THE COVENANT QUARTERLY

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every one must keep silence in the church. It is remarkable that those who understand the word "brethren" to exclude the sisters could not see that they consequently come to the conclusion that Mary Magdalene must then have brought the message given her by the Savior only to the brethren, for Jesus said, "Go to my brethren" (John 20:17). From this passage it could just as well be proven that Mary Magdalene was forbidden to hold women's meetings and could only speak to men. She had to bring the message of Jesus' resurrection to 500 brethren, but no woman was permitted to be among them. One comes to such absurd conclusions through such narrow understandings of God's Word. Praise be to God that at least as many women as men are being sent out to the mission field from England and America, which was not at all the case twenty years ago, and every year greater and greater numbers of brothers and sisters go out. One thing, however, all missionary sisters in the homeland must be careful about, and that is not to try, especially publicly, to *defend* preaching by women. As soon as they do that, they appear as teachers on a controversial question and enter thereby into an area where their place, to say the least, is ambiguous. It is enough that they themselves have assurance in their own hearts of the Word of God, that they have the right to evangelize and don't need much discussion of the subject. If mission houses or churches are for the time being closed to them, they should take that from God, for it will help them to come to those places where the needs are greatest and which would otherwise be neglected if much attendance at meetings were required of them. May now the Lord of the harvest continue to send out many laborers into his great harvest in order that the number of those who belong to God's wedding party may be complete and that he, our highly praised Savior and bridegroom of the soul, might soon come and take us home! Amen. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

EVANGELICAL ROOTS OF FEMINISM

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The historical process sometimes plays strange tricks on us. Later developments and history written from within a new situation often obscure the character of earlier events and alter our present self-understanding. Feminism is a good case in point. The contemporary "women's liberation" movement derives largely from secular sources and is often characterized by fierce opposition to the church and the assumption that Christianity has been a major force in the oppression of women. This sense of conflict has affected the way in which history has been written. Such history then reinforces the feeling among Christians, especially conservative or evangelical Christians, that feminism is anti-Christian in character and to be resisted as a pagan ideology that if embraced would undermine a biblically based life-style and world view.

Actually, the contrary is more nearly the case. Though Christian and biblical themes have been used to "keep women in their place," biblical Christianity has been a major force in the elevation of women. This has been clearest when Christianity has been introduced by missionaries into other cultures, where, as in the first century, Christianity has brought a new value to women and a new equality with men. Such elevation has not always incarnated all the values of feminism as we know it today, though it has often leaned in that direction. But beyond this more general contribution of Christianity to the status of women, I would like to argue that, historically at least, feminism has particular affinities with that branch of Christianity identified as evangelical and that the roots of feminism as it emerged in pre-Civil War America are clearly to be found in evangelicalism.

This is not to insist that there are not other forms of feminism rooted in other traditions or thought forms. There is obviously also an Enlightenment-grounded feminism that found expression in eighteenth-century Europe, in some circles of nineteenth-century America, and in our own day. Nor would I want to suggest a strict cause and effect relationship between evangelicalism and feminisn. Historical causation is, of course, infinitely more complex, and not all evangelicals do become feminists. I shall be satisfied to argue that evangelical soil is a

natural one for the growth of feminism and that, as a matter of fact, feminism has often sprouted there.

We must also understand the sense in which we are using the word "evangelical." In our culture and time this word tends to gather its nuances primarily from the American fundamentalist/modernist controversy. When rooted in this model, the word "evangelical" is identified more with orthodoxy and conservatism. For this study we must move back to recover the connotations of the word a century or two ago. There evangelicalism is grounded more in the Evangelical Revival of eighteenth-century England and the great awakenings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America. In that context an "evangelical" is one concerned primarily with the personal appropriation of grace—with conversion and the new life that follows the new birth. The emphasis is on a vital or revived Christian faith rather than on orthodoxy or doctrine. Christian faith that is unrevived or lacks vitality comes in several varieties—including orthodox! In fact, the evangelicalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was equally opposed from the left by infidelity and paganism and from the right by orthodoxy and traditionalism. We often forget this and the fact that this form of evangelicalism was in many ways a progressive rather than a conservative form of Christianity that was able to affirm and incorporate into its life new thought forms and cultural patterns.

With these comments in the background I would like to discuss in three steps the interrelationships between evangelicalism and feminism. First, I will indicate some features of the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century that contributed to a new role for women in the church and derivatively in society. Second, I will suggest how these themes were transformed into feminism in the pre-Civil War conjunction of revivalism and social reform (especially abolitionism). Finally, I will attempt to confirm this argument by sketching how this feminism was incorporated into the forms of evangelicalism that are close to our own experience.

I. The Evangelical Revival

It is possible to argue, of course, that any new role given to women in the Evangelical Revival was a product of that burst of vitality that occurs in the early years of any new Christian movement. One can draw parallels with the early years of Christianity in that during New Testament times women seem to have had a greater role that in later, more institutionalized periods of Christian history. This sort of analysis no doubt has a great deal of validity, but I would like to suggest three features of

the Evangelical Revival that helped open the way for a new role for women. These would be an implicit egalitarianism, an emphasis on Christian experience, and a certain pragmatism that encouraged experimentation with new cultural patterns.

Most students of the Evangelical Revival have noticed John Wesley's turn to the poor and disenfranchised of English society. This crossing class barriers, combined with a new sense of self-worth instilled in converts from lower classes, had a major impact on the development of English society. This impact is especially evident in the later development of the labor movement in the early nineteenth century. Bernard Semmel has even argued recently in *The Methodist Revolution* that it was Methodism that mediated in a non-violent manner to English society the modern radical and egalitarian ideas of the French Revolution.[1] Though Wesley was himself a conservative Tory, he helped to set in motion forces that went beyond his own convictions to make a major impact on the social structure of English society.

Whatever one thinks of Semmel's thesis, one is forced to recognize in the Evangelical Revival a certain egalitarianism that can be variously correlated with Wesley's "optimism of grace," his witness to unlimited or universal grace, his turn toward Christian experience, and related themes. Any movement that is seriously motivated by the conviction that the most important fact about any person is human sinfulness and his need for transforming grace is already a long way toward a very basic and fundamental egalitarianism. The classic statement of this is found in a letter from the Duchess of Buckingham to Lady Huntingdon, the patron of the Calvinistic wing of the Evangelical Revival:

> I thank your ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers. Their doctrines are most repulsive and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect toward their superiors, in perpetually endeavoring to level all ranks and do away with all distinctions. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiment so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.[2]

The point of this is that the Evangelical Revival contained within it forces that would undermine traditional social patterns, structures of authority, social class distinctions, hierarchical as-

sumptions, and so forth. In the social fluidity that resulted women could find new roles. As other social patterns dissolved, those that delineated the appropriate spheres of women's activity were weakened. People were then able to look back to Scripture and discover that some of those elements assumed to be a part of a Christian view of life were more assumed cultural patterns than essential features of the Faith.

A second factor in the Evangelical Revival that opened up a new role for women was a turn to Christian experience. For Wesley true Christian faith that manifests itself in "repentance, and love, and all good works" is not a "speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart."[3] This emphasis shifts the fundamental question away from orthodoxy and doctrine to religious experience. Wesley, though "orthodox" and a defender in theological controversy of such doctrines as "original sin," of course never tired of pointing out that the devil himself is orthodox. In Wesley's words, ". . . neither does religion consist in orthodoxy, or right opinions. . . . A man may be orthodox in every point. . . . He may be almost as orthodox—as the devil . . . and may, all the while, be as great a stranger as he to the religion of the heart."[4]

These stark and perhaps extreme statements indicate the extent to which Christian experience dominated the Evangelical Revival. Such a position naturally contributed to a weakening of the traditional sources of religious authority—the trained clergy and the established church. In fact, the implications of Wesley's position became clear very early, and he was barred from church after church as a destroyer of traditional authority and assumed patterns of church order. The clergy and people of the Church of England did not readily take to the suggestion that they were at most "almost Christians" rather than "altogether Christians."

This elevation of the personal experience of grace in the soul contributed to providing a new role for women in the Evangelical Revival. If the basic concern is the experience of Christian faith, women, who have been denied access to theological training and positions of authority in the church, are now full participants in the religious life of the community. If religious instruction is more concerned with the "experimental" outworkings of faith in the life and progression along the "stages in life's way," the qualifications for Christian leadership are based more on spiritual maturity and insight that upon theological training or ecclesiastical ordination. Women, judged by such criteria, may more easily qualify for positions of leadership in the church. In

fact, women, whose socialization has perhaps contributed to greater sensitivity to feelings and the emotional life, may even excell in these new patterns. Wesley recognized this very early on by appointing women to positions as class leaders.

Another important factor in the Evangelical Revival contributed to opening up leadership to women. There was a certain pragmatic quality to the leaders of the Evangelical Revival. They were open to experimentation with new patterns of ministry and church life (field preaching, class meetings, and others) and were willing to let the validity of these new forms be judged in part by the results they produced. Albert Outler has even argued that it was the response to Wesley's field preaching—a practice that he at first loathed—that confirmed him in the practice and was a decisive factory in contributing to his achieving "spiritual equilibrium" and "assurance."[5] The fact that field preaching *worked*, that people were actually brought to faith, tipped the balance for Wesley and drove him in new directions.

This factor was apparently important in influencing Wesley to allow laymen to preach. When Thomas Maxfield began to expand his class meeting assignment into a form of exposition that developed into preaching, Wesley faced a crisis. Both his mother and the Countess of Huntingdon, however, cautioned him. Sussana Wesley affirmed in a letter that Maxfield was "as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself."[6]

Once this principle was established, it was difficult to avoid extending it to the case of women, though it was some time before this logic was totally worked out. Thirty years after the incident with Maxfield, Wesley responded to an inquiry about female preaching from Mary Bosanquet, who was later to marry Wesley's designated successor, John Fletcher, and then take over many of the parish duties of her husband after his death. He wrote: ". . . the strength of the cause rests there—on your having an *extraordinary* call. So I am persuaded has every one of our lay preachers; otherwise I could not countenance his preaching at all."[7] At the end of two more decades Wesley had moved a little further, and what was so "extraordinary" before had become a little more common. In 1787 he wrote to Sarah Mallet from the Manchester conference, ". . . we give the right hand of fellowship to Sarah Mallet and have no objection to her being a preacher in our connexion, so long as she preaches the Methodist doctrines and attends to our discipline."[8]

This was still a long way from the full ordination of women or feminism as we know it today, but the forces that would produce

those steps had been set in motion. In the early years of the next century, Methodist commentator Adam Clarke would go on to say of women that "under the blessed spirit of Christianity, they have equal *rights*, equal *privileges*, and equal *blessings*, and, let me add, they are equally *useful*."[9] Such sentiments were to grow and develop into feminism and the full ordination of women on the American scene, especially under the influence of evangelist Charles G. Finney. But the seed of later developments were sown in the Evangelical Revival—so much so that Robert Wearmouth, a close student of the social impact of the movement, has claimed that "the emancipation of womanhood began with John Wesley."[10]

II. Pre-Civil War American Revivalism

The Great Awakenings in America saw the emergence of some of the same practices as in the British Evangelical Revival. Women preachers, for example, appeared in the last decades of the eighteenth century among the Free-Will Baptists. It was especially the revivalism of Charles G. Finney that expressed the values and ethos of the Wesleyan Revival. Here was the same "arminianizing" of theology, the same affirmation of human potentiality under the transforming power of grace, the same thrust toward perfectionism, the same turn toward the poor and disenfranchised, the same emergent egalitarianism, and the same pragmatic element. And it was the revivalism of Finney that brought in its wake both the full ordination of women and the rise of feminism.[11]

The most controversial of the new measures used by Finney in his meetings was that of allowing women to pray in "promiscuos," or mixed assemblies. Finney's convert and assistant Theodore Weld later claimed credit for this practice. The same week of his conversion in 1825, Weld encouraged women to speak and ". . . seven females, a number of them the most influential Christians in the city, confessed their sin in being restrained by their sex and prayed publickly in succession."[12] But Finney's commitment to the practice was revealed shortly thereafter in the New Lebanon Conference called to reconcile Finney and his followers with the more conservative revivalists of New England. Though allowing women to speak in public assemblies was the major bone of contention, Finney refused to back down.

The first coeducational college in the world was Oberlin College, founded to perpetuate Finney's blend of revivalism and reform. Finney himself was the school's first professor of theology and

second president. Asa Mahan, Oberlin's first president, was so proud of this record that he suggested for a tombstone epitaph the fact that he was ". . . the first man, in the history of the race, who conducted women, in connection with members of the opposite sex, through a full course of liberal education, and conferred upon her the high degrees which had hitherto been the exclusive prerogatives of men."[13] Later feminists found the early leaders of Oberlin inconsistent and their approach still too conservative. But Oberlin did make a major contribution to the women's rights movement by graduating many early feminists. Among these were Lucy Stone, who gained notoreity for her egalitarian marriage and refusal to change her name; Antoinette Brown, the first woman to be fully ordained; and Betsy Cowles, president of the second National Women's Rights Convention.

It was, however, the anti-slavery struggle that really enabled the evangelical openness to a new role for women to be transformed into an actual evangelical feminism. Here, too, we must notice the correlation of this anti-slavery movement with Finney's revivalism. Earlier interpretations of the abolitionist movement tended to emphasize Enlightenment and Unitarian aspects, but in the 1930s Gilbert Barnes discovered a trunk of letters belonging to Theodore Weld, his wife, Angelina Grimke Weld, and her sister, Sarah Grimke. This material enabled him to reconstruct the history of abolitionism in his book, *The Anti-Slavery Impulse*, where he argued that:

> . . . the agitation was accomplished not so much by heroes of reform as by very numerous obscure persons, prompted by an impulse religious in character and evangelical in spirit, which began in the Great Revival in 1830, was translated for a time into anti-slavery organization, and then broadened into a Congressional movement against slavery and the South.[14]

This interpretation of the abolitionist movement concentrates on the careers of Theodore Weld and the Grimke sisters, Quakers who had been converted out of southern Episcopalianism in Presbyterian revivalism.[15] The Grimke sisters had shaken New England in the 1830s by taking to the lecture platform in their attack on slavery. The ensuing controversy about women's speaking in public was a major factor in splitting the abolitionist movement in 1840. In the process Weld and the Grimke sisters were pushed to develop a feminist defense of the right of women to speak in public. This step was taken by Sarah M. Grimke in *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*, first published in 1837.[16]

It was not only historical accident that abolitionism and feminism

should be so closely intertwined. Just as the recent rebirth of feminism emerged largely out of the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, so nineteenth-century feminism was a product of the abolitionist struggle in the 1830s. There seem to be several reasons for this.

In the first place, abolitionism picked up and gave extra impulse to the egalitarian thrust of revivalism. Those who were willing to critique slavery on the basis of a doctrine of human equality found the principle to have broader application. Those who had marshalled the courage to attack one social institution found it easier to broaden the attack. Contemporaries certainly noticed this tendency. Calvin Colton, a consistent and vigorous critic of the interrelated forces of revivalism, abolitionism, and temperance movements, argued in *Abolition a Sedition* that the members of the New England Non-Resistance Society, for example, had "levelled all distinctions in society of rank, color, caste, and sex; and the doctrines of Abolitionism, carried out, have legitimately led them to this."[17] Here we see surfacing the tension between conservative and modern social views that lay beneath the controversies over abolitionism and revivalism. For Colton "it is to the *conservative* power of Christianity that we owe our greatest blessings."[18]

Beyond this general aspect of the extension of abolitionist egalitarianism into the relationship of the sexes, women found more specific parallels between their situation and that of the slave. Sarah Grimke signed her letters "Thine in the bonds of womanhood" and suggested that "the cupidity of man soon led him to regard women as property,"[19] pointing out that in some countries women were sold into marriage just as slaves were sold in slavery. One letter sketched the laws of the age which left "women very little more liberty, or power, in some respects, than the slave." Sarah Grimke claimed that "in all ages and countries, not excepting enlightened republican America, woman has more or less been made a *means* to promote the welfare of man, without due regard to her own happiness, and the glory of God, as the end of her creation."[21]

Perhaps more important still for these people so deeply grounded in evangelical and biblical religion were the parallel problems in the interpretation of relevant biblical texts. The abolitionists regularly had to face conservatives who built upon biblical instances of slavery and upon biblical admonitions to obedience of slaves a "Bible defense of slavery." The abolitionists were forced to develop in opposition a "Bible argument against slavery" that appealed to an egalitarian "spirit" of Scripture over

against the status quo-supporting "letter" so often thrown up against them. The conjunction of the issues seemed supported by the Scriptures themselves. Biblical admonitions to slaves stood parallel to those to women—equally within the same chapter. But perhaps even more important was the conjunction of the issues in Galatians 3:38, a passage to which both abolitionists and feminist exegetes made reference: "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."

The significance of these hermeneutical moves was not always immediately realized and advocated as such, but later writings frequently reveal the systematic development of the parallel issues. John Foster's biography of Mrs. Maggie Newton Van Cott, the first woman licensed to preach in the Methodist Episcopal Church, contains a preface by the Rev. David Sherman on "Woman's Place in the Gospel." There Sherman self-consciously argued that the contemporary movement for women's rights was in fact the culmination of New Testament teachings. Just as in the case of slavery, where "while yielding for a time to the form of the institution, the apostles laid down principles which cut away the foundations of the system,"[22] so the "same method was adopted in the case of woman."[23]

> . . . the apostles began the elevation and education of woman, and left the movement to flow on so far and in such channels as Providence and the current of events might open for it, thus preparing the way for a much broader and grander work than they themselves were permitted to perform.[24]

III. Feminism in Later Evangelicalism

Post-Civil War developments brought about profound reorientations within the evangelical traditions. The rise of evolutionism, biblical criticism, and modern science in America split these progressive revivalistic currents into two camps—those that played out the earlier themes in a more liberal direction and those that pulled back from such new directions. Among the latter groups attention was now directed more against enemies on the left than on the right, resulting in a tendency to join hands with more conservative and traditional groups whose style and ethos became more and more dominant. (The style and concerns of Old School Presbyterianism, for example, replaced New School Presbyterianism at a number of points.) Unmanageable social forces—industrialization, urbanization, cultural pluralism, secularization—forced the evangelical traditions to

turn inward upon themselves and to withdraw from some forms of broader cultural engagement. These forces, worked out over the next century, began to erode the commitment of the evangelical world to progressive social movements.

The relationship of evangelicalism to feminism was affected to a great extent by these currents. We are most aware of that major strand of feminism that moved in a more liberal and secular direction. But it is also true that was preserved in the evangelical world was a major strand of feminism now largely forgotten. Those traditions of evangelicalism that most completely incarnated the pre-Civil War heritage of revivalism tended also to maintain longer a commitment to social reform and a strand of feminism. This could be illustrated very widely, but I will focus on only half a dozen examples of this post-Civil War evangelical feminism, attempting to show how it was based on the same dynamic and argument as the early strands of pre-Civil War feminism.

Perhaps the first of these evangelical feminist traditions to emerge was among the Wesleyan Methodists. This denomination emerged in the early 1840s as an abolitionist protest against the Methodist accommodation to slavery. As such this body more than any other shared the convictions and ethos of early Oberlin College. Early founders of the denomination had resisted the efforts of William Lloyd Garrison to broaden the abolitionist movement to include women's rights, but later events showed a decreasing of this tension. The first women's rights convention was held in the Wesleyan church in Seneca Falls, New York, and it was Wesleyan Methodist Luther Lee who preached in 1853 the ordination sermon for Antoinette Brown, an Oberlin graduate who was the first woman to be ordained. The Wesleyans began to ordain women in the 1860s. After a period of controversy and struggle in the church, the practice gained a fair amount of acceptance.

Lee's sermon on "Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel" reveals a perspective that can only be called feminist. Arguing exegetically that the New Testament not only describes the ministry of women but also speaks of them as ministers and that hermeneutically the Pauline prohibitions on women were only of local significance, Lee rested most of his weight on Galatians 3:28 to affirm:

> I cannot see how the text can be explained so as to exclude females from any right, office, work, privilege, or immunity which males enjoy, hold, or perform. If the text means anything, it means that males and females are equal in rights, privileges, and responsibilities upon the Christian Platform.[25]

A Presbyterian/Congregationalist example of such feminism grounded in revivalistic abolitionism is seen in Jonathan Blanchard, founding president of Illinois's Wheaton College. He had been extremely active in the abolitionist movement and had close connections with Oberlin College and the Wesleyan Methodists. In Cincinnati he served the sixth Presbyterian church, earlier led by Asa Mahan, the first president of Oberlin. This church was popularly called the "nigger church" in mockery of its abolitionist stance. While in Cincinnati, Blanchard debated the issue of slavery with N.L. Rice. In these widely publicized speeches Blanchard insisted that "the first alteration which Christianity made in the polity of Judaism was to abrogate this oppressive distinction of sexes" in which "women had almost no rights; they were menials to their husbands and parents."[26]

Blanchard (and problably Lee as well) preserved the teaching that the husband is the head of the wife, but others went beyond this to advocate a completely egalitarian marriage relationship. One of these was B.T. Roberts, founder of the Free Methodist Church in 1860. The word "free" in Free Methodist had several meanings—among them abolitionism and "free pews" in opposition to pew rentals that excluded the poor. Though the denomination did not capitulate to the full ordination of women until 1974, Roberts and several other early bishops were distinctly feminist in conviction. Roberts's book *Ordaining Women* was one of the best and most radical defenses of a feminist perspective in the late nineteenth-century evangelical traditions.

In *Ordaining Women* Roberts wrote:

> . . . we cannot ascertain the truth of an opinion by inquiries about its age. Let us decide that as the church did, for ages, misinterpret the teachings of the Bible on the subject of slavery, so it may now fail to apprehend its teaching on the question of women's rights.[27]

Roberts argues explicitly on the hermeneutical level, claiming that one's starting point must be Galatians 3:28:

> Make this the *key text* upon this subject and give to other passages such a construction as will make them agree with it and all is in harmony. The apparent conflict is at an end.[28]

Baptist A.J. Gordon provides an interesting variation on this

theme. Gordon, the major figure behind Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, shared the same revivalist and abolitionist social origins. His son and biographer, Ernest, indicates that A.J. Gordon "had been bred in the strictest sect of the abolitionists" and had known William Lloyd Garrison, a frequent visitor in his boyhood home.[29] This biography also indicates, as we have come to expect, that with regard to women A.J. Gordon "advocated their complete enfranchisement and their entrance into every political and social pivilege enjoyed by men."[30]

In spite of these facts Gordon did not ground his argument for the ordination of women upon Galatians 3:28 and a doctrine of the equality of women, but upon his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. This is developed in an essay on "The Ministry of Women" in the *Missionary Review of the World* (1894) that Gordon wrote in response to criticism of the practice of allowing women to speak at some of the missionary conventions in which he was involved. Gordon's basic text here is not the Galatians passage but the second chapter of Acts, especially the prophecy from Joel that is quoted there—"in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons *and your daughters* shall prophesy."

In the midst of this argument Gordon makes some very interesting suggestions. He affirms for example, the "value of experience as an interpreter of Scripture. The final exegesis is not always to be found in the lexicon and grammar."[31] In addition to being in the Word, the "Spirit is also in the Church, the body of regenerate and sanctified believers."[32] Though Gordon wished to give priority to the written Word, he also wished to give a certain weight to the voice of the Spirit speaking in the experience of the church. The particular experience that Gordon had in mind was that "in every great spiritual awakening in the history of Protestantism the impulse for Christian women to pray and witness for Christ in the public assembly has been found irrepressible."[33]

Gordon's argument for the right of women to preach found particular reception in the rising tide of premillenial eschatology, and Gordon himself was a prominent figure in the prophecy conferences that lay behind this new current. This movement gave particular emphasis to the imminence of the return of Christ and the fact that people were living in the last days. The uncertainty of many in interpreting the "last days" of the Joel prophecy in Acts 2 was resolved by arguing that the last days just before the return of Christ would be accompanied by a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would restore the phenomena (such as that

of women's prophesying) which characterized the Pentecost era that inaugurated the last days in another sense. It was this complex of ideas that fed into Pentecostalism and provided the grounding that was used in classical Pentecostalism to defend the practice of women's preaching. This argument also had the advantage of turning the fact that women had not had a major role in the church in the meantime into a form of apologetic argument for why it had now become appropriate.

Very similar to Gordon's position was that of Fredrik Franson, who also argued from Acts 2 for the ministry of women in a pamphlet entitled "Prophesying Daughters."[34] Franson was a Swedish immigrant who became the first commisioned missionary of Moody Church and a prominent figure in the founding of TEAM (The Evangelical Alliance Mission) and related mission groups. His teachings apparently had major impact on the Evangelical Free Church. This denomination greatly benefited in early years from the work of women not only as evangelists but also occasionally as stationed pastors. The founding constitution of the church made explicit that women were to be ordained to its ministry; among early ordained ministers were such women as Christina Carlson, Ellen Modin, Amanda Nelson, Carrie Norgaard, Hilma Severin, and Amanda Gustafson.[35]

The main outline of this "pentecostal" argument by Gordon and Franson had actually been developed over thirty years earlier by lay evangelist Phoebe Palmer, editor of *The Guide to Holiness* and a major force behind the mid-nineteenth-century reaffirmation of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection, which produced by the turn of the century perhaps a hundred different church and quasi-church bodies. This tradition also had its origin in pre-Civil War revivalism and was perhaps the tradition that most clearly perpetuated Charles G. Finney's "new measure" revivalism. Early editors of the *Guide to Holiness* were abolitionist, but Phoebe Palmer was less socially radical and shied away from controversy. She found the Pentecostal justification for her own work more congenial and argued it extensively in her 1859 treatise, *The Promise of the Father.*[36]

In spite of Phoebe Palmer's reticence, her successors took her argument in a distinctly feminist direction. Mrs. J. Fowler Willing argued at the turn of the century in the pages of the *Guide,* "The Pentecost laid the axe at the root of the tree of social injustice. The text of Peter's sermon that marvelous day was the keynote of woman's enfranchisement."[37] Alma White, who claimed as the founder of the small Pillar of Fire denomination to be the first woman bishop in the history of Christianity, was an ardent feminist, basing her convictions largely on this argument.

Her group published for years a paper called *Women's Chains*, which argued for suffrage and defended the right of women to enter any profession.

In this perfectionist tradition the "Pentecost" argument included within it another theological premise that should be recognized. In its emphasis on the doctrine of sanctification, this tradition often came close to arguing that the pre-fallen state of men could be completely restored by the transforming grace of God. In this argument, then, any elements of the curse laid upon women in the fall would not apply in the church, the company of the redeemed and restored. Seth Cook Rees, for example, was to argue that "as the grace of god and the light of the Gospel are shed abroad . . . woman is elevated, until at Pentecost she stands, a second Eve, by the side of her husband.[38]

Such convictions (and the practices that they supported) continued and flourished in some evangelical traditions until at least World War II. Since that date feminist convictions in evangelical traditions have radically declined. We have already suggested some of the reasons for this. As evangelicals were more and more distanced from the abolitionist controversies, they tended to fall back into biblical literalism. The forces of fundamentalism and traditionalism replaced the evangelical spirit. Those groups that were produced by the spiritual movements and revivalism of the nineteenth century became more institutionalized, and with the decline of that first burst of spiritual vitality also gave up the practice of women preachers and feminist convictions. The increasing professionalization of the ministry and the growth of evangelical seminaries tended to exclude women. And by and large there was a general accommodatton to American culture that cut the nerve behind such deviant practices. In short, the evangelical traditions became much like those against which their foremothers and forefathers had protested.

ENDNOTES

1. (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

2. This may be found in Aaron C.H. Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (London, 1844), I, 27, or more readily in Oscar Sherwin, *John Wesley: Friend of the People* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1961), pp. 40-41.

3. Sermon entitled "Salvation by Faith" (preached at St. Mary's Oxford, June 18, 1738), I, 4 (available in various editions).

4. Sermon entitled "The Way to the Kingdom," I, 6.

5. Variously in Albert Outler (editor), *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

6. Variously reported, but cf. John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (London: The Epworth Press, 1923), p. 25.

7. Letter of June 13, 1771, to Mary Bosanquet in John Telford (editor), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley* (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), Vol. V, p. 257.

8. This letter, now apparently lost, is variously reported. Cf. Pheobe Palmer, *The Promise of the Father* (Boston: Henry V. Degen, 1859), p. 117, relying on Zechariah Taft, *Biographical Sketches of Holy Women.*

9. Comment on Galatians 3:28 in Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible* etc. (various editions).

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

11. The extent to which feminism followed in the wake of Finney's revivals has not been adequately noticed in the literature. Cf., however, Alice Rossi (editor), *The Feminist Papers* (New York: Columbia Univeristy Press, 1973).

12. Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond (editors), *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld, and Sarah Grimke, 1822-1844* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965), p. 432.

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

14. Barnes and Dumond, *op. cit.*, pp. xvi-xvii.

15. The religious development of the Grimke sisters is not yet well understood. The best treatment is by Katherine Du Pre Lumpkin, *The Emancipation of Angelina Grimke* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974).

16. (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838), collecting letters first published during 1837 in the *Spectator* and the *Liberator* (reprinted New York: Burt Franklin, 1970).

17. (Philadelphia: George Donohue, 1839—reprinted New York: AMS Press, 1973), p. 73.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

19. *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*, p. 13.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

22. David Sherman, "Woman's Place in the Gospel," in John O. Foster, *Life and Labors of Mrs. Maggie Newton Van Cott* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1872), p. xxxiv.

23. *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.

24. *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

25. Luther Lee, *Woman's Right to Preach the Gospel* (Syracuse, New York: Published by the author, 1853), p. 4. This sermon is also available in a modern edition of *Five Sermons and a Tract by Luther Lee*, edited with an introduction by Donald W. Dayton (Chicago: Holrad House, 1975).

26. Jonathan Blanchard and N.L. Rice, *A Debate on Slavery*, (Cincinnati: Wm. H. Moore, 1846 and several modern reprints), p. 433.

27. B.T. Roberts, *Ordaining Women* (Rochester, New York: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1891). p. 13. New edition with an introduction by Donald W. Dayton (Winona Lake: Light and Life Press, 1977).

28. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

29. Ernest B. Gordon, *Adoniram Judson Gordon: A Biography* (New York: Revell, 1896), p. 35.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

31. A.J. Gordon, "The Ministry of Women," *Missionary Review of the World* VII (December, 1894), pp. 910-921, also available as "Gordon-Conwell Monograph #61," the edition used here. This quote is on p. 12 in this format edited by the Rev. Pamela Cole.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

33. *Ibid.*

34. This pamphlet, originally published in various European languages, is translated and published in English for the first time elsewhere in this issue of the *Covenant Quarterly*.

35. Further information on this and various Scandinavian antecedents may be found in a series of articles by Mrs. Arnold T. (Della E.) Olson on "A Woman of Her Times" in various issues of the *Evangelical Beacon*, May 27 through September 2, 1975.

36. [Phoebe Palmer], *The Promise of the Father; or, A Neglected Specialty of the Last Days* (Boston: H.V. Degen, 1859). This 421-page work became the fountainhead of innumerable works through the rest of the century.

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

38. Seth C. Rees, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church* (Cincinnati: Martin Wells Knapp at the Revivalist Office, 1897), p. 41.

BOOK REVIEWS

REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

Earl C. Dahlstrom, professor of pastoral studies, North Park Theological Seminary

Everett L. Wilson, pastor of College Park Covenant Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Confusion and Hope: Clergy, Laity, and the Church in Transition. By Glenn Richard Bucher and Patricia Ruth Hill, eds. Fortress Press, 1974, 128 pp., $3.50.

Gods of Goodness: The Sophisticated Idolatry of the Main Line Churches. By Bruce L. Blackie. Westminster Press, 1975, 170 pp., $5.95.

Both of these volumes are sharply critical of the present-day church in America. Both are divided into two parts: the former into "The Confusion" and "The Hope" and the latter in "Idols of the Mind" and "Idols of Culture." Both represent the convictions of thoroughly informed and responsible scholarship. Both concern themselves not only with what is wrong with the church today but also with specific and workable suggestions for finding the way out of its morass. Though only the former by title and announced intention sets for itself the task of the "cure," both are much more effective diagnostically—and a devastating diagnosis it is.

Admittedly, the presses have been running overtime with books on "what's wrong with the church" during the past decade. One had even been led to believe that the spate of such books had run its course. I, too, have been among those who have been saying we've had more than enough. But here are two volumes which, while not wholly equal in value, attempt to deal with the matter of the demise of the effectiveness of today's church redemptively. Even the sharpest criticisms have a subjective and compassionate tone to them. Negative as portions of both books are, there is wholesomeness to the concern expressed and at least an implied solution for every weakness or confusion revealed.

As would be expected, both volumes relate a good deal of the contemporary crisis to the clergy. This is not necessarily to attach the blame there, but the weaknesses and strengths of the