M. Tobin, eds. *The Age of Urban Reform: New Perspectives on the Progressive Era* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1977) 4.

<sup>4</sup> Catherine Cocks, Peter C. Holloran, and Alan Lessoff, *Historical Dictionary of the Progressive Era*, no. 12 (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009), xxvii.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Historically, the Progressive Era has alternatively been characterized as one of “triumphant efforts at reform,” and as an era of “pessimism and disenchantment,” coinciding paradoxically with the quest for a “cooperative commonwealth.”<sup>6</sup> Historian David Noble describes the Progressive Era as one in which industrial expansion would guarantee continuous economic and social mobility and reject competitive individualism of an earlier era in favor of a community defined in terms that echo progressive reform.<sup>7</sup> Social and political historian Samuel Hays emphasized the emergence of a modern technological society and the impact of that industrialization on society. Later, Robert Wiebe would describe the “regulative hierarchal needs of an urban-industrial existence” resting on increased government control and sanction.<sup>8</sup>

John Garraty notes integration of the American economy through industrialization increased with a concurrent yield of production that was moved efficiently by advances in transportation.<sup>9</sup> Nineteenth century historians seem to agree on at least some things even though “fifty years of intense investigation failed to establish a consensus” among them, such as the prohibitive nature of specific pieces of legislation that earmarked the Progressive Era.<sup>10</sup> The previous review of literature would seem to indicate a disparity of consensus among historians who chose to review the exact same era and time. John Buenker notes even the progressives who wrote contentious restrictions into the legislature: prohibition, limits on immigration, and the disenfranchisement and segregation of southern blacks were at odds with one another.<sup>11</sup> Buenker argues that due to a wide variance of opinion on what constituted a progressive state of mind,

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<sup>6</sup> David D. Van Tassel, ed. *The Progressive Mind, 1890-1917* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1970)., John D. Buenker, John C. Burnham, and Robert M. Crunden, *Progressivism* (Cambridge: Schenkman, 1977), v.

<sup>7</sup> David W. Noble, “The Progressive Mind,” ix.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel P. Hayes, *The Response to Industrialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> John A. Garraty, *The Transformation of American Society, 1870-1890* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 2.

<sup>10</sup> John D. Buenker, *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform* (New York: Scribner, 1973), vii.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

since the term was applied to individuals of opposing points of view, the cumulative effects of reform could be called into question.<sup>12</sup> Historians who review the period referred to as the Progressive Era fail to achieve a consensus of opinion on either the character or quality of the period owing to the contradictory and contentious nature of the era. While Bunker's perspective considers the era to be one of urban liberalism promoted by political incentives toward government intervention, welfare, and liberal tax policies, other historians view it as a "profound dislocation" brought on by extensive industrialization.<sup>13</sup> That "dislocation" surfaced as Americans of the early twentieth century experienced the emergence of new technologies and exploitive industries that changed their world and produced wealth for those who could negotiate its terms.<sup>14</sup> The new age of progress changed the way business was conducted from the craftsmanship of the individual who hand-produced goods to the mass production of durable goods and foodstuffs in corporations "headed by remote managers who seemed invisible."<sup>15</sup>

The social, economic, and political changes of the twentieth century were a continuation of changes initiated in the nineteenth but carried particular and important differences of response. Change manifested in the way Americans who enjoyed the material benefits of capitalism looked with growing apprehension at the loss of control they exercised over their lives and their work. New systems of managerial oversight eroded the independence of American workers. The welfare of the worker now depended upon wages and the goodwill of capital corporations to pay for all those goods and services they enjoyed. Steven Dinar in his review of the Progressive Era notes "An individual's security depended increasingly on the activities of the

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<sup>12</sup> Bunker, "Urban Liberalism," vii.

<sup>13</sup> Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye, eds. *Gender, Class Race, and Reform in the Progressive Era* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Steven J. Dinar, *A Very Different Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 3-13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

corporation and the decisions of a few senior executives.”<sup>16</sup> In response to the startling material and industrial changes taking place in American society, efforts emerged to counteract the exploitive power of concentrated monopolies of wealth and production that threatened the welfare of average Americans. Social reformers and populists became concerned that one of the byproducts of material capitalism was the usurpation of control by large corporations and sought legislative relief for thousands of American workers. Historians David Colburn and George Pozzetta express the idea that “The central concern of the Progressive period was the relationship between government, business, labor and the public.”<sup>17</sup> George Mowry summarizes the progressive period as a “reaction . . . compounded of moral, political, economic, and intellectual revolt.”<sup>18</sup> A revolt that cut across social classes to include farmers, laborers, white collar workers, and the wealthy who contributed to their support.<sup>19</sup> More than anything else the period of progressive reform in America constituted a shift in the social and economic life for millions of Americans. Mowry observes the Populist Movement initiated an inquiry into the national structure of production and an equitable redistribution of wealth with “drastic changes in the old concepts of property which the race had held for centuries.”<sup>20</sup>

Yet questions surface among historians who have reevaluated the selfless performance of reformers to note the testimony of middle-class philanthropists tended to obscure “other purposes often at work in (their) endeavors.”<sup>21</sup> The selfless altruism displayed in the acts of reform by progressive humanitarians frequently obscured ulterior motivations.

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<sup>16</sup> Dinar, “A Different Age,” 4.

<sup>17</sup> David R. Colburn and George E. Pozzetta, eds. *Reform and Reformers in the Progressive Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983),viii.

<sup>18</sup> George E. Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1946).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 10-11.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>21</sup> George E. Pozzetta, “Gino C. Speranza: Reform and the Immigrant,” in David R. Colburn and George E. Pozzetta, eds. *Reform and Reformers in the Progressive Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 47.

George Pozzetta notes the frequent policy of “indoctrination and socialization,” that took place with immigrant children used “heavy doses of religion and morality” as instruments of social control among the poor.<sup>22</sup> In his review of immigration policies and ensuing restrictions placed on immigrants, Pozzetta notes that attempts at reform gave way to pressures exerted by worried and angry Americans.<sup>23</sup>

### Progressive Reform, Immigration, and Catholicism

Michael McGerr exposes a critical underlying dualism in the reform initiatives of the Progressive Era and, consequently, a schism in the interests and motivations of Americans in their pursuit of reform. On the one hand, many Americans earnestly sought to enact social reforms for the betterment of all society and to a large extent, were successful in obtaining legislation that outlawed alcohol, closed vice districts, and won suffrage for women. However, as McGerr notes, President Woodrow Wilson’s progressive initiatives lost their appeal for many middle-class Americans whose idea of progressive reform focused on protecting their families from the conflict of race riots, strikes, and uncontrolled immigration.<sup>24</sup> Progressives refocused their initiatives of reform on segregation as a means of preserving Protestant society and as a means to protect diverse groups from “brutal annihilation”.<sup>25</sup> Segregation revealed an underlying pessimism in the American middle-class that foreign religious or minority populations could be assimilated into the general population. As if in response to this dire assessment, Walter Weyl founding editor of *The New Republic* wrote in response to the restrictions placed on increased immigration “We need not claim a superiority over the people who throng at Ellis Island.

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<sup>22</sup> Pozzetta, “Gino C. Speranza: Reform and the Immigrant,” 47.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> McGerr, “A Fierce Discontent,” 185.

We may concede their splendid qualities, and still advance proposals for the stemming of this human flood.”<sup>26</sup> The “flood” of immigrants coming into America was perceived as a threat for many reasons, not the least of which was the challenge presented by Catholic allegiance to the Pope. Aside from religious concerns, Catholicism was thought to present a direct threat to capitalist systems of labor and social organization because of the tenets and policies of Catholic Social Theories (CST). Jeremy J. O’Connor notes CST states “accumulation of wealth in any form that results in social disparity is unjustifiable.”<sup>27</sup> Again, Protestants viewed with alarm the support of the Catholic Church for advocacy groups such as the Knights of Labor organized in 1869 by Uriah Smith Stephens, which were responsible for initiating labor strikes. By 1886, nearly 800,000 workers were affiliated in the labor organization to comprise 20 per cent of American workers.<sup>28</sup> Internal tension between skilled and unskilled members of the Knights of Labor resulted in a decline of membership after 1886, contributing to the defection of skilled workers to the American Federation of Labor, newly organized by Samuel Gompers.<sup>29</sup>

By 1928, Protestant fears were realized, as the governor of New York and the democratic nominee for the presidency—Alfred E. Smith arrived in Boston to give a speech. Noted as a progressive crusader and urban reformist, Smith was unabashedly Catholic, liberal, and tolerant. Smith appealed to Massachusetts voters on his progressive record of social welfare, labor reform, and legislation for public health issues, in addition to conservation of natural resources. Smith’s platform epitomized the liberal objectives of social welfare to improve protection for the

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<sup>26</sup> Walter Weyl, “The New Democracy,” in *The Social and Political Thought of American Progressivism*, ed. Eldon Eisenach (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Inc., 2006), 254.

<sup>27</sup> Jeremy J. O’Connor, “Is Catholic Social Theory Capitalistic?,” *Journal of Business Diversity* 12 no. 3 (2012), 96. [http://www.na-businesspress.com/JBD/O\\_ConnorJJ\\_Web12\\_3\\_.pdf](http://www.na-businesspress.com/JBD/O_ConnorJJ_Web12_3_.pdf) (Accessed July 31, 2019).

<sup>28</sup> Jason Kaufman, “Rise and Fall of a Nation of Joiners: The Knights of Labor Revisited,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 31 no. 4 (Spring 2001), 553-579. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/206859> (Accessed December 2, 2019).

<sup>29</sup> Phillip S. Foner, *History of Labor Movement in the United States: The Policies and Practices of the American Federation of Labor, 1900-1909* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 111-116.

working-class and the dignity of diverse populations who inhabited sprawling cities such as New York. Robert Chiles portrays Al Smith as the “Happy Warrior” who positioned as a central figure in the transition from progressive reform to the investiture of Roosevelt’s New Deal.<sup>30</sup> Chiles’ characterization of Al Smith as a protagonist of progressive reform illustrates conflicting ideologies at work in 1928 that divided Americans on initiatives of liberal reform and challenged Anglo-Saxon concepts of Americanism. In newspaper caricatures and political cartoons, Smith was portrayed as the back-slapping populist who eschewed prohibition and excoriated the Ku Klux Klan in one breath. Alfred Smith’s rise to prominence in the 1928 presidential race and his subsequent defeat to Herbert Hoover reflected the fear of many Americans that Smith would have a divided allegiance to the Pope in Rome and would formulate his administrative policies accordingly. Historian George McAdam reiterates that attitude to argue Smith was linked to the Tammany Hall political machine that controlled New York City politics.<sup>31</sup> Smith’s defeat in the presidential race illustrates the analysis by political commentator Walter Lippmann of the media as an “unregulated private enterprise,” that was to blame for circulating biased information and reveals the troubled misgivings of progressives in 1920.<sup>32</sup>

If the Progressive Era could be characterized by a defining description it would be one of conflicting changes that troubled liberal socialists for other reasons, too: The inordinate power of unrestrained monopolies, rampant political corruption, and the nation’s growing heterogeneity reflected by an influx of unassimilated foreigners.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Chiles, *The Revolution of '28: Al Smith, American Progressivism, and the Coming of the New Deal* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 5.

<sup>31</sup> George McAdam, “Governor Smith of New York,” in *The World’s Work* vol. XXXIX, Arthur W. Page, ed. (New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1919-1920), 238.

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Auerbach, *Weapons of Democracy: Propaganda, Progressivism, and American Public Opinion* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015); Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, rev. 1985).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

The rapid dissolution of old forms gave way to a scientific revolution in the way people thought of and imagined their world in terms no longer “fixed” to ancient anachronisms. John Louis Recchiuti writes of the reverence held for science in the latter half of the nineteenth century to note “in a world where fixed notions were rapidly giving way to entirely new visions old notions of a fixed social order gave way to new possibilities.”<sup>34</sup> Recchiuti argues that among these exciting new possibilities was the idea of restructuring social relations of gender, race, and labor among men and women in ways that better reflected their commitment to science.<sup>35</sup>

Nancy Dye reviews the era as one of contradiction in which a complex response from partisans brought opposition to issues of political restructuring and economic regulation. Dye’s perspective ranges wider to include the civic and political activities of women who brought the ideas of progressive liberalism to the forefront of domestic reform. Issues such as improving the working conditions for women, sanitation, housing, schools, and caring for the poor were primary considerations, but women also protested “corporate arrogance and political malfeasance.”<sup>36</sup> Dye argues through the venue of clubs and civic organizations, middle-class women worked to correct social-economic conditions and compile documentation on the dimensions of poverty.<sup>37</sup> An extension of these initiatives resulted in the establishment of settlement houses in cities such as New York and Chicago where Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Star opened Hull House in 1889 in an effort to aid dislocated women, children and immigrants. More recently feminist historians such as Nancy Cott note the active participation of women in the social reformation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to acknowledge

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<sup>34</sup> John Louis Recchiuti, *Civic Engagement: Social Science and Progressive-Era Reform in New York City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 18.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Nancy S. Dye, Introduction to *Gender, Class, Race and Reform in the Progressive Era* edited by Noralee Frankel and Nancy S. Dye (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 1-10.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



women's role in secular and religiously based initiatives of reform.<sup>38</sup> Cott notes women's associations involved in reform primarily have been viewed as "modes of self-assertive public action and self-realization by women."<sup>39</sup> Cott, who asks how advancement of women's rights may have been affected, writes the "women's movement" subsumed under one rubric charity based objectives and goals that enhanced the educational and professional advancement of women.<sup>40</sup> To illustrate her argument, Cott provides an example of this in the outreach of the Women's Christian Temperance League, noting their membership exceeded that of any other civic organization or women's association and its demographically dispersed chapters pursued legislative reforms beyond those of regulating alcohol. Cott raises a contentious point when she notes some historians question the role women assumed in their guise as charitable reformers to ask whether such benevolent activities benefited the poor or were designed to protect and preserve the status quo "rationalizing the social order without changing the relative distribution of power."<sup>41</sup> Cott reflects the scrutiny of historians who question women's initiatives of reform and the motivations of their activism, but fail to apply the same measures of skepticism toward initiatives of reform sponsored by men. Cott notes that as a result of women's volunteerism many cities obtained civic services that benefited from efforts of "municipal housekeeping."<sup>42</sup>

Women sought to protect the health and safety of the community by lobbying for legislation that would maintain critical standards of sanitation, food and drug regulation, and the reform of working conditions in sweat shops that employed women and children.<sup>43</sup> Cott's introductory chapter to the anthology on women's activism in the Progressive Era reiterates a

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<sup>38</sup> Nancy F. Cott, ed. *History of Women in the United States: Social and Moral Reform* vol. 17/2 (New Providence: Saur, 1994), xiii. Is it volume 17 or volume 2?

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii-xv.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

common complaint among women historians that many, if not most, reviews of the era fail to credit the voluntary activities of women in shaping public policy and securing reform. With this, Cott assumes her place among feminist historians to recognize the efforts of women. Cott's contribution to the historical discussion of the era illuminates the ways in which women were instrumental in effecting reform in the social, economic, and legislative branch of government.

Christine Dando takes a different approach to describing woman of the Progressive Era. In her study, Dando examines women's new sense of mobility and their freedom to transgress the old domestic boundaries that kept them home. By the late nineteenth century innovations in the technological design of the bicycle and, later, the automobile made possible new avenues of exploration for women never attempted. In the opening scene of her work, Dando uses the anecdote of a woman trekking cross-country from Chicago to San Francisco on her bicycle to exercise her new mobility and engage the geography of a new territory.<sup>44</sup> Prior to advancement, travel was limited to walking, horseback, carriages, and trains. Modern improvement in personal modes of travel gave women a greater measure of control and mobility.<sup>45</sup> Dando's use of the bicycle is an apt metaphor for the progress women made in their private and public lives during the Progressive Era and illustrates the changing attitude toward women's place in public, their mobility, and possibilities afforded by private transportation.<sup>46</sup> Dando illustrates how new innovations such as the bicycle required women to make changes in their clothing to accommodate travel—Dando writes “Appearance was important, but so was the practical need for a costume that would not result in a serious accident.”<sup>47</sup> While Dando's description of women's needs for practical clothing results primarily from their election to use the bicycle,

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<sup>44</sup> Christine E. Dando, *Women and Cartography in the Progressive Era* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 33.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

Joyce Kriebel recognizes that the reformation of women's dress had long been an issue for women. Kriebel asserts that reform of dress codes for women began with the women's rights movement in 1848 and connected to their expanded social role.<sup>48</sup> In her research on dress reform, Kriebel recognizes National Dress Reform Association, (NDRA) as significant to the women's movement with the doctrine that orthodox Victorian fashions were "unnatural and unhealthy," to women's rights, freedom, and lives.<sup>49</sup> Barbara Korte in her article on women's fashion magazines identifies 1850-1880 as one that provoked an "intense scrutiny of women's position in society," when women's magazines first appeared.<sup>50</sup> Korte's exploration of women's culture and fashions offers a comprehensive assessment of the widened spheres of progress within which women moved to accomplish their goals of reform.

Catherine Mas adds to the conversation on dress reform, health, and issues of women's rights. In 1850, advocates of advancing women's equality found the issue of dress reform a "fundamental and unavoidably feminist issue" that would have to be confronted regardless of the negative publicity engendered.<sup>51</sup> Mas clearly has a point regarding the physiological health of women when she compares the accepted standard of dress for women prior to dress reform as "tightly laced corsets made with steel or iron" followed by "fifteen pounds of petticoats."<sup>52</sup> Mas describes the women who worked in the textile factories of Lowell, Massachusetts as "relatively independent," women who chose to adopt a practical form of dress that made them "better able

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<sup>48</sup> Joyce Karen Kriebel, "From Bloomers to Flappers: The American Woman's Dress Reform Movement, 1840-1920" (PhD Diss., Ohio State University, 1998), 15.

file://etsulab1/users/zskk12/Downloads/From\_bloomers\_to\_flappers\_The.pdf (accessed June 28, 2019)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>50</sup> Barbara Korte, "Between Fashion and Feminism: History in Mid-Victorian Women's Magazines," *English Studies*, 96 No. 4 (April 2015), 424-443. 10.1080/0013838X.2015.1011893 (accessed June 28, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Catherine Mas, "She Wears the Pants: The Reform Dress as Technology in Nineteenth-Century America," *Technology and Culture* 8 no. 1 (January 2017), 43. pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4919/410f2ee904a023165d9593ca38fa367f1555.pdf (accessed June 30, 2019).

<sup>52</sup> Mas, "She Wears the Pants," 39.

to perform important labor.”<sup>53</sup> Following suit, Robert Riegel brings a slightly different emphasis to the argument of dress reform by claiming reform necessary not only for reasons of health, but to correct clothing that demeaned women with “low-cut bodices that encouraged imagination.”<sup>54</sup> Riegel argues women’s clothes were designed to excite male passions and conservative members of society thought of them as “immodest and immoral.”<sup>55</sup> Susan B. Anthony declared women’s dress an impediment to working women stating “I can see no business avocation in which woman in her present dress can possibly earn equal wages with a man.”<sup>56</sup> Anthony made clear the connection between women’s rights and dress reform when she appeared before a crowd of women factory workers in Auburn, Massachusetts wearing a skirt over pants. That women for reasons of health and practicality abandoned previous styles of restrictive attire for clothing more suited to earning a living, riding a bike, traveling, or campaigning for equality reiterates concern for progressive reform, but makes a profound political statement as illustrated by Anthony.

Gayle Fischer takes it a step further in her assessment of the challenge to conventional forms of dress when she reviews the renegotiation of power among men and women. Fischer argues women took control of their appearance in ways “intrinsically transgressive” to don trousers as a reaction to the social control of their lives and gender.<sup>57</sup> Fischer proposes an interesting hypothesis linking women’s role as caregivers with their socially assigned function as monitors of the family’s health and, by extension, that of society. At first glance this seems incongruous with ideas of dress reform, however, Fischer finds evidence that links issues of

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<sup>53</sup> Mas, “She Wears the Pants,” 43.

<sup>54</sup> Robert E. Riegel, “Women’s Clothes and Women’s Rights,” *American Quarterly*, 15 no. 3 (Autumn 1963), 390-391. [www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2711370](http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2711370) (accessed June 30, 2019), 390-401.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Gayle V. Fischer, *Pantaloons and Power: A Nineteenth Century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2001), 5.

women's health to issues of "inappropriate clothing."<sup>58</sup> In her work, Fischer discusses the beneficial effects thought to incur from hydropathic therapy with its emphasis on pure water as a cure for illness. Fischer profiles Anthony as an example of a woman who adhered to a simple regimen of fresh air and cold-water sponge baths thought to invigorate good health. The idea of dress reform and good health resonated as well within groups such as Seventh Day Adventists. The social reforms that carried these ideas reflected a consensus in religion with an emphasis on right living that reiterated within the doctrines of Seventh Day Adventists.<sup>59</sup> Established under the auspices of Ellen Gould White, Seventh Day Adventists embraced a moral obligation to healthy living by avoiding alcohol, tobacco, tea, and coffee in exchange for cold water cures and vegetarianism.<sup>60</sup> In 1867, White's support of "pantaloons" and her ideas on health, wellness and reform brought the disparate doctrines of dress reform, modesty, and health together.<sup>61</sup>

Fischer echoes Riegel's comments when she writes that as a conservative evangelical, White perceived immodest dress as a potential problem for women. Fischer notes that White expressed concern that fashionable clothing for women with its low neckline and exposed bosom could distract women from their "holy pursuits" and "seduce women into assuming the role of a sexual temptresses that could lead to other sexual transgressions."<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, White rejected feminist ideas of dress reform regardless of the touted health benefits to insist instead on plain modest attire for women members. White's entry into the debate on dress reform locates her as an evangelical conservative who, along with other conservative religious leaders of the time, sought changes that would reform society. Fisher, and to a lesser extent Riegel, use the metaphor of women's dress to navigate arguments surrounding issues of control women experienced in

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<sup>58</sup> Fischer, "Pantaloons and Power," 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

their public and private lives. In his reference to “low-cut bodices” Riegel touches on the need to control how women presented in society with latent ideas that held women as pure and pious. Fischer adopts a more practical approach in her review of power relations to position women in control of their bodies and the way in which they would choose to present themselves. The difference between Fischer and Riegel hinges on what is emphasized, male sexual desire or the need for practicality. In the Progressive Era religious reform often paired with social reform.

Historian Timothy Smith identifies three discernable periods in the religious and social history of the nation when resurgent advances in religiosity took place. Smith writes that in the mid-nineteenth century the “progressive theology and humanitarian reform,” of evangelical Protestants sought to perfect human society through Christian initiatives of reform.<sup>63</sup> In 1856, Smith notes the Sunday School Union (SSU) of New York City issued an interdenominational challenge to churches to visit homes of the poor as the SSU was “concerned with ways to evangelize the impoverished immigrants in the slums.”<sup>64</sup> When Protestant laity were exposed to the living conditions of the inner city poor they decided to enact interventions that exceeded their expectations for success and resulted in movements of reform.<sup>65</sup> Smith argues what made the era of progressive reform most significant was the “remolding of American Protestantism,” with the expanding control and participation of the laity to the detriment of traditional clergy.<sup>66</sup> In an outline of progressive reform in 1895, Smith reviews it as a decade when commitment to decent standards of living rose in reaction to the conditions of working women and children and, again, with the influx of immigrants. Smith cites an assumption of the “white man’s burden,” evidence

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<sup>63</sup> Timothy L. Smith, “Historic Waves of Religious Interest in America,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol. 332, (November 1960), 13. [www.jstor.org/stable/1033784](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1033784) (accessed July 2, 2019).

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

of a moral response to Christianization beyond American shores to ensure spread of Protestant theology abroad.<sup>67</sup> Christian gospels of morality emerged to challenge “gospels of wealth” and worked to secure the names of the men and women who labored for social justice.

Jill Conway addresses the social activism of women who sought reform to write, “The failure to see women’s activism for what it was, a real departure from women’s traditional domesticity, indicates the controlling power of the stereotype of the female temperament.”<sup>68</sup> Conway reiterates Cott’s recognition of criticism leveled at women who engaged in reform work with a curt analysis of the educated women involved in running the inner city settlement houses. Conway notes the initial impulse for such women was not identification with the working class, but as a “cure” for the “neurotic ills” of privileged young women.<sup>69</sup> In her analysis of women, Conway asserts that reformers such as Jane Addams succumbed to invidious stereotypes that imprisoned women within assigned identities as “sages,” that could not be transcended.<sup>70</sup> Conway’s analysis of the social ideology that surrounded women reformers reveals her view of the limited articulation of status that attended their efforts.

Kathryn Kish Sklar presents a far different picture of the founding and importance of Chicago’s Hull House whom Sklar reveals formed networks of association and political action. Under Sklar’s review, the collective life, political activism, and relationships of reform with other social groups comes to light. Sklar reviews the 1893 anti-sweatshop legislation resulting from the collective intercession of Hull House and institutions of reform led by men.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Smith, “Historic Waves of Religious Interest,” 13.

<sup>68</sup> Jill Conway, “Women Reformers and American Culture, 1870-1930,” *Journal of Social History* 5, no. 2 (Winter 1971-1972), 166. [www.jstor.org/stable/3786409](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3786409) (accessed July 2, 2019). 166.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-175.

<sup>71</sup> Kathryn Kish Sklar, “Hull House in the 1890’s: A Community of Women Reformers,” in *Social and Moral Reform: A History of Women in the United States*, 17/2 (New Providence: K.G. Saur, 1994), ed. Nancy Cott, 427.

Jane Addams and Florence Kelly introduced legislation mandating a ten-hour workday in Illinois factories that employed women and children. Sklar contends the success of passing the new legislation depended upon the political activism and collective efforts of women's groups and support of men's groups who allowed access to their spheres of male organization and influence.<sup>72</sup> In her review of Chicago's Hull House, Sklar cites four influential processes of support that enabled women to reach their goals of reform: First, the residence offered women both emotional and economic support, Second, the community provided women with connections to other women's groups, and third, it enabled cooperation with men's groups.

Sklar argues Hull House afforded an amicable setting within which women could develop and pursue strategies of reform.<sup>73</sup> In her review, Sklar notes an important distinction regarding the occupants of Hull House was that they were in, but not part of the religious impetus of social Christianity that galvanized the actions of religious women. Instead the leaders of Hull House acted upon ethical and moral initiatives of reform.<sup>74</sup> Sklar writes settlement houses provided a means for women who sought to influence reform for the social welfare of the community.

Women in the Progressive Era who sponsored secular legislation for social improvement includes such historical luminaries as Sophonisba Breckinridge (1866-1948), whose work spanned the course of her career as an educator, social scientist, writer, and social reformer. Breckinridge was among the first women to successfully take the Kentucky bar exam in 1892, only to find herself the victim of gender discrimination. In 1907, Breckinridge moved to Hull House to begin work at the Chicago Institute for Social Sciences where she popularized the idea

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<sup>72</sup> Sklar, "Hull House in the 1890's," 427.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.



of social-welfare in her work with immigrants, women, and children.<sup>75</sup> Historian Hindy Lauer Schachter notes, “Settlement houses became important venues of action to promote government interest in the poor,” citing the relationship among educated women and management of urban reform.<sup>76</sup> Schachter’s emphasis on intellectual origins of social reform seeks to elucidate the key role women performed in pursuing enactment of social legislation from administrative government. Specifically, Schachter argues that reform minded women who inhabited the settlement houses used rational, legal, and logical means to obtain their desired outcomes in much the same manner as men.<sup>77</sup> Schachter supports her argument with evidence that shows cooperation among men and women using the model of engineering efficiency pioneered by Frederick Winslow Taylor who revolutionized industrial profits in 1903.<sup>78</sup> Schachter shows how settlement women such as Florence Kelly used Taylor’s model of efficient work methods to manage administration of the National Consumers League (NCL).

The NCL, was initiated under the guidance of Jane Addams and Josephine Lowell in 1899 to promote and protect the interests of industrial wage earners and their families through enactment of legislation that sponsored the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, minimum wage laws, and restrictions on child labor.<sup>79</sup> Schachter’s research reveals the lengths to which intellectual collective of settlement women were willing to go to achieve their goals.

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<sup>75</sup> Robert W. Dimand, Mary Ann Dimand, and Evelyn L. Forget, eds. *A Biographical Dictionary of Women Economists* (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2000), 81., Anya Jabour, *Sophonisba Breckinridge: Championing Women’s Activism in Modern America* (Champaign: University Press, 2019)., *Women’s Legal History*, s. v. “Breckinridge, Sophonisba Preston,” [http://wlh.law.stanford.edu/biography\\_search/biopage/?woman\\_lawyer\\_id=10114](http://wlh.law.stanford.edu/biography_search/biopage/?woman_lawyer_id=10114) (accessed March 8, 2020).,

<sup>76</sup>Hindy Lauer Schachter “Women, Progressive Reform, and Scientific Management,” *Administration and Society* 34 no. 5 (November 2002), 564.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 565.

<sup>78</sup> Frederick Winslow Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper and Row, 1911).

<sup>79</sup> Schachter, “Women, Progressive Reform, and Scientific Management,” 565: See also the website for the National Consumers League <https://www.nclnet.org/history>: Also, Scientific Management Principles Excerpt <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/taylor/shop-management/abstract.htm>

Schachter illustrates this with her introduction of two studies on women and work that were used to convince congress of the need to enact protection of industrial and factory workers. Josephine Goldmark, in her capacity as the Secretary of the NCL, published a landmark study detailing the effect of fatigue on industrial workers in 1912 to give a factual basis for relief from oppressive conditions of employment. NCL Director Florence Kelly published the work to document the harsh conditions under which thousands of domestic and foreign workers toiled to increase industrial profits.<sup>80</sup> Elite intellectual cooperatives such as the Hull House attracted college educated women who campaigned for social legislation to improve the welfare of the community and to end the exploitive practices of industry. Settlement houses also became a source of refuge for those without work or families who sought respite from the street. The best illustration on the exploitation of women is the research produced by Sue Ainsley Clark and Edith Wyatt in 1911, who recorded the experiences of working women in New York City.<sup>81</sup> Clark and Wyatt produced research in accord with the initiatives of the NCL as evidence for a reform in laws that could be used to protect women and children from exploitive practices.

In the preceding review the focus has been on the social activism of secular women as an integral part of the social reform movement. The Progressive Era was diffusely integrated into the public mind with imperatives of reform that demanded action. The problem that presented for many was what type of reform best fit the needs of the poor, the homeless, the immigrant, and the dysfunctional systems of provision in crowded cities. Historians of the period fail to agree on the temporal boundaries that define the era and sociological reviews devolve into myriad points of analysis and recrimination but fail to achieve consensus. It took the effort of a vast array of

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<sup>80</sup> Josephine Goldmark, *Fatigue and Efficiency: A Study in Industry* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1912), <https://archive.org/details/fatigueefficien00gold/page/n9> (accessed July 3, 2019).

<sup>81</sup> Sue Ainsley Clark and Edith Wyatt, *Making Both Ends Meet: The Income and Outlay of New York Working Girls* (New York: McMillian and Company, 1911).

different personalities working from divergent points of view to propose and implement reforms that would resolve the pressing issues of the time. The literature constitutes a broad swarth of opinion about liberal and conservative progressives who had one thing in common, the need for reform in the social and economic chaos that was left in the wake of industrialization and shifting demographics. In short, the entire racial and ethnic character of America was undergoing radical change in degrees never before imagined creating riots in Chicago's Haymarket Square and on the streets outside of Hull House.<sup>82</sup> New York City's political machine was rife with corrupting graft that compromised many civic leaders, party affiliates, and police in response to an influx of Irish immigrants desperate for work.<sup>83</sup> The Protestant majority in America reacted with alarm and legislation to limit immigration even as new factories opened to expand employment for women and immigrants. As a result of being incorporated into the workforce in greater numbers, women pursued less restrictive dress codes allowing them to participate in practical ways to become wage-earners, social activists, and enjoy leisure activities such as riding a bicycle.

A preponderance of the evidence points to new initiatives by women activists to pursue legislation for reform of the workplace, housing conditions, municipal facilities, and to pursue a review of the preconditions of poverty leading to new efforts of education and training. The new image of women in the Progressive Era transcends imbedded stereotypes of them to see them emerge as well-educated, strong, and resilient activists mirrored by a core contingent of elite, upper-echelon women with means and status. The average middle-class white woman remained at the center of family life and the home as a maternal minister of love and devotion to her

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<sup>82</sup> Jabour, "Women's Activism in Modern America," 81-90.

<sup>83</sup> Richard F. Welch, *King of the Bowery: Big Tim Sullivan, Tammany Hall, and New York City from the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 23-24.

husband and children.<sup>84</sup> For working-class women few options were available as the need to procure a livelihood and provide for their families trumped other considerations, few of these women would have had either the time or the energy to become politically involved after shifts of eleven hours, six days a week and the needs of young children usurped their days.<sup>85</sup> Those women with the leisure, financial means, and time who were seen campaigning publicly for women's rights in parades down Main Street represent an educated class who could indulge their political goals.<sup>86</sup> The literature from the last group of women: Dando, Kriebel, Korte, and Mas forms a consensus of feminist review that looks at the way women were actively engaged as integral performers of culture in a highly diffuse era of change. By focusing on issues of fashion, women participated in political initiatives of reform that affected how they lived, worked, and organized to act as models for their families and communities. The authors of this sartorial genre perform a valuable service by illustrating the political productivity of women's fashions and the subsequent activity engendered by less restrictive clothing. In the next section, the focus shifts to include the social activism and progressive reforms of religious women and the impact of their determination to build religious institutions that promoted the public performance of their faith.

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<sup>84</sup> Many Victorian women chose to remain as "ministers" in the home "specializing in the informal education and nurture" of their families. Coleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 127-128.

<sup>85</sup> By far, one of the best resources for information on the labor reform movement in the nineteenth century comes from, Karen Pastorello, *The Progressives: Activism and Reform in American Society, 1893-1917* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 120-128. In her study, Pastorello notes workers went on strike in 1912, to protest long hours and new demands for increased production by factory managers eager to make-up lost time. 154.

## Progressive Reform: Women and Religion

Priscilla Pope-Levison opens her review of women who engaged the politics of religion with Iva Durham Vennard as an example of women who built religious institutions.<sup>87</sup> Vennard was the founder of Epworth Evangelistic Institute, a Methodist training school for deaconesses. Pope-Levison portrays Vennard as an exceptional woman who persevered through adversity to build an institution that would support women's authority in ministry and their social objectives. In her discussion of Vennard, Levison demonstrates a critical shift in approach taken by women at the turn of the twentieth century from itinerant preachers who were content to proselytize on street corners and rented meeting rooms to women who became entrepreneurial leaders and institutional founders.<sup>88</sup> Levison contends three issues galvanized the actions of religious women during the Progressive Era: Conversion, Sanctification, and Gender. The issues identified by Levison are indicative of a schism that occurred within Protestantism among evangelical and conservative members during the late nineteenth century on key issues of doctrine and administrative policy. As an evangelical, Vennard felt that conversion should be "demonstrable and immediate," conversely, denominational leaders who spoke for the large contingent of conservative members felt it prudent to redirect institutional emphasis towards a religious education that would nurture conversion gradually.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Building the Old Time Religion: Women Evangelists in the Progressive Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 1., Priscilla Pope-Levinson, "A Thirty Year War And More: Exposing Complexities in the Methodist Deaconess Movement" *Methodist History* 47 No. 2 (January 2009): 101-116 <http://archives.gcah.org/bitstream/handle/10516/221/Methodist-History-2009-01-Pope-Levison.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed March 10, 2020)., Susan Hill Lindley and Eleanor J. Stebner, eds. *The Westminster Handbook to Women in American Religious History* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2008), 227., Mary Agnes Dougherty, "The Methodist Deaconess, 1885-1919: A Study in Religious Feminism"(PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 1979)., Estelle Freedman, "Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution Building and American Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 5 No. 3 (Autumn 1979), 512-513 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3177511?> (accessed March 10, 2020).

<sup>88</sup> Pope-Levison, "Building the Old Time Religion," 4.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

The doctrinal dispute evidenced a deeper division within mainline Protestantism that shifted away from the experiential and emotional approach taken by evangelicals on issues of conversion toward a more orthodox structure of religious instruction. This structured approach to conversion epitomized Protestant reaction in the late nineteenth century to a perception of crisis that was precipitated by Catholic immigration and their resistance to assimilation.<sup>90</sup> Evangelicals were no less emphatic in their response to issues of scriptural interpretation and to divisive issues of *glossolalia*, sanctification, and divine healing by faith alone.<sup>91</sup> In her analysis, Levinson argues one of the prominent issues dividing male clergy from female constituents was their position against having a woman in the pulpit. Levinson notes this concern of clergy exposed their fear of criticism from female preachers.<sup>92</sup>

Ellen Fitzpatrick writes progressive ideas of social reform were endemic to the culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and not particular to secular or religious identity. Fitzpatrick cites the intellectual influence of universities for their role establishing a rational approach to problems.<sup>93</sup> In her description of Chicago in 1877, Fitzpatrick details the labor strikes, riots, and over-crowding that marked the lives of the inner city working poor who found

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<sup>90</sup> Nativist reaction to the unprecedented surge of incoming Catholics from Southern and Eastern Europe resulted in rising animosity and tension between American Protestants and Irish-Catholic immigrants for reasons that include historical religious disagreement, fear over papal aspirations of power, control over schools and religious instruction, and racist charges of inferiority. See: Josh Zeitz, "When America Hated Catholics," *Politico magazine* (September 2015), <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/09/when-america-hated-catholics> (accessed July 4, 2020)., Joshua Paddison, "Anti-Catholicism and Race in Post-Civil War San Francisco," *Pacifica Historical Review* 78 no. 4 (November 2009), 507., Joseph A. Burgess and Brother Jeffery Gros, eds. *Building Unity: Ecumenical Dialogues with Roman Catholic Participation in the United States* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 141.

<sup>91</sup> Pope-Levinson, "Building the Old Time Religion," 11-12.

<sup>92</sup> The Deaconess Home and Hospital Association of St. Joseph, Missouri maintained a training school for nurses and deaconesses, reported "we are grateful that no scandal has arisen to cloud our good name," written in context of review of deaconesses. Minutes of the Eighty-Second Session of the Missouri Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church Held at Kirksville, Missouri, March 1900 (St. Joseph: Nelson Printing Company, 1906-1910), 241., Evangelicals for Social Action, "Heroes of the Faith: Iva Durham Vennard," <https://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/?s=Epworth+Evangelistic+Institute+> (accessed March 10, 2020)., Pope-Levinson, "Building the Old Time Religion," 14.

<sup>93</sup> Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Endless Crusade: Women Social Scientists and Progressive Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xiv.

relief at Hull House. Located in one of the city's worst neighborhoods, Hull House stood in the "shadow of shipyards and slaughterhouses" managed by the intellectually elite women graduated from Chicago University.<sup>94</sup> Fitzpatrick's review of well educated women in the late nineteenth century correlates well with Levinson's contention that women were fundamental in the reforms of the Progressive Era. That socially elite women enjoy a privileged place in the recorded history of women's initiatives remains undebated. What does remain of interest, however, is the role of untutored, religious women who assumed positions of authority that allowed their participation in the reformation of society and restructure of religious institutions into political platforms that supported women's advancement.

Religious historian Grant Wacker reviews the participation of Pentecostal women who assumed such positions and who became responsible for disseminating theological doctrine in public.<sup>95</sup> While most women encountered resistance to their public ministry, Wacker claims many women found support for their ministries when Reverend A.J. Gordon cited biblical justification for women's religious activism based on the prophecy of Joel 2:28.<sup>96</sup> In his discussion of women evangelicals, Wacker insists "women's leadership roles crossed racial, ethnic, and geographic boundaries," to inform a growing authorship of "tract and hymn writers, and newspaper editors."<sup>97</sup> In addition to pursuing viable careers as missionaries, itinerant preachers, and pastors' women served to open and run orphanages, bible institutes, and schools. Women maintained membership in church related charities and civic organizations as well as benevolent societies that assisted widows and orphans who did not qualify for church related aid.

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<sup>94</sup> Fitzpatrick, "Endless Crusade," 35.

<sup>95</sup> Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 158-159. \*The prophecies of Joel 2:28 have been used extensively by women to justify their right to preach. The KJV of Joel 2:28 reads: And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . . shall see visions.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

Most women of the nineteenth century acted in accord with deep convictions of religious certainty initiated by gospels of social Christianity resulting in benevolent efforts to aid the poor, reform their communities, and minister to the bedridden. Many other women in the nineteenth century who were possessed of education and status chose to challenge domestic conventions to act with implicit acknowledgement of civic duty to reform the social landscape.<sup>98</sup> In December of 1894, Reverend A. J. Gordon wrote a special addition in the publication of the *Missionary Review* on the “Ministry of Women.” The object of his intention was to clarify the position of the Protestant Church on the authority of women to preach or, as in this instance, simply to appear in public and address a mixed audience. The occasion recalled by Gordon was the report of a young woman missionary who had returned from abroad with news of her reception and work.

Gordon writes, “The scruples of certain of the delegates against a woman addressing a mixed assembly were found to be so strong . . . that she was withdrawn.”<sup>99</sup> In his comments on women, Gordon acknowledges that while the “alleged,” injunction of silence issued by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:34-35 deserved respect, nonetheless, women were serving as missionaries and the matter needed to be justified by scripture or modified to insure harmony.<sup>100</sup> In his article, Gordon states his purpose was neither to condemn nor modify, but to present scriptural

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<sup>98</sup> Statistical data on voluntary organizations in the United States indicate “The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries comprised an age of great associational activity” Gerald Gramm and Robert D. Putnam, “The Growth of Voluntary Associations in America, 1840-1940,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 29 No. 4 (Spring 1999), 518. [jstor.org/stable/206973](https://www.jstor.org/stable/206973) (accessed March 10, 2020)., In her work on women’s benevolent organizations Lori D. Ginzberg, writes, “Women assume[d] a unique responsibility to disseminate Christian virtues and counter the materialism and greed of the nineteenth-century male,” *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 14., Anne Firor Scott writes, “Women were also accustomed to the idea of benevolence; it meant a quality good Christians were expected to exhibit,” *Natural Allies: Women’s Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 12 ., Another excellent anthology of women’s benevolent tendencies can be found in Jill Bergman and Debra Bernardi, eds. *Our Sisters Keepers: Nineteenth Century Benevolence Literature by American Women* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

<sup>99</sup> A.J. Gordon, “Ministry of Women,” in *Missionary Review of the World*, January-December, vol.vii (New York: Funk and Wagnall’s Company, 1894), 910. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015006971132&view=2up&seq=964> (accessed August 1, 2019).

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.



justification for women's ministry as it presents "nearer to the preaching enjoined by the commission than the theological disquisition from the pulpit on Sunday."<sup>101</sup> To accomplish this, Gordon again cites the prophecy of Joel 2:28 to write, "It gives to women a status hitherto unknown," and allows women the same state of grace accorded to men.<sup>102</sup> Gordon was not alone in assuming the relevance of this scripture as rebuttal to those who used Paul's admonition of silence as justification for their position against female ministry. Female evangelists employed it as a scriptural stratagem to authorize their voice and presence in the pulpit. Women, even within Pentecostal traditions, found it difficult to overcome resistance to their public ministry.

Gordon was not the only minister to validate women's ministry. In 1853, Wesleyan Holiness minister, Luther Lee wrote an impassioned appeal to call for the ordination of women writing "I regard it in the light of a great innovation upon the opinions, prejudices, and practices of nearly the whole Christian world."<sup>103</sup> In a stunning reversal of the adamant resistance of most ministers, Lee allowed himself to be guided by the scripture of Galatians 3:28, "There is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Jesus Christ."<sup>104</sup> Lee writes "To make any distinction . . . between males and females . . . is virtually to strike this text from the sacred volume."<sup>105</sup> Many theologians select scriptural texts to support their position and vindicate their actions and Rev. Lee employed this strategy when he gave his sermon at the ordination of Antoinette Brown. Lee's decision to "defend and substantiate" Brown's ordination reveals the deep divide of opinion on the issue of women's ordination within Methodist and Wesleyan-Holiness traditions of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>101</sup> Gordon, "Ministry of Women," 910.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 911.

<sup>103</sup> Luther Lee, *Five Sermons and a Tract*, ed. Donald W. Dayton (Chicago: Holrad House, 1975), 79-81. Lee began his ministry under the auspices of the Methodist Church, but differences on doctrine and practice led him to join the Wesleyan-Holiness Church in 1855 that supported women as ordained members of the clergy.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

In his work, Lee cautions his readers that texts such as those he used to defend women are known, but “not practically applied as with the case of other truths.”<sup>106</sup> Lee offers an enlightened rationale in his own defense “I cannot see how the text can be explained so as to exclude females from any right, office, work, privilege, or immunity which males enjoy, hold, or perform.”<sup>107</sup> In his rebuttal of Pauline doctrine, Lee takes to task the speech of Paul wherein he commands the silence of women in the church. To do this, Lee reconstructs the scene of the early church in disorderly confusion following in the wake of multiple voices speaking at once to conjecture why Paul called for women to remain silent. Lee argues “It is clearly inferable that women took part and talked in opposition to their husbands.”<sup>108</sup> Lee’s reading of the passage concludes the admonition of silence imposed on women by Paul served to amend one specific instance of difficulty and did not construe a general rule by which women were to be denied the opportunity to speak or serve within the church. Indeed, Lee cites that specific text, often used to justify the exclusion of women from positions of authority, as “unanswerable proof that women did teach under divine sanction.”<sup>109</sup>

In accord with other ministers, Reverend B.T. Roberts quotes Galatians 3:28 to vindicate the right of women to participate in the church as teachers and ministers.<sup>110</sup> In his conclusion, Roberts clarifies his argument on women to teach:

We come then to this final conclusion: 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.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Lee, “Five Sermons and a Tract,” 81.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>110</sup> B.T. Roberts, “Ordaining Women,” in *Holiness Tracts Defending the ministry of Women* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 23.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

The practice of reading selected texts among advocates for women preachers seeks justification for women to appear in public to preach to mixed audiences.<sup>112</sup> Author and religious historian Susan Cunningham Stanley cites another way female evangelicals were able to obtain the justification necessary for their ministries by engaging the unassailable authority of God through acts of sanctification. Stanley contends baptism of the second blessing removed the burden of gender from women and provided legitimation for their endeavors.<sup>113</sup> Stanley predicates her argument on the “empowerment of the Holy Spirit accompanying sanctification to enable women to undertake the task of preaching despite their own initial misgivings and the vigorous opposition of others.”<sup>114</sup> Theologian Thomas Clark Oden describes sanctification as “A state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness . . . obtained by loving God with all the heart, soul and strength. [Grace] begins the moment one is justified.”<sup>115</sup> In his explanation, Oden describes sanctification as an act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from sin and brought to grace.<sup>116</sup> Oden, as does Stanley, gives a modern definition of sanctification that might not concur entirely with ideas of grace found in the Progressive Era, but reiterates themes thought integral to evangelical belief and practice.

Religious women who declared sanctification were able to resist the domestic limitations of their gender to join their male brethren and claim the pulpit as their rightful place. Stanley restates Wacker’s argument that the Wesleyan-Holiness Movement was conducive to women’s ministry as it called for the individual to heed the word of God and encouraged women’s

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<sup>112</sup> See the testimony of Mrs. Booth’s “Female Ministry,” and the tract by Mrs. Fannie McDowell Hunter “Women Preachers,” written in 1905 in *Holiness Tracts Defending the Ministry of Women*. Hunter concludes her testimony with the advice of Peter in Acts 5:29, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” 98.

<sup>113</sup> Susie Cunningham Stanley, *Holy Boldness: Women Preachers’ Autobiographies and the Sanctified Self* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 101.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1988), 190.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

involvement in ministry.<sup>117</sup> While many women chose to ignore the criticism and reach for the pulpit, others tended to play by the rules governing their involvement in the church and restrict themselves to supportive positions as missionaries and teachers. In 1944, the Methodist minister and historian Isaac Patton Martin undertook writing the history of *Methodism in the Holston* at the behest of the Holston Conference of Knoxville, Tennessee. In his work, Martin details the efforts and activities of Methodist women who served as missionaries in connection with The Women's Foreign Missionary Society organized in 1878 to acknowledge their growing membership and financial contribution to the Church.<sup>118</sup> As a result of that success, the Women's Home Mission was initiated by the Board of Church Extension to continue their work with founding the Holston orphanage and improving parsonages throughout the Holston Conference.<sup>119</sup> Martin writes of all the organizations originating toward the end of the nineteenth century, The Women's Missionary Society has been the most widely useful.<sup>120</sup>

Women's involvement in the Methodist Episcopal Church was limited to supportive managerial positions not exceeding the authority of those on the Board of Executive Assembly.

In 1881, Mary Sparkes Wheeler introduced her work on the *First Decade* by noting:

The first annual donation in cash was \$7 sent to New York, to the treasurer of the parent board. We gave the money to the treasurer, baptizing it with our tears, and wishing it were a hundred fold more. The next year we did better, Prejudice met us at every point, but by diligence, perseverance, and the blessing of God, we prospered, our contributions increased, and prejudice gave way.<sup>121</sup>

The financial report in the minutes of the Seventh Annual Report of the Holston Conference

Women's Missionary Society, indicates the dire state of funding needed for fulfillment of work

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<sup>117</sup> Stanley, "Holy Boldness," 101.

<sup>118</sup> Isaac Patton Martin, *Methodism in Holston* (Knoxville: Methodist Historical Society, 1944), 162-163.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Mary Sparkes Wheeler, *First Decade of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1881) 26-27.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc1.cr59898291&view=2up&seq=22&size=125> (accessed March 20, 2020).

taken on by the women's auxiliary in 1885. Mrs. N.S. Woodward, Chairman of the Board of Finance for the Women's Missionary Society, clarifies the state of the treasury with this report:

Whereas, No work can be successfully carried to its complete fulfillment without the use of money; and whereas, there are many expenses connected with prosecution of the work of our conference and auxiliaries societies, for which we hesitate to draw funds from the treasury, that have come to us from the sacrifices and self-denials of our workers; We recommend and urge each member to sustain a fund for the support of the work. We leave to each the liberty of devising plans for this, trusting their liberality may abound to the enriching of their own souls.<sup>122</sup>

By 1911, the Thirty-third Annual Report of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society was far more optimistic in its outlook and financial contribution to the Methodist Church.

Corresponding Secretary Bennett in her address to the Council said:

Please let me give you a few figures here. The foreign department reported a total membership of 99,626 a gain of 1,555. The Treasurer reported collections 278,973.07 the largest amount collected in any one year since the Women's Foreign Missionary Society was organized and a gain over the preceding year of more than eleven thousand dollars. Since organization of our work the sum total of 3,250,116.01 has been raised.<sup>123</sup>

The fiduciary changes indicated in these reports from the Women's Foreign Missionary Society trace the determined efforts of Methodist women to serve in the capacity for which they were approved of by the Methodist Church to establish footholds in foreign lands and proselytize the gospel to native populations at home and abroad. The women who served as foreign missionaries worked to secure the salvation of souls through the out-reach ministry of the church and to act a "peculiar and glorious part in the conquest of the world to Christ."<sup>124</sup> There is a remarkable coincidence of circumstance in the lives of the young, single women sent as missionaries out to foreign lands. Most were the literate daughters of clergymen who had sought consecration early

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<sup>122</sup> N. S. Woodward, Finance Report in the Condensed Minutes of the Holston Conference Women's Missionary Society, Jonesboro, Tennessee 1885. United Methodist Women and Antecedents Collection, Holston Conference Archive, Wesleyan University Library, Athens, Tennessee.

<sup>123</sup> Thirty-third Annual Report of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society, Broad Street Church, Knoxville, Tennessee May 1911. United Methodist Women and Antecedents Collection, Holston Conference Archive, Wesleyan University Library, Athens, Tennessee.

<sup>124</sup> Wheeler, "Women's Foreign Missionary Society," 17.

in their lives and were employed as teachers. Many had suffered the loss of one or both parents and sought through service to bring meaning to their lives. One example is Dora Schoonmaker. Born in 1851, Schoonmaker graduated her studies valedictorian to accept a position as a teacher in a public school, a remunerative position she resigned to work in Japan. Fluent in language, letters, and mathematics, Schoonmaker was assigned to a missionary outpost in Tokyo, in 1878. In her letters, Schoonmaker mirrors Protestant concerns of Catholic influence to write:

Tell the people at home how it is—tell them the positive need; bid them remember that the Roman Catholic Church is established here, spreading its manifold errors among the people and, because of its large force and unsparing use of funds, is said to have gathered no less than three hundred children in this one city of Tokio.<sup>125</sup>

Other examples of dedicated professional women can be found in the unusual number of female physicians who gave up private careers to render their services without charge in foreign service. The women who went to foreign outposts were exceptionally well-educated, many as medical doctors, illustrating an unusual accomplishment for women in the nineteenth century, but they were by no means alone. Author Dorothy Porter examines the contributions made by women to the medical profession in the Progressive Era. In her research on women in medical services, Porter notes that while “formal routes to equal opportunity were blocked, women found routes to participation in the political sphere and social policy formation and administration.”<sup>126</sup> Women active in the church as missionaries and secular women active in social politics achieved recognition as trained professionals engaged in the social work of reformation. While women in the service of the church established missionary outposts to procure foreign converts, others such as physician Esther Pohl Lovejoy took a different route to become the first professional women employed as the Director for Public Health in Portland, Oregon. Lovejoy worked to establish

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<sup>125</sup> Dora Schoonmaker, “Dora Schoonmaker,” in *First Decade of the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1881), 212.

<sup>126</sup> Dorothy Porter, *Health, Civilization, and the State: A History of Public Health from Ancient to Modern Times* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 183.

social welfare policies for women and children.<sup>127</sup> As these examples show, engagement of educated women was crucial in establishing the early precedents of authority for women in missionary endeavors as well as in the church and secular society.

Religious scholar Ann Braude observes evangelicalism encouraged “new departures for women because it emphasized the authority of the individual over the institutional authority of the church.”<sup>128</sup> Braude’s study reveals women derived authority from the endowment of spiritual gifts rather than from institutional recognition to pursue directives of intercession as ministers. Braude, in her address of the antecedents of women’s spiritual freedom, acknowledges women activists emerged from groups such as Society of Friends to contend with issues of equality.<sup>129</sup> Feminist scholar Donna Behnke echoes Braude’s sentiments writing, “In 1891, the National Council of Women met in Washington, D.C. An entire conference session was devoted to women in the church.”<sup>130</sup> Women were resolved, writes Behnke, that their “present position of political, social and religious impotence was antithetical to divine will and Christian doctrine.”<sup>131</sup>

Behnke’s reference to a term of male sexual performance is not coincidental but is used to indicate women’s curtailed activities within the church as it describes women’s inability to fulfil self-directed goals of autonomy. Behnke focuses on biblical exegesis as the reason why women are not allowed to preach citing creationist accounts that subordinate their status.<sup>132</sup> Behnke argues nineteenth century women experienced a surge of feminism in context with the suffragist push for civic equality and in reaction to subjective definitions of gender by men.

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<sup>127</sup> Kimberly Jensen, *Oregon’s Doctor to the World: Esther Pohl Lovejoy & a Life in Activism* (Seattle: University of Washington State, 2012), 4.

<sup>128</sup> Ann Braude, *Sisters and Saints: Women and American Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

<sup>130</sup> Donna A. Behnke, *Religious Issues in Nineteenth Century Feminism* (New York: Whitston Publishing, 1982), 115.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

## Progressive Reform and Pentecostal Women

Edith Blumhofer continues the conversation on women's contributions to the ministry, particularly those of charismatic women, recalling that in 1918 the ministerial and missionary list increased with addition of women who had been "summoned to evangelize."<sup>133</sup> Blumhofer makes an interesting correlation, noting during the years of the Great Depression in the 1920s, there was an increase in attendance at Pentecostal churches citing that the number of churches, ministers, and new members all rose. Blumhofer attributes this to the need for happiness, confidence, and companionship.<sup>134</sup> Blumhofer notes the prominence and visibility of female evangelists rose in conjunction as the subject of women's ministry led the governing body of ministers in the Assembly of God to "define the sphere of women's ministry."<sup>135</sup> Blumhofer, calls the status of women in the Pentecostal Church "ambiguous," to write that while women were supported as gospel workers the preferences of male members often led to their silence.<sup>136</sup>

Blumhofer's assertion fits with other historical studies such as that of Vinson Synan and Charles R. Fox who contend in their study of William Seymour that there was a "lack of genuine gender equality" in his leadership of the church on Azusa Street.<sup>137</sup> Seymour was the charismatic African American leader of the church who initiated new practices of faith and belief that came to characterize ecstatic Pentecostal worship in 1906.<sup>138</sup> Historian and President of the William Seymour College and Educational Foundation, Estrela Y. Alexander, argues an early leader in the Azusa Street church, Florence Crawford, departed from the church as a result of Seymour's

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<sup>133</sup> Edith L. Blumhofer, *Restoring the Faith: The Assemblies of God, Pentecostalism, and American Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 164-165.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Synan Vinson and Charles R. Fox, ed. Harold J. Chadwick. *William J. Seymour: Pioneer of the Azusa Street Revival* (Alachua: Bridge-Logos, 2012), 378-379.

<sup>138</sup> Gastón Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography and Documentary History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 101.



exclusionary policies toward women.<sup>139</sup> However, a review of Seymour's sermons to women fails to substantiate their arguments as he seems to advocate for women as full partners in the church equally responsible for administration and dispensing gospel.<sup>140</sup> In their work at home and abroad, Pentecostal women played an integral role in the spread of charismatic ministry despite the ambiguity of their position. Zachary Michael Tackett offers an enthusiastic overview of women within Pentecostal tradition and ministry to write, "The implication of eschatological Pentecost Proclamation for praxis is a radical, egalitarian gospel."<sup>141</sup> Tackett continues by noting "Pentecostals have contended that all may be called, gifted, and empowered to preach without regard to gender, ethnicity, social location or educational background."<sup>142</sup>

Tackett reiterates the ambiguous position of Pentecostal women admitting while many women were encouraged to serve in supportive positions through a gospel espousing inclusion, others "struggled with the implications" of such a doctrine.<sup>143</sup> Editor and author, Margret English De Alminana in her introduction of the work on Pentecostal women that includes Tackett's essay, states "Pentecostal and charismatic women have offered a wide variety of divergent responses to the opportunities and limitations they have experienced in their commitment to religious service."<sup>144</sup> De Alminanas' observation highlights the core contention of this study that religious women influenced, and in turn were influenced by, the demands of an era couched in

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<sup>139</sup> Estrela Y. Alexander, *The Women of Azusa Street* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 66-68.

<sup>140</sup> The text of William Seymour's eighteen sermons can be found on Sermon Index.net In particular, see Edition 10, Pentecostal Notes: Paragraph eight, wherein Seymour stipulates to women's ministry and their divinely appointed right to do so . <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=category&cid=329> (accessed March 13, 2020).

<sup>141</sup> Zachary Michael Tackett, "Callings, Giftings, and Empowerment: Preaching Women and American Pentecostalism in Historical and Theological Perspective," in *Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministry: Informing a Dialog on Gender, Church, and Ministry* ed. Margaret English de Alminana and Lois E. Olena (Boston: Leiden, 2017), 73-98.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>143</sup> Tackett, "Callings, Giftings, and Empowerment," 75.

<sup>144</sup> Margret English De Alminana, introduction to *Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministry: Informing a Dialog on Gender, Church, and Ministry* ed. Margret English De Alminana and Lois E. Olena (Boston: Leiden. 2017), 2.

the ambiguous terms surrounding their authority and right to preach. Religious historian Melissa Archer brings the debate home as a Pentecostal minister who has experienced professional bias:

I would suggest that key for Pentecostals should be their understanding of the Spirit. For this reason, Acts 2:1-4 can be appealed to as the paradigmatic text affirming the responsibility of women along with men to proclaim the gospel as Spirit-anointed and empowered spokespersons for God. The crucial event of Spirit-baptism initiates women and men into the mission of God.<sup>145</sup>

Archer argues the scripture of Acts 2:1-4 confirms the ministry of both men and women calling it a text “*Par excellence*,” through which it is understood that women share along with men in the outpouring of the Spirit. In writing that echoes Tackett, Archer references the “eschatological community of Spirit,” in which Pentecostals group to receive the blessing of God’s promise.<sup>146</sup> In her work, Archer gives a detailed analysis of the Epistles of Paul in 1 Corinthians to offer alternative explanation of meaning used by women theologians through-out the nineteenth century. To accomplish this task, Archer deconstructs and retranslates scriptural admonishment of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:3-9 wherein he confirms the “divine order,” of nature and creation to propose an alternative meaning.<sup>147</sup> In conclusion, Archer acknowledges certain scriptural texts can be used either to substantiate or deny women’s ordination. Archer’s analysis enhances the prospects for female evangelicals by sculpting her argument to include a feminist reading of scripture that affirms women’s initiative to teach the gospel and redeems women as

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<sup>145</sup> Melissa L. Archer, “Women in Ministry: A Pentecostal Reading of New Testament Texts,” in *Women in Pentecostal and Charismatic Ministry*, eds. Margaret English de Alminana and Lois E. Olena (Boston: Leiden, 2017), 35-55.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. \*The KJV of I Corinthians reads: But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.8 For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man.9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

created in the image of God, and legitimizes the sanctity of women to testify.<sup>148</sup> Archer states her argument on scriptural affirmation of women in Acts 2:1-4 “It is by means of spirit baptism that women receive the same fundamental qualifications for ministry as men in New Testament.”<sup>149</sup> Archer goes to exhaustive lengths to review relevant scripture on women’s authority to minister and concludes with an impassioned appeal to the Pentecostal community writing “The Kingdom of God is not exhibited in human relationships that elevate hierarchy or domination; rather it exhibits in mutuality and equality.”<sup>150</sup>

Feminist scholar, Lisa Stephenson argues texts on Pentecostal women are nuanced by “dualisms of a hierarchal anthropology” that despite an “outpouring of the spirit” subject women to bias.<sup>151</sup> Stephenson argues that an underlying ideology of hierarchal descent drawn from literal readings of scripture places women subordinate to men.<sup>152</sup> Religious scholar Elaine Lawless agrees with Stephenson, finding that although Pentecostal women are active in church ministry, few are pastors. Men, writes Lawless, “generally maintain positions of authority in this religion consistent with a biblically-based hierarchy.”<sup>153</sup> Lawless, contends that women in Pentecostal traditions find ways to “manipulate” their status by commandeering attention to their testimonies through filibuster performances that leave little time for much else.<sup>154</sup> Using what Lawless refers to as “creative improvisation,” women as expert testifiers take over the service forcing a political confrontation with their exclusion from positions of authority.<sup>155</sup> In what amounts to a subtle and nuanced revolt, Lawless claims women perform to resist domination. In a textual throwback to

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<sup>148</sup> Archer, “Women in Ministry,” 53.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., “Women in Ministry,” 54.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Lisa P. Stephenson, *Dismantling the Dualisms for American Pentecostal Women in Ministry: A Feminist Pneumatological Approach* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 18.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Elain J. Lawless, *God’s Peculiar People: Women’s Voices & Folk Tradition in a Pentecostal Church* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 77.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

dress codes, Lawless notes Pentecostal women adhere to certain styles of distinctive apparel that function to structure their secular and religious behavior.<sup>156</sup> Picking-up on the themes of disorder noted by Lawless, academic scholar, Susan Juster adds to the conversation with an in-depth look at religious women identified as the “chief source of disorder” by worried church officials.<sup>157</sup> Juster claims women in the early nineteenth century represented a subversive element that went to the core of their character as seductive threats to the sanctity of the church. In this cosmology, Juster claims women occupied a “liminal equation with disorder” that gendered sin distinctly female in a way that elided equality to posit a transformation of grace, at once, sublime and suffused with moral resonance.<sup>158</sup>

Ruth Marie Griffith in her work on evangelical women, sets-up a different scenario to write of the “therapeutic value” obtained through charismatic and emotional worship.<sup>159</sup> In her work, Griffith reinforces the idea of distinctive dress among Pentecostal women, but extends the conversation to focus on a sisterhood of support for one another through meetings and worship. Griffith discloses her participation in meetings that are intensely intimate discussions of private matters that leave most women in a catharsis of tears. Using an ethnographic approach, Griffith researches the interconnection among women who eschew feminism “in favor of a theology enjoining female submission to male authority . . . even as they denounce the abuses of male power.”<sup>160</sup> Griffith’s assessment of Pentecostal women relies on the interpersonal dynamics of relationship among themselves and the dispersion of power within charismatic groups that derive self-justification through worship.

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<sup>156</sup> Lawless, “God’s Peculiar People,” 36.

<sup>157</sup> Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 147.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-149.

<sup>159</sup> R. Marie Griffith, *God’s Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), 4-5.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

Author Jane Harris notes “women’s organizations drew on an established history of female networking to launch an age of reform and women’s activism.”<sup>161</sup> Harris argues that long standing traditions of women’s groups exerted influence over evangelical women who “entered the ranks of reforming women after 1830.”<sup>162</sup> To illustrate, Harris cites the formation of Female Religious and Moral Societies 1837-1860, that arose in answer to concern over morality. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Harris claims significant shifts occurred in the roles women assumed in church and community evidenced by a profound change in evangelicals who became fundamentalist in their approach to religion and social issues.<sup>163</sup>

George Marsden expands on that argument writing “Pentecostals were only tangentially part of the fundamentalism of the 1920s. Pentecostals often identified . . . as fundamentalists,” yet were seldom welcomed by allies.<sup>164</sup> Marsden argues a split occurred among late-nineteenth-century revivalists in 1910, resulting in a shift in the way sanctification was perceived.<sup>165</sup> Some saw the process as distinct while others viewed it as continuous. Schismatic cleavages occurred as a result of which evangelicals separated, some grouped to form the Assemblies of God. This church became the basis for Aimee Semple McPherson’s International Church of Four Square Gospel.<sup>166</sup> Marsden reviews controversy over the doctrine of tongues initiated by Pentecostal teachers, Parham and Seymour, to note the “embarrassment” of other evangelicals at “pains to disclaim any ties” with them.<sup>167</sup> A theme of disquiet that restates in the chapter on Alma White.

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<sup>161</sup> Jane Harris, “America’s Evangelical Women: More Than Wives and Mothers—Reformers, Ministers, and Leaders” in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America* ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 452.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Harris, “America’s Evangelical Women,” 455.

<sup>164</sup> George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 94.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

## Summary and Analysis

The historiography of the Progressive Era illustrates an era marked by contradiction and conflicting motivation for reform by individuals who sought resolution to the problems of their time. The literature surveyed in this study reveals the social reformation of an era marked by the tensions produced when America became an industrial nation. I suggest that the era of progress began earlier in the nation's history with the Gilded Age acting as a precursor to the influence of the Progressive Era. Many of the same concerns that initiated efforts of reform in the nineteenth century carried over into the twentieth with a changed focus. The literature on women, religion, and reform responds to the overwhelming urgency of an age confronted by immigration, cultural and religious difference, and wide-spread poverty among the working poor of industrial cities. Secular and religious responses were scripted by widening chasms of wealth and poverty, political scandals, and unrestrained industrial growth. Settlement Houses populated the urban landscape staffed by a contingent core of elite, well-educated men and women seeking legislative reforms to renovate archaic systems of labor and redefine the face of poverty; while secular and religious organizations staffed primarily by women worked to supplement absent government services through "municipal housekeeping". Benevolent societies organized and run by socially prominent women reached out to the poor to open-up missions, orphanages, schools, and bible institutes. Evangelical women adopted new strategies of response to deal with the social and political exclusiveness of male institutions by establishing their own institutions and legitimated their authority to do so by invoking scripture. Finally, this section of the survey reveals an age of innovation that reconfigured the course of a nation with advancement in communication, travel, shipping, machinery, and manufacturing even as labor riots erupted in the squares of major cities and women marched to secure their rights as citizens.

An analysis of the literature on women and religion illustrates the means they used to achieve equity in the church. The texts reveal religious women determined to transcend their gender by building and leading institutions that gave them the authority to act independent of restrictions levied against them by clergymen. One of the themes that repeats in evangelical discussions of sanctification shows how it is used by religious women to legitimate their authority to preach especially when it is used in context with selected scriptures affirming the necessity for doing so. Moreover, a plurality of agreement exists in texts on Pentecostal women that focuses on twin themes of power and submission with the gray, unclaimed territory lying between those polarities an ambiguous space where women move to establish their authority. Another area of agreement resides in the textual consensus of empowerment through prayer and endowment of gifts through the Holy Spirit. Griffith notes in her research other themes surface to emphasize “intimacy, healing, and transformation.”<sup>168</sup>

Specifically, scholarly and feminist texts on religious women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries work to establish, through the various means women used, a concerted determination by women to occupy the pulpit. Many evangelical women’s groups modeled on secular sister organizations that demonstrated the political power of networks among women, while other groups of charismatic women formed as reservoirs of ecstatic worship and support. Many more women exercised their religious prerogatives through writing privately in memoirs and publicly in journals, editorials in newspapers, and religious tracts to exhort compliance with a gospel of social justice and as a means of Christian instruction for young women and men. The texts chronicle the journeys of young women who committed to foreign service for the church while other texts reveal women who dedicated their lives to providing domestic alters of piety and devotion for their families becoming chief ministers of the home.

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<sup>168</sup> Griffith, “God’s Daughters,” 4-5.

## CHAPTER 3

### PROGRESSIVE ERA REFORM AND SOCIAL ACTIVISM

The Progressive Era has challenged many historians to encompass its diverse aspects or to describe the demographic and political influences that shaped its social institutions. In 1915, Benjamin Parke De Witt wrote, “No one can study the progressive movement, no one can read the lives of its pioneers and advocates without feeling its strength and vitality and realizing that it [was] a potent force in our political and social life.”<sup>1</sup> The rapid and unprecedented expansion of industry and commerce took the nation by surprise leaving inadequate agencies of state and federal government straining to catch-up.<sup>2</sup> Among the very first priorities was the removal of corrupt influences in municipal, state, and federal offices and the reinstatement of democratic reforms to restrict monopolistic consortiums of power and control. Social progressives sought to expand government administration and oversight into programs of social welfare to relieve the conditions of economic distress that afflicted so many across the nation with poverty. Regulation and reform of industrial labor, hours, and workers’ pay took precedence due to the appalling conditions within which women and children were employed.<sup>3</sup> Many of the reforms centered on the provision of pensions for widows and orphans in addition to the reallocation of resources and the redistribution of excessive rates of taxation onto those best able to bear them.<sup>4</sup>

In 1912 the organization of a third political party was formed from the progressive elements of the Democratic Federation and the National Progressive Republican League that combined to form the Progressive Party headed by former President Theodore Roosevelt.

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Parke De Witt, “The Progressive Movement: A Non-Partisan, Comprehensive Discussion of Current Tendencies in American Politics,” in *The Social and Political Thought of American Progressivism* ed. Eldon J. Eisenach (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006), 262-286.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



In 1901, Roosevelt was sworn in as the 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States to finish the term of William McKinley after his assignment left the office vacant. In 1904, Roosevelt was elected on his own merit to serve a second term but pledged not to run for a third term. Instead, Roosevelt declined the nomination in 1908 to William Howard Taft. When Taft failed to follow through on the progressive reforms Roosevelt had initiated in his administration, he ran against Taft for the Republican nomination in 1912. When that effort failed, Roosevelt and his supporters organized to form the Progressive Party. The sentiments of the Progressive Party and the planks of its platform are best epitomized by the rhetoric used to announce Roosevelt's intention to enter the presidential race and promote his advocacy of the public welfare:

The conscience of the people, in a time of grave national problems, has called into being a new party, born of the nation's sense of justice. We hold . . . that the people are the masters of their Constitution . . . to safeguard it from those who, by perversion of its intent, would convert it into an instrument of injustice. The people must use their sovereign powers to establish and maintain equal opportunity and industrial justice . . . This country belongs to the people who inhabit it. Its resources, its business, its institutions and its laws should be utilized, maintained or altered in whatever manner will best promote the general interest. It is time to set the public welfare in the first place.<sup>5</sup>

The Progressive Party won the nomination of liberals, social reformers, and women sensitive to the initiatives of reform and women's rights by its ardent support of equal rights and suffrage.

The party also proposed legislation to curtail the abuse of all industrial workers, but particularly women and children who were held most vulnerable to the manipulation of hours and pay. The proposed legislation looked to correct and prevent: industrial accidents, overwork, occupational disease, involuntary unemployment, and the "injurious effects of industry."<sup>6</sup> Progressive Party platforms covered a vast array of services and policies pertinent to the welfare of people, goods, services, tariffs, trade, taxation, and business reformed under a socialist rubric of redistribution that for all intents and purposes reiterated the proposals of the Socialist Party except they posited

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<sup>5</sup> De Witt, "The Progressive Movement," 273-274.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

a greater emphasis on eliminating “special interests.”<sup>7</sup> Popularly nicknamed the “Bull Moose Party” after its leader Theodore Roosevelt the Progressive Party went into decline after it lost the presidential election in 1912 and disappeared altogether by 1920. The “public welfare” touted by Theodore Roosevelt in his speech provided initiatives of reform that were enacted by churches still located within the inner-city neighborhoods long abandoned by the rising middle-class of social entrepreneurs and professionals who sought the safety of the suburbs. Some churches became rich, but in those that did the money never seemed to reach the poor who remained indebted and entrenched in their tenements within the cities of industry and business.<sup>8</sup>

The arrival of the affluent in their carriages on Sunday drives into the city to attend church created a disturbing juxtaposition for observers who noted the squalid conditions of the poor only blocks away. For many social reformers churches had become “intellectually and socially marginal in an age of Darwinism and agnosticism,” at a time when the gap between the rich and the poor had widened.<sup>9</sup> The social gospel of an intellectual progressivism gave way to an equally adamant theory of secular socialism concerning the working-class who remained dependent on the provisions of a capitalist economy.<sup>10</sup> In 1902 the contest between the upper ten of the nation’s wealthiest magnates who controlled the means of production and the remaining ninety percent who performed the difficult work of production came to a head when the local union of United Mine Workers called a strike.<sup>11</sup> The disparity, strife, and increased conflict between the classes who possessed wealth and those that envied them resulted in a growing

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<sup>7</sup> De Witt, “The Progressive Movement,” 276.

<sup>8</sup> Robert M. Crunden, *Ministers of Reform: The Progressives’ Achievement in American Civilization, 1889-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 40-41.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Michael McGee, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 152.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

barrage of labor strikes, violence, and new venues of socialist reform.<sup>12</sup> By 1914 progressive liberalist Herbert Croly issued a socialist editorial arguing conflict created through syndicalist reform would protect the working-classes from becoming dependent on economic masters.<sup>13</sup> Citing twin rivals of science and industry, Croly contends only by strengthening the trade-unions would an “enlightened,” proletariat enjoy the fruits of industrial democracy.<sup>14</sup> In his political analysis, Croly responds to nascent theories of scientific management introduced in 1912 by Frederick Winslow Taylor whose model of engineering efficiency was created to increase industrial profit.<sup>15</sup> Economists of the Progressive Era commented on the growing disparities of class and wealth that industry produced to suggest labor constituted only a small fraction of the problem, but one that reverberated throughout society.<sup>16</sup> For economists such as Richard Ely the labor problem was not seen as one of class, but rather as a concern of all civilized societies with an interest in the social advancement of progress through reciprocal arrangements that benefited both society and labor.<sup>17</sup> For Ely labor depended upon the social progress of civilization because labor itself “could not flourish as part of a diseased organ.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> McGerr, “A Fierce Discontent,” 118.

<sup>13</sup> Herbert David Croly, “Progressive Democracy,” in *The Social and Political Thought of American Progressivism* ed. Eldon J. Eisenach, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006), 168-175. Syndicalism refers to an idea in the labor movement that establishes the right of workers to advance issues in dispute through strikes. Several excellent resources exist that explicate its origination and function in the American labor movement and politics. See: Kevin C. O’Leary, “Herbert Croly & Progressive Democracy,” *Polity* 26, no. 4 (Summer 1994), [jstor.org/stable/3235094](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3235094) (accessed March 14, 2020) and., David W. Noble, “Herbert Croly and American Progressive Thought,” *Western Political Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (December 1954), [jstor.org/stable/442804](https://www.jstor.org/stable/442804) (accessed March 14, 2020)., For discussion on the radical and “virile” nature of syndicalism see, Todd J. McCallum, “Not a Sex Question? The One Big Union and the Politics of Radical Manhood,” *Labour/LeTravail* 42 (Fall 1998), 15-54. [jstor.org/stable/25148879](https://www.jstor.org/stable/25148879) (accessed March 14, 2020).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-175.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Richard Ely and Seth Low, “A Program for Labor Reform,” *Century Magazine* 39, no. 6 (April 1890), 938-951, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112003284806&view=2up&seq=958> (accessed July 17, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 939.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

Ely established that advancement of wage-earners was in the best interest of society because labor and society were inter-dependent on each other.<sup>19</sup>

### Immigration, Religion, and Culture

Labor strikes were prominent during an age of industrial growth but were not the only problem. Issues arose from an influx of immigrants who brought with them different standards in living, culture, and religion—notably Catholicism. Protestant reaction to the challenges of Catholicism ranged from dislike to alarm with enactment of new initiatives to counteract the threat to Protestant-American values. New emphasis was placed on education and establishment of Protestant schools and churches. Historian Steven Dinar notes more immigrants arrived during the Progressive Era than before or after with fifteen million arriving in the twenty-four years between 1890 and 1914. Moreover, the national identity and ethnicity of immigrants changed dramatically after 1890. Prior to that, most immigrants arrived from Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Holland. However, after 1890, many of these immigrants began to arrive from Italy, Russia, Greece, Romania, and Turkey.<sup>20</sup> With the change in immigration patterns most who arrived did not speak English and did not share Protestant values. Roman Catholic immigrants arrived in America to find the Catholic Church established and prepared to present a parallel system of education in direct contest with Protestant efforts to maintain the status quo. The Catholic Church was shaped by its commitment to expand systems of education for the children of America's working-class poor and assist the social mobility of thousands of immigrants.<sup>21</sup> Many Catholic progressives were suspicious of the new reform initiatives and social welfare programs extended through the oversight of state and federal

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Ely and Seth Low, "A Program for Labor Reform," 939.

<sup>20</sup> Steven Dinar, *A Very Different Age: Americans in the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998), 76.

<sup>21</sup> Kathleen Sprows Cummings, *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 9.

government in America during the Progressive Era as these were perceived as antithetical to Catholic interests.<sup>22</sup> For many Catholics religious identity was both crucial and decisive in determining how they ordered their world and their place in American society.<sup>23</sup> In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued an encyclical entitled *Rerum Novarum* or the “Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor,” that addressed the condition of the working classes in recognition of problems created by industrialization and urbanization.<sup>24</sup> Directed by the precedents of Catholic social thought, Catholic groups established in the United States worked to make transition of new immigrants more systematic and to assist arriving immigrants with direction and contact with the Church.<sup>25</sup> One concern of these groups was that without such assistance some immigrants could become secular or might turn away from the Church to Protestant agencies for help.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast to Protestant goals and reforms aimed at unifying American culture and religion, groups of reform minded, middle-class Catholics provided alternative social services to less affluent members that tended to foster religious and cultural cohesion among Catholics.<sup>27</sup> The clash of cultural commitment among secular and religious Catholic reformists extended from differences of approach to the social issues that defined the Progressive Era. Foremost were the conditions of labor that afflicted workers with long hours, few breaks and low wages. The ideological debate among Catholic Progressives culminated in dissention over whether to impose a moral or a scientific application of relief.<sup>28</sup> Catholic social theory/teaching and its consequent criticism of capitalism grounded in ideas that challenged modernity and mainstream American

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<sup>22</sup> Cummings, “New Women of the Old Faith,” 14.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Deidra M. Moloney, *American Catholic Lay Groups and Transatlantic Social Reform in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina, 2002), 71.

<sup>25</sup> Moloney, “American Catholic Lay Groups,” 69.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas E. Woods, *The Church Confronts Modernity: Catholic Intellectuals of the Progressive Era* (New York: Columbia University, 2004), 119-120.

culture.<sup>29</sup> Substantial philosophical differences of approach among Catholic intellectuals and their Progressive counterparts divided efforts of reform along lines that demanded a rational empiricism. Secular intellectuals instead chose to support a growing sentiment of scientific rationalism that “many came to view,” writes historian Edward Purcell, “not in terms of good against evil, but in terms of knowledge, efficiency, and scientific planning against ignorance, error, and economic waste.”<sup>30</sup> Social harmony depended on the methods of science and intelligent application of a rational understanding of the universe.

Sociologist Cybelle Fox notes between 1890 and 1930, more than twenty million immigrants and refugees found their way to America and the modern welfare state was founded on the heels of their arrival.<sup>31</sup> While white Europeans fared well in their bid for social inclusion and were assimilated into the fabric of American society, Eastern and Southern Europeans, once thought to be distinct and racially inferior, were “expelled from the boundaries of social citizenship.”<sup>32</sup> Studies in the dispersion of social welfare and programs of aid among different ethnicities of immigrants have shown a biased disparity in the allocation of resources contributing to the success of some groups of immigrants and demise of others.<sup>33</sup> The extent of favoritism in the early effort of social welfare helped to establish a precedence of treatment that resulted in a rising middle-class of recipients distinguishing them from non-white immigrants.<sup>34</sup> Those who were left without social services found help in settlement houses run by concerned, well-educated men and women who devoted their efforts to civic and legislative reforms.

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<sup>29</sup> Woods, “The Church Confronts Modernity,” 121.

<sup>30</sup> Edward A. Purcell, *The Crisis of Democratic Theory: Scientific Naturalism and the Problem of Value* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1973), 25.

<sup>31</sup> Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State, From the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

## Settlement Houses, Social Elites, and Social Gospel

In 1890 an elite society of social reformers took note of these disparities and created programs of assistance that sought to alleviate squalid conditions of inner-city slums by working to reform the social environment.<sup>35</sup> Settlement Houses run by an elite core of well-educated women and men opened in cities to ameliorate the conditions of urban poverty spawned by rampant industrialization and exploitive conditions of employment. Living conditions for wage-earners in industrial cities such as New York and Chicago were substandard with wages that sentenced unskilled workers to confinement in tenements with poor sanitation and little mobility.

The first Neighborhood Guild was established by Stanton Coit in 1886, in New York City to assist the poor by creating a place where elite members of society could “settle among the poor.”<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, such settlement houses became the repositories of elite social activism that attracted scores of college trained intellectuals who initiated legislative, environmental, and social reform. By 1890, the overwhelming need of recipients and their response to settlement houses caused an increase in placement of settlement houses in urban neighborhoods, from an initial three to more than one hundred, with a coinciding change in the public attitude toward the causes of poverty.<sup>37</sup> The democratic reforms instituted by settlement workers resulted in schools with improved conditions, sanitation, public welfare, and better housing. The women and men who involved themselves with these settlement projects came armed with ideologies fashioned in the reformation of liberal Protestantism.<sup>38</sup> The idea of settlement houses and the services they were able to provide to the poor and the homeless caught on quickly with new establishments

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<sup>35</sup> Judith Ann Trolander, *Settlement Houses and the Great Depression* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 18.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Mina Carson, “American Settlement Houses: The First Half Century,” in *Settlements, Social Change & Community Action: Good Neighbors*, eds. Ruth Gilchrist and Tony Jeffs (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2001), 34.

opening within months of each other. New homes opened in New York City, (Neighborhood Guild 1886, College Settlement 1889), Chicago, (Hull House 1889), and Boston, (Andover House 1891, Denison House 1892).<sup>39</sup> The liberal Protestantism that fueled such ventures was grounded in religious and intellectual fusion of social spirituality, social gospel, and scientific rationalism that marked the Progressive Era.<sup>40</sup> Coit wrote, “The first step in social reform must be the conscious organization of the intellectual and moral life of the people for the total improvement of the human lot.”<sup>41</sup> Guilds, and later, settlement houses opened to alleviate the desperate poverty engulfing urban cities with the despair and disease permeating through the pervasive tenement slums. So prolific was the poverty that charitable organizations such as the Salvation Army and the Charity Organization Society of New York were incapable of providing aid to the more than 136,000 families who applied for relief in 1890.<sup>42</sup>

Jacob Riis provides poignant testimony to reveal a city over-run with paupers and beggars and writes of the need to remove what he sees as the cause, tenements.<sup>43</sup> As reformers and social analysts of the late nineteenth century sought to identify the root cause of poverty-low wages, exploitive industrial practices, squalid living conditions, and immigrants willing to work long hours for less pay than American workers-men and women who comprised the social elite of the cities organized and opened settlement houses. Swept up in the progressive tide of reform, churches too, weighed in with theologies of social gospel that sought to compel the Christian conscience to comply with the principles of sacrifice and justice.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Carson, “American Settlement Houses” 34-35.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>41</sup> Stanton Coit, *Neighborhood Guilds: An Instrument of Social Reform* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892), 4, [https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b268533&view=2up&seq=10](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b268533&view=2up&seq=10) (Accessed July 21, 2019).

<sup>42</sup> Jacob A. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890), 254.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Shailer Mathews, *Social Gospel* (Philadelphia: The Griffith & Rowland Press, 1910), 26.



In the latter half of the nineteenth century new ideas in social and religious thought were informing old traditions in Catholic and Protestant reform. Never entirely or completely separate, the church and the state formed a complex nexus of social organization resulting in new gospels of Catholic intellectual thought and Christian socialism.<sup>45</sup> In American Protestantism the result was a theology of social gospel that compelled the Christian conscience to recognize the plight of the less fortunate by declaring “Man . . . stands under religious judgement.”<sup>46</sup>

As a religious *dictum* this was not new, but the idea was extended to incorporate the “collective institutions” of human endeavor.<sup>47</sup> The church by such means went beyond passing judgement on individuals to positioning itself to comment on systems of labor and capitalism. The argument that followed this logic insisted upon the cumulative effect of right and wrong actions on the whole of society thereby compelling social and religious responsibility to correct the pervasive injury of social injustice.<sup>48</sup> Prior to the social reorganization of American society instigated by labor strikes, high unemployment, and a major economic depression, churches in America were mired in what historian Henry May describes in his study as “the summit of complacency.”<sup>49</sup> May wrote, “Although some fainthearted individuals [are] alarmed at the tide of Catholic immigration,” many others have “uncompromising confidence in the dominance of Protestant tradition.”<sup>50</sup> A “confidence” that extended out from the religious sphere to include “prophetic visions” of national success.<sup>51</sup> The revolution of thought and practice that took place within Protestant churches in the late 1890s, came as a result of violent economic upheavals that

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<sup>45</sup> Paul A. Carter, *Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel: Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1963), 42.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 44.

left freight cars burning on the tracks and angry multitudes out of work.<sup>52</sup> Leading proponents of social gospel included men such as: Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden, and Lyman Abbott who rejected the *laissez-faire* attitudes of capitalist enterprise, to instead insist on the energetic regeneration of the individual.<sup>53</sup> Breadlines and riots commanded the headlines of newspapers and the discontent of the working-class did little to stem the empire of political and economic corruption. Social Christianity repudiated arrogant assumption of unbridled capitalism and its attendant assumption of wealth and success promulgated by the captains of industry amid the contentions of labor that its share of the profits was too small.<sup>54</sup> The questions posed by the domestic labor force ran concomitant with those posed by immigrants who sought work and the flood of new citizens seeking a chance to start over again in America.

Protestant America watched with a growing sense of apprehension as these new citizens resumed the cultural and religious practices of their former lives assembling in growing numbers to rebuild the institutions of their faith. American Evangelicals, such as Alma Bridwell White, were overwhelmed and distraught by what she saw as the “drift of higher institutions of learning and the Protestant churches away from orthodoxy.”<sup>55</sup> White was adamant in her resistance to the Catholic Church and professed to a calamitous foreboding of what she called the “deception of the Scarlet Mother.”<sup>56</sup> White was one of many evangelicals such as Dora Schoonmaker who had written a warning to the Board of Foreign Missionaries to enhance the funding for foreign field service to forestall the well-funded efforts of the Catholic Church in Asia.

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<sup>52</sup> Carter, “Social and Political Liberalism,” 10.

<sup>53</sup> Lyman Abbott, *Christianity and Social Problems* (New York: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1896), 133.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Howard Hopkins, *Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915* (New haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 53., Clifford E. Clark, “The Changing Nature of Protestantism in Mid-Nineteenth Century America: Henry Ward Beecher’s Seven Lectures to Young Men,” *Journal of American History* 57, no. 4. (March 1971), 832-846 [www.jstor.org/stable/1917785](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1917785) (accessed July 23, 2019).

<sup>55</sup> Alma Bridwell White, *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty* (Zarephath: The Good Citizen, 1926), 15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

## Race and the Ku Klux Klan

With the close of the war in 1918, Protestant America retreated into a culture of religious and ethnic conformity in reaction to an increased foreign presence, banding together to confront what many perceived as a threat. In 1917, Congress took the first preliminary steps to limit immigration by requiring a literacy test to be taken by prospective new immigrants and in 1924, Congress passed The Johnson-Reed Immigration Act severely limiting the number of immigrants from the Eastern hemisphere and curtailing immigration from Asia. The new law imposed a two percent “quota system” on all foreign nationals based on previously recorded levels of foreign occupancy in 1890.<sup>57</sup>

Pozzetta notes the wider movement of reform suffered a disillusionment in the aftermath of World War I, that resulted in the revival of exclusive organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan. The organization resurrected in 1915, to focus on immigration with a resurgence of racial and ethnic intolerance.<sup>58</sup> Historian Rory McVeigh reviews records of the Klan, to write between 1920 and 1925 the Klan numbered between three and six million members, with the majority of membership located in central and southwest states.<sup>59</sup> McVeigh claims the Klan drew its membership primarily from the ranks of the small business owners, merchant professionals, and land owning farmers who “comprised a culturally homogenous middle-class.”<sup>60</sup> McVeigh argues the Klan’s restricted base of membership excluded: Catholics, Jews, African Americans, socialists, immigrants, and agrarian radicals.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Department of State Office of The Historian, “The Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson-Reed Act), <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act> (accessed June 24, 2019).

<sup>58</sup> Pozzetta, “Reform and the Immigrant,” 64: See Kelly Jeannette Baker, *Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK’s Appeal to Protestant America, 1915–1930* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 28-29.

<sup>59</sup> Rory McVeigh, “Structural Incentives for Conservative Mobilization: Power Devaluation and the Rise of the Ku Klux Klan, 1915-1925,” *Social Forces* 77, no.4 (June 1999): 1461-1496, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3005883> (accessed June 24, 2019).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1463.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 1464.

Klan ideology was pervasive among many white Protestants and the release of D.W. Griffith's silent film, *Birth of a Nation* in 1915, became a symbol of Protestant unity. Historian Michael McGerr shares his view on segregation in the early twentieth century writing, "Americans have liked to pretend that Jim Crow was a regional aberration, an exception to our history."<sup>62</sup> Author Kelly Baker observes reorganization of the Klan depended on close alignment with Protestant ministers in ways that illustrated their racial and religious intolerance. Baker argues Protestant ideology was an integral part of the Klan's incarnation as an order to defend America against the foreign threat.<sup>63</sup> Baker asserts the vitriol of the Klan toward diverse populations resulted from the influx of immigrants and shifts in the demographics of African Americans from the American South to the North and West. Baker claims between 1890 and 1914 "over 16 million immigrants arrived in the United States" noting such massive immigration gave vent to a nativist reaction that embraced Klan theology.<sup>64</sup> Under such conditions foreigners who did not support the war were suspect of anti-American sentiment and activities. In her study, Baker cites compelling descriptions of the Klan that deliver her work from an imputed sympathy with their cause to a status of "moral ambiguity" that tempers her enthusiasm for the Klan.<sup>65</sup>

Kenneth Jackson reveals the historic precedents that led to the formation of the Klan. Originally organized by Confederate veterans in 1866, the Klan revamped its image after the close of World War I in the 1920s to follow the nativist tradition of the Know-Nothing Party of the 1850s and, later, the American Protective Party of 1890.<sup>66</sup> Jackson notes the Klan presented itself as the defender of American values and "Conservators of Christian ideals" to enroll over

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<sup>62</sup> Michael E. McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 183.

<sup>63</sup> Baker, "Gospel According to the Klan," 6.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>66</sup> Kenneth Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), xi.

two million new members between 1920 and 1926.<sup>67</sup> Jackson's study predates McVeigh and thoroughly contradicts many of the claims made by McVeigh, writing, "An important by-product of the urban confrontation of cultures was the success of the Ku Klux Klan in metropolitan areas."<sup>68</sup> Jackson insists the Klan, contrary to popular opinion, did not have a broad base of appeal with white, rural farmers or support of townspeople in many states. Jackson's study reveals the socio-economic status of most Klan members composed of a "struggling" middle-class with few professional members.<sup>69</sup> Historian Kathleen Blee offers a more comprehensive and balanced review of the Klan, writing "From the beginning, the rituals and terrorism of the Klan were based on symbols of violent white masculinity and vulnerable white femininity."<sup>70</sup>

Blee notes women were used as a double entendre for the Klan. The feared assault on white women by a black insurgency served both as a threat that violated white men's sexual prerogatives and, again, as a metaphor for the rape of the South during reconstruction.<sup>71</sup> Blee records the second iteration of the Klan emerged in response to conditions that made the twentieth century "ripe for a political movement championing nationalism and white Protestant supremacy."<sup>72</sup> In America, hard economic downturns in the national economy along with the collapse of prices in the agricultural market contributed to an atmosphere of suspicion and resentment against Jewish bankers and foreign interests.<sup>73</sup> Blee writes Americans engaged attitudes of a "postwar nationalism," that, along with the large numbers of African Americans who were migrating to the North, heightened the appeal of the Klan to urban Northerners.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Jackson, "The Ku Klux Klan in the City," xii.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 12.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

## Summary and Analysis

The Progressive Era may well have been misnamed as the rise of racial and religious intolerance flourished as never before with growing sentiment against foreigners, immigrants, blacks, Jews, and Catholics. World War I (1914-1918) proved to be the fulcrum upon which the growing tide of nativism took hold with a wave of anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, and racial bigotry that reached into the highest echelons of American society and especially into the churches.<sup>75</sup> The rise of the Ku Klux Klan immediately after the war was a direct response to the swelling resentment, fear, and resurrection of Protestant hope for a racially pure nation absent of Catholic influence.<sup>76</sup> While the war on the theological front never wavered, Protestants had long viewed the incursion of Catholic immigrants into America with distaste, new fronts in the war among nativists and immigrants opened with fresh assault. Concurrent with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan were exciting new revisions in science and evolution that spurred a scientific revolution in the American imagination. New ideas on the nature of man and species coupled with evolutionary and hereditary science to create a uniquely American ideal of process. Eugenics became the byword for the Protestant refinement of society with exclusive doctrines preaching separation from the “insane and criminal specimens of humanity” by white clergymen from Protestant pulpits.<sup>77</sup> Eugenics had the distinction of being the “most modern of sciences,” and those who adhered to its principles were progressive liberals in search of solutions to the incoming tide of immigrants bringing with them their problems of poverty.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Lynn S. Neal, “Christianizing the Klan: Alma White, Branford Clarke, and the Art of Religious Intolerance,” *Church History*, 78, no. 2 (June., 2009): 350-378, [jstor.org/stable/20618700](http://jstor.org/stable/20618700); Robert William Moore, “The Role of the New Jersey Protestant Clergy in the 1920s Ku Klux Klan,” (PhD diss., Drew University 2013), 15-20.

<sup>76</sup> Baker, “Gospel According to the Klan,” 29; Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press 2004), 3-5.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

## CHAPTER 4

### PROPHETS AND PREACHERS

In this chapter the political novelty and ministries of three women are reviewed for their contribution to and involvement with reform of religious practice that marked the Progressive Era. While each of these women proclaimed doctrines that departed from Methodist practice, they did so within individual interpretations of scripture that illustrate an ongoing and conflicting approach to religious and progressive reform. The conflict posed by these women evolved in several ways, one was the challenge of their gender to male authority in religious institutions the other was the ideological reconstruction of gender in society. Women were no longer content to abide within assigned roles of performance that limited their productivity to the domestic sphere and chose instead to infiltrate the public world as doctors, teachers, missionaries, and writers.<sup>1</sup>

The women reviewed for this chapter were fearless representatives of change in an era of change working to secure their right to perform religion in ways not readily acceptable to many. In doing so, these women upset boundaries of relationship among ethnic and gendered classes in America to rewrite scripts of theological belief, instigate novel practices of faith, healing, and worship and, reset social expectations for women in religion. The example set by these women insured their place in history if for no other reason than their disregard of social conventions that discouraged women to aspire beyond the social construction of gender. Courageous and resolute, these women undertook the social and religious imperative of reform to campaign for women's right to vote, build religious institutions that supported women's leadership roles, and moved to occupy the pulpit in religious institutions as influential leaders. Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter,

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<sup>1</sup> A cadre of feminist writers exist to document nineteenth and early twentieth century women who stepped out of their protected spheres to engage the material world: Susan Hill Lindley, *You have Stept Out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1996)., Mary McCartin Wearn, ed. *Nineteenth Century Women Write Religion: Lived Theologies and Literature* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014)., Rebecca Styler, *Literary Theology by Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010).

and Aimee Semple McPherson were Pentecostal ministers and contemporaries who advocated reforms that through their practice and example advanced the religious boundaries of women in the ministry. Alma Bridwell White organized a ministry far more radically feminist and racially divisive than any of her contemporaries and practiced the political novelty of her theology as a reformed Pentecostal in the tradition of the Wesleyan-Holiness Movement.

Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter: Charismatic Faith Healer and Minister

Previous studies of Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter (1844-1924) fail to situate her ministry within the influence of the Progressive Era or to recognize her novel approach to channeling Christian initiatives of holistic healing.<sup>2</sup> These initiatives consisted of a charismatic approach to healing through prayer and the laying on of hands. Woodworth-Etter's healing ministry began in the twentieth century with implicit recognition of the attitude held by many Christians toward traditional methods of medicine to offer an alternative rooted in the faith and prophecy of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> In the latter half of the nineteenth century as physicians advanced in their capacity to diagnose and treat disease the entrepreneurial spirit among medical practitioners commercialized to increase their earnings and elevate their social standing.<sup>4</sup> For the majority of sufferers who were poor this led to a sense of dissatisfaction with the medical community and the pursuit of alternative methods of healing promised to provide relief.

Traditional medical cures in the nineteenth century employed a variety of exceptional measures termed "heroic" for their invasive extirpation of disease and "aggressive methods of treatment"

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathon R. Baer, "Redeemed Bodies: The functions of Divine Healing in Incipient Pentecostalism," *Church History* 70, no. 4 (December 2001): 735-771. [www.jstor.org/stable/3654547](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3654547) (accessed December 5, 2019); Paul Gale Chappell, "The Divine Healing Movement in America," (PhD diss., Drew University, 1983), 74, (accessed December 5, 2019), ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

<sup>3</sup> Claire Hoertz Badaracco, *Prescribing Faith: Medicine, Media, and Religion in American Culture* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007) 3-4; Heather D. Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860-1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> James Robinson, *Divine Healing: The Formative Years, 1830-1890* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 54. Robinson explores medical intervention in the nineteenth century to expose the horrific treatments patients were subjected to causing many to try alternative forms of healing outside of approved medical interventions.



that frequently resulted in patients experiencing intolerable pain.<sup>5</sup> Christians perfectionists and those associated with the Pentecostal Holiness Movement such as Woodworth-Etter, chose to use an alternative means of intervention undertaking healing through acts of faith and prayer.<sup>6</sup> In the early half of the nineteenth century the poor were more susceptible to disease than those with the resources to segregate themselves away from the cities and the corruption of poor sanitation.<sup>7</sup> In the United States, the urban poor of industrial cities suffered disproportionately falling victim to poor sanitation and crowded conditions with an inadequate of ventilation.<sup>8</sup> In the United Kingdom, the Medical Act of 1858 was enacted to insure health care providers were registered and provided proof of qualification to prevent abuse and malpractice.<sup>9</sup> In the United States legislation was passed in New York City by the newly formed Metropolitan Board of Health to insure methods of sanitation deemed preventive and necessary to public health.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Robinson, "Divine Healing," 163.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond J. Cunningham, "From Holiness to Healing: The Faith Cure in America 1872-1892," *Church History* 43, no. 4 (December 1974): 499-513.

<sup>7</sup> In a report issued through the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine it was found that "Industrialization, with its overburdened workforce and crowded dwellings, produced a population more susceptible to disease and [produced] conditions in which disease was more easily transmitted." *Institute of Medicine. "The Future of Public Health,"* (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press., 1988), 58-59 <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/1091/the-future-of-public-health> (accessed March 27, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Statistics on the types of disease and prevalent conditions can be found in several reports issued in both The United Kingdom in 1843 and in the United States in 1850. Internal restructuring of sanitation began in earnest with the report by Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Laboring Population of Great Britain* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1843)., followed by, Lemule Shattuck, *Report of the Sanitary Commission of Massachusetts, 1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948).

<sup>9</sup> In part due to practice by individuals who did not possess either training or credentials from an accredited school the British legislature moved to demand registration, see title XXVI of the Medical Act. Legislation.gov.uk "Medical Act 1858," <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/21-22/90/enacted> (accessed March 27, 2020)., In addition, Paul Starr, "Medicine, Economy and Society in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Social History* 10 no. 4 (Summer 1977): 591-592, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3786770> (accessed March 27, 2020)., P.S. Brown "Medically Qualified Naturopathes and the General Medical Council." *Medical History* 35 no.1 (January 1991): 50-51, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1036269/pdf/medhist00052-0054.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> New York City was among the most crowded and urgent example of miserable living conditions in the mid-nineteenth century prompting review of its sanitary systems by, John H. Griscom, *The Laboring Population of New York* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1845)., followed in "1864 by physician Stephen Smith who organized and directed a sanitary survey of New York City." Richard A. Pizzi, "Apostles of Cleanliness," *Modern Drug Discovery* 5 no.5 (May 2002): [pubsapp.acs.org/subscribe/archive/mdd/v05/i05/html/05ttl.html](https://pubsapp.acs.org/subscribe/archive/mdd/v05/i05/html/05ttl.html) (accessed March 28, 2020).

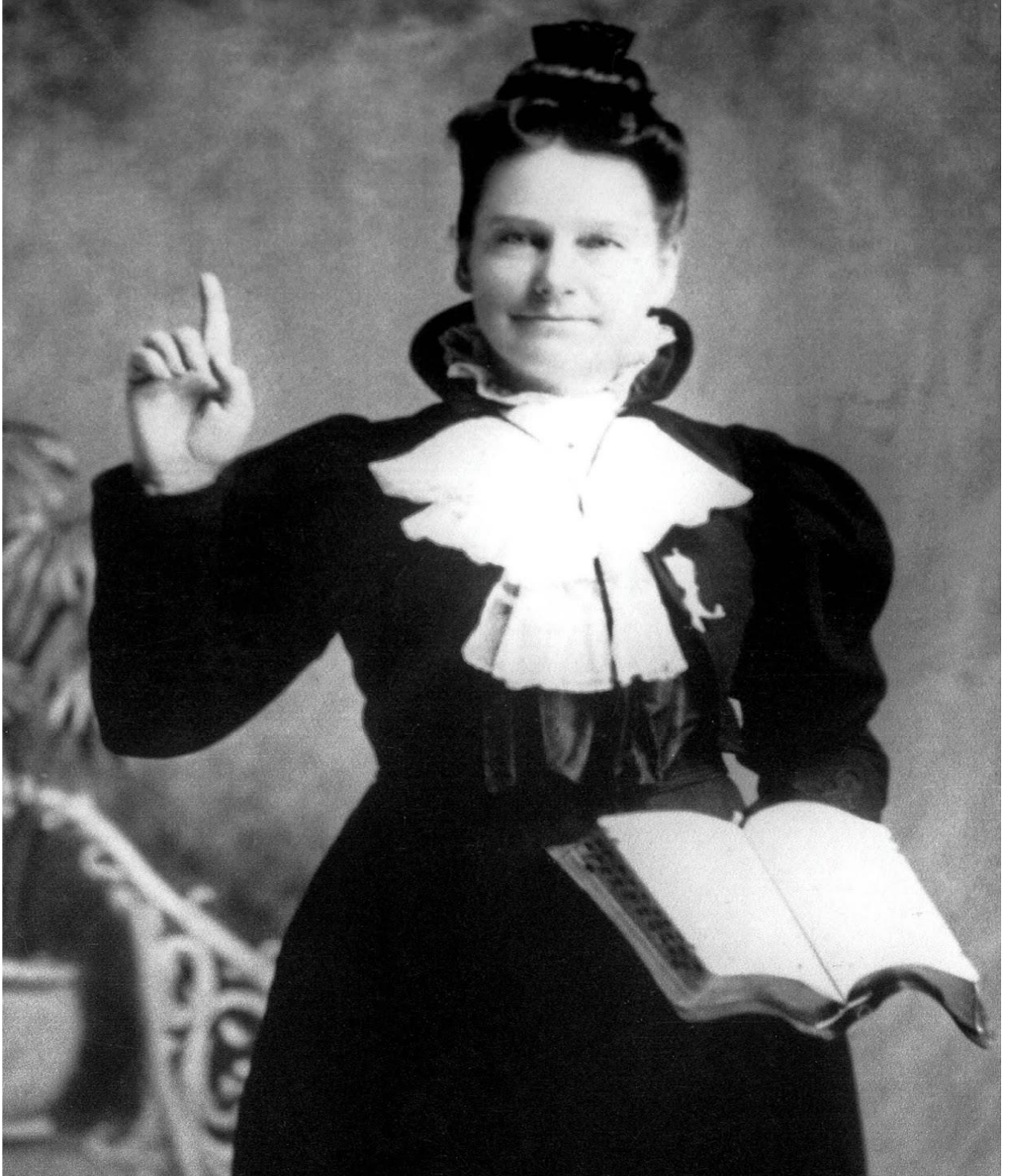


Figure 1. *Woodworth-Etter in traditional pose*. Christian Forum, Maria Woodworth-Etter, 2017, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://www.christianforums.com/blogs/life-and-experience-of-maria-woodworth-by-maria-woodworth.55081/>.

Treatment of disease by both the urban poor and those in rural locations varied widely with an intermix of hydropathy, homeopathic, and herbal remedies offered by physicians such as Samuel Thompson who “eschewed schooling and science for an empirical embrace of nature's apothecary.”<sup>11</sup> The hodgepodge of medical practices frequently resulted in patients resorting to self-cures and alternative forms of medicine from trusted forms of authority who appealed to a higher sense of spiritual morality and practice. Charismatic Christians such as Woodworth-Etter was one of those who acknowledged the Holy Spirit as the Great Physician.<sup>12</sup> Woodworth-Etter, labeled derisively as a “trance evangelist,” infused her ministry with a unique character of faith that divided her theology from that of other evangelical leaders. Her work among the sick and poor who visited the gospel tent in growing numbers challenged critiques that regarded her ministry as a carnival side show to one where people came to be healed through their faith.

Woodworth-Etter never became wealthy; Her tent ministry operated with barely enough to keep the doors open. The Woodworth-Etter Tabernacle she built in Indianapolis opened in 1918 and served as a model for other Pentecostal churches with seating for five hundred. After her death in 1924, membership and participation dwindled, but the church continued under the direction of Reverend Thomas Paino transitioning into the Lakeview Church of Indianapolis.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Michael A. Flannery, “The Early Botanical Medical Movement as a Reflection of Life, Liberty, and Literacy in Jacksonian America,” *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 90 no.4 (October 2002): <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC128961/> (accessed March 28, 2020)., Catherine L. Thompson, *Patient Expectations: How Economics, Religion, and Malpractice Shaped Therapeutics in Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 46-47.

<sup>12</sup> Charismatic Christians also referred to as perfectionist were a distinct group of evangelicals who undertook the goal of sanctification as a spiritual journey of connection, communication, and enduement of grace received through a total commitment of self and purpose to the Holy Spirit. The activist spirit of evangelicals who embraced faith healing understood that their mission to spread the gospel required them to take responsibility for their own health. Heather D. Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860-1900* ( Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) 4.

<sup>13</sup> One of the best sources of information on Woodworth-Etter remains Wayne Warner, *Maria Woodworth-Etter: For Such A Time as This* (Gainesville: Bridge-Logos, 2004), 275-278., “Church Notices,” *Indianapolis Times, Final Home Edition*, February 1936, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015313/1936->



Figure 2. *Woodworth-Etters first church. Built 1918, Indianapolis, Indiana.* Lakeview Church, The First 100 Years: 1918-2018, 2020, accessed July 13, 2020, <http://www.lakeviewchurch.org/lc100/history/>.



Figure 3. *Revival tent used for evangelical prayer meetings on the road.* Faith for Life Church, Maria Woodworth-Etter: Grandmother of the Pentecostal Movement, n.d., accessed July 13, 2020, <https://www.fflchurch.org/wall-of-flame>.

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02-22/ed-2/seq-2/#date1=1918&index (accessed March 29, 2020)., Lakeview Church, Indianapolis, Indiana. <http://www.lakeviewchurch.org/> (accessed March 29, 2020).

The practice of Faith healing lodged in the doctrinal beliefs and scriptural exegesis of Pentecostal/Holiness evangelicals who challenged the Methodist disavowal of “miracles in any form.”<sup>14</sup> Theologian Horace Bushnell, in response to the critical antagonism of Methodist clergy toward miracles, emphasized a distinction between nature and the supernatural. Bushnell defined miracles as supernatural acts by three distinctions: first, as an action upon the normal chain of cause and effect; second, as residing within the sphere of the senses; and third, by evincing superhuman power.<sup>15</sup> In her writing, Woodworth-Etter defines the miracle of divine healing as “The act of God’s grace, by the direct power of the Holy Spirit, by which the physical body is delivered from sickness and disease and restored to soundness and health.”<sup>16</sup>

Woodworth-Etter, incorporated Bushnell’s criteria for miracles by manifesting their supernatural power on stage for audiences. The phenomenal success that followed the healing ministry and evangelical career of Woodworth-Etter stemmed from more than faith; rather, her response evidenced social concern over prevalent medical practices and adulterated drugs with resort to home remedies.<sup>17</sup> In her comments on medical advancement, Woodworth-Etter positions herself firmly within the stream of progressive thought and current affairs when she references events in news and medical journals in 1890. In one of her many books, Woodworth-Etter writes her opinion on drugs and doctors to warn against the false prophets of medical intervention and so-called miraculous cures.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cunningham, “From Holiness to Healing,” 508.

<sup>15</sup> Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural, as Together Constituting the One System of God* (London: Alexander Strahan & Co., 1867), 234.

<sup>16</sup> Maria Woodworth-Etter, *Acts of the Holy Ghost: The Life, Work and Experience of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter* (Dallas: John F. Worley Printing, n/d) 415. The appeal of the Pentecostal/Holiness Movement to individuals such as Bushnell and Woodworth-Etter lay precisely in the division over the nature and manifestation of miracles and in rapport with the Holy Spirit.

<sup>17</sup> In his article, Cunningham offers explicit reference to faith cures, “From Holiness to Healing,” 510.

<sup>18</sup> In her book *Acts of the Holy Ghost*, Woodworth-Etter calls on the opinion of a physician to ridicule the Koch Cure for Tuberculosis and reiterate the need for divine healing. Woodworth-Etter, “Acts,” 421.,

Woodworth-Etters's approach to divine healing embodied "the pragmatic" attitude by many middle-class women toward issues of health in the late nineteenth century that held women responsible for the management of personal health.<sup>19</sup> Historian Martha Verbrugge comments that popular instruction on health in the nineteenth century was often a "movement of, by, and for women" that marked commitment to maintaining the health of their communities and families.<sup>20</sup> In her commitment to restoring health through divine healing, Woodworth-Etter exemplified the concern manifested toward the decline of health in the late nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Important themes of moral and physical perfectionism predominate in the text of Woodworth-Etter to reflect the preoccupation of many citizens in 1890 with patent medicine and the "ignorant asininity of the medical profession."<sup>22</sup> Healing was an important aspect and attribute of Woodworth-Etters's ministry in keeping with nineteenth century cultural expectation of revealed truth, and physical and spiritual well-being.

In 1890, American diarist Alice James chronicled her long convalescence and her ambivalent attitude toward physicians who plied her with drugs to effect a cure for an ailment variously diagnosed as either "rheumatic gout or spinal neurosis."<sup>23</sup> In her effort to get well, James endured the remedies proscribed from specialists for ice and electric therapy, special

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"Reaction from the Lymph," *New York Evening World*, December 13, 1890 (accessed December 7, 2019), <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>, J. Cutan Genito-Urin, "Koch's Cure for Tuberculosis," *Archives of Dermatology* 127 no. 1 (1991): 42.

<sup>19</sup> Martha H. Verbrugge, *Able-Bodied Womanhood: Personal Health and Social Change in Nineteenth Century Boston* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 8-9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Social ideas concerning health and disease prevention preoccupied middle-class Americans, especially women who were invested in procuring the social welfare of their communities through efforts of reform aimed at better sanitation, clean water, and natural cures. See work by Anita Clair Fellman and Michael Fellman, *Making Sense of Self: Medical Advice Literature in Late Nineteenth Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1981), 4-5; James Harvey Young, "The Great American Fraud," in *Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Patent Medicine before Federal Regulation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 205.

<sup>22</sup> Woodworth-Etter, "Acts," 423., See also Leon Edel, ed. *The Diary of Alice James 1889-1890* Reprinted (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1934), 150.

<sup>23</sup> Edel, "Diary of Alice James," 8.

blistering baths, and a stay at Adams Nervous Asylum. These experiences provoked James to remark, “These doctors will tell you that you will either die or recover: I am neither dead or recovered.”<sup>24</sup> In response to the health crisis in America, Woodworth-Etter provided spiritual cures through her healing ministry that appealed to those who suffered as much from their proposed medical cures as from their disease. Letters of praise and thanksgiving from people who received spiritual cures fill the pages of Woodworth-Etters’s published work to embroider her claims of healing and prophecy including this report by Arthur C. Bell, Dean College of Physicians and Surgeons, “I stand as witness to the glorious work at the Woodworth-Etter meetings in Dallas. I have seen doctors enraged over these healings . . . calling meeting after meeting of the Medical Association to discuss steps of suppressing her work.”<sup>25</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, ideas of Christian perfectionism drew on an illustrious history of submission to the divine will, expressed through the passive endurance of pain that reiterates in the published work of Jennie Smith in her “valorized resignation” to illness.<sup>26</sup> Smith, an English missionary, recovered from her illness to become an itinerant evangelist preaching to others on the power of divine healing and she came to exemplify the way many evangelicals interpreted and responded to illness and pain. Lydia Pinkham provides yet another example of a Christian woman who grew up in “the forcing house of New England reform,” to assert herself as a proponent of holistic medicine.<sup>27</sup> Pinkham launched her career on the stage of medical reform with the invention of a vegetable compound that catered to the qualms of an alarmed

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<sup>24</sup> Edel, “Diary of Alice James,” 9.

<sup>25</sup> Woodworth-Etter, “acts,” 362; Wayne Warner, *Maria Woodworth-Etter: For Such a Time as This* (Gainesville: Bridge-Logos, 2004), 159; Also, *Polk’s Medical Register and Directory of North America: Index to the Physicians of the United States, Tenth Revised Edition* (Detroit: R.L. Polk & CO. Publishers, 1908), 180.

<sup>26</sup> Jennie Smith, *The Valley of Baca: A Record of Suffering and Triumph* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1880), 165-166. See work by Heather D. Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860-1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 2. For more on Christian Perfection see, John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1966), 27-28.

<sup>27</sup> Sarah Stage, *Female Complaints: Lydia Pinkham and the Business of Women’s Medicine* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 20-21.

public who distrusted conventional therapies proffered by physicians. Increasingly the public refused to take the poisonous cures of physicians turning instead to holistic remedies that promised relief and to common-sense cures that abjured the use of toxic medicants.<sup>28</sup> Holistic medicinal cures and alternative methods of healing were but one area of reform and public activism, other avenues of response included foreign and domestic missionary workers intent on providing conversion, instruction, and salvation. Foremost among these was the American Home Baptist Society. As with reform of her healing ministry, Woodworth-Etter participated in efforts initiated by the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) to spread evangelical doctrine through efforts of reform, education, and organization of women's support groups.

Initiated in 1832, the ABHMS was organized in New York City by Jonathon Going who served as the first Corresponding Secretary to advance the establishment of churches and proselytize to the unchurched.<sup>29</sup> In 1879, ABHMS reorganized its priorities under stewardship of Henry Lyman Morehouse to concentrate on "Winning North America for Christ" and the Christianization of minority populations to include: "Mexicans, Indians, negroes, and foreign-speaking peoples."<sup>30</sup> The stated purpose of ABHMS was the Christianization of America to an evangelical standard of belief through missionary efforts of education and reform. Through her ministry, Woodworth-Etter emulated the missionary efforts of the ABHMS, by training and dispersing missionaries to prisons and hospitals throughout St. Louis, noting, "the missionary spirit has gone out all over the great city; hundreds went out in the work from our meeting, and

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<sup>28</sup> Lydia Estes Pinkham, *Lydia E. Pinkham's Text-Book upon Ailments Peculiar to Women* (Lynn: Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company, 1880), 7.

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Fisher Henderson, Nellie Edith LaTourette and Kenneth Scott LaTourette, eds. "Correspondence of the Reverend Ezra Fisher: Pioneer Missionary of the American Baptist Home Mission Society in Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Oregon," *Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* 16, no. 1 (March 1915): 7.

<sup>30</sup> Lathan A. Crandall, *Henry Lyman Morehouse: A Biography* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1919), 55.



missions were started in several parts of the city.”<sup>31</sup> In keeping with the directives of the General Baptist Missionary Conference held in St. Louis, Woodworth-Etter “agree[d] on the need of the hour for foreign missions” and used her ministry to participate and further the work of preparing men and women to enter the foreign field.<sup>32</sup> Temperance was another reform of the Progressive Era in the early twentieth century whose influence reached among others, Woodworth-Etter.

The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was among the first to link secular and religious efforts of reform and to advocate for the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to prohibit intoxicating liquors in America. The WCTU organized in the 1870s and by the 1920s boasted over 766,000 dues-paying members who pursued progressive reforms of temperance, abstinence, suffrage, and evangelical Christianity.<sup>33</sup> In their missionary work, the WCTU expressed clear connection to the evangelical work of women devoted to social reform and suffrage.<sup>34</sup> Woodworth-Etter, in her thoughts on missionary work and temperance wrote, “We closed the session feeling encouraged and determined . . . to do more. God is calling women to rise. . . it was women that started the glorious temperance movement, which has grown into a mighty army and will go on until the accursed liquor-traffic [is] banished from our land.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Woodworth-Etter, “acts,” 198, 263; *The Life and Experience of Mrs. Woodworth-Etter* on women’s missionary groups, schools, and work in foreign lands, 52-67.

<sup>32</sup> General Council, Assemblies of God, St Louis, MO., “Interest in General Missionary Conference Growing,” *The Weekly Evangel*, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1917, [https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Assemblies%20of%20God%20USA/Pentecostal%20Evangel/Unregistered/1917/FPHC/1917\\_07\\_14.pdf#search=%22alice%20wood%22](https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Assemblies%20of%20God%20USA/Pentecostal%20Evangel/Unregistered/1917/FPHC/1917_07_14.pdf#search=%22alice%20wood%22) (accessed December 14, 2019); Woodworth-Etter, “Life and Experience,” 67. See the work of Rosemarie Linda Daher Kowalski, “Whom Shall I Send? And Who Will Go For Us? The Empowerment of the Holy Spirit for Early Female Missionaries” (PhD Diss., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2012), 144-145, accessed December 14, 2019, ProQuest Dissertations <https://search.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/1353635199/fulltextPDF/80B4186B7B174A74PQ/1?accountid=10771>

<sup>33</sup> Ian Tyrell, *Women’s World, Women’s Empire: The Women’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Woodworth-Etter, “Life and Experience,” 68. Sermons in the *Pentecostal Weekly Evangel* warned against drink beseeching prayer for the “thousands of wretched souls enslaved.” *Weekly Evangel*, May 5, 1917. [https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Assemblies%20of%20God%20USA/Pentecostal%20Evangel/Unregistered/1917/FPHC/1917\\_05\\_05.pdf#search=%22temperance%22](https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Assemblies%20of%20God%20USA/Pentecostal%20Evangel/Unregistered/1917/FPHC/1917_05_05.pdf#search=%22temperance%22) (accessed December 14, 2019).

Frequently, Woodworth-Etter would use the draw of her sensationalism to speak-out on the evils of the liquor trade and drum-up support for the WCTU when invited to speak.<sup>36</sup> Pentecostals of the early twentieth century represented a radical form of evangelicalism founded on the four-fold gospel of personal salvation, baptism, divine healing, and the post-millennial return of God.<sup>37</sup> The secular emphasis on promoting physical health reiterated with a similar insistence within evangelical traditions with the manifestation of signs and the outreach of faith to the “immediacy of the supernatural.”<sup>38</sup> Woodworth-Etter was influential among Pentecostal evangelicals who held similar views on the manifestation of signs and she changed the tenor of theological response to the practice, dissemination, and interpretation of gospel in ways that affected how it was received by others. Outspoken and controversial due to her methods of faith healing, Woodworth-Etter was challenged from within the church by evangelical leaders in the Church of God, who charged her with “misinterpreting the scriptures” and “false prophesies.”<sup>39</sup>

The challenge was indicative of doctrinal controversies that divided Pentecostal and evangelicals on exegetical issues of signs. Woodworth-Etter was reproached for controversial practices that led to her arrest, once for practicing medicine without a license in 1913, and again, in 1920, for obtaining money under false pretenses. At her trial, Woodworth-Etter was accused of misleading people by receiving money for healings that did not occur, when the jury failed to convict her, the charges were dismissed.<sup>40</sup> Newspapers across the nation were quick to try the case in the papers and in interview with A.V. Shotwell, Nebraska District Attorney, he declared

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<sup>36</sup> “Mrs. Maria Woodworth Holds Gospel Meeting: Services Unmarked by Unusual Scenes or Incidents,” *Indianapolis Journal*, September 26, 1885, [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov) (accessed December 15, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Joshua J. McMullen, “Maria B. Woodworth-Etter: Bridging the Wesleyan-Pentecostal Divide,” in *From Aldergate to Azusa Street: Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal Visions of the New Creation*, ed. Henry H. Knight (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 205.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>39</sup> June Melby Benowitz, *Encyclopedia of American Women and Religion 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* s.v. “Woodworth-Etter, Maria Beulah Underwood,” (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2017), 682.

<sup>40</sup> Benowitz, “Woodworth-Etter,” 682; Timothy L. Hall, *American Religious Leaders: American Biographies* (New York: Facts On File, 2003), 388-389.

he was ready to prosecute Woodworth-Etter if a “complaint was made against her and it was shown she [had] practiced medicine without a license.”<sup>41</sup> Labeled a charlatan by the medical community, Woodworth-Etter continued to practice healing by faith, provoking rebuke by medical practitioners who did not believe in her miracles.<sup>42</sup> In church and press reports, Woodworth-Etter was disparaged as a “trance evangelist,” and “cataleptic faith healer,” who claimed she could cure the blind and save the lame, charges she did not dispute, instead insisting that these were gifts.<sup>43</sup> Woodworth-Etter contended that such signs were essential aspects of her faith and her practice drew on traditions that located historically in the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. The physical manifestation of signs such as *glossolalia*, faith healing, and spirit communion came to distinguish and define Pentecostal Holiness traditions and her ministry served as a source of renewal for other evangelicals who believed as she did.<sup>44</sup>

In May 1885, when she stepped out onto the stage of the courthouse in Kokomo, Indiana the room, capable of seating fifteen hundred, was packed with the curious, the faithful, and those who saw her as a threat to the doctrines of the Methodist Church. Throughout her long career as a traveling evangelist, Woodworth-Etters’s publicized notoriety preceded her arrival to the expectant anticipation of anxious crowds as happened when she traveled to Missouri in 1904.

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<sup>41</sup> “Officials Here May Act,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, October 1, 1920, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov> (accessed December 16, 2019). In a second addition, Douglas County Attorney, A. V. Shotwell offers \$500 dollars for “testimony” leading to Woodworth-Etters’s arrest, “Fremont Leads in Infidels,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, October 2, 1920, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov> (accessed August 29, 2019).

<sup>42</sup> Paul Ellis, President Douglas County Medical Society, states in an interview “I don’t believe that miracles of the Bible are being repeated today. Most of these “healers” are out and out fakes.” *Omaha Daily Bee*, October 2, 1920, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov> (accessed August 29, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> “Razzle Dazzle Evangelism: Cataleptic Converter of Sinners,” *Indianapolis Journal*, December 9, 1886, [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov). (accessed August 29, 2019). “Mrs. Woodworth in Trance,” *Indianapolis Journal*, Sunday, May 30, 1885; “Claimed to Be Cured,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, September 4, 1890; “The Preacher Against Her,” *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, September 8, 1888. Meredith Frasier, “Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter Trance Evangelist,” *Priscilla Papers*, 33 no. 3 (Summer 2019): 3.

<sup>44</sup> McMullin, “Bridging the Divide,” 205.

Woodworth-Etter arrived in St. Louis to the heralded acclaim of newspapers in conjunction with the World's Fair in a coincidence of adept planning where she remained for six long months holding two meetings a day until the novelty of her healing ministry wore thin and the return of the faithful with their sustaining gratuities wore equally thin. In her comments on divine healing Woodworth-Etter wrote:

If ministers could cast out devils today in the name of Jesus and lay hands on the sick and have them restored to health, they would not preach to empty benches, nor mourn over the dearth of revivals. On the contrary, every minister who could do that would have crowded houses and a perpetual revival. And that is what God wants His ministers to do, and it is not His fault if they are not able to do it.<sup>45</sup>

Woodworth-Etter's ministry was among those serving in the vanguard of the Pentecostal rebellion against the traditional structure of the Methodist Church and her religious philosophy lodged in doctrines that promoted reform. As a minister, Woodworth-Etter remained convinced by the passages she quoted from her Bible and sought to reform the ministry of women with an assumption of authority in the church at a time when women were just beginning to apprehend their own authority in the secular world of political reform. In her sermons to women, Woodworth-Etter wrote, "My dear sisters in Christ, as you read these words, may the spirit of God come upon you and make you willing to do the work the Lord has assigned to you. It is high time for women to let their lights shine; to bring out their talents and use them for the glory of God."<sup>46</sup> Eager to express her support of women's ministry, Woodworth-Etter defended both her own right to preach and that of other women to prophesy by invoking scriptural references that

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<sup>45</sup> Roberts Liardon, *Maria Woodworth-Etter: The Complete Collection of Her Life Teachings* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 2000), 319; Woodworth-Etter, "Acts," 483.

authorized women to participate in religious outreach writing “Dear reader, God has called you and me into his vineyard to work, Why stand ye here all day idle?”<sup>47</sup>

In her defense of women’s right to participate in the dissemination of the gospel, Woodworth-Etter did not view herself as a feminist, suffragist, or even as political, but as one who had been called by the Lord. Woodworth-Etter felt herself imbued with the same divine authority as men and exercised that authority to represent herself to audiences as uniquely gifted.<sup>48</sup> Woodworth-Etter proved her ministry unique by welcoming the participation of black congregants for interracial services in ways that did not conform to what other Pentecostals in the “white branch,” of the Church of God practiced.<sup>49</sup> In her traveling tent ministry, Woodworth-Etter was accompanied by men and women of color who participated along with white members to exhort the crowd and provide support for her ecstatic trances.<sup>50</sup> In her Southern travels, Woodworth-Etter encountered racial prejudice from white parishioners prompting her to write:

The colored people were the greatest drawback. The Southern people are so prejudiced against them that they will not permit them to worship with white people. The white people said that if the colored were permitted to come, they would stay at home. Some of the wealthy citizens said they liked the meetings and would support them but would not do anything if we let the negroes come. Ministers and professing Christians said the same. I told them God had made the whole human family of one blood. Can we obey God and drive the hungry souls away?”<sup>51</sup>

Nonetheless, secular issues of race relations intensified inside the Pentecostal church to create an urgency of response to address the needs of the parishioners with reassurance and

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<sup>47</sup> Woodworth-Etter, “Acts,” 483.

<sup>48</sup> “Mrs. Woodworth In Trance: Evangelist Passes into Ecstatic State in Kokomo,” *Indianapolis Journal*, May 31, 1885; “A Miracle Worker,” *The Gazette*, October 8, 1887; “Nab Healer In Fremont For Fraud,” *Omaha Daily Bee*, October 1, 1920, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> (accessed December 17, 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Scott Smalridge, “Early American Pentecostalism and the issues of Race, Gender, and Poverty: A History of the belief System and Social Witness of Early Twentieth Century Pentecostalism and Its Nineteenth Century Holiness Roots,” (Master’s Thesis., McGill University, 1998), 73-74. file:///E:/Early\_American\_Pentecostalism\_.pdf (accessed December 17, 2019).

<sup>50</sup> “Razzle-Dazzle Evangelism,” *Indianapolis Journal*, December 9, 1886; “Insulted by her Audience,” *Indianapolis Journal*, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1886; “Trances of the Wicked,” *Indianapolis Journal*, December 18, 1886. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> (accessed December 17, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> Woodworth-Etter, “Acts,” 171-172.

solutions. As with any theological doctrine of practice and belief, many, but not all, Pentecostals accepted interpretations of scripture allowing black evangelicals to participate in white churches.

Overwhelmed, many churches continued to serve predominately white parishioners and denied the efforts of a black clergy to practice in white congregations.<sup>52</sup> Despite individual and institutional racism, many black Americans of faith remained convinced they received divine protection that would prevail over adversity.<sup>53</sup> For a majority of black Americans, especially in the South, racially divided churches meant continuation of segregated systems of education and worship.<sup>54</sup> The changed demographics of an increasingly diverse American population during the Progressive Era reflected increased immigration and the migration of black populations both of whom required assimilation and spiritual guidance.<sup>55</sup> Woodworth-Etters's ministry continued the practice of interracial worship in keeping with Pentecostal doctrines of inclusiveness that extended to the ministry of women and to the progressive demand for integration. A decision that placed Woodworth-Etters's ministry among the few churches in the Progressive Era that welcomed the ministry, participation, and testimony of black Americans. It should be noted that the anomaly of an interracial congregation during an era of conflicting reforms posed challenges even within the ministry of Pentecostals who adhered to the idea "that black and white partake of one communion, one God and Father of all."<sup>56</sup> The Pentecostal church in America reflected the

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<sup>52</sup> Richard S. Newman, *Freedoms Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University, 2008), 158; Richard Allen and Jacob Tapisco, *The Doctrines and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Philadelphia: John H. Cunningham Printer, 1817), 3.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher Robert Reed, *Knock at the Door of Opportunity: Black Migration to Chicago, 1900-1919* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 112-113.

<sup>54</sup> Jason McDonald, *Racial Dynamics in Early Twentieth-Century Austin, Texas* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 126-127.

<sup>55</sup> The black diaspora refers to the "fourth wave," of black migration that took place during wartime emancipation that forced dispersal of freed slaves North and West. Leslie A. Schwalm, *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2009), 14-15.

<sup>56</sup> R.G. Robins, *A. J. Tomlinson: Plain folk Modernist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 54.

further fragmentation and refinement of its doctrinal roots in Methodism both as a reaction to the formal liberalism of Protestant churches and as an expression of Pentecostal perfectionism.<sup>57</sup>

The emphasis within the Pentecostal church of the nineteenth century reoriented toward an eschatological and pneumatological experience. As a spiritual leader, Woodworth-Etters's ministry reflected reforms that sought to return the Pentecostal Church to its theological roots in the early Christian Church, writing:

We are living in the last days. If there could be a return . . . and the interrupted communication of God restored, the great decline of the power of the church would be arrested. Sorrowfully, we must acknowledge that the glory of former days has departed. The trouble with people is they believe this power was for the early church only. One of the fundamental doctrines of Christian religion is the immutability of an omnipotent God. He is all powerful and He has not lost that power in the centuries that have elapsed since the early church.<sup>58</sup>

Pentecostals have often viewed themselves as representing a restoration of the purity and power of the first century Apostolic Church.<sup>59</sup> A defining characteristic of Pentecostal doctrine relies on the experience of baptism within the Holy Spirit and the belief that those who have this experience of conversion will speak in "strange tongues," as initial physical evidence.<sup>60</sup> Again, The premise of Pentecostalism is that an individual can receive later blessings of the Spirit after initial conversion that results in a "second blessing" conferred by the Holy Spirit and evidenced by the gift of tongues.<sup>61</sup> Religious historian Vinson Synan contends Pentecostal practice initiated within Wesleyan traditions of the Holiness Movement and includes aspects of Christian perfectionism or entire sanctification as a rationale for deliverance from the residue of sin.<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>57</sup> Alan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 27.

<sup>58</sup> Woodworth-Etter, "Acts," 241.

<sup>59</sup> Anderson, "An Introduction to Pentecostalism," 25-27.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Vinson Synan, *The Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), xi.

<sup>62</sup> Synan, "The Pentecostal Tradition," 6; Alan Anderson contends much the same in his review of Pentecostal denominations but shifts his investigation to review the difference in the theological emphasis among

establishment of the Pentecostal church resulted, in part, from a conservative middle-class majority in Methodism who rejected and declined to support ecstatic experiences of conversion.

The result was as much a division of class as it was of doctrine. In the late nineteenth century, a movement arose around a gospel of social reform that united ministers of holiness traditions and unified the opposition of conservative churches and religious leaders. The movement began with Washington Gladden a congregational minister from Boston who, in accord with Walter Rauschenbusch a Baptist minister from New York, chose to advocate for a social gospel. The ministers proposed a theory of Christian Socialism as a replacement for what they rejected as an oppressive system of modern capitalism seen as the source of social ills that beset society: poverty, sickness, intemperance, and lack of sanitation.<sup>63</sup>

Synan notes it was people most affected by the inequity of capitalism, the destitute and underprivileged, who joined the Pentecostal Church.<sup>64</sup> The theological divide among mainline Protestant churches and Pentecostal denominations ran deeper than differences of doctrine and ideological contention reveal, it exposes the growing divide in intellectual, material, and resource allocation among middle and lower classes. Conservative Pentecostal theologians rejected the accommodating, transitional metamorphosis of the Protestant Church to what they perceived to be the intellectual rationalism and moral laxity of modern institutions and rose in defense of a literal exegete of scripture.<sup>65</sup> The liberalism of the social gospel doctrine reflected the pragmatic assessment of economic conditions by elite intellectuals such as Edward Devine who located in the privileged echelons of upper and middle-class society given to alleviating the plight of lesser

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middle and working-classes who initiated schisms within the Methodist Church that resulted in the forming of Holiness/Pentecostal denominations.

<sup>63</sup> Synan, "Charismatic Movements," 46.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Anderson, "An Introduction to Pentecostalism," 27; Synan, "Charismatic Movements," 45-46.



classes with acts of charity and philanthropy. In 1906, Edward Devine President of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, gave this assessment on the reform of philanthropy:

If I have rightly conceived the dominant idea of the modern philanthropy it is embodied in a determination to seek out and to strike effectively at those organized forces of evil, at those particular causes of dependence and intolerable living conditions which are beyond the control of the individuals whom they injure and whom they too often destroy.<sup>66</sup>

Historian Samuel Hays notes the “social justice movement was composed of ministers, intellectuals, lawyers and, above all, women . . . who were active in social justice reforms.”<sup>67</sup>

Social Christianity, long the concern of religious and secular women, has also been called: Social Gospel, Social Religion, Social Salvation, and Social Regeneration.<sup>68</sup> The influence of progressive socialism in the twentieth century cannot be discounted, considering its effect on the working classes who attended the religious revivals of faith ushered in by the ministries of Woodworth-Etter and by her stage, theater, and theoretical sequel, Aimee Semple McPherson.

#### Aimee Semple McPherson: Evangelical Celebrity and Institutional Leader

The Pentecostal ministry of Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944) was fashioned on that of her contemporary, Woodworth-Etter with whom she shared the same inclusive outreach that appealed to audiences. However, important theological, political, and practical differences set her ministry apart as singularly unique among evangelical churches. McPherson, with a flamboyant flair for the theatrical, used her carefully cultivated public persona to organize a ministry that inspired publicity and contention by departing from accepted norms of religious practice. McPherson was so successful as an evangelist that her original plan to build a wooden

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<sup>66</sup> Edward T. Devine, “The Dominant Note of the Modern Philanthropy,” Presidential Address to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, Official Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 1906. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/n/ncosw/ACH8650.1906.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext> (accessed June 17, 2019).

<sup>67</sup> Samuel Hays, *Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 104.

<sup>68</sup> Gary Scott Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation: Social Christianity and America, 1880-1925* (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), 3.

church in Los Angeles was discarded to accommodate the enthusiastic response to her ministry.<sup>69</sup> Instead, McPherson acknowledged the attention of the thousands who came to see her with the grand edifice of the Angelus Temple and set a precedent for future generations of evangelists.



Figure 4. *Aimee Semple McPherson: Hollywood pose inside Angeles Temple (1920)*. BBC News Magazine, *Mysterious Disappearance of a Celebrity Preacher*, 2014, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30148022>.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> “Thousands of Dollars Flow into Aimee’s Temple Coffers,” *Indianapolis Times* September 25, 1930. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015313/1930-09-25/ed-1/seq-14> (accessed July 5, 2020).

<sup>70</sup> McPherson was a prolific writer and public speaker on center stage with her radio sermons this link provides access to one of her sermons via youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOWgaJb2FVE> (accessed January 10, 2020).

McPherson poses in the style adopted by many popular performers of stage and screen in Hollywood, California. Figure 4 is in keeping with the era's fashionable advances for women with bobbed hair and a dramatic presentation heralding women's entry into the public sphere.

As a public personality, McPherson symbolized the confident new woman of the twentieth century participating in civic affairs and political exchange. McPherson began her obscure ministry in 1915, in a small mission in Canada where she had been invited to preach.<sup>71</sup> Still a young woman, McPherson had been twice married and once widowed by the age of twenty and was left with two young children to raise. In 1916, McPherson convinced her reluctant husband Harold to assist her evangelical aspirations with camp-meetings and tent-revivals in New England, moving to Florida when the weather turned cold.<sup>72</sup> By 1918, McPherson had learned what she would need to know as a female preacher and, alone this time, took her traveling tent show West to California. Smart and intuitive, McPherson could see the opportunities presented by the expansion and development taking place in California and wanted a church of her own. McPherson purchased a car with money raised from revival meetings and, with her mother and children in tow, took to the road. McPherson preached her way across the nation until she reached Indianapolis, Indiana where she stopped to attend the gospel meeting of her mentor, Woodworth-Etter.<sup>73</sup> It was October 31, 1918 when McPherson arrived in Indianapolis. The ban on public meetings due to influenza lifted leading McPherson to write:

For years I have been longing to meet Sister Etter. I have longed to hear her preach and to be at her meetings. Tomorrow Mrs. Etters's tabernacle will be open, and I will have the

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<sup>71</sup> In 1915, McPherson was invited to preach at the request of Pentecostal friends and ministers in a small mission in a village north of Kitchener, Ontario. Already well-versed in the practice of tongues and the art of divine healing, McPherson employed a variety of ruses to gain an audience. Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 107-108.

<sup>72</sup> Blumhofer, "Everybody's Sister," 112-113. See also accounts of McPherson by Daniel Mark Epstein, *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 120-130.

<sup>73</sup> Epstein, "sister Aimee," 140., McPherson admired and sought to imitate Woodworth-Etters talent as a female preacher who could attract an audience of committed followers. See Blumhofer, "Everybody's sister," 140.

desire of my heart. Glory! Called upon Mrs. Etter and attended the meeting in her tabernacle tonight. We rejoiced and praised the lord together. The power of God fell even though there were only a very few at the meeting.<sup>74</sup>

Buoyed by her transcontinental success and enthusiastic reception to her message, McPherson rolled into Los Angeles with her loyal entourage with plans to build her own church.



Figure 5. *Camp meetings sustained McPherson and company financially.* Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Camp Meeting Group, Holdrege, Nebraska, 2006, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ifphc/258867837>.

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<sup>74</sup> Aimee Semple McPherson, *This is That: Personal Experiences Sermons and Writing of Aimee Semple McPherson, Evangelist* (Los Angeles: Bridal Call Publishing, 1919), 213.



Figure 6. A temporary tent city set up by McPherson and her first husband Robert Semple. PBS, *Selling Religion*, 2020, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/sister-gallery-selling-religion/>.

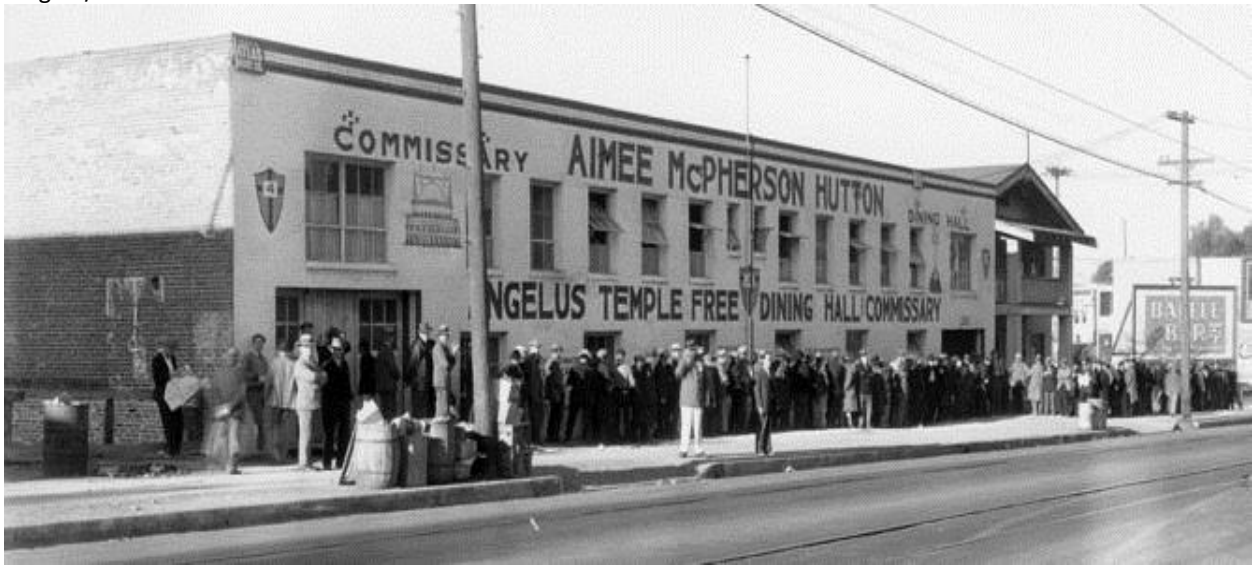


Figure 7. McPherson provided free meals to the homeless and indigent in Los Angeles, California. Wikipedia, *Men Wait in Line*, 2020, accessed July 13, 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Men\\_Wait\\_in\\_Line](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Men_Wait_in_Line).

Following her separation and divorce from her second husband Harold in 1921, McPherson married a third time in 1931 to actor David Hutton hence the name on the outside of

the mission where she catered to the indigent and homeless population of Los Angeles. That marriage lasted less than two years due to Hutton's much publicized scandals that damaged her credibility and her livelihood.<sup>75</sup> Social Services in California was not equal to providing aid to thousands who were out of work in the 1920s following the close of World War I that put many into bread lines stretching for blocks around missions such as this one.<sup>76</sup> The crisis in Los Angeles became so severe an article written for the United Garment Workers Journal reported, "Never in the history of Los Angeles have there been so many unemployed persons as are at present. There is no way to determine the exact number, but no doubt there are thousands."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Newspapers across America chronicled the soap-opera antics of McPherson's third husband, actor David Hutton who made headlines as the star attraction in an affair that ended in court for breach of promise. "Dimpled David Hits Snag," *Indianapolis Times*, September 17, 1931; "Portly Romeo is Hailed into Court," *Bismarck Tribune*, August 26, 1932. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> (accessed December 22, 2019).

<sup>76</sup> J.R. Vernon, "The 1920-21 Deflation: The Role of Aggregate Supply," *Economic Inquiry* 29, 3 (July 1991): file:///E:/The\_1920-21\_Deflation\_The\_Rol.pdf (accessed December 22, 2019); For a review of the fiscal policies leading into the recession see Elmus R. Wicker, "A Reconsideration of Federal Reserve Policy during the 1920-1921 Depression," *Journal of Economic History* 26, no. 2 (June 1966): 223-238. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/2116229?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2116229?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents) (accessed December 22, 2019).

<sup>77</sup> *The Garment Worker: Official Journal of the United Garment Workers of America*, "Unemployment in the West," 23, no. 34 (June 1924): 3-4, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015062198281&view=2up&seq=16> (accessed December 22, 2019).



Figure 8. *Inside the commissary men who were out of work and out of luck receive a meal.* Wikipedia, Unemployed Men, 2020, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

With the end of World War, I in 1918, the expanse of the Progressive Era slowed when the nation plunged into a recession in 1920-1921, that put many people out of work and into line for soup kitchens. McPherson operated her mission to provide for those who needed help due to the slowdown of the national economy following the end of World War I. <sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas W. Zeiler, David K. Ekbladh, and Benjamin C. Montoya eds. *Beyond 1917: The United States and the Global Legacies of the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); 25-30; Christina D. Romer, "World War I and the Postwar Depression," *Journal of Monetary Economics* 22 no.1 (1988): 91-115; Clarke A. Chambers, *Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action 1918-1933* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 178.

By 1928, four million were unemployed and family welfare agencies reported public need was the greatest since the winter of 1920-1921.<sup>79</sup> In response, McPherson operated food pantries that dispensed aid to those displaced by the new economics.



Figure 9. *Angelus Temple, 1923*. Wikipedia, Angelus Temple, 2020, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

On New Year's Day 1923, McPherson opened her much advertised Angeles Temple with seating for 5,300 it could accommodate up to 7,500. It was topped by a large, conspicuous neon cross that attracted thousands of curious Angelinos as well as many from out of town who came to see the show. To fund the cost of her lofty aspiration, McPherson once again took to the byways and hedges of gospel preaching to raise the more than 250,000 needed to build the nation's first mega-church.<sup>80</sup> The Angeles Temple when completed cost 1.5 million and offered worshippers stained glass windows, an ornately decorated dome 125 feet high, a baptismal tank

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<sup>79</sup> Chambers, "Seedtime of Reform," 178.

<sup>80</sup> Hadley Meares, "How America's First Megachurch Changed LA's Echo Park," *Curbed, Los Angeles* <https://la.curbed.com/2014/4/21/10112432/how-americas-first-megachurch-changed-las-echo-park-1> (accessed December 20, 2019).



fed by a real stream with waterfalls, a section dedicated to faith healing and a private room for speaking in tongues.<sup>81</sup> The Temple also boasted 25 exits to prevent the kind of stampedes McPherson had witnessed before when fevered revival meetings got out of control.<sup>82</sup>



Figure 10. *Choir and staging inside Angelus Temple*. Wikipedia, Choir at Angelus Temple, 2020, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

The large seating capacity and excellent acoustics inside the temple fit McPherson's style of preaching with a platform that could support an entire orchestra over hung by ornate

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<sup>81</sup> Colin Marshall, "Los Angeles in Buildings: The Angeles Temple," KCET Lost LA, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/los-angeles-in-buildings-the-angelus-temple> (accessed December 20, 2019).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

chandeliers, the stage included a gold harp, a Steinway concert piano, a Kimball pipe organ and elaborate sets that illustrated her sermons.<sup>83</sup> A decorated watchtower was provided where volunteers came to pray in response to prayer requests featured a painting of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and scenes of Jerusalem.



Figure 11. *Elaborate sets and costumed performers on the stage of Angelus Temple.* Wikipedia, Tambourine Players, 2020, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

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<sup>83</sup> Anne C. Loveland and Otis B. Wheeler, *From Meeting House to Megachurch: A Material and Cultural History* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 100-104.

McPherson staged elaborate sets to illustrate her theatrical reinvention of her journey “from milk pail to pulpit,” that she reenacted to the popular acclaim of her audiences.<sup>84</sup> McPherson literally debuted on the public stage of religious persuasion with theatrical performances that incited Pentecostal reaction, sparked controversy among many, and mentioned her name in newspapers across America. Beginning in the 1920s, McPherson capitalized on new technology that allowed her to insert her religious message into the sanctity of hundreds of homes with the introduction of radio. McPherson was an early pioneer of radio broadcasting in the 1920s in conjunction with her mega-enterprise the International Church of Four-Square Gospel. McPherson’s debut on radio came as an unexpected invitation when Rockridge Radio Station located in Oakland, California offered to air her program one Sunday morning in 1921. The nation’s first broadcast station was less than eighteen months old when McPherson took the “next logical step,” in her public ministry.<sup>85</sup> Doubtful of whether her broadcast would catch the attention of the public, McPherson was delighted when the station switchboard “lit-up” with calls from those who had heard her speak.<sup>86</sup> As an entrepreneur in the novel advent of radio religion, McPherson capitalized on her flamboyant personality to propel herself onto the public airwaves with religious broadcasts to listeners in remote localities and to solicit donations to her ministry. McPherson set herself apart from other religious women who preached by her public style of address, her savvy use of publicity, and by using her sense of what sold to raise money. Girded by visions of success, McPherson hit the campaign trail touting her vision for a “Center of evangelicalism in the West.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> For a review of Aimee Semple McPherson preaching listen to this recording of her story, “From Milk-Pail to Pulpit,” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQ9mr\\_a2uRs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQ9mr_a2uRs) (accessed December 22, 2019).

<sup>85</sup> Blumhofer, “Everybody’s Sister,” 183.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Lately Thomas, *Storming Heaven: The Lives and Turmoils of Minnie Kennedy and Aimee Semple McPherson* (New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1970), 25.

McPherson devised gimmicks to sell her vision by promising to identify donors in perpetuity by attaching their name to theater-type chairs that would be used for seating instead of regular pews and sold little bags of cement for five dollars each from the backseat of her car.<sup>88</sup> McPherson raised over one hundred thousand dollars from such ventures and solicited for more telling her supporters the new church would be consecrated to the “cause of interdenominational and worldwide evangelism.”<sup>89</sup> McPherson purveyed hope at a time when that commodity was in short supply. Having rode the lecture circuit, McPherson developed an acute sense of what her audiences needed and wanted to hear from her, and she delivered both with the practiced finesse of a consummate performer. McPherson filled the chairs of the Angeles Temple to capacity and the collection plate overflowed with revenue needed for her edifice.<sup>90</sup>

Over the course of her career, McPherson’s persona became increasingly notorious as she careened from one infamous affair to another and concluded rather spectacularly with her presumed drowning off a beach in Southern California. The drama following the disappearance of the evangelist created a media sensation in the press that did not end with her resurrection days later in Mexico.<sup>91</sup> McPherson had vanished only to reappear “days before her own memorial service,” claiming to have been abducted.<sup>92</sup> Outraged, the District Attorney for the County of Los Angeles decided to subpoena her before a grand jury for perpetrating a public fraud. The trial and prosecution ended with acquittal when evidence was ruled “insufficient.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Thomas, “Storming Heaven,” 25.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Newspaper reports in Douglas, Arizona and Los Angeles, California carried extensive coverage of the affair as did opinion editorials. Roger M. Grace, “Keyes Drops Prosecution,” *Metropolitan News*, October 15, 2007 <http://www.metnews.com/articles/2007/perspectives101507.htm> (accessed December 23, 2019).

<sup>92</sup> Lately Thomas, *The Vanishing Evangelist: The Aimee Semple McPherson Kidnapping Affair* (1959, reprinted Plano: Papamoa Press, 2018), 52.

<sup>93</sup> “Aimee Semple McPherson Dies Suddenly in Oakland,” *Los Angeles Times*, Obituaries, September 28, 1944 <https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/archives/la-me-aimee-semple-mcpherson-19440928-story.html> (accessed April 13, 2019).

Dismissal of charges against McPherson aroused public speculation that the District Attorney accepted a bribe and an investigation was launched to indict him. Cleared of suspicion, District Attorney Asa Keyes said he had reason to believe the kidnapping was, in reality, a tryst with a married man who was last seen with the evangelist in the seaside village of Carmel, California.<sup>94</sup> Undaunted, McPherson returned to Los Angeles greeted by thousands of well-wishers, skeptics, and clergymen who used the opportunity to further excoriate her. Cleared, McPherson resumed her ministry and her pulpit to the wide acclaim of her followers. In her role as a Pentecostal leader, McPherson's primary goal was the establishment and success of her church; nonetheless, as generational successor to Woodworth-Etter, McPherson was acutely aware of her social role to influence and further reforms that benefited women. In her ministry, McPherson advocated an "evolving view of women's proper role," contributing to the "powerful Progressive Era tradition of social and moral reform work" in Los Angeles.<sup>95</sup> In 1926, McPherson opened the Lighthouse of International Foursquare Evangelism Bible College (LIFE) in Los Angeles to establish a co-educational ministerial training school for young women and men who aspired to become ministers. At a time when most clergymen firmly discouraged women's advancement beyond the front pews of the church, McPherson actively sought their participation and encouraged women to train as future leaders in the church. The grand opening of the school was remarkable when Carlos Hardy, former trial Judge in the alleged kidnapping of McPherson, officiated to turn the first spade of earth for the groundbreaking.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> "Wait on Ormiston in M'Pherson Case," *Evening Star*, Washington D.C. July 20, 1926; "Aimee Now Identified as the Woman with Ormiston," *Douglas Daily Dispatch*, July 16, 1926 [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/) (accessed December 23, 2019).

<sup>95</sup> Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 60-61.

<sup>96</sup> Daniel Mark Epstein, *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1993), 332; Colin Marshall, "Los Angeles in Buildings," KCET <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/los-angeles-in-buildings-the-angelus-temple>; Kristy Maddux, "The Foursquare

In 1924, McPherson was invited to speak by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) to announce the nomination of Marie Brehm a temperance worker in Long Beach, California as candidate for vice president of the United States on the Prohibition ticket.<sup>97</sup> An interesting anecdote to McPherson's support of the WCTU arises from close ties between national leaders of the WCTU, the Anti-Saloon League, and the Ku Klux Klan illustrating conflicting and overlapping issues prevailing in the 1920s.<sup>98</sup> McPherson's civic outreach in support of the WCTU did not extend to the Ku Klux Klan who were known to visit her interracial services held at Angelus Temple in Los Angeles although she did accept money from them.<sup>99</sup> McPherson focused on establishing a ministry to interdenominational and interracial populations of African Americans, immigrants, and itinerant gypsies all of whom were made welcome at her services.<sup>100</sup> Acknowledged as a consummate businesswoman, McPherson participated in civic and community organization with public appearances and financial support locating her ambitious optimism in the mainstream of progressive reform. McPherson's use of media included several print publications, *Bridal Call*, published in 1917, the *Foursquare Crusader* published in 1927, and control of a radio station (KSFG) with private access to religious broadcasting.

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Gospel of Aimee Semple McPherson," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 14 no.2 (Summer 2011): 291-326. [www.jstor.org/stable/41940541](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41940541) (accessed December 27, 2019).

<sup>97</sup> Berry Hankins, *Jesus and Gin: Evangelicalism, the Roaring Twenties, and Today's Culture Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 27; Sutton, "Sister Aimee," 64; "Woman Named for Vice President," *Evening Star*, Washington D.C., June 7, 1924., "Wants to be Vice President," *Indianapolis Times*, June 9, 1924 [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov). (accessed December 27, 2019).

<sup>98</sup> Several sources exist to verify connection between the WCTU and the KKK. See Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 103-110., Jesse Latour, *Fullerton Observer* "A Brief History of the Klan in Orange County," January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019 <https://fullertonobserver.com/2019/01/07/a-brief-history-of-the-ku-klux-klan-in-orange-county-notes-on-the-banality-of-evil/> (accessed December 27, 2019)., Randall C. Jimerson, Francis X. Blouin, and Charles A. Isetts, eds. *Guide to Microfilm Edition of Temperance and Prohibition Papers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1977), 330. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015002702945&view=2up&seq=8> (accessed December 27, 2019).

<sup>99</sup> Epstein, "Sister Aimee," 243., Blumhofer, "Everybody's Sister," 187, 189,240,245, 275.

<sup>100</sup> Years later when her son, Rolf McPherson, took over as the leader of the Foursquare Church, he published accounts of his mother's colorful involvement with the gypsies relating how she had been called upon to pray for a sick child and later, in gratitude, the gypsies had donated an expensive stained glass window to her church. Rolf McPherson, "Early Recollections," <https://resources.foursquare.org/why-foursquares-founder-ministered-to-people-society-shunned/> (accessed December 27, 2019).

McPherson's violation of gender norms and her status as a single woman generated gossip and innuendo among her rivals and was spread by suspicious ministers at a loss to explain her success as an evangelical leader. As did many other successful women evangelists, McPherson wrote an edited version of her life for public consumption that elides the details of her escapades.<sup>101</sup> McPherson died young. She was only fifty-four when she died on September 27, 1944 and her death was an occasion for the obituary page of the *Evening Star* to reprint the lurid details of her life. Mourned by the faithful who attended to her in death as in life, McPherson was laid to rest in Forest Lawn Cemetery.<sup>102</sup> In an odd epilog to her life, a reporter who had covered her earlier trial for fraud asked several groups of women some young and some middle-aged, whether they thought she should have been convicted. The younger women responded with characteristic charity and optimistic restraint while the older women were far more critical.<sup>103</sup> More than 50,000 thousand people, including leading politicians, paid tribute to McPherson whose death "was a glamorous recession for the end of an era."<sup>104</sup>

McPherson bridged the transition of Pentecostal practice into the twentieth century with a style uniquely her own, but characteristically reminiscent of her predecessor Maria Woodworth-Etter. McPherson's work carried on three main principles of Pentecostal organization with an emphasis on health and healing, foreign and domestic agendas of missionary work, and the promotion of interracial services.

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<sup>101</sup> Recommended Reading, Grover C. Loud, "Continuous Performance," in *Evangelized America*. (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1928; reprinted 1971), 320-342.

<sup>102</sup> "Autopsy Seeks Cause of Death," *Evening Star*, September 28, 1944 [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1944-09-28/ed-1/seq-12/#date1](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1944-09-28/ed-1/seq-12/#date1) (accessed September 5, 2019). For greater detail of the funeral and processional see Edith Waldvogel Blumhofer, "Everybody's Sister," 376-377.

<sup>103</sup> "Aimee Semple McPherson Dies Suddenly," *Los Angeles Times*, September 28, 1944 <https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/archives/la-me-aimee-semple-mcpherson-19440928-story.html> (accessed December 28, 2019). Blumhofer, "Everybody's Sister," 375-376., Epstein, "Sister Aimee," 438.

<sup>104</sup> Chas Bosworth, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Making of Modern Pentecostalism, 1890-1926* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 27.

While the political novelty of McPherson's ministry moderated toward a tolerant acceptance of minority populations, the Pentecostal minister who followed her in the headlines most assuredly would not.

Alma Bridwell White: Religious Leader, Women's Rights Advocate, and Racist

Alma Bridwell White (1862-1946) stepped into the void of controversy created by McPherson's death with a determined will and an absolute sense of authority to ascend the pulpit and lead her church toward a racially segregated nation. The nation stood poised between two World Wars and bridled a foreign policy that alternately demanded strict isolation and one that sought to impose an imperialistic democracy on Asia and her European allies.<sup>105</sup> By the end of 1920, the nation transitioned toward a severe depression and American Christianity stretched between opposing polarities of modernism and fundamentalism.<sup>106</sup> The American reformation initiated by the Progressive Era intensified in its contradictory approach to national policy in reaction to the unparalleled influx of immigrants and the attritive close of a world war. Foreign and domestic national policy and American sentiment that had once coalesced around a unified front during the war years now fragmented along faults of theological outreach that divided American Christians from one another.<sup>107</sup> The confrontation in the theological war among modern liberal progressive Protestants and radical evangelicals reified in fundamentalist belief in

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<sup>105</sup> Bosworth, "The Making of Modern Pentecostalism," 27; For a dissenting opinion on American isolationism after World War I see Bear F. Braumoeller, "The Myth of American Isolationism," *Oxford Academic Journal* 6 no. 4 (October 2010): 349-371, [https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/579\\_mythofusisol.pdf](https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/579_mythofusisol.pdf) (accessed December 29, 2019); for a more recent assessment see Joseph Lieberman and Jon Kyl, "The Danger of Repeating the Cycle of American Isolationism," *Washington Post*, April 25, 2013, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-danger-of-repeating-the-cycle-of-american-isolationism/2013/04/25/16da45f8-a90c-11e2-a8e2-5b98cb59187f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-danger-of-repeating-the-cycle-of-american-isolationism/2013/04/25/16da45f8-a90c-11e2-a8e2-5b98cb59187f_story.html) (accessed December 29, 2019).

<sup>106</sup> Bosworth, "The Making of Modern Pentecostalism," 27-28.

<sup>107</sup> The reformation policies of the Progressive Era provoked contradictory responses to efforts of national welfare that did not end with the close of the war in 1918, but continued to cause division among Christians, see David Mislin, "One Nation, Three Faiths: World War I and the Shaping of Protestant-Catholic-Jewish America," *Church History* 84, no. 4 (December 2015): 882-862, file:///E:/One\_Nation,\_Three\_Faiths\_Worl.pdf (accessed December 29, 2019).



the “historicity of biblical miracles and the inerrancy of the Bible.”<sup>108</sup> The divide among Christians was further evidenced by the reaction of progressive modernists to calls for a return to the fundamental faith. In 1922, progressive minister Harry Emerson Fosdick ascended the pulpit of Manhattan’s First Presbyterian Church to deliver his sermon, *Shall the Fundamentalists Win?* In his sermon, Fosdick proclaimed the “fundamentalist program illiberal and intolerant”<sup>109</sup>



Figure 12 and 13 *Alma Bridwell White*. Association of Religion Archives, Portrait Alma White, n.d. accessed July 13, 2020, [http://www.thearda.com/timeline/events/event\\_391.asp](http://www.thearda.com/timeline/events/event_391.asp).

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<sup>108</sup> For some religious scholars the radical fundamentalism evincing after World War I stemmed from premillennial ideas that critiqued evolution, higher criticism, and liberal modern approaches to the scriptures, see Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 78-80. The Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy intensified public awareness with the Scopes trial in 1925 and debate following efforts of defense attorney Clarence Darrow and prosecutor William Jennings Bryan.

<sup>109</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, “shall the Fundamentalists Win,” <http://baptiststudiesonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/01/shall-the-fundamentalists-win.pdf> (accessed April 7, 2020).



Figure.14 *Alma White*. Jewish Philosophy Place, Conservative Christian Feminist, 2017, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://jewishphilosophyplace.com/2017/09/17/a-conservative-christian-feminist-the-kkk-mollie-alma-white/>.

Alma Bridwell White formed a divisive ministry repudiating unification with a call for a racially segregated white majority that exemplified the division among fundamental evangelicals and liberal progressives such as Fosdick.<sup>110</sup> As a child, White was raised by strict Methodist parents and brought up within the traditions of the Methodist church. As a young woman, White trained as a teacher in established Methodist colleges to pursue work in the public education system and eventually married a Methodist minister with whom she established and ran a Methodist church. In the years that preceded her own career as a minister, White separated from her husband over integral differences of theological interpretation and practice and declared the

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<sup>110</sup> The American religious community was deeply divided after World War I between pursuing national policies of unification epitomized by Woodrow Wilson's call for a "common covenant and practical cooperation," and revision to nativist sentiment. See the work of Johnathon Ebel, *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* s. v. "Religion," [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/religion\\_usa](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/religion_usa) (accessed December 29, 2019). In a related article see work by Patrick J. Houlihan, *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* s. v. "The Churches," [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/the\\_churches/](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/the_churches/) (accessed December 29, 2019).

Methodist church with its tolerant attitude the product of a “fallen” doctrine.<sup>111</sup> In turn, White was reprimanded by Methodist clergy for defection to doctrines that were established in the Wesleyan/Holiness Church and she espoused a return to the literal inerrancy of scripture. White’s conversion to the doctrine of Holiness came after a long, intense introspection that left her to realize “there was no going back. I must go through at any cost, for it is now holiness or hell.”<sup>112</sup> After a prolonged period of wretched despair, White reached the point where she felt she had received the second blessing of sanctification and divine imperative to preach a reformed gospel founded on a return to the gospels of the early church.<sup>113</sup> In 1901, White put her belief into practice with her ministry of the Pentecostal Union Church and changed the name to Pillar of Fire to indicate her spiritual evolution and doctrinal separation from Pentecostalism.

Freed from the constraint of Methodist polity, White fashioned her church to reflect a racially pure form of Protestantism. Social, civic, and religious equality for white women and an avid endorsement of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>114</sup> No monograph of White, her sociopolitical theology, or scriptural exegesis would be complete without examining her stand on women’s equality and their fitness to lead. White’s involvement with and support for women’s political organizations marks her activism on behalf of women and places the work of her ministry squarely on the front lines of dissent in the call for suffrage and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment presented to

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<sup>111</sup> The best resource to fully understand White’s attitude toward Methodism is her own published work. Mollie Alma White, *Looking back From Beulah* (Denver: Pentecostal Union, 1902), 133-134; 158-160. <https://archive.org/details/lookingbackfromb00whitalia/page/n5> (accessed December 30, 2019).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-125.

<sup>114</sup> The articles, books, and dissertations written on Alma White are extensive and exclusive of her own written work. See Nichole Kathryn Kathol, “The Power of Christ Compelled Her: The Intersectional Identity and Cultural Logic of Bishop Alma B. White,” (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2010); Nancy Clydelle Dixon, “The Women Behind the Hoods: An In-Depth Look at the Women of the Ku Klux Klan, Its Leaders, and the Appropriation of Feminism,” (master’s thesis, Western Illinois University, 2018); Kristin E. Kandt, “In the Name of God; An American Story of Feminism, Racism, and Religious Intolerance: The Story of Alma Bridwell White,” *The American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law* 8, no. 3 (2000): 753-794; Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

Congress in December of 1923.<sup>115</sup> In her advocacy for women, White strove to represent the fitness of women to lead in her many publications and in the support of her church for political organizations such as the National Women's Party (NWP).<sup>116</sup> Through the efforts of groups such as the NWP the right for women to vote was achieved but White, in accord with the militant leadership of Alice Paul and Harriet Stanton Blanch of the NWP, declared the battle only just begun.<sup>117</sup> White used the authority of her pulpit to dramatize the opposition women faced in their advancement to social and religious equity with men preaching "It may take years for women to be free from the bondage of subordination."<sup>118</sup> Although White's argument for women's equality agreed in substance with the NWP, it differed substantially in its theoretical justification drawing instead on the scriptural authority of the Bible for herself and that of other women to hold and execute positions of authority within the ministry and community.<sup>119</sup>

When entering the work to which I was called, I often sought for some consolation or promise from the Word and found much scripture that assured me that God would be with me and give me a weapon with which to tear down the strongholds of the enemy. My attention was called particularly to Isaiah 41:15, "Behold, I will make of thee a sharp threshing instrument having teeth. It was not pleasant to be made such an instrument . . . but, God had spoken and it was not for me to decide. To refuse to let Him use me in any way He saw fit meant to forfeit salvation."<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Ben McKelway, "Women's War Is Opened with Verbal Barrages," *Evening Star*, Washington, D.C. December 16, 1923. McKelway, "Women Play a Growing Part in Politics," *Sunday Star editorial*, Washington D.C. April 1, 1928. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1923-12-16/ed-1/seq-49/#date1=1920> (accessed December 31, 2019); The Alice Paul Institute, s. v. "The History of the Equal Rights Amendment," <https://www.alicepaul.org/era/history/> (accessed December 31, 2019).

<sup>116</sup> White published the monthly periodical *Women's Chains* as the main instrument of her public activism for women to advocate for the National Women's Party and used the forum of her pulpit to argue for women. See Susie Cunningham Stanley, *Feminist Pillar of Fire: The Life of Alma White* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1993), 98-99,106; Lynn S. Neal "Alma White's Bloodless Warfare," in John D. Carlson and Jonathon H. Ebel eds. *From Jeremiad to Jihad: Religion, Violence, and America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press,2012), 159-177; and Alma White, *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty* (Zarephath: The good Citizen, 1926), 128-131.

<sup>117</sup> Stanley, "Feminist," 108.,

<sup>118</sup> Stanley, "Feminist," 108.

<sup>119</sup> Alma White, *The New Testament Church* (Zarephath: Pillar of Fire, 1919), 217.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-218.

White's understanding of women's equality anchors firmly in scripture where she offers many examples to support her contention that women were meant to preach writing that not to do so would result in the forfeiture of their salvation.<sup>121</sup> An important distinction in the Wesleyan-Holiness Church is the belief that women in the New Testament Era Church once held positions as teachers and administrators next to men and played an integral role in the development of the primitive church. White's theology predicated on these scriptural injunctions to expand upon the larger role of women in society.<sup>122</sup> White's support of the NWP puts her in accord with reforms she advocated for in her sermons and instituted in her religious commune of Zarephath. White illustrated her commitment to the principles of the NWP with a commencement address in 1922, when she declared the "religious and political equality of the sexes" was established in the creed and operation of the Pillar of Fire.<sup>123</sup> White used her pulpit as a political agency of progressive reform when she sermonized the need for the "reconstruction of society" to support women's equality and again, when she used her talent as a writer of political commentary in *Women's Chains*, the periodical published in 1924, to call for an end to women's subordination.<sup>124</sup> White's ministry and political activism reflects in her approach to secular politics and religious exegesis in her sermons to women such as this one:

Down the ages woman has proved to be the most sincere, devout, and self-sacrificing in religion. She has tipped the scales against man's indifference and lack of fervency in the Spirit. Whenever woman has failed to scale the heights of human progress it has been because man forged her chains and kept her in subordination and thralldom.<sup>125</sup>

To bolster her argument for women, White concedes her interpretive authority to discern meaning to instead write the "Bible is a plain book and the Holy Spirit is the interpreter" and in a

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<sup>121</sup> White, "The New Testament Church," 230.

<sup>122</sup> Stanley, "Feminist," 99.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>124</sup> Stanley, "Feminist," 110-114.

<sup>125</sup> White, *Radio Sermons and Lectures*. (Denver: Pillar of Fire, 1936), 208.

similar vein, White takes aim at clergymen who refuse to share the pulpit as “unenlightened.”<sup>126</sup> White’s complicated trilogy of prejudicial bias involved three interrelated issues that were made prominent during the time of her ministry: One was her focus on the protection of white women from the corrupting influence of Catholicism, White’s other two concerns were a direct result of the first and focused on the influx of foreign immigrants who brought their cultural baggage and subversive religious ideas to the shore of a Protestant nation. White perceived a third threat in the form of interracial integration to the sanctity of white women and the Protestant home. No single issue divided Americans more in the early half of the twentieth century than immigration and the threat it posed to Protestant homogeneity and it resulted in legislative reforms by Congress to alleviate what many Americans viewed as a threat to white Protestant culture.<sup>127</sup>

White used the authority of her pulpit to inveigh against the threat she perceived to white women and by public endorsement of exclusive organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan whom she praised as defenders of American values. In her political comments on the religious orders of Europe, White notes World War I did much to “break up these ancient systems, but those who are in authority die hard and only under the lash of compulsion will they yield to progress.”<sup>128</sup> Again, White comments “If our American people would contrast the sacrifice of early settlers,

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<sup>126</sup> White, “Radio Sermons and Lectures,” 212.

<sup>127</sup> Substantial resources document nativist sentiment on foreign immigration and racial exclusion of black Americans in the 1920s one of the best is by John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955); Kathleen Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991); Thomas C. Leonard, *Illiberal Reformers: Race, Eugenics & American Economics in the Progressive Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Alma White and Branford Clarke, *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty* (Zarephath: Pillar of Fire, 1926); *The Good Citizen*, a monthly periodical was published from 1913- 1933 by the Pillar of Fire Press. Alma White, illustrated by Branford Clarke; “Patriotic Day at Zarephath Camp-Meeting,” Exposes the political racism of its authors, see photo reproduction <https://www.flickr.com/photos/8629844@N02/5965849098/sizes/k/in/photostream/> Also, “America---The White Man’s Heritage,” photo reproduction, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/8629844@N02/5965844550/sizes/k/in/set-72157627134215437/> (accessed January 2, 2020)., Office of the Historian Online, “The Immigration Act of 1924,” <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act> (accessed January 2, 2020).

<sup>128</sup> Alma White, *The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy* (Zarephath: The Good Citizen, 1925)., On black migration see Christopher Robert Reed, *Knock at the Door of Opportunity: Black Migration to Chicago, 1900-1919* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 266.

they would not be so prone to forget and allow European sentiment and propaganda to undermine our government and leave us impotent.”<sup>129</sup> Clearly, White opposes immigration and Catholic influence to embrace the Klan with their politics of racial superiority writing:

So long as people ignore that Roman Catholicism has played in the political history of the world, they cannot expect the lasting peace they desire. During the World War the wrath of God struck at the very foundation of the old papal system, but the smoldering fires will be fanned by the winds of fate into a conflagration than the world has ever known.<sup>130</sup>

White depicts the Klan as champions of social and political justice to tie their work to the benefit of white women writing, “Women have always been the greater sufferers under the violation of the law; and those who stand for law-enforcement are the espousers of women’s cause.”<sup>131</sup> In her disparaging remarks on the Catholic Church, White draws scriptural inspiration from Revelation 17:3, to portray Catholicism as a “Scarlet Mother,” of ill repute who “incubates and hatches schemes” to overtake and consume white America.<sup>132</sup> In her fundamental approach to religion, White is an embattled soldier in the service of the Lord at war against the corrupting influences of sin, lust, and the evils of the flesh. White’s endorsement of the Klan integrates seamlessly into her sociopolitical ideas, women’s protection, and preservation of white Protestant America. The Klan was God’s army “poised to defend her sex, her faith, and her nation.”<sup>133</sup> In her tirades and verbal assaults on racial minorities, White manages to isolate her religious exegete and practice from her predecessor Woodworth-Etter and from most of her Pentecostal contemporary’s in 1920, including McPherson.

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<sup>129</sup> Reed, “Knock at the Door of Opportunity,” 268.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> White, “The Ku Klux Klan in Prophecy,” 268.

<sup>132</sup> Lynn S. Neal, “Alma White’s Bloodless Warfare: Women and Violence in U. S. Religious History,” in John D. Carlson and Jonathan H. Ebel, eds. *From Jeremiad to Jihad: Religion, Violence and America* (Berkeley: University of California, 2012), 159-176, [jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1525/](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/10.1525/) (accessed July 12, 2019).

<sup>133</sup> Neal, “Alma White’s Bloodless Warfare,” 159.

White's political endorsement of women's suffrage resulted from ideas promoted by national leaders in the NWP who used nativist sentiment to suggest the votes of white Protestant women would effectively counter the seditious influence of Catholic voters.<sup>134</sup> For White, giving women the right to vote worked in complicated ways with her dislike of the Catholic Church, her nativist reaction to immigration, and her anxiety over the foreign displacement of American values. White's abrasive rhetorical assault against the Catholic Church results from her activism on behalf of women and her perception the popish empire hindered women's initiative to assert themselves and move beyond their domestic venues.<sup>135</sup> In a separate but related issue, White's virulent rhetoric stems from the growing political influence of the Church and Catholics in America. White's inherent racism toward people of color, foreigners, and Catholics links her complicated trilogy of hostility to become a significant factor in her endorsement of the Klan.

The contentious issue of White's sociopolitical theology intertwines as part and parcel of a much larger issue—Americanism. That issue itself was on the minds of many Americans before and especially after, World War I.<sup>136</sup> Despite her initial Pentecostal affiliation, White set her ministry apart from that of her evangelical colleagues with her adamant disputation and rejection of the gospel of tongues. In an honest reflection on her life and ministry, White notes "The route to heaven is one of loneliness and separation," that comment becomes a prophetic inditement of her failed marriage to Kent White when, years later, he suddenly adopts the doctrine of tongues.<sup>137</sup> White's rejection of this doctrine distinguishes her ministry and departs

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<sup>134</sup> Olympia Brown, "On the Foreign Menace," in Aileen S. Kraditor, *Up from the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 258; White, "Klansmen," 127.

<sup>135</sup> White, "Klansmen," 128-131.

<sup>136</sup> Stanley, "Feminist," 96., Also Higham, "Strangers in the Land," 179.

<sup>137</sup> White, "New Testament Church," preface., In another volume of work, White comments on her husband's sudden defection from his "strict orthodox belief," and his "acceptance of dogmas and practices which he formerly affirmed were unscriptural and Satanic." White, *My Heart and my Husband* (Zarephath: Pillar of Fire, 1923), preface, 5. In this work, White gives readers a glimpse of a convoluted theology that combines her rejection



from the accepted practices of her cohorts, despite the contemporary alignment of her ministry with McPherson. White's theology blended a unique and controversial ministry indicative of the discord among evangelicals in the early years of the twentieth century marking the close and contradiction of a progressive era of reform.<sup>138</sup>

Over the course of her career, White succeeded in establishing several radio stations that were used to broadcast her sermons to audiences unable to attend her meetings in church. White was not the first to discover the broad reach of radio, that distinction fell first to a minister in Pittsburg in 1921, then to McPherson in 1924, White's foray into radio took place in 1928. Radio was a relatively new invention by the time it was used for religious and commercial broadcasting in the 1920s, but the phenomena quickly became popular with American consumers and radio became "the door handle into a man's living room."<sup>139</sup> Radio became a formidable media tool in the hands of religious exhorters who used it to extend their influence beyond the boundary of the local community to those who lived in rural isolation. By 1920, radio as a commercial product was an efficient means of communication with the potential to reach audiences previously inaccessible and it had the persuasive power to bring in revenue. Religious entrepreneurs were quick to recognize the potential of radio and moved to take advantage of its possibilities. Radio took the street corner preacher to a whole new level of effectiveness and prepared the way for the next logical initiative of television that would debut in the 1950s.<sup>140</sup>

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of doctrine on tongues with her scriptural imputation of sin to the "colored race." White, *Demons and Tongues* (Bound Brooke: Pentecostal Union, 1910), 79-80.

<sup>138</sup> Tony J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion, and Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 92; Clyde Wilcox, "The Christian Right in Twentieth Century America: Continuity and Change," *The Review of Politics* 50, no. 4 (Autumn 1988): 659-681; A more expansive resource on the modernist controversy among evangelicals can be found in L. Dean Allen, *Rise Up Oh Men Of God: The Men and Religion Forward Movement and Promise Keepers* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2002), 265-266.

<sup>139</sup> Hangen, "Redeeming the Dial," 6.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

Radio became a surrogate for the disembodied conscience of a nation desperately seeking what scripture described as the “the still, small voice,” of God to lead them forth from the chaos of industrial progress.<sup>141</sup> The first church broadcast took place in 1921 by the Reverend Edwin J. Van Etten from his church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to raise money for a memorial. The *Oakland Tribune* carried an account in its Sunday edition describing the donations that came pouring in by way of an immediate response to his message.<sup>142</sup> Van Etten, still bewildered by the enormity of his accomplishment, wrote “The whole thing was an experiment, and I remember distinctly my own feeling that after all no harm would be done! It never occurred to me that the little black box was really going to carry out the service to the outside world . . . It is a very different thing broadcasting a service now.”<sup>143</sup>

Alma White followed the advances that had been made by others who were broadcasting religious radio addresses and in 1927, purchased and operated her own station (KPOF) in Denver, Colorado with another station (WAWZ) in Zarephath, New Jersey in 1931. White used her radio stations as part of a vast media arsenal that included books, newspapers, sermons, and numerous public appearances.<sup>144</sup> In time, White’s use of radio expanded to compose a major part of her ministry and in her initial broadcast White told listeners “The station belongs to all regardless your affiliation.”<sup>145</sup> There is little doubt radio revolutionized the dissemination of religion even though some who made use of it did so with reservation. The use of radio received a mixed reaction by clergymen who used it to reach out to their audiences as an impersonal

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<sup>141</sup> Spencer Miller, “Radio: The Fifth Estate,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 177 (January 1935): 135, [www.jstor.org/stable/1019975](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1019975) (accessed July 10, 2019).

<sup>142</sup> “Tablet Donated to First Pastor to Adopt Radio,” *Oakland Tribune*, Sunday Edition, June 10, 1923 <https://www.newspapers.com/image/> (accessed July 10, 2019).

<sup>143</sup> Miller, “Radio,” 135.

<sup>144</sup> Neal, “Christianizing the Klan,” 356.

<sup>145</sup> Bill Jaker, Frank Sulek and Peter Kanze, *Airwaves of New York: Illustrated Histories of 156 AM Stations in the Metropolitan Area, 1921-1996* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 1998), 36.

device “lacking the magnetism required to preach.”<sup>146</sup> Aimee Semple McPherson’s use of radio was fully conversant with her flamboyant style and public personality it suited her theatrical overtures and blended with her modern approach to religion. Alma White’s use of radio to broadcast her religious convictions made for an odd juxtaposition of her stern aversion to worldly indulgence through the means of modern technology.

White’s religious stand against drinking, dancing, card playing, and levity established the dour pattern of life at the commune in Zarephath where hard-work, vegetarian diets, and drab uniforms set its religiously convicted members apart from the rest of society. In 1907, an article in the *New York Times* described the Zarephath commune and the “religious hysteria” of its members who were caricatured in cartoons and derogatively referred to as “Holy Jumpers.”<sup>147</sup> In 1910, the *New York Times* again described the harsh conditions of life assumed by the sects 20,000 members, many of whom had arrived as immigrants, hustled from the ship dock to the farm.<sup>148</sup> Alma White’s control of the community was ironclad, her word law, and the autocracy of her rule unchallenged. Life in the commune was governed by a regimen of prayer and work—that divided daily chores among women and men without regard to gender. Workers wore uniforms that designated their assignments on the farm where they had two plain meals a day. Missionaries were schooled and dispersed to proselytize to all who would listen and hopefully buy the religious tracts the order printed to earn their keep. Doctrines of sanctification and conversion formed their core beliefs and were strictly adhered to along with the articles of healing by faith and prayer.

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<sup>146</sup> James M. Gillis, “Radio and Public Service,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 2, no. 1, Special Supplement: *Public Opinion in a Democracy* (January 1938): 75, [jstor.org/stable/2744789](https://www.jstor.org/stable/2744789) (accessed July 11, 2019).

<sup>147</sup> “Holy Jumpers Live by Leaps and Prayers,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1907, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1907/08/18/104993249.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2019).

<sup>148</sup> “Holy Jumpers Live by Leaps and Prayers,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1907, “An Old Religion Headed by a Woman,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1910, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1910/12/11/102052937.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2019).

The novelty of their communal life in the suburbs outside New York City kept the small community of Zarephath in the report of newspapers keen on exposition. To avoid the sin of vanity women were given a dark blue dress of common cloth that a *Times* reporter wrote “makes them look as if they were encased in dark heavy sacks tied in the middle wide enough to hang in thick folds.”<sup>149</sup> White’s literal exegesis of scripture kept the members of her sect isolated from the corruption, sin, and “backsliding” she denounced in her published work.<sup>150</sup> Isolation protected female members from the racial threat posed by New York City and protected the men of Zarephath from the corrupting influence of city’s carnal pleasures. Zarephath represented a unique opportunity for White to expand her own authority and to model that autonomy for other women to challenge designations that demeaned women in the public sphere. Within the institution of her church and commune, White extended her religious authority in direct contravention of church polity to install herself as prophet-founder and Bishop of Zarephath. White founded a community that was economically independent and organized despite its public designation as radical and different.

Through her novel institutional efforts, White reframed the terms of women’s political involvement with her support of women’s rights initiatives that demanded women be counted as citizens with the right to vote. More, as the undisputed leader of a thriving congregation, White fulfilled the role and duties of a public administrator overseeing the complex negotiation of economic and social life in a community. White’s control of the commune and her ministry provides a window into her character exposing her resolve to lead her congregation as a divinely appointed prophet legitimized by sanctification of the Holy Spirit.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> “Holy Jumpers,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1907.

<sup>150</sup> Alma Bridwell White, *Looking Back From Beulah* (Denver: The Pentecostal Union, 1902), 305.

<sup>151</sup> Alma White considered herself appointed to lead through identification with and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. White was alternately described as a zealot and as a dedicated Christian in administration of ministry.

In her ministry, White functioned as a fundamental dispensationalist relying on the literal inerrancy of scripture to inform her understanding of the Holy Spirit and guide return to a “purer form” of worship she believed signified the early church.<sup>152</sup> White’s war on the “immoral modernism” of a “fallen Methodism” resulted in forming her own sect and, subsequently, defection to doctrines offering an equity of status and recognition for women to preach. White founded her ministry on articles of faith contained in the creed of the Holiness/Wesleyan Church. These doctrines accepted healing by faith, enduement by the Holy Spirit, and blessings of sanctification, but denied doctrines that encouraged the practice of tongues. In many ways, White’s ministry paralleled those of her contemporaries, Woodworth-Etter and McPherson, but departed in significant aspects of practice. Over the course of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries religious women challenged church doctrine, but not to the extent of theological review brought on by the evangelical, charismatic Pentecostal women noted here. The political novelty of female led institutions of religion contributed to the changing perception of women as leaders and as ministers of reform that advanced women’s initiatives of authority in the church. Despite the “ambiguous” position of women to deliver prophetic scriptural leadership within hierarchies of Methodist and Pentecostal churches, the ministries of Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Alma Bridwell White did just that.

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Nichole Kathryn Kathol, “The Power of Christ Compelled Her: The Intersectional Identities and Cultural Logic of Bishop Alma B. White,” (PhD. Diss. University of Kansas, 2010), 102-103; Lindley, “You Have Stepped Out of Your Place,” 330-331; Blee, “Women of the Klan,” 73; White, “Looking Back,” 111-117, 203.

<sup>152</sup> Kandt, “In the Name of God,” 767; Blee, “Women of the Klan,” 73.

## Summary and Analysis

In the wake of their controversial ministries each of the women who are described here established recognition for themselves, and for that of other women, as organizers and leaders of religious institutions despite the resistance of obdurate clergymen. In doing so, they transformed the religious landscape by offering representation of authoritative women in control of their lives and careers. While the ministries of these women did not conform within a single approach to salvation, neither did the progressive reforms of an era beset by industrial expansion, change, and immigration. As archetypes of religious innovation, the women profiled fulfilled the primary objective to promote reforms that advanced women's initiatives of authority in the church and challenged prevalent hierarchies of institutional control that prohibited women from obtaining positions of authority in civic and religious organizations. Woodworth-Etter did not set out to challenge the existing structure of hierarchal dominance exerted by the church, but her public itinerancy of raw emotion and spiritual enduement collapsed many of the previously held notions about women. To the contrary, McPherson sought precisely to engage the garish lights of the stage to enhance her appeal to audiences and to garnish attention and revenue. Of the three women, Alma White was perhaps the most complicated and the most successful in her leadership of thousands who followed her ministry, worked in her commune, published monthly periodicals operated colleges, and radio stations. Many of her followers branched out into ministries of their own to disperse doctrinal beliefs that included promoting her progressive optimism and support for the advancement of women through suffrage and initiatives of the National Women's Party. The political novelty of White's ministry worked to establish a base of support for women actively engaged in campaigns to secure the vote and to lobby for an amendment to create equal rights for women that would be guaranteed by law.



**Realm Commander Leah E. Bell and her Staff in Front of the Assembly Hall, Zarephath**

Figure 15. *Ku Klux Klan, Zarephath, New Jersey 1920*. Wikipedia, Klan Gathering, 2020, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In her adamant rejection of core beliefs within Pentecostalism, White changed the name of her congregation from the Pentecostal Union Church to The Pillar of Fire to underscore ideological and theological remove from doctrines inspired by the “old red flesh dragon.”<sup>1</sup> White focused on a return to the pure principles of Methodism that informed the Corinthian Church of the first disciples that authorized women to preach and administer doctrines of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> White based her understanding of the early church on scripture that described it as one that was “divinely led, and “composed of Spirit-filled men and women.”<sup>3</sup> For White, the early church modeled the separation of good and evil, light and dark, the separation of those who were called out to witness the true church free from entanglement.<sup>4</sup> Despite rejecting the Pentecostal doctrine of tongues, White believed in the power of the Holy Spirit to heal writing:

In most of the modern churches, to advocate the healing of the sick by prayer and faith is looked upon as fanaticism. It would be just as reasonable to deny the atonement as to say that the gift of healing has been withdrawn from the church. In most modern pulpits divine healing is an unpopular doctrine. In many years of experience with Methodists, I never knew one to call the elders to pray with the sick. Even those that claimed to be consecrated ran to the medicine man as soon as there was sickness in the family.<sup>5</sup>

With this, White joined with McPherson and Woodworth-Etter in their support for and practice of healing by faith noting “when Jesus walked the earth there were no incurables and no demons so strongly entrenched but that they were subject to His rebuke.”<sup>6</sup> White typified the Christian response of personal accountability to issues of good health with her refusal to eat meat

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<sup>1</sup> White, *Demons and Tongues* (Bound Brooke: The Pentecostal Union, 1910), 78-79.

<sup>2</sup> White, *New Testament Church* (Zarephath: Pillar of Fire, 1919), 267; Vincent P. Branick, *First Corinthians: Building up the Church* (New York: New City Press, 2001), 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> White, “New Testament,” 267.

<sup>4</sup> White, “New Testament,” 12-13; Branick references “Apocalyptic Dualism,” as Paul’s separation of cosmic forces that control the universe and divagate the kingdom of God *pneumatikos* (spiritual) from that of the corruptible body, *psychikos* (nature) the difference lies in the transformation of the spirit. Branick, “First,” 13.

<sup>5</sup> White, “New Testament,” 125.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.



citing scriptural injunction prohibiting consumption of pork and noting many people fell ill after consuming chicken “We scarcely look at a daily paper without finding an account of meat poisoning.”<sup>7</sup> In response, White used science as a rational:

At the present time the dreadful foot and mouth disease is spreading with such rapidity that at least fifteen states have been quarantined. Foot and mouth disease is caused by a germ so small that it passes through the finest filter and cannot be seen with the most powerful microscope. No remedy for the disease has ever been found.<sup>8</sup>

White was aware of the empirical science in 1915, connecting cancer with consumption of pork to militate for abstinence and control of appetite citing liquor as a substance that perverts the will of those who use it writing “Liquor has long dominated the nation . . . those that use it have little power over their own will. May God hasten the day when the accursed [liquor] traffic will be wiped off the face of the earth.”<sup>9</sup> White’s stand against the liquor trade stemmed from twin sources of inspiration: one was her effort to conjoin the issue of good health with abstinence the other was her often repeated accusation that Catholic politicians were to blame for importation.

Although McPherson did not practice or exhort abstinence to her parishioners, she did hold faith healings in her Angeles Temple that were reported in her periodical *The Foursquare Crusader*. Testimony by witnesses told of miraculous cures performed by McPherson who “was at her best when the spirit of the Lord was upon her as she spoke with conviction that sank deep into the heart of every listener.”<sup>10</sup> McPherson’s civic and political involvement with the WTCU extended to providing free meeting rooms and sponsoring luncheons inside Angeles Temple for

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<sup>7</sup> White, *Why I Do Not Eat Meat* (Zarephath: Pentecostal Union, 1915), 21.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>10</sup> “Fire Falls In God’s Powerhouse,” *Foursquare Crusader*, 2 no. 40 (August 29, 1928): pentecostalarchives.org (accessed January 15, 2020).

Friends of the Prohibition Act.<sup>11</sup> As editor in chief of the *Foursquare Crusader*, McPherson authorized her weekly newsletter to report on a wide spectrum of current affairs that engaged civic and political news. As contemporaries, McPherson and White contended with issues relevant to their time, but did so from perspectives that yielded contradictory opinions as when White comments on capitalist systems of wealth revealing what she sees as a failed system:

The subject that concerns most people today is that of labor. It is agitated in every avenue of political and social life. There are endless discussions and divisions that often result in bloodshed. People not only toil for their daily bread, but the great problem is to find something to do. Millions are in strife for existence. The industrial systems are becoming more and more complicated and the cry is ever heard from those who are under the heel of the capitalist.<sup>12</sup>

Contrary to White's position, McPherson capitalized on free enterprise building an interactive and successful megachurch that operated under capitalist rules of endeavor to produce revenue. Objections over interpretations of doctrine and rivalry among evangelical ministers was common and White posed no exception when she engaged discursive commentary of McPherson to voice her opinion on more than the usurious tactics of capitalists. White chose to comment on her fellow ministers with "scathing criticism of the church of Mary Baker Eddy" and, in a public exchange with McPherson from her box at Albert Hall in London, White challenged the "kidnapping" of her rival McPherson. White, described by a London reporter as a "resolute woman with the mien of an inspired laundress," taunted McPherson with questions as she stood to deliver her sermon from the stage clearly regarding her as a "poacher upon her preserve."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "WTCU President to Give Report on Boston Convention," *Foursquare Crusader*, 3, no. 6 (January 9, 1929): pentecostalarchives.org (accessed January 15, 2020). McPherson sponsored the branch of the WTCU that met at Angeles Temple in Los Angeles.

<sup>12</sup> White, "Why I Do Not Eat Meat," 34.

<sup>13</sup> "Poor Aimee" *Time Magazine* 12, no. 17 (October 22, 1928), *Time Magazine Archive*, <https://time.com/search/?q=%22poor%20Aimee%22> (accessed January 16, 2020). White organized a successful branch of her ministry in London and did not spare her vitriolic rhetoric of rival ministries. See note 212 in Kirsten E. Kandt, "Historical Essay," page 776; Lynn S. Neal, "Christianizing The Klan," note 13, page 355 cites McPherson as a "Necromancer."

Los Angeles, California proved a fertile field for evangelical harvest and played host to Maria Woodworth-Etter when she arrived to convert and save the souls of suntanned sinners. In 1917, preceding the arrival of McPherson, Woodworth-Etter began a series of revival meetings in the People's Auditorium in South Los Angeles with successive "waves of glory and power," building to rescue those "far out on the sea of life."<sup>14</sup> The Holiness Movement in Colorado that gained momentum under the direction of Alma White also witnessed evidence of her imprint in Los Angeles, California with the *Galilean Training School* where White served as President, and with the Pillar of Fire "A Wesleyan Holiness Church affiliated with Alma White."<sup>15</sup> Despite the coincidental timing of their ministries differences of inclusion and administration could not have been more profound among White and McPherson as illustrated by this notice in the *Foursquare Crusader* advertising assistance for the poor and needy:

"For ye shall deliver the needy when he crieth" Helping to deliver the needy in a time of distress and want is one of the biggest missions of the Angeles Temple commissary. According to the President of the City Sisters Organization during the first month of the year both departments were able to give aid to several hundred people who sought help from Angeles Temple. Whether black, white, or yellow, Jew, Gentile, or Catholic, anyone seeking help at the Temple commissary is not turned away.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the panic of unemployment gripping the rest of the nation, the news headlining the *Foursquare Crusader* proclaimed, "No Depression in Heaven," and work for hundreds as the

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<sup>14</sup> "The Etter Meeting in Los Angeles, California *The Weekly Evangelical*, no. 181, (March 17, 1917), <https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/> (accessed January 19, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> Cecil M. Robeck, *The Azusa Street Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Emanate Books, 2006), 187; E.O. Watson, ed. *Yearbook of the Churches 1924-5*, Published for the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, (New York: J.E Stohlmann, 1924), 95.

<sup>16</sup> "Angeles Temple Aids Poor, Needy with Food, Clothing," *Foursquare Crusader*, 8, no. 17. (February 7, 1934), <https://pentecostalarchives.org/> (accessed January 19, 2020). At the height of the depression in 1932 over twelve million people were out of work and could not get a job. Almost half of the banks in the United States either failed or merged with other banks. Milton Friedman and Anna Jacobson Schwartz, *The Great Contraction, 1929-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 241. A. P. Carter and family composed and recorded this song in 1936, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkIKbR832og>

growing sensation of McPherson's ministry took hold.<sup>17</sup> White, too, experienced the growth of her church as the depression deepened and people sought relief from the spiritual and economic crisis that resulted. Reports of membership in the Pillar of Fire vary from a modest 2,950 in 1931 to a high of 4000 in 1936. It would not be until 1937 and American response to events leading up to the start of World War II that membership would soar to a high of ten thousand.<sup>18</sup> The often controversial ministries of these women provide a way to interpret the discreet historical moment in which they located as complex appropriations of the social and political production of an era. Beginning with the ministry of Woodworth-Etter who ushered in a new approach to evangelical faith and practice with her public performances to the glamorous stage ministry of McPherson who set new records for attendance and revenue to the reclusive tyranny and nativism of White; all contributed to the growing phenomena of female led organizations and religious institutions.

The ministry of these women and others written out of the historical context established new expectations for both religious and secular women in the political sphere of public relations. Women who identified as either Pentecostal or Holiness advocates did not declare themselves publicly as feminist with exception of Alma White who committed herself and her ministry to supporting women's issues as a result of her scriptural exegesis and understanding. Indeed, the ministry of Amy Semple McPherson forged on her personal appeal to mixed audiences as a new ideal of the modern Christian woman: strong, competent, and feminine. Maria Woodworth-Etter, never surrendered her femininity even as she led a successful ministry of miracles and wonders.

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<sup>17</sup> "Cities Plead for Foursquare Gospel," *Foursquare Crusader*, 8 no. 17, (February 7, 1934), <https://pentecostalarchives.org/> (accessed January 21, 2020).

<sup>18</sup> Association of Religion Data Archives, "Pillar of Fire," [http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D\\_1352.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1352.asp)., *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s. v. Alma Bridwell White, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alma-Bridwell-White>., H. L. Mousheng and George Kao Lin eds., "China Declares War on the Axis Powers," *Contemporary China: A Reference Digest* 1 no. 15, (December 15, 1941): 253. <http://ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/411209b.html>., For full text see, <https://books.google.com.sb/books?id=sII8AQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed January 21, 2020).

The religious and political novelty of ministries established by Maria Woodworth-Etter, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Alma Bridwell White decisively addressed issues of concern to women such as suffrage and recognized their right to participate equally in the public forum. The politically public approach taken by the three Pentecostal ministries to promote women's issues was as exceptionally individual as was the leadership that drove their commitment and resolve. For Woodworth-Etter the focus was on women as spiritually endowed members of the religious community who were scripturally justified to speak out and were "required to work for the advancement of Christ's cause upon the earth."<sup>19</sup> In her many disquisitions on the subject of women, Woodworth-Etter wrote decisively, "I maintain that, by the prophecy of Joel, women [are] to participate in this work with their brethren."<sup>20</sup> While Woodworth-Etter did not directly address the political issue of suffrage for women, she did argue for their right to answer the call to preach insisting there was as much to sustain their position to exhort as there was for men.<sup>21</sup>

Aimee Semple McPherson aligned closely with Woodworth-Etter's position in that she did not risk alienation of her male audience with the belligerent rhetoric employed by suffragists. Instead, in a baccalaureate sermon to the female graduates of LIFE Bible College, McPherson entreated "Go on with the word of God."<sup>22</sup> Speaking passionately, McPherson eulogized heroic woman of the Bible telling her graduates, "The Lord is calling the handmaidens today as well as the servants; the daughters as well as the sons. There are some who believe that a woman should never witness for Jesus Christ that her lips should be sealed. This is not the Word of God."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Maria Woodworth -Etter, *Acts of the Holy Ghost: The Life, Work, and Experience of Mrs. M. B. Woodworth-Etter, Evangelist* (Dallas: John F. Worley, n.d.), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 205.

<sup>23</sup> Aimee Semple McPherson, "Baccalaureate Sermon," *The Bridal Call Foursquare Forever* XIII no. 9 (February 1930), 5.

<https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/International%20Church%20of%20the%20Foursquare%20>

McPherson was unwilling to risk public censure to campaign openly for women's issues, nonetheless she did use the authority of her position to stage public debates to deliver opinions on the relative merits of female preachers with other "gentlemen preachers."<sup>24</sup> In her approach to women's issues, McPherson's unabashedly feminist viewpoint was made clear when she reviewed biblical accounts of the Fall cited by her male adversary's as proof and reason for women's subjugation to men. McPherson, in her reply to charges of corruption leveled at Eve, said, "God made man out of mud. He made Eve out of a rib. Although the creation of woman may have been a second thought, the second thought is often better than the first."<sup>25</sup> McPherson's rebuttal to charges Adam was "deceived," delivered the final *coup d'etat*; "I did not think my opponent would bring up that subject, Eve did that which she did having been deceived. But Adam knew better. He was not deceived. Therefore, He was the much greater sinner, for he sinned deliberately with his eyes open."<sup>26</sup> McPherson, as did her contemporary Woodworth-Etter, remained focused on scriptural legitimization to justify women as preachers and participants in the public forum to dispense gospel.

For McPherson and Woodworth-Etter overt issues such as suffrage were better left to the determined women marching down Main Street. Although McPherson was silent on feminist issues her demeanor, lifestyle, and mode of dress belied the demure public image she cultivated. In a well written assessment of early Pentecostals, Scholar Leah Payne describes McPherson as "ultra-feminine" and as someone who "adorned her body with attractive outerwear," even as she

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Gospel/Bridal%20Call%20Foursquare/Unregistered/1930/ICFG/1930\_02.pdf#search=%22baccalaureate%20sermon%22 (accessed June 26, 2020).

<sup>24</sup> A spirited debate on the merit of female preachers as opposed to men took place between McPherson, and two male preachers on the stage of her Angelus theater. McPherson, "Should Women Preach the Gospel," *Foursquare Crusader* (April 1934), 1. [https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/International%20Church%20of%20the%20Foursquare%20Gospel/Foursquare%20Crusader/Unregistered/1934/ICFG/1934\\_04\\_11.pdf#search=%22women%22](https://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/International%20Church%20of%20the%20Foursquare%20Gospel/Foursquare%20Crusader/Unregistered/1934/ICFG/1934_04_11.pdf#search=%22women%22) (accessed June 26, 2020).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

performed acts considered inappropriate for a woman such as purchasing real estate, creating media empires, and public performances of theater.<sup>27</sup> As a denomination, Pentecostals in the nineteenth and early twentieth century reflected the greater social sentiment about women that extended a cautious reserve toward women outside the home. Payne draws distinction between mainline Protestant women who embraced feminist ideology and their conterminous cousins, Pentecostals. In her study, Payne finds the foundations of a split between suffragists and those who formed a strong organizational front against legislating the Nineteenth Amendment. Payne writes “political enfranchisement, women’s clubs, and commercial privileges lead women away from her sphere that is the home, and as she goes away from home, she goes away from her real self.”<sup>28</sup> Payne contends that Pentecostals “sided with those who argued a women’s femininity would be jeopardized if she ventured too far from home.”<sup>29</sup>

Social attitudes toward women in the public space of commercial enterprise and politics evidenced vestigial reserves of prurient prejudice equating the public sphere with immorality.<sup>30</sup> In context with these sentiments, Payne argues women, such as McPherson who bobbed her hair, risked censure as profane women who hastened the end of time.<sup>31</sup> McPherson’s departure from established norms set her at odds with Pentecostal expectations for women and may have been responsible for her reticence to endorse suffrage publicly. One woman, however, was not daunted or deterred by threats of public censure and behaved with the impunity of a leader. Alma Bridwell White stood alone on the stage of her ministry to support and mitigate for women’s rights. Fearless and outspoken, White joined the public debate on suffrage with her active

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<sup>27</sup> Leah Payne, “Bobs and the Character of our Citizenship: Early Pentecostals, Women, and Public Life in the United States of America,” *Nova Religio* 23 no. 2 (November 2019), 51. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/744415/pdf> (accessed June 26, 2020).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.

participation on behalf of white, Protestant women in America. In tandem with Alice Paul, President of the National Women's Party (NWP) White supported the Equal Rights Amendment to bolster support for legal protections that would ensure against discriminatory practices toward women. Additionally, White embraced feminist ideology in her publications to exhort on behalf of women's issues and lend support to the cause of suffrage.<sup>32</sup> Several things explain why Alma White was so fervently supportive of women's rights: First, there was her turbulent history with the Methodist Church and her fight for the right to preach. Second, and more cogently significant for White, there was her firm belief that white women were in danger not only from non-white immigrants, but also from the egregious attitudes of white men that denied their abilities. In support of suffrage, White used the resources of her media enterprises to lobby for passage of suffrage and joined with Alice Paul to pursue additional legislation.

In the United States, the issue of suffrage became a *cause célèbre* for the thousands of women who identified under its precepts. Advocate Ida Harper Husted chronicles the extent of women's involvement with the issue writing "The sentiment for women's suffrage is stronger, more general and more widespread than any other public question before the people today."<sup>33</sup> The issue of suffrage was so pervasively debated throughout the states that many organizations rallied to either support or mitigate against it. Among those who lent support were: International Council of Women, Women's Christian Temperance Union, National Grange, American Federation of Labor, National Women's Trade Union league, National Education Association, National Child Labor Committee, National Consumers League, National Conference of Charities

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<sup>32</sup> "Hits Indifferent Women: Bishop Alma White Says Inactivity is Alarming," *Evening Star*, Washington D.C., December 27, 1923 <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1923-12-27/ed-1/seq-4/> (accessed June 26, 2020)., Alma White, *Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty* (Zarephath: The Good Citizen, 1926), 15. [https://archive.org/details/dudeman5685\\_yahoo\\_LGOL/page/n1/mode/2up?q=suffrage](https://archive.org/details/dudeman5685_yahoo_LGOL/page/n1/mode/2up?q=suffrage) (accessed June 26, 2020)., Alma White, Arthur K. White, eds. *The Harp of Gold* (Zarephath: Pillar of Fire, 1921), 237.

<sup>33</sup> Ida Harper Husted, "The Sentiment for Woman Suffrage," in *Woman Suffrage: History, Argument, and Results*, ed. Frances Maule Bjökman (New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1913), 210.



and Corrections, National Purity Conference, National Women's Single Tax League, and a large number of Women's Clubs.<sup>34</sup> Husted's study compiled a number of opinions on suffrage from eminently placed people including Florence Kelly Secretary of the National Consumers League who wrote "We make some gains for children by the method of persuasion and petition. But child labor can be abolished only when women of every state are given equal authority with men in the political and industrial life of this Republic."<sup>35</sup> For women such as Jane Adams whose work involved efforts to alleviate and refocus attention on the causes of poverty the issue of suffrage was paramount in the fight to obtain decent housing and living conditions for women and children. Appalled by conditions in the tenements of industrial cities and the lack of clean living space, Adams complains women have no way to remediate these problems and are "utterly dependent upon the city administration for the conditions which render decent living possible."<sup>36</sup>

Carrie Chapman Catt Director National American Woman Suffrage Association and the founder of the League of Women Voters was among those who labored for women's rights with Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. In her essay on suffrage, Catt asks "Did you know that votes for women is one which commands the attention of the whole civilized world?"<sup>37</sup> The attention given to the question of enfranchising women with the right to vote mobilized men and women who sought to rectify the inequity of coverture that for generations had kept women in social and domestic chains.<sup>38</sup> Although suffrage was a national issue at the forefront of heated debates and legislative initiatives across America, one state led

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<sup>34</sup> Husted, "Woman Suffrage," 211-212.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

<sup>36</sup> Jane Adams, "Why Women Should Vote," in *Woman Suffrage: History, Argument, and Results*, ed. Frances Maule Bjökman (New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1913), 140.

<sup>37</sup> Carrie Chapman Catt, "Did You Know," in *Woman Suffrage*, 159.

<sup>38</sup> See the work of Alma White, *Women's Chains* edited Alma White and illustrated by Branford Clarke (Zarephath: Pillar of Fire, 1924)., See also the work of Susie C. Stanley, *Feminist Pillar of Fire: The Life of Alma White* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1993)., Pricilla Pope-Levinson, *Turn the pulpit loose: Two Centuries of American Women Evangelists* (New York: Palgrave, 2004).

the way as a flashpoint of political activism. In 1848, the town of Seneca Falls, New York hosted the first convention of women who met to discuss, among other things, the right to vote. In 1917, The New York State referendum on women's right to vote proved crucial to the success of the movement and caused Carrie Chapman Catt to remark it was "the greatest victory possible."<sup>39</sup> New York City provided the volunteers who worked to achieve that success by printing newspapers, distributing leaflets, and lobbying congressional representatives; as early as 1915, New York was pivotal to the success of women's efforts to secure the vote.<sup>40</sup> For most women, suffrage meant more than finding a place at the polling booth, it was a referendum to restructure antiquated laws that denied women the equity of full recognition, protection, and rights afforded by citizenship. New York's successful referendum gave women the right to their own wages, the right for married women to own property, and more importantly, shared custody of children.<sup>41</sup>

Different in nature and far more diverse than the issues that drove social reformation, suffrage appealed across a broad spectrum of race and class that included working-class, black, rural, and radical women. For these women suffrage proved to be the venue that introduced their participation in political culture and opened opportunities of advancement that served to redress exploitive working conditions and low wages. In an era of progressive reform changes to the status of women challenged ideas that had crafted images of femininity as delicate, fragile, and incompetent in the public world. Instead, many women assigned themselves new roles that appropriated public spaces formerly associated with the attributes of "independence, courage, and industry" that defined the male sphere of engagement.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Susan Goodier and Karen Pastorello *Women Will Vote: Winning Suffrage in New York State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Susan Goodier, *No Votes for Women: The New York State Anti-Suffrage Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 1.

Such women were recognized for their organizational abilities and for pursuit of legislative resolutions to correct discriminatory practices that subjugated women. As adamant as many women were for the right to vote and to have a voice in forming public policy, so too, were women who felt such actions antithetical to the Platonic ideal of femininity. Some women felt the ideology of separate spheres for men and women was threatened by such incursions and formed a vociferous anti-suffragist reaction to the political platforms of their sisters. Many viewed the transgression of traditional gender roles as a crucial disruption to the proper functioning of society and the cohesive fabric of the nation.<sup>43</sup>

In America, the home was seen by many as a crucial “bulwark against social disorder” and as critical to the “preservation of the social order” in ways that defined the separate roles of men and women.<sup>44</sup> In her work, Susan Goodier reviews white New Yorkers who held to ideas of separate spheres and traditional gender roles and organized efforts to defeat proposed legislation to enact suffrage. The defining ideology of women as domestic beings took as its core belief the construct of “true womanhood” and prepared a pedestal for the discreet, demure woman who was enshrined in its tenets.<sup>45</sup> Barbara Welter gives insightful disclosure on the attributes that defined American women in the nineteenth century to remark on the four cardinal virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity that represented the socially constructed woman. As Welter argues, the construct reinvented a “newer, better Eve” that promised salvation for the

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<sup>43</sup> Goodier, “No Votes for Women,” 1-2.

<sup>44</sup> Goodier reiterates this sentiment in the introduction to her work and similar reference can be found in: Aileen S. Kraditor, *Up from the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the history of American Feminism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968)., Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600-1900* (New York: Verso, 1988)., Claudia Stokes, *The Altar at Home: Sentimental Literature and Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014)., Coleen Mcdannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986).

<sup>45</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18 no. 2 (Summer 1966), 151-152.

wayward souls of men.<sup>46</sup> For women opposed to suffrage the inclusion of women into public life threatened the integrity of the private sphere of feminine repose, piety, and domesticity wherein they resided.<sup>47</sup> Further, as Goodier notes, such legislation incurred against their right “not to be men.”<sup>48</sup> Yet women who campaigned against suffrage used tactics similar to those of their opponents to organize and influence legislators. Anti-suffragists wanted to retain their authority in the home and prevent the loss of what many viewed as their “special privileges.”<sup>49</sup> The unwitting and unwilling politicization of women opposed to suffrage was cause for discursive commentary and much amusement by male observers who watched with a mixture of mirth and wonderment “from such safe points of view as they may be able to secure.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed, the chagrin of lawmakers was aroused by the vociferous efforts of women opposed to suffrage causing one Senator to remark that “In all the years women had pleaded and petitioned for suffrage, never once had the legislature heard a dissenting voice.”<sup>51</sup>

Historian Corrine M. Mc Connaughy has identified anti-suffrage protagonists who may have been successful in delaying or subverting legislation to enact suffrage. Chief among these was the liquor industry whose interests would be jeopardized once women who were in favor of prohibition were able to enact regulatory legislation. In addition, McConnaughy contends immigrant men who were persuaded by centuries of traditional gender role assignments posed a threat to passage as did “well-heeled” upper-class women who also sought to protect gendered

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<sup>46</sup> Welter, “Cult of True Womanhood,” 152.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>48</sup> Goodier, “No Votes,” 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

<sup>50</sup> “Organized Opposition,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1895, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine> (accessed June 28, 2020)., “Don’t Want The Ballot,” *The Sun*, April 11, 1895, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1895-04-11/> (accessed June 28, 2020).

<sup>51</sup> “Against Woman Suffrage: New York Women Organizing to Defeat the Movement,” *The Sun*, April 28, 1895, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1895-04-28/ed-1/> (accessed June 28, 2020).

divisions of labor.<sup>52</sup> Although women were divided among themselves on the question of political enfranchisement there were areas of agreement where women came together to support the common good of all. In an era of social reform and progressive advancement women who debated issues of suffrage were in accord on the need for greater protection for women and children in the labor force, regulation of the liquor industry, and community improvement through provision of “parks and playgrounds.”<sup>53</sup> In the campaign for suffrage there were women best described as “first among equals.”<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth Cady Stanton was that and more having been described as “the moving force’ behind the Seneca Falls convention in 1848 and in 1895-1898 wrote and published her final work, *The Women’s Bible*.<sup>55</sup> Historian Kathi Kern reviews Stanton, her work, and the women’s movement to comment her book, coauthored with other pro-suffrage women, was presented as an analysis of women’s dependence on the church, clergy and Bible.

Instead, Stanton’s work aroused the antipathy of the church, startled members of her own association, and was used by anti-suffragists to defame her.<sup>56</sup> In her discussion of Stanton, Kern notes part of the problem in resurrecting Stanton from the margins of history where she had been laid to rest following the debacle of her book, are her uncomfortable views on race. Stanton, in a strange similarity to Alma White, evinced views on race that promoted the prerogatives of white women over those of black male suffrage.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Corrine M. McConaughy, *The Woman Suffrage Movement in America: A Reassessment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 7.

<sup>53</sup> McConaughy, “Woman Suffrage,” 7. For additional review see Susan B. Anthony and Ida Husted Harper eds., *The history of Women’s Suffrage*, IV (Indianapolis: Hollenbeck Press, 1902), 444-445., Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Women’s Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965)., and for illuminating dialog on “Preceding Causes” see Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds. *History of Woman Suffrage* Vol. I. 1848-1861 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1881), 24-28. <https://babel.hathitrust.org> (accessed June 29, 2020).

<sup>54</sup> I Timothy 5:17 KJV

<sup>55</sup> Kathi Kern, *Mrs. Stanton’s Bible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Kern, “Mrs. Stanton’s Bible,” 6., Elizabeth Griffith, *In her Own Right: The Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 124.

A problem Kern responds to by asking “How might we understand Stanton’s feminist theology if it were explored as a response to her contemporary political culture?”<sup>58</sup> Indeed, how might we write the feminist and political ideology of Alma White if it were explored within the contemporary frames of relevance that contextualize her against the protracted influx of foreign immigration, the domestic migration of Southern African-Americans North, and the inhospitable political culture toward women. Where Stanton was entrenched in feminist rhetoric and misandry on issues of race and gender, White was equally adamant to advance women into positions of authority, protest the treatment of women by the Catholic Church, and support legislation for suffrage and women’s rights.<sup>59</sup>

It has now been one hundred years since the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified. President Woodrow Wilson signed it into law on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1920. In 1917, women picketed outside the White House angered by Wilson’s lack of resolve to further their cause. The protest climaxed with the arrest and imprisonment of several women who once jailed, promptly went on a hunger strike and refused to eat. Wilson, alarmed at the prospect of women being “force-fed,” intervened to take up their cause to honor the sacrifice of their husbands and sons sent to fight in World War I.<sup>60</sup> Wilson, in his speech to Congress on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1918 spoke to the issue of suffrage, “We have made partners of the women in this war; shall we admit them only to a partnership of sacrifice, suffering, and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Kern “Mrs. Stanton’s Bible,” 6.

<sup>59</sup> Griffith, “In Her Own Right,” 135-140., White, “Klansmen: Guardians of Liberty,” 128-131. In this book, White asserts her truest feelings toward the Catholic Church, its precepts and practices, and suffrage for women. [https://archive.org/details/dudemans5685\\_yahoo\\_LGOL/page/n65/mode/2up?q=women](https://archive.org/details/dudemans5685_yahoo_LGOL/page/n65/mode/2up?q=women) (accessed June 30, 2020).

<sup>60</sup> Mario R. Dinunzio, ed. *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings & Speeches of the Scholar-President* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 378., McConaughy, “a Reassessment,” 192., Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Frances Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle: The Women’s Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 256.

<sup>61</sup> President Woodrow Wilson, in an address to Congress on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1918. 65<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1918, Senate Doc. 284. “Equal Suffrage,” <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/WilsonSpeech1918.pdf> (accessed June 30, 2020).

In the flux of the Progressive Era the issue of suffrage was one more indicator of social reform and it reflected the hopes and aspirations of secular women who fought for equal rights in America. For some religious women the issue of suffrage was subdued and rephrased in terms convergent with scripture that advocated for women's participation in the church, for others such as Alma White, suffrage came to epitomize the advancement of (white) women into the public forum of civic and political affairs. White chose to champion the political rights of women from the authority of her pulpit a decision that repositions her from the margin of historical footnotes to the center of women's studies.

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