

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: A GENRE OF DEFENSE: HYBRIDITY IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S
DEFENSES OF WOMEN'S PREACHING.

Lisa Dawn Zimmerelli, Ph.D., 2009

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This dissertation explores how nineteenth-century Protestant women negotiated genre in order to manage more effectively the controversial rhetorical project of defending women's right to preach. After providing a comprehensive overview of the debate of women's preaching in America, this project presents a genre study of a subset of these defenses: those women who do not adhere strictly to their "home" genres, but rather demonstrate a range of generic blending and manipulation in their defenses of women's preaching. This study further reads religion as an integral identity category that was the seat for other activist rhetorics; by extension, then, women's defenses of women's preaching is an important site of activism and rhetorical discourse. Foote, Willard, and Woosley are rhetoricians and theologians; the hybrid form of their books provides them with a textual space for the intersections of their rhetoric and theology. This study examines three books within the tradition of defenses of women's preaching—Julia Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* (1879), Frances Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit* (1888), and Louisa Woosley's *Shall Woman Preach?* (1891)—as representative of the

journey a genre takes from early adaptation to solidification, what Carolyn Miller calls “typified rhetorical action” (151) and as the containers for an egalitarian theology. Foote adapts the genre of spiritual autobiography to include the oral and textual discourses of letters, sermons, and hymn in order to present her holiness theology. Willard experiments with the epistolary genre in order to present her Social Gospel theology. Woosley includes all of the genres of defenses of women’s preaching: sermon, spiritual autobiography, editorial letter, and speech; she also appropriates Masonic rhetoric in order to merge the defense of women’s preaching with another kind of defense prevalent at the time: the scriptural defense of women. Significantly, each woman resolves “separate spheres” ideology by suggesting a new religious sphere where men and women participate equally: Foote’s sphere is the sphere of holiness; Willard’s is her reconceptualized Kingdom of God; and Woosley’s is a world of action, where men and women, after ritualized initiation, are responsible for building the temple of God.

A GENRE OF DEFENSE: HYBRIDITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY
WOMEN'S DEFENSES OF WOMEN'S PREACHING

By

Lisa Dawn Zimmerelli

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Advisory Committee:
Professor Jane Donawerth, Chair
Dr. Jeanne Fahnestock, Professor
Dr. Shirley Wilson Logan, Professor
Dr. Leigh Ryan, Instructor
Dr. Claire Moses, Professor

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my husband, John, who has been bringing me coffee for all-nighters since our undergraduate days together.

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Chapter 1

The Little Book Defense of Women's Preaching

I have written this little book after many prayers to ascertain the will of God—
having long had an impression to do it.

Julia Foote, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* 3

With an earnest prayer that Christ's blessed kingdom in the earth
may be advanced a little by the considerations herein urged,
I can but repeat the well known and half-pathetic words,
"Go, little Book, I cast thee on the waters, go thy way."

Frances Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit* 6

To Christians striving for a more complete mastery of this question, and to those
earnestly seeking the truth, is this little book most affectionately dedicated.

Louisa Woosley, *Shall Woman Preach?* 5

In nineteenth-century America, women's rhetorical options broadened as they participated in an increased range of private to public arenas using a variety of discourses and genres. Within these arenas, women addressed issues from abolition to hygiene, reflecting their desire to exercise at least a modicum of agency in an increasingly complicated and tumultuous society. Protestant churches were the point of origin for much of this rhetorical discourse. Women began their activist work in prayer circles, in Sunday school classrooms, and in the vast array of church-associated reform and benevolent societies. A subset of these women also felt called to preach, and for them, the ultimate rhetorical act was the performance and service of their ministry.

The pulpit was territory that was particularly prohibited; except for a dissident few, male church leaders forbade women's access to the pulpit and limited their religious leadership in other spaces. This prohibition was enacted in both word and deed.

Ministers argued against women's preaching from their pulpits and in the press, and

religious leaders signed denominational resolutions that restricted women's voices in the church. When they were denied the pulpit, women preachers persevered by stepping into other spaces: meetinghouses, drawing rooms, tents, and platforms. They also picked up their pens. Female religious rhetors responded to the backlash against their leadership by making their lives recognized, their sermons heard, and their defenses of their right to preach public.

Women defended their right to preach via a variety of genres, selecting that which was appropriate for their audience and occasion. They delivered sermons, published spiritual autobiographies, circulated pamphlets, wrote editorial letters, and gave speeches. As the backlash against their preaching intensified in the mid-nineteenth century, women also began publishing treatises defending women's preaching. By the end of the nineteenth century, the majority of the women who wrote these book-length defenses referred to their texts as "little books" or "little volumes" in their dedications, prefaces, and introductions.

Prefatory matter is what Gérard Genette calls a paratext, a liminal space within and outside the book; signals contained therein, like "little book" and "little volume," are devices that help mediate the rhetorical triangle of text, author, and audience (1). According to Genette, such material is transactional—the author's attempt to exercise some control over the rhetorical situation and the response of the reader (2). As Genette argues, the function of the preface, at its most simplistic, is "*to get the book read and to get the book read properly*" (197, italics in original). Getting the book read properly was an imperative rhetorical task for nineteenth-century female preachers: their very spiritual lives depended upon their success in persuading audiences to accept them as religious

leaders. Consequently, referring to their defenses as “little books” or “little volumes” was more than a naming trope; it also signaled their attempts to negotiate genre in order to manage more effectively the highly controversial rhetorical project of defending women’s right to preach. The little book became the staging ground for this rhetorical project.

Although it was a designation fairly common in the nineteenth century, the “little book” or “little volume” has its roots in seventeenth-century “chapbook” literature, texts that included tales from the bawdry to the satirical to the religious.¹ These “Small Merry Books” and “Small Godly Books,” as one trades company listed them, were carried from village to village by peddlars (Spufford xix). In the eighteenth century, in generic form and literary style, the “little book” denoted the didactic tract. For example, the diminutive term was used frequently by the British Religious Tract Society to refer to street literature and broadsheets aimed to quell radical uprisings and rather inspire more contemplative, moral behavior (L. Peterson 2). “Small books” and “little books” physically earned their names as well, since they were often pocket-sized (quarto), relatively brief, and disposable. By the nineteenth century, in both America and Britain, the little book signified a broader range of texts, including religious tracts and treatises,² spiritual autobiographies and biographies,³ collections of poetry,⁴ novels and short stories,⁵ and scientific literature.⁶

¹ For more on seventh-century chapbooks, see Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (1981).

² E.g. Catherine Booth, *Papers on Aggressive Christianity* (1891); John Vine Hall, *The Sinner’s Friend* (1843); Frances Ridley Havergal, *My King* (1887); Harriet Livermore, *The Harp of Israel* (1835), and *Millennial Tidings* (1831); Harriet Martineau, *Traditions of Palestine* (1870); Phoebe Palmer, *The Way of Holiness* (1854); Luther Tracy Townsend, *The Bible and Other Ancient Literature* (1889).

³ E.g. Lucy Delany, *From the Darkness Cometh the Light* (n.d.); Phoebe Palmer, *Recollections and Gathered Fragments* (1845); Susie King Taylor, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp* (1902); Bethany Veney, *The Narrative of Bethany Veney* (1889).

In sum, “little book” came to be a fairly well used term, and, as a set, nineteenth-century little books represent a wide assortment of genres. However, most little books from this era adhere strictly to their generic conventions. For example, Catherine Booth’s “little volume,” *Papers on Aggressive Christianity* (1891), is a collection of sermons. Each sermon includes a scriptural text, introduction, discussion, exhortation, and conclusion. Similarly, Pauline Hopkins’ “little romance,” *Contending Forces* (1900), exhibits all of the characteristics expected of a sentimental romance novel. For the majority of authors of little books in the nineteenth century, the identification of their texts as such operated simply as an expected, self-deprecating mode of introducing their works.

In contrast, the writers of defenses of women’s preaching who refer to their works as “little books” or “little volumes” do not adhere strictly to their “home” genres, but rather demonstrate a range of generic blending and manipulation.⁷ Furthermore, they invoke the terms “little book” or “little volume” as signifiers for the hybridity of their discourse. This hybridity is evident in the slight to considerable modification of the genre of spiritual autobiography in particular, most notably by Julia Foote’s, Ellen Stewart’s, Nancy Towle’s, and Maggie Newton Van Cott’s inclusion of letters, sermons, and religious poems and hymns within their autobiographies. This hybridity is also

⁴ E.g. Eloise Bibb, *Poems* (1895); Mary West Fordham, *Magnolia Leaves* (1897); Josephine D. Heard, *Morning Glories* (1890); Effie Walker Smith, *Rhymes from the Cumberland* (1904); Priscilla Thompson, *Ethiopia Lays* (1900), and *Gleanings of Quiet Hours* (1907).

⁵ E.g. Alice Dunbar-Nelson, *Violets and Other Tales* (1895); Pauline Hopkins, *Contending Forces* (1900).

⁶ E.g. Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1896). See Charlotte Sleight, “This Questionable Little Book” (2005), for the development of chapbook literature within the sciences.

⁷ For an analysis of an adaption of the little book genre in early nineteenth-century Britain, see Linda Peterson, “From French Revolution to English Reform” (2006), who argues that Harriet Martineau “appropriated the format and features of the ‘little book’ . . . in order to attract a popular audience and to signal, in the era of the First Reform Bill, the need to redirect knowledge from a conservative social and religious framework to a progressive, scientific, theory-based economics, politics, and literature” (3-4).

demonstrated in the experimentation with the treatise form, creating what Jane Donawerth calls “collage” (*Conversational Rhetoric* 117), most notably by Frances Willard’s and Fannie McDowell Hunter’s blending of the voices and arguments of other women into their texts, Willard through letters and Hunter through autobiography. Finally, this hybridity is represented in what I call the “genre of defense,” evidenced by Louisa Woosley’s defense of women’s preaching. Woosley merges the defense of women’s preaching with another kind of defense prevalent at the time: the scriptural defense of women. This dissertation looks closely at three little books within the tradition of defenses of women’s preaching—Julia Foote’s *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* (1879), Frances Willard’s *Woman in the Pulpit* (1888), and Louisa Woosley’s *Shall Woman Preach?* (1891)—as representative of the journey a genre takes from early adaptation to solidification, what Carolyn Miller calls “typified rhetorical action” (151). This project studies the evolution of the little book from modification of the spiritual autobiography to experimental collage to realized hybrid form: a genre of defense.

Foote’s, Willard’s, and Woosley’s little books are worthy of rhetorical attention, because their works are both transitional to and representative of this solidification of the little book genre of defense. At the time Foote and Willard wrote their defenses, there was not a genre that fit their needs; they had to modify the genres of spiritual autobiography and treatise to gain access to a textual space more persuasive to their audience and purpose. All three women use the little book to articulate their theology. For Woosley, the genre was called into existence by the discourse. The discourse was the increasingly charged debate surrounding women’s preaching in the late-nineteenth century; the genre was her adaptation of the little book into a genre that defended the act

of women's preaching specifically and the contribution of women generally. *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, *Woman in the Pulpit*, and *Shall Woman Preach?* are fertile texts for rhetorical investigation and inquiry, for they represent the move away from collage embedded within spiritual autobiography toward establishing the little book defense as a genre in its own right.

From its early to later stages, the little book is marked by hybridity, and all three texts in this dissertation are representative of this hybridity. In *A Brand Plucked by the Fire*, Foote adapts the genre of spiritual autobiography to include letters, sermons, and a hymn, and to encompass oral and textual discourses. Similarly, in *Woman in the Pulpit*, Willard experiments with the epistolary genre to include detailed exegesis, and to encompass Social Gospel rhetoric. In *Shall Woman Preach?* Louisa Woosley includes all of the genres of defense of women's preaching: sermon, spiritual autobiography, religious poem, and speech, and encompasses Masonic and women's rights rhetoric. By blending multiple genres and by defending both women's preaching and women's rights, Woosley, through the genre of the little book, presents a feminist theological activist agenda, with women occupying a central role. Foote's, Willard's, and Woosley's little book defenses of female preaching function at the nexus of the personal/ political and the private/ public, and form a confluence of narrative, sermonic, and activist rhetorics. In short, they are hybrid both in form and function.

"Hybridity" is a highly theorized term which demands further explication. Outside of the sciences, where it originated, the concept of hybridity has no real disciplinary home; it has been influential in the social science and humanities disciplines, most notably cultural studies, postcolonial theory, political theory, and composition

studies.⁸ Many scholars use the term to signify the transgressive subversion of dominant, hegemonic discourse, such as Homi Bhabha, who reads hybridity as a social and political act of “colonial mimicry” (172) which “terroriz[es] authority” (165) and becomes the “moment of panic which reveals the borderline experience” (296). At the other end of the spectrum is Gloria Anzaldúa’s utopic vision of an intercultural hybridity that embraces multi-ethnicity.

In composition studies, hybridity is invoked as a literacy and pedagogical strategy that disrupts hegemonic academic discourse (i.e. Standard Academic English) with the introduction of non-Academic discourse, often a student’s “home” discourse. Patricia Bizzell introduced the concept of “hybrid academic discourse” in 1999 as the mix of academic discourse with “previously non-academic” discourse, arguing that such discourse is “greater than the sum of its parts, accomplishing intellectual work that could not be done in either of the parent discourses alone” (“Hybrid” 11, 13). Composition and literacy scholars have since expanded and modified the term to include “mixed,” “alternative,” and “constructed” forms of discourse, most notably in Bizzell’s edited collection, *ALT DIS: Alternative Discourses and the Academy*. This collection provides composition classroom strategies for using hybridity as a pedagogy of empowerment, while it simultaneously problematizes the notion of hybridity by recognizing the potential danger in creating a hierarchy or dichotomy between academic discourse and a student’s home discourse.⁹ Furthermore, *Alt Diss* suggests that scholars should enact hybrid

⁸ For an excellent survey of the development of theories of hybridity, see Deborah Kapchan and Pauline Strong, “Theorizing the Hybrid” (1999). For an interesting discussion of the influence of science studies on the humanities and social sciences, see Sarah Franklin, “Science as Culture, Cultures of Science” (1995). For a reflection on the essentializing danger in using theories of hybridity, see Nikolas Kompridis, “Normativizing Hybridity/ Neutralizing Culture” (2005).

⁹ For additional articles on the pedagogical uses of hybridity, see Keith Gilyard and Elaine Richardson, “Students’ Right to Possibility” (2001); Judith Hebb, “Mixed Forms of Academic Discourse” (2002);

discourse in their own writing and thus contribute to the disruption of a singular, privileged academic discourse.¹⁰ Some composition scholars have also used the concept of hybridity in their analysis of non-academic discourses, such as the web or minority communities.¹¹

What I borrow from cultural theorists is the idea that hybridity can be used to complicate discourse “that rests on a coercive unity, ideologically grounded in a single monolithic truth” (Werbner 21). As I detail later in this chapter, the ideological unity of several nineteenth-century Protestant churches was already being threatened by sectarian impulses that reconfigured the relationship—and hierarchy—of God, preacher, and man/woman. Women preachers contributed to this realignment by asserting their rights to formal recognition within their communities, churches, and denominations.

What I borrow from composition theorists is the functional application of hybridity, as “multiple semiotic modes of the textual practice” represented by “symbolic activity woven together in threads of interactional history” (Bazerman and Prior, “Participating” 8). As I argue in chapter two, the symbolic activity of defending women’s right to the pulpit is enacted across denominations, races, geographical boundaries, class, and even time. In addition, the textual practice occurs in multiple genres, including the autobiographical, exegetical, sermonic, epistolary, and oratorical.

George Kamberelis, “Producing Heteroglossic Classroom (Micro)cultures” (2001); Victoria Purcell-Gates, *Cultural Practices of Literacy* (2007); and Blake Scott, “Service-Learning and Cultural Studies” (2004).

¹⁰ For scholars who employ hybrid academic discourse in their own work, see Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* (1987), and “Speaking in Tongues” (1983); Donald McCrary, “*Represent, Representin’, Representation*” (2005); Mike Rose, “The Language of Exclusion” (2006); Geneva Smitherman, *Black Talk* (2000); Michael Spooner, “An Essay We’re Learning to Read” (2002); and Victor Villanueva, *Bootstraps*, (1993).

¹¹ See Charles Bazerman, who analyzes hybridity in Edison’s notebooks in *The Languages of Edison’s Light* (1999) and on the web in “Genre and Identity” (2002); Terese Monberg, who analyzes hybridity within the Latino community in “Reclaiming Hybridity” (2006); and Darrel Enck-Wanzer, who analyzes hybridity within government and politics in “A Radical Democratic Style” (2008).

I further use the term “hybridity” to signify Foote’s, Willard’s, and Woosley’s conscious blending of various genres and multiple rhetorics. Bakhtin’s idea of the intentional hybrid utterance, what he also refers to as the “novelistic hybrid,” is à propos here. Bakhtin argues that intentional hybridity creates “*an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another*” (361, italics in original). Slightly modifying Bakhtin’s definition, I argue that Foote’s and Willard’s little book defenses embody “an artistically organized system for bringing different genres and rhetorics in contact with one another.” I prefer the term “hybrid” to “alternative” or “mixed,” because I believe that such interaction results in a truly modified, transformed genre—a cross-breed, if you will. If, as Charles Bazerman asserts, “Genres are the familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar” (“The Life” 19), I would argue that the hybrid little book genre of defense not only allowed female religious rhetors to explore the unfamiliar, but also helped introduce the unfamiliar to their audiences and inspire action—in the form of support for women’s preaching—from these audiences.

American Women’s Religious Participation

It is fairly difficult to outline a coherent and linear history of nineteenth-century women’s preaching. Women preachers are glaringly absent from Sidney Ahlstrom’s seminal 1000-page tome *A Religious History of the American People*, even in the 2004 second edition. Hilah Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller argue that “in nineteenth-century America, women began to seek the legal sanction of the churches to preach and to be ordained” (18), while, to the contrary, Susan Hill Lindley asserts that “full, formal

ordination was not the dominant concern of women religious leaders in the nineteenth century” (*You Have Stept* 117). Margaret Lamberts Bendroth claims that “most women preachers were not nationally known” (27), but Margaret McFadden argues that there was an international network of well-known preaching women (49-66). And Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham identifies a danger in focusing on women’s preaching: “Research on women preachers, while of great value, does not capture the more representative role of the majority of women church members. If taken alone, such discussion continues to render women’s role as marginal” (2).

The history of American women’s preaching in the nineteenth century is particularly complicated because of the various categories for women’s religious participation and the numerous possibilities for recognizing—formally and informally—women’s religious leadership. Women could officially be recognized by the church and formally be granted access to the pulpit in a variety of ways: by a license to preach without full ordination rights; by an invitation to occupy another leadership position by the general polity, such as deaconess; by ordination from a congregation despite denominational opposition to women’s preaching; and by ordination from the denomination. According to religious historians Carl and Dorothy Schneider:

From one denomination to another and even within denominations, standards for ordination varied with theology, the age of the denomination and its corresponding degree of institutionalization, and church polity—whether standards were set by individual congregations or by the whole denomination. (118)

Furthermore, when reviewing the various denominational timelines and records created by religion scholars and historians, it is important to consider that there may have been subsets of women operating as preachers without formal licensure or ordination.

Many women were itinerate preachers, traveling from community to community and preaching only by invitation of individual congregations. Other women never purported to preach, per se, but did exhibit rhetorical agency and leadership through exhorting, testifying, and prophesying.¹² For example, Phoebe Palmer, a prominent lay evangelist who wrote one of the most persuasive and comprehensive defenses of women's preaching of the nineteenth century, *Promise of the Father; or, A Neglected Specialty of the Last Days* (1859), explicitly states that "We do not intend to discuss the question of 'Women's Rights' or of 'Women's Preaching,' technically so called. We leave this for those whose ability and tastes may better fit them for discussions of this sort" (1). In addition to exhorter, testifier, or prophesier, the other titles a female religious leader could claim were evangelist, missionary, teacher, class leader, or simply "pulpit speaker" or "useful helper in the work of Christ" (qtd. in Hardesty, *Women* 83). Whether the discomfort with the designation "preacher" or "minister" was their own or projected by their male counterparts, women religious leaders had a variety of options for informally labeling themselves and their work. In light of the variety of official ordination options and with respect to the various titles that signified women's church practices, for the purposes of this dissertation, preaching is defined as any rhetorical activity in which the rhetor assumes a position of leadership and engages the audience in a discussion of religious significance; a preacher is defined as a rhetor who sees herself as God's agent in communicating God's message to a community of believers and/or nonbelievers.¹³

¹² Exhorting was the act of speaking passionately about one's faith as an encouragement for conversion; exhortation differed from preaching in that the rhetor did not "take a text" from the Bible to expound. Testifying was the act of sharing one's conversion and sanctification experience and was thought of as a means of securing one's salvation. Prophesying, the act of allowing God to speak through a person, was the ultimate example of divine inspiration.

¹³ Preaching did not have a stable definition in the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century homiletics tended to emphasize the personality of the preacher as central to the "movement of the will." Reasoning

We will never know, exactly, how many female preachers there were in America in the nineteenth century; however, we do have record of a tremendous number of defenses of women's preaching during this time period.¹⁴ In the next chapter I provide a detailed overview of the arguments used for and against women in the debate surrounding women's preaching; in the remainder of this chapter I provide an historical overview and context for this debate, attending closely to women's religious participation and agency.¹⁵ Most Religious Studies scholars and historians agree that the various Protestant denominations of nineteenth-century America were often segregated; consequently, I am mindful of the shared histories of women religious rhetors within African American and Anglo American Protestant denominations as they developed out of the eighteenth century and intersected over the course of the nineteenth century.

Women and the Great Awakenings

Both the first Great Awakening (1730s-1760s) and the second Great Awakening (1790s-1830s) were marked by powerful religiosity, resulting in intense social and ideological upheaval that created a more egalitarian and democratic American brand of Christianity.¹⁶ Particularly important to the Great Awakenings was the spread of

and structured, formal hermeneutical inquiry were secondary to emotional and imaginative appeals. Although this definition of preaching was certainly more inclusive in theory, it operated, nonetheless, with a gendered bias, evidenced by Phillips Brooks' famous definition: "Preaching is the communication of truth through a man to men" (73), *Lectures on Preaching* (1877). For a detailed history of homiletics, see O. C. Edwards, *The History of Preaching* (2004); and Richard Lischer, *The Company of Preachers* (2002).

¹⁴ See Appendix A: Nineteenth-Century Women's Defenses of Women's Preaching

¹⁵ For comprehensive histories of women's preaching in America, see Catherin Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims* (1998); and Carl and Dorothy Schneider, *In Their Own Right* (1997).

¹⁶ For more on the "democratization" of Christianity in America, see Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (1989).

Methodism through the teachings of John Wesley.¹⁷ Wesley preached thousands of sermons and published hundreds of books; he is arguably one of the most influential figures of Christian history. According to Wesley, faith alone was essential to salvation, what he called “via salutis” in one of his most often preached sermons, “The Scriptural Way of Salvation” (L. Warner 118). Wesley’s theology placed primary importance on the relationship of the Holy Spirit to each individual, and the power of that relationship to move people to evangelize. Referring often to the “extraordinary call,” Wesley empowered men and women alike to give public witness to their personal experience of salvation.

Similarly, in America, extremely popular “star” preachers, such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and James Davenport, articulated a new approach to salvation, one that valued each individual’s religious experience, and presented a new form of preaching, one that attempted to elicit highly emotional responses.¹⁸ Collectively, preachers like Edwards, Whitefield, and Davenport challenged ecclesiastical monopoly on biblical interpretation and thus caused considerable division within denominations: many congregations fractured into either “strict” or “separatist” groups (Ahlstrom 290). By the end of the second Great Awakening, such discord had quieted down considerably, and although popular preachers, such as Lyman Beecher, still drew a large crowd, the focus and efforts of parishioners—from New England to Georgia to the western territories—began to turn to reform activities.

¹⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of John Wesley’s influence on eighteenth-century revivalism, see Vicki Tolar Burton, *Spiritual Literacy* (2008); and Donald Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (1976).

¹⁸ This was the general trend in homiletic style. See Lawrence Buell, “The Unitarian Movement and the Art of Preaching” (1972), for an interesting discussion of the development and influence of Unitarian preaching, what he claims is a *techne* in nineteenth-century America.

For slaves, the first Great Awakening introduced sustained and formalized religious instruction. When provided by white preachers, this instruction often had racist overtones; preaching from texts such as Ephesians 6.5 (“Slaves, be obedient to your masters”), they advocated a submissive faith and hope in the brighter future of heaven. Despite the overtly racist agenda of this religious instruction, black men and women were empowered through the biblical literacy acquired during the first Great Awakening, and by the second Great Awakening, religious leaders, including Gabriel Prosser, Nat Turner, and Denmark Vesey, began to articulate a theology of personal freedom and equality in the eyes of God, a theology that focused on the liberating power of Christianity.¹⁹ What emerged was an African American Christian faith that rejected white-sponsored submissive and docile religious doctrine and instead embraced a more revolutionary and radical theology supported by Exodus (Angell and Pinn xiv). This religious ethic—the idea that God was just, the assumption that every person was a “child of God” made in his image, and the promise that God would deliver them from slavery and racism—was an ethic that unified African American Christians in both the South and the North.

In the mid-Atlantic and North regions of America, free black men and women were initially invited and welcomed into white churches during the first Great Awakening, but faced considerable racism from congregations and thus eventually chose separate worship (Dodson 7). Most famous is the spontaneous mass protest that occurred at the Philadelphian St. George Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787, after white members attempted to physically remove black members from their prayer at the altar. All African Americans in the church, including Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Jane Ann

¹⁹ For a comprehensive history of the development of African American theology, from pre-slavery in Africa to the Black Power movement in the 1960s, see Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (1998).

Murray, Sarah Dougherty, and Mother Duncan, stood and left. They never returned to the church and instead began the Free African Society. Following in the footsteps of Richard Allen and his co-congregants, several African American leaders organized all-black independent denominations during the second Great Awakening. By 1821, African American Christians could worship, for example, in the African Union Church in Delaware, in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in New York City, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia (Wilmore 108-10).

Although there were clear theological differences between the two Great Awakenings, it is helpful to see one as a continuation of the other. Indeed, in many ways, the second Great Awakening was a more organized and coordinated version of the first: the preaching was more accessible, the revivals were bigger and more widespread, and the converted were more empowered to evangelize (Hatch 139). Each of these components—populist theology, the revival, and evangelism—were significant factors in women’s increased involvement in religious affairs.

Populist Theology

The evangelical message of the two Great Awakenings stressed emotional, individual response to the Bible and deemphasized a literal reading of the Bible mediated through clergy. At the heart of populist theology was an emphasis on each person’s capacity to reform him/herself and society, and it was therefore a powerful theological premise and an empowering rhetorical tool (Vasquez 192). Preachers shifted their theology from a focus on rational understanding of the Bible to a focus on the sensational experience of religion. Their sermonic styles consequently shifted toward emotional

styles of preaching that were believed to help rekindle “vital piety” (Brekus 36). For several reasons, this move from rational preaching to emotional preaching empowered women: first, the authority of the preacher was decentered; second, the interpretive powers of all congregants, including women, were acknowledged and encouraged; and third, emotive response was considered a naturally female style of response. For women who were called to preach, these factors were all entry points into the ministry.

Because populist theology advocated individual scriptural interpretation, literacy initiatives were paramount. Wesley deserves recognition for his commitment to biblical literacy. According to Vicki Tolar Burton, “Wesley wanted to make ordinary Methodist men and women readers, writers, and public speakers because he understood the powerful role of language in spiritual formation” (*Spiritual* 1). Consequently, Wesley—and many like-minded Methodist leaders—empowered men and women of all classes and races to read and study the Bible and encouraged them to articulate their experiences for the benefit of the community.

For religious women, churches became what Deborah Brandt terms “sponsors of literacy”—“agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way” (166). Women were in constant negotiation with the various religious institutions that served as their sponsors of literacy; “literacy transfer” emboldened women to pursue opportunities for rhetorical power while it simultaneously threatened the balance of power between them and their sponsors (Brandt 183). Consequently, women had to use their biblical literacy in ways deemed suitable and non-threatening to church leadership. For example, slave women could appropriate literacy for psychic

survival, demonstrated by singing spirituals,²⁰ or physical survival, evidenced in letters to family detailing their fears over being sold;²¹ however, slave women were not encouraged at this time, as were many of their male counterparts, to write and disseminate spiritual narratives (Sterling 73). Likewise, free black and white women were discouraged from preaching, but were expected to host “praying bands,” prayer meetings,” or “ladies’ meetings”—female-only gatherings where women were encouraged to speak freely about their religious experiences and thoughts. Mother Duncan’s and Wealthy Dorsey’s praying bands gained a reputation far beyond their city limits of Philadelphia (Dodson 13); Sarah Osborn invited white and black women into her home for fifty years for prayer meetings (C. Schneider 12); and Esther Stoddard Edwards, mother of famous theologian Jonathan Edwards, would regularly host religious ladies’ meetings. The following description exemplifies the complex nature of these events and the opportunities for different means of participation:

A table always stood in the middle of her parlor, on which lay a large quarto Bible, and treatises on doctrinal and experimental religion. In the afternoon, at a stated hour, such of the ladies of the neighbourhood, as found it convenient, went customarily to her house.... Her daughter regularly read a chapter of the Bible, and then a passage from some religious author, but was often stopped by the comments and remarks of her mother, who always closed the interview with prayer. (Edwards biographer Sereno E. Dwight (1829), qtd. in C. Schneider 12-13)

Often, after gaining notoriety, these engagements became promiscuous (gender-mixed), and, although they were conducted in private domestic spaces, were therefore defacto public forums. Literacy transfer was particularly apparent in these instances,

²⁰ For more on the tradition of spirituals within slave communities, see Eileen Southern and Josephine Wright, *African-American Traditions in Song, Sermon, Tale, and Dance* (1990).

²¹ Dorothy Sterling reprints many of these letters in her fifth chapter, “Letters from Slave Women,” in *We Are Your Sisters* (1984).

because women not only exercised and developed their biblical literacy, but they also practiced general communication skills. Furthermore, after praying together and reading Scripture, the women would often move on to organizing charitable work or political activity, thus gaining key management skills that served them well in the public sphere (C. Schneider 12).

The Revival

Because of the importance of the revitalization of religious faith and activity, the revival was at the heart of both Great Awakenings. Revivals were large-scale religious events that combined a variety of religious rhetorical practices—preaching, exhorting, testifying, prophesying—and attracted people of different denominations, races, and classes.²² Sometimes they were segregated, particularly in the South; often they were comprised of both Anglo and African Americans.²³ The massive scale of these events cannot be overestimated. Preacher George Whitfield, the “first ‘American’ public figure,” addressed hundreds of thousands of people in the American colonies during the first Great Awakening, often at open-air revivals (Ahlstrom 348-49). The rhetoric of these revivals was highly emotional, representative of the belief that “the emotions could also affect the will” (Vasquez 173). Eliciting an emotional response—moving the soul—was considered the most effective strategy for inspiring moral action and behavior. This reliance on pathos came through in the printed word as well; thousands of revival sermons were printed and distributed as pamphlets, published in denominational journals,

²² For a much more nuanced understanding of the historical and doctrinal significance of revivals and revivalism, see Gerald Priest, “Revival and Revivalism” (1996).

²³ However, revivals certainly were not epitomes of racial and gender harmony. “Negro tents” were separated from white tents and men and women often had to sit in separate quarters.

or compiled in books for dissemination (Howden 262). Therefore, the reach of these revivals stretched far beyond the last tent, and even if they could not physically attend, most Americans felt the effects of revivalism.

By the Second Great Awakening, women not only outnumbered men at revivals, but also played a primary organizational role—planning and orchestrating large-scale meetings—and a central rhetorical role—witnessing, testifying, praying, and occasionally preaching (Lindley, *You Have Stept* 61). Public prayer and public testimony were encouraged at revivals and were for many women their first opportunity to speak publically. Revivals were also social occasions and presented women with opportunities for networking; relationships begun at revivals were often continued as prayer meetings in parlors. Significantly, younger, single women were particularly attracted to revivals; consequently, the revivals became a rhetorical training ground for a generation of teachers, activists, and future mothers (Mary Ryan, “Women’s” 609).

Evangelism

The revival was but one form of many kinds of evangelism that developed out of the Great Awakenings. Defined as “the ministries of verbal proclamation... for the purpose of Christian initiation and discipling,” evangelism was the active pursuit and reformation of sinners and included a broad range of activities, from social reform work to itinerate preaching (L. Warner 7-8). Many women helped evangelizing efforts by developing Sunday and Sabbath schools, such as Presbyterian Joanna Graham Bethune, who began the Female Union Society for the Promotion of Sabbath Schools in 1816. Other women formed women’s auxiliaries to already established men’s reform societies.

Between 1792 and 1835 there were thirty-two such societies in Boston and New York alone (Boylan 219-26). Indeed *all* women's associations in America, and most in England, were aligned with the Church until the end of the second Great Awakening, in 1835 (Cott 154). Many served as the fund-raising arms of their male counterpart organizations; however, several coordinated their own evangelizing efforts. The Infant School Society, for example, not only provided day care, but taught religion as well. Similarly, the Female Bethel Union provided religious instruction to sailors and their families. Many female tract societies sold and disseminated biblical literature.

Itineracy—traveling from community to community to preach—was a much lonelier evangelical activity; however, in some ways it was more empowering, because women were not tied to a particular congregation or even, in some cases, denomination. Quakers were particularly supportive, and had been from the seventeenth century, in encouraging women to itinerate. Likewise, Methodists advocated the idea of women as the traveling moral regulators of the community. Often simply referred to as “evangelists” or “lay workers,” female itinerate preachers were sometimes authorized by a parent congregation to travel, and were sometimes self-authorized to itinerate. Indeed, many women took to the road because they were prevented from preaching in their home churches. Women's evangelical efforts at the turn of the nineteenth century, whether social reform work or itineracy, helped women begin to develop a collective self-confidence and empowerment that transcended the individual preaching woman. No longer was the preaching woman a rare anomaly or a spectacle, but was rather representative of a growing body of women who felt authorized to perform their ministry and were rhetorically trained to defend that right.

When the dust settled after the second Great Awakening, no denomination remained unchanged. Sermonic styles were forever altered, and congregants were empowered to be more participatory. For many women, minor participation during the first Great Awakening morphed into religious leadership by the second Great Awakening. Although there is a strong tradition of women's preaching in eighteenth-century England, at this time there is little record of women's preaching or defenses of women's preaching during the first Great Awakening in America; Catherine Brekus' *Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* is the most comprehensive treatment of American women's preaching to date, and she references only ten female preachers from the eighteenth century.²⁴ However, that number grew to over one hundred by 1845. As Brekus' archival scholarship demonstrates, the revivalism and evangelism of the second Great Awakening laid the foundation for an explosion of religious activism and rhetorical discourse in the early-nineteenth century.

Women's Preaching in the Early-Nineteenth Century

According to social scientist Mark Chaves, there were two significant constellations of conflicts surrounding women's preaching in the nineteenth century: the 1830s and the 1880s (64). The catalyst for the first groupings of women's defense of female preaching was male reaction and resistance to the increasingly powerful roles women were playing in the Protestant church. Many denominations that had fractured into "Old Lights"—those who adhered strictly to doctrine and structure—and "New Lights"—those who challenged both doctrine and structure—formally reorganized into

²⁴ Margaret Meuse Clay, Bathsheba Kingsley, Mother Ann Lee, Abigail Leister, "Sister" Mills, Sally Parsons, Sarah Riker, Mary Savage, Sarah Wright Townsend, and Jemima Wilkinson.

separate denominations by 1830. As they reorganized, they ironically often mimicked the same stratified gender hierarchy as their former affiliations; that is, although their theology was different, their worshipping structure remained the same, and they did not—or would not—formally recognize the various forms of women’s ministry.

In the 1830s, male clergy of all denominations began to “clarify” their position on women’s religious participation; that is, they argued for increased limitations on women’s preaching and other public addresses, such as exhorting, testifying, or prophesying. This resistance to women’s public voices is evidenced by the formal measures church polity took: the African Methodist Episcopal Church’s refusal to give licensure for women to exhort or preach (resulting in Rebecca Jackson’s resignation from the membership), the Presbyterian General Assembly’s attempts to limit female religious participation to private meetings, and the efforts of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church to ban women from praying or testifying aloud. In addition to procedural restrictions, male church leaders also wrote and disseminated virulent objections to women’s preaching. Many of these objections were articulated via pastoral letters, which were published in denominational journals and read at church association meetings. These letters were addressed both to the women who dared to preach and the men who dared to support them:

Meetings of pious women by themselves, for conversation and prayer, whenever they can confidently be held, we entirely approve. But let not the inspired prohibitions of the great apostle to the Gentiles, as found in his epistles to the Corinthians and to Timothy, be violated. To teach and exhort, or to lead in prayer, in public and promiscuous assemblies, is clearly forbidden to women in the Holy Oracles (reported in *General Assembly Minutes*, Presbytery, 348).

This Presbyterian pastoral letter clearly distinguishes between private and public speaking and is thus also representative of the larger debate regarding women's public address.

Women preachers were not the only ones to be denounced—women in other arenas of nineteenth-century life were similarly sanctioned for their attempts to speak publically. The Grimke sisters, for example, provoked the ire of several theologians when they spoke in churches on their abolitionism tour. One Orthodox pastoral letter reprimanded

the mistaken conduct of those who encourage females to bear an obtrusive and ostentatious part in measures of reform, and countenance of any of that sex who so far forget themselves as to itinerate in the character of public lecturers and teachers. (qtd. in Zikmund, "Struggle" 194)

Whether speaking on religious or political matters, speaking to a mixed, public audience violated a social code, and male church leaders responded by attempting to re-inscribe silence and piety as feminine virtues. The debate gained notoriety for the vitriolic nature of the responses, with Whittier documenting the debate thus:

So this is all—the utmost reach
Of priestly power the mind to fetter!
When laymen think—when women preach—
A war of words—a "Pastoral Letter!" (46)

The "war of words" against women's preaching was exhibited across all denominations, from the established Presbyterian and Congregational to the fledging, sectarian African Methodist Episcopal and Christian Connection. As Brekus explains, the backlash "began among socially conservative ministers... and it accelerated under the leadership of Methodists, African Methodists, Freewill Baptists, and Christians who wanted to build their small, counter-cultural churches into successful denominations"

(271). Women's fund-raising, organizing, and proselytizing abilities were sought after and valued when a congregation or sectarian denomination was attempting to establish itself in a community; once it acquired a critical mass, however, male church leaders did not want confusion—or competition—over who was assigned the divine right to minister and lead. They therefore threatened to cut off the church-sanctioned freedom—and power—that women had been exploiting in the church-based moral and social reforms that grew out of the Second Great Awakening.

Evangelical Motherhood

Despite strong opposition to women's leadership, by the 1840s, the church was the one place where women could congregate in large numbers, and female church members began to identify themselves as a group and a social class. Both male and female members articulated this idea. Pastor's wife Rebeccah Lee wrote in 1831, "To the Christian religion, we owe the rank we hold in society, and we should feel our obligation," and in 1843 a Boston pastor conflated sex and class when he stated, "I address you as a class because your duties and responsibilities are peculiar" (qtd. in Cott 131, 148). This formation of a class of women within denominations occurred simultaneously in England and the United States through the ideologies of True Womanhood and Republican Motherhood, both of which emphasized a separate, domestic sphere for women, where women bore the responsibility for child-rearing and family virtue (C. Schneider 23). Consequently, there is a proliferation of literature by men and women during this time that attempted to justify women's increased involvement in the church in relation to their roles as mothers and wives. In the words of

Daniel Chapman, because of women's "natural endowments" of delicacy, sensibility, and sympathy, "women are happily formed for religion" (qtd. in Cott 128). Chapman's sentiments were characteristic of male preachers who began to identify the fold of active women in churches as a threat. These preachers could not very well ask them to leave; instead, they inscribed submissive traits as feminine—and Christian—virtues. Consequently, by the mid-nineteenth century, the first constellation of significant debate surrounding women's preaching was "resolved" by a strategic and subtle shift of female resources: Quakers argued for a quieter form of preaching, Presbyterians relegated women to Sunday school classrooms, and Methodists limited women's preaching to missionary efforts stateside and abroad.

In a strategic rhetorical move, however, women coopted the separate sphere argument to continue to justify their religious leadership and activism. Women were the spiritual queens of their castles and were empowered to assume the responsibility of raising Christian men and supporting Christian husbands. In 1833, the Presbyterian Maternal Association established *The Mother's Magazine* which contained accounts of women leading their children and husbands toward salvation (Mary Ryan "Women's" 623). As the editor of *The Mother's Magazine* put it, "The church has had her seasons of refreshing and her returns of decay; but here in the circles of mothers, it is felt that the Holy Spirit condescends to *dwell*. It seems his blessed 'rest.'" (qtd. in Mary Ryan, "Women's" 623). According to Mary Ryan, although relegated to their homes for ministry, such ministry was nonetheless empowered, as "mothers may have ultimately supplanted ministers as the agents of religious conversion and of its functional equivalent, the Christian socialization of children" ("Women's" 623). In emphasizing their

evangelical roles in the home, women transformed Republican Motherhood into Evangelical Motherhood.

Women's Preaching in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

By the mid-nineteenth century, women began to take advantage of their numbers in the church and their "natural" moral authority to become increasingly involved in such social reform movements as temperance, suffrage, abolition, and the crusade against poverty. Continuing their work from the second Great Awakening, women organized on a massive scale to raise funds, start Sunday Schools and other charitable organizations, and participate in missionary activities, especially to the South. As Carol Mattingly has persuasively argued, these moral reform activities enabled women to create community and solidarity and to appeal to a large audience (*Well-Tempered* 18). It was the formal organization and framework of Protestantism that gave women access to the public forum and the opportunity to speak out on public issues.²⁵

By the mid-nineteenth century, this emphasis on action made its way out of the home and church and into communities, as large numbers of women in formal church bodies argued for increased activity in social reform due to religious obligation. Often identified as the "Feminization of Protestantism," this movement gave women the opportunity to explore definitions of selfhood and participate in a supportive community, an opportunity usually reserved for men in secular occupations (Cott 138).²⁶

²⁵ For a discussion of the importance of the Protestant movement in the development of women's activist networks, see Martha Blauvelt, "Women and Revivalism" (1981); Anne Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism* (2002); Brekus, chapters 1-3; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, chapter 4, in *Man Cannot Speak For Her* (1989); Jualynne Dodson, *Engendering Church* (2002); and Susan Lindley, "Deciding Who Counts" (2001): 59-69.

²⁶ For more on the "Feminization of Protestantism," see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood" (1996) and *Dimity Convictions* (1976).

Furthermore, the nineteenth-century belletristic rhetorical tradition that valued natural taste and bearing provided women with a rhetorical style that was considered appropriate to their sex (N. Johnson 91).

In the fifty years following the debates of the 1830s, women gained access to the pulpit by using rhetoric that was non-threatening to the male hierarchy of the church and even gaining, in some cases, the explicit support of church leaders. Small victories in the early-nineteenth century led to significant victories in the mid-nineteenth century. After rebuffing her in 1811, African Methodist Episcopalian Richard Allen fully supported Jarena Lee's preaching career in 1819, and she informally preached till her death. Congregationalists Gerrit Smith and the Reverend Luther Lee convinced their congregation to formally ordain Antoinette Brown²⁷ in 1853. And Olympia Brown was the first woman to be ordained by a denomination, gaining full preaching rights from the Universalist denomination in 1863.

The Holiness Movement

It was also in the mid-nineteenth century that the holiness movement climaxed, renewing with even greater intensity the revivalism of the second Great Awakening. The holiness movement was initially founded on John Wesley's teachings; holiness theology rejected Calvinist views of total depravity and predestination and rather assumed that all persons had a natural capacity for faith and goodness. In America, the holiness movement started at about the same time that women and men engaged in the first debate over women's preaching, in the 1830s. Charles Finney, together with Oberlin College's

²⁷ Also known as Antoinette Brown Blackwell. She married in 1856. Because much of her activist work was published when she was single, I refer to her throughout this dissertation as Antoinette Brown.

first president, Asa Mahan, deflected away from Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, respectively, in 1836 and began to advocate persuasive evangelistic methods that could expedite a person's salvation. According to Finney and Mahan, one did not need to spend a lifetime spiritually maturing, nor wait for God's sanctification; rather, sanctification simply required the "purification" of a second conversion. "Perfectionism," the result of such purification, was a stable, consistent Christian life free from the habit of sin (Tait 22).²⁸ Propagated mostly by Methodist congregations, the holiness movement cut across racial and geographic lines. In his introduction to Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Richard Doty asserted, "Holiness takes the prejudice of color out of both the white and the black, and declares that 'The [heart's] the standard of the man'" (5-6).

Perhaps partly because of their remarkable success gaining converts during the second Great Awakening, women were explicitly invited to participate in the holiness movement. In 1839, Timothy Merritt, founder of *The Guide to Christian Perfection*, included a special notice on the last page of the first issue:

A Word to the Female Members of the Church.—Many of you have experienced the grace of sanctification. Should you not then, as a thank-offering to God, give an account of this gracious dealing with your souls, that others may be partakers of the grace also? *Sisters in Christ*, may we not expect that you will assist us both with your prayers and pens? (qtd. in Hardesty, et al. 232)

Phoebe Palmer was one woman who responded loudly and prolifically. Technically a Methodist class leader in New York City, Palmer was never ordained or licensed to preach, but traveled extensively with her husband and "preached" as a lay revivalist.

²⁸ For more on the development of Christian Perfectionism within American Methodism, see John Peter, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (1956).

Palmer was instrumental in the Holiness Revival of 1857-1858, which jumpstarted the revival movement in the United States. In her lifetime, Palmer spoke to over 100,000 people and reached countless more with her numerous publications, including *The Way of Holiness* and seventeen other books of theology, biography, and poetry, and the extremely popular international journal, the *Guide to Holiness*, which she edited for eleven years.²⁹ Her famous holiness Tuesday Meetings attracted Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Quakers, and her converts included Amanda Berry Smith, Catherine Booth, and Frances Willard.

Phoebe Palmer simplified Wesleyan's process to Christian Perfection into three simple steps, what she called her "shorter way" or "altar theology": 1) consecration—the dedication of all time, talents, relationships, and material goods to God; 2) faith—the belief in God's promises as set forth in the Bible; and 3) testimony—the sharing of one's experience of sanctification (*Way of Holiness* 10-19). Consecration and faith enabled a person to gain sanctification; testimony allowed a person to reach perfection. Palmer also stressed biblical literacy; she claimed that biblical "knowledge is conviction" and encouraged converts to "seek only to be *fully conformed to the will of God, as recorded in his written word....* to be an humble *Bible Christian*" (*Way of Holiness* 10).

Palmer also claimed that "Holiness is power" (*Promise* 206). Holiness as empowerment was a significant theological underpinning for women's increased rhetorical agency in the church in the mid-nineteenth century.³⁰ Because holiness stressed each person's potential for perfectionism and strictly adhered to the Biblical

²⁹ For biographies of Phoebe Palmer, see Charles White, *The Beauty of Holiness* (1986); and Harold Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought* (1947). For a collection of her writings, see Thomas Oden, *Phoebe Palmer: Selected Writings* (1988).

³⁰ For more on women preachers in the Wesleyan tradition, see Stan Ingersol, "Holiness Women" (1994).

precepts of purification and sanctification, women's religious experiences were valued, and the public sharing through testimony of these experiences was expected.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit provided preaching women with the necessary context and strategy to support their preaching. The importance of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process enabled women to bypass formal male or denominational support. Preaching women in the holiness tradition stressed that God, through the Holy Spirit, sanctioned them to preach, and this sanction trumped whatever objections their churches or denominations had. Furthermore, perfectionism—the idea that Christ could cleanse a person's soul of original sin—released women from the legacy of Eve.

The women I study in this dissertation—Julia Foote, Frances Willard, and Louisa Woolsley—all came out of holiness traditions (AME Zion, Methodist, and Cumberland Presbyterian, respectively) or were involved in the holiness movement. Furthermore, with the exception of Willard, all women belonged to sectarian Protestant branches that broke away from their denominations during the holiness movement. As Barbara Zikmund points out, when women were ignored in mainline denominations, they sought out, or even developed, in the case of the Shakers and the Salvation Army, sectarian communities more sympathetic to their leadership (“Feminist” 207). Because they were independent of denominational rule, these sectarian groups often showed more latitude towards female leadership.

Women's Preaching in the Late-Nineteenth Century

Just as the evangelism of the second Great Awakening led to the first constellation of debate surrounding women's preaching in the 1830s, the revivalism of the holiness movement led to the second constellation of rhetorical activity around women's preaching in the 1880s and 1890s. "During the late nineteenth century," Bettye Collier-Thomas explains, "there was increased activity and discussion about the proper role and place for women in the Church and in society" (xiii). However, unlike the debate in the 1830s, which tended to emphasize women's unique nature and to argue for "appropriate" models of religious discourse, the debate in the late-nineteenth century was instead focused on women's right to preach based on natural rights. According to Mark Chaves, "As the nineteenth century moved on, but especially after 1870, the issue of female clergy came to be more and more understood as an issue of gender equality" (70). When an AME bishop, for example, attempted to persuade the 1884 Methodist Episcopal General Conference to license women to preach, he asked them to "give notice to all that we have risen to that height where sex is no barrier to the enjoyment of some of the privileges of the Gospel Ministry" (qtd. in Angell and Pinn 100). Similarly, the 1893 United Brethren General Conference welcomed women delegates by stating that women should be "recognized on an equality with their brethren" (qtd. in Gorrell 243).

This rhetoric reflects the close alignment that the debate over women's preaching had with the women's rights movement of that time. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage report in the first volume of their *History of Women Suffrage* that six of eleven sets of resolutions from state-level women's rights conventions called for equal access of women to clergy status and, of sixteen national meetings of the National American Woman Suffrage Associations held between 1885

and 1900, nine of them gave attention to women's position in church (Chaves 44-45). Clearly, the same factors that instigated a new flurry of defenses of women's preaching in the 1880s also prepared the ground for the various progressive movements of the early twentieth century. The surge in women's defenses of their preaching coincided with a wave of other social movements, including suffrage, temperance, education, and poverty-reform. Many proponents of these movements, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, took a secular stance and increasingly distanced themselves from church bodies, relying less and less often on religious arguments. Others argued that the role of the church should be more expansive, not less, in the social welfare of Americans.

Foreign and Home Mission Efforts

The women who argued for a more expansive role of the Protestant church organized, developed, and led foreign and home mission efforts. Foreign missionary work included building churches, hospitals and clinics, schools, and orphanages, and then ministering to and teaching those who took advantage of these structures. For many women, mission efforts comprised a sphere of activity in which women were encouraged to flex their rhetorical muscles; indeed, many women who expressed an interest in preaching were often sidelined into foreign missionary work. What was unacceptable in the American public sphere was considered quite acceptable in the Haitian, African, or Chinese public sphere. In 1889, twenty-two states had women's branches of foreign missionary societies, and most denominations had an autonomous women's mission society, such the AME Women's Parent Mite Missionary Society or the Disciples of

Christ Christian Women's Board of Missions. These autonomous societies were comprised of women and organized and led by women.

Similarly, home missionary efforts provided women with an outlet for their evangelical callings. In the south, during Reconstruction, there was a great deal of missionary activity, as northern women traveled south to help their religious brothers and sisters congregate formally. Anglo Methodist female members, for example, attempted to address social and economic imbalances through educational and vocational missionary efforts, efforts which were based on the idea of an "alternative New South: an industrial society run by men and women in the name of God" (Frederickson 345). Laura Haygood and Bertha Newell, for example, spoke out for industrial reform despite open hostility in their communities. African American Methodist and Baptist women were vital to the identity and community of southern blacks and functioned to support African Americans politically, socially, and economically. The missionary efforts of African American women not only represented religious interests, but also helped create institutional space for political and social interests as well.³¹ This new massive organization helped fuel a significant transformation in black authorship and readership, because mission events were reported in the African American religious press. Women missionary leaders were often tasked with writing a column to report their efforts (Higginbotham 77). These journals—read by men and women, or read to them in their congregations—were integral to "the development of the critical reflection that informed the church's practice" (Angell and Pinn xiii).

³¹ The activism of religious African American women is well-documented. See Stephen Angell and Anthony Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (2000); Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder* (1997); Dodson; Evelyn Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent* (1993); Shirley Logan, "We Are Coming" (1999); and Jacqueline Royster, *Traces of a Stream* (2000).

The western expansion of the mid- and late nineteenth century also provided women with increased opportunities to minister in communities where congregations were newly forming and still open to women's preaching. Indeed, in some cases, women were the only qualified and interested people ministering on the frontier. According to Janette Hassey, "newer, smaller communities in the West, where few Christian men lived and public sentiment was unsettled, most rapidly received new practices such as women preachers" (125). The expanding western border presented numerous social problems and inequities, such as alcoholism, violence, and Native American poverty and lack of education, and consequently also became fertile ground for temperance and other social reform work. Women led and supported their work on the frontier by publishing journals, starting training schools and developing curricula, and raising millions of dollars (Bendroth 28). Numerous Bible Institutes sprang up across the Midwest and West, most notably evangelist Dwight Moody's Bible Institute in Chicago. In addition, other benevolent societies originated on the frontier, such as the Union Benevolent Societies, which were organized in Lexington, Kentucky.

The most successful home missionary effort was unequivocally the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Although temperance was a movement that spread out across the entire nineteenth century, it experienced tremendous support and growth after the establishment of the WCTU in 1874. Membership in that organization jumped from 22,800 in 1881 to 158,477 in 1901; not surprisingly, then, "Temperance women made up the largest movement of women in the nineteenth century, and the largest group of women orators and rhetors" (Mattingly, *Well-Tempered* 1). Many temperance women became involved in temperance because of their religious

convictions, and the tactics of the organization often mirrored religious practices. For example, crusaders would march through the streets, enter a saloon, and, if permitted, would lead a kind of make-shift church service, complete with prayer, exhortations, and sermon. At the conclusion of the “service,” saloon owners were asked to sign a pledge to cease selling liquor (S. Lee 296).

The behind-the-scenes work of women in the early and mid-nineteenth century directly led to more public and established religious roles for women at the turn-of-the-century: stewardess, missionary, female evangelist, deaconess, and preacher. According to Jualynne Dodson, “the changes did not happen because churchmen were cooperative and eager to include women in hierarchy; it took hard, sustained effort by women” (3). Instead, the changes rather happened because women were more outspoken about their inherent rights to the pulpit and were supported by leaders and participants in the coinciding women’s rights and temperance movements. The male backlash against growing female religious leadership resulted in increased discussion and communication over how, exactly, women should contribute to church life. According to Janette Hassey, “evangelical feminism in America first surfaced in the mid-nineteenth century and accelerated at the turn of the century” (xii). American Protestantism created a rhetorical situation that gave women an opportunity to speak out on public issues in a sustained women-led political movement. No longer satisfied with behind-the-scenes work, women began to adopt a more public persona. By the late nineteenth century, religious women wanted to trade in their sewing circles for prayer circles, their bake sales for missionary work, and their roles of teacher, testifier, and exhorter for more formal

ministry. With religion as their primary site of identity, they established an activist religious ethic.

At the turn of the century, the threat of female preachers gaining numerical prominence and religious authority was no longer merely “a rope of sand,” as AME bishop Daniel Payne referred to it in 1850 (qtd. in Dodson 56). In the first half of the nineteenth century, women broadened the boundaries of what was considered their appropriate sphere of influence; emboldened by their success and empowered through their involvement in revivals, church clubs, missions, societies, and sectarian congregations, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, women took a more activist stance over their right to the pulpit. “The ‘new woman’ of the late nineteenth century, influenced by the woman’s rights and suffrage movements and the rhetoric of woman’s equality,” writes Collier-Thomas, “sought greater recognition and equality in the Church” (18). The ambitions of women preachers in particular were partly realized: the percentage of denominations that ordained women jumped from about seven percent in 1890 to more than twenty-five percent in 1900 (Chaves 48). Women preachers helped secure this formal recognition by printing their sermons, submitting editorials in church presses, self-publishing their spiritual autobiographies, and writing defenses of women’s preaching. Women thus made their leadership more public and engaged directly with their denominations, their clergy, and their congregations over their right to preach.

Nineteenth-Century Female Religious Rhetorical Scholarship

The arduous process of archival and recovery work often necessitates the articulation of a narrative: to convey the significance of a newly discovered rhetor, a story must be told—her life must be represented within the context of her time, and her works must be put in conversation with other contemporary texts. Many of the religious rhetors that I study are available because scholars from a variety of disciplines have begun to tell the narratives of these women. Scholars in African American Studies,³² Religious Studies,³³ Women’s Studies,³⁴ and History³⁵ have compiled critical anthologies of works that include women preachers and have written studies of female religious speakers, attending to their race, gender, and religious identities within cultural and historical contexts.

Within Rhetorical Studies, the list of scholars who study women’s religious practices throughout history is a short but increasing one, evidence of an acknowledgment that women’s religious activism is a worthy site of rhetorical inquiry.³⁶ The rhetorical treatment of nineteenth-century women preachers’ activism is an important subset of this body of scholarship. In addition to her inclusion of Margaret Fell, Maria Stewart, Phoebe Palmer, and Frances Willard in *The Rhetorical Tradition*, Patricia Bizzell’s scholarship on rhetoric and religion includes considerations of gender, most notably in “Frances Willard, Phoebe Palmer, and the Ethos of the Methodist Woman Preacher.” In this essay, Bizzell attends closely to the influence of Phoebe Palmer on Frances Willard, particularly in her development of a “type of womanly spiritual

³² E.g. Bettye Collier-Thomas, Jualynne Dodson, Richard Douglass-Chin, and Evelyn Higginbotham.

³³ E.g. Catherine Brekus, Mark Chaves, Paul Chilcote, David Farmer and Edwina Hunter, Nancy Hardesty, Rosemary Keller, Pamela Klassen, Susan Lindley, Rosemary Ruether, Carl and Dorothy Schneider, Hilah Thomas, and Barbara Zikmund.

³⁴ E.g. Margaret McFadden, and Cynthia Tucker.

³⁵ E.g. Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, Janette Hassey, and Barbara MacHaffie.

³⁶ E.g. Patricia Bizzell, Vicki Tolar Burton, Beth Daniell, Julia Dietrich, Jane Donawerth, Cheryl Glenn, Shirley Logan, Roxanne Mountford, Lisa Shaver, Amy Slagell, Jan Swearingen, and Martha Watson.

ethos...associated with the platform presence of Methodist women preachers” (378). Like Bizzell, Jane Donawerth has included several female religious activists in her anthology, *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900*, including Margaret Fell, Jennie Willing, and Frances Willard. Donawerth’s chapter on women’s defenses of their preaching in *Conversational Rhetoric: The Rise and Fall of a Women’s Tradition, 1600-1900* is the first to provide a broad and inclusive description of the tradition of defenses of women’s preaching. In “*We are Coming:*” *The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women*, Shirley Wilson Logan examines the rhetorical discourse of women in the black Baptist women’s movement. Although defenses of women’s preaching by black Baptist women are rare, their contribution to nineteenth-century female religious discourse is significant. According to Logan: “They spoke their minds from platform and pulpit and went to work correcting the wrongs they saw before them. They left no records, wrote no books, organized no conferences, but they helped to establish a tradition of political activism among black women” (22). Roxanne Mountford and Lisa Shaver both address space and women’s religious rhetoric: Mountford attends specifically to the fifth canon of delivery in her investigation of women preachers within the rhetorical space of the pulpit; Shaver claims that women transformed the space of their deathbeds into symbolic pulpits by using their memoirs to construct an image of themselves as ministers.

Together, rhetorical scholars and nineteenth-century scholars from other disciplines, including Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, Nancy Hardesty, Janette Hassey, Lucy Lind Hogan, Rosemary Skinner Keller, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Barbara Brown Zikmund, have begun to map out a tradition of women’s defenses of their preaching by

identifying women who have defended women's right to the pulpit. These treatments either look closely at one religious rhetor or identify common rhetorical strategies among multiple rhetors, thus contributing: 1) single-author treatments; 2) critical anthologies, with female preachers grouped according to race and/or denomination; 3) rehistoricizations—re-readings of the times and places in which female preachers spoke and wrote; and 4) comparative treatments of women's defenses of their preaching, usually within the same denomination. This body of work is significant in its recognition of women preachers as rhetorical activists and serious theologians asserting their place among other religious rhetors.

I firmly place this dissertation within the recent scholarship on women's religious practice and in the joint venture of recovery work and rhetorical analysis. I hope to contribute to this valuable scholarship by offering a close analysis of a significant rhetorical moment in the tradition of defenses of women's preaching: the production and typification of a new genre. Foote's, Willard's, and Woosley's little books are what Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior call "rich contextualizations of discourse":

the sense that genre systems must be understood as embodied, mediated, semiotically multimodal, and historically dispersed, [a discourse] truly about developing ways of being in the world—about embodied work and its material conditions, about attunement to and transformation of complex lifeworlds, and about sociohistoric trajectories of hybrid practices, artifacts, institutions, and persons. ("Participating" 16)

The little book defense of women's preaching is functionally and rhetorically multimodal in its capacity to adapt to the changing, increasingly virulent debate surrounding women's preaching.

This project also addresses what Diane Helene Miller identifies as a “commitment to exploring the ways in which identity categories *constitute* rhetoric” (376, italics in original). According to Miller:

such a commitment must mean looking beyond gender as an isolated category to the intersection of gender with variables of race, class, sexual orientation, and other variables of stratification—looking, therefore, to the differences *among* and even *within* women rather than focusing exclusively, or even primarily, on the difference between the sexes. (376)

Religion is one identity category that is often diminished or even erased from rhetorical treatments of women in history. In this study, I see religion as an integral identity category that was the seat for other activist rhetorics; by extension, then, women’s right to the ministry is an important site of activism and rhetorical discourse. My project considers women’s defenses of women’s preaching to be worthy of consideration as a unique subset of women’s activism in the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century women who defended their right to preach saw their role as preachers of the Gospel as not only ordained by God, but also mandated by the contemporary needs of modern society. The underlying assumption throughout this project is that these female rhetors were consciously engaging in rhetorical and theological multiplicity. Their texts are simultaneously defenses of women’s religious discourse, evangelical calls to Christ, and abolitionist, suffrage, and temperance texts.

Cheryl Glenn argues that as scholars we must be aware of the elasticity of who we are, what we study, and how the two inform one another. According to Glenn:

rhetorical history is not and has never been neutral territory ... our new map or, rather, our partially completed maps reflect and coordinate our current institutional, intellectual, political, and personal values, all of which have become markedly more diverse and elastic in terms of gender, race, and class. (4)

For the purposes of articulating my conception of the development of the little book defense of women's preaching, I give Foote's, Willard's, and Woosley's texts representational status; however, their personal stories are not monolithic—there is not a singular African American nor Anglo American Methodist or Presbyterian female story in the nineteenth-century United States. I aim to contribute to the partial map of women's defenses of women's preaching, but I am fully aware of the futility in claiming permanent borders and boundaries. I hope as we read more defenses of women's preaching—and, more generally, women's religious rhetoric—that map will continue to grow and shift.

To this end, I continue my project in the next chapter with a kind of topography of the debate of women's preaching by providing a comprehensive survey of the debate. First, I provide an overview of the objections to women's preaching; I then outline and categorize the various arguments used by male religious leaders in support of women's preaching. I follow with a survey of women's defenses of their preaching, organized by genre, then rhetoric. I closely attend to the forms that were available to women as well as to the lines of argument that women used in defense of their right to preach.

Having broadened the parameters of the body of work called “defenses of women's preaching” to include spiritual autobiographies, pamphlets, books, letters, and speeches, I then focus on Julia Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* and Frances Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit* in chapters three and four. In chapter three, I read Foote's little book as a joint project defending women's ministry and presenting her holiness theology. Foote blends textual rhetorics of the slave narrative and spiritual autobiography traditions, mapping her story onto the story of slavery in America. Foote

also incorporates the oral rhetoric one would expect in various worship venues, including revivals, church services, and prayer circles. In so doing, she adapts the genre of spiritual autobiography into a little book that invokes her authority as ministerial and transforms her audience into a congregation.

Similarly, in chapter four, I read Willard's little book as a joint project defending women's preaching and presenting her Social Gospel theology, a theology based on equal female and male contribution to religious life. Willard experiments with both the form of the treatise and the rhetoric of the Social Gospel. First, Willard transforms the authenticating documents one would expect in such a work into letters of support for women's ministry generally. She then presents her own exegetical support for women's preaching, borrowing from the scientific and metaphysical discourse that was prevalent in the Social Gospel and in nineteenth-century American life in general. Willard theorizes a Kingdom of God in which the "mother" role is as integral as the "Fatherhood of God." Female preachers, assert Willard, are integral to representing the "mother-heart of God" (46). Willard closes her book by textually creating a forum, representing her interpretation of the Kingdom of God as an ideal, egalitarian society.

I close by reading Louisa Woosley's *Shall Woman Preach? Or The Question Answered* as one example of how the little book solidifies into a genre of defense. Woosley adapts the multiple genres and lines of argument used to defend women's preaching into her little book. Furthermore, her text bridges women's defenses of women's preaching and scriptural defenses of women; Woosley navigates between both modes easily, demonstrating how the little book gives her the textual space to address multiple discourses at once. Finally, Woosley incorporates Masonic and women's rights

rhetoric to articulate a theology that values women as representative of Christ and identifies them as capable of leadership in the religious and secular world. All of the rhetors I study in this project, I posit, are both rhetoricians and theologians. The little book, a hybrid form, provides them with a textual space for the intersections of their rhetoric and theology.

Chapter 2

The Debate over Women's Preaching

Mr. Editor: I said some time ago, that there was danger that the women would soon get the power into their hands, and we poor men would have to hold *men's rights meetings*.

J. F. Weishampel

Reply of Ellen Stewart: He fears the women will get the power into their hands, and then the poor men will have to hold men's rights meetings. We think they need not wait for that. It would be an excellent thing to have them now taking the code of the Saviour, especially the golden rule, which knows no sex, for their rule of judgment.

Exchange in the *Church Advocate*, 1855 (rpt. in E. Stewart 199-200)

In 1666, from prison, Quaker Margaret Fell wrote the entymeme: “those who speak against the woman's speaking speak against the Church of Christ and the seed of woman, which is Christ” (62). One of the first major defenses of women's preaching, Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified* exemplifies the theological sophistication and rhetorical prowess employed by women throughout history as they struggled for recognition in the pulpit. This is a debate that has resurged in practically every historical era from early modern times to today, often coinciding with religious reformation periods. This is also a debate that presents itself in almost every genre, from the spiritual autobiography to the convention speech.

It is telling that Fell conflates “speaking” with “preaching” in *Women's Speaking Justified*, because preaching is but one public oratorical activity that women have had to fight for and protect in the history of women's rhetorical practices, and defenses of women's preaching consequently share space with defenses of women's public address

under the general umbrella of defenses of women.³⁷ From the early modern period through the nineteenth century, women's voices and texts were often considered a collective threat to male-dominated institutions and a gross violation of women's sphere and capabilities; when women attempted to lay claim to a public space, whether stage, platform, or pulpit, they were denounced as morally repugnant and intellectually inferior. This was particularly the case in the nineteenth century, when "femininity and rhetorical action were seen as mutually exclusive" (K. Campbell 9). Both women's bodies and intellects were open to criticism when they attempted to address public audiences, and, consequently, women carefully negotiated dress and adopted particular styles of speaking that would be more acceptable to their audiences' idea of feminine decorum. As Carol Mattingly explains,

Because gender was the defining feature for women, public success for women speakers was largely determined by their ability to negotiate gender constraints in a manner that allowed audiences to identify with them, to hear, and ultimately to consider and agree with both their role and their words. (*Appropriating* 8)

Throughout history, "public" has been just as much a concept as it is an actual space, and both the borders of and prohibitions around public discourse are often fluid and temporary. During the seventeenth century, for example, midwives like Elizabeth Cellier were allowed to serve as experts in court, because they were speaking about women's bodies (Bruce 62); similarly, as I have already demonstrated, in the nineteenth century, women were encouraged to preach in foreign missions, because they were

³⁷ For an interesting study of early modern women's use of counterpublics as an entry into public debate, see Catherine Gray, *Women Writers and Public Debate* (2007). For an overview and analysis of nineteenth-century women's public speaking, see K. Campbell, and Caroline Levander, *Voices of the Nation* (1998). For the specific contributions of African American to women's nineteenth-century public speaking, see Logan, and Carla Peterson, *Doers of the Word* (1995). For a rhetorical study of how nineteenth-century women modified the fifth canon of delivery for their oratorical purposes, see Lindal Buchanan, *Regendering Delivery* (2005). For nineteenth-century women's role in public events and ceremonies, see Mary Ryan, *Women in Public* (1992).

addressing a “heathen” audience. The debate over women’s preaching, although it intersects in many ways with the debate over women’s public speaking, deserves special consideration and analysis because it contributes to our understanding of public space and public voices in the nineteenth century. In the discourse surrounding women’s ministry, the source for objection was not only that women were speaking publically, but, moreover, that they were speaking publically about spiritual matters and thus presuming direct inspiration from God. Furthermore, women defenders of women’s preaching represent perhaps one of the broadest ranges of political and social sympathies, with some arguing quite conservatively that women’s voices should be limited to religious discourse and others arguing quite radically that women’s equal status in church was representative of her equal status in society. There is a range of historical breadth as well. The tradition of female preaching apologia goes at least as far back as Argula von Grumbach and Marie Dentiere, who defended their right to speak out on religious topics in the early-sixteenth century. The tradition continues in the seventeenth century with Rachel Speght, Margaret Fell, and Elizabeth Bathurst and coalesces in the eighteenth century, with the voices of the women of early British Methodism: forty-one preaching women, most notably represented by Mary Bosanquet, Sarah Mallet, and Sarah Crosby³⁸

As Vicki Tolar Burton details in her scholarship on British Wesleyan women, Bosanquet, Mallet, and Crosby helped constitute a select cohort of female followers of Methodism’s founder, John Wesley—followers who enjoyed his explicit support for their preaching.³⁹ Bosanquet, Mallet, and Crosby’s preaching careers helped initiate a

³⁸ For a comprehensive list of early Wesleyan preachers, see Chilcote 253-87.

³⁹ For more on eighteenth-century British preaching women in the Wesleyan tradition, see Burton, *Spiritual Literacy*, and Chilcote. For a general study of British preaching women of the nineteenth century, see Christine Krueger, *The Reader’s Repentance* (1992).

dramatic increase in female preaching. Across the ocean, American women were participating in a wide-spread revival movement which provided virtually unlimited possibilities for public religious speech. These trans-continental preaching women were simultaneously denounced and embraced by their communities and became both spectacles and models for other British and American women (Brekus 44). Letters to Wesley from Bosanquet, Mallet, and Crosby justifying their right to minister reveal similar rhetorical strategies to those of religious women a century later. However, although they were frequently castigated, eighteenth-century female preachers were never institutionally denied their right to preach; it was fifty years later that American women were heatedly challenged and engaged in the debate over women's preaching with greater fervor and intensity than perhaps ever before.

Objections to Women's Preaching

As I detailed in the previous chapter, nineteenth-century American defenses of women's preaching were written in direct response to the backlash against women's religious leadership in the growing and diverse branches of the Protestant church. Sectarian and separatist churches that tried to distance themselves from mainstream denominations *had*—at the turn of the nineteenth century—welcomed women's speaking and testifying in church. Indeed, they relied on women's participation for such integral components of church growth as membership campaigns and fund-raising efforts. However, as these churches strove to gain denominational status and reputation, the male leadership forcefully began to revoke their support of all forms of women's public speaking in the church.

The rumblings of discontent over female religious leaders in the early decades of the nineteenth century came to a head in the 1830s, as church leaders from a range of denominations went on the attack, condemning the ministry of women in pastoral letters and sermons. In the mid- to late nineteenth century, church leaders broadened their audiences by addressing the issue in religious journals and at denominational conventions. No longer limited to the confines of church walls, the debate raged in the pages of the such journals as the *Western Recorder*, *Church Advocate*, *Gospel Advocate*, and *Christian Standard*. Often this debate was initiated because of the ordination of a woman. For example, in 1886, Henry McNeal Turner's ordination of Sallie Ann Hughes as the first AME deacon prompted furious debate in the *A.M.E. Church Review* (Angell and Pinn 288). Similarly, in 1892, the *Methodist Recorder* devoted considerable space to Eugenia St. John's and Anna Howard Shaw's request for official recognition by the denomination. The debate was not limited to Methodism: throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the *Presbyterian Review*, the *Cumberland Presbyterian*, and the *Congregational Quarterly* published articles and editorials representing a spectrum of views on women's ordination (Boyd and Brackenridge 110-11). Women's preaching was also the central issue at sizeable conventions, like the Presbyterian General Assembly and the Methodist Protestant General Conference, both of which discussed women's preaching in their meetings in 1892 (Hudson 113, Noll 228). Such attention in the press and at conventions prompted George Francis Wilkin's attempt to resolve the issue over women's preaching with a lengthy treatise. Although it masquerades as a defense of women's prophesying, Wilkin's *The Prophesying of Women* (1895) is a 350-page argument for limitations on women's speech in church.

The objections to women's preaching ranged from strong, sometimes hostile opposition to conciliatory concession. At the far end of this spectrum, male church leaders did not mince words, calling women's ministry a "subversion of Christian faith" (Wilkin 245) and a sign of "failure and apostasy" (Whittle 315) in the modern church. Such rhetoric represented the biblical and cultural bases for their opposition.

A significant number of male clergy considered anything but a very literal interpretation of the Bible to indeed be subversive and unsupportable. They took as their text a range of scripture, from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Congregational minister Stephen Knowlton supported his arguments for women's subordination by referencing Eve, writing "She made a little speech once and that was the world's undoing: now let her keep silence" (332). *Church Advocate* editor J. F. Weishampel similarly alludes to Genesis by opening his editorial thus: "Woman is the 'second and revised edition' of man" ("Female Preaching" 184). Clergyman's wives shared the disapproval, evidenced by Pastor George C. Needham's wife, Elizabeth, who blames Eve for passing on a "moral disability" whose "humiliation will abide even upon the last woman to the end of the age" (11).⁴⁰

The biblical texts of choice, however, were New Testament passages I Corinthians 14: 34-35:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

and I Timothy 2:11-12:

⁴⁰ For additional arguments based on Eve's original transgression, see John Kendall, "The Family" (1885); David Lipscomb, "Woman's Station" (1888): 6; and E.G. Sewell, "The Elevation and Proper Position of Women" (1888): 8.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.⁴¹

Calling Paul's prohibition against female preaching a "positive, explicit, and universal" rule (A. Barnes 294), male clergy refused to budge from a literal reading of Paul and argued that all other arguments fell weakly aside "against the authority of God" (Brookes, "Woman" 253).⁴² They cited as evidence the fact that no woman was chosen to author a biblical book, no woman was chosen by Christ as a disciple, bishop, elder, or deacon, and no woman was authorized to baptize.⁴³ In the words of AME minister J. P. Campbell, "Women always have been and are now recognized as helpers, and always ought to be so recognized and received, for that is the will of the Lord" (290). Along those lines, objectors also drew clear lines of differentiation between preaching and "ministering," "evangelizing," "prophesying," and "laboring."⁴⁴

Although religious leaders claimed to rely on scriptural authority, the majority of objections were equally based on cultural fears and assumptions. For example, one pastoral letter from the General Association of Congregational Ministers read:

But when she assumes the place of man as a public reformer, she yields the power which God has given her for her protection, and her character becomes unnatural. If the vine, whose strength and beauty is to lean on the trellis-work, and half conceal its clusters, thinks to assume the independence and the overshadowing nature of the elm, it will not only

⁴¹ For reference purposes, I have compiled common biblical passages used in the debate over women's preaching in Appendix B. All biblical references are from the King James translation, as this was the translation most cited by women preachers in the nineteenth century.

⁴² For additional arguments based on literal biblical interpretation of Pauline scripture, see also Cyrus Cort, "Woman Preaching" (1882); Robert Dabney, "The Public Preaching of Women" (1879); Stephen Knowlton, "The Silence of Women" (1867); David Libscomb, "Paul's Word and Women's Opportunity" (1892); and J. L. Neve, "Shall Women Preach" (1903).

⁴³ For arguments citing lack of Biblical precedence, see James Brookes, "Woman in the Church" (1887-1888); William Johnston, "To Sister Ellen Stewart" (1853): 178-79; and Benjamin Tanner, "The Ordination of Women" (1886): 296.

⁴⁴ For arguments citing definitional differences, see A. A. Bunner "Woman's Work in the Church" (1888); J. P. Campbell, "The Ordination of Women" (1886) 290; W. Johnston, "Reply" (1852): 172-73; and George Wilkin, *The Prophesying of Women* (1895).

cease to bear fruit, but fall in shame and dishonor into the dust. (qtd. in Brekus 282)

This letter represents one of the primary arguments against women's preaching employed throughout the nineteenth century: that female preachers would throw off the divinely-established natural hierarchy of the world. As Catherine Brekus explains, objectors to women's preaching called up "virtually every negative stereotype of female preachers and reformers: they were 'manly' ('independent' and 'overshadowing'), sexually sterile (unable to 'bear fruit'), and promiscuous ('fallen')" (282).

The stereotype of manliness carried particular weight in objections to women's ministry: women were denounced by both men and women for appearing too masculine in their preaching and for breaching feminine decorum. Itinerate preacher Nancy Towle cites an editorial mocking her for being a man "in the costume of a female" (227), and J. F. Weishampel calls women preachers "repulsive" ("Female Presumption Again" 190). George Wilkin claims that under the leadership of women, "the churches are at war with manhood" (346). Indeed, women preachers so threatened what many considered the natural order of God that they were often met with violence or the threat of violence. Methodist preacher Ellen Stewart summarizes the experience thus: "She takes a public stand, making herself a spectacle to angels and to men" (171). African American women in particular challenged—in both presence and words—the "natural" order and hierarchy of gender, race, and class, and were often punished severely for it, evidenced by AME preachers Jarena Lee's, Julia Foote's, and Amanda Berry Smith's recounting of various threats of physical violence (46, 215, 206). Other African American women who ascended the platform to speak publically about secular issues encountered similar

dangerous situations. Maria Stewart, for example attributes such dangers to the work of the devil:

I have indeed had to contend against the fiery darts of the devil. And was it not that the righteous are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation, long before this I should have proved to be like the seed by the way-side. For it has actually appeared to me at different periods, as though the powers of earth and hell had combined against me, to prove my overthrow. (71)

God's natural place for women, argued objectors, was not in the pulpit, but rather in the home, where their piety and morality could influence their husbands and children. For example, Presbyterian Theodore Cuyler argued: "There is a ministry that is older and deeper and more potent than ours. It is the ministry that presides over the crib and impresses the first gospel influence on the enfant soul" (4). Similarly, an editorial in the *Gospel Advocate* claimed that the "most contented little queen of the earth is the mistress of a true husband, a cosy cottage, a hen-coop, a cooking stove, a gentle cow, a good sewing machine, and a baby" (J. Barnes 451). Calling up the Victorian feminine ideal and separate spheres ideology, these arguments claimed to value woman's piety and morality as the antidotes to a masculine, industrialized, harsh world.⁴⁵

Such arguments based on women's unique contribution to the home inevitably led to comment on her physical limitations for ministry beyond the home. Citing the biological burdens of pregnancy and breastfeeding, objectors claimed that women could not cope with the exhausting regimen of preaching along with their biological and household duties.⁴⁶ They also worried that female preaching might discourage marriage

⁴⁵ For additional arguments based on separate spheres ideology, see J. Campbell, "Ordination" 289; W. Johnston, "To Sister Ellen Stewart" (1853): 180; David Lipscomb, "Woman and Her Work" (1892): 618; and E.G. Sewell, "The Elevation and Proper Position of Women" (1888): 8.

⁴⁶ For an argument citing women's physical limitations, see Henry Van Dyke, "Shall Women be Licensed to Preach" (1888).

and thus threaten the family unit. For example, the AME refusal of an 1848 petition for women's preaching read:

In every sphere of labor, physical and moral, Providence seems to have appropriated the proper laborers.... Must the Church, that needs the most manly strength, the most gigantic minds to execute her labors, confide them to those whom nature has fitted for the easier toil of life? ...When his mighty truths were to be promulgated to a listless world, who was sent forth by heaven's Son, the tender, gentle daughter of Israel, or her more hardy enduring brothers? (qtd in Dodson 92)

Some objectors made concessions, such as this concession by minister Charles Duren, allowing for women's testifying and exhorting in *private* meetings, like small prayer groups, but not public preaching to "promiscuous" or mixed assemblies: "Yet in ordinary social religious meetings, the instructions of the Apostle do not forbid her to take part. But they teach her to perform such part, at such times, and in such circumstances as become the subjection and modesty of her sex"⁴⁷ These ministers made a very clear distinction between appropriate and inappropriate womanly speech, and many believed that women who spoke in front of men—whether in church or from the platform—shared a sin that warranted the "deepest condemnation" (P. Cooke 9). For these ministers, the issue was not so much that women claimed inspiration by God, but rather that women claimed the public space. That is, they were not concerned, necessarily, with the theological debate over women's preaching, but rather with the social debate over women's public speaking. Nonetheless, these concessions were important to a number of women who found great satisfaction in ministering to other female church members within the private spaces of their homes.

⁴⁷ For additional concessions allowing women's testifying to female-only audiences, or to only husbands and children, see Asbel Green, "The Christian Duty of Christian Women" (1826); Lipscomb, "Paul's Word," 661; and Wilkin.

Finally, although it was not a strong component of their argument against women's preaching, some objectors denounced women's intelligence as unsuitable for theological studies. Women, they claimed, were intuitive, not logical and reasonable, and their style of preaching would not win men back to congregations.⁴⁸ *Gospel Advocate* editor David Lipscomb, for example, wrote that a woman's "strong emotional nature cause[s] her to be easily deceived and to be ready to run after anything or body that might strike her fancy against reasons and facts" ("Woman's Station" 6). Furthermore, starting in the 1840s, sectarian denominations began to stress a more formalized clerical education for their preaching, an education that was limited to its male members. This prohibition posed a significant practical hurdle for women attempting to gain formal access to the pulpit.

Male Defenses of Women's Preaching

The men who spoke against women's preaching did not represent all male clergy or leaders in the church. Just as women have been defending their right to preach for centuries, there is also a tradition of male apologia for women's preaching. One of the earliest is Quaker founder George Fox's *The Woman Learning in Silence, or the Mystery of the Woman's Subjection to Her Husband*, published in 1656. Although he supported women's subjection in marriage, Fox also advocated for women's prophesying:

If Christ be in the Female as well as in the Male, is not he the same? And may not the spirit of Christ speak in the Female as well as in the Male? Is he there to be limited? Who is it that dare limit the Holy one of Israel? From the Light is the same in the Male, and in the Female, which cometh from Christ. (109)

⁴⁸ For arguments based on women's inferior intellectual capacity, see Margaret Seebach, "Shall women Preach?" (1903); and Wilkin.

Twenty years later, Fell's contemporary, George Keith, also wrote a defense of women's preaching. In *The Woman-Preacher of Samaria a better preacher, and more sufficiently qualified to preach than any of the men-preachers of the man-made-ministry in these three nations* (1674), Keith outlines ten arguments for women's preaching, along with a postscript answering further objections.

Like Fox and Keith, some of the greatest advocates for women's preaching in the nineteenth century were also leaders in the church, most notably Adam Clarke in Britain and Charles Finney in America. Together with a handful of other leaders in other denominations, Clarke and Finney propagated their version of John Wesley's Methodism and revivalism. The advocacy of these male church leaders, however, was limited. Few argued for full ordination rights; nonetheless, their support was important to nineteenth-century preaching women. Indeed, several women, including Harriet Livermore, Maggie Newton Van Cott, Frances Willard, Julia Foote, Fannie McDowell Hunter, and Mary Lee Cagle, publish within their own defenses letters of support from male colleagues, and many more cite Wesley or Clarke in their defenses.

Commissioned by Wesley to preach, Adam Clarke was an Irish biblical scholar who traveled and wrote extensively. Clarke's six-volume Bible commentary on both the Old and New Testaments, published in 1831, was enormously popular and widely read. What is revealed in Clarke's comments and critical notes is an acceptance of female subordination, but with a caveat that female subordination should not restrict women's right to teach and prophesy if so called by God. Revealing early dispensational theology, Clarke argues that the silence of women "was their condition till the time of the Gospel, when, according to the prediction of Joel, the Spirit of God was to be poured out on the

women as well as the *men*, that they might *prophesy*, i.e. *teach*” (290, italics in original). Clarke’s text was heavily cited and lifted by women preachers;⁴⁹ he was equally well-known among almost all women’s rights supporters, particularly for his comment: “Under the blessed spirit of Christianity, [women] have equal *rights*, equal *privileges*, and equal *blessings*; and, let me add, they are equally *useful*” (418, italics in original).

John Wesley’s and Adam Clarke’s American counterpart was holiness proponent Charles Finney. Finney widened opportunities for women’s church involvement by introducing a variety of new evangelical techniques, such as revivals and prayer groups, but he never explicitly included women’s political and social rights on his list of reforms. He did, however, support them in practice; in particular, he encouraged Antoinette Brown while she attended the co-educational Oberlin College, calling on her to testify and relate her call to preach publically in front of other students and requesting that she recite class devotions and speak extemporaneously (Hardesty, *Women* 74).

In contrast, Luther Lee, founder of the abolitionist Wesleyan Methodist Connection Church, explicitly supported Brown, preaching a defense of women’s preaching at her ordination into the Congregational Church in 1853 and later self-publishing the sermon to a wider audience. Taking as his text Galatians 3:28 (“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”), Lee makes an argument based on men’s and women’s spiritual equality and argues that Lee’s ordination is evidence of the progress of the modern world beyond age-old prejudices and customs (3). Lee is careful not to advocate

⁴⁹ For example, see Catherin Booth, “Female Ministry” (1859): 5, 8, 19; Barbara Kellison, *The Rights of Women* (1862): 222; Jennie Willing, “Talking” (1886): 122; Mary Cagle, “Woman’s Right to Preach” (1928): 162, 164, 170, 176; Nancy Towle, *Vicissitudes Illustrated* (1832): 14; Sarah Grimke, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* (1838): 109-110; Maggie Newton Van Cott, *Life and Labors* (1872): 307.

equality between men and women on all points—that is, he does not claim “civic or political” rights for women—but he rather asserts that “males and females are equal in rights, privileges and responsibilities upon the Christian platform” (4) and “males and females...are all one in regard to the gospel of the grace of God” (5). Lee continues his argument by listing biblical female leaders, prophets, and ministers (7-14). He closes by refuting a literalist reading of I Corinthians 14: 34-35 and I Timothy 2: 11-12 (15-21).

Similarly, in his ordination sermon of Phebe Hanaford, Unitarian minister John Greenleaf Adams explicitly states that he does not wish to engage in the debate over the “‘sphere’ or the ‘rights’ of woman” (20). Nonetheless, like Lee, he also opens his sermon with Galatians 3:28, and continues with a defense of women’s preaching by citing female contributions in the Bible (20-21) and in the early church (21). After a reinterpretation of the Pauline injunctions (22), Adams closes with a discussion of women’s suitability for public speaking, arguing that “if woman may have her word to speak in behalf of any truthful and righteous cause, the door is as fairly open to her as to man” (23).

In addition to ordination services, another popular location for male defenses of women’s preaching was in the prefaces and introductions to works written by female preachers. The supporting letters and essays by male colleagues served as both authenticating documents for the women, as well as justification for women’s ministry generally. Maggie Newton Van Cott’s spiritual autobiography, for example, contains a letter from the editor of *Zion’s Herald* and an essay by David Sherman, “Woman’s Place in the Gospel.” Frances Willard and Fannie McDowell Hunter also include male defenses within their own defenses of women’s preaching.

Whether sermon, editorial, letter, or essay, most male defenses of women's preaching were relatively pithy. The exception was B.T. Roberts. Roberts founded the Free Methodists after splitting from the Methodist church after disagreement over slavery and holiness doctrine. Roberts supported women's full ordination rights, and, in 1891, he published perhaps the most extensive male defense of women's preaching of the nineteenth century, *Ordaining Women*. Developed from a tract he published and circulated in 1872, *Ordaining Women* is evidence of the culmination of his years of advocacy for female preaching. Like Lee, Roberts takes as his key text Galatians 3:28; however, he extends gender equality to the temporal realm, arguing that both men and women were given joint dominion in Eden prior to the Fall and that Christ's redemption restores that balance (34). He counters Paul's injunctions against women's preaching by insisting that reason must be employed in biblical interpretation and that passages must be understood within their historical context and in harmony with the rest of Scripture (37-61). Furthermore, Roberts identifies female deacons in the Bible as a clerical order and thus acknowledges them as precedence for ordination (62-73). Roberts concludes with a practical argument: he believed it was nonsensical to limit women's preaching; because two-thirds of Protestants were women, to bar them from spreading the Gospel meant preventing an evangelized world (74-77).

Although Roberts' *Ordaining Women* was certainly the most thorough male defense of women's preaching, it was not representative of the majority of such defenses in the nineteenth century. Although male clergy increasingly supported women's preaching, particularly in the denominational presses, they typically did not argue from the perspective of gender equality, or even from the perspective of spiritual equality, but

rather based their arguments on the assumption that the world was entering a new dispensation. Self-identified “dispensationalists” believed that God was concluding the premillennial times in order to usher in the “end of the world” for the return of Jesus Christ. According to such clergy as A. J. Gordon, Fredrik Franson, Charles H. Pridgeon, and Arthur T. Pierson, the unique situation of women preaching from the pulpit was a sign of the end of the times, and their role in evangelizing the world was a prerequisite for the return of Christ and the last days. They thus referred to women’s ministry as an “extraordinary spectacle” (Gordon 921), and offered a *temporary* broadening of the definition of preaching in response to the urgency of the new dispensation. In Pridgeon’s words:

If it was “last days” on Pentecost, it certainly is now.... The question of the ministry of women is more than just an academic question. The force of men who offer for His service is inadequate. Souls are perishing. There is no time to argue whether it be a man or woman that performs the service. The need must be met.... millions are going to hell while we delay. (qtd. in Hassey 127-28).

Consequently, this cohort of male supporters tended not to cite biblical precedents for women’s activity in the Old and New Testaments, since they were concerned solely with the new dispensation. Rather, their biblical text of choice was Acts 2:17: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” Furthermore, they maintained the need for separate spheres.⁵⁰ T. DeWitt Talmage, for example, who supported Frances Willard in *Woman in the Pulpit*, also referred to Elizabeth Cady Stanton in a sermon entitled “The Choice of a Wife” as “an awful creature, and you had better not come near such a reeking lepress. She needs to be washed, and for three weeks to be soaked in

⁵⁰ The exception seems to be Seth Rees, “Knows No Gender” (1897), who makes a Pentecostal argument, but also suggests women should enjoy equal privileges with men.

carbolic acid, and for a whole year fumigated, before she is fit for decent society” (qtd. in DeBerg 1). Such misogynistic sentiments were not uncommon among the premillennialists, who had a rather pessimistic view of the world; indeed to point out signs of “hell on earth”—such as the reeking leprosy of Stanton—was further evidence of their theology that Christ’s return was imminent. They usually did not support women’s suffrage and sometimes even criticized the temperance movement for taking so many women out of the home and putting them on the public circuit.

The arguments based on the dispensation often elided into a pragmatic argument: in order for the new dispensation to be fulfilled, women’s sheer numbers were needed for evangelical work. Although not the most rhetorically powerful strategy, argument from expedience was often the most effective, because supporters could reference verifiable numbers of converts. To further bolster this argument, some male clergy pointed to the ministry of women in both foreign and home missions, and argued that this ministry was a unique form of preaching, acceptable for a woman.⁵¹ Gordon, for example, differentiates between missionary ministry and pulpit ministry:

If any one [sic] should raise the technical objection that because of its informal and colloquial character [missionary preaching] is not preaching, we are ready to affirm that it comes much nearer the preaching enjoined in the great commission than does the reading of a theological disquisition from the pulpit on Sunday morning. (910)

Likewise, AME bishop William Fisher Dickerson did not ask the 1884 General Conference for full ordination of women; he rather requested that male delegates sanction the licensing of women so that they might enjoy “some of the privileges” of male ministers as they traveled as evangelists (qtd. in Angell and Pinn 284). Missionary and

⁵¹ For additional arguments citing women’s missionary gospel work, see John Humphreys, “Women’s Work in the Church” (1893); Charles Torrey, “Women’s Sphere in the Church” (1867); and Henry Turner, “Local, Traveling and Female Preachers” (1885).

evangelical lay preaching was more acceptable than pulpit preaching because it was enacted not in the masculine space of the pulpit, but rather in the “other” space of Africa, China, and other “heathen” countries.

Women’s Defenses of Women’s Preaching

Women did not sit quietly by and let their male supporters answer for them as their rights to the pulpit were increasingly and virulently challenged. There are dozens of defenses of women’s preaching published by women in the nineteenth century *found to date*.⁵² Although a handful of defenses of women’s preaching were written in the very early nineteenth century, the majority appear to be written after 1830, with significant flurries of publication in the 1830s, the 1850s, and the 1880s-1890s. The increase in the 1830s and 1880s-1890s is accountable to the two considerable backlashes against women’s preaching that Mark Chaves documents and I detailed in chapter one. Although the backlash in the 1850s was not as intense, it was during this decade that the holiness movement gained scores of converts; simultaneously, the woman’s rights movement engaged in regular debate over the proper role of Scripture, evidenced—and perhaps partly initiated—by proceedings at the 1848 Seneca Falls convention (Bendroth 36).

As I detailed in chapter one, the history of nineteenth-century female ordination is complex and nuanced; similarly, female defenders of women’s preaching in the nineteenth century were not a homogeneous group. They were Methodist, Quaker, Universalist, African Methodist Episcopalian, Nazarene, Millerite, Presbyterian, and nondenominational. They were black, white, of the Midwest, of the South, and of the

⁵² For a list of the nineteenth-century women’s defenses of women’s preaching cited in this project, see Appendix B.

Northeast. They were radical, conservative, and everywhere in between. They were also prolific, producing texts that reflect this diversity. In the remaining pages of this chapter, I sketch out both the forms (genres) and the content (arguments) of those defenses so that we can more easily see how Julia Foote, Frances Willard, and Louisa Woosley use and adapt the conventions established by women before them.

The Genres of Women's Defenses of Women's Preaching

Women chose to locate their defenses of women's preaching in several genres: sermons, spiritual autobiographies, treatises, editorials, and convention speeches. Nineteenth-century women's knowledge and use of a broad set of rhetorical options in their religious activism reveal their awareness of what genre theorist Amy Devitt calls a transition away from the idea of genre as "form and text type" toward genre as a "dynamic patterning of human experience" (573). Devitt further explains that this theoretical move has helped change our focus of texts according to genre "from a formal classification system to a rhetorical and essentially semiotic social construct" (574). This change has significant implications for rhetorical scholars studying women's texts, because it recognizes genre as reciprocal; the genre is not only an available means of persuasion with certain characteristic textual features, but it is also a rhetorical choice that provides us with insights into the material, social, and political constraints and opportunities that gave rise to those texts. In other words, this fuller understanding of genre helps prevent rhetorical scholars from falling into the interpretative—and destructive—trap of reading genre as prescribing the rhetoric contained within the genre. Genre, then, is the "text" in the rhetorical situation; it is also, however, in symbiotic

relationship with rhetor, audience, and social context. Genre is the “what” of what female preachers wrote; genre is also a significant factor in the creation of a semiotic understanding of how and why they wrote. Consequently, before we can study the lines of argument that women used in defending their right to the pulpit, we must attend to their selected genres.

Sermons

Perhaps one of the most obvious places one would expect to find women’s defenses of their preaching would be in recorded sermons. Undoubtedly, women did defend their right to preach from the pulpit; however, remarkably few of those sermons seem to have been self-published.⁵³ There is a tradition of defending women’s preaching by delivering sermons at the ordination services of women. Many of these ordination services were later published, thus circulating Luther Lee’s defense of Antoinette Brown; John Adams’ and Olympia Brown’s defense of Phebe Hanaford; and Augusta Chapin’s defense of Florence Kollock (who would later write her own defense of women’s preaching). In the early twentieth century, two Church of Nazarene ministers also defended their right to preach directly from the pulpit: Mary Cagle delivered “Women’s Right to Preach” after her hometown Alabama Methodist church refused the use of its pulpit, and Annie May Fisher delivered “Woman’s Right to Preach” in Chilton, Texas.

⁵³ See Olympia Brown, “Band of Fellowship” (1870); Mary Cagle, “Woman’s Right Preach” (1928); and Annie Fisher, *Woman’s Right to Preach* (1903). Augusta Chapin’s ordination sermon is referenced, but I have been unable to locate it. Also, a number of male defenses of women’s preaching were originally delivered as sermons and then either self-published or reprinted in denominational journals. Two were fairly well publicized at the time: Luther Lee, “Woman’s Right to Preach the Gospel” (1853); and P. R. Russell, “Female Preaching: A Short Sermon” (1838). See also S. May, and T. Parker.

The occasion evidently was not unique; Cagle writes that “as usual, she had to preach on ‘Women’s Right to Preach’” (61).⁵⁴

Although they do not publish their sermonic defenses as do Cagle, Fisher, and Chapin, other female preachers referenced the need to defend scripturally women’s preaching at preaching engagements; Ellen Stewart, for example, writes that she responded to the heckling of congregation members with a sermon defending her right to the pulpit (80-81).⁵⁵ Similarly, Amanda Berry Smith details how “the good Plymouth brethren were much disturbed” by her (321). After they “bombarded [her] with Scriptural texts against women’s preaching,” she finally felt compelled to address the matter directly, and she preached on Paul’s injunction to the Corinthians (321). Smith does not include the sermon, nor even a synopsis of it. She does, however, tell the reader that “We had an excellent meeting, and the newspaper articles stopped, and I went on till I got through” (321). Louisa Woosley also makes record in her notes of preaching on the rights of women at the end of a revival meeting in Texas (Hudson 143). We only have a handful of defenses by women in the sermonic genre; however, many more nineteenth-century female preachers write about their preaching engagements and detail the conversions as a result of their sermons. The recollecting of these sermons serves as a kind of defense, evidence of their performance and effectiveness as preachers.

Spiritual Autobiographies

We do, fortunately, have an extensive record of women’s defenses of their preaching in nearly every other genre chosen by them in the nineteenth century. Some of

⁵⁴ Cagle uses the third person throughout her autobiography.

⁵⁵ See also Lydia Sexton, *Autobiography* (1882): 229.

the first defenses of women's preaching published in the nineteenth century came out of the conversion narrative or spiritual autobiography common to the AME, Methodist, and other evangelical traditions.⁵⁶ Within the Wesleyan tradition alone there are hundreds of spiritual autobiographies,⁵⁷ and nineteenth-century women often referenced the spiritual autobiographies of each other and such eighteenth-century female religious leaders as Madam Guyon, Lady Maxwell, Hester Ann Rogers, and Mary Bosanquet as models for their own texts.⁵⁸ The spiritual autobiographies follow a well-established narrative structure: the women detail their conversion, sanctification, call to preach, and preaching career, often itinerate. Consequently, the spiritual autobiography by its very generic nature is a defacto defense of the woman preacher who wrote it; the text itself serves as evidence that she was called by God to minister and was successful in her preaching career. To that effect, several women include reprinted sermons in their spiritual autobiographies. Furthermore, because the spiritual autobiography was often self-published and sold to fund the author's itinerate preaching career, the public consumption of the work affirmed an implicit acceptance of her ministry.

Additionally, there were several female spiritual autobiographers who attended specifically to women's right to the pulpit within their texts.⁵⁹ Although popular

⁵⁶ Particularly popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) and Philip Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745).

⁵⁷ For a comprehensive list of Wesleyan spiritual autobiographies, see the *Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy International Bibliography*.

⁵⁸ Sarah Cooke, *The Handmaiden of the Lord* (1896): 49, 53, 65, 158, 197, 284; Phoebe Palmer, *Promise of the Father* (1859): 57, 107, 109, 117; Frances Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit* (1888): 111. Other popular eighteenth-century female spiritual autobiographies were Mary Clarke Lloyd's *Meditations on Divine Subjects* (1750); Elizabeth Singer Rowe's *Devout Exercises of the Heart in Meditation and Soliloquy, Prayer and Praise* (1796); and Elizabeth White's *Experience of God's Gracious Dealings* (1741).

⁵⁹ The following is undoubtedly not an exhaustive list; however, it demonstrates women's extensive use of the autobiographical genre to defend their right to preach throughout the nineteenth century. I have included the page references to the defense within the text when applicable. Some defenses are scattered throughout. Mary Adams, *Autobiography* (1893); Sarah Cooke, *The Handmaiden of the Lord* (1896): 174-77; Zilpha Elaw, *Memoirs* (1846): 124; Julia Foote, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* (1879): 208-209; Jarena

throughout the nineteenth century, the spiritual autobiography was the genre of choice for early nineteenth-century women defending women's ministry, because the retelling of one's call to preach was an acceptable discursive practice for every denomination. Furthermore, as evidenced by the following quotation from Harriet Livermore's spiritual autobiography, this genre allowed these women to defend their right to the pulpit in a rather passive, non-threatening way, consistent with how many regarded the role of female preacher: "A female preacher is a spectacle and sufferer—a female autobiographer is a victim" (*Narration* 7).⁶⁰ Some women dedicate separate chapters or sections to their defenses, such as Sarah Cooke, who includes a chapter titled "Shall Women Preach the Gospel," and Maggie Newton Van Cott, who closes her spiritual autobiography with a chapter similarly titled "Shall Woman Preach." Many others, such as Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, and Lydia Sexton, embed their defenses within their calls to preach. Others, like Fanny Newell and Amanda Berry Smith, intersperse common lines of argument defending women's preaching throughout their narratives.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I select Julia Foote out of this tradition, because she complicates the generic conventions of the spiritual autobiography and creates a hybrid genre to better serve her defense. Foote represents several other spiritual autobiographers who modify the genre. In her two-hundred and ninety-three page *Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Life and Experience of Nancy Towle in Europe and America* (1832), Nancy Towle spends only eighty pages on her early life and itineracy,

Lee, *Religious Experience* (1849): 35-38; Fanny Newell, *Memoirs* (1832): 135; Lydia Sexton, *Autobiography* (1882); Amanda Berry Smith, *The Story of the Lord's Dealings* (1893); Ellen Stewart, *Life of Mrs. Ellen Stewart* (1858); Nancy Towle, *Vicissitudes Illustrated* (1832); and Maggie Newton Van Cott, *Life and Labors* (1872): 304-15.

⁶⁰ Please note that Harriet Livermore's spiritual autobiography, *A Narration of Religious Experience* (1826), does not contain a defense, but rather refers the reader to her book-length defense, *Scriptural Evidence in Favour of Female Testimony* (1824).

devoting the last one hundred and fifty pages of the book to cover the two years in which she—and so many others—faced the greatest opposition to her preaching: 1830-1832. In this section she includes various personal references from ministers, letters from friends and family, texts from her sermons, and poems. Ellen Stewart's equally voluminous *Life of Mrs. Ellen Stewart* (1858) includes a sermon, religious poems, a biography of her husband, and a reprinted epistolary exchange from *The Church Advocate*. Maggie Newton Van Cott's *Life and Labors of Mrs. Maggie Newton Van Cott* (1872)—a defense dictated to a colleague—contains a defense by a male colleague, two sermons, her chapter titled “Shall Women Preach?” and reprinted editorial remarks about her preaching career. Towle, Stewart, and Van Cott—all of whom refer to their works as a “little book” or a “little volume”—demonstrate their awareness that the discourse surrounding the debate of women's ministry demanded more than just a narrative of their lives. They added these other genres into their spiritual autobiographies as supplements to bolster their efforts in defense of women's preaching. As I will detail in the next chapter, Foote's conscious blending of genres is representative of this early modification of the genre of spiritual autobiography into the little book genre of defense.

Treatises

A surprising number of women during the nineteenth century took advantage of another lengthy—and rather expensive—printing option: the treatise.⁶¹ Some, such as

⁶¹ Mary Boardman, *Who Shall Prophecy?* (1873); Catherine Booth, *Female Ministry* (1859); Sara Duncan, *Progressive Missions in the South* (1906); Sarah Grimke, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* (1838); Fannie McDowell Hunter, *Women Preachers* (1905); Barbara Kellison, *The Rights of Women in the Church* (1862); Harriet Livermore, *Scriptural Evidence in Favor of Female Testimony* (1824); Phoebe Palmer, *Promise of the Father* (1859) and *Tongue of Fire on the Daughters of the Lord* (1869); Deborah Pierce, *A Scriptural Vindication of Female Preaching* (1820); Frances Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*

Deborah Pierce, Catherine Booth, Barbara Kellison, and Mary Boardman wrote shorter treatises and circulated them as public pamphlets.⁶² Public pamphlets were a popular genre for addressing a variety of civil topics from the beginning of the Reformation through the mid-nineteenth century and ensured a relatively large readership. It is therefore telling that Booth, Kellison, and Boardman, who published their pamphlets in 1859, 1862, 1873, respectively, and then republished them in 1861, 1867, and 1875, respectively, chose the pamphlet in response to a debate that gained momentum and rhetorical heat in the 1850s. All three pamphlets contain a rather forceful approach to the topic, with aggressive attacks on the opposition to women's preaching.

Several women defended women's preaching within their treatises on women's rights. These defenses are usually one chapter or section of a longer book dedicated to women's equal place in society. Sarah Grimke's *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* (1838), a collection of letters addressed to Mary S. Parker, President of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, is the earliest such treatment. Only Grimke's fourteenth letter, "Ministry of Women," is a defense of women's preaching particularly. The other letters cover a range of issues, from the condition of women in various parts of the world, to her intellect and dress, to her legal rights. Elizabeth Wilson's *A Scriptural View of Woman's Rights* (1849) is similar in its range of topics, with only one chapter, "Woman's Standing in a Church Capacity," devoted to defending women's ministry. Wilson

(1888); Jennie Willing, *The Potential Woman* (1886); Elizabeth Wilson, *A Scriptural View of Woman's Rights* (1849); and Louisa Woosley, *Shall Woman Preach?* (1891).

⁶² One of Palmer's most famous converts to holiness is Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. Booth almost immediately entered the debate surrounding women's preaching after first attending a Palmer revival. She read a scathing letter against Palmer and responded with her pamphlet, *Female Ministry* in 1859, which she lengthened in 1861 to the longer treatise, *Female Teaching; or, the Rev. A. A. Rees versus Mrs. Palmer, being a reply to a pamphlet by the above gentlemen on the Sunderland Revival*. Although she was British, I include her in this discussion, because she often toured in the United States and was influential in American religious and reform discourse.

explains that her purpose in the treatise is “to ascertain woman’s *rights* and *duties*, in the important relations of life from the sacred record, is strictly adhered to throughout the work” (1). Grimke and Wilson were slightly ahead of their time; it was not until the late-nineteenth century that we see additional defenses of women’s preaching embedded within treatises advocating women’s rights. Jennie Fowler Willing embeds a defense of women’s preaching in the chapter, “Talking” in her conduct book, *The Potential Women* (1887), and Sara Duncan includes a brief defense of women’s integral role in missionary work in *Woman a Factor in the Development of Christian Missions* (1900).

There were only a few women in the nineteenth century who wrote long treatises entirely dedicated to women’s preaching. Harriet Livermore’s *Scriptural evidence in favour of female testimony, in meetings for Christian worship in letters to a friend* (1824), published in the form of letters to an anonymous friend, is one of the earliest. Because Livermore embeds her arguments for women’s preaching within the personal epistolary form, her text is less threatening, in genre and rhetoric, than many of the other treatises, and she does not attempt to argue for women’s equal access in church: “I am not myself very much in favour of females taking the pulpit in this day of reigning prejudice, against female preaching; let those small inclosures [sic], generally esteemed so sacred, be occupied by men only, is my judgment.” (122).

Like Livermore, Phoebe Palmer is not insistent upon claiming the pulpit for women in her 429-page treatise defending women’s ministry, *The Promise of the Father; or a Neglected Specialty of His Last Days* (1859) or in the pamphlet-length version of the treatise, *Tongue of Fire on The Daughters of the Lord; or, Questions in Relation to the Duty of the Christian Church in Regard to the Privileges of Her Female Membership*

(1869). Nonetheless, Palmer's texts were two of the most influential of the defenses, perhaps partly because of Palmer's already established reputation as a holiness evangelist herself. Palmer's influence on various social progressive movements cannot be underestimated: Palmer is cited as an influential figure in the lives of countless women preachers and activists, including Frances Willard and Catherine Booth.⁶³ Her text inspired confidence and action, evidenced by a passage she includes in both *The Promise of the Father* and *Tongue of Fire*:

Answer, ye thousands of heaven-touched lips, whose testimonies have so long been repressed in the assemblies of the pious! Yes, answer, ye thousands of female disciples of every Christian land, whose pent-up voices have so long, under the pressure of these man-made restraints, been uttered in groanings before God! (32)

Although they wrote book-length defenses of women's preaching, neither Livermore nor Palmer are included in my categorization of "little book," because they did not blend other genres into their text, thus demonstrating hybridity. However, as long treatises dedicated entirely to the purpose of defending a women's right to ministry, *Scriptural Evidence* and *The Promise of the Father* certainly serve as important precursors to little book defenses.

The treatises that I consider to be little book defenses of women's preaching were written by Frances Willard and Fannie McDowell Hunter. Both Willard and Hunter alter the treatise form by blending in other genres, creating an experimental collage. I study Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit* (1888) as representative of experimental collage in chapter four. In addition to her confirmation and refutation of women's preaching, Willard includes letters supporting women's preaching by men and testimonials by both

⁶³ For an interesting discussion of Palmer's influence on Willard, see Patricia Bizzell, "Frances Willard, Phoebe Palmer, and the Ethos of the Methodist Woman Preacher" (2006).

male and female ministers, and reprints an editorial exchange. Similarly, Fannie McDowell Hunter, who also calls her book, *Women Preachers* (1905), a “little book,” includes a detailed history of women preachers of the Old and New Testaments (9-32), a refutation to objections to women’s preaching (33-48), her spiritual autobiography (48-61), the calls to preach of eight other preaching women (62-93), and a religious poem (99-100). Both Willard and Hunter create forums in their texts through their blending of their own and other’s arguments.

Editorial Letters

Many more of the “heaven-touched lips” and “pent-up voices” that Palmer exhorts in her defense broke through in denominational and religious journals, particularly in the mid- to late nineteenth century.⁶⁴ Whereas the female spiritual autobiographer and treatise writer established an intimate personal relationship with the reader of her text, often through a self-published work, the editorial writer instead invited the whole religious community of a particular denomination to engage in the debate via the sanctioned publishing of the church. This was particularly true of sectarian Methodist women of the late-nineteenth century. The Methodist Church was often called the “printing church” (Gewehr 119); religious periodicals like the *Gospel Advocate* exerted great control over the direction of sectarian Methodist denominations in particular, with editors often more influential than ministers (Harrell 17). Letters were frequently written to the editor, asking his opinion on important doctrinal matters, like the

⁶⁴ E.g. Antoinette Brown, “Exegesis” (1849); Olympia Brown, “Women Preachers” (1872); Josephine Butler, “Woman’s Place in the Church” (1892); Maria Gordon, “Women as Evangelists” (1894); Virginia Hedges, “Woman’s Work in the Church” (1893); Silena Holman, (multiple, please see bibliography); Beulah Matthewson, “Female Preaching” (1852); Rebecca Miller, “Duty of Females” (1841); Philanthropos, “Paul versus Silencing Woman” (1853); Mary Seymour, “Women May Preach” (1851); Mrs. G. E. Taylor, “Woman’s Work” (1906); and Willing, (multiple, please see bibliography).

use of instrumental music or the role of congregational mission boards (Harrell 256-66).

Women's public address became a fairly common topic in these journals, such as the case in 1888, when T. J. Hunsaker, a member of a Disciples of Christ church, asked *Gospel Advocate* editor David Lipscomb if an elder in his church had the right to stop a Bible class from meeting because women were allowed to speak in the class (6).

Lipscomb offered a reading of Paul that interpreted women's ministry to their husbands or children as teaching privately, "in a quiet social way" ("Woman's Work" 7). Silena Holman, of Fayetteville, Tennessee, immediately wrote a response to Lipscomb, challenging his interpretation. A six-month debate ensued, with Lipscomb, Holman, and the *Gospel Advocate* editorial staff going back and forth, Holman claiming that "while it does seem rather bad that two big brothers must fight one little sister, still, I am grateful for the implied compliment, and feel encouraged to continue" ("Women's Scriptural Status Again" 8). Although they were often in the minority (Holman is one of the few who defended women's preaching; many more wrote scathing editorials against it), women continued to use denominational publications to advocate for female leadership in churches.⁶⁵ Indeed, Holman herself persevered in the debate through 1913, taking on each new editor in stride.

Several debates over women's preaching took place within the covers of other religious journals. As columnists, Olympia Brown and Jennie Willing frequently advocated for women's preaching in the *New York Evangelist* and *Guide to Holiness*, respectively. Other women attempted to engage in debate via the editorial pages, debate

⁶⁵ The exception seems to be the Disciples of Christ journal, the *Christian Standard*. Out of twenty-nine writers, twenty-one supported women's ministry. For further discussion on the debate within the *Christian Standard*, see Mary Lantzer, *An Examination of the 1892-1893 Christian Standard Controversy Concerning Women's Preaching* (1990): 70.

which often continued over a period of several weeks, months, or even years within a single press. For example, Antoinette Brown initiated a debate in 1849 with her “Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12” in the *Oberlin Quarterly Review*, and Ellen Stewart similarly engaged the editors of the *Church Advocate* over the issue of women’s ordination from 1851 to 1855. Stewart explicitly invited the exchange with Church of God minister and *Church Advocate* editor John Winebrenner in her second editorial, which began: “In my former letter I endeavored to throw what light I could on the subject of female preaching.... Long and anxiously have I waited for some remarks, but in vain. Brethren, how shall I interpret this universal silence?” (170). Nancy Towle devoted an entire press to the issue, publishing *The Female Religious Advocate* in 1834 in New York City and thus providing a “journalistic pulpit for the defense of preaching women” (Bailey, chapter 3). Unfortunately, she was not successful in her endeavor, and no copies of the publication are extant. The debate was still going strong in the *AME Church Review* at the turn of the century, with Mrs. G. E. Taylor writing in 1906 that “All avenues of life are thrown open to-day to women.... Our women are destined to be among the leaders in the future, and they have it in their power to save the race” (22). In engaging in a denominationally-supported *open* forum, these women did not limit the discussion of women’s preaching to a single church or to a restricted readership, but rather invited the whole religious community of a particular denomination to take part.

Speeches

From the mid-nineteenth century on, women preachers also took advantage of the women's rights convention by giving speeches in defense of women's preaching.⁶⁶ The use of this forum is not surprising, because the women's rights movement of the nineteenth century developed out of women's church-sponsored activities, such as moral reform associations and benevolent societies. Early women's rights conventions in the late 1840s and 1850s in particular devoted considerable space and time to the issue of women's sphere within the church. The frontpiece to the published proceedings of the 1850 Worcester Woman's Rights Convention reads:

The signs are encouraging; the time is opportune. Come, then, to this Convention. It is your duty, if you are worthy of your age and country. Give the help of your best thought to separate the light from the darkness. Wisely give the protection of your name and the benefit of your efforts to the great work of settling the principles, devising the method, and achieving the success of this high and holy movement. (*Proceedings* 5)

This "holy movement" attracted female religious leaders, including Antoinette Brown, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, and Elizabeth Wilson, and prompted speeches in support of women in general and speeches that addressed women's preaching in particular. Held within the physical parameters of the women's rights convention and couched within women's rights rhetoric, the basis of the debate over women's preaching began to evolve from an argument based on the right to speak in religious settings into an argument based on the right to speak in any setting. Women's preaching was articulated as but one of many activities women should be allowed to engage in. Indeed, the very act

⁶⁶ E.g. Caroline Bartlett, "Woman's Call to the Ministry" (1893); Augusta Chapin, "Woman's Work in the Pulpit and in the Church" (1874); Phebe Hanaford, "Woman in the Church and Pulpit" (1874); Ida Hultin, "Woman and Religion" (1894); Florence Kollock, "Woman in the Pulpit" (1893); Mary Moreland, "Discussion of the Same Subject" (1893); Amelia Quinton, "Discussion of the Same Subject" (1893); Mary Safford, "Woman as a Minister of Religion" (1893); Eugenia St. John, "Discussion of the Same Subject" (1893); Kate Woods, "Women in the Pulpit" (1891).

of public speaking at these events was a kind of evidence by example that they could perform the oratorical activity capably. What the debate over women's preaching lent the women's right debate was a strong tradition of scriptural support for women's activism; what the debate over women's rights lent the women's preaching debate was a commitment to women's agency in all spheres of public and private life.

Surprisingly, explicit support for women's preaching was met with quite a bit of resistance. Antoinette Brown, for example, proposed a resolution at the 1849 Syracuse Women's Right's Convention:

Resolved, That the Bible recognizes the rights, duties and privileges of Woman as a public teacher as every way equal with those of man; that it enjoins upon her no subjection that is not enjoined upon him; and that it truly and practically recognizes neither male nor female in Christ Jesus. (Stanton, et. al. *History of Woman's Suffrage* 1:536)

Brown's resolution faced opposition from Lucretia Mott, who, ironically, had just delivered her scriptural defense of women, "Discourse on Woman." Intense debate ensued, with many leaders not willing to sacrifice any headway in the suffrage or abolitionist movement for Brown's resolution. Citing historical precedence, Lucretia Mott argued by analogy to the futility of biblical arguments in support of the abolitionist movement. Mott and her supporters were not against women's preaching, but they were concerned that the battle over women's preaching—a battle they considered to be unwinnable—would waste precious time and energy. Mott's argument was successful and the resolution defending women's preaching was tabled. Brown resurrected the resolution again the following year, but it was again defeated.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Much of this debate is covered in *History of Women's Suffrage*, Vol. 1 (1881), in which Stanton, Stone, and Gage reference the letters, speeches, debates, and diary entries of women defending their right to the pulpit and to religious equality generally. See also Nancy Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness* (1999): 61-62.

In the wake of these early conventions, suffrage supporters began to withdraw from direct engagement in the debate over women's ordination, and the suffrage movement, for all intents and purposes, became a more secularized campaign. Indeed rhetorical scholar Karlyn Kohls Campbell characterizes Brown's as a "rather unusual perspective," suggesting that it was unique and not representative of other women attending and presenting at the conference (59). I would rather assert that a dramatic shift was taking place, a shift from a reliance on biblical rhetoric and scriptural support to more secularized, radical rhetoric and arguments based on natural rights.

This shift, both in claims and support, is apparent in the ensuing four decades, as the topic of women's preaching continued to arise in multiple conventions. The First Women's Congress of the Association for the Advancement of Women, in 1874, had a markedly different tone from the Worcester Women's Rights Conventions: there is no mention of God or Scripture in the frontmatter of the published proceedings, and the second Article simply states that "[The Association for the Advancement of Women's] object shall be to receive and present practical methods for securing to Woman higher intellectual, moral, and physical conditions, and thereby to improve all domestic and social relations" (*Papers and Letters* 3). Two women presented arguments in favor of women's preaching: ordained Unitarian ministers Augusta Chapin and Phebe Hanaford.

Twenty years later, women's preaching was back on the program at the World's Congress of Representative Women and the Congress of Women, both part of the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago, a World Fair devoted to social reconstruction efforts. The published proceedings of the World's Congress of Representative Women, edited by May Sewell, includes many speeches on women and

religion. Several of these speeches were defenses of women's preaching. Within a series titled "Science and Religion" are speeches given by six women in favor of women's preaching: Eugenia St. John (a pseudonym for Martha Eugenia Berry), Amelia Quinton, Mary Moreland, Mary Safford, Florence Kollock, and Caroline Bartlett. Ida Hultin's "Woman and Religion" is included in the proceedings for the Congress of Women, edited by Mary Oldham Eagle. Hultin, Safford, Kollock, and Bartlett were members of what has since been referred to as the Iowa Sisterhood, a loose association of about twenty women ministers who organized Unitarian congregations throughout the West. Whereas the women's rights conventions of the mid-nineteenth century attempted to distance themselves from their evangelical roots, these late-nineteenth century speeches demonstrate, instead, an adept negotiation of religious discourse and women's rights discourse. Most present a logical exposition, relying primarily on natural rights.

Scriptural Defenses of Women

Many women also pointedly defended women's speaking on scriptural grounds, writing what I call "scriptural defenses of women."⁶⁸ The significant difference between defenses of women's preaching and scriptural defenses of women is that the former were concerned specifically with women's right to public ministry; the latter addressed women's rights more generally, relying on biblical Scripture and arguments throughout their texts as they defended women's equal place in society. Maria Stewart's 1833 "Farewell Address to Her Friends in the City of Boston" is a poignant example of a scriptural defense of her right to speak publically. Frustrated by the poor reception she

⁶⁸ There are also a number of scriptural defenses of women written by men. See Reverdy Ransom, "Deborah and Jael" (1897); Theodore Parker, "A Sermon of the Public Function of Woman" (1853); and Samuel May, "The Rights and Condition of Women" (1853).

received during her year-long lecture circuit, Stewart delivered a scathing speech that characterized her motivations for speaking as God-inspired and charged her audience with obstructing her activism. “What if I am a woman,” spoke Stewart, “is not the God of ancient times the God of these modern days?” (68). She then cited biblical foremothers authorized by God to speak and outlined her attempts at public speaking despite harsh racism and sexism. In her farewell address, Stewart elevated the debate over women’s speaking to a religious debate, insinuating that for those who opposed her, “a fire will burst forth and devour us,” and for those who supported her, “a rich reward awaits them” (72). Lucretia Mott, Abby Price, and Sojourner Truth also delivered scriptural defenses of women from the platform, in 1849, 1850, and 1851, respectively; like Stewart, Mott later published her defense, *Discourse on Woman*, for general circulation.⁶⁹

In addition to scripturally defending women’s rights in speeches, women also engaged in the debate over women’s sphere in editorials and treatises. Georgiana Watson and Beulah Matthewson, for example, attempt to reconcile Scripture with women’s rights, Watson in “The Scripture Versus the Woman Question,” published in the *Woman’s Advocate* in 1869, and Matthewson in the pamphlet *Women from a Bible Standpoint* (1873). Similarly, Hannah Mather Crocker’s treatise, *Observations on the Real Rights of Women* (1818), provides a general defense of women, with her second chapter in particular detailing a scriptural argument for the equal rights of men and women in all spheres of life. Lillie Devereux Blake responds to Rev. Morgan Dix’s misogynistic

⁶⁹ For a compelling reading of Mott’s defense, see Donawerth, who suggests that *Discourse on Woman* “demonstrates the growth of a discourse of women’s rights out of the genre of defense of women’s preaching” (31), *Conversational Rhetorics*.

Lenten lectures on “Woman”⁷⁰ in *Woman’s Place To-day* (1883) with her own scriptural interpretation; Matilda Gage closes her *Women, Church and State* (1893) with a scathing discussion of woman’s inequities in the modern church; and Virginia Broughton defends women’s work generally and encourages women to pursue a variety of callings in *Women’s Work, as Gleaned from the Women of the Bible* (1904). These women typically argue primarily from an equality standpoint, blending women’s rights rhetoric with Scripture; they include preaching as but one activity among many that should be accessible to women.

I conclude this dissertation with a reading of Louisa Woosley’s *Shall Woman Preach?* as a unique genre of defense. I argue that her little book bridges defenses of women’s preaching and scriptural defenses of women. Like Foote, Woosley relies on narrative extensively throughout her text; in many ways, her text reads like a spiritual autobiography of women in general. Like Willard, Woosley provides detailed exegesis and a comprehensive refutation of male objections to women’s preaching. And, like the women who were also writing scriptural defenses of women at the time, Woosley elevates the issue over women’s preaching into an issue over women’s equal place in society.

There were some women who, out of creativity or necessity, defended their right to preach in unexpected ways. In 1830, Sally Thompson defended herself at a trial over her right to preach before the Methodist Episcopal Society, the proceedings of which were later published; on September 11, 1864, Fanny C. Bush addressed a letter to President Abraham Lincoln requesting licensure to preach; and in that same year, a Mrs.

⁷⁰ Dix’s lectures were published in print and widely circulated, titled *Lectures on the Calling of a Christian Woman, and Her Training to Fulfil it, Delivered during the Season of Lent, A.D.* (1883).

M. J. Beecher advertised her lecture tour, “Lecture on Female Preaching” with the following advertisement: “Tickets of admission 25 cents, and all moneys collected will be applied to paying the debt yet remaining on the Pittsburg bethel” (qtd. in Forney 127-28).⁷¹ Two women cleverly addressed the issue with humor: Susan B. Anthony, with her parody article “On Permitting Women to Preach,” and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, with her satirical short story, “A Woman’s Pulpit.”⁷²

The Topoi of Women’s Defenses of Women’s Preaching

Although nineteenth-century female religious rhetors used all forms available in their attempts to defend women’s preaching—spiritual autobiography, treatise, pamphlet, editorial, letter, and speech—their content, that is, the rhetorical strategies employed therein, varied significantly. Scholars such as Jane Donawerth, Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, Janette Hassey, Rosemary Ruether, and Catherine Brekus have begun to establish a set of topoi in defenses of women’s preaching. Although these topoi differ slightly, all scholars agree that, overall, a defense must articulate the need to accept women as authorized and legitimate rhetorical agents in their faith communities. For the purposes of this project, the three core rhetorical markers which serve as the criteria for a cohesive body of work that may be called “defenses of women’s preaching” are: 1) Authorization; 2) Biblical hermeneutics; and 3) Women’s role in society. I have only included those women whose defenses contain all three components: their call to preach or reference to the call as significant, a range of biblical exegesis, and the reconciliation of the role of the female preacher within society.

⁷¹ A bethel was a term used by watermen to refer to a house of worship.

⁷² I thank Jane Donawerth for pointing me to Phelps’s short story.

Authorization: Relating the Call to Preach

In her popular text, *Faith and Its Effects*, Phoebe Palmer emphasizes the call to preach as the primary source of religious and rhetorical authorization:

And now, my dear sister, do not be startled, when I tell you that you have been *ordained* for a great work. Not by the imposition of mortal hands, or a call from man. No, Christ, the great Head of the church, hath chosen you, “and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.” O my sister, yours is indeed a high and holy calling. (290)

Palmer’s rhetorical choice in emphasizing “ordained” as the term signifying and encompassing the power of the call to preach reflects the general belief among women religious rhetors that the call was a literal, distinct command from God. Found within the genres of spiritual autobiography or conversion narrative of women from a variety of denominations, the call was preceded by a fairly consistent discursive trajectory: details of early life, conversion, often followed by a second conversion or sanctification. Sanctification was particularly important to followers of the holiness tradition, who believed that the Holy Spirit visited some after conversion and provided a “second blessing” which freed them from sin to lead an empowered life of spiritual perfection.

This second blessing was accompanied by a charge from God, and for most women preachers, that charge was to minister. Citing Acts 15: 8-9 (“So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith”), holiness women referenced the cleansing, purifying power of the Holy Spirit during sanctification, power which was transferred to them and prepared them to preach. Even prior to the popularity of holiness in the United States, evangelical women referenced such a second conversion or sanctification. Harriet Livermore, for example, seeks out baptism by

immersion after “a small still voice...speaking to my heart, will you follow that pattern?” (*Narration* 119-120); and Jarena Lee was bathed in an “ocean of light and bliss” following her sanctification (34).

Although included in virtually every spiritual autobiography of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and present in most defenses of women’s preaching, the call to preach was a particularly important rhetorical warrant for early evangelical sectarian women, such as AME preaching women, for the call was the major criterion for becoming a local or itinerate preacher. According to holiness scholar Donald Dayton, “experiential religious traditions [were] especially open to the ministry of women because in such contexts religious authority is grounded in religious experience and not in traditional patterns of education or ecclesiastical structures” (*Holiness* viii). Each congregation had the freedom to evaluate the authenticity of a woman’s calling and her hermeneutic skills. Therefore, the narration of her call had to be rhetorically powerful enough to prove that authenticity.

First, the women narrate, in detail, the exact circumstances of the call. For many, the call is a distinct, audible voice from God, and the women include the exact words, within quotation marks, that God or an angel delivers to them commanding them to preach.⁷³ Several women also describe the physical nature of the event. Zilpha Elaw, for example, tells of “a sensation as if I had received a blow on the head, or had sustained an electric shock” (79), followed by “a hand, touch me, on the right shoulder” (82); and Mary Lee Cagle claims that “the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth” (*My*

⁷³ See also Cagle (in Hunter) 72; Hunter 53; J. Lee 35; Mitchum (in Hunter) 78; Newell 110; Rutherford (in Hunter) 68; A. Smith 148; Suddarth (in Hunter) 92; Van Cott 54. Please note that Fannie McDowell Hunter includes the calls to preach from eight women in *Women Preachers*: W. M. Fisher, Eliza Rutherford, Lillian Pool, Mary Cagle, R. B. Mitchum, Jonnie Jernigan, E. J. Sheeks, and Fannie Suddarth. I have noted that their texts are included in Hunter’s when I reference their calls in this section.

Call to the Ministry 71). For others, the call comes in dreams and visions.⁷⁴ Maggie Newton Van Cott relates a dream where she is called to preach and immediately answers that call, preaching to none other than John Wesley in her dreams (153).

Second, many women detail their attempts to ignore God's call. After reviewing several New England women's defenses of their preaching in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Louis Billington notes that all "emphasized both publicly and privately the overwhelming compulsion of their calling and yet the fear and dread which it produced in them" (qtd. in Chaves 176). This fear had two sources: men and God. Lydia Sexton, like Ellen Stewart (217) and Lillian Pool (67), narrates how she was "possessed of a man-fearing spirit, and continually resisted the monitions of the Spirit" (223). This is a subtle, but rhetorically powerful narrative technique, because it reinforces two central tenets in the defenses: first, that the call to preach was solely God-inspired, and second, that objections to their preaching were man-made. In order to demonstrate that her call is legitimate, Mrs. E. J. Sheeks, for example, writes "So that matter was *settled* and I had the assurance the call was not a human impression, but a Divine call" (88).

As further evidence, the women are punished heavily for resisting the call, and, similar to their portrayal of the call to preach, they narrate their resistance and God's response in descriptive prose. In 1817, Deborah Pierce warns: "Rise up ye careless daughters, for many, many days shall ye be troubled, for ye have not harkened to the voice of God yourself" (qtd. in Mary Ryan. *Women* 72). The consequences of ignoring her counsel are sprinkled throughout the other defenses, as women detail the physical, mental, and spiritual dangers of not heeding God's call. In their minds, not only did their

⁷⁴ See also Foote 65-67; Newell 64-66; Sexton 213; A. Smith 42-43; and Towle 9, 10-11.

own good health depend upon their compliance, but they also risked the health and even the lives of their family, as well, if they failed to answer God's call.⁷⁵ Many of these women use Scripture to describe the spiritual torment of resisting God's call, particularly Jeremiah 20:9: "Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay."⁷⁶ Also frequently cited is I Corinthians 9:16: "Necessity is laid upon me, and woe is me if I preach not the Gospel."⁷⁷

By establishing in their narratives that they are called to preach by God himself, and that they have resisted his call due to real and potential objections from their communities, these religious women create a unique rhetorical situation. The call to preach was not only a source of rhetorical power; it was also rhetorically generative. It was a source of authority because nineteenth-century women were expected to remain silent in virtually any public space, and the call provided them with the necessary ethos to claim their role in public ministry. The call was rhetorically generative because it was considered a mandate from the Holy Spirit to minister, testify, exhort, and preach and provided them with the necessary exigence to fulfill this duty. Nonetheless, when the female preachers finally answer the call, they are careful to protect this constructed ethos by claiming little agency in their rhetorical power.

Employing both simple and extended metaphors, female preachers refer to themselves as instruments for use by God. Harriet Livermore calls herself a "sharp threshing instrument in God's hands" (*Narration* 159), Fanny Newell a "poor feeble

⁷⁵ See also Elaw 70-76; Fisher (in Hunter) 63; Hunter 51; J. Lee 32, 36; Newell 108-10; Sexton 223, 226; E. Stewart 9-10, 60; Towle 10; and Woosley 98.

⁷⁶ See also Grimke 103; J. Lee 42; E. Stewart 175; and Towle 11.

⁷⁷ See also Fisher (in Hunter) 64; Hanaford 102; Lee 42; Towle 18; and Woosley 97.

instrument” (144), Jarena Lee a “poor coloured instrument” (37), and Zilpha Elaw a “simple and weak instrument” (70). The women then describe how God fills them as if they were his vessels, often with text; their sermons and exhortations are provided to them.⁷⁸ Harriet Livermore comments that her “mouth was filled with praise” (*Narration* 118); Jarena Lee hears God’s voice, which says, “Preach the Gospel; I will put words in your mouth” (35); and Mary Adams writes, “As soon as the Lord was pleased to give me strength I arose in obedience to my divine Master’s command, and delivered the message which his Spirit dictated to me” (56). Zilpha Elaw claims that her entire rhetorical situation—rhetoric, audience, text—was determined by God. Elaw writes that “the Lord opened my mouth in public prayer” (67) and describes her first preaching engagement thus:

in an instant I began as it were involuntarily, or from an internal prompting, with a loud voice to exhort the people...as if God had called forth witnesses from heaven, and witnesses on earth, ministers and members, to witness on this day to my commission, and the qualifications He bestowed on me to preach his holy Gospel. (82)

This rhetorical technique is modified slightly in the conversion narratives of the late nineteenth century. In narrating their call, these later female preachers avoid deflecting agency solely to God and speak more confidently about their personal rhetorical abilities and their biblical knowledge. W. M. Fisher, for example, writes that the call “rings in my soul,” but she does not claim that God then provides specific directions or text for carrying out that call (67). Lydia Sexton looks to the Bible and her religious community for support, citing the scriptural passages which support her call and relating the “encouragements by my brethren and sisters” (213-21). Nonetheless, these later defenders continue to place a good measure of authority with God, using the

⁷⁸ See also M. Adams 66; S. Cooke 22; Hunter 58-59; and E. Stewart 9-10.

common biblical metaphor of God putting his “seal” upon their preaching.⁷⁹ “How He put his seal on this first work,” writes Amanda Berry Smith, “to encourage my heart and establish my faith, that he indeed had chosen, and ordained and sent me” (158-59). The mediatory role of the female preacher is highlighted in all of these texts: God provides the inspiration and the authorization; the women provide the rhetorical talent to deliver the message.

God was not only represented as an agent in the act of their preaching, but also in the circumstances of their preaching careers. Many describe similar hardships in beginning their ministry and the divine means by which those obstacles were removed.⁸⁰ Often those hardships are man-made, but several women also blame the devil himself for limiting or blocking their access to the pulpit.⁸¹ They thus rhetorically elevate the debate over their right to the pulpit: it becomes a spiritual warfare, a battle between God and Satan.

Although it is not a significant component in defenses outside of the genre of spiritual autobiography, most women preachers still include references to the call in defenses within other genres. Phoebe Palmer, Jennie Willing, and Frances Willard, for example, do not share their own call to preach within their defenses; however, they all refer to the call to preach as a valid justification for preaching. Writes Willing, “But shall women preach? Certainly, if God calls them to preach. He cannot make a mistake. He is not the author of confusion” (“Talking” 121).⁸² In addition to their own spiritual

⁷⁹ This might be a reference to 2 Corinthians 1:22 (“[God] who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts”). See also Cagle (in Hunter) 73; Fisher (in Hunter) 64; Gordon 160; Rutherford (in Hunter) 66; and Woosley 96.

⁸⁰ See also M. Adams 147; S. Cooke 129; Elaw 86, 101; J. Lee 46; A. Smith 157; and Towle 95.

⁸¹ See also M. Adams 133; Elaw 91; and E. Stewart 63-65.

⁸² See also Chapin 100; Palmer, chapters 1, 2, 12; and Willard 62.

autobiographies, Ellen Stewart and Fannie McDowell Hunter also include the narratives of other women's calls to preach within their texts, testifying to the rhetorical prominence of the call.

Nineteenth-century women preachers clearly recognized that the call needed to be rhetorically verifiable and supportable, and they provide sufficient evidence—physical, literal, and scriptural—to that effect. Women preachers used the call as their first line of argument: God called them to preach, and any objections were clearly man-made. However, as Catherine Brekus, points out, by the mid-nineteenth century the call to preach lost much of its rhetorical efficacy, because “most clerical leaders no longer believed that being called was sufficient preparation for the ministry” (288). Consequently, women increasingly had to rely on biblical hermeneutics.

Biblical Hermeneutics: Employing a Range of Interpretation

Even in the late-nineteenth century, the prevailing point of contention, according to Nazarene preacher Fannie McDowell Hunter, remained the issue of authority: “By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?” (Matt. 21:23). This is the question propounded by many when a woman enters the pulpit, takes a text and preaches a sermon” (7). However, when the acceptable answer was no longer simply God's call, women turned to the Bible and added hermeneutics to their arsenal of defense strategies. Biblical hermeneutics, the science and methodology of scriptural interpretation, includes the entire framework of the interpretative process, from recalling the historical precedence of biblical female leaders, to exegesis, a more formalized textual study of particular scriptural passages. Whether engaged in confirmation or

refutation, whether using subtle reference or explicit biblical comparison, every woman who defended women's ministry employed a hermeneutic and thus demonstrated her profound scriptural knowledge and literacy. If the call to preach was evidence of a divine right to the pulpit, the use of a hermeneutic was evidence of scriptural literacy.

One end of the spectrum of biblical hermeneutics was the strategy of referencing a lineage of women religious leaders in the Bible, such as Deborah, Miriam, Huldah, Jael, Anna, Priscilla, and Phoebe.⁸³ This historiography was a particularly popular strategy for early nineteenth-century female defenders, because it did not require scriptural "interpretation" per se, but rather merely a re-narratization of biblical stories. Harriet Livermore, for example, devotes the majority of her defense—five letters and fifty-four pages—to detailing the stories of dozens of biblical women, beginning with Sarah and concluding with Mary Magdalene (*Scriptural* 32-86). The recitation of these biblical foremothers is a particularly common topos in practically every spiritual autobiography throughout the nineteenth century. Additionally, spiritual autobiographers compare themselves to these women throughout their texts, or even re-name themselves or other contemporary preaching women as "Phoebes" or "Marys." By citing Jesus' particular acceptance of female religious leadership and then cloaking themselves in the identity of these early preaching women, nineteenth-century female preachers rhetorically insert themselves into this lineage.

Although a popular rhetorical strategy in the early nineteenth century and within the genre of spiritual autobiography, naming a lineage of biblical female precedence is

⁸³ See Broughton 11-16, 25; Cagle 162-69; Crocker 32; Duncan 170; Gordon 158-59; Grimke 102; Holman, "Peculiar" 12; Kollock 222; Livermore 32-86; Mott 489-90; Newell 135; Palmer, chapter 1; Sexton 211, 214, 253; E. Stewart 168, 174-75, 182-83, 186, 188; Towle 8; Van Cott 304, 311-15; Willard 28, 33-34, 40-44; Willing "Consecrated" 22, "Talking" 118; Woods 287; and Woosley 71.

common in other genres in the mid- and late nineteenth century, as well. Additionally, these women tended also to reference a lineage of contemporary female leaders, both religious and secular. Susanne Wesley, Mary Bosanquet, and Sojourner Truth are just a few of the examples frequently cited as foremothers of a female clerical tradition; female pioneers in other industries—medicine, trade, astronomy, education—are cited, as well.⁸⁴ By supplementing the biblical lineage of preaching women with modern-day preaching women and women in other spheres of public life, these rhetors assert a wider sphere of activity for *all* women and suggest their willingness to utilize evidence outside of the Bible.

Having established that there was scriptural precedence for women's preaching, defenders then pointed to two key biblical texts, rhetorically linking their divine right to the pulpit with their biblical literacy. One of the texts is Joel 2:28-29:

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, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

The other frequently cited text is Acts 2:17-18:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my spirit; and they shall prophesy.

Based on the central promise that in the latter days the Holy Spirit would impel women as well as men to prophesy, these passages were included in nearly every defense of the

⁸⁴For defenses that cite contemporary female religious leaders and exemplars, see Booth 4, 20-2; Gordon 158, 160; Kellison 21; Kollock 224-28; Livermore 85-88; Moreland 235; Palmer, chapters 5-9; Towle 26, 37, 57; Willard 63; Willing "Talking" 122-24; Woods 287; and Woosley 52-53. For defenses that cite female secular leaders and positions, see Broughton 3, 23, 36; Cagle 160-1; Mott 495-97; and Woosley 86-95.

nineteenth century.⁸⁵ They are central, however, to the logical support of holiness women in particular. Phoebe Palmer refers directly to the Pentecost in the title of her defense: *Promise of the Father, or, A neglected speciality of the last days*, and Jennie Willing writes that “The Pentecost gave woman her Magna Charta” (“Woman” 21). When detailing their call to preach was not sufficient for their audiences, these passages enabled women to prove scripturally that the Holy Spirit could call women to preach.

According to Wesleyan scholar Susan Stanley, for holiness women, the authority of the Holy Spirit superseded any clerical prohibition against women’s preaching (“Empowered” 104). The preachers often cite Acts 5:29 in support: “We must obey God rather than men.” Coupled with the Pentecostal passages, this mandate compelled women to challenge the authority of those who attempted to prevent them from preaching. Palmer, for example, writes, “Where church order is at variance with divine order, it were better to obey God than man” (*Promise of the Father* vi); and Lydia Sexton asks “How could they obey God and not Prophecy?” (254).

It is important to differentiate female preachers’ use of Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2 17-18 from that of their male counterparts. As I explained earlier in this chapter, male clergy who supported women’s preaching largely relied upon these two passages in portending a new dispensation, a dispensation in which the Holy Spirit might grant women unique and temporary access to the pulpit. For the majority of women preachers, and particularly for the holiness preachers of the mid-nineteenth century, these passages instead referred to a “new age” of perfectionism.

⁸⁵ The exception are the defenses of Unitarian women. See also Booth 1, 17-8; Cagle 169-70; Crocker 14; Gordon 147-51, 157; Grimke 105-106; Holman, “Peculiar” 12; Livermore, *Spiritual* 89; Newell 135; Mott 490; Palmer 34, 28, 164, 178, 174, 189, 208, 313; Sexton 253-55; Thompson 6; Towle 15; Van Cott 307; Willard 30-31; Willing, “Talking” 118; Woosley 34-35.

Late-nineteenth century Wesleyan perfectionism differed dramatically from dispensationalism in that dispensationalists believed that Eve's curse, and thus women's subordination, was permanent until Christ's second coming. Perfectionism, however, encouraged both a reinterpretation of the Fall and a consideration of Christ's atonement as a reversal of the Fall. Women's empowerment was the sign of a dawning of a new age, an age shepherded in by Christ's resurrection (Bendroth 45). Perfectionists not only denied the permanence of female subordination; they also articulated a theology of optimism that both rehistoricized the past and looked hopefully toward the future. In looking to the past, female preachers cited prophetic leadership which based its authority on the Holy Spirit and stated their intention to imitate the prophetic leadership style of the New Testament era as they ushered in a future age of even greater female empowerment. Livermore, for example, summons up an image of past religious leaders in defining women's future role: "Now I am contented woman shall reign with Christ, and the ancient fathers, the holy prophets, and inspired apostles" (*Scriptural* 113). According to Stanley, holiness doctrine enabled women preachers to create a "theology of empowerment" that interpreted biblical restrictions on feminine leadership as temporary and swept away by the atoning death and resurrection of Christ ("Empowered" 115). In this reconceptualized theology, women were not temporarily necessary, but rather primarily responsible for ensuring Christ's return.

As the nineteenth century progressed, however, referring to the Pentecost became less effective, and women preachers relied on a more explicit hermeneutic to refute common objections to their preaching through biblical exegesis—the critical, intellectual tradition of interpreting key scriptural passages. The Pentecostal arguments diminished

in effectiveness partly because of a newly emerging denominational hierarchy in which presbyters, deacons, and bishops claimed greater ecclesiastical authority and de-emphasized prophetic authority. Therefore, the delicate blend of experience and hermeneutics altered in ratio by the mid-nineteenth century as women religious rhetors shifted from a reliance on their call to preach to an articulation of a hermeneutics based on biblical women's prophesy and the promise of future female prophecy to, finally, their exegetical expertise. The former two were acceptable discursive strategies for all church members, because they indicated a personal relationship with God and demonstrated basic scriptural literacy. Furthermore, when these women articulated their call to preach and referred to prophetic Scripture, they stayed within the non-confrontational mode of confirmation. Exegetical expertise, and particularly exegesis as a means of refutation, was relatively new territory for women and considered an acceptable practice only for male preachers and church leaders. Consequently, when they began employing a more sophisticated exegesis, female religious rhetors located their rhetorical power not only in the individualized experience of conversion or sanctification, but also in their mastery of a recognized, denominational, clerical act.⁸⁶

Two biblical passages that women preachers had to refute were at the core of the objections to their preaching: one was 1 Corinthians 14:34 ("Let your women keep silence in the churches"), and the other was Timothy 2:11-12 ("Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence"). As Elizabeth Wilson explains in her scriptural defense of

⁸⁶ Refuting objections based on biblical evidence was not a strategy limited to only mid- and late nineteenth-century women. Early nineteenth-century women also demonstrated a deep knowledge of the Bible; however, they tended to be less explicit in their references, cribbing biblical passages in their own words and within their own personal narratives.

women, “There are but *two* isolated portions of scripture on which the whole idea of women’s prohibition of speaking in the church is predicated without any corroborating evidence” (149-50). Through their exegesis of these two passages, along with their comparative exegesis of other scripture, these women generated arguments refuting objections to their preaching on three basic grounds: women spoke under the authority of the Holy Spirit and not in authority over men; Paul’s injunctions were temporary and idiosyncratic when taken in historical context; and Paul’s two passages were inconsistent with other scripture.

First, women argued that women’s preaching did not in fact *usurp* authority, because when women speak they did so under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁷ Defenses often reinforced this argument with the Pentecostal scripture; thus, although defenders engaged in direct confrontation of male clergy through their refutation, they still articulated a theology which maintained the passivity of the female preacher. Women preachers also argued that women’s submission to men was limited to the home and did not extend to the church, where God exercised authority over both men and women.

Second, female defenders argued that Paul’s scripture was uniquely specific to the early church and that biblical scholars had to be sensitive to the cultural conditions that gave rise to Paul’s prohibitions.⁸⁸ According to female preachers, women obviously prayed and prophesied in public in the early church; Paul’s restrictions were not against their speaking, but rather referred to the manner of their speaking, that is, with propriety.

⁸⁷ See A. Brown; Broughton; Booth 5; Cagle 72; Cook; Mott 49; Palmer, chapter 13; Willard; and Woosley 12.

⁸⁸ See Boardman 39; Booth 12; A. Brown; Cagle 162, 175-76; Kellison 219-20; Grimke 110-11; Livermore *Scriptural* 18, 91-2; Palmer, chapter 1; E. Stewart 133, 196-97; Van Cott 308; Willard 29-30; Willing, “Talking” 119; Wilson 150-54; Woods 287; and Woosley 78.

For example, Phoebe Palmer argues that the passages were written in the context of disorderly debates and only referenced disruptive women in the church of Paul's time as specific examples; Elizabeth Wilson claims that "the apostle's prohibition was *special* and *particular*, and not universal and general (159); and Jennie Willing writes, "[Paul] gave [women] an injunction applicable only to their land and time" ("Talking" 119).

Third, female defenders argued that a too literal reading of Paul is inconsistent with other parts of the Bible.⁸⁹ Citing such scripture as Genesis 1:27 ("So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them") and Matthew 28:10 ("Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me"), the women offer a revisionist reading of key scriptural passages and argue that the passages contradict the Pauline injunctions. This argument applied equally well to other scripture authored by Paul. The women refer to 1 Corinthians 11:4-5, in which Paul allows women to "pray and prophesy, and Philippians 4:2 and Romans 16:12, where Paul lists several women who helped him spread the gospel, including Euodia, Syntyche, Tryphena, and Tryphosa.

In addition to demonstrating their own careful exegesis of the Pauline injunctions, women preachers also critiqued male exegesis as inaccurate and dogmatic. Female preachers challenged formal biblical translations, particularly the King James version of the Bible.⁹⁰ They criticized the change in Paul's reference to Phoebe from deacon or minister to servant; they conjugated and analyzed the Greek word "lalein" or "to speak"

⁸⁹ See also Booth 6-11, 25; A. Brown; Grimke 113; Holman, "Peculiar" 12; Kellison 36, 219; Livermore 92, 94-98; E. Stewart 101, 17-9, 133-36, 168; Van Cott 308-10; Willard 34-37; Willing, "Talking" 120-21; and Wilson 155-66.

⁹⁰ For example, the King James' translation of Romans 16: 1-2 changed Paul's reference of Phoebe from "deacon" or "minister" to "servant." See Booth 8-11; Cagle 165, 167; Grimke 103-104; 107-108; Livermore 72-74; Mott 490; E. Stewart 175; Willard 30-31; Wilson 147-48.

used in the Pauline injunction, claiming that in its proper usage it is not nearly as prescriptive towards women; and they challenged the gender pronouns used in the Bible.⁹¹ Both Elizabeth Wilson and Sarah Grimke refer to a 1574 edition of the Bible (147-48; 107-108), and most women refer to a range of Bible editions within their texts. Such criticism was not only performative, demonstrating a deep awareness of both Scripture and church publishing history, but it was also rhetorically effective, enabling a broader range of biblical interpretation. As Mary Gordon so aptly put it, “Doors which have long been shut through a misapprehension of Scripture are now flung wide open” (159).

Misapprehension of Scripture, according to these women, was not innocent, and they further argued that male clerical leaders willfully misread Scripture for their own dogmatic ends.⁹² This particular criticism stretches back as far as the earliest nineteenth-century defenses. Jarena Lee warns, “O how careful ought we to be lest through our by-laws of church government and discipline, we bring into disrepute even the word of life” (36); and Elizabeth Wilson complains: “Some of our brethren are very good at *making scripture*, in order to support a *favourite theory*” (153). These women remove the incompatibility of male clerical interpretation of women’s preaching by dissociating it from true exegesis and associating it, instead, with “ecclesiastical tyranny” (E. Stewart 188), and “imposed or borrowed theories of masculine authority” (Hultin 789).

Catherine Booth aptly sums up the arguments by female defenders of women’s preaching and hints at the importance of women preacher’s exegetical contributions:

⁹¹ Ellen Stewart claims that “There is no distinction of sex in the decalogue” (181).

⁹² See also Bartlett 231; L. Blake 13; Booth 3, 22; Elaw; Hanaford; Kollock 222, 228; J. Lee 36; Palmer, chapter 2; Safford 237, 205; E. Stewart 132; Willard 17-26; and Willing, “Talking” 121.

If commentators had dealt with the Bible on other subjects as they have dealt with it on this, taking isolated passages, separated from their explanatory connections, and insisting on a literal interpretation of the words of our version, what errors and contradictions would have been forced upon the acceptance of the Church, and what terrible results would have accrued to the world. (*Female* 23)

Booth's admonishment demonstrates the increased rhetorical liberty that women began to take in the nineteenth century in their defenses of women's preaching. Such liberties are due in part to the dramatic increase in scriptural literacy supported by both John Wesley and Charles Finney. Finney in particular preached a hermeneutic based on common sense, accessibility, and flexibility. According to Finney, "The Bible is eminently a reasonable book" that anyone could read and interpret, because God spoke to every person through the Bible and did not allow for misinterpretation (qtd. in Hardesty, *Women* 55). Revivalist theology not only sanctioned women's interpretation of the Bible, but even encouraged it. Furthermore, revivalist and evangelical theology linked the Bible with experience, stressing the "Living Word" and its application to the common person. It is not surprising, therefore, that with the exception of speeches delivered at women's rights conventions, nearly every defense of women's preaching utilized a blend of experience and hermeneutics. There was a certain duality to women's religious participation in the nineteenth century. The Bible provided the strongest words against female preaching while it simultaneously provided the strongest support for female leadership in the church. Similarly, the Bible was used by some to inscribe femininity and by others to expand women's traditional roles.

Women's Role in Society: Reconciling the Role of Female Preacher

The final rhetorical marker found in all defenses of women's preaching was a consideration of women's role within society and a negotiation of the role of preacher within that sphere. Nancy Cott argues that in the nineteenth century there were two general methods of argumentation employed in rhetoric concerning the "woman question": that of "difference" and that of "equality." The former was based on the argument that because women were different from men—in their natural endowment, environment, or training—it would behoove the natural balance of society to permit women equal access to education, work, and citizenship; women were moral, nurturing, and philosophically disinterested, and men were competitive and self-interested. Those who employed the second method argued that women were intellectually and spiritually equal to men, and were therefore deserving of the same opportunities as men. The same is true for women defending their right to the pulpit: women argued from a position of difference or equality; however, the arguments based on equality can be further divided into two camps, with one group forming arguments based on scriptural equality and another based on natural equality.

Surprisingly, the argument based on difference is largely an argument of the mid- to late nineteenth century. Palmer represents the majority of mid-nineteenth century defenses in that she never argues for a reconfiguration of traditional male and female roles nor for women's ordination, but merely for the right of women to speak in public when the Holy Spirit moves her to do so. Similarly, Jennie Willing and Josephine Butler attempt to demonstrate that women's preaching was well within a woman's prescribed sphere by pointing to Jesus' parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) and claiming that God

included the pulpit as an appropriate place to exhibit and use their talents. Butler writes that women's energies should not "be folded in napkins and buried under the church floor" (5).⁹³

In addition to including preaching as an act sanctioned by God as appropriate to their sphere, women defenders also argue that God purposely created women as different from men and endowed with uniquely feminine gifts for the ministry. Using rhetoric consistent with the Barbara Welter's "Cult of True Womanhood," a Protestant-based ideology which emphasized middle-class social responsibility and piety and relied on a rhetoric of domesticity, these rhetors offered women a vision of an expanded spiritual sphere while maintaining the constraints of her temporal sphere. According to Catherine Booth, "God has given to woman a graceful form and attitude, winning manners, persuasive speech, and, above all, a finely-toned emotional nature, all of which appear to us eminent *natural* qualifications for public speaking" (*Female* 3); and Mrs. G. E. Taylor claims that "From the beginning of time, woman has represented the good, the true and the beautiful. She has been the personification of the world's ideals" (20).

Female rhetors who defended women's preaching at the World's Columbian Exposition presented arguments that women are not only uniquely gifted by God, but are also necessary for creating the human whole and having a humanizing effect on religion. Caroline Bartlett claims that "ideal humanity is not man and is not woman, it is both" (230); Mary Safford argues that through female ministry "religion will become less masculine in the pulpit, less feminine in the pews, more nobly human in both" (238); and Ida Hultin agrees that both man and woman are needed:

⁹³ See also Willing, "Women" 87; Hedges 390.

both together—man thinking and doing in man’s way, woman thinking and doing in woman’s way. He, true manly; she, true womanly; each intelligently, responsibly, personally religious, thus complementing each other and each other’s work, and helping and blessing the world. (789)

Eugenia St. John claims that “woman’s native intuition is as necessary in the pulpit as man’s logical, reasoning powers” (233). She suggests that the hard, logical reasoning of men makes them rigid, whereas the soft intuition of women makes them perceptive, and better able to adapt themselves to the nuances of the situation. What Bartlett, Safford, Hultin, and St. John imply is that, if humanity is comprised equally of men and women, then the important roles in society—namely, teachers and ministers—must be equally distributed to men and women. In sum, it is precisely because women and men are different that they should be equally represented in church offices.

A natural extension of the argument based on difference was an argument for women’s preaching based on her unique role as mother. Nineteenth-century dominant discourse offered up a limited number of acceptable roles—and thus acceptable rhetorics—for women: slave, wife, mother, and teacher. Clearly, these roles were not only defined by gender, but also by class and race. The role of mother was often used in women’s defenses as a position with a scriptural function that unified a woman’s other sites of identity. As I will detail in chapter four, Frances Willard most famously, and perhaps most brilliantly, utilized maternal identity and domestic space in her arguments for women’s preaching, temperance, and suffrage. But she was not the only rhetor to do so. The preacher as mother is a popular trope used in defenses across genres and

throughout the nineteenth century, because it enabled women to position themselves across the political spectrum.⁹⁴

In earlier defenses, women identify themselves as mothers, maintaining a safe, acceptable identity. Fanny Newell never uses the term “preaching” except when she refers to preaching to her children (168); rather, when engaged in public ministry, she “exhorts,” “testifies,” or “speaks.” Similarly, throughout her work, Nancy Towle simply refers to herself as a “Mother in Israel” and “Sister in Christ” (229), but never as a preacher. By mid-century women expanded the definition of mother by claiming that “Pastoral work is adapted to women, for it is motherly work” (Oliver 3).

By the late nineteenth century, representing the role of mother as congruent with the role of minister became a primary line of argument, as women defenders aligned the biological function of motherhood with the scriptural function of ministering.⁹⁵ Virginia Broughton, for example, argues that the women of a man’s family were often the means of his conversion (cited in Higginbotham 129). Broughton further states that all women were descended from Mary, the mother of Jesus, and thus claims women as specially privileged by God for the regeneration of the human race (cited in Higginbotham 129). Caroline Bartlett similarly argues that the regeneration of the church depended upon women’s motherly ministry:

But today, while the present abnormal state of things exists in the church, I believe that the greatest need of the church is to be *mothered*... until the motherhood as well as the fatherhood of God is recognized by this world... bringing it up to the true knowledge and glad service of our Father and Mother God. (232-33)

⁹⁴ For an interesting comparison of Palmer’s emphasis on woman as “prophet” and Willard’s on woman as “mother,” see Nancy Hardesty, “Minister as Prophet? Or as Mother?” (1982).

⁹⁵ See also Chapin 100; Willard 63-72.

Florence Kollock further adds a mother's intellectual contribution to women's biological and scriptural functions. Kollock claims that both "mother's love and woman's wit" are needed in ministry (222). In this phrase she successfully absolves the binary of mother/woman/maternal affection and masculine wit and rather suggests that woman can be both maternal and intellectual. Kollock further argues that women not only physically birthed the world's "great prophets, priests, and teachers" (221), but also "[sustained] them in their efforts" (222), presumably through education and support. Through their biological and intellectual contributions of motherhood, in other words, women provide for a matrix of support for male religious leaders throughout history.

The female rhetors who argue for equality based on scriptural rights do so primarily by referencing Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."⁹⁶ According to Catherine Booth, "If this passage does not teach that in the privileges, duties, and responsibilities of Christ's kingdom, all differences of nation, caste, and sex are abolished, we should like to know what it does teach, and wherefore it was written" (*Female* 19). The women who cite Galatians negotiate a delicate balance, arguing for equality with men while maintaining women's separate sphere. In claiming that men and women are equal *in the eyes of God*, these women avoid direct confrontation with men over the debate of women's sphere in everyday life and distance themselves from the larger and more strident battles of equality being waged on platforms across the country. They do this partly by arguing that men and women are inherently and naturally equal in their Edenic state. They consider the current subjugation of woman to be a result of the

⁹⁶ See also Booth 15, 19; Cagle 171; Chapin 100; Gordon 157; Grimke 106; Holman, "Scriptural" 2; Livermore 17; E. Stewart 168, 186; Towle 14-15; Van Cott 309; Wilson 145; and Woosley 34.

fall, as explained by Harriet Livermore in 1824: “It must be conceded, that in a state of innocency, there was a perfect equality between the sexes” (*Scriptural* 26). Moreover, in redefining the “natural order of God”—an argument so often used against women—they maintain that it was actually male custom and prejudice that threatened the original natural order of God: “They were both made in the image of God. Dominion was given to both over every other creature, but not over each other” (Price 20).⁹⁷

Rhetors who argued for equality from a position of natural rights borrowed rhetoric from the woman’s rights and other social justice movements.⁹⁸ They still relied on scriptural support; however, that support was either on equal footing with or became secondary to their arguments based on natural equality. Furthermore, it was relatively easy and rhetorically seamless to borrow from these other movements, because, as Carl and Dorothy Schneider point out, these movements “originated in part because of men’s refusal to let women speak...[and] at least at first understood themselves as promoting religious values...[and] afforded women experiences helpful in the pulpit” (59). It is thus not surprising to see rhetoric in these defenses that encourages political action and engagement. Writes Jennie Willing, “If the existing social order is not in harmony with the Divine plan, it will have to be subverted” (“Talking” 122). And Mary Lee Cagle warns, “This is pre-eminently a woman’s age. They are slowly but surely pressing their way to the front” (160). Within their defenses women encourage other female ministers to attend to a variety of social issues, including not only women’s political disenfranchisement, slavery and racism, and alcoholism, but also poverty, prostitution,

⁹⁷ See also Bartlett 229; Booth 3, 15; Josephine Butler 5; Holman, “Scriptural” 2; Hultin 788; Kellison 223; Kollock 221-22; J. Lee 36; Mott 489; E. Stewart 18, 101, 128, 186-87, 200; Taylor 20; Towle 14-15; and Woosley 27-29..

⁹⁸ For a discussion of the language of women’s rights in women’s defenses of women’s preaching, see Donawerth, *Conversation Rhetoric*, chapter 4.

and education.⁹⁹ These defenses merge scriptural arguments for women's preaching with the natural rights arguments used in a variety of social reform movements; they also conflate the importance of eschatological witness with political action. In so doing, they present a theology aimed not only at transforming the individual, but potentially also society. According to Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, this theology also influenced the increased political participation of women: "By the close of the nineteenth century, woman suffragists and social reformers had stretched the traditional boundaries of the feminine sphere to the breaking point" (6).

The defenses presented at the World's Columbian Exposition are novel in that they not only borrow women's rights rhetoric, but also replace exegesis with a rhetoric of secular reason and logic. Whereas the other defenses *supplement* their scriptural defenses with secular, natural rights arguments, the women at the World's Columbian Exposition *replace* the scriptural arguments for women's preaching with arguments based on the prevailing natural rights arguments of the day. Indeed, it is telling that the speeches presented at the World's Congress of Representative Women are in the forum titled "Science and Religion." Mary Safford, for example, references evolution in her extended metaphor: "As that monarch of the forest, the oak, is the result of the evolution of physical life, so woman's place in the church as a minister of religion is the result of that evolution of spiritual life which will yet transform the world" (236); Eugenia St. John claims that "intuition and reason have come to woman in the new era" (234); and Ida Hultin refers to religion as "the science of the highest human development" (788). Using

⁹⁹ See Livermore, "Woman and the Pentecost" 21-22; Mott 494; Price 21-23, 28; Safford (poverty and prostitution) 239-40; Sexton (temperance, suffrage) 314-20; E. Stewart (race) 84, 98 (suffrage and temperance) 89-90 (property rights) 96; Willing, "Talking" 120; Wilson (suffrage) 146-47; and Woosley (education) 86-87.

this form of natural rights rhetoric, Caroline Bartlett opens her defense with three “propositions,” which she then explicates in order to demonstrate that her third proposition is true, due partly to “the law which governs ‘the survival of the fittest’” (229).

Because theirs is not an exegetical argument, Kollock, Safford, St. John, Hultin, and Bartlett cite few, if any, biblical passages. Rather, their references to God are often masked by metonymy. For example, Florence Kollock refers to God as “Logic” and “the power that gave woman being” (221), thus establishing a binary between logic and theology, with logic being a God-given power and theology a human, and specifically masculine, power. Her opening enthymeme sets the tone for her entire argument: “Woman in the world is the product of the will of the First Great Cause. Woman in the pew is the natural sequence of woman in the world. ‘Woman in the pulpit’ is the inevitable consequence of woman in the pew” (221). By identifying God as the “First Great Cause” and using the terms “product” and “natural sequence,” Kollock naturalizes God and further establishes him as the precedence of all other causes to follow. She implies that such causes as temperance, suffrage, abolitionism, and education are a natural extension or evolution of this First Great Cause. She employs social reform and natural rights rhetoric to synchronize the debate over women’s preaching with other social reform movements while employing an intellectual, scientific rhetoric. In so doing, she creates a mutually religious and secular argument for defending women’s right to preach:

We would admit all the difference that our great and beneficent Creator has made, in the relation of man and woman, nor would we seek to disturb this relation; but we deny that the present position of woman is her true sphere of usefulness; nor will she attain to this sphere, until the disabilities

and disadvantages, religious, civil, and social, which impede her progress, are removed out of her way (492).

Regardless of whether they argued from a position of difference or equality, female religious rhetors recognized the need to define, redefine, or expand women's sphere. As they did so, the stakes were made clear, and women's right to the pulpit became representative of her other civil and political rights.

Conclusion

Following Bakhtin's assertion that "form and content in discourse are one" (259), one might expect a rather neat alignment between the genre and content of nineteenth-century women's preaching self-defenses, with similar lines of argument utilized and common rhetorical choices made within genres. We can make certain generalizations and claims; however, it is rhetorically more interesting to investigate the boundaries between the genre and content of these works as fluid and negotiable. Spiritual autobiographers, for example, rely quite heavily on the call to preach as a means of justification. They also, however, employ a biblical hermeneutics, especially towards the middle of the nineteenth century, in their use of Pentecostal scripture as they engage in confirmation. Similarly, many treatise and editorial writers rely primarily on exegesis, but several also include their call to preach or reference the call as a viable defense. All of the women preachers, whether paraphrasing biblical passages in their personal narratives, refuting objections to their preaching, or using metaphor to align their defenses with the women's rights movement, demonstrate a deep knowledge of the Bible and a commitment to their preaching sisters.

Primarily using the genre of spiritual autobiography, the earlier defenses rely much more heavily on personal narrative, and many keep the issue of women's preaching within the stasis of conjecture.¹⁰⁰ Avoiding direct confrontation with the denominational establishment, they do not argue "should women preach?" but rather "yes, women have preached, as evidenced by myself and other biblical women." These earlier defenses simply give witness to their successful preaching careers. Their hermeneutical strategy is more historical than exegetical, and their use of the inspired call is a rhetorical choice to locate power with God alone, deflecting attention from the rhetorical agency of the woman preacher. Also, situating power in God enabled these women to articulate a position that did not *appear* to threaten the hierarchy of the church.

In the mid-nineteenth century there is an explosion of exegetical defenses, as women engage directly with the clerical opponents to their ministry. Therefore, even as they attest that their inspiration is God, the source of their rhetorical power lies in biblical hermeneutics, as practiced by their male clerical counterparts. By the end of the nineteenth century we see an increased reliance on natural rights rhetoric, and scriptural support becomes secondary. This is particularly true as women address public audiences via the platform at more secular women's rights conferences. For these women, preaching is but one vocation of many that should be equally accessible for women.

Women preachers participated in historiography as they studied, critiqued, and reconfigured an articulation of their history, following what Patricia Bizzell has outlined as three stages of feminist research ("Opportunities" 51): first, they recovered women who were "practicing rhetoric as traditionally defined," and they attempted to construct a

¹⁰⁰ I use the term as Jeanne Fahnestock and Mari Secor articulate it in "Toward a Modern Version of Stasis" (1985). Fahnestock and Secor modify stasis theory so that it "reflects an epistemology generally adaptable to contemporary communication" (217). 217-26.

tradition—both historical and contemporary—of women’s preaching that complements men’s achievements. Second, they became “resisting readers” of their canonical text, the Bible, as well as resisting readers of other Church doctrine passed down through the ages. Indeed, one of their primary arguments is that the “Truth” in these texts is socially constructed—truth blurs as it passes through the lens of the politically and religiously powerful and dominant. Finally, they became involved in the discursive practice of reconceptualizing women’s roles and thus suggesting new possibilities both for constructing women’s history and for inspiring a future generation of women to embrace more fully their roles as religious rhetors.

Barbara Biesecker modifies the concept of the rhetorical situation into what she calls a “rhetorical event,” “an incident that produces and reproduces the identities of subjects and constructs and reconstructs linkages between them” (126). Throughout the nineteenth century, the rhetorical event of defending one’s right to preach demonstrates each woman’s identity as a religious rhetor, capable not only of public speaking, but also of communicating God’s word. The women writing defenses of women’s preaching privilege their religious identity as a sort of “master” identity, and, as evidenced by the dozens of defenses of women’s preaching, this site of identity is as powerful and generative as gender, race, or class. Simultaneously, however, each woman had to negotiate her economy of difference, in identity, but also the economy of difference of her discourse, as she selected from a variety of genres, addressed multiple audiences, and used various lines of argument. The little book was one way to do that. In the next three chapters, I detail how Julia Foote, Frances Willard, and Louisa Woolsley are representative of the debate of women’s preaching, but also unique in the hybridity of

their discourse, blending various genres and rhetorics to create a forum more conducive to their arguments defending women's preaching and their theologies.

Chapter 3

The Little Book as Modification of Spiritual Autobiography: Julia Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*

We may be debarred entrance to many pulpits (as some of us now are) and stand at the door or on the street corner in order to preach to men and women. No difference when or where, we must preach a whole Gospel.
Julia Foote, "Christian Perfection" 66

Across disciplines, Julia Foote has been anthologized and studied as contributing a chapter to the story of African American women's participation in nineteenth-century American religious discourse with her 1879 spiritual autobiography, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch*.¹⁰¹ According to Marilyn Richardson, Foote "[was] neither isolated nor atypical, but [was an] inheritor of a black female tradition of activism founded on a commitment to religious faith, human rights, and women's struggles" (viii). William Andrews calls Foote, together with Jarena Lee and Zilpha Elaw, who published spiritual autobiographies in 1836 and 1846 respectively, "foremothers of the black feminist literary tradition in the United States" (*Sisters of the Spirit* 22). According to Richardson and Andrews, and other scholars across the disciplines of Religion, African American Studies, History, and English, Foote gave witness and spoke truth to black women's church participation and religious agency in nineteenth-century America.

¹⁰¹ See William Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit* (1986); Joanne Braxton, *Black Women Writing Autobiography* (1989); Jennifer Fleischner, *Mastering Slavery* (1996); Sue Houchins, *Spiritual Narratives* (1988); Jocelyn Moody, *Sentimental Confessions* (2001); and Martha Wharton, *A Contour Portrait* (1996).

I hope to contribute to this scholarship by reading Julia Foote as one of many female nineteenth-century religious rhetors who uses her story to consciously and actively participate in the movement to defend women's preaching. In reading Foote this way, I respond to Darlene Clark Hine's challenge that "it is not enough simply to uncover . . . the obscure names of black foremothers"; scholars need also "to develop an array of analytical frameworks" to allow for more complex readings of women's lives and their texts (47). I agree, and go further to argue that in addition to representing African American Protestantism, the texts of black religious rhetors can also give us considerable insight into women's nineteenth-century religious discourse generally.

The analytical framework that I apply in this chapter positions Foote as both a sophisticated rhetor and an accomplished theologian. Foote opens her book by emphasizing God's approval for her text: "I have written this little book after many prayers to ascertain the will of God—having long had an impression to do it" (3). Foote employs hybridity in form and function in her little book in order to defend women's ministry and to articulate her holiness theology. Specifically, Foote modifies the genre of spiritual autobiography by blending narrative, sermons, and a hymn. Foote modifies the rhetoric of spiritual autobiography by encompassing the language and techniques expected in Christian worship. Foote thus rhetorically demonstrates her competence to minister, and she rhetorically constitutes an audience of inspired congregants. Furthermore, Foote indicates a deft awareness of her need to exhibit a hybrid literacy of textual and oral discourse that would be persuasive to a broad—and sometimes hostile—audience.

Born in 1823 to slaves who purchased their freedom, Julia Foote grew up in New York's "Burned Over District"—where waves of religious revivalism in the 1830s and 1840s led to numerous sects devoted to the attainment of holiness or "Christian Perfection." Foote was raised in a Methodist home. Her parents put her to service when she was ten so that she might have access to a country school education. She was only in service for two years, and consequently largely taught herself to read the Bible, which she did diligently. Foote was converted at the age of fifteen in an AME church in Albany, New York. Three years later she married a waterman and traveled with him to Boston where she joined the AME Zion church. After her sanctification, Foote began to evangelize and experienced her call to preach. She commenced her itineracy in 1845, was instrumental in the holiness movement in the 1870s, and traveled the western frontier extensively. Foote directly challenged the denominational establishment by requesting their authorization throughout her preaching career; in 1894 she won a small battle when she became the first AME Zion woman to be ordained a deacon. In 1899, she followed Mary Small's footsteps and became the second woman to be ordained an elder. A year later, on November 22, Foote passed away.

The AME Zion church originated in 1796 in New York and formally organized as distinct from the AME church in 1821. Before the Civil War, it was primarily confined to the northern states, but by 1890 had spread as far west as California and as far south as Florida, boasting approximately 600,000 adherents in nearly 1,600 congregations (Newman and Halvorson 157). AME Zion ministers and congregations were devoted to anti-slavery efforts, most notably exemplified by their support of and contribution to the Underground Railroad (Wilmore 113). Together with its sister denomination, the AME

church, the AME Zion church also provided an environment of intense support of women's religious participation and leadership. The AME Zion church was the first to formally support women's preaching in several ways. In 1876, it granted women suffrage so that they could vote on church issues; in 1884, it allowed women to be elected as lay delegates to the General Conference; in 1894, it permitted women to be ordained deacons; and in 1898, it changed denominational rules to allow for women deacons and preachers, resulting in the formal ordination of Florence Spearing Randolph.

Julia Foote self-published the details of her life-long itinerate career as an AME Zion preacher in 1879 in *A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch*.¹⁰² She reprinted her spiritual narrative and defense of women's preaching in 1886. She was not unique in this endeavor. There is a rich tradition of spiritual autobiography of which Julia Foote is a part.¹⁰³ As Andrews articulates, "Autobiography has been recognized and celebrated since its inception as a powerful means of addressing and altering sociopolitical as well as cultural realities in the United States" (*African* 1). Sue Houchins places Foote in the same tradition as such early modern visionary autobiographers as Margery Kemp and Julian of Norwich (xxx); Martha Wharton claims that traces of a confluence of traditions—slave narrative, African American autobiography, and American spiritual autobiography—can be found in Foote's text. Regardless of how you define the tradition, the simple fact is that Foote belonged to a community of women embarking on a similar textual endeavor; like Maria Stewart, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw,

¹⁰² *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is included in William Andrew's *Sisters of the Spirit*, is online as part of the Digital Schomburg Project, and was reprinted by Kessinger Publishing, LLC in 2007. I refer to the original publication, digitized and available via pdf and facsimile on Google Books.

¹⁰³ For more on the tradition of African American female spiritual autobiography, see Braxton; Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Black Womanhood* (1987); Frances Smith Foster, *Written by Herself* (1993); and Wharton.

Amanda Berry Smith, Virginia Broughton, and dozens of other women, Julia Foote recorded her spiritual journey in what she titles a spiritual autobiography. Furthermore, like Lee, Elaw, Smith, and white spiritual autobiographers Fanny Newell, Lydia Sexton, Ellen Stewart, Nancy Towle, and Maggie Newton Van Cott, Foote also interwove a defense of her right to preach into her autobiography.

Julia Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is a transition text both in genre and rhetoric. In genre, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is a hybrid blend of the spiritual autobiography and the sermon; in rhetoric, therefore, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is a hybrid blend of textual and oral discourse. As a hybrid text, Foote's spiritual autobiography is representative of the early modification of the little book genre. As I detailed in chapter two, hybrid spiritual autobiographies were also written by Ellen Stewart, Nancy Towle, and Maggie Newton Van Cott. In her analysis of *Life of Mrs. Ellen Stewart*, Donawerth states that:

Stewart's book reiterates her argument in several forms, creating a hybrid text of several different genres: conversion narrative/spiritual autobiography, sermonic treatise, biography of her husband, and epistolary exchange reprinted from a church magazine.... In each genre melded together in this hybrid text, Stewart repeats her defense of women's preaching. (*Conversational* 132-33).

Donawerth writes that Stewart's "narrative is interrupted by interpolations" of the other genres (*Conversational* 133). Similarly, Foote's narrative is interrupted by the interpolation of sermonic rhetoric throughout her work. Foote uses narrative to give testament to her life as a preaching women; she uses the sermonic to invite her audience to witness and to perform her holiness theology.

The life of an itinerate preacher was marked by social heterogeneity—she preached in a variety of places to a variety of audiences under many different

circumstances. Such social heterogeneity demanded of the preacher a careful consideration of her rhetorical situation; indeed, her safety often depended upon it. The little book genre allowed Foote to respond fully to this reality within a textual space that she controlled and created. Foote consequently transformed her rhetorical situation into one more accepting of women's preaching and more receptive to the tenets of holiness.

Unlike in the other little books I investigate in this dissertation, in *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* Foote blends her argument into a narrative of experiences; as Foote unfolds the details of her life and her own ministry, she intermingles her arguments supporting women's ministry generally. To fully grasp her argument, her text thus necessitates a reading from start to finish. To that end, I have included subtitles for each section of Foote's little book throughout this chapter, and I detail in each section how Foote includes the rhetorical markers for defenses of women's preaching I outlined in chapter two:

1) Authorization; 2) Biblical hermeneutics; and 3) Women's role in society.

Introducing the Theologian: The Preface

For women preachers who include it in their defenses, the preface serves as a textual space where they can name their purpose in writing the work. For those writing spiritual autobiographies, that purpose is usually to offer up the narratives of their lives for public consumption. Some modestly state that they share their personal journeys only because of the "solicitations of dear friends" (Cagle 13) and "upon the earnest request of dear friends" (Broughton i). Others claim a more inspirational purpose, such as Lydia

Sexton, who writes that she wishes to present “lessons and warnings or encouragement to those who may have started out upon life’s uneven journey” (iii).

In her preface, Foote also establishes her ethos and exigence. However, she does not claim, like so many of her contemporaries, to be motivated by friends or her church community; she is rather called by God to write her book, stating that she wrote her book “after many prayers to ascertain the will of God” and in respect to her “consciousness of obedience to the will of my dear Lord and Master” (3). In short, Foote is “called” to write the text; she successfully extends the rhetorical power of the “extraordinary call” to preach to her entire text. Whereas her contemporaries claim to be sanctioned by God to minister, Foote claims that God sanctions not only her ministry but also her written defense of that ministry. This is significant because it demonstrates the activist agenda of her autobiography. According to Martha Watson, an “activist autobiography” functions both as a representation of the author’s life as well as advocacy for her efforts for social change; a successful activist autobiographer “must weave together the facts of history, the details of her own life, and the strands of her ideology with a sensitivity to the perhaps skeptical reader” (*Lives* 5). In naming her ideological purpose, “to testify more extensively to the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus Christ to save from all sin” (3), Foote establishes her ethos as a “testifier” and “exhorter.” Both were well-known and respected roles in evangelical churches; they were also roles defined by their activism, because testifiers and exhorters were expected to lead others away from sin and toward salvation. Her sister autobiographers typically assume an authorial identity in the preface and indicate that they will *detail* their lives as exhorters or preachers in their books; Foote rather hints that she will *perform* a ministerial identity within her text.

Foote then carefully constructs an audience that is both raced and classed. First, she states that “Many have not the means of purchasing large and expensive works on this important theme” (3), and she closes her preface by writing, “My earnest desire is that many—especially of my own race—may be led to believe and enter into rest” (3). Chaim Perelman and Lucy Olbrechts-Tyteca’s concept of the audience as constructed by the speaker is useful in analyzing these passages. These authors describe audience as “always a more or less systematized construction ... adequate to the occasion” (19). Nonetheless, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca further argue, that construction of audience must be a careful negotiation of the real audience with the writer’s projected ideal audience.

Foote identifies her real audience as African Americans, but, in signifying her book as the alternative to other “large and expensive works,” Foote establishes the credibility of her text—it can hold its own against weightier theological treatises—and invokes her ideal audience, an attentive, dutiful readership who is interested in the book for religious edification, not merely for pleasure or entertainment. This is further supported by Foote’s references to scripture throughout her preface. Although her preface is only a page long, Foote squeezes in three scriptural passages and presents a brief theology of the “beauty of holiness” (4). She thus dresses herself in the robes of the minister, identifies her text as a theological treatise, and places her audience in the collective role of congregation. Therefore, in the first few pages of her little book, Foote demonstrates her hybrid rhetorical project: a modification of the spiritual autobiography to envelope holiness theology.

Furthermore, Foote calls up the revival audiences so prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century. Foote's reference to holiness and her allusion to the revival signifies her awareness of her other audience—a white, middle-class readership. Holiness revivals attracted the poor and middle-class and both African and Anglo Americans. Texts like Foote's were very popular with white readers, particularly those readers who were abolitionist supporters and advocated for African American rights. But the construction of voice in these texts was often demure and sentimental, and the black author was still placed in subjection to his or her audience. In broadening her audience through an explicit invitation to other African Americans, Foote claims agency both for herself and for the black community. Her white readers become the silent, unspoken participants in her discourse, relegated to the back pews.

Having constructed a textual congregation in the preface, Foote's more difficult task is to condition them to accept a female minister. She does so by creating an incompatibility and resolving it by dissociation:

Those who are fully in the truth cannot possess a prejudiced or sectarian spirit. As they hold fellowship with Christ, they cannot reject those whom he has received, nor receive those whom he rejects, but all are brought into a blessed harmony with God and each other. (3)

According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, dissociation “assumes the original unity of elements comprised within a single conception and designated by a single notion.

[Dissociation] is then no more a question of breaking the links that join independent elements, but of modifying the very structure of these elements” (411-12). The single notion of original unity for Foote is “those who are fully in the truth,” i.e. her invoked audience. She modifies the structure by dissociating any members who might have a prejudice towards her as a woman and/or as an African American. The reconfigured

structure is a unified congregation in “blessed harmony with God and with each other” and presumably accepting of her leadership.

Letter of Introduction by a Male Colleague

Foote’s preface is particularly important as the antecedent—and the antidote—to the authenticating introduction by *Christian Harvester* editor Thomas Doty, a white Methodist minister and holiness proponent. Authenticating documents were an expected component of the slave narratives and spiritual autobiographies of the nineteenth century. They served to establish both the moral character and literacy of the author (Heglar 9). However, there was often a tension between the authenticator’s portrayal of the author and the author’s self-portrayal in the remainder of the narrative. For example, in stark contrast to Foote’s constructed ethos, Doty states that Foote is “guilty of three great crimes ... Color ... Womanhood ... Evangelist” (5-6). Although Doty is being ironic and claims that “holiness takes the prejudice” out of race, gender, and sectarianism, he nonetheless calls attention to her raced and gendered secondary status within society. Furthermore, Doty states that “our dear sister is not a genius” but “simply strong in common sense” (7), and he sums up Foote’s spiritual autobiography as a “simple narrative of a life of incidents, many of them stirring and strange” (7). Doty thus situates Foote’s text in the context of the Methodist “extraordinary call,” where women were expected to speak simply about what was in their hearts. For earlier Methodist women, like Sarah Mallet and Sarah Crosby, simplicity was a trope that replaced conscious agency with unconscious submission to God’s will (Bizzell and Herzberg 1087). If one were to read Doty’s introduction in isolation, one would assume Foote *simply* sat down

and wrote a straight-forward account of her life, a life that was certainly not representative of other women.

Furthermore, Doty's references to "stirring and strange" is representative of the racism that African American female preachers experienced during their itineracy. Amanda Berry Smith, for example, details the reaction of attendees to one of her first preaching engagements: "How the smiles and whispers went around among the passengers, 'The colored woman is going to preach'" (252). It is also representative of the sexism that itinerate women experienced; they were often branded as "sensation-seeking, crazy, hysterical" (qtd. in Billington 370). Doty, in referring to Foote's narrative as bizarre and by suggesting that it is not representative of other women, encourages the audience to assume the role of spectator consuming the spectacle. In short, Doty's introduction, although seemingly well-intended, represents the limitations of Foote's rhetorical situation as she often encountered it on the road, limitations stemming from racism and sexism.

Thankfully, Doty's introduction is sandwiched between Foote's skillful preface and the remaining sections of her sophisticated little book, and Foote's performance as rhetor is anything but simple. As Jacqueline Jones Royster explains, for marginalized women writing in the nineteenth century, "the very act of writing, especially for people who do not occupy positions of status and privilege in the general society, is a bold and courageous enterprise rather than simply a demonstration of the ability to express oneself" (81). Foote's use of the generic conventions of the preface hints that she will do more than simply relate the story of her life; she is rather embarking on a bold and courageous rhetorical and literacy project, transforming herself into the minister

exhorting her congregants to Jesus Christ, a role she plays out in the remainder of the work.

A Parabolic Early Life

Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* demonstrates an adaptation of the genre of spiritual autobiography in its innovative use of personal and collective narrative and in its blend of narrative and sermonic rhetoric. At first glance, the majority of the thirty chapters of Foote's defense seem to fit neatly into the genre of spiritual autobiography, because she details her early life, conversion experience, call to preach, and preaching career. However, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that Foote is narrating more than just her story. First, Foote spends the opening portion of her narrative detailing the effects of racism and slavery on the childhoods and lives of her parents, both former slaves. Indeed, Foote devotes the majority of her first chapter, "Birth and Parentage," to her parents' experiences with slavery; only one sentence in the opening paragraph and the second to last paragraph address Foote's actual childhood. Therefore, even though Foote did not personally experience slavery, she invokes the pain and memory of the institution at the start of her text, and it becomes the opening framework for her narrative. She quotes her mother and father and summarizes their experience in her own words. According to Bakhtin, a heteroglossic utterance privileges the "primacy of context over text" (428) and entails that one appropriate the words of others in order to populate them with one's own intention. Foote appropriates both the words and experiences of her parents as she layers the narrative of their lives onto her own, establishing that the text of her life in fact represents a more significant shared context.

According to Jennifer Fleischner, the end of enslavement in America did not end the production of slave narratives; rather, “the premises and motivations behind their composition, publication, and reception” changed (133). The “enduring presences” and narration of slavery continued in other genres well into the twentieth century (133). Like most African American autobiographers, Foote’s intention in *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is to provide more than a personal story; it is also to give voice to the trauma and difficulties of growing up African American in nineteenth-century antebellum America. Foote does this through her invocation of slavery through her parents’ experiences. In so doing, she models the transmission of personal or familial memory into collective memory.

When Foote transitions from the narrative of her parents’ experiences in slavery into the narrative of her own childhood, she adopts a more anecdotal narrative mode, choosing her stories carefully so that they resonate with both her black and white audience as shared heritage recorded in public memory. There are three poignant examples of this strategy. Foote shares a story her mother passed down to her in which her mother is admonished for going to the communion table of an Methodist Episcopal Church prior to the “poorer class of white folks” (11). This is very similar to the historical account of the circumstances that led to the mass exodus from the St. George Methodist Episcopal Church in 1787 that instigated Richard Allen’s Free African Society, and ultimately the AME church, as related in Allen’s own spiritual autobiography (13). Allen was a very popular preacher for both black and white audiences, and his text *The Life, Experience, and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen. To Which is Annexed the Rise and Progress of the African Methodist Episcopal*

Church in the United States of America, although not widely circulated when it was originally published in 1833, was republished in serial in the *AME Christian Recorder* in the summer and fall of 1875 and therefore garnered greater attention, both from blacks and whites, the second time around (Conyers 55). The *Christian Recorder* was a weekly newspaper that printed serialized novels, poems, editorials, and essays. Although it had a primarily black readership, there is evidence that many whites read the *Christian Recorder* as well, and it occasionally accepted submissions from white authors (Gardner 813-14). In relating a story almost identical to Allen's, Foote adds salience to her mother's story; Foote's narrative provides not only personal testimony, but also conjures up a highly publicized account of the racism of the early Methodist church. Foote's personal and family history represents a piece of well-documented and well-known African American religious history.

Foote also details the public execution of John Van Paten, a highly-publicized hanging that occurred in 1825. John Van Paten's life, crime, and hanging were memorialized in a widely-circulated pamphlet that same year: "The Trial and Life and Confessions of John F. Van Paten. Together with the Arguments of Counsel, and the Judges Charge." It was often invoked as a cautionary tale of a sinful life juxtaposed against the saving power of Jesus (Wells 57). Foote claims that Van Paten was her school teacher when she was in grade school, around ten years of age; however, at the time of his hanging, by her own account, Foote was only two years old. She quite possibly witnessed a similar hanging; however, she chooses again to relate a story that was covered in the press and therefore carried with it public memory. It is worth noting that for this anecdote, which Foote uses to buttress her anti-death penalty sentiments,

Foote does not draw from the thousands of examples of African Americans killed via capital punishment, but rather selects a publicized account of a white man.¹⁰⁴ This story therefore serves as both a spoken indictment of capital punishment and an unspoken indictment of the injustice of the legal system.

Foote also indicts the nineteenth-century American educational system. Referencing the closing of a school for African American children in Albany, Foote laments that this was her final opportunity for a formal education. Says, Foote, “Mr. and Mrs. Phileos and their daughter opened a school in Albany for colored children of both sexes,” but Foote “was doomed to disappointment: for some inexplicable reason, the family left the place in a few weeks after beginning the school” (39). The reason, in fact, would be quite well-known to her audience. The white Quaker schoolteacher, Mrs. Phileos, was the former Miss Prudence Crandall, who, with the help of her future husband, Mr. Phileos, had attempted to start a similar school in Connecticut approximately five years earlier, in 1833. They were beset by a mob, jailed, and eventually forced to leave the area, relocating to Boston. The circumstances were followed closely, and resulted in state legislation that expressly prohibited the education of African American children (Royster 138).¹⁰⁵ In this anecdote, Foote highlights not only her lack of access to education and literacy, but the lack of literacy access in America generally for African American children.

Foote narrates her early life by recalling highly publicized events confirmed in other media venues that she knew would resonate with an African and Anglo American

¹⁰⁴ For a history of the racism of the death penalty in the nineteenth century, see Howard Allen et al., *Race, Class, and the Death Penalty* (2008).

¹⁰⁵ For a first-hand account of the experience of the Phileos, see Thomas James, *Life of Rev. Thomas James* (1886).

audience. In her work on nineteenth-century African American women autobiographers, Frances Smith Foster asserts that “the differences between [Black women’s] histories and those of their white audiences necessitated formal compromise” (27). For Foote, this formal compromise takes shape in the form of modern-day parables which reveal the individual experience while simultaneously chronicling a specifically African American experience—religious and secular—in America. The dialogism that Foote employs mirrors her literacy: she first layers her story on the oral history provided to her by her parents; she then develops that history by folding in events from the recorded textual history of both the black and white presses.

In this first half of her spiritual autobiography, Foote also departs from the narrative rhetoric expected of the genre of spiritual autobiography in her blend of anecdote with direct, sermonic appeal. Most spiritual autobiographies follow a fairly traditional narrative format and allow the reader to judge for him or herself the values and lessons learned from one’s early life. Foote, however, modifies this textual tradition by coupling her personal, familial, and public anecdotes with sermonic appeal. Although these anecdotes are presented in chronological order, the organization is equally thematic, with chapters devoted to “Learning the Alphabet,” “An Undeserved Whipping,” and so on. Such a thematic organization provides Foote with the opportunity to make a direct appeal to her audience on the theme of that chapter; as exhortation, then, it also provides her with the opportunity to demonstrate her ministerial competence. Foote’s direct appeals are exhortations on topics of social and political import, and Foote addresses a subset of her audience in each chapter. Her organization is consistent throughout this section: in each chapter, Foote first narrates her experience as exemplum; she follows

with applicable biblical passages; and she closes with a direct exhortation to specific members of her audience.

In chapter one, after narrating a story of her excessive drinking and resulting nausea, Foote references I Corinthians 6:10 and writes: “Dear reader, have you innocent children, given you from the hand of God?...Do not, I pray, give to these little ones of God the accursed cup which will send them down to misery and death” (13). In her next two chapters on her early education, Foote references Exodus 20:12 and appeals to children to be obedient to their parents (17), and then to parents to raise Christian children (20). In chapter four, after narrating her experience of watching Van Paten’s public hanging, she cites John 13:34, Matthew 5:39, and Luke 23:34 before concluding, “Christian men, vote as you pray, that the legalized traffic in ardent spirits may be abolished, and God grant that capital punishment may be banished from our land” (23). In chapter six, Foote details her experience at a dance, references 2 Samuel 6:14, Exodus 15:20, and Matthew 14:6-10, and admonishes both her general readership and “mothers” specifically. “Mothers,” warns Foote, “you know not what you do when you urge your daughter to go to parties to make her more cheerful. You may even be causing the eternal destruction of that daughter” (31). Foote’s final direct appeal is several chapters later to her “Dear sisters in Christ,” and this last appeal encourages her female colleagues to also answer God’s call to minister (115), thus placing the issue of women’s preaching alongside such other social issues as temperance and education.

Direct appeals are not limited, of course, to the sermonic genre and are fairly common in spiritual autobiographies. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, for example, Harriet Jacobs also makes direct appeals to her readers. For example, following

her narration of her early life, Jacobs writes, “In view of these things, why are ye silent, ye free men and women of the north?” (48). It is the patterning of Foote’s chapters, with an appeal following testimony and scripture, that calls up the oral event of the revival and thus contributes to the hybridity of her discourse. Each of these chapters mirrors the kinds of testimony and exhortations a nineteenth-century reader would expect at a revival: a personal anecdote, biblical citation, and audience admonition.

The narrative fluidity between personal experience, shared experience, and sermonic exhortation in *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* speaks to Foote’s rhetorical genius in exploiting the genre and rhetoric of the spiritual autobiography. Foote uses narrative to tell both her history and the general history of other African Americans while simultaneously employing exhortation to engage the various constituents of her readership—children, parents, men, mothers, sisters—on a variety of social issues. She does not follow a common chronological trajectory, but rather selects vignettes that capture a history lesson, a sociological critique, and a scriptural message. In other words, instead of a scriptural text serving as the basis for her sermon, her personal narrative represented as public parable becomes her sermonic fodder. Foote’s spiritual autobiography is a blend of narrative and direct pleas to her audience, and her modification of the genre allows her to assume two roles simultaneously: the female church member testifying to her experience, and the male preacher exhorting his followers not to go down the path of evil. Significantly, before we read her call to preach and her exegetical defense of women’s preaching, we witness her performance as a minister.

The modification of the genre demonstrates Foote's sensitivity to the power of literacy, and it is in this section that we see a hint of Foote's hybridization of oral and textual discourse, with a focus on the social application of religion. According to Frances Smith Foster, African American women recognized that their texts were both "art and artifact," and thus employed not only rhetorical elements from the oral and expressive African American tradition, but also from broader American and female-based traditions (19). The "art" of *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is the performance of the art of preaching within the text; the "artifact" is the actual physical text.

Foote's attention to various social ills is consistent with a multithematic form of preaching centered on an "ethos of connectedness" found in other women's sermons, such as those by Maria Stewart (J. Ryan 278). Foote's modification of the spiritual autobiography to include sermonic rhetoric provides her with a space to articulate her distinct theology. Collier-Thomas claims that "with the exception of Foote, none of the early black preaching women appear to have spoken directly of Christian perfection" (59). Andrews agrees, arguing that, as one of the earliest female holiness preachers in black American Methodism, "Foote demonstrated her sisterhood with feminists touched by ... perfectionism in her attacks on general evils like racial bigotry and male authoritarianism and on specific social institutions" (*Sisters* 4). In *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* Foote modifies the genre of spiritual autobiography so that she can directly address several social problems; furthermore, she modifies the rhetoric of the spiritual autobiography to encompass her theology of holiness. Foote explicitly invites and empowers her audience to confront these social evils with her through the "beauty of Holiness" (4).

Mapping an Itinerant Preaching Career

In the latter half of her spiritual autobiography, Foote details her itinerancy, and she carefully marks her journey by naming specific dates, places, and people. In this section of the book, Foote does not rely on public events, but rather explicitly details the very personal encounters she has with racism. Indeed, almost every step of her journey is marked in some way by a reminder of slavery and racism in America. She is physically threatened by a man who attempts to deny her a berth in the ladies' cabin of a boat (91); on a later boat trip she is denied a berth and is forced to sit on the deck all night (96); in Baltimore she is forced to prove that she is a free woman (98); in Washington D.C. her dinner is violently interrupted by a man looking for a runaway slave (99); and her journey in Ohio is delayed for several mornings because white passengers object to her boarding their stage-coach (108). These accounts are given equal textual space with Foote's accounts of her preaching, and she confers rhetorical power against the widespread and well-known trademarks of the institution of slavery.

Foote also maps her journey onto more famous ministers like AME Bishops Morris Brown and Daniel Payne, continuing her strategy of authenticating her narrative by documenting public events. Interestingly, Foote's claim that she was invited by Payne to minister in Baltimore is not corroborated in either Payne's *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* or his autobiography, *Recollections of Seventy Years*. Foote could not have known in 1879 that she would be left out of Payne's autobiography or history, written in 1888 and 1891, respectively. However, she is perhaps anticipating the possibility that she would be left out of recorded experience. As Jualynne Dodson asserts, despite their remarkable contributions to the AME tradition, women's

accomplishments were often “completely unheralded” (118). Foote writes herself into this tradition.

Whereas the first half of the spiritual autobiography is parabolic, the second half of *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* provides a textual map of the antebellum African American experience through her personal chronicles.¹⁰⁶ In so doing Foote employs strategies that can best be analyzed through Bakhtin’s idea of the “chronotope,” the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (84). Bakhtin defines “chronotope” as common time/space characteristics of historically-situated plots. According to Bakhtin, chronotopicity is a kind of multidimensional “mapping” or layering of time and space onto a narrative or plot. Although Foote’s is not a fictional piece of literature, she skillfully manipulates time and space in the structure of her plotline, and her narrative is in dialogue with “extra-literary forms of personal and social reality” (33), particularly other spiritual autobiographies, slave narratives, newspaper accounts, and state legislature. Roxanne Mountford writes that “rhetorical spaces carry the residue of history upon them” (“On Gender” 42). Foote brings to the forefront the physical spaces—the roads she traveled by stage-coach, the waters she crossed by boat—that carry with them residues of history. She then highlights that as a female itinerate preacher, she occupied those spaces alongside more well-known male preachers.

The spiritual autobiography is often read as simply a defense of the female preacher, of her life in isolation, written in a genre with a prescribed narrative form. In both the early life and itineracy sections of her spiritual autobiography, Foote blends the

¹⁰⁶ Although Foote’s *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is published in 1879, after the Civil War, she ends her narrative in 1856.

boundaries between personal narrative and public record in recalling both common racist treatment of African Americans and fairly well-publicized events. In sharing these accounts, Foote modifies the genre of spiritual autobiography to represent more than the personal and private religious life of the author; she portrays herself as “everywoman,” embodying the struggles and journeys of the African American community, the role a preacher often assumed for his congregation. Within *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Foote performs the role of preacher; by writing *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Foote performs her literacy. She demonstrates authorization for both her preaching and her literacy in the narratives of her conversion, sanctification, and call to preach.

The Gift of Literacy: Conversion and Sanctification

In the middle of her book, Foote includes two standard components of the spiritual autobiography: her conversion and sanctification narratives. As with other spiritual autobiographers, Foote presents the primary authorization for her preaching within her call to preach, after her conversion and sanctification. However, Foote first presents subtle, yet key, rhetorical signifiers for God’s approval of her ministry throughout her early life and conversion experience.

First, she references the biblical text which initiates her conversion, Revelations 14:3: “And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts and the elders, and no man could learn that song but the hundreds and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from earth.” According to Foote, she collapses upon hearing this text only to be revived by “a ray of light ...accompanied by a sound of far distant singing” (32-33). She springs out of bed, singing the song. What is remarkable

about this passage is Foote's implied agency; unlike many of the other spiritual autobiographers, she was not "given" the song, but claimed it. The biblical text is also significant. Many nineteenth-century women identified music as their ministry, singing in churches, leading youth choirs, and writing Christian music. Fannie McDowell Hunter, for example, explains in her defense, *Women Preachers*, that her "first Christian work was to sing the Gospel" (54). Significantly, Foote refers to the song as a "new song," referencing Revelations 14:3 and Psalm 33, and signifying perhaps a broadening of the term to refer not only to music but also to women's preaching. Furthermore, the song—access to ministry—is only available to those who "were redeemed from earth," that is, sanctified. Thus, she privileges sanctification, not gender, as a prerequisite for preaching.

Foote places authority not only in the visitation of God's spirit, but also in God's word, and she includes detailed descriptions of her attempts at biblical literacy. After narrating her conversion, Foote devotes two chapters to her attempts to gain an education. Foote is certainly not the first to detail her zealous attempts at literacy; most famously, Frederick Douglass also shares his difficult road to literacy. However, as historian Harryette Mullen explains, the slave narrative tradition focused on secular texts as training-ground for literacy, whereas visionary writers attributed their literacy to God and the Bible (674). For example, in his slave narrative, Douglass details how he "got hold of a book entitled 'The Columbian Orator'" reading the text with "every opportunity I got" (39). This secular text gave Douglass access to the world of philosophy and served as his particular *entrée* into public speaking:

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance.... The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery. (39-40)

Alternatively, spiritual autobiographers Jarena Lee (48), Zilpha Elaw (60), and Rebecca Cox Jackson (107-108) credit God with providing them with "the gift of literacy," notably at the moment of their calls to preach. For these women, literacy is the means to fulfill a holy duty, and their "gifts" of literacy are utilitarian. In detailing her attempts at literacy *before* her call to preach, Foote rather invokes a literacy of individual empowerment reminiscent of Douglass' own secular efforts at literacy and of the slave narrative genre more generally. After her efforts for an education are thwarted due to racism and poverty, Foote twice claims direct intervention by God: "The dear Holy Spirit helped me by quickening my mental faculties" (36); "The dear Holy Spirit helped me wonderfully to understand the precious Word" (39). For Foote, the attainment of literacy is equally a means for her own edification and a holy gift enabling her to fulfill God's call for her to preach. Foote is careful to maintain her agency in the path to her preaching career (she chooses to sing; she actively pursues an education), while still maintaining that God authorizes her activity (God provides the song; the Holy Spirit increases her mental acuity).

When Foote details her sanctification experience, she again places God in a background role. He does not visit her personally, but rather sends an elderly sanctified woman to minister to her "on [a] mission of love and mercy" (42). They sit together and pore through the Bible. It is through the woman's edification of key scriptural passages

that Foote claims “the seals were broken and light began to shine upon the blessed Word of God as I had never seen it before” (43), and she is sanctified. In detailing her use of an intercessionary on her path to sanctification, Foote suggests that authority rests not only with God, but also with another woman in her church community. The power of the female intercessionary is a significant theme in the remainder of her book.

A Negotiation of God’s Will, Woman’s Community, and Agency: Call to Preach

As she does in the narratives of her conversion and sanctification experiences, Foote details her use of female intercessionaries in interpreting God’s call to preach. Unlike within the other spiritual autobiography defenses, the call to preach in *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* functions as both a private exchange between God and Foote and as a public discussion with other women. Furthermore, Foote imbues her call with spiritual imagery to describe women’s intercessionary power. When she is overcome with doubt and fear in answering the call, Foote claims that “It was eleven o’clock in the morning, yet everything grew dark as night. The darkness was so great that I feared to stir” (66). It is not God who alleviates her fear, but a female friend, “Mam” Riley. Foote characterizes “Mam” Riley as possessing the spiritual power usually reserved for angels or God in spiritual autobiographies: when “Mam” Riley enters her room, “the room grew lighter and I arose from my knees” (66). “Mam” Riley gathers several other women, Foote’s “band of sisters,” to whom Foote “partially open[s] her mind” (66) and who encourage her to follow the call. In privileging female community throughout her conversion, sanctification, and call to preach, Foote maintains a “productive tension between individuality and collectivity,” a key marker, according to Mullen, of nineteenth-

century African American spiritual culture (686). In privileging and forging both the individual and the communal, Foote highlights not the uniqueness of her ministry, but rather its representation of the ministerial work of other women as well.

Furthermore, through references to key ordinary women who inspire, support, and assist in her ministry, Foote modifies the common rhetorical topos found in defenses of women's preaching of naming a lineage of contemporary famous religious female leaders. Foote makes no mention of famous eighteenth- or nineteenth-century female preachers anywhere in *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*; rather, she names the "white woman" who taught her the Lord's prayer (15), her "dear old mother in Israel" who helped her achieve sanctification (42), "Mam" Riley and her two daughters, "dear Christian women, and like sisters to me" (54), the "band of sisters" in Boston who sustain her during her call to preach (66), three blood sisters with whom she procures a location in Philadelphia for a series of religious meetings (82), and finally, "Sister Ann W. Johnson," who travels with her for seven years throughout Canada, Michigan, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland (97-110).

Unlike many of her contemporary spiritual autobiographers, Foote does not identify a group of extraordinary, well-known preaching women, but rather names everyday women, doing everyday ministerial work. Throughout *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Foote uses the collective pronoun "we" to describe her preaching career, suggesting that she and these women are representative of vast numbers of preaching women. She also removes the male intercessionary, usually represented by the male minister, by creating a new collective community of female religious participants who are directly moved by God to share and circulate his message.

Foote's experience of her call to preach as a physical, literal phenomenon, and her description of that experience by using the extended metaphor of prophetic vision, is consistent with other defenses of women's preaching. However, it departs from the tradition in her explicit emphasis on textual discourse and her acquisition of literacy. She does not deflect agency to God, but claims it for herself. This is powerfully represented in her prophetic vision. The angel who visits Foote with the initial call does not speak to her, but rather presents her with a scroll, with the following words "Thee have I chosen to preach my Gospel without delay" (66). Upon reading the scroll, Foote says, "it appeared to be printed on my heart" (66), an allusion to Romans 2:15, 2 Corinthians 3, and Jeremiah 31, as well as a common Quaker claim. The angel returns with letters written on his breast: "You are lost unless you obey God's righteous commands" (67). Two months later, God sends the same angel who delivers another printed message: "You have I chosen to go in my name and warn the people of their sins" (68). Finally, Foote meets with Jesus himself, and he writes "with a golden pen and golden ink, upon golden paper," and says to Foote, "Put this in your bosom, and, wherever you go show it, and they will know that I have sent you to proclaim salvation to all" (71). Jesus places the golden scroll in her bosom, and Foote refers to it as her "letter of authority" (71).

The transition from God's literal spoken word to God's literal written word is significant, for it indicates the shift in the rhetoric of nineteenth-century female preachers from a reliance on the call to preach to an increasing reliance on biblical hermeneutics. In this passage, Foote not only establishes that she is called to preach by God himself, but she also establishes her biblical literacy: *she must read her call to preach*. Furthermore, Christ provides physical—albeit hidden in her breast—textual evidence of the call. The

metaphor dramatically confirms Foote's unique blend of oral and textual sermonic rhetoric and signifies authorization both for her preaching and for her literacy. This linguistic presence and authorization tempers Foote's visionary rhetoric and brings the sublime, the ephemeral, into reality. This is an important rhetorical counter to the traditional "opposition between the wise rhetoric of masculine prophets and the crazed voices of inspired women" (Pernot 239). Foote uses the expected extended metaphor in a rather unexpected way: to signify her acquisition of biblical literacy.

Recognizing that the crazed voice lacks agency, whereas the voice of wise rhetoric implies agency, Foote, like other female spiritual autobiographers, must then also balance God's use of her with her own agency. She never refers to herself as merely a vessel or instrument of God, as do Livermore, Newell, Lee, and Elaw. Throughout her call to preach, Foote is commanded by God, but the commands are coupled with choice. God says, "You are now prepared, and must go where I have commanded you" (70), but only after asking her to exercise her free will: "Before these people make your choice, whether you will obey me or go from this place to eternal misery and pain" (69). God then points her hand in various directions, asking her if she will embark on an itinerate career. Foote replies simply "Yes, Lord" (69) after each direction. Foote does claim that God literally provides her with words, as Livermore, Lee, Elaw, and Adams also claim. However, in Foote's narrative, God's provided text are only the words authorizing her to preach, and she is left to write and deliver her own preaching text. It is through her own power that she reads the scrolls, determines the course of her itineracy, and ultimately preaches.

Establishing Theological Proficiency: Exegetical Defense of Women’s Preaching

Foote’s exegetical defense of women’s preaching is embedded within the narrative of her itineracy, contained in her twentieth chapter: “Women in the Gospel.” It is the shortest one that I study in this project. Foote does not merely insert her exegetical defense, but rather contextualizes it by means of the preceding chapter. “Women in the Gospel” directly follows her chapter “Public Effort—Excommunication,” in which she details her conflict with Boston minister Jehiel Beman. Beman, a well-known and highly-regarded leader in the AME Zion church, strongly supported abolition and temperance.¹⁰⁷ Beman strictly forbade Foote’s preaching, threatened other church members who supported her with excommunication, and eventually extended his prohibition of her preaching to “over all Boston” (75). Foote is not the first to detail a story of rejection by a preacher of consequence; similarly, Lee is rebuffed by Richard Allen (36), and Zilpha Elaw is treated with “great contempt” by the superintendent minister of the Circuit (123). Foote, however, is the first to address such challenges explicitly within her text. Foote’s initial response is oral: she has a conversation with Beman which she reprints in “Public Effort—Excommunication.” When her oral strategy fails, she turns to her newly acquired textual literacy and addresses a letter to the AME Zion Conference, “stating all the facts” (76) and requesting “an impartial hearing” and a “written statement expressive of their opinion” (76).

Foote’s letter to the Conference, however, is also unsuccessful. Disappointed with two failed attempts at persuasion, Foote closes her chapter with these words:

My letter was slightly noticed, and then thrown under the table. Why should they notice it? It was only the grievance of a woman, and there

¹⁰⁷ Jehiel Beman established the Middletown Anti-Slavery Society and was president of the Massachusetts Temperance Society of Colored People

was no justice meted out to women in those days. Even ministers of Christ did not feel that women had any rights which they were bound to respect. (76)

In this passage, Foote appropriates highly-publicized language from the Dred Scott decision twenty-two years earlier. Supreme Court Chief Justice Roger B. Taney concluded in 1857 that African Americans were considered “so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect” (qtd. in J. Moody 148-49).¹⁰⁸ Foote’s admonishment is most serious here, for she compares the General Conference with the “white man” who subjugated the black man and thus aligns their sexism against her with the racism demonstrated in the Dred Scott case.

Although it is not in letter format, the reader can easily surmise that “Women in the Gospel” is a version of the letter to the Conference. By reprinting it in her spiritual autobiography, Foote indicts not only Beman, but the entire AME Zion Conference and invites her readership to engage in the debate. Foote did not receive her right to a hearing; she consequently rhetorically constructs her due hearing within her text.

Foote begins her exegesis by citing scriptural passages that support women’s preaching. She first stresses the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, citing Joel 2:28-29 (78). Foote then refutes conservative readings of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and Timothy 2:11-12 by citing scripture that contradicts these injunctions, such as Paul’s support of Phoebe and his directions to both men and women to prophesy in 1 Corinthians 11 (79). Writes Foote, “When Paul said, ‘Help those women who labor with me in the Gospel,’ he certainly meant that they did more than to pour out tea” (79). Foote catalogues only a small sampling of women religious leaders in the Bible: Phoebe, Philip’s four daughters, Priscilla, and Aquila. However, she aligns this lineage with the history of male

¹⁰⁸ See also Wharton 184-85, for an analysis of Foote’s use of rhetoric from the Dred Scott case.

preaching, and argues that “if women have lost the gift of prophecy, so have men” (78). By classing men and women together as preachers, she creates a new religious identity that circumvents the arguments against women’s preaching based on gender.

Foote also uses a common line of argument in other defenses of women’s preaching: an explicit warning that the divine word takes precedence over the man-made ecclesiastical word. In reference to the AME Zion Conference, Foote states “I saw, as never before, that the best men were liable to err, and that the only safe way was to fall on Christ.... Man’s opinion weighed nothing with me, for my commission was from heaven” (78). Although Foote’s refutation is very brief in this chapter, she extends this specific critique into a general assessment of male exegesis and opposition to women’s preaching by continuously differentiating between God’s word and men’s interpretation of that word throughout *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*. She details an early encounter with a white minister who frightens her, and her mother consoles her by saying “this preacher was a good man, but not the Lord” (14-15). After a debate with a pastor who disputes her sanctification, Foote writes “I could not be shaken by what man might think or say” (47). When she is rebuffed by Jehial Beman, she characterizes him as a “scholar, and a fine speaker” (71) and claims that she “fear[s] God more than man” (74).

In this section of the book, Foote also uses biblical exegesis to support holiness doctrine. Indeed, as a whole *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is arguably as much a defense of holiness doctrine as it is of women’s right to preach, and she devotes several pages throughout the book to an explication of holiness scripture. For example, the pastor of her childhood church negatively characterizes holiness as a “new religion” (46) when he visits her after her sanctification. She details her exchange with him, including

her references to Scripture supporting holiness doctrine. Foote's recounting of her performance of explication in defense of holiness serves as a simultaneous defense of her own preaching. She demonstrates that she has the biblical knowledge and exegetical sophistication necessary to defend both ministry and her theology.

Reconciling Women's Role

It is through Foote's negotiation of agency within her call to preach, her itineracy, and her exegetical defense that we also witness an articulation of Foote's reconciliation of women's role within society. After her sanctification, Foote writes, "God is no respecter of persons. Jesus' blood will wash away all your sin and make you whiter than snow" (48). Foote again calls up the imagery of whiteness during her call to preach when God dresses her with "a clean, white robe" and she "appeared to be changed into an angel" (70). The first passage is a direct reference to Psalm 51:7: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." The second passage is an implicit reference to the plain dress of holiness preachers. Foote therefore both symbolically dresses herself in the authority of God, and also recalls an image for her readers that would be acceptable in line with the identity of a holiness preacher. Metaphors of whiteness in these two passages serve as representations of purity, a fairly common literary tactic of the time. I also read "whiteness" in these two passages as a re-ordering of the identity categories of race, gender, and religion.

As Pamela Klassen documents in her study of African American Methodist female rhetors, nineteenth-century white standards of "respectability" during Reconstruction were inherently racist; black Methodist writers recognized and articulated

that “black skin could never become clean, and black bodies could never be respectably clothed” (65). Klassen goes on to argue that “according to such standards, respectability—and, by extension, American Christianity—remained trapped in dominant illusions of authentic blackness that consigned African Americans to slavery-bred, racist stereotypes” (65). Women consequently had to employ a strategy of respectability that both rejected racist stereotypes while simultaneously acknowledging the power of those stereotypes. As Elaine Richardson explains, “early knowledge of the self as racially and sexually marked objects” was foundational to women’s early experiences and were incorporated in women’s narratives (685).

I believe that Foote’s reference to whiteness in these passages is double-tongued. In addition to signifying the trope of purity, Foote also suggests a hierarchy of order, with religion as the master category under which her femaleness and blackness are subsumed. Her spiritual identity following her sanctification is brought to the forefront, with her gender and racial identity in secondary status. Similarly, although she references Galatians 3:28 in a later chapter (78), she does so only briefly, and it does not serve as the basis for an articulation of women’s equal role in heaven *or* in society, as it so often does in other defenses of women’s preaching. Rather than make an explicit—or implicit—argument for equality, Foote again privileges the role of minister, a role she never genders or races. Doing so enables her to address all the constituents of her readership—men, women, children, sisters, readers—equally. Foote’s “separate sphere” is the sphere of holiness.

It is apparent throughout *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* that Foote’s articulated sphere of holiness bridges the domestic and the public; it is a hybrid sphere. Foote

neither occupies nor privileges the domestic space and the roles of mother and wife. Indeed, Foote's mother is somewhat ineffective in her role of ministering to her children. She inadvertently gives Foote access to alcohol at a very early age (13), encourages Foote to attend a party (31), takes away her Bible after she catches Foote reading it at night (35), and discourages her from sanctification (40-1). In fact, the only reason Foote is sanctified is because she "deliberately disobeyed [her] mother" (42).¹⁰⁹

Similarly, Foote has little positive to say for her own married and family life. In detailing her struggles with her husband, who does not support her preaching, Foote resolves the issue by replacing her husband with God. Her husband leaves on another journey out to sea, and Foote asks God for "divine aid" in dealing with the loss and his rejection of her ministry. Foote cites Isaiah 54:5: "As I opened the book, my eyes fell on these words: 'For thy Maker is thine husband'" (61). Although she only cites one line, she tells the reader that she read the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah "over and over again" (61). That chapter also references motherhood: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 54:1). Foote never has children herself—she is the barren who can sing in the passage from Isaiah, a circumstance she claims makes her more available to general ministry: "Having no children, I had a good deal of leisure after my husband's departure, so I visited many of the poor and forsaken ones, reading and talking to them of Jesus, the

¹⁰⁹ Both Jocelyn Moody and Martha Wharton offer interesting readings of the role of mother in Foote's text. Moody suggests that Foote privileges the role of God as the loving Father, and he becomes the universal parent (130). Similarly, Wharton discusses the primacy of "spiritual parenthood" over motherhood in *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* (128).

Savior” (62). Her husband dies on a subsequent trip, and she is free to follow an itinerate career.

Foote’s account of her itineracy ends with a brief chapter titled “Work in Various Places” that details her ministry following the death of her husband. In order to pursue her ministry—both in real life and in her book—Foote first must eradicate the roles of wife and mother and supplant them with the role of minister, a common rhetorical task among itinerate women. Foote concludes the narrative portion of her book with the reconciliation of women’s role within society.

Empowering a Female Ministry: Call to Other Women

A final chapter in Foote’s autobiography, titled “A Word to My Christian Sisters” offers a direct appeal to other women to become leaders in church affairs. Within this chapter Foote also recapitulates several of her arguments in defense of women’s preaching. First, she once again refers to the “new song” which initiated her conversion. However, in this reference she calls it “the one of which the Revelator says ‘no man can learn’” (112). She then laments that she can no longer sing it, but only hears “the distant echo of the music” (112). Foote immediately follows with this exhortation:

Sisters, shall not you and I unite with the heavenly host in the grand chorus? If so, you will not let what man may say or do, keep you from doing the will of the Lord or using the gifts you have for the good of others. How much easier to bear the reproach of men than to live at a distance from God. Be not kept in bondage by those who say, “We suffer not a woman to teach,” thus quoting Paul’s words, but not rightly applying them. (112-13)

The song is available only to women, but cannot truly be vocalized until shared through female fellowship, through a “grand chorus.” Foote recognizes that hers cannot be a solo

voice in holiness ministry. This passage once again demonstrates Foote's adaptation of the genre of spiritual autobiography to provide textual space for a religious communal experience.

Foote then summarizes her own personal spiritual and physical struggle in accepting the call to preach and suggests that her female readership may also be participating in a similar struggle. She compares herself and these women to the disciples and encourages them to have a "full baptism of the Spirit," arguing that upon such a baptism "Our minds will then be fully illuminated, our hearts purified, and our souls filled with the pure love of god, bringing forth his glory" (115). Having modeled and narrated the life that other women can lead, she invites all women to participate in the rhetorical act of preaching. Foote, like so many religious women before her, is here establishing a female-led arm of the church. According to Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, "The tendency to view black churches only as agencies of sociopolitical change led by black male pastors also obscures the central and critical roles of black women" who accounted for 75 to 90 percent of congregants (679). Foote addresses that majority, models a preaching life, and empowers them to join her in ministry.

Performing a Ministry: Two Sermons

In addition to using sermonic rhetoric and exhortation throughout *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Foote also includes two sermons at the end of her text. Both are provided after several chapters detailing Foote's itineracy; they therefore serve as the evidence and support for her claim that she is a preacher. Although there is ample evidence—thanks to the denominational presses—that black women were integral and

active members of their religious communities before the Civil War, we have been able to recover only one antebellum piece of evidence of black women's preaching, a reprinted sermon. There are historical references to the preaching of Elizabeth, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Sojourner Truth, and Amanda Berry Smith, just to name a few; however, Bettye Collier-Thomas, who has spent decades researching the contributions of African American churchwomen, cites the earliest sermon she uncovered as Julia Foote's 1851 *A Threshing Sermon*. The remaining sermons by black women were all published after the Civil War.

The first sermon is contained within the narrative structure of the genre of spiritual autobiography, buttressed by Foote's discussion of the events that led up to and preceded the sermon. In great detail, Foote provides the exact dates, places, and conversations that prompted the sermon. She details how she refused to preach in Chillicothe, Ohio "on account of the opposition of the pastor" (102) and in Zanesville, Ohio because "prejudice had closed the door of their sanctuary against the colored people of the place" (103). Finally, in Detroit, Foote is able to deliver her sermon on Christian work, "A Threshing Sermon." By inserting a reprint of her sermon within the narrative of her travels, Foote gives witness not only to her ministry, but also to the sexist and racist circumstances that hindered that ministry. Although a member of the AME Zion church, Foote's itineracy included other branches of the Methodist church. The Methodist Episcopal Church split prior to the Civil War over the issue of slavery into the Northern Methodist Episcopal Church and the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church; the Northern sect opposed slavery, and the Southern faction favored slavery. Both Southern and Northern Methodist Episcopal Churches existed in Ohio, and it is not surprising that

Foote ran into resistance to her ministry while traveling in that state. In textually blending the narrative and sermon forms, Foote can recreate for her audience the exact rhetorical situational, inserting her readers into the actual spaces and circumstances in which she preached.

Foote's primary biblical text is Micah 4:13: "Arise and thresh, O daughters of Zion." She also highlights Joel 2: 28-29. Her explicit message in this sermon is the need for inner purification, which will "thresh" out the devil and let in the Holy Spirit. Her implicit message, however, is that both men and women are capable of receiving the Holy Spirit and doing God's work. She subtly supports this unspoken claim by her scriptural references and by referring to the "supernatural aid" that God provides to those whose "own feeble and unassisted powers were totally inadequate" (105). In referring to the transforming power of God in this sermon, Foote provides a subtle refutation to the common argument that women are too weak—spiritually, physically, and intellectually—to preach.

Foote's second sermon, "Love Not the World," is printed in its own chapter without narrative context. As one of the last chapters, it follows the exhortation to women, "A Word to My Christian Sisters" and precedes a hymn and benediction. This sermon, then, has a rhetorically performative function. Foote models the very act she exhorts other women to engage in. Furthermore, she does not simply narrate how she came to preach a sermon and what that sermon covered as she does with her sermon in Detroit; rather, she exits the narrative mode and genre of spiritual autobiography to assume the role of minister and deliver a sermon. Foote's valedictory sermon is in the tradition of women like Maria Stewart; Stewart's farewells at the end of her addresses are

also very sermon-like. Moreover, Foote's "Love Not the World" also says farewell to the narrative form, signifying her transition to a new genre within her little book.

"Love Not the World," like "A Threshing Sermon," is not explicitly about women's ministry, but is also a holiness sermon that stresses God's power in cleansing the soul of the evils of the world to make room for the power of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, Foote indirectly contributes to the arguments of other defenders of women's preaching who assert that objections to women's preaching are "man-made" and "ecclesiastical" rather than biblical. Foote challenges the "maxims and fashions of this world" (117) as well as ministers who "profess to teach" but are unable "to feed the lambs, while the sheep are dying for lack of nourishment and the true knowledge of salvation" (118). A complete overhaul of the church establishment is in order, claims Foote, and the church must be "purged from its dead forms and notions" (119). Foote does not refer to women's preaching, but one can surmise that the objection to female ministry is one dead notion needing expunging.

Foote's blend of narrative and sermon in this section of her book indicates Foote's recognition of a general national trend in pulpit rhetoric. Around the time that she began her itineracy, in 1845, there was a move away from a reliance on narrative and the call to preach in justification of one's fitness for the ministry. Simultaneously, however, the homiletic style of the nineteenth century dramatically transitioned from a conventional schema of text, exposition, and proof, with various divisions and subdivisions to a more relaxed, personal, storytelling style, with use of narrative and anecdote (Reynolds 481). In other words, and ironically, by the mid-nineteenth century, preachers were expected to gain access to the pulpit through formal seminary training, but were expected to rely on

the narrative form from the pulpit. Use of narrative enabled a more effective identification with one's audience. In lecture twenty-nine of his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, "Eloquence of the Pulpit," Hugh Blair remarks on the importance of a preacher's appeal to a popular audience and recommends more engaging sermons: "It must be remembered, that all the preacher's instructions are to be of the practical kind, and that persuasion must ever be his ultimate object.... The eloquence of the pulpit, then, must be popular eloquence" (315). Blair's sentiments gained particular favor with evangelical preachers, whose sole purpose was indeed persuasion in their attempts to win more souls to God. Although Blair does not speak specifically to the use of narrative, preachers found narrative particularly helpful in securing the hearts of their congregants. Increasingly, theirs became a rhetoric of popular accommodation in which polemical, abstract sermons were discarded in favor of practical, personal sermons (Ahlstrom 61). Charles Finney, for example argued for an increase in "story-telling ministers" who would use the "language of common life," following "the example of Jesus Christ, in *illustrating* truths by facts" (194, italics in original). Baptist John Dowling advocated the substitution of "a long chain of argument" with "an attractive narrative" (40). And Methodist Abel Stevens called for a preaching "revolution," in which "earnest, simple, powerful address" replace technical sermonic jargon (21).

Around the time that Foote publishes her text, AME, holiness, and early Social Gospel proponents advocated a sermonic style that not only drew from human experience, but also validated that experience, identifying all congregants as potential agents of change in the world. This storytelling, colloquial pulpit style was used by both white and black preachers and was advocated for its effectiveness to a wide variety of

audiences (Reynolds 486-87). These audiences were highly skilled consumers and critics of sermons. The purpose of the encouragement of a more personalized sermonic rhetoric was both to appeal to the masses in order to convert souls, and also to inspire men and women to apply Christian principles and ethics to their communities in order to usher in a new era. To that end, theologians suggested that sermons be “a living observation of men” (Bushnell 230), include “the physical, the social, the intellectual, the moral, the spiritual” (Beecher 1:31), and employ illustrations, anecdotes, and metaphors freely (J. Moody 111). The sermons and other writings of Social Gospelists in particular were enormously popular. Dwight Moody, for example, sold 425,000 copies of one sermon alone (Reynolds 496). Indeed, just two years prior to *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Moody published the popular *Anecdotes and Illustrations of D. L. Moody*.

We do not know whether or not Julia Foote had access to the religious treatises I have referenced. Undoubtedly, however, she did read some of the vast numbers of religious and secular newspapers that were in circulation in mid- to late nineteenth century America. Such preachers as Henry Ward Beecher, De Witt Talmage, and Dwight Moody printed sermons in the secular press. Remarkably, Talmage began a Sermon Syndicate, in which his sermons were reprinted in three thousand newspapers, reaching almost twenty million readers (Reynolds 497). Foote, who cites stories from the church and secular presses, and chooses an editor to write her introduction, was clearly familiar with the enormous popularity of these texts. Foote’s blend of narrative with other worship genres, such as testifying and exhortation in the beginning of her text, and sermon at the end of her text, demonstrates Foote’s awareness of a developing tradition with enormous rhetorical power.

Concluding the Service: Hymn and Benediction

Foote concludes *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* with her hymn and benediction; the genres serve a performative purpose similar to that of the two sermons. Foote's hymn, "Holy is the Lamb," is printed on the final page of her book, complete with musical arrangement. Other spiritual autobiographers, such as Ellen Stewart, Nancy Towle, and Louisa Woosley, also include religious poetry in their defenses.¹¹⁰ Because Foote, however, includes the notes for her hymn, the implication is that the hymn is purposeful and should be used in church. But the hymn has symbolic resonance, as well. If Foote's spiritual autobiography is a textual version of a worship service, the hymn provides the performative function of concluding that service. Indeed, Foote ends her book by following the hymn with a benediction appropriated from Ephesians 3:20-21: "Now, unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (124).

"Holy is the Lamb," however, is not Foote's first reference to hymns in the text. Throughout *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* Foote inserts lines of popular hymns from Methodist Episcopal hymnals, perhaps from the popular *The Methodist Harmonist* (1833) and the *Hymns for the Use of the Methodist Episcopal Church, With Tunes for Congregational Worship* (1857). These hymnals were published by the Methodist Episcopal Church and were intended to "suit the taste of the different sections of the country" (Methodist Episcopal General Conference, qtd. in K. Tucker 160-61). The hymns were sung communally, as well as "lined" by the preacher, a practice that dated

¹¹⁰ For a discussion of women's influences on hymn practices in the nineteenth century, see Hobbs.

back to the seventeenth century when the preacher sang or incanted one or two lines of the stanza, and the congregation followed suit. This practice was begun partly in response to an illiterate and poor population of congregants who either could not read hymnals or could not afford to purchase them; it fell out of favor in the eighteenth century, but was revived by the African Methodist Episcopal Church as a way to ensure “the vital power of the church” (Henry Turner, qtd. in K. Tucker 169). Lining also mimics the call and response of African American preaching styles and nineteenth-century public address; it is consequently a “token of adherence” (Olbrechts-Tyteca and Perelman 105) that serves to connect the congregation, via the preacher, to biblical texts. By lining, the preacher and congregation agree on the religious premises of the text.

Foote “lines” thirteen times in her spiritual autobiography. In the beginning of the text, Foote qualifies the lines by stating that her father sang this hymn, or the minister sang that hymn and so on. However, by the end of the text, she simply inserts the lines to operate rhetorically in her text. For example, after detailing opposition from the Methodist Episcopal General Conference, she lines “Only Thou my Leader be/ And I still will follow thee” (83).¹¹¹ In requesting her audience to line with her, she aligns them with her position—one which trusts and follows Christ in her pursuit of a ministry—and in opposition to the General Conference. Her final line concludes a narrative of her itineracy: “The Bible is my chart; it is a chart and compass too,/ Whose needle points forever true” (111). This hymn is from *The Pilgrim’s Hymn Book* (1816), reprinted in *A Choice Selection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1836). It reminds the reader, who has followed Foote in her articulated journey, that hers is a God-authorized ministry.

¹¹¹ These hymnal lines were also used by Amanda Berry Smith in her call to preach and in the biography of nineteenth-century Methodist missionary Mariet Hardy Freeland.

Conclusion

The reader is also reminded at the conclusion of *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* that Foote is capable of both oral and textual discourse. Indeed, the demonstration of that literacy within her spiritual autobiography is her ultimate defense of both her preaching and women's preaching more generally. Recent scholarship on Foote has predominantly focused on her use of oral discourse. Richard Douglass-Chin, who considers *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* to be a "uniquely oral, African American, womanist text," shows how Foote uses "oral strategies of African American folk sermonizing instead of the literary conventions defining written spiritual autobiography" (121); according to Douglass-Chin, Foote's "entire spiritual autobiography reads like a long sermon...or series of sermons" (130). Similarly, Jocelyn Moody reads Foote as "inscrib[ing] her mother's speech acts" in "tribute to the legacy of her mother's resistant orality" (130). Moody's interpretation of Foote is consistent with Johnnie Stover's analysis of African American women's autobiography generally; Stover demonstrates how nineteenth-century black women used a unique "mother tongue," employing literary tools of masking and other both subtle and flagrant resistance tactics within their texts (139-40). Douglass-Chinn and Stover also indicate the strategies that black nineteenth-century writers used in resistance to the literary conventions of their white oppressors.

I hope that my reading of Foote, with emphasis on a blended discourse of textual and oral, of narrative and sermon, contributes to this scholarship. I find Elaine Richardson's use of literacies, in the plural, in "opposition to the concept of monolithic autonomous literacy" (678) helpful in reading Foote, and I agree with Harryette Mullen's assertion that scholars should be wary of excluding "more writerly texts" in an attempt to

highlight and privilege the “trope of orality” (670). In other words, I do not propose that Foote was writing only in response to, in resistance to, a single white oppressive literacy, but was responding both to white supremacist *and* sexist assumptions. Furthermore, Foote’s stated and performed exigence in *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* is her advocacy of holiness doctrine; her defense of herself and other women preachers is not on principle alone, but to articulate her holiness theology and support her revivalist ministry. To that end, I believe she made use of all and any discourses, oral and textual, that would serve her holy purpose.

In reading Foote’s text, whether her audience members started as former slaves, impoverished and illiterate workers, or white holiness movement members, by the end they are Foote’s congregants, receiving her blessing. According to Jan Swearingen, sermonic rhetoric is a “complex mixture of ‘literate’ and ‘oral’” that “functions not only as a source of knowledge, but also as a guide for behavior” (Swearingen 154-55). Foote transforms the available discourse—the genre of spiritual autobiography—to a hybrid genre that serves as such a guide for her imagined audience, a hybrid audience of black and white, male and female, adult and child, poor and privileged, brought together through the theology of holiness. She also transforms the rhetorical situation from a private text read in a private setting with a single reader, to a public account delivered in a public setting to a public audience. In so doing, she creates what Shirley Heath calls a “literacy event” (200), in which both textual and oral modes of discourse are balanced and negotiated by the rhetor and reader. As the minister in her text, Foote facilitates this literacy event.

Foote's literacy event is marked by the discursive interaction of personal narrative, public record, spiritual testimony, exhortation, sermon, and hymn. *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* demonstrates the rhetorical self-consciousness with which Julia Foote defended her own and other women's right to the pulpit. As Jacqueline Jones Royster states, "the ongoing task of African American women...has been to create a space where no space 'naturally' existed and to raise voices that those who *were* entitled to speak did not welcome and were not particularly compelled to challenge" (233). As an itinerate preacher, Foote spent many arduous days and nights carving space for her ministry in the landscape of nineteenth-century revivalism; as a rhetor, her text extends that space rhetorically and demonstrates an equal amount of spiritual and intellectual rigor in the pursuit of gaining acceptance for that ministry. She truly preached a "whole Gospel."

Chapter 4

The Little Book as Experimental Collage: Frances Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit*

We need the stereoscopic view of truth, when woman's eye and man's together shall discern the perspective of the Bible's full-orbed revelation.

Woman in the Pulpit 21

Like Julia Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Frances Willard's defense of women's preaching, *Woman in the Pulpit*, is a "little book." Like Foote, Willard skillfully blends genres to create a hybrid text that enables her to articulate and to represent her rhetorical theory and theology. In blending genre, Willard creates a literal and rhetorical representation of one of her favorite instruments, the stereoscope. Willard used the term "stereoscopic" metaphorically in her writings to represent the congruence of divergent perspectives, most notably male and female. For example, in 1873 Willard posited:

You will find [in the ideal school] a man and woman, the different angles of whose mental vision bring the subjects which they look at into stereoscopic clearness. ("A New Departure" 96);

in 1880:

Until we get the stereoscopic view from the different angles of vision which man's eye and woman's furnish, Government will remain the Chinese picture that it is, without the vividness and perspective of truth. ("First Presidential Address" 55);

in 1882:

The stereoscopic view is more complete than any other because it presents the same object under two angles of vision. ("Personal Liberty" 69);

in 1891:

To get a stereoscopic view in full-orbed perspective, we must have the two angles of vision formed by the eyes of man and woman” (“Presidential Address” 133);

and in *Woman in the Pulpit*,

We need the stereoscopic view of truth, when woman’s eye and man’s together shall discern the perspective of the Bible’s full-orbed revelation. (21)

Woman in the Pulpit is Willard’s articulation and representation of “the stereoscopic view of truth.” Willard’s “little book” is in genre and content a stereoscopic text.

Specifically, Willard creates a unique rhetorical system that demonstrates a form of egalitarian politics she dubbed “Gospel Socialism,” clearly her version of the Social Gospel.¹¹² Neither a formal organization nor denomination, the Social Gospel was a loosely organized alliance of reformers and theologians who “stepped outside the churches to intersect the political, social, and economic forces of changing America” (White and Hopkins xi). During the decade that she wrote *Woman in the Pulpit*, Willard also expressed her commitment to socialism, both as a secular political cause, and as a philosophical variance for Christianity, in various speeches and publications, most notably “The Coming Brotherhood” and “Gospel Socialism.” Willard defines Gospel Socialism as “Christianity applied” and articulates the need to “conceive of society as a unity” whose salvation requires the unified efforts of men and women (“Gospel Socialism” 57, 53). *Woman in the Pulpit* is Willard’s culminating articulation of the ideals presented in these other works, her pièce de résistance.

¹¹²The term “Social Gospel” was not used until 1900. Most Social Gospel historians claim that early adherents to the Social Gospel identified themselves as “Social Christians” or “Christian Socialists” (Robert Handy, *The Social Gospel in America* (1966) 5. However, in agreement with Paul Boase, who calls Christian Socialism the “radical relative” of the Social Gospel (*The Rhetoric of Christian Socialism* (1969) 3), I would argue that many early Social Gospelists felt no need for a separate label for their work. Furthermore, the assumption that Social Gospelists conflated the Social Gospel movement with the socialist movement presumes a particularly liberal bias.

I select both the little book and the Social Gospel as frames for reading *Woman in the Pulpit* because they both were marked by hybridity and served as rhetorical bridges. The little book bridges various genres available to women in the nineteenth century, while the Social Gospel bridged denominations and linked those denominations to various social movements. I assert that Willard negotiates the hybrid genre of the little book with the hybrid denomination of the Social Gospel to engage directly with key rhetorical and theological features of the early Social Gospel: the “Brotherhood of Man,” scientific and metaphysical concepts and metaphors, and the “Kingdom of God.” Through that engagement, Willard articulates her theory of women’s rhetorical, religious, and political agency. Just as Foote modifies the genre of spiritual autobiography to create a little book in which she can present her holiness theology, Willard creates an experimental collage of the epistolary and exegetical in which she can articulate her Social Gospel theology.

This chapter’s larger project is historiographical. Willard scholars have begun to complicate their more focused reading of Willard as fixated on temperance and preoccupied with the female separate sphere. Similarly, Social Gospel scholars have begun to reconsider both the members of and characterization of the Social Gospel. In contributing to both projects, I participate in what Dale M. Bauer and Susan Jaret McKinstry identify as “feminist dialogics,” a rendering of history that “challenges the assumption...of a monolithic or univocal feminism” (1) and allows for the “disruption and critique of dominant and oppressive ideologies” (3). First, I borrow from Janice Lauer’s concept of “storiography,” a rendering of history that falls into the trap of “setting up straw persons against which to authorize their own accounts instead of

representing another's work in its own time and exigencies and acknowledging its contribution" (31). This chapter presents and critiques two "storiographies": the storiography of France Willard and the storiography of the Social Gospel. I then offer a close reading of the rhetorical and theological features of *Woman in the Pulpit* in an attempt to recast Willard's little book as a central text both in her repertoire and in the Social Gospel.

I follow in Willard's footsteps, who participated in her own feminist dialogism over one hundred years ago in writing *Woman in the Pulpit*. According to Bauer and McKinstry, feminist dialogics bring together "a masculine or rationalized public language" with "cultural representations from the private voice" (2). *Woman in the Pulpit* re-negotiates the private/public, moral/natural, and feminine/masculine "separate" spheres so prevalent in nineteenth-century rhetoric and ideology and suggests an egalitarian, stereoscopic world in which men and women, working together as a "brotherhood," become a power for transformation in bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth. While feminists today might regard both metaphors—the "brotherhood" and the "Kingdom of God" as representative of sexist and conservative political goals, for Willard these terms signaled a socially progressive agenda.

The Storiography of Frances Willard

Raised in a strict Methodist home in the Midwest and sanctified at a Palmer holiness revival, Frances Willard (1839-1898) was a life-long devout Methodist. Willard had the benefit of formal schooling; she attended Milwaukee Normal Institute and North Western Female College. She taught for several years and helped found the Evanston

Ladies' College, which later merged with Northwestern University. Early in life, Willard's religious convictions inspired her to enter into activist work, and her faith sustained her in various pursuits. On every issue, in every debate, she demonstrated her commitment to the ideals of evangelical Protestantism. She served as the secretary to the Methodist Centenary Fund, did two years of mission work in Europe and the Middle East, and spent a year on Dwight Moody's preaching circuit, addressing revivalism, temperance, and suffrage from the pulpit. Willard never married nor had children. Today, as documented in Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford's edited collection of Willard's journals, Willard probably would have self-identified as a lesbian: she had several intimate friends with whom she partnered in her life.

Most of Willard's life and energies were devoted to the WCTU, of which she was President from 1879 until her death. Throughout her long tenure with the WCTU, Willard argued that the organization take a broader platform than the single issue of prohibition, and she placed significant emphasis on suffrage, and other social issues, such as poverty and prostitution. She was successful in this advocacy largely because of her keen leadership and organizational skills, apparent in a diverse set of political strategies, a vigorous membership campaign, almost constant speaking tours, and grand annual conventions (Ahlstrom 869).

Willard is most famously known for her significant contribution to the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). However, she wore many hats in her lifetime. Willard was also active in the suffrage movement, fought against urban poverty, and was a strong advocate for women's education, taking leadership roles in nearly all of these activities: president of the WCTU, executive committee member of the Prohibition Party,

member of the Knights of Labor and the Socialist Party, vice-president of the Association for the Advancement of Women, editor of the *Chicago Post*, and president of a women's college, to name a few. As a committed feminist, socialist, and reformer, Willard embraced the public forum, utilizing it to advance the various causes that were nearest to her heart.¹¹³

Willard was also a successful rhetor. She was trained by one of the leading elocutionists of the day, R. L. Cumnock of Northwestern University, and was one of the most prolific writers of her time, producing a handful of books, publishing dozens of articles, and delivering countless speeches on the issues which she so actively fought for in her lifetime (Boase 78). Willard was very active in the publishing industry: she was associate editor of the Social Gospel press, *The Dawn*, and established her own journal, *The Union Signal*. Willard's belief in the power of the press is evident in the following excerpt from her speech "Home Protection":

I venture the prediction that this Republic will prove herself the greatest fighter of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; but her bullets will be molded into printers' type, her Gatling guns will be the pulpit and the platform, her war will be a war of words, and underneath the white storm of men's and women's ballots her enemies—state rights, the saloon, and the commune—shall find their only shroud. (354-55)

Willard armed herself with the press and aimed from both the pulpit and platform, engaging in a war of words with anyone who suggested that women did not belong in the political sphere.

Because Willard's volume of work spanned a variety of genres—autobiography, biography, novel, conduct literature, speech, and editorial—and appealed to a broad

¹¹³ For more on Willard's life, see the following biographies: Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard* (1986); Mary Earhart, *Frances Willard* (1944); Anna Gordon, *The Beautiful Life* (1898); and Ray Strachey, *Frances Willard* (1913). See also Willard's autobiography, *Glimpses of Fifty Years* (1884); and selections from Willard's journal, collected and edited by Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, *Writing Out My Heart* (1995).

range of audiences—religious, conservative, liberal, socialist, and most notably her middle-class base—the attention that she received was extensive. In her lifetime and in the half century following her death, Willard was enormously popular; it is not an exaggeration to dub her the “Oprah” of the nineteenth century. Fellow evangelist Henry Ward Beecher called Willard “the best known and best beloved of women” (qtd. in Slagell, “Making” 159); Congregational minister Newell Dwight Hillis wrote that Willard’s “achievements for God and home and native land . . .rank her as one of the most famous women of this century” (361); and literary critic and author Lilian Whiting considered Willard to be “of the angelic order . . .fashioned of diviner quality than is often revealed in this stage of life’s progress” (190). From 1898 until 1944, Willard is the subject of a publication *virtually every year*. “Saint Frances” was a fixture in popular compilations of famous men and women and the subject of over a dozen biographies.

The devotional quality of these encomiums may make modern readers cringe; however, what is remarkable about the majority of the early biographical treatments of Willard is their recognition of the breadth of Willard’s activist agenda. For example, five years before Willard’s death, poet and feminist Kate Sanborn wrote that Willard was remarkable “as an educator of women in the wider sense, as an emancipator from conventionalities, prejudices, narrowness, and as a representative on a spiritual plane of the new age upon which we are entering” (714). Educator Sherman Williams included Willard in his 1904 *Some Successful Americans*, writing:

[Willard] was not interested in temperance alone, but worked for equal suffrage, social purity, labor reform—for whatever she believed stood for the uplifting of humanity. It was not so much a movement or a cause that interested her as the welfare of mankind. Her sympathies and views were broad. (96)

And Lilian Whiting in 1915 credited her with a range of political and social accomplishments: “The world of scholarship, of reform, of philanthropy, of religious progress, each brought to her its tribute” (207). In other words, Willard’s contemporaries understood her activism to be seated in temperance, but not limited by it; they understood that temperance was a means to a much bigger project. Willard herself makes this point clear in her autobiography, referencing her temperance work as only one aspect of her identity: “I have looked back upon the seven persons whom I know most about: the welcome child, the romping girl, the happy student, the roving teacher, the tireless traveler, the temperance organizer, and lastly, the politician and organizer of woman’s rights!” (*Glimpses* xi).

Unfortunately, this rather broad view of Willard’s activism was not shared by the one person who would most shape the public perception of her in the century following her death: Willard’s close friend, biographer, and WCTU president replacement Anna Gordon. According to Willard biographer Mary Earhart, writing in 1944, the posthumous Willard that Gordon editorialized in the *Union Signal* and created in her biography was idealized and almost mythological. Gordon presented Willard as obsessively focused on temperance and interpreted Willard’s use of “home” and “mother” quite literally, limiting her political efforts to the domestic space. Earhart considered the resulting injury to Willard’s place in history “a form of intellectual perjury” since “she was more than the leader of a temperance organization.... she was the general of the whole woman’s movement, seeking the emancipation of her sisters from all legal, traditional, and economic bonds” (5, 11). Crediting Gordon’s narrow

interpretation of Willard's field of activism, Earhart anticipated a decline in Willard's popularity in the second half of the twentieth century.

Earhart's predictions came true. Willard slowly fell out of popular favor and recognition, becoming hardly more than a footnote in the histories of feminism, suffrage, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and education reform.¹¹⁴ There was a marked hiatus on publications on Willard from Earhart's biography in 1944 until Ruth Bordin's biography in 1986. Like Earhart, Bordin remarks on the broad scope of Willard's activism and regrets the reductive nature of most treatments of her:

Frances Willard played a much larger role in nineteenth-century America than her leadership of the temperance cause.... Willard's beliefs and contributions, which spanned a wide variety of reform causes, were reduced after her death to a single dimension, temperance, and that dimension of her life's work was repudiated unequivocally by a later generation. (xiv, 6)

That later generation included nineteenth-century scholars across the fields of history, communication studies, rhetoric, and women's studies, fields which today still tend to valorize the "radical" and more secular work of suffragists like Ida B. Wells, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, and to discount the contributions of women involved in projects that seem, through a late-twentieth or twenty-first century lens, to be conservative, sentimental, overly religious, or simply quaint. Mattingly makes this point in "Woman-Tempered Rhetoric," arguing that scholars have a "natural inclination to value the ideas and motives of those most like us" (58). Whether natural or not, because of this inclination, Willard came to represent Barbara Welter's articulation of the "Cult of True Womanhood." As Prudence Flowers points out, Welter's argument

¹¹⁴The exception are the following histories of suffrage, each of which accounts for Willard's significant contribution: Jean Baker, *Sisters: The Lives of America's Suffragists* (2005); and Shelley Mosley and John Charles, *Suffragists in Literature for Youth* (2006).

has been problematized in terms of race and class; yet, it remains a primary rationale for explaining the activities of nineteenth-century white, middle-class, religious women (15). This stance is evident in most of the scholarship on Willard of the late-twentieth century. With a few exceptions, early analysis of Willard's writings by feminist, history, and rhetoric scholars seem to take a page out of Gordon's book, continuing to characterize Willard as a sort of conservative temperance zealot, at odds with other female activists of her day.

For example, one of the first rhetorical scholars to treat Willard at length, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell includes Willard in her seminal *Man Cannot Speak for Her*. Characterizing Willard as socially and "religiously conservative," Campbell provides a rhetorical analysis of Willard's speech, "A White Life for Two," and claims that this speech is representative of Willard's rhetoric generally (123). According to Campbell, Willard's "real achievement was in making suffrage acceptable to more conservative women, but she did so at a cost of making other reforms—reforms that would have attacked the tenets of true womanhood—far more difficult, if not impossible" (128); and "In her extraordinary efforts to be persuasive and adapt to her audiences, she ended up generating discourse which was suited only to reinforce existing beliefs.... In other words, both in style and content, Willard was an extreme case" (129). In Campbell's collection, Willard's speech is presented as the anomaly in nineteenth-century activist rhetorics, and as a powerful but unfortunate digression from the feminist progressive agenda of her contemporaries.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ The text that Campbell chooses to represent women's religious public speaking is Lucretia Mott's *Discourse on Women*. I would argue that *Discourse on Women*, although an important and significant work, is not representative of the vast numbers of defenses of women's preaching, but rather representative of the few scriptural defenses of women, a distinction I make in chapter two. Campbell presents Mott as a

Similarly, historians Barbara Epstein and Suzanne Marilley represent Willard and other temperance women as unquestioningly accepting separate spheres ideology, and although Patricia Bizzell, Jane Donawerth, Bonnie Dow, Janet Zolinger Giele, and Alison Parker nuance this view by conceding that there was a consciousness to Willard's use of the domestic, like Campbell, they claim that such use was still nonetheless grounded in a middle-class True Womanhood ethic. Indeed, inherent in the very title of Giele's book, *Two Paths to Women's Equality: Temperance, Suffrage, and the Origins of Modern Feminism*, is the assumption that a woman activist of the nineteenth century had to adopt either a separate spheres/morality or equality/natural rights rhetoric.

Carol Mattingly, who provides a deep historical contextualization for temperance rhetoric in *Well-Tempered Women*, argues that such binaries may be too simplistic:

Women's temperance rhetoric is complex and varied and might, according to time, purpose, and author, fit any assortment of labels.... Labels such as conservative and radical inadequately describe the complex speakers who successfully addressed a large community of people, united them, organized them, and moved them to action. (2)

Indeed, the complexity of the late nineteenth-century social and political landscape demands a more complex reading of perhaps the most well-known and well-regarded woman of that time. Significant recovery work by historian Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford and rhetorical scholar Amy Slagell has enabled more varied readings of Willard by helping to make Willard's vast repertoire of writings more accessible to scholars, and

foil to Willard; however, Mott's scriptural defense of women shares many of the arguments of Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit*, including a hermeneutical reinterpretation Paul and biblical models of women speaking. Indeed, although Mott relies on natural rights rhetoric, arguing that women are equal to men, she does so carefully, still maintaining "the difference, that our great and beneficent Creator has made, in the relation of man and woman" (492). I cite Campbell's discussion of Mott at length because it encapsulates the kind of storiography that I am critiquing.

their collective analysis of this assemblage of work suggests that Willard's approach was multifaceted, and that her rhetoric of the domestic actually broadened women's sphere:

Nor did Willard's oft-noted "womanliness" mean that she accepted the ideal of true womanhood—or any other formulations that limited women's role in the world. As she moved from one reform issue to another, she carried with her a constant determination to make the world a wider place for women, and she repeatedly voiced positions that sound strikingly modern in their analysis of women's issues. (Slagell, *A Good Woman* 50)

Gifford and Slagell also recognize the "home" as a central and unifying feature of Willard's reform work; however, they argue that Willard extended and adapted the ideology of separate spheres and figuratively used metaphors of the domestic to accomplish a variety of political and social goals.¹¹⁶ For Willard, the skills and attention required by mothers traditionally defined were the same skills necessary for caring for public concerns. She thus constructed an image and ethos of the public mother.

Although this scholarship gives Willard credit for her organizational, activist work, and references her religious motivations, it rarely mentions one of the causes that Willard was especially committed to, women's preaching and religious leadership, and rarely cites her defense of women's preaching, *Woman in the Pulpit*. Little mention is made of *Woman in the Pulpit* in even longer treatments of her and anthologies of her work; rather, Willard's speeches, journals, and autobiography are the focus of most scholarship on her.¹¹⁷ There are a few notable exceptions. Historian and biographer Ruth Bordin calls *Woman in the Pulpit* Willard's "most ambitious work" (117), and scholars in the field of Religious Studies often reference the work as important to—even

¹¹⁶ See Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford's and Amy Slagell's edited collection of Willard's speeches, *Let Something Good Be Said* (2007); and Slagell, "Making the World More Homelike" (2008): 163.

¹¹⁷ Richard Leeman and Amy Slagell concentrate on Willard's speeches; Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford focuses on her journals and speeches; James Kimble attends only to her biography. The exception is Lacey Warner, who provides an overview of *Woman in the Pulpit* in *Saving Women* (2007).

representative of—the debate surrounding women’s preaching in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸

In Rhetorical Studies, analysis of Willard is predominantly focused on her speeches and autobiography, with the exception of Patricia Bizzell and Jane Donawerth, who make an argument for *Woman in the Pulpit* as rhetorical theory. Bizzell includes excerpts from *Woman in the Pulpit* in *The Rhetorical Tradition*, claiming that *Woman in the Pulpit* “is [Willard’s] most complete statement on women and rhetoric” (1120), and Donawerth similarly identifies *Woman in the Pulpit* as rhetorical theory in her collection *Rhetorical Theory by Women Before 1900* and includes it in *Conversational Rhetoric: The Rise and Fall of a Women’s Tradition, 1600-1900*. In this chapter, I hope to contribute to the consideration of *Woman in the Pulpit* as rhetorical theory; furthermore, I believe that this text also represents a feminist rhetoric of theology.

The Storiography of the Social Gospel

The rhetoric of theology that I believe Willard adapts into a feminist theological rhetoric is that of the Social Gospel. Marked by a social consciousness grounded in faith-based community, the Social Gospel’s basic theological premise was the belief that social change could be wrought through the “application of religious ideals” (King 109). Social Gospel rhetoric dropped emphasis on doctrinal or denominational differences and spoke instead about cooperation and unity across denominational and social lines.

The Social Gospel spanned a period of great change and upheaval in America.

With roots in the Second Great Awakening, the holiness movement, and reform

¹¹⁸ Betty DeBerg, Nancy Hardesty, Janette Hassey, Rosemary Keller, Rosemary Ruether, Lacey Warner, and Barbara Zikmund all attribute particular significance to *Woman in the Pulpit* in the debate over women’s preaching.

movements, the Social Gospel began to synthesize in the 1870s. The early period of the Social Gospel was a marked departure from the premillennialistic discourse preceding the Civil War, which focused on the salvation of the individual soul and entry into God's kingdom in heaven.¹¹⁹ Rather than focus on an other-worldly goal, early Social Gospelists addressed the turbulence of the Industrial Revolution, the Civil War, and America's newly forming Democracy with optimism and articulated the possibility of creating God's kingdom on earth. The terms "Brotherhood of Man" and "Kingdom of God" became the primary rhetorical representations of this theological possibility. The Social Gospel focused not on individual sin and redemption, but rather on social sin and social redemption. Heaven on earth—the Kingdom of God—might be obtained through the collective good works of men and women—the Brotherhood of Man.

During the middle period, around the turn-of-the-century, Social Gospelists increasingly turned their attention away from social reform more broadly defined and focused, instead, on urban issues, particularly immigration and poverty. The most obvious example is Jane Addams' work in Hull House. By the late period, the Social Gospel had a primarily urban focus and attended to labor issues and labor reform. Most scholars mark the end of the Social Gospel with the first World War, arguing that the optimism of the Social Gospel was simply unpalatable to a public shocked by the brutality of war.

The Social Gospel was neither a denomination nor a unified social movement. It lacked the unique and expressed doctrinal features that would set it apart as a distinct denomination; indeed, Social Gospel proponents belonged to a spectrum of

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of dispensational premillennialism, see DeBerg 119-27.

denominations, from Baptist to Methodist to Presbyterian to Unitarian to Catholic.¹²⁰ Similarly, the Social Gospel lacked the high degree of communication and organization that would establish it as a social movement. It did not have a primary devoted press like the abolitionist *The North Star*, the *St. Louis Temperance Battery*, or the suffrage newspaper, the *Woman's Journal*. Rather, there were several newspapers that claimed to represent the “Social Christian” or “Christian Socialist” or “Social Gospel” cause, such as William Dwight Porter Bliss’ *The Dawn*, George Gates’ and George Herron’s *The Kingdom*, and Washington Gladden’s *For the Right*. However, these journals did not necessarily adhere to similar religious premises or devote content to similar causes.¹²¹ Neither did Social Gospel proponents enjoy annual conventions or formalized boards for representation. Social Gospelists did not see themselves as participating in a single movement with an identifiable goal and end, like temperance with its goal of prohibition or suffrage with its goal of the women’s vote; rather, their main tenet was the application of a Christian value system for the social good *indeterminately*. As Social Gospel historians Ronald White and Charles Howard explain, “The social gospel never became an organized ‘movement.’ Rather it was a network of movements operating in different contexts. Those individuals connected with its ideology worked through ongoing religious and secular organizations” (xviii). Like many of the texts I study in this dissertation, the Social Gospel was both marked by and created hybridity.

¹²⁰ Although traditionally understood as a largely Protestant movement, R.A.R. Edwards, “Jane Addams, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Dorothy Day” (2003), and Robert Trawick, “Dorothy Day and the Social Gospel Movement” (2003) both make arguments for including Catholic Dorothy Day as an important contributor to the Social Gospel movement.

¹²¹ A Social Gospel press was attempted, but failed; see Billie Jensen, “A Social Gospel Experiment in Newspaper Reform” (1964).

Unfortunately, this hybridity has not always been articulated in Social Gospel scholarship. A relatively uniform, static narrative greets us from the pages of Social Gospel historians; this narrative has only recently been challenged and modified. Because it is often conflated with Protestant liberalism and Christian socialism, both the sphere and the proponents of the Social Gospel are usually limited to a white male intellectual elite, mainly those teaching in or affiliated with seminaries, or to a white male socialist cohort targeting lay working class audiences. Center stage are a bevy of male religious figures: Washington Gladden, Dwight Moody, Josiah Strong, Richard Ely, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Henry Churchill King. The dominating plot is framed in largely economic terms, with a preoccupation on urban class inequities and the social ills that ensue.

This narrative is by no means misrepresentative; many Social Gospelists loudly responded to concerns over the industrialization of America and a relatively newly defined capitalistic democratic society. However, this narrative is under-representative. When we read what are still considered the landmark histories of the Social Gospel, we are led to believe that “[Josiah Strong’s] career... made him central to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Protestant scene in a fashion matched only by Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch” (White and Hopkins 55); “Far more important than any other member of the [Social Gospel] group was Richard T. Ely” (H. May 40); and “Rauschenbusch still towers above the other advocates of the social gospel.... His is the central place in an important chapter in American church history” (Handy 263). By extension, then, the rhetoric of these “towering” figures has come largely to represent the Social Gospel, and that rhetoric is often explicitly racist and sexist: “God, with infinite

wisdom and skill, is here training the Anglo-Saxon race for an hour sure to come in the world's future.... Then will the world enter on a new stage of its history—*the final competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled*” (Strong 79, italics in original); “The eighteenth-century doctrine of essential equality among men is, in my opinion, pernicious” (Ely, qtd. in Handy 183); and “The health of society rests on the welfare of the home. What, then, will be the outcome if the unmarried multiply; if homes remain childless; if families are homeless; if girls do not know housework; and if men come to distrust the purity of women?” (Rauschenbusch, “Ideals” 279).

These historical assumptions have unfortunately led to criticism of the Social Gospel that is equally limiting. Both Sidney Mead and Susan Curtis, for example, critique the Social Gospel as a symbol of hegemonic white American morality (expressed through American Protestantism) that enabled and bowed before the emerging consumer culture of the Progressive Era. This sort of religious relativistic and pluralistic definition—one that still resonates as a critique of current liberal theology—unfortunately precludes, then, alternative perspectives. If the Social Gospel is defined as a religion of the white dominant culture of the time, coupled with a theology considered “liberal” then its parameters are tightly and clearly drawn, as evidenced by religion historian Christopher Evans in the introduction to a recent compilation of essays on the Social Gospel: “the social gospel, at times, was held captive by the cultural suppositions of white Euro-American Protestantism” (7). I would argue that the history of the Social Gospel has been held equally captive by our modern assumptions and consequent limited historiography.

Specifically, many scholars take umbrage at the paternalistic racism and sexism of texts by Gladden, Strong, Ely, and Rauschenbusch, and to their seeming indifference—and sometimes hostility—to causes outside of the labor movement, such as abolition, suffrage, and temperance. Interestingly, the definitions and theologies offered by these men are not challenged by contemporary scholars; rather, it is the application of these theories to social issues that is deemed problematic. I would argue, in agreement with religion scholar Susan Hill Lindley, that it is the stories that have been constructed around these definitions that have so limited our understanding of the Social Gospel, stories assembled on “a racist and sexist myopia on the part of both the social gospel’s leaders and its historians” (“Deciding” 17). Argues Lindley:

However inadequate the breadth of vision of those leaders may have been, they never *by definition* excluded some groups of humans from the concept, and it would surely be ironic for later historians to insist on a definition that denied neglected voices the possibility of participation as actors and not merely objects of sympathy. (“Deciding” 20-21)

Like the political aims of Willard, the goals of the Social Gospel came to be very narrowly defined by historians and scholars, and consequently, many of its participants were left out of its history. Identifying both the subtle and explicit racism and sexism of Social Gospel texts is important work and serves to remind us of the skewed cultural lens with which many white male nineteenth-century leaders often interpreted society. However, what is equally important is recovering the voices of those articulating a different version of the Social Gospel. This effort is the backbone of a few recent books that have addressed race and gender in the Social Gospel. The most symbolic representation of this is Ronald White’s *Liberty and Justice for All: Racial Reform and the Social Gospel (1877-1925)*, a significant development from the single chapter, “The

Souls of Black Folk,” in his and Howard’s earlier seminal work. In a kind of academic apologia, he states in his preface that there were pervasive racist assumptions about who contributed to and created Social Gospel theology and rhetoric: “Prominent scholars, black as well as white, advised me that the Social Gospel was basically a white not a black movement. I was told . . . that if there were a black Social Gospel, it would be hard to find the sources for it” (xii-xiii). Contributors to two collections of essays: *The Social Gospel Today*, edited by Christopher Evans, and *Gender and the Social Gospel*, edited by Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, have found the sources for a fuller understanding of the racial and gendered dimensions of the Social Gospel.¹²² This body of work attends closely to the contribution of African Americans and women to the Social Gospel movement, including ministers in the Black church (James Walker Hood, Benjamin Mays, Reverdy C. Ransom, Henry McNeal Turner, Alexander Walters, L.K. Williams), female activists in the Black church (Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Pearl Garnett, Elsie Scott), and white female reformers (Jane Addams, Dorothy Day, Helen Barrett Montgomery, Vida Scudder).

It is, nonetheless, important to impose limitations on who is included as female Social Gospelists. Where recent scholarship on women in the Social Gospel falls short, I believe, is in its inclination to include any women who was involved in reform movements who also happened to be religious or use religious rhetoric in their support of

¹²² For more on the Black Social Gospel, see Jeffrey Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (2008): 265-92; Stephen Angell and Anthony Pinn, *Social Protest Thought in the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (2000): 127-137; Ralph Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White* (1991); Ingrid Overacker, “True to Our God” (2003); Dianne Reistroffer, “Giving Patterns and Practices among Church Women” (2001); and Darryl Trimview, “The Social Gospel Movement and the Question of Race” (2001). For more on women in the Social Gospel, see Robert Crunden, *Ministers of Reform* (1984); Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith* (2001); Allen Davis, *Spearheads for Reform* (2001); Mary Dougherty, “The Social Gospel According to Phoebe” (1982); Overacker; Reistroffer; Sandra Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion* (1978); Gary Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation* (2000).

their reform work. In her aptly titled chapter: “Deciding Who Counts: Toward a Revised Definition of the Social Gospel,” Susan Hill Lindley clarifies:

The social gospel was distinguished, on the one hand, from general charity and humanitarian work by the religious motivation behind its ideas and activities and its insistence on connecting social ideals with the Kingdom of God, at least partially realizable in this world. On the other hand, the social gospel moved beyond traditional Christian charity in its recognition of corporate identity, corporate and structural sin, and social salvation, along with concern for individual sin, faith, and responsibility. (24)

It was the socialist underpinnings of reform work that unified Social Gospelists and created their unique way of understanding the world and their relationship—and obligation—to it.

Willard is frequently cited in this revisionist and recovery work; however, she does not need to be newly discovered: she is often the lone female representative in the published histories of the Social Gospel.¹²³ Clearly an important contributor to the first wave of the Social Gospel, Willard was writing and speaking at the same time as its early influential leaders. However, scholars who study Willard in the context of the Social Gospel rarely cite evidence of her rhetorical and theoretical framework. Lindley, for example, asserts that, with the exception of Vida Scudder, women were “focused on action rather than theory or constructive theology” and were not “theologically sophisticated” (*You Have Stept* 141); “most women in the Social Gospel,” she claims, “were more activists and publicists than theologians or theoreticians” (*You Have Stept* 147).

¹²³ Willard is the only woman mentioned in Ronald White’s and Charles Hopkins’ chapter on women in the Social Gospel in *The Social Gospel* (1976). Willard’s “Brotherhood of Man” is also included in Boase’s collection of Social Gospel essays; hers is the only female-authored essay.

In the next section of this chapter, I hope to re-establish Willard as an important early contributor to Social Gospel theology. Although the majority of Willard's writings are indeed focused on action, I argue that *Woman in the Pulpit* focused on a presentation of her theology. This theology is simultaneously a critique and reconfiguration of dominant themes of the Social Gospel. Willard agreed with Social Gospel theological premises, particularly the emphasis on community and the responsibility to address social and institutional evils. However, Willard disagreed with its rhetorical representation and strategies and saw the need to reframe these premises, creating both a rhetoric and a theology more conducive to women's participation. In contributing to the conversations surrounding these two historiographies, I hope that this chapter also enacts Willard's vision of the stereoscope in its synthesis of the work of scholars who consider Willard worthy of rhetorical analysis, who include her as a rhetorical theorist, and who reclaim her as a Social Gospel theologian and leader.

In chapter two, I identified what I consider to be the three unifying rhetorical markers of defenses of women's preaching: authorization, exegesis, and a consideration of women's role within society. In chapter three, I demonstrated how Julia Foote addresses each of those markers throughout *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* by weaving together orality and textuality. Foote consequently creates a hybrid discourse that defends both her own preaching life and female ministry generally and that articulates her holiness theology. Willard addresses each marker by weaving together the epistolary and exegetical; she creates a hybrid discourse that invites equal male and female participation in the Social Gospel. The little book provides her with the textual space to enact her feminist theology through experimental collage.

Willard divides her defense into five sections. First, in her preface and introduction, Willard carefully crafts her rhetorical situation, using the Brotherhood of Man tenet of the Social Gospel to convey the collegial discourse she hopes to create in *Woman in the Pulpit*. Then, in her first chapter, Willard provides a refutation to objections to women's preaching, applying scientific and metaphysical metaphors common in Social Gospel rhetoric to her exegesis. In her second chapter, Willard continues her exegesis by demonstrating the various ways God authorizes women to preach. Willard reconciles the roles of mother and minister in her third chapter, introducing the mother figure into the Kingdom of God. Finally, the remaining chapters—letters of defense of women's preaching by both men and women—exhibit a textual transformation of the Brotherhood of Man into the Kingdom of God, an egalitarian, stereoscopic realm, where women and men act and speak equally.

Willard's Rhetorical Situation: Invoking the Brotherhood of Man

The Brotherhood of Man referenced the need for a Christian collective to address social sins, most prominently the exploitation of the working class. As the name indicates, this vision was not gender-neutral. Many Social Gospel leaders were clearly concerned with the perceived "feminization" of Protestantism; they responded to this "threat" by attempting to draw more men into churches and then out into the community. This campaign was marked by an increase in masculine images and metaphors, evoking a more manly Christianity.¹²⁴ The Brotherhood of Man was not simply a theological trope,

¹²⁴ The concept of muscular Christianity partly originated in England from the ideas of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, who promoted physical health and vigor as part of the Christian ideal. For more on the development of a "manly" Christianity at the turn of the twentieth century in America, see Margaret Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender* (1993): 13-30; Betty DeBerg, *Ungodly Women* (1990): 75-98;

but referred to actual men working together collectively; the concept was absorbed into the everyday vernacular of nineteenth-century American life, and its popularity is revealed in a brief survey of United States organizations. In addition to the explicitly Social Gospel Brotherhood of the Kingdom, other social reform groups, including the United Sons of Vulcan, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, the National Brotherhood of Baseball Players, and the Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth, used the concept to invoke a sense of camaraderie based on similar ethical, social, and political interests (Tilly 49). Almost without exception, these groups were comprised solely of men; indeed, one can see them partly as a critique of the “feminization of Protestantism” and the various women’s reform and missionary societies that developed in the early- to mid nineteenth century. By the late-nineteenth century, these brotherhoods rivaled women’s reform societies both in size and in political power. By the early-twentieth century, they had eclipsed them.

Consequently, Social Gospel rhetoric often contributed to separate spheres ideology, limiting women to the domestic space and reclaiming the church back into the domain of men. Indeed, there is a tendency in the writings of Rauschenbusch and Strong to revere the mother role as integral to creating and maintaining the Christian family, the ideal representation of a Christian social order (DeBerg 151-52). By the early-twentieth century, most Social Gospel rhetoric completely conformed to separate spheres ideology, with men in the world of politics, social reform, and public service, and women in the world of the domestic, keeping the home safe and protecting it as a social institution.

Janet Fishburn, *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family* (1981); and Roxanne Mountford, *The Gendered Pulpit* (2003): 40-64.

In the late-nineteenth century, however, this Social Gospel world-view had not completely solidified, and many women found the Brotherhood of Man conceit attractive and empowering. Reformer Helen Barrett Montgomery, for example, references a “human brotherhood” (Mobley 171) and Mary Richmond similarly speaks to the influence of the ideal of a brotherhood (Agnew 119). In addition to Willard’s rather famous “The Coming Brotherhood” speech, she also references “human brotherhood” in her “Eighteenth Presidential Address” (223) and the “brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity” in “Women and Organization” (159). In the introductory matter of *Woman in the Pulpit*, Willard adeptly crafts all components of her rhetorical situation—rhetor, audience, and context—framing each within the conceit of the Brotherhood of Man.

The preface of *Woman in the Pulpit* is as remarkable for what it leaves out as for what is included. In the opening line of the preface, Willard briefly shares the context for writing *Woman in the Pulpit*: “This book is the outgrowth of an article prepared by me in compliance with the request of my good friends the Editors of *The Homiletic Monthly*” (5). What Willard does not include are the particulars of the actual circumstances that inspired her to write supporting women’s ordination. The initial article and subsequent publications were written in response to a series of events that curtailed Willard’s religious leadership. First, Charles Fowler denied her the privilege of conducting evening prayers in 1874. Second, the Methodist Conference of 1880, after refusing to allow her ten minutes to address the delegates, denied women’s ordination and revoked preaching licenses from those women previously accredited. In 1886, in the *Homiletic Monthly*, and in 1887, in the *Homiletic Review*, Willard wrote articles defending the right of women to preach. After the Methodist Conference of 1888 failed to recognize her as a

duly-appointed lay delegate, she published chapters from *Woman in the Pulpit* in serial in *Our Day*, a periodical which claimed “to endeavor to foster a deep spiritual life as well as the most scholarly and progressive religious thought” (2). Finally, later that year, she published *Woman in the Pulpit*. Although the context—and the impressive publishing record—leading up to *Woman in the Pulpit* was fairly well-known and recorded, Willard makes no mention of it. Willard certainly could have attributed *Woman in the Pulpit* to these very personal circumstances, referring to her rhetorical situation as Lloyd Bitzer famously defines it: as “called into existence by situation” (9). Instead, she follows a model more in keeping with Richard Vatz’s definition, selecting for her rhetorical situation what she considers “salient” (158).

First, what is *not* salient in Willard’s preface is her ethos as the President of the WCTU. Although her position as “President of the National Woman’s Christian Temperance Union” is referenced on the title page, Willard seems aware of the danger in consequently also invoking an ethos of extraordinary, “saintly” woman. Willard makes no mention of her activist career in the preface, and she uses the passive voice almost exclusively. Willard’s modesty—her “compliance with the request of [her] good friends the Editors of *The Homiletic Monthly*”—is more than just a nineteenth-century version of the modesty topos. If she is to speak for other female rhetors, if she is to defend the right of all women to preach, Willard must deconstruct her extrinsic ethos, what linguist Ruth Amossy calls “prior ethos.”

According to Amossy, prior ethos, “the image his audience has of him before he takes the floor,” is significant as “the background against which ethos is built in the discourse” (“Ethos” 20). As such, prior ethos must often be displaced or modified in

order for the rhetor “to set in place an image of self which corresponds to a preexistent assignment of roles” and simultaneously compliments this image of self with a “scenography” selected by the speaker (“Ethos” 21). Similar to Vatz’s critique of Bitzer’s characterization of the rhetorical situation, Amossy challenges the idea of ethos “as a purely language-related construction” and rather argues for the importance of underscoring both “the social dimension of the discursive ethos (the collective representation)” and “its relation to external institutional positions” (“Ethos” 20).

In addition to her external institutional position as the prominent leader of the WCTU, Willard could also claim prior ethos because of her participation in the Social Gospel movement. She was invoked as an honorary member of the brotherhood by Presbyterian James Manning Sherwood, who wrote in 1889, “We count it an honor and a privilege to be numbered among her personal friends and be addressed by her as ‘Brother’” (192). Additionally, Willard served with Townsend and Cook as associate editor on the *Our Day* editorial board from its inception in 1888, and was included in 1889 as the sole female representative in the comprehensive *Current Discussion in Theology, by the Professors of Chicago Theological Seminary, Volume VI*, an annual survey of “What has been done in the different fields of sacred learning during the past twelve months, and what are the latest results of such studies” (2). In sum, Willard could rely on both her tremendous ethos as a temperance reformer and as a theologian. She does neither. Instead, she removes herself as the active agent in the debate:

Its length went beyond the prescribed limits, and it overflows into these pages, accompanied by testimony collected by me from men and women preachers, and enriched by the criticism of [Dr. Van Dyke and Dr. Townsend]... Wishing to learn the opinion of three ministers...I wrote asking what they thought about “Woman in the Pulpit.” (5)

It is not Willard who is “accompanied by testimony,” but “this book.” At this moment in her text, Willard constructs her authorial identity as a medium, a conduit for all—men as well as women—who wish to engage in the debate. Willard is not a famous rhetor, attempting to convince an audience to sign on to her cause, the authorial identity she relies on in so many of her temperance and suffrage speeches. Neither is Willard an exceptional woman defending her individual right to preach, the authorial identity often assigned to other women who defended their right to the pulpit. Willard does not call herself a preacher in *Woman in the Pulpit*, not even referencing her brief stint as a member of Dwight Moody’s preaching circuit. Rather, Willard is simply a collector of testimony.

As the collector of testimony, Willard then must identify for whom she is doing the collation. Writes Willard, “I count myself fortunate to be able to introduce this little book with the approving and brotherly words of these great men, and I beg a patient and unprejudiced attention not only to *their* words but to the words of *all* the witnesses that follow them” (6). I find Lisa Ede’s and Andrea Lunsford’s concept of “audience invoked” helpful in reading this passage. According to Ede and Lunsford:

The central task of the writer, then, is not to analyze an audience and adapt discourse to meet its need. Rather, the writer uses the semantic and syntactic resources of language to provide cues for the reader—cues which help to define the role or roles the writer wishes the reader to adopt in responding to the text. (160)

As suggested by Willard’s rejection by male leaders in the Methodist Episcopal Church, her actual audience in the Bitzerian sense, an audience that “consists only of those persons who are capable... of being mediators of change” (7) was comprised of people who were fairly hostile to her position and obviously powerful in denying her and other

women leadership opportunities in the church. In her preface, Willard gives a nod to her audience addressed, while simultaneously defining a new audience for the debate through a series of semantic and syntactic cues grounded in the Social Gospel.

The use of “brotherly” is not insignificant, for it is Willard’s first reference to the Social Gospel and thus her first syntactic clue. In the passage above, Willard marks “*their*” text—the “words”—as brotherly; the “words” of “all the witnesses”—the nameless other women are not included *at this point* in *Woman in the Pulpit* as part of the brotherhood. The women preachers she is defending in her text are nameless in the preface, not even designated by a gendered pronoun, but simply “all.” The ministers she references, in contrast, the “great men,” are named, cited, and given precious prefatory space in her book. I read this as Willard’s critique of the separate spheres ideology beginning to concretize within the Social Gospel movement, indicated by male leaders attempts to refocus women’s religious efforts back into the home, ministering to husbands and children. Later in her text, Willard directly references her audience as “my brethren” (21) and “my brother” (59), and in these passages, the syntactic cues clearly refer to a mixed audience. However, in the preface, her cues are still very gendered. The passage is thus a hint at her larger rhetorical project in *Woman in the Pulpit*.

That project, I assert, is two-fold. First, Willard must take the debate out of the limited context of her Bitzerian rhetorical situation and place it in the unlimited field of reform work: her “scenography,” to borrow Amossy’s term, is the interdenominational, broad field of the Social Gospel. The semantic cues for this begin on her title page, with the identification of herself as the WCTU president. Although, as I have argued, Willard must distance herself from this considerable ethos, she can, nonetheless, use the reference

to invoke the ethos of a movement that had already established a broad base of support and an international audience. This audience is further established in the preface, referenced by Willard as “millions of readers in all lands” (5). When she wrote *Woman in the Pulpit*, temperance work had become international; by semantically and syntactically identifying a global readership, Willard removes the constraints of her rhetorical situation, inviting *all* to engage in the debate. Second, Willard must engage in the cultural work of challenging muscular Christianity by acknowledging the gendered controlling images of the Social Gospel while simultaneously absorbing women into the fold of the brotherhood.

Willard closes her preface with an excerpt from Robert Southey’s *Lay of the Laureate—L’Envoy*: “Go, little Book, I cast thee on the waters, go thy way” (6). Southey’s original reads, “Go, little Book! From this my solitude/ I cast thee on the Waters,—go thy ways.” It is interesting that Willard omits “From this my solitude,” for she indeed was attempting to portray herself—and the movement defending women’s right to the pulpit—as anything but solitary. For instance, Willard follows her preface with letters from three ministers: Presbyterian Thomas De Witt Talmage, Methodist Joseph Cook, and Congregationalist Joseph Parker—all of whom were fairly well-established Social Gospelists.¹²⁵

These letters are not authenticating letters in support of Willard, but rather letters supporting women’s preaching. Furthermore, it is clear that Talmage, Cook, and Parker wrote these letters in response to a request by Willard to articulate their opinions on

¹²⁵ As I demonstrate in my second chapter, Willard is not the first to utilize the letter form: several defenses of women’s preaching contain letters of support from male preachers. Other defenses, such as Harriet Livermore’s and Sarah Grimke’s, contain the entire defense in epistolary form, in letters to female friends. And Ellen Stewart reprints her extended argument with clergyman J. F. Weishampel over women’s preaching in her spiritual autobiography.

women's preaching; they are therefore a continuation of a dialogue that Willard initiates. "Thanks for your letter" (9) begins Talmage, and Cook presumably repeats the question which Willard asked in said letter, opening his letter with it: "What constitutes a providential call to a woman to be a preacher?" (10). Although textually it appears as though the men are framing Willard's argument, she is actually doing the framing by inviting their response. Perhaps Willard circulated her letter to dozens of ministers, then selected the arguments of Talmage, Cook, and Parker for her preface, re-published the editorial debate between Henry J. Van Dyke and Luther Tracy Townsend for her conclusion, and relegated excerpts from others to her later section "Testimony by Preachers who are Men." The letters by Talmage, Cook, and Parker, therefore, are Willard's twist on the authenticating document usually prevalent in women's defenses; together, they form the first component of her experimental little book collage.

Using the genre of the little book, Willard negotiates all the constituents of her rhetorical situation. The audience, although in reality quite small, is invoked as global; the author, although in reality celebrated as an exemplar, is foregrounded and eclipsed by a collective brotherhood. And although *Woman in the Pulpit* was written in response to hindrances to Willard's religious leadership, the exigence and context is recast as a significant issue facing all men and women. Following her "authenticating letters," each additional remaining component of *Woman in the Pulpit* contributes to and supports this rhetorical situation. According to Vatz, "After salience is created, the situation must be translated into meaning" (160). Having successfully created salience in her preface and introduction, Willard embarks on her exegetical project, the meaning-making segment of her little book collage.

Willard's Refutation: Performing a Scientific Exegesis

Willard divides her exegesis into two chapters: "The Letter Killeth and "The Spirit Giveth Life." Her exegesis is itself stereoscopic: she calls the former—her refutation—the "negative side," and the latter—her confirmation—the "positive" side (39). Her titles are an allusion to the scripture she cites at the start of her text:

"Search the Scriptures."—John v. 39

"But now we are delivered from the law . . . that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter."—Rom. vii. 6

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."—2 Cor. iii. 6.

With the exception of Corinthians, these passages are not commonly referenced in other defenses of women's preaching. In framing her exegesis with these passages, Willard signals that her project is not only a defense of women preachers; hers is also a defense of a new kind of ministry, one that is in the "spirit" as opposed to the "letter." Willard characterizes exegesis of the letter as "man-made" and "the most misleading of all arts" (23) and offers up exegesis of the spirit, what she calls the "science of theology" (26) as the alternative. This dissociative act is significant, for Willard aligns the "spirit" with truth defined two ways: as religious, God-inspired truth, and as scientific truth. Consistent with other early Social Gospel theologians, Willard's "science of theology" is grounded in a rhetoric that borrows scientific and metaphysical concepts, metaphors, and imagery.

Wendy Hayden argues that the use of scientific warrants by nineteenth-century female reformers was fairly common at the time. According to Hayden, there was tremendous availability of scientific information in the public sphere as a result of popular medical books and journals. Thus, the theory of evolution and other novel

scientific theories were easily and quickly disseminated, and scientific discourse began to become absorbed into the social arena. “Thanks to popularization,” writes Hayden, “science permeated so many areas of social life that it became almost a common language..... feminist reformers could mold and shape science to meet their ends” (58). Women not only invoked the authority of science; they also explicitly and implicitly used science in their discourse (284). Because Willard taught natural sciences at North Western Female College, she would have had a strong understanding of the prevalent theories at the time.

Just as Willard experiments with the authenticating letter, she experiments with biblical exegesis. In “The Letter Killeth,” Willard provides a detailed refutation of objections to women’s preaching and critiques literal Biblical interpretation, what she calls “playing fast and loose” with Scripture. Willard’s exegesis contributes a new approach to the tradition of defenses of women’s preaching: the scientific method. Although the scientific method originated in the sixteenth century, in part from Galileo, our modern-day notion of the steps involved in the process was developed in the nineteenth century: the proving or disproving of a hypothesis borne out through evidence and reasoning.¹²⁶ However, unlike our modern-day inclination to confine the scientific method to the laboratory and highly specialized disciplinary inquiry, nineteenth-century scientific theories permeated all aspects of culture. According to Janice Law Trecker, “The scientific method and the new scientific theories were not seen simply as means of exploring nature and matter, but as tools for approaching moral and social problems as well” (88). Although the theories often demonstrated highly sophisticated modes of

¹²⁶ For more on history of scientific method in the nineteenth century, see Ralph Blake, et al., *Theories of Scientific Method* (1989).

reasoning, it was assumed that an educated middle class could easily follow the application of such reasoning.

The social application of scientific inquiry was recognized by Charles Saunders Peirce, a highly influential theorist during this period. Peirce articulated a scientific method that blended abductive, inductive, and deductive reasoning. According to Peirce, the scientific method was the advanced of four stages of inquiry, trumping “tenacity” (what one is inclined to think), “authority” (conformity to ready-made beliefs), and “congruity” (what is already agreeable to reason). Peirce recognized that “logic is rooted in the social principle” and believed that the scientific method could enable the evolution of society toward Truth (142).

Scientific theories were of particular interest to Social Gospelists precisely because of this possibility of *social* human development. One of the key theological principles of the Social Gospel was process theory, the teleological idea that states of being become modified over time, developing from simpler into infinitely more sophisticated states.¹²⁷ Darwin’s theory of evolution is the most obvious example of process theory and was very influential to Social Gospel thought. Social Darwinism influenced not only the Social Gospel, but most public discourse in its emphasis on human evolution and the facilitation of human progress (Watson and Burkholder xxiii). Henry Ward Beecher, for example, whom Willard highly regarded and is considered by many to be a precursor to Social Gospel thought, called himself a “cordial Christian evolutionist” (qtd. in Melanie May 142).¹²⁸

¹²⁷ For more on process theory see William King, “History as Revelation” (1983).

¹²⁸ Amy Slagell, “Rhetorical Structure” (2001) writes that Willard copied long excerpts from Beecher’s speeches into her journal (6). For Willard’s impressions of Beecher, see *Glimpses* 345-47.

What the Social Gospel adapted from evolutionary theory was the idea that the social order mirrored the natural order in its progress toward a state of more morally advanced being. Because the Social Gospel stressed the collective over the individual, it departed from Social Darwinism in its refusal to validate the idea of the “survival of fittest.” Indeed, Social Darwinists and Social Gospelers often went head-to-head over economic and social reform, since Social Darwinists, following leaders like William Graham Sumner, argued that honest, hard-working, “evolved” men should never have to support the “ne’er-do-well” (qtd. in Boase 14). Social Gospelists rather argued that it was because of institutional evils that humanity could be prohibited from evolving, and they believed that evolutionary progress necessitated the collective good will and good works for the benefit of society overall. In the words of Washington Gladden: “The world is not saved...it is ‘being saved’.... humanity moves slowly forward in the track of God’s great purpose” (7-8). Similarly, Josiah Strong wrote: “Does it not look as if there were about to be a new evolution of civilization? If this evolution is to bring the solution of our great sociological problems, it must be along Christian lines” (162).

Although Willard has been studied in the context of the Social Gospel, the influences of science on her rhetoric and theology have not been investigated. She considered herself to be writing in “these regnant days of scientific Christianity and Christian science” (“The Quenchless Woman Question” 34) and claimed that “the best scientific minds are now religious and the larger religious minds are scientific” (“The World’s Religious Congress” 62). Women, according to Willard, were “students of [Science’s] sacred revelation” (*Dress and Vice* 8). A cursory glance through Willard’s writings demonstrates the importance of evolution to her, not only as a metaphor, but also

as a concept. For example, Willard wrote in her journal, “They are all helping the one cause—the evolution of man toward God” (396); furthermore, she said to the WCTU, “The ‘Do Everything Policy’ was not of our choosing, but is an evolution as inevitable as any traced by the naturalist or described by the historian” (“The Do Everything Policy” 2).

The influence of popular scientific and metaphysical discourse on Willard is particularly evident in *Woman in the Pulpit*; Willard uses the hybrid textual space of the little book to articulate her “science of theology.” Science and its step-sister, metaphysics, helps Willard defend women’s ministry; it also provides her with a process and a rhetoric for articulating her Social Gospel theology. First, Willard uses the process of scientific reasoning in her exegesis through inductive and deductive reasoning and comparison.

Willard begins her exegetical chapter with inductive reasoning. Willard cites several examples of modern-day contradictions with Scripture, from the mundane (jewelry and other “adornment” and leavened bread) to the significant (marriage and abolition) (18-21). Willard follows these examples with a series of “givens”:

given an appreciation of the pleasantness of women...given the charm that men find in “stylish” dress...given the custom of being waited on...given the unpleasantness of washing people’s feet... given in the dominant sex the quenchless love of individual liberty... given the resistless force of attraction between man and woman... (22-23).

Using inductive reasoning, Willard then states: “woman cannot help concluding that exegesis, thus conducted, is one of the most time-serving and man-made of all sciences” (23). Willard’s analysis serves two purposes in this long passage: she proves the fallacy of exegesis as it is usually conducted and simultaneously indicates her mastery of logical

reasoning. Willard thus displaces “misleading” exegesis with her own *logical*, scientific exegesis, an approach that would have particular weight for a nineteenth-century audience receptive to and interested in prevailing scientific discourse.

Willard also provides evidence of her proficiency with scientific logic with deductive reasoning, presenting two topoi of defenses of women’s preaching: an explication of Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2: 17-18 and a presentation of female biblical lineage. Willard first gives the reader her premise: “As woman’s prophesying (literally, ‘speaking forth’) is plainly authorized, let us inquire what this word means” (30). She follows with a lexical treatment of the word (30-31) and multiple examples of women’s prophesying found in the New Testament (31). Willard’s second example of deductive reasoning is a refutation of the premise of women’s subjection based on original sin. To counter, Willard offers up a lineage of female leaders in the Bible (33-34).

Finally, Willard presents her refutation of Pauline scripture in “tabulated form,” with a three-column table, the first column containing Paul’s text, the middle containing contradictory “other scripture,” and the third containing contradictory Pauline scripture (27-28). Her comparative biblical exegesis is not new; many of the defenses of women’s preaching published before *Woman in the Pulpit* cite these same passages as evidence to the idiosyncratic and contradictory nature of Paul’s injunction. What is unique about Willard’s text is her presentation. The table format was commonly used in scientific works of the period to demonstrate classification and systematic cataloguing (Battalio 28). In borrowing from this tradition, Willard is able both to present a taxonomy of defense of women’s preaching and to invoke the credibility of the scientific method. Willard’s exegetical table is a visual cue for her hybrid scientific and religious discourse.

In addition to providing her with a process, science and metaphysics also gives Willard a rhetoric for articulating her Social Gospel theology. Willard frequently references evolution in her text. For example, in rejoinder to arguments supporting women's subjection, with slight tongue-in-cheek, she argues that "coming last in the order of creation, [woman] stands highest of all" (37). In an implicit reference to evolution, Willard makes a bolder claim that is indicative of the influence of process theory in her theology. Writes Willard, "Exegesis is defined as being 'especially the scientific interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.' It is in no sense an inspired work, but grows in breadth and accuracy with the general growth of humanity" (24). In this passage, both the Bible and humanity evolve as complementary processes. The inference is that exegesis must also grow and change, supporting Willard's theology "in the spirit" as opposed to the "letter."

Willard's other implicit reference to evolution serves as the transition to the confirmation chapter of her exegesis, "The Spirit Giveth Life." Willard's final claim in "The Letter Killeth" is that men and women exist together, "belonging to the same class represented by [Christ's] only earthly parent" (35). Claiming that opposition to women's preaching "reverses nature's order," Willard borrows popular German metaphysical phrases, writing: "Life sleeps in minerals, dreams in vegetables, wakes in animals, and speaks in man" (36), and "A stream cannot rise higher than its source" (37). Both passages were commonly used in the late-nineteenth century; the former was an appropriation of a passage from the works of the early nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich von Schelling: "Mind sleeps in stone, dreams in the plant, awakes

in the animal and becomes conscious in man.”¹²⁹ The latter was employed by both literary and religious writers, notably Anna Julia Cooper and Mormon Joseph Smith. For Willard, the phrases demonstrate a hierarchy of order, as well as evolutionary principles. Both “man” and “stream” represent a unified humanity of men and women, with their linguistic power resulting from their joint evolutionary standing.

Willard does not reference Schelling by name in any of her works; however, the indirect citation indicates an interest in his metaphysics.¹³⁰ Schelling argued that division in nature led to a single formative energy, the soul. George Wilhelm Hegel developed Schelling’s idea of the soul into his concept of “spirit,” what Hegel defined as a set of contradictions or oppositions that united into what he called “dialectic” (qtd. in Pelczynski 212)¹³¹ Claiming Schelling’s and Hegel’s influence on Willard is speculative, but tenable, since they were precursors to socialist thought and heavily influenced philosophy in the late-nineteenth century. In Social Gospel circles, Hegel had “considerable influence” (Pannenberg 496); this influence is particularly evident in the theology of the early Social Gospel, among Willard’s contemporaries. The Hegelian idea of society—“the state”—as a united, single organism (Ware 179), for example, is frequently referenced by Washington Gladden and Josiah Strong. Gladden writes in *The Church and the Kingdom*: “Human society is an organism; it is a whole whose parts are

¹²⁹ The quotation is also found—and also not cited—in John Astor, *A Journey in Other Worlds* (1894) and a year later in Horatio Dresser, *An Interpretation of Life in Its Relation to Health and Happiness* (1895). Although today often attributed to Eastern philosophy—and it very well may have originated from an ancient Sufi text—the quotation was often attributed to Schelling in Willard’s time: it was probably published in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s and Margaret Fuller’s *The Dial*. For more on the influence of metaphysics on nineteenth century religion, see Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith* (1990).

¹³⁰ Willard biographer Ruth Bordin references Willard’s interest in “psychic phenomena” in the 1880s and 1890s (157). According to Bordin, Willard corresponded with Elliot Cones of the Society for Psychical Research and Annie Besant, a theosophist.

¹³¹ For more on Schelling’s influence on Hegel, see Charles Warner, *Library of the World’s Best Literature* (1897): 7162-166.

intrinsically and vitally related to it; humanity is one body with any members. Every organism is the product of one coordinating life force” (6).

For Willard, such unity is at the core of her exegesis and serves as the conclusion to her scientific project in this chapter. Willard presents the concept of dialectical unity as the antithesis to separate spheres ideology. Willard’s exegesis as presented in “The Letter Killeth” rejects a severe dissociation between male and female; Willard argues that separate spheres ideology represents “denaturalizing theories” (36) and reveals “a general and deep-seated peculiarity” (38). What is natural infers Willard, is a new combined entity which does not *erase* the separate identities of male and female but rather permits their dual contributions to theology and society. “We need women commentators to bring out the women’s side of the book” (21), writes Willard; “The whole subjection theory grows out of the one-sided interpretation of the Bible by men” (37). Willard proposes that female—united with male—exegesis is scientifically, metaphysically, and theologically sanctioned and therefore evidence of men’s and women’s synthesized evolution into a dual state of being.

The result of this dual state of being is not an un-gendered Man, but a dual-gendered Man in the image of Christ. Willard hints at this in her epigraph, Galatians 3:28: “There can be no male and female: for ye all are one *man* in Christ Jesus.” Notice that Willard does not cite the King James Version, as do most of her contemporaries: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Willard cites the English Revised Version, omits the first part of the passage (“There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free”), and italicizes “man.” For Willard, “man” is the key term in the

passage, representing both men and women together. This duality is the basis of her confirmation in “The Spirit Giveth Life.”

Willard’s Confirmation: God’s Authorization for Women’s Ministry

The purpose for “The Spirit Giveth Life” is to prove God’s authorization of female ministry. Willard continues her exegesis from the previous chapter by explicating and narrating her exegetical chart in “The Letter Killeth,” re-citing several passages, and adding analysis and interpretation. Beginning with the premises that “Christ, not Paul, is the source of all churchly authority and power” (40) and that “Christ’s commission only is authoritative” (42), Willard lists several examples of women helping Christ in the Bible (40-44), and cites the Holy Spirit’s mandate to prophesy (44).

Willard argues that God authorizes “every woman who leads a life of weekday holiness, and has the Gospel in her looks” (48). Unlike many other defenders of women’s preaching who are careful to present an acceptable list of contemporary female preachers, Willard opens up the arena to include any woman who *acts* holy. According to Amy Slagell, a consistent theme in Willard’s speeches is an emphasis on “new worlds of action,” where women are not submissive, but active agents transforming their worlds (“Making” 168). The new world of action represented in *Woman in the Pulpit* is obviously the field of ministry; the players authorized to act in this new world are not identified based on structures of identity, but rather on their behaviors. Willard attributes tremendous values to a woman’s acts, with action actually replacing identifiable, physical markers of difference. The Gospel “in her looks” is potentially transformative,

superseding these other markers. Like so many other women preachers, including Julia Foote, Willard claims religion here as a master identity.

The reader is then quickly reoriented back to the dissociative pair of letter/spirit and the dialectical synthesis that Willard introduced in “The Letter Killeth.” After defining Christ as “the dual-natured founder of Christianity” (45), Willard urges: “It is men who have given us the dead letter rather than the living Gospel. The mother-heart of God will never be known to the world until translated into terms of speech by mother-hearted women” (47). This is a powerful statement: Willard claims that God authorizes women to use their gifts of rhetoric, “speech by mother-hearted women,” to represent him fully. Empowered as translators, women are placed in the intermediary role between men and God. Willard then develops her dissociation of the letter/spirit pair into several additional dissociative phrases:

Men preach a creed; women will declare a life. Men deal in formulas, women in facts. Men have tithed mint and rue and cumin [sic] in their exegesis and their ecclesiasticism, while the world’s heart has cried out for compassion, forgiveness, and sympathy.... Men reason in the abstract, women in the concrete. (47)

Jane Donawerth has argued that Willard creates a forum in her text, allowing both female and male voices to speak and “fragment[ing] what had been a coherent, exclusive system” (252). I would add that Willard’s dissociative project is critical to this fragmentation and serves as the foundation for her articulation of duality and egalitarianism. She follows this fragmentation with evidence of women’s realized and potential contribution to Christianity, including scores of conversion (48-49) and “strengthening and comforting speech” (49).

She also follows this fragmentation with a threat of what continued fragmentation may lead to: women authorizing themselves to minister. According to Willard:

“Shall women be ordained to preach?” another question is hereby proposed: “Shall women ordain themselves?” ...shall the bold, resolute men among our clergy win the day and give ordination to women, or shall women take this matter into their own hands? Fondly do women hope, and earnestly do they pray, that the churches they love may not drive them to this extremity. (56-7)

This was not an empty threat. Minutes from the 1877 WCTU convention refer to a “woman’s church” in Ohio that developed out of temperance meetings (L. Warner 177). Willard herself spoke of “the germ of a new church in which, as Christ declared, there shall be neither male nor female” (qtd. in Hardesty, *Women* 82).¹³² However, as she presents in this chapter, the female-only religious space is an extreme that she would prefer to avoid.

Finally, Willard claims that men themselves have authorized women to pursue opportunities in the public sphere, encouraging them to become educated (60) and allowing them to teach Sunday-school, serve on church councils, and engage in missionary work (50-55):

It was [Man] who read our books and encouraged us to write more. It was he who listened to us on the platform and applauded every good thing we said; it is he who invites us to his counsels, ministerial, education, medical, and philanthropic; he who must let us into the pulpit...he who must swing wide the door to the throne-room of government, and bid us share his regal seat as joint rulers with him of this republic. (60-61)

In sum, Willard articulates God’s authorization for women’s preaching, speculates about women’s authorization for their own preaching, and provides evidence of men’s authorization for similar kinds of public work.

¹³² For more on Willard’s interest in a female-only church, see Lacey Warner, *Saving Women* (2007), 173-81; and Carl and Dorothy Schneider, *In Their Own Right* (1997), 93.

What Willard does not do, unlike the majority of women who defended their right to preach, is rely on a narrative of her personal call to preach for authorization.

Interestingly, the closest representation of the call to preach is presented in Willard's autobiography, *Glimpses of Fifty Years* (1889) in which she provides an account of her inspiration for suffrage work:

Upon my knees alone...there was borne in upon my mind, as I believe, from loftier regions, the declaration, "You are to speak for woman's ballot as a weapon of protection to her home and tempted [sic] loved ones from the tyranny of drink," and then for the first and only time in my life, there flashed through my brain a complete line of argument and illustration—the same that I used a few months later before the Women's Congress...when I first publicly avowed my faith in the enfranchisement of women. (351)

This account, stylistically and rhetorically, evokes the strategies of many female preachers in authorizing their right to the pulpit: using a rhetoric of divine inspiration, they first establish God's authorization for their own preaching careers, then continue with their defenses of women's preaching. Clearly, Willard is familiar with the topos since she uses it in her autobiography; its absence from *Woman in the Pulpit*, therefore, is significant.

Unlike other defenses of women's preaching, *Woman in the Pulpit* is not simultaneously a self-defense and a defense of the practice generally. Willard is not concerned with defending her personal right to preach, but, instead, with defending women's universal right to the pulpit. Consequently, Willard cannot draw on the personal mandate from God that individual women might use to justify their preaching. Indeed, Willard claims that she never received a direct call from God, although she felt the desire to preach acutely: "I was too timid to go without a call, and so it came about

that while my unconstrained preference would long ago have led me to the pastorate, I have failed of it” (62).

Nonetheless, Willard places considerable significance on the call to preach, and, like Foote, exhorts her female readers to obey that call: “Let me, as a loyal daughter of the church, urge upon younger women who feel a call, as I once did, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ” (62). Furthermore, she encourages the community to support women who have been called, closing her exegesis thus:

let me pleadingly beseech all Christian people ...to encourage every true and capable woman, whose heart God has touched, in her wistful purpose of entering upon that blessed Gospel ministry, through which her strong yet gentle words and work may help to heal that heartache, and to comfort the sinful and the sad “as one whom his mother comforteth.” (62)

The quotation is a reference to Isaiah 66:13: “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.” The use of this scripture is significant, because it is one of the few biblical passages which directly refers to God in female-gendered terms. It certainly was not a popular passage in the Social Gospel, whose rhetoric was so heavily-laden with the masculine metaphors of brotherhood, fatherhood, and knighthood.¹³³ The feminine family metaphors—mother-heart, mother-church, loyal daughter—introduced in “The Spirit Giveth Life” are central to the remainder of *Woman in the Pulpit*. Willard’s significant task in the final three sections of her little book is to represent a society where the dual natures of femininity and masculinity can coexist and co-minister. She does this rhetorically in her third chapter, “The Earth-born Argument,” by strategically inserting the mother role and figure into the Kingdom of God. Moreover, she accomplishes this textually in “Testimony by Preachers who are Men” and “Testimony by Women Preachers” by providing equal space and room for both men’s and women’s voices.

¹³³ Indeed, Willard herself opens “The Coming Brotherhood” with references to “true knights” 79.

Theorizing the Mother in the Kingdom of God

As I detail in chapter two, at some point in each woman's defense of women's preaching, the author must reconcile the role of preacher with women's other sites of identity, most notably wife and mother. In "The Earth-born Argument," Willard very directly defines her task in her opening line: "But there are many ministers and other thoughtful men who...find substantial difficulty in reconciling the vocations of minister and mother" (63). Willard accomplishes this task by introducing motherhood into the Kingdom of God and by extending the parameters of the "home" to include the public sphere.

Much of the scholarship on Willard places her squarely in the "argument by difference" camp. I hope that I have complicated Willard's use of difference with my suggestion that she in fact uses dissociation in order, first, to present the dual natures of men and women, and, second, to defend women's authorization of and unique contributions to ministry. In doing so, she blends the common arguments based on difference and equality: it is precisely because of women's natural differences that they are equal with men.¹³⁴ In the category "Man," women and men form a more perfect Brotherhood. This world-view is expressed in other writings by Willard. For example, she wrote in 1888 that:

if a man and woman are stronger together than either can be separately in the home, by the same law of mind they are stronger together than either can be separately in literature and science, in business and professional life, in church and state.... By the laws of being, men and women must go hand in hand if they would not go astray; that equally do

¹³⁴ Amy Slagell calls this "egalitarian diversity" and argues that Willard extended this concept of diversity to race as well, "prefigur[ing] late twentieth-century arguments that embraced racial diversity rather than demanding color blindness" ("Rhetorical" 20).

man and woman need...not “like with like, but like with difference.”
 (“Individuality in Woman” 453)

Her “Brotherhood of Man” essay similarly references a “paternal and maternal government” (82). Willard’s argument by dissociation in the first half of *Woman in the Pulpit* establishes a theory and sets up a framework for the second half: if society in its perfect, evolved state is a dual-natured society, then the Kingdom of God must evolve to encompass the maternal, what Willard calls the “mother-heart of God” (46).

For Social Gospelists, the Kingdom of God was “the central, dominating, and most important concept of the Social Gospel” (Durfee 125). It was not a static concept, but inherent in its definition was continual progress and a movement toward unity, unity with other people and unity with God. Social Gospelists believed that part of the Christian mission—and integral to individual redemption—was the attempt to create heaven-on-earth, that is, to structurally “Christianize” society. In the words of Washington Gladden: “The complete Christianization of all life is what we pray for and work for, when we work and pray for the coming of the kingdom of heaven” (8). Heavily relying on metaphors of the family, in addition to the Brotherhood of Man, Social Gospelists frequently referred to the “Fatherhood of God.”

The family of God metaphor has its roots in early nineteenth-century Methodist practices and continues as a well-used metaphor into the twentieth century. As religious scholar A. Gregory Schneider has noted, early Methodists not only “felt themselves to be the heaven-bound family of God but also acted the parts of sister, brother, father, and mother” (123). Frederick Douglass, for example, references the family of God in one of his speeches as the ideal to which society should attain, and attacks racism as the barrier to this ideal: “it makes God a respecter of persons, denies his fatherhood of the race, and

tramples in the dust the great truth of the brotherhood of man.” (“What to the Slaves” 378). Unitarians also used family metaphors in their sermons. In his 1868 sermonic defense of women’s preaching, John Greenleaf Adams speaks of “A Common Fatherhood of Mankind,” “Divine Fatherhood,” and “Brotherhood of Mankind” as guiding principles for a strong ministry (7-8). For Social Gospelists, the metaphor applied not only to spiritual life and matters, but was the guiding principle for their theology. God’s charge to humanity, according to Social Gospel doctrine, was the broadening of the spiritual realm to engulf the secular realm. The Kingdom of God was the accomplishment of a truly Christianized society.

Willard spoke of the Kingdom of God frequently in her writings. For example, in “Women and Organization” she lists a number of reformers, including Lady Henry Somerset and Susan B. Anthony, who “are all bent upon one beautiful result—they would bring in the brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity; they would hasten the coming upon earth of the kingdom of heaven” (54). In a WCTU presidential address, Willard further stated “[men] have been full of wisdom in letting us into the kingdom, for we want a fair division of the world into two equal parts” (qtd. in Annie Gordon 224-35). In “The Earth-born Argument” Willard theorizes how the mother can contribute her fair share to the Kingdom of God.

Significantly, Willard does not reject the corporal mother in favor of a divine mother, but rather broadens the biological role of the mother to encompass spiritual motherhood. Willard symbolically uses the act of birthing to connect the corporal mother and the spiritual mother. She details how “combined in one personality,” mother and minister become “exalted,” and “Of such might well be born philanthropists and poets”

(65). Clearly, “born” does not refer to the actual biological process, but to a spiritual labor: the exalted dual role of mother-minister bears good citizens. Willard grounds the mother-minister, however, in explicit images of bodily labor, detailing “eternity’s cold breath upon [the Virgin Mary’s] forehead, while she suffered pangs untold that another life might be” (66). According to Willard, this physical labor “prepared and consecrated [her] for a mission so divine” (60). Willard does more, however, than simply glorify Mary’s sacrifice. She states that all women who labor—all mothers—are particularly equipped for ministry because of childbirth:

Incarnation and Vicarious Sacrifice—the two cardinal beliefs of Christendom—can never be so convincingly borne to the world’s heart as from the lips that have blanched with agony, while, with groanings that cannot be uttered, the speaker learned, even upon the purely human plane, what those words, incarnation and vicarious sacrifice, do really mean.... our holy faith can have no human ally so invincible as she who, with strong crying and tears, has learned the sublime secrets of pain and pathos that only mothers’ hearts can know. (66)

In objections to women’s preaching, a common line of argument is that women cannot bear the physical strain of the ministry, that their bodies are simply too delicate for the work. Willard turns that argument on its head in this passage, demonstrating how women’s bodies are in fact “invincible.” Furthermore, the sacrifice and act of labor consecrates woman’s ministry, just as bearing Christ consecrated Mary. Through the act of childbirth, women become the ultimate martyrs, and thus potentially the ultimate ministers: “a mother and a wife is, above all others, consecrated and set apart by *nature* to be a minister in the household of faith” (*italics mine*, 65).

The domestic metaphor of the “household of faith” is the second controlling image for the chapter. Just as woman’s duties are expanded in Willard’s articulated

mother-minister role, their sphere is expanded through her use of domestic metaphors. Rhetoric of the family and household is a marked feature of Willard's other writings. A year before she wrote *Woman in the Pulpit*, Willard's WCTU presidential address was riddled with domestic metaphors. She asked her audience to envision "one world of men and women side by side, God's home for all humanity" and claimed that women had a unique role to play in this sacred home, making "home-like every place she enters" (qtd. in Slagell, "Making" 176, 174). Three years later she wrote that "Society should become simply a larger home in which no human being should be any longer forgotten or forlorn" ("Woman's Cause" 716).

In all of her speeches and writings, Willard broadens the concept of the home to include all of society—the entire Kingdom. Instead of the separate spheres of a public, male space and a domestic, female space, Willard argued for one sphere in which men and women, different, contributed and participated equally. This is evident in her 1884 speech to the Michigan State WCTU: "A community without woman's equal social action, a church without her equal ecclesiastical action and a state without her equal political action is very much what a home would be without a mother, wife, sister, daughter, or friend" (382). According to Amy Slagell, "Willard used the home to justify women's entry into reform and political work, but she also used it to provide a model for the society that this work aimed to create" ("Making" 171).

That domestic model of society, I assert, is predicated on Willard's reconfiguration of the Social Gospel Kingdom of God to include the mother-minister role. Willard's closing paragraph encapsulates this reconfigured Kingdom:

But when women themselves speak, they represent not world-force so much as home-force; the home includes both man and woman, youth and

maiden, boy and girl; hence it is natural to women to make all feel themselves included in the motherly utterance that not only remembers but recognizes all. (72)

Earlier in the chapter, Willard bodily empowered women by referencing their capacity to bear children; at the close of her chapter, she rhetorically empowers women by referring to their speech. The “motherly utterance” that “remembers” and “recognizes all” has distinct biblical connotations: “remembers” connotes a commitment and promise (e.g. Exodus 20:8: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”), and “recognizes” connotes awareness and revelation (e.g. Luke 24:31: “And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him”). By proposing that in the home-like world women are the facilitators—through their speech and their utterances—of remembrance and recognition, Willard imbues women with preacherly qualities.

It is worth noting that throughout *Woman in the Pulpit*, Willard is careful not to suggest a feminine divine nature, but rather to identify the feminine in the divine. The difference is significant. As I explained earlier, the Fatherhood of God was a key concept to the Social Gospel. By 1910, Jesus was celebrated as the “manly man of Galilee” in a Social Gospel hymnal, and Walter Rauschenbusch similarly claims: “There was nothing mushy, nothing sweetly effeminate about Jesus” (both qtd. in Prothero 96). To challenge the inherent masculinity of any part of the trinity would probably result in a poor—or even hostile—reception of *Woman in the Pulpit*. That certainly was the experience of Elizabeth Cady Stanton a decade later with *The Woman’s Bible*. Although celebrated in the twentieth century, *The Woman’s Bible*, with its disdain for masculine images and gendered pronouns, caused painful division and discord in the female reform community. *The Woman’s Bible* had a chilly reception in the 1880s and 1890s National American

Woman Suffrage Association, which Stanton founded. The organization denounced *The Woman's Bible* publically, by passing a resolution disassociating itself from the work (Chaves 93). Alternatively, Willard presents *Woman in the Pulpit* as not a critique of the Bible, and she introduces the mother element not as an actual female-gendered deity, but rather as represented by women preachers. The responsibility of the female preacher is to offer the mother component of the Kingdom of God.

Twenty years after Willard published *Woman in the Pulpit*, Walter Rauschenbusch would write: “the constitutional structure of the family has passed through an ethical transformation by slow historical processes...the family has been assimilated to Christianity. As an institution it has been Christianized” (“Semi-Christian” 345-46). Willard was a part of the project of Christianizing the family; additionally, she saw as her mission the domestication of Christianity—of making a family, with a mother and father, out of the Christian state. She theorizes this concept in “The Earth-born Argument” so that she can textually represent it in the final sections of her book.

The Stereoscopic Forum: The Mother in the Kingdom of God Realized

Together, the two chapters “Testimony of Preachers who are Men” and “Testimony of Women Preachers” form a textual representation of the egalitarian Kingdom of God; furthermore, they are a textual representation of the forum Willard was denied in the Methodist Episcopal General Conference. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Willard makes it clear that she solicited letters on the topic of woman’s preaching for inclusion in *Woman in the Pulpit*. In these chapters, Willard exercises clear editorial control over the letters, excerpting, introducing, and providing a bit of

contextual information for each. Willard's little book is transformed at this point in her text into truly hybrid discourse. The rhetors are blended, the genres are blended, and together they represent Willard's envisioned utopic Kingdom of God, a hybrid theology based on the dual natures of man and woman.

What Willard does not do is insert her commentary on the passages. Consistent with the scientific approach she introduced in the exegetical portion of her book, Willard rather adopts the persona of the objective moderator, simply introducing the various voices into the debate. The contextual information she provides, however, hints at the rhetorical power she has in constructing the rhetor(s). Textually, the two chapters are almost identical. In "Testimony of Preachers who are Men," Willard includes excerpts from sixteen men; in "Testimony of Women Preachers," Willard includes excerpts from eleven women. Jane Donawerth observes that Willard creates "quite literally in her book the separate spheres of nineteenth-century Anglo American social life" (*Rhetorical* 243). I agree that Willard certainly acknowledges the ideology of separate spheres in her choice to divide the testimony by gender. However, I think that the chapters are meant to signify the dual components of her Kingdom of God domestic sphere; they contribute equally to the unified whole of *Woman in the Pulpit*. In her pamphlet, *A White Life for Two*, Willard argues that men and women should be "set side by side in school, in church, in government, even as God sets male and female everywhere side by side throughout His realm of law, and has declared them one throughout His realm of grace" (186). In these two chapters, Willard sets men and women side-by-side; collectively they become equal rhetors.

The constructed collective rhetor in “Testimony of Preachers who are Men” is, according to Willard, “A new class of theologians, dowered with what may be justly called the dual powers of man and woman in their perception and interpretation of the sacred oracles” (73). Willard keeps her introduction to each preacher brief, simply identifying him by denomination, location, and vocation; for example, she introduces a minister “who reaches, editorially, several hundred thousand readers per month,” “a well known Congregational pastor and professor,” “a Methodist doctor of divinity,” and “a Congregational D. D., a College President, and author of books.” In leaving the men nameless, despite their apparent popularity and esteem, Willard ensures that these male preachers not overshadow the women preachers who follow.

Willard does not construct a collective rhetor, a “class,” in “Testimony of Women Preachers” as she does in the previous chapter. Rather, she is careful to give rhetorical weight to individual woman preachers, referencing “five hundred who have already entered the pulpit as evangelists, and at least a score who are pastors” (94). Willard states that those represented in her book are but “a few women preachers among hundreds more” and cites six denominations who had ordained women by that time (94). In this opening paragraph, Willard distinguishes between evangelists and preachers, but then unifies them all as “ministers in Christ” (94), recognizing the various religious identities a female preacher could cloak herself with. Furthermore, the contextual information Willard provides for each female contributor is much more detailed in this section. She pays particular attention to the tenure of their preaching careers, referencing the number of years served and the number of converts under their ministries.

This section of *Woman in the Pulpit* is also hybrid in its genre; in addition to blending the epistolary into her book, Willard includes excerpts from previously printed and delivered pieces, such as editorials, books, and speeches. However, she only blends in these additional genres in “Testimony of Women Preachers,” not in “Testimony of Preachers who are Men.” This is a significant rhetorical move, because Willard demonstrates that women were participating in public discourse but limits men to domestic, semi-private discourse, via the letter. Willard very easily could have cited male preacher’s previously published material, as did so many women’s defenses of women’s preaching of that time.

In her preface, Willard identifies herself as the collector of testimony; in her first few chapters, she demonstrates that she is also a theologian; in her conclusion, she assumes the role of moderator, facilitating a dialogue. In one of her speeches, Willard remarked that “the greatest organizer on this earth is the mother” (“Organization” 224). Willard performs the role of the great organizer in *Woman in the Pulpit*, creating an ecumenical forum representative of and responding to a larger cultural conversation.¹³⁵ The little book genre allows Willard, first, to rhetorically reconceptualize the Social Gospel doctrine of the Kingdom of God so that she can, second, literally represent her vision of the Kingdom as encompassing two halves of one distinct sphere in which women and men must be co-participants.

¹³⁵ Although Willard was a devout Methodist her entire life, she does not claim Methodism anywhere in her book; indeed she references so many other religions that if one did not know her history, one could not guess her affiliation. Willard’s ecumenical leanings were evident from a very early age. Arguing for increased support for women’s education as she attempted to help found Evanston Ladies’ College, Willard recognized the contribution of women from a broad range of religious backgrounds: “Although ours was a Methodist college, Episcopal ladies were on the Committee, Presbyterians bore the battle’s brunt, Congregationalists cheered on the battalions and did not a little of the fighting, while Baptists were outdone by nobody, and Methodists...were ‘at it all at it’” (*Glimpses* 202).

Conclusion

One significant underpinning of the Social Gospel was the idea that a value shift was necessary to bring about a “new mode of theological discourse and a new type of doctrinal reconstruction” (King 111). *Woman in the Pulpit* represents both a new mode of discourse—the little book—and a new type of doctrinal reconstruction—Willard’s stereoscopic Kingdom of God. Like Julia Foote’s hybrid book, Willard’s book is participatory. In Foote’s *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, the audience is constructed as her congregants and she assumes the role of minister; in *Woman in the Pulpit*, the audience is constructed as ministerial colleagues, with Willard as the mediator. Willard places demands on both her readers and the discourse itself. The participatory experience of reading *Woman in the Pulpit* is indicative of the Social Gospel interaction model, a model that suggested that social change could only occur through deeply committed community work. Social Gospel leaders expected the “recognition of corporate identity, sin, and salvation” and “insisted that structural social changes were imperative” (Lindley *You Have Stept* 135). Willard, in *Woman in the Pulpit* makes the same demands on the Social Gospel movement itself, recognizing its masculinist tendencies and attempting to structurally change the Kingdom of God through her rhetoric.

This chapter set out to simultaneously challenge two historiographies: a storiography of Frances Willard that portrayed her as the personification of the Cult of True Womanhood, and a storiography of the Social Gospel that described it as a primarily masculinist discourse. In studying Willard and the Social Gospel together, I assert that the Social Gospel was not simply a theology, but it also provided a means of communication, a rhetoric, for that theology. When Willard spoke before the U.S. Senate

Suffrage Committee in 1888, she proclaimed that “woman have been obliged to seek out a new territory” (448). Willard’s new textual territory was her stereoscopic little book. *Woman in the Pulpit*, as a hybrid genre of experimental collage, should thus be considered a central work in Willard’s repertoire, because it articulates her rhetorical theory and it presents her feminist theology.

Conclusion

The Little Book Defense: Louisa Woosley's *Shall Women Preach*

Women of America, and of God, let us,
for the sake of what he has done for us, give ourselves wholly to his work.
Shall Woman Preach? Or, the Question Answered 95

In 1984, Carolyn Miller identified the need “to make of rhetorical genre a stable classifying concept” and “to ensure that the concept is rhetorically sound” in her landmark essay, “Genre as Social Action” (151). Miller’s essay posits a set of criteria for understanding genre as a typified convention of discourse that enables or represents “meaningful action” (163). In this project, I have attempted to answer the question, “How does argument become genre—what causes typification?” That is, what can be learned from the process of genre-creation, when the exigencies of the discourse become so powerful that a genre develops in response?

I read not only genre, but also the creation of genre as meaningful action. The evolution of genre starts with hybridization, with the modification and experimentation of genres already available. In chapter one, I provided background for the tremendous backlash against women’s preaching, a backlash that hit women preachers in three considerable waves: in the 1830s, the 1850s, and in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. In chapter two, I surveyed the various genres and arguments used by women to defend women’s ministry; these genres included sermons, spiritual autobiographies, treatises, editorial letters, and speeches. The rhetorical markers for the defenses included

detailing God's authorization for women's ministry, performing exegesis, and reconciling the role of preacher with the role of woman as traditionally defined. As I demonstrated in chapters three and four, Foote and Willard modify and experiment with the genres available to them—the spiritual autobiography and treatise—in order to defend women's preaching and to present their theologies. Foote and Willard also demonstrate hybridity in their discourse, borrowing and appropriating rhetoric from a variety of traditions, including the sermonic and the Social Gospel. In creating hybrid forms and using hybrid rhetorics, Foote and Willard challenge the biblical, historical, and cultural arguments against women's preaching.

However, writing their little books was not simply a counter-cultural move against the backlash to women's preaching; it was also an attempt to change the landscape of religious experience in late-nineteenth century America at a time of incredible flux and crisis. Foote and Willard present their theologies—holiness and the Social Gospel, respectively—as a means to create a more egalitarian worshipping space for men and women. I close this project with an analysis of Louisa Woosley's *Shall Women Preach? Or The Question Answered* as an example of genre “typified,” to borrow Miller's term. The little book, represented in Woosley's *Shall Woman Preach?*, is used to accomplish three things simultaneously: defend women's preaching, defend women's rights, and present a theology. Through the genre of the little book, Woosley extends the rhetorical project of defending women's preaching into a broader realm of argument—women's equal rights; she also uses the little book to introduce her theology, a theology of action based on the codes and symbols of Masonic ritual.

Louisa Mariah Layman Woosley

We have knowledge of Woosley's life because of the brief, six-page spiritual autobiography she included at the back of her defense, and because of the work of Mary Linnie Hudson, who reviewed several miscellaneous boxes and files of Woosley's extant sermons, letters, and evangelistic records for her 1992 dissertation. Louisa Mariah Layman was born in 1862 in central Kentucky. She was raised in the Baptist faith by her father, a clerk of the church. She did not have the benefit of an education, Woosley tells her readers, because her father "did not take the interest in education...being taught from early childhood of Jesus Christ to the exclusion of all others" (96). She experienced sanctification and the call to preach at the age of twelve. Because she was uneducated and "many obstacles were in the way," she did not answer the call, persuading herself that "it was not right for women to preach" (96). This brief narrative is all that Woosley shares of her early years.

At the age of seventeen, Layman married a farmer, Curtis Woosley. Louisa Layman Woosley hoped that her husband would answer the call to preach for her, but he showed no interest. At the age of twenty, with two young children to care for, Woosley read the Bible cover to cover, in order to justify her resistance to follow God's call to minister. Writes Woosley, "In order to justify myself in refusing to obey the instructions of the Holy Spirit and go to work for the Master, I set to work to read the Bible through carefully, marking all the places where a woman was mentioned" (96). The project took a year, and at the conclusion of her bible study, Woosley felt affirmed in the scriptural justification of her right to preach. The notes she took served as the basis for *Shall Woman Preach?*

As typical of conversion narratives, Woosley writes of her resistance to the call and how her resistance threatened the life of her child. She pledged to God to follow her call if he spared her child. Her child lived, but she again was reluctant to preach. Her fears are typical of other woman preachers of the time: “I am slow of speech, I am not educated, and the people will not hear me. And perhaps my husband will not be willing” (98). Her own health failed, and it was only after “giving all to God” that she improved. In 1887, at twenty-five, she conducted services and preached her first sermon for an absent pastor in a Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Woosley enjoyed local support and was welcomed regularly back into the pulpit; she was formally recognized by a licensure to preach in 1888 and by ordination from the local Presbytery in 1889. Woosley ends her narrative by detailing the success of her four years of ministry: nine hundred and twelve sermons, two souls, and five hundred new members of the Cumberland Presbytery. She writes of her hope for even greater success: “For two thousand souls more I am willing to consecrate the remainder of my life to God” (101).

Woosley was true to her word. According to a memorial tribute of her in the *Cumberland Presbyterian*, Woosley was active in ministry for forty-five years, holding hundreds of revivals from Kentucky to Oregon and saving one hundred thousand souls (“Tribute” 15). Mary Linnie Hudson credits Woosley with preaching nearly eight thousand sermons, baptizing over four hundred children and adults, and joining three thousand new members to the Cumberland Presbyterian faith (184). Woosley moved in with her daughter in Lexington, Kentucky in 1930 after the death of her husband. She continued her ministry there, writing sermons, “quoting scripture by the yard,” and

conducting Bible classes in the First Methodist Church until her death, at the age of ninety, in 1952 (Boyd and Brackenridge 116).

What Woosley does not detail in her spiritual autobiography is her motivation for writing *Shall Woman Preach?*. Woosley's ordination was the focus of a series of heated debates within the Presbyterian General Assembly. According to the research of Presbyterian scholars Lois Boyd and R. Brackenridge, the debate over Woosley's ordination was just as much a debate over the rights of local presbyters versus the parent synod as it was over women's preaching.¹³⁶ The Kentucky Synod ordered the local Presbytery (the Nolin Presbytery) to remove Woosley's name from its roster of ministers in 1890. In direct defiance, the Nolin Presbytery elected Woosley as the alternative delegate to the General Assembly. The Kentucky Synod took stronger action in 1893 in response: it declared her ordination invalid and ordered the Nolin Presbytery to strike her name from its roster, claiming that "the Presbytery had no authority either from the Confession of Faith, or from the Holy Scriptures for the ordination of a woman" ("Minutes" 24). The Nolin Presbytery did not back down and elected Woosley as a commissioner to the General Assembly a year later. A series of back-and-forth judicatory actions continued for almost twenty years, and Woosley was not officially and fully recognized as an ordained Cumberland Presbyterian minister until 1913.

In the context of this debate, Woosley's self-published *Shall Woman Preach?* can be read as a defense of herself in direct response to the actions of the General Assembly. As I will detail in this chapter, *Shall Woman Preach?* can also be read in direct response to the broader issues of women's preaching and women's rights. A review of the book in

¹³⁶ My history of the debate is from Lois A. Boyd and R. Douglas Brackenridge, *Presbyterian Women in America* (1983): 116-17; and Mary Linnie Hudson's dissertation, *Shall Woman Preach? Or the Question Answered: The Ministry of Louisa M. Woosley in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church* (1992), 34-81.

the same year it was published criticized it for being “not very systematic”; the reviewer found that “the names of the chapters convey, in several instances, no idea of the character of the contents” (qtd. in Hudson 107). This is only true if the book is read in isolation; to the contrary, if read alongside the dozens of other women’s defenses of women’s preaching and scriptural defenses of women, it represents a significant cultural conversation with other women engaged in the same rhetorical project of defending women’s right to the pulpit and right to equality.

Woosley refers to her text as a “little book” or “little volume” six times in her prefatory matter; the term is clearly a controlling signifier for her project. Woosley also details that she “made [her] arguments as plain and as pointed as possible,” and claims that her motivation for writing the book came from a desire “to afford a concise, yet comprehensive, Bible argument for the benefit of the mass of common readers; to aid in procuring, if possible, more uniformity of sentiment and practice in the Church to which the author esteems it an honor to belong” (6). Although not the lengthiest treatment, Woosley’s little book is perhaps the most comprehensive defense of the nineteenth century, addressing every topos that I outlined in chapter two. Woosley’s concluding remarks in her introduction convey her view of the purpose of the book:

This little book is sent forth after much prayer, and careful investigation of God’s Word, with the hope that it may help all, into whose hands it may fall, to a better understanding of the truth; and that it may be wielded by the great Head of the Church as an instrument for the spread of truth and righteousness. (7)

In this passage, “instrument” has as much rhetorical weight as “little book,” because it signifies the usefulness, the *instrumentality* of the little book. Such instrumentality is central to Carolyn Miller’s definition of genre. “A rhetorically sound definition of

genre,” argues Miller, “must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (151). The little book, as Woosley constructed it, continually moves the argument over women’s preaching into the stasis of policy and action. The reader is invited again and again to commit to some action—to “give our hearts and our hands” (95)—for example, to change church policy, to build God’s metaphorical temple on earth, or to preach. Remarkably, though, that action is not centered on defending women’s preaching, but rather on enacting Woosley’s theology. According to Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor, “arguer, audience, and occasion—in short the full rhetorical situation—can actually move the effective stasis of a dispute” (223). In this chapter, I demonstrate how genre can move the stasis of a dispute, in this case moving the debate over women’s preaching into a debate over women’s equality.

Woosley’s *Shall Woman Preach* contains an introduction, eight chapters, two poems, and a spiritual autobiography. Three chapters are solely addressed to the issue of women’s preaching, three chapters offer scriptural defenses of women, and two chapters present Woosley’s Masonic theology. Within the larger rhetorical framework of the scriptural defense chapters, Woosley addresses women’s preaching as a subset of activity and women’s access to ministry as a subset of rights. In the remainder of this chapter, I will detail how Woosley’s little book genre is simultaneously a defense of women’s preaching, a scriptural defense of women, and a theology of action.

The Little Book as a Defense of Women’s Preaching

The three chapters in *Shall Woman Preach?* that are entirely dedicated to women’s preaching are “Objections Answered,” “The Truth Shall Make You Free,” and “By What Authority.” “Objections Answered,” the first chapter in the book, addresses

sixteen potential objections to women's preaching. As I detailed in chapter two, objections to female ministry were based on both Scripture and cultural fears and assumptions (50). Woosley opens her book by touching upon every conceivable objection to women's preaching: the Pauline prohibitions (9-14, 23-24), lack of biblical precedent (14-15, 17-18), Presbytery-specific objections (15-16, 18-19), woman's physical and intellectual handicaps and maternal obligations (20-21, 23), and the limitation of God's call and specificity of Christ's commissioning to men only (21-23, 25).

The breadth of the objections that Woosley addresses indicates that she was very familiar with the debate over women's preaching. Furthermore, she uses a variety of rhetorical strategies for each objection: exegesis to outline biblical contradictions, narrative to lay bare cultural presuppositions, and argument to point out logical fallacies. The genre that Woosley seems to be adopting in this chapter is the editorial letter. She numbers each objection and addresses it in turn; this was a common tactic in editorial letters defending or objecting to women's preaching.

Alternatively, "The Truth Shall Set You Free," reads like a sermon. Woosley first takes a text, Psalm 68: 11-12: "The Lord gave the Word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil." Woosley then painstakingly explicates Scripture that she claims supports women's preaching, citing two dozen passages from multiple books in both the Old and New Testaments. Included also in this chapter is a kind of benediction, where Woosley asks God for help in strengthening women for ministry, recalling a lineage of biblical foremothers:

O great and eternal God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of heaven and earth, Creator of all things, Preserver of men and women.... As thou didst fill with thy spirit, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Hannah, Ruth, Esther, Anna, Mary, Priscilla, Phebe, and Philip's daughters, and other good and noble women—fill the hearts of the daughters of America with thy love, and with a burning zeal for thy cause; that they may worthily perform the work committed to them. So shall thy name be glorified, our cords lengthened and our stakes strengthened. (71-72)

Additionally, Woosley, like Foote, lines four times in her text, incorporating poetry and hymn without referencing the original source. First, Woosley includes the last stanza to a poem titled “The Summons to Service” by Marianne Farmingham; the second two I could not locate and may have been original hymns. The performative function of the benediction and hymns embedded within the chapter invoke the orality of the revival. Woosley was very active in revival ministry; this chapter clearly borrows in rhetoric and form from that tradition.

In her third and final chapter defending women's preaching, “By What Authority,” Woosley asks and answers the question: “Who has a right to administer these sacraments” (75). She is concerned specifically with proving that women should enjoy the full rights of ordination, and she thus responds to stipulations that women only be allowed to perform limited kinds of ministry, such as Sunday school education, lay evangelism, or missionary work. Woosley references the same volume of scripture as she does in the preceding chapter; however, she does not adopt a sermonic mode. Rather, the chapter directly addresses the “Presbytery,” the “Synod,” and the “General Assembly,” while it suggests that the resolution could benefit the greater community: “With due deference to one and all, we will proceed to investigate this subject, hoping it will be profitable to the reader, and beneficial to the world” (74). Woosley adopts a more

formal tone in this chapter; she perhaps was imagining the real rhetorical situation of defending her right to ordination at the General Assembly meetings that same year.

The Little Book as a Scriptural Defense of Women

Woosley's second chapter, "Woman in the Garden," fifth chapter, "Christian and Pagan Womanhood," and last chapter, "The Outlook—Woman's Prospects Brightening," are scriptural defenses of women; each chapter also contains a defense of women's preaching embedded within it. "Woman in the Garden," is a blend of oratorical styles, reminiscent of both the sermon and convention speech. Woosley takes as her text Genesis 2:18 ("And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone") and provides an explication of the passage, detailing women's creation and God's purpose for women. In the middle of the chapter, however, Woosley changes into an argumentative style that relies on natural rights rhetoric, arguing that God's creation of man and woman represents a unified sphere: "Not a word is said of man's sphere and woman's sphere, neither of his authority and her subjection; so, without a doubt, they stood on equal footing under the law" (28). Woosley follows by offering an exposition of "the women of to-day" (30), refuting all scripture that potentially supports the subjection of women.

Woosley closes by returning to the particular issue of women's preaching, relying on the common topos of exegesis of prophetic scripture. Woosley sums up her argument thus:

If god pours out his Spirit upon the women, and says they shall prophesy (preach), who will dare say they shall not? Shall we not obey God rather than man? But if women fail to preach, what, then, becomes of Joel's prophecy? Can it ever be fulfilled? Of what authority is his prophecy? And, if this prophecy is never to be fulfilled, then we will have to drop this book from the sacred canon. But if it is to be fulfilled, then God sanctions

women preaching. We understand that whatever prophesying means in men, it means in women. (34-35)

This passage is evocative of mid-nineteenth century defenses in particular, such as Phoebe Palmer's and Jennie Willing's, in its emphasis on God's unquestionable authorization.

In both her fifth chapter, "Christian and Pagan Womanhood," and final chapter, "The Outlook—Woman's Prospects Brightening," Woosley borrows from the genre of the convention speech. Woosley compares "heathen" nations with Christian nations. In heathen nations, argues Woosley, subjection of women is the norm; in Christian nations, "[woman] is a helpmeet—an equal sharer in all the blessings of the gospel (51). "The Outlook" is an encomium of women's progress in the modern world; Woosley outlines the various occupations of women, including "editors, authors, inventors, lawyers, physicians, architects, astronomers, teachers, officers, and preachers" (92) and questions gender inequality in pay scale, education, and opportunity (88-89).

These chapters are also the most insistent in their feminist rhetoric. Woosley compares the debate over women's rights to a "battle," a "movement," and a "wave," with women "fast coming to the front...engaging in active public work" (53-54). Woosley places women preachers at the forefront of the debate, arguing that because of women's religious leadership, "woman's prospect for future usefulness is brightening: new fields are inviting her: and when she has once entered the work, no earthly power can turn the tide" (59). As I explained in chapter two, when distinct movements developed in the mid- to late nineteenth century—most notably suffrage—female church leaders either distanced themselves rhetorically from their "radical" sisters or began to replace biblical rhetoric and scriptural support for their preaching with more secularized,

radical rhetoric and arguments based on natural rights (76). Woosley does neither. She embraces the radical rhetoric of the secular sphere; simultaneously, she uses scriptural support to augment the female preacher's role to leader of women's rights. I quote the following passage at length, because it is representative of Woosley's rhetorical strategy of blending the rhetoric of defenses of preaching with the rhetoric of scriptural defense to privilege the role of female preacher:

We will now take the boldness of Deborah, God's mouth-piece and commander-in-chief, who lead the army of Israel to battle, and to whom God gave the victory; and Miriam, the faithful and called of God; and Huldah, the expounder of the law, who for wisdom, at that time, could not be excelled; and the adoration and thanksgiving of Hannah; and the intercession of Esther; and the piety of Ruth;—and with all these graces blended the Church shall be united and the world shall be girdled. Then let us take the faith of the Syrophenician woman; the aptness of the woman of Samaria; the humility of Mary; the office of Phebe; the zeal of Priscilla; the gift of Philip's four daughters; the spirit of the woman who gave her two mites; the devotion of the woman that anointed the Savior's feet; the position of the woman who labored with Paul in the gospel;—by the union of these excellences of character, the world shall be filled with gladness, and heaven with music. (92)

As she does in her defense of women's preaching chapter, "The Truth Shall Set You Free," Woosley lists a biblical lineage of female religious leaders; however in the context of the scriptural defense of women, the line of argument operates slightly differently. Woosley identifies a lineage of traits, represented by the acts of biblical females; women activists, through the "blend" and "union" of these characteristics, can reach out from the church and "girdle" the world. Using the blended genre of the little book defense, Woosley moves the reader from the stasis of conjecture—"Did women really preach?"—to the stasis of future action—"Assume the qualities of those preaching women and go forth."

Women's rights and women's preaching were already aligned in the public eye and in the press. Arguing against women's preaching in 1879, fellow Presbyterian Robert Lewis Dabney wrote in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, "This common movement for 'women's rights,' and women's preaching, must be regarded, then, as simply infidel. It cannot be candidly upheld without attacking the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures" (700). Woosley tackled the exigencies of both her personal situation, a refusal by the General Assembly to recognize her ordination, and what that personal situation represented, the challenge to women's preaching in America. She did so by blending the discourse of women's defenses of women's preaching with the discourse of women's rights, creating a hybrid scriptural defense of women that elevated the issue of women's preaching to the forefront of women's activism, and recast the role of female preacher as female activist. In Woosley's theology, a symbolic, Masonic theology, Woosley articulates the sphere in which female religious leaders can act.

The Little Book as a Presentation of Theology

As I detailed in chapters three and four, Foote and Willard partly resolve the debate over separate spheres by articulating a new sphere for women. For Foote, that sphere is the sphere of holiness; sanctified by the Holy Spirit, argues Foote, all are equal to do God's work. Similarly, for Willard, that sphere is the sphere of the Kingdom of God, an egalitarian realm where women and men, different, contribute equally together. I conclude my reading of Woosley with a consideration of *Shall Women Preach?* as a presentation of her theology. Woosley's theological sphere is a sphere of action, articulated through Masonic rhetoric.

It should be noted that I am the first scholar to associate Woosley with Freemasonry. Mary Linnie Hudson makes no mention of finding Masonry references in Woosley's materials, and Presbyterian scholars Boyd and Brackenridge and Ben Barrus do not discuss Masonry in their brief studies of Woosley. I make the assertion based solely on my analysis of two of Woosley's chapters: "Behold I Have Set Before Thee an Open Door" and "And They Came, Both Men and Women, as Many as Were Willing-Hearted." Woosley's appropriation of the Masonic-associated ritual, "Ritual of the Eastern Star," is hard to dispute. Woosley recreates the initiation ceremony of the Order of the Eastern Star within her third chapter, presenting a highly symbolic theology that places women in a central role in the story of Christ's life. Continuing her allusion to Masonry, Woosley then suggests in her fourth chapter a society where men and women can share "in this great undertaking" of building God's spiritual temple (47).

Charles Clyde Hunt, who published prolifically on symbols of Freemasonry in the 1930s, provides several definitions of Masonry, articulating the disagreement among Freemasons themselves as to the nature of their organization.¹³⁷ The broadest definition, writes Hunt, comes from the "Old English Constitutions," who consider Masonry to be "a system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols" (13). The most specific definition Hunt provides is from Leipzig:

The activity of closely united men who, employing symbolic forms, borrowed principally from the masons' trade and from architecture, work for the welfare of mankind, striving morally to ennoble themselves and others, and thereby to bring about a universal league of mankind, which they aspire to exhibit, even now, on a small scale. (14)

¹³⁷ Just as the definition of Freemasonry is disputed, so is its history. It perhaps started in eighteenth-century England, with the Grand Lodge of England; however, there are some claims that Freemasonry dates as far back as the fourteenth century, when architects formed societies and applied their trade to moral traits (Hunt 17).

In short, Freemasons rely heavily on symbolic forms borrowed from the trades of masonry and architecture. These symbols represent the physical manifestations of moral obligations to society. Masons can earn up to thirty-three “degrees” through their good works and development of specific character traits.

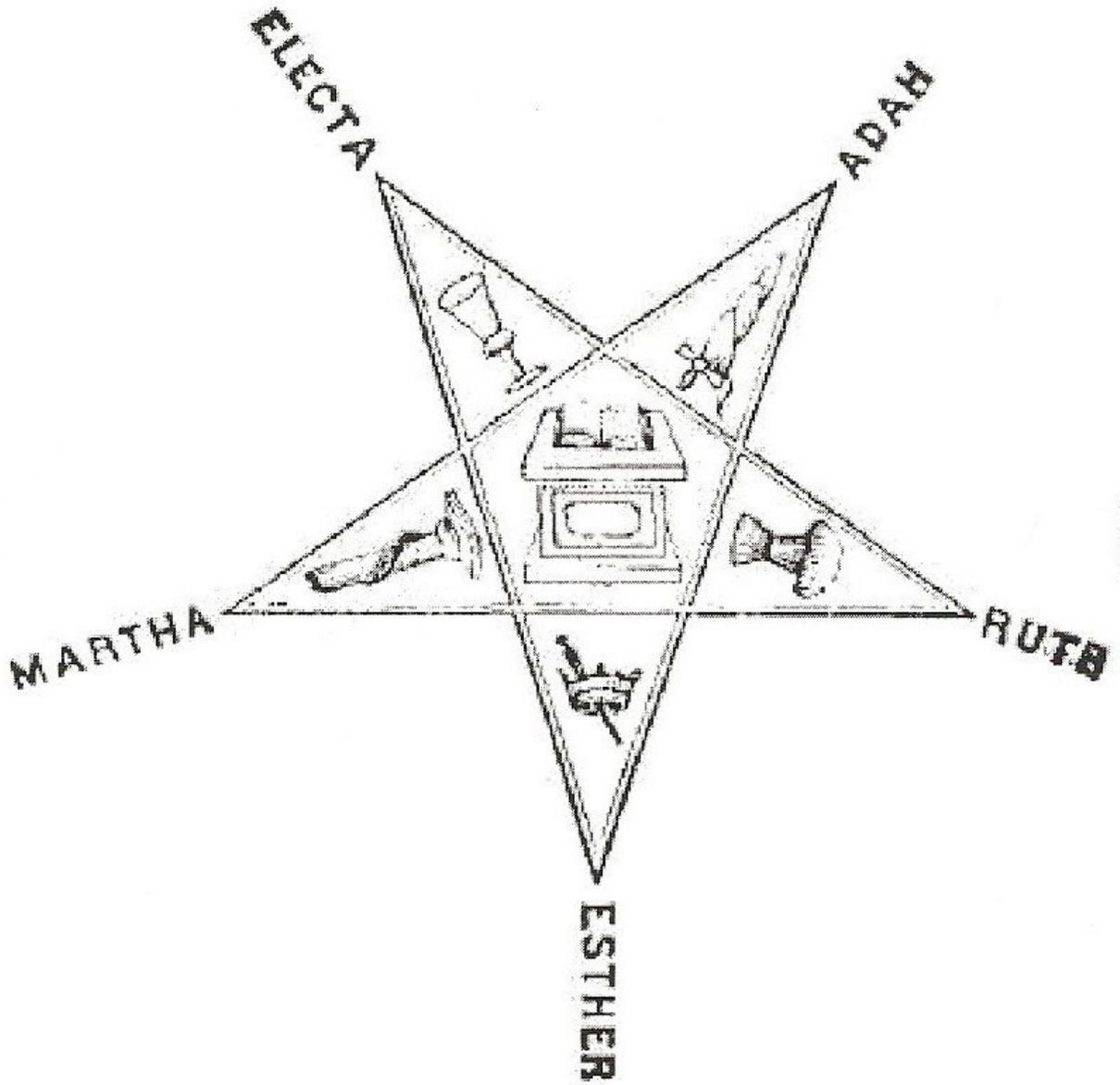
The history of specific Freemason Orders can be difficult to trace; histories around the Order of the Eastern Star, an organization related to the Masons that admits men and women, are particularly conflicted between what is published by the Order itself and by early-twentieth century historians. Consequently, what follows is based on the ninth edition of the *Ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star*, originally published in 1890 and amended in 1916 by the General Grand Chapter in Washington DC. It is from this text that I identify Woosley’s direct appropriation of terms and symbols, and so I believe that she either belonged to or was closely affiliated with this Order. I only claim to represent the order as it existed in Woosley’s time.

The Order of the Eastern Star was founded in Indiana in 1876 and spread across the Midwest, including Kentucky, where Woosley lived. In 1889, the Order adopted the Ritual of the Eastern Star and published the *Ritual* a year later. Today considered an order for both men and women, at the end of the nineteenth century, it existed “for the purpose of giving practical effect to one of the beneficent purposes of Freemasonry, which is to provide for the welfare of the wives, daughters, mothers, widows and sisters of Master Masons” (General Grand Chapter 40). The published *Ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star* includes detailed specifications for conducting meetings, and initiation, installation, and funeral ceremonies.

The Order of the Eastern Star, although based on biblical imagery, was ecumenical. It claimed allegiance to a “Supreme Being” (7) and adhered to Scriptural lessons, moral teachings, and beneficent purposes (8). The Rite of the Eastern Star was based on biblical women; women could obtain five degrees by demonstrating the traits of Adah, Ruth, Martha, Esther, and Electa. In a detailed initiation ceremony, women were provided with a history of the woman and the characteristic she represented; they were then given secret codes and signifiers for the symbols associated with that woman. Apart from the biblical story of each woman, the Rite uses secular language only. Woosley transforms the Rite of the Eastern Star into a strictly Christian rite in her third chapter; in her fourth chapter she details the potential contributions of those who adopt the rite.

Woosley does not refer to the Eastern Star directly; her third chapter is organized around the central metaphor of the “Star of Hope,” Woosley’s term for the Star of Bethlehem. According to Woosley, “In looking at this star, we are pointed to Christ by every ray and by every symbol” (43). Woosley then provides four readings of the star, outlining in each how the five rays of the star “points” or “directs” the reader to “five beautiful characters,” five symbols, five emblems, and five colors. Woosley’s first reading of the Star of Hope positions five biblical women on each ray: Jephthah’s daughter (Adah), Ruth, Esther, Martha, and Electa. Woosley then associates a symbol, emblem, and color for each ray. For the ray of Adah, Woosley attributes an open Bible, the sword and the veil, and blue. For the ray of Ruth, Woosley attributes the lily of the valley, the sheaf, and yellow. For the ray of Esther, Woosley attributes the sun, the crown and scepter, and white. For the ray of Martha, Woosley attributes the lamb, the broken column, and green. Finally, for the ray of Electa, Woosley attributes the lion, the

cup, and red. Each symbol, emblem, and ray have particular significance, and Woosley outlines each in detail.



The Eastern Star

As printed in *Ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star* (1919), p. 17

The symbolism that Woosley uses is identical to the “Ritual of the Eastern Star.” The initiation rite for each degree (each ray) also narrates the story of the biblical woman, and details the associated symbol, emblem, and color. Although interesting in its own right, Woosley’s use of the Eastern Star is particularly fascinating in her appropriation of the symbolic system to articulate her theology; Woosley uses the names, signs, and symbols of the star, but departs from the “Rite of the Eastern Star” in her description of the significance of each sign.

For a point of comparison, consider the following description of the ray of Esther and her associated symbol, emblem, and color, as detailed in the *Ritual*. Esther represents “commendable virtue of fidelity to kindred and friends” (48). The symbol associated with Esther, the sun, is “a symbol of the Light and Joy she gave to an oppressed and captive race” (60). The emblem associated with Esther, the crown and scepter, “is an emblem of royalty and power” (49). Finally, the color associated with Esther, white, is “a symbol of Light, Purity and Joy and should teach us that a pure and upright life is above the tongue of reproach” (49).

In spirit, Woosley’s description is similar; the rhetorical—and theological—difference is in the letter. According to Woosley, it is in the ray of Esther that “we are reminded...of the fact that when justice cried for our blood...mercy came in disguise and spread for us His bleeding hands” (41). Esther’s symbol, the sun, represents Christ as the “sun of Righteousness”; her emblem, the crown and scepter, “points us to him that is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords,” and her associated color, white, evokes “Oh what a beautiful type of Him...for in him there is ‘no darkness at all’ (44).

I have detailed Woosley's description of Esther and her associated signs together for the purpose of comparison; however, Woosley compartmentalizes the women, the symbols, the emblems, and the colors into five different readings. In each, she centers the imagery on Christ. This difference is significant. In the *Ritual*, the symbols, emblems, and colors are associated with the virtues and traits of Adah, Ruth, Esther, Martha, and Electa; Christ is only mentioned once as an historical figure in the narration of Martha.

When Woosley narrates a story for each ray of the star—each woman—she details how collectively they represent a step in Christ's journey. Taken together, they symbolize his life. Writes Woosley, "In the person of Christ all thy beams center, and from him they will never cease to shine.... These five illustrious and noble women are so linked together that they shed their benign light upon the page of inspiration, and all, point us to Christ 'the light of the world'" (37). Adah, who was sacrificed by her father, represents "promised redemption through Christ" (39). Woosley references the promise to Eve that her seed should bruise the serpent's head. Ruth represents that redemption realized, in the birth of Christ in Bethlehem (40). Esther represents "mercy...in disguise"; her crown, says Woosley, symbolizes Christ's crown of thorns and thus references his actual crucifixion (41). Martha, the fourth point on the star, represents Christ's broken body when he is taken off the cross (42). Finally, Electa, who was also crucified, represents Christ's covenant with humanity sealed in his blood (43).

In Woosley's rendering of the rite, the women *embody* Christ's journey from birth through crucifixion. This is a powerful defense of women, because it suggests that women not only can adopt Christian traits and behaviors, but can also be responsible for

the salvation of humanity. When detailing Electa's sacrifice, for example, Woosley writes: "She was then nailed there herself, and thus sealed her faith with her blood" (43). Woosley's theology is symbolically represented by women. Furthermore, this chapter serves as Woosley's initiation of the reader into her theology. "So let each one that reads these lines," writes Woosley in closing, "try to cultivate the virtues and graces of the tried and chosen servants of God. Let each one practice them in his life, and point to Christ as these did, and are yet pointing to him. The deeds of these women will never die" (45). In Woosley's theology, the deeds of women are immortalized through a system of symbols.

Woosley's next rhetorical move is to present a sphere of action, also based on Masonic imagery, in which women and men work together to build Christ's kingdom on earth. According to the *Ritual*, through initiation, "the wives, daughters, mothers, widows and sisters of Masons, may become co-laborers with the great Brotherhood in the service of humanity" (55). Similarly, after being initiated in chapter three, in chapter four, Woosley claims woman "as a builder, as a warrior, as a helper" in all work, including ministry (47). Woosley relies on temple imagery throughout her fourth chapter, arguing that "Women, coming as lively stones to Christ, the living stone...have as much right to aid in getting up the material and in building this house, as any man" (49).

In a way, *Shall Women Preach?* serves as a kind of summary, a compendium, of defenses of women's preaching and scriptural defenses of women. Woosley merges all of the genres and topoi of women's defenses of women's preaching into the little book to create a genre of defense. This genre of defense operates on several levels to different audiences, from particular to general: for the Presbytery, it is a defense of Woosley; for

women preachers, it is a defense of their ministry; for all readers, it is a defense of women. Woosley's hybrid discourse is a blend of exegetical, women's rights, and Masonic rhetoric; her hybrid theology invites all to minister—broadly defined—in the temple of God.

Conclusion

In this project, I have attempted to investigate not only the strategic rhetorical moves women made as they defended their religious agency, but also the forms that they selected to contain their arguments—the genres. When an “argumentative dimension,” to borrow Ruth Amossy's term, no longer fits within the confines of genres available, can and do rhetors adapt the genre to better fit their purpose and needs? Amossy writes that “texts can have various degrees of argumentivity” (“Argumentative” 1). Argumentation in discourse, according to Amossy, “displays different forms and strategies according to the framework in which it appears”; scholars investigating that framework—genre—must ask: “what tacit communication contract is activated, what are the rules and constraints of the chosen genre and how they accommodate argumentative moves” (“Argumentative” 2). In this project, I have demonstrated how one accommodation of argumentivity is the adaptation, experimentation, and solidification of genre.

If, as Carolyn Miller claims, genre is one lens to investigate “social and historical aspects of rhetoric” (151), then I would argue that the development and evolution of a genre is equally fertile ground for such investigation. Specifically, I have read the little book defense of women's preaching as a response, represented in genre, to the debate over women's preaching. I indicated in my first chapter that the debate over women's

preaching was one that was particularly charged with hostile rhetoric. As churches strove to gain denominational status and reputation, male leadership forcefully began to revoke their support of all forms of women's public speaking in the church, creating a tremendous backlash against women's ministry. In response, in the first half of the nineteenth century, women broadened the boundaries of what was considered their appropriate sphere of influence and co-opted the separate spheres argument prevalent at the time to continue to justify their religious leadership and activism. By the mid-nineteenth century, partly because of the holiness movement, women argued for increased public activity in social reform due to religious obligation. Reform work became the training ground for a variety of activities—public speaking, fundraising, and organizing, to name a few—and ushered in a new era, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when women took a more activist stance over their right to the pulpit.

In my second chapter, I attended more closely to the spectrum of the genres and arguments used in objecting to and defending women's right to engage in religious discourse. I included objections to women's preaching and support for women's preaching by male religious leaders. I followed with a survey of women's defenses of their preaching, organized by genre, then rhetoric. Women defended their right to preach via a variety of genres, selecting that which was appropriate for their audience and occasion. They delivered sermons, published spiritual autobiographies, circulated pamphlets, wrote editorial letters and treatises, and gave speeches. They also used a variety of lines of argument. For example, some relied more heavily on Pentecostal support for women's prophesying, while others used equal rights rhetoric borrowed from suffrage to support women's right to the pulpit.

As the debate intensified in the mid- to late nineteenth century, women began borrowing from multiple genres simultaneously to aid them in their project of defending women's ministry. In the latter half of my dissertation, I focused on three of these hybrid books, arguing that this hybridity is evident in the slight to considerable modification of the genre of spiritual autobiography, is demonstrated in the experimentation with the treatise and epistolary forms, and is represented in what I call the "genre of defense." I looked closely at three little books within the tradition of defenses of women's preaching as representative of the journey a genre takes from early adaptation to solidification: Julia Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Frances Willard's *Woman in the Pulpit*, and Louisa Woosley's *Shall Woman Preach?*.

In *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, Julia Foote adapted her spiritual autobiography to incorporate the sermonic form, invoking her audience as a congregation and inviting them to participate in her holiness theology. In *Woman in the Pulpit*, Frances Willard experimented with the treatise form, blending the letters and perspectives of other women and men to create a forum that represented her Social Gospel theology. Louisa Woosley wrote a book of defense. She used the modes and rhetoric expected of all of the genres, but absorbed them into the cohesive whole of her book, assigning them to separate chapters, with each performing a particular function within the book. Like Foote and Willard, Woosley also uses the space of the little book to articulate her theology; furthermore, she details a sphere of action in which women have equal rights in performing that theology.

In chapter three, I read Julia Foote's *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* as a transition text both in genre and rhetoric. In genre, the book is a hybrid blend of the spiritual

autobiography, slave conversion narrative, and sermon; in rhetoric, the book is a hybrid blend of textual and oral discourse. Foote blends textual rhetorics of the slave narrative and spiritual autobiography traditions, mapping her story onto the story of African American slavery in America. Foote further adapts the genre of spiritual autobiography to incorporate the sermonic form. I therefore read Foote's little book as a joint project defending women's ministry and presenting her holiness theology. She incorporates oral rhetoric one would expect in various worship venues—the revival, church service, and prayer circle—thus invoking her authority as ministerial and transforming her audience into a congregation. Foote's little book is marked by the discursive interaction of personal narrative, public record, spiritual testimony, exhortation, sermon, and hymn. Foote uses narrative to give testament to her life as a preaching women; she uses the sermonic to invite her audience to witness and to perform her holiness theology.

Similarly, in chapter four, I read Willard's little book, *Woman in the Pulpit*, as a joint project defending women's preaching and presenting her feminist version of Social Gospel theology. In *Woman in the Pulpit*, Frances Willard experiments with the treatise form, by blending in the epistolary form—the letters and perspectives of other women and men—to create a forum; she also experiments with the rhetoric of the Social Gospel, appropriating key concepts important to that movement—evolution and process theory, the Brotherhood of Man, and the Kingdom of God—to articulate her feminist theology. First, Willard carefully crafts her rhetorical situation, using the Brotherhood of Man tenet of the Social Gospel to convey the collegial discourse she hopes to create in her book. Then, Willard presents her own exegetical support for women's preaching, borrowing from the scientific and metaphysical discourse that was prevalent in the Social Gospel

and in nineteenth-century American life in general. Willard then theorizes a Kingdom of God in which the “mother” role is as integral as the “Fatherhood of God.” Female preachers, assert Willard, represent the “mother-heart of God” (46). Willard closes her little book by including letters of defense of women’s preaching by both men and women—exhibiting a textual transformation of the Brotherhood of Man into Willard’s version of the Kingdom of God, an ideal, egalitarian society where women and men act and speak equally.

I conclude this dissertation by reading Louisa Woosley’s *Shall Woman Preach?* as one example of how the little book solidifies into a genre of defense. Woosley’s text bridges women’s defenses of women’s preaching with another kind of defense prevalent at the time: the scriptural defense of women. Like Foote, Woosley relies on narrative extensively throughout her text; in many ways, her text reads like a spiritual autobiography of women in general. Like Willard, Woosley provides detailed exegesis and a comprehensive refutation of male objections to women’s preaching. And, like the women who were also writing scriptural defenses of women at the time, Woosley elevates the issue over women’s preaching into an issue over women’s equal place in society—it’s a general defense of women. Woosley also incorporates Masonic and women’s rights rhetoric to articulate a theology that values women as representative of Christ and identifies them as capable of leadership in the religious and secular world. In a fascinating appropriation of the Rite of the Eastern Star, Woosley textually initiates readers into her version of the Order, a new Christ-centered Order.

Significantly, each woman resolves separate spheres ideology by suggesting a new religious sphere where men and women participate equally: Foote’s sphere is the

sphere of holiness; Willard's is her reconceptualized Kingdom of God; and Woosley's is a world of action, where men and women, after initiation, are responsible for building the temple of God. In sum, Foote, Willard, and Woosley are rhetoricians and theologians; the hybrid form of the little book provides them with a textual space for the intersections of their rhetoric and theology. The genre of defense, represented in Woosley's *Shall Woman Preach?* demonstrates how that interaction can also elevate a debate, in this case into an argument supporting all women's acts. The religious discourse provided by the genre of the little book invited a connection to an increasingly secular debate of women's rights.

I believe that women discursively moved through the genres as the debate over women's preaching ramped up in the nineteenth century. In the early nineteenth century, the genre of choice was the spiritual autobiography—the Methodists in particular privileged the form and it also had roots in the slave conversion narrative. These earlier defenses rely much more heavily on personal narrative, and many keep the issue of women's preaching within the stasis of conjecture—is there an act to be considered? Avoiding direct confrontation with the denominational establishment, they do not argue “should women preach?” but rather “yes, women have preached, as evidenced by myself and other biblical women.” The degree of “argumentivity,” however, in the spiritual autobiography was limited. These earlier defenses simply give witness to their successful preaching careers.

However, around the mid-nineteenth century, as the argument around women's preaching moved out of the stasis of conjecture and into the stasis of definition (how can this act be defined?) the genre of spiritual autobiography was not as well-suited for

defenses of women's preaching because it relied primarily on personal narrative and individual experience and did not speak more generally to women's collective acts of ministry. Female religious rhetors then turned to the treatise and pamphlet in their attempts to more broadly—and sometimes more narrowly—define women's preaching. To do so, women provide more exegesis in their defenses, as they attempt to engage directly with the clerical opponents to their ministry.

Finally, at the end of the nineteenth century, as the debate moved into the stasis of quality (how serious is the act) and policy (how formally should we deal with this act), women wanted to engage even more directly with opponents to women's preaching, and they wrote editorial letters to the denominational presses to do so. Women argued for the value of women's preaching and demanded full ordination rights. Additionally, many female preachers sought out the community and support of the women's rights movement, and we have a great number of speeches defending women's preaching delivered at women's rights conventions. Foote's, Willard's, and Woosley's hybrid books demonstrate how the debate over women's preaching moved from a genre with little argumentivity—the spiritual autobiography—to a genre defined by argumentivity—the genre of defense. Their hybrid form invites us to see these texts as transitional texts within the debate over women's preaching.

In addition to being a genre study, this dissertation also contributes to the recent scholarship on women's religious practice and participates in the joint venture of recovery work and rhetorical analysis. Religion is one identity category that is often diminished or even erased from rhetorical treatments of women in history. In this study, I read religion as an integral identity category that was the seat for other activist rhetorics;

by extension, then, women's defenses of women's preaching is an important site of activism and rhetorical discourse. Objections to and defenses of women's preaching were not a minor subset of religious rhetoric in nineteenth-century Protestant American life; rather, they were a very prominent part of the discourse surrounding a person's relationship and contribution to her faith community.

Therefore, defenses of women's preaching represent a broad range of political affiliation and comfort with public speaking. Many women chose not to defend public speaking, but rather limited their defense to women's right to speak about religious matters. These women claimed that their preaching was a compulsion mandated by God that they simply could not ignore. Nonetheless, the objections to their speaking tended to be even more virulent to general objections to women's public address. The subject of their speaking—religion—and the presumption of speaking for God, caused particular discord in their religious communities. Clearly the symbolic space of the pulpit was one that people were perhaps the most resistant to women inhabiting; consequently, defending women's preaching was a more challenging task. Women's defenses of women's preaching are activist writings, encouraging readers to reconsider their limited view of women's religious work and agency. As such, they are an important component of feminist American activist rhetoric and should be read against other feminist movements of the time.

This dissertation reads rhetorical theory and criticism as reciprocal. Rhetorical theory is helpful in the ways it opens up possibilities for analyzing texts, for providing for close textual readings that help us reconceptualize the times, places, people—the rhetorical situation—of those texts. For this reason, rhetorical criticism is a particularly

important contribution to historical studies. Furthermore, studies like mine can also inform rhetorical theory. I hope that my study provides a possible model for looking at the powerful rhetorical moment of genre creation, when rhetors feel compelled to adapt genres in response to commanding exigencies of the discourse. The rhetorical self-consciousness of blending genres in response to one's rhetorical situation tells us more about the circumstances and demands placed on the rhetor.

Appendix A
Nineteenth-Century
Women’s Defenses of Women’s Preaching

Name, Title	Genre	Religious Affiliation	Date
Olympia Brown “Band of Fellowship”	Sermon	Unitarian	1868
Annie May Fisher “Woman’s Right to Preach”	Sermon	Nazarene	1903
Mary Cagle “Woman’s Right to Preach”	Sermon	Nazarene	n.d.
Fanny Newell <i>Memoirs</i>	Spiritual Autobiography	Methodist Episcopal	1832
Zilpha Elaw <i>Memoirs</i>	Spiritual Autobiography	Nondenominational	1846
Jarena Lee <i>Religious Experience and Journal</i>	Spiritual Autobiography	African Methodist Episcopal	1849
Lydia Sexton <i>Autobiography</i>	Spiritual Autobiography	United Brethren	1882
Amanda Berry Smith <i>The Story of the Lord’s Dealings</i>	Spiritual Autobiography	African Methodist Episcopal	1893
Mary Still Adams <i>Autobiography</i>	Spiritual Autobiography	Methodist	1893
Sarah Cooke <i>Handmaiden</i>	Spiritual Autobiography	Free Methodist	1900
Nancy Towle <i>Vicissitudes Illustrated</i>	Spiritual Autobiography /Little Book	Nondenominational	1832
Ellen Stewart <i>Life of Mrs. Ellen Stewart</i>	Spiritual Autobiography /Little Book	Methodist	1858
Maggie Newton Van Cott <i>Life and Labors</i>	Spiritual Autobiography /Little Book	Methodist Episcopal	1872
Julia Foote <i>A Brand Plucked from the Fire</i>	Spiritual Autobiography /Little Book	African Methodist Episcopal Zion	1879

Deborah Pierce <i>A Scriptural Vindication of Female Preaching</i>	Pamphlet	Christian Connection	1820
Catherin Booth <i>Female Ministry</i>	Pamphlet	Salvation Army	1859, 1861
Phoebe Palmer <i>Tongue of Fire</i>	Pamphlet	Methodist Episcopal	1869
Barbara Kellison <i>The Rights of Women in the Church</i>	Pamphlet	?	1862, 1867
Mary Boardman <i>Who Shall Prophecy?</i>	Pamphlet	Methodist	1873, 1875
Sarah Grimke "Ministry of Women," in <i>Letters on the Equality of the Sexes</i>	Chapter in a Treatise	Quaker	1838
Elizabeth Wilson "Woman's Standing in a Church Capacity," in <i>A Scriptural View of Woman's Rights</i>	Chapter in a Treatise	Methodist Episcopal	1849
Sara Duncan "Women in the Churches," in <i>Progressive Missions</i>	Section in a Treatise	African Methodist Episcopal	1906
Jennie Fowler Willing "Talking," in <i>The Potential Woman</i>	Chapter in a Treatise	Wesleyan Methodist	1886
Harriet Livermore <i>Scriptural Evidence in Favor of Female Testimony</i>	Treatise	Nondenominational	1824
Phoebe Palmer <i>Promise of the Father</i>	Treatise	Methodist	1859
Frances Willard <i>Woman in the Pulpit</i>	Treatise/ Little Book	Methodist Episcopal	1888
Fannie McDowell Hunter <i>Women Preachers</i>	Treatise/ Little Book	Nazarene	1905
Rebecca Miller "Duty of Females"	Article/Editorial	Southern Christian	1841
Antoinette Brown "Exegesis"	Article/Editorial	Congregational	1849
Mary Seymour "Women May Preach"	Article/Editorial	Methodist Episcopal	1851

Beulah Matthewson "Female Preaching"	Article/Editorial	?	1852
Philanthropos "Paul versus Silencing Woman"	Article/Editorial	?	1853
Olympia Brown "Women Preachers"	Article/Editorial	Unitarian	1872
Josephine Butler "Woman's Place in the Church"	Article/Editorial	Anglican	1892
Virginia Hedges "Woman's Work in the Church"	Article/Editorial	?	1893
Maria Hale Gordon "Women as Evangelists"	Article/Editorial	Baptist	1894
Jennie Fowler Willing several articles, see bib.	Article/Editorial	Wesleyan Methodist	1896- 1899
Mrs. G. E. Taylor "Woman's Work"	Article/Editorial	African Methodist Episcopal	1906
Silena Holman several articles, see bib.	Article/Editorial	Church of Christ	1888- 1913
Augusta Chapin "Woman's Work in the Pulpit"	Speech	Unitarian	1874
Phebe Hanaford "Woman in the Church"	Speech	Unitarian	1874
Kate Woods "Women in the Pulpit"	Speech	?	1891
Caroline Bartlett "Woman's Call to the Ministry"	Speech	Unitarian	1893
Ida Hultin "Woman and Religion"	Speech	Unitarian	1893
Florence Kollock "Woman in the Pulpit"	Speech	Unitarian	1893
Mary Moreland "Discussion"	Speech	Congregationalist	1893
Amelia Quinton "Discussion"	Speech	Baptist	1893

Mary Safford "Woman as a Minister"	Speech	Unitarian	1893
Eugenia St. John "Discussion"	Speech	Methodist	1893
Susan B. Anthony "On Permitting Women to Preach"	Parody	Unitarian	1877
Polly Stevens "A Defense"	Essay in Spiritual Biography	?	1858
Sally Thompson <i>Trial and Defence</i>	Court Proceedings	Methodist Episcopal	1830
Elizabeth Stuart Phelps <i>A Woman's Pulpit</i>	Satire	Congregational	1880
Louisa Woosley Shall Women Preach?	Little Book	Cumberland Presbyterian	1891

Appendix B

Bible Passages Cited in the Debate over Women's Preaching

Genesis 1:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Jeremiah 20:9

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

Joel 2:28-29

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, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Matthew 28:10

Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Acts 2:17-18

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Acts 5:29

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Acts 15: 8-9

And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;
And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Romans 16:12

Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

I Corinthians 9:16

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

1 Corinthians 11:4-5

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.
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.

I Corinthians 14: 34-35

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law.
And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

I Timothy 2:11-12

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.
But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

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