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ABSTRACT

TURNING FROM THE PULPIT TO THE PAGES OF PERIODICALS: WOMEN'S RHETORICAL ROLES IN THE ANTEBELLUM METHODIST CHURCH

By Lisa J. Shaver

My dissertation claims the antebellum Methodist Church as a central rhetorical site for women. In doing so, I attempt to shift focus away from the lone male in the pulpit to the overwhelming majority of women who made up nineteenth-century America's largest religious movement. My study examines two of the Methodist Church's most popular general audience periodicals produced during the antebellum period, the monthly *Methodist Magazine,* established in 1818, and the weekly *Christian Advocate,* introduced in 1826. From the little narratives appearing in these periodicals, I outline roles both ascribed to and assumed by women in order to posit a broader definition of women's rhetorical roles within the church. In its publications, the church extended women's influence far beyond their own households, congregations, and communities. While depicting women as pious models and evangelists inside their homes, Methodist periodicals also charted and sanctioned women's migration outside of the domestic sphere by reporting their efforts as fundraisers, benevolent workers, Sunday school teachers, ministers' wives, and missionary assistants. Ultimately, my dissertation further complicates the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres by claiming that the Methodist Church and its periodicals operated as both private and public spaces that empowered women and expanded rather than limited their realm of influence.

In Chapter One, I describe Methodism's explosive growth in America between 1776 and 1850, and I situate my analysis of women's rhetorical roles in the church within the on-going efforts to recover women in the rhetorical tradition. Based on a study of the 154 memoirs appearing in *Methodist Magazine* from 1818 to 1824, Chapters Two and Three outline the rhetorical strategies and conventions used in depictions of persons "dying well" as well as the specific roles assigned to women. Based on my study of the *Christian Advocate* from its inception in 1826 to 1832, Chapters Four and Five show how women erupted out of the confines of the back page "Ladies' Department," the institutional space in which "women's concerns" were initially consigned. I conclude by claiming religious institutions as an essential, yet often-neglected site for studying early American women's rhetoric.

TURNING FROM THE PULPIT TO THE PAGES OF PERIODICALS: WOMEN'S RHETORICAL ROLES IN THE ANTEBELLUM METHODIST CHURCH

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I distinctly remember the day that I read the introduction to nineteenth-century rhetoric in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg's *Rhetorical Tradition*. Included in their introduction was the mention of early Methodist female ministers in England, which piqued my curious about women's roles in the early American Methodist Church. It was at that moment that my mind forged a lasting link between women, American Methodism, and rhetoric. Hailing from a long line of strong Methodist women, the connection made perfect sense—to me.

It is also not surprising that I first read Bizzell and Herzberg's *Rhetorical Tradition* in Kate Ronald's Histories and Theories of Rhetoric course. In pursuing this project, the person to whom I owe the greatest depth of gratitude is my advisor Kate Ronald. At crucial junctures of this project, Kate's questions helped me expand my argument while reigning in my research. Her insight and example has profoundly influenced my research, writing, and teaching. I cannot imagine writing this dissertation without her. I am also grateful to Sarah Robbins, who helped set me on this path into women's rhetoric, and who has always been willing to offer guidance along the way. Thank you also to Morris Young, Whitney Womack Smith, and Carla Pestana, the other members of my committee, who have patiently watched this project materialize and who have been generous with their time and input. My dissertation was supported in part with a fellowship from the Graduate School of Miami University, which provided me with an uninterrupted year of research and writing.

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Chapter 1: Claiming the Antebellum Methodist Church as a Rhetorical Site for Women

> *There could be no lone man in the pulpit without the mass of women who fill the pews.*
>
> Ann Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History" (1997)

> *The contributions of women to Methodism were significant but more often assumed than acknowledged.*
>
> Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800* (2000)

> From my early youth I have felt a predilection for the employment of teaching; this sentiment strengthened as I advanced in years, and when, through the mercy of God, I was led to obey the requirements of the Gospel, and give to him my heart, a new impulse was given to my desires, and I resolved to engage in the work, and seek to become instrumental in planting the seeds of virtue and piety in the minds of youth. (CA[1] 1832: 54)

Infused with religious conviction and confidence, the young Methodist[2] woman who penned these words, made a perilous journey with her sister by sea and land from Boston to Tuscumbia, Alabama, in 1832 to provide religious instruction to the town's youth at a Sabbath school there. According to the young woman, unnamed in the paper, the Sabbath school opened before her "a scene of labor" to which she hoped with "earnest wishes and prayers that my feeble efforts might be blessed of God" (54). Despite what she describes as the "difficulties attendant upon settling in a new country," the "languid state" of the Sabbath school, the "low state" of religion in the community, and the tremendous "exertions" required, the young woman claimed, "I have spent some of the happiest hours of my life with my Sabbath charge, and I find in the performance of this duty much satisfaction" (54). In fact, the young woman considered her work in the Sabbath school an important part of the Methodist's mission to ignite religious zeal in a community that she feared was more focused on seeking wealth than salvation.

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[1] Abbreviation for the Methodist Church's *Christian Advocate* newspaper.

[2] Although the church was officially established in America as the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, members of the church were customarily referred to as Methodists, so I use the more common references Methodists and the Methodist Church throughout my dissertation.

The young woman's efforts to spread the gospel were acknowledged by the title "Female Missionaries" that the newspaper attached to her letter, which was originally addressed to her minister in Boston but reprinted in the Methodist Church's popular *Christian Advocate* eight months after she wrote it. Institutionally, antebellum Methodists seldom recognized women as missionaries in their own right, yet in print, the editors of the *Advocate* elevated this woman and her sister to the roles of missionaries and religious models. Introducing the letter, the editors extol, "The spirit which led, and the motives which influenced these young ladies, were those of the cross of Christ. They left their friends, and a part of the country where they might have had good employment, for a new and distant part, that they might be more useful" (54). Embedded in these editorial comments is an evangelical emphasis on Christian action, usefulness, and placing religious concerns ahead of financial or familial comfort. The editors also transform these women into religious exemplars for both men and women asserting, "There are calls from thousands in the southern and western parts of our country to females as well as males, to engage in the instruction of youth; and in this work they may cultivate the wilderness and the solitary place, and greatly help forward the cause of God" (54).

This article is emblematic of rhetorical conventions repeatedly employed in Methodist periodicals, particularly in gendered depictions that construct women as religious models. Additionally, this article highlights both the roles assumed by antebellum women as well as the roles ascribed to them in print. Through their own religious calling, these two young sisters journey to Alabama to assume professions as teachers and purveyors of the gospel. Wrapped in a religious mantle, these antebellum women radically expanded their field of labor and influence. At the same time, through the act of rhetorical accretion, publication, and dissemination to a broad audience, the *Christian Advocate's* editors convert these women into religious models for emulation—expanding their influence even further. In her *College English* article, "The Speaker Respoken: Material Rhetoric as Feminist Methodology," Vicki Tolar Collins defines rhetorical accretion as "a process which respeaks and redefines the original speaker" often with male voices "talking over" a woman's text (555). In this study, I use rhetorical accretion to describe how male ministers, who primarily wrote and edited the texts appearing in Methodist periodicals, transform these texts into rhetorical appeals affirming a particular religious ideology. For instance, the *Advocate* editors comments that "The spirit which led, and the motives which influenced these young ladies, were those of the cross of Christ," frames these two sisters'

actions as spiritually inspired and holds these women up as religious examples. In *Turning from the Pulpit to the Pages of Periodicals*, I examine the roles both assumed by and ascribed to women in Methodist publications in order to posit a broader definition of women's rhetorical roles within the church. Through a review of two popular general-audience periodicals introduced by the Methodist Church during the first third of the nineteenth century, my dissertation claims the antebellum Methodist Church as an important rhetorical site for women.

In making this claim, I use women's "little narratives" appearing in the Methodist Church's periodicals to contradict the overarching narrative in Methodist historiography that women were relegated to silence in the domestic sphere during the antebellum period. In *A Communion of Friendship: Literacy, Spiritual Practice, and Women in Recovery*, a study of the literate practices of a contemporary group of Al-Anon women, Beth Daniell draws on Jean-Francois Lyotard's conception of overarching "grand narratives" to posit post-modern "little narratives" as a means of challenging grand narratives that often exclude women (3-7). Daniell's little narratives highlight the fact that historical narratives are no longer considered complete or overarching. Hence, the little narratives outlined in my dissertation are far more than additions or corrections; they are intended to complicate previous notions of Methodist history and rhetorical history.

Locating these little narratives allows me to map the textual and literal spaces in which women are depicted in these periodicals. These narratives not only chart women's movement beyond their prescribed domestic borders, but also reveal women performing powerful rhetorical roles within their homes, assumed to be private spaces, which through publication and mass dissemination became persuasive public spaces. In fact, my examination of Methodist periodicals represents part of what Sean Latham and Robert Scholes label periodical studies—a burgeoning field of interdisciplinary scholarship that treats periodicals as important cultural artifacts representative of their social and political contexts (517-30). Scrutinizing the depiction of women in these publications exposes how contributing authors and the periodicals' editors purposefully converted women into pious models, which sometimes had the collateral effect of elevating women to ministers or missionaries, offices they were precluded from holding. Through a rhetorical analysis of these institutional and individual narratives, my dissertation offers an alternative approach to examining women's rhetorical influence within this male-dominated institution. By exploring textual spaces and activities in the church that traditionally

have not been considered rhetorical, I not only turn attention away from church pulpits to the pages of early Methodist periodicals, but also establish the Methodist Church as an important developmental site for American women's rhetoric. In doing so, my dissertation contributes to the construction of a more accurate legacy for American women's rhetoric and provides insight into the way in which women have operated rhetorically inside male-dominated institutions. Finally, my dissertation questions why churches, which were overwhelming populated and supported by women, have often been neglected as sites of study for early American women's rhetoric.

The Age of Methodism in America

Between 1776 and 1850 Methodism exploded across the American landscape. Dramatically increasing from less than three percent of all church membership in 1776 to more than thirty four percent by 1850, the Methodist Church became by far the largest religious body and the most extensive national institution outside of the Federal government (Hatch, "Puzzle" 27). During the first third of the nineteenth century, a general resurgence of faith, known as the Second Great Awakening, spread across the country, often manifesting itself in revivals and large camp meetings. The Second Great Awakening promoted a more enthusiastic evangelical faith that encouraged individuals to seek divine mercy and salvation by submitting their minds, hearts, and wills to God. Although the Second Great Awakening cut across denominations and geographical regions, its emotional, evangelical revivalism particularly resonated with Methodists and Baptists—two less-established religious sects. Amidst the fervor of the Second Great Awakening, the Methodists and Baptists rapidly assumed numerical dominance among America's Protestant denominations (Lindley 59-60). John Wigger claims, "Under Methodism's aegis, American evangelism became more enthusiastic, individualistic, egalitarian, entrepreneurial and lay oriented—characteristics that continue to shape and define American popular religion today" (7).

Aligning the church's growth with the Second Great Awakening, Methodist historians James Kirby, Russell Richey, and Kenneth Rowe claim that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, "Methodism was a marginal church associated with religious fervor, cultural poverty, and social dispossession," but by the 1820s, the rapidly growing church began to ascend the "ladder of social respectability," and by 1830, the Methodists were reported to be the largest

denomination in the country (177). In fact, by 1850, one out of every fifteen Americans belonged to the Methodist Church, and by the start of the Civil War, Methodists occupied more than 20,000 places of worship across the country (Hatch, "Puzzle" 28; Andrews 4). Amidst this explosive growth, the Methodists more than any other church shaped religion in the new republic. Historian Dee Andrews highlights several overlapping attributes of Methodism that propelled the church's growth. She notes that Methodism gained popularity at a time when America was redefining the relationship between the church and state by eliminating all vestiges of state-supported churches. With missionary zeal, Methodists sought all classes of individuals in cities as well as rural and frontier regions. As a result, the movement wasn't constrained by location or formal places of worship. Methodist itinerant ministers traveled to the people conducting worship at camp meetings and in homes, and as they migrated across the country, Methodist adherents established new Methodist societies. Methodism also emphasized individual religious experience and each person's choice to accept or reject God's grace. Compared to the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, early Methodism stressed free will and free grace as opposed to Calvinistic doctrines of limited grace or predestination (Andrews 5-7).

Ultimately, Methodism offered an egalitarian form of religion that "empowered ordinary people by taking their deepest spiritual impulses at face value rather than subjecting them to the scrutiny of orthodox doctrine and the frowns of respectable clergymen," who stood before Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Anglican churches (Hatch "Puzzle" 10). Indeed as a progressive force, Methodism chipped away at traditional patterns of deference such as class, professional clericalism and conventional boundaries of gender, ethnicity, and education; Methodists recognized religious expression by all individuals—including women (27; Hatch and Wigger 16-19). Local Methodist societies organized around gatherings that provided religious forums for individuals to preach, exhort, testify, pray, and encourage each other. In addition to Sunday worship, members and prospective members attended small group gatherings. Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, Methodists were required to attend these small groups, called "class meetings," which were led by an appointed class leader. In these meetings, individuals opened their spiritual experiences and salvation to discussion, examination, and prayer, and class leaders were responsible for overseeing the spiritual progress of class members (Wigger 4). Methodists in good standing were also invited to participate in quarterly circuit-wide love feasts. These meetings brought together all the parishioners along one circuit to address

business matters and share worship. Additionally, Methodists came together for large revivals and camp meetings. In each of these forums, men and women were encouraged to share their testimonies and discuss their spiritual failures and triumphs. A few Methodist women even received local acclaim as lay preachers and exhorters.

As with most religious institutions of the era, women comprised the overwhelming majority of Methodists. In her survey of women and religion in America, Susan Hill Lindley notes that women were drawn to religion from a variety of motivations including cultural expectations, as a form of submission to man and God, in search of individual identities, to join supportive communities, and as a means of self-assertion (60-61). Yet, too often scholars stress how religion acts as a form of submission ignoring women's other motivations. Moreover, rhetoricians and religious historians have narrowly defined women's rhetorical roles within antebellum American churches. Historian Ann Braude claims that most studies of church histories have "perpetuated the contention that the views of one man in the pulpit are more important than those of the many women in the pews" (91).

A similar inclination exists in rhetorical histories. Too often rhetorical studies tend to emphasize the pulpit as the sole rhetorical space within churches, which excludes women's influence from consideration because most churches banned women from the pulpit in the nineteenth century.[3] For example, of the four nineteenth-century women included in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg's *The Rhetorical Tradition*, the excerpts from Sarah Grimké, Phoebe Palmer, and Frances Willard all address women's exclusion from preaching. Even though they depict the strong ties that existed between women and religion, and demonstrate that women considered the church an important rhetorical site, by highlighting "extraordinary" women's efforts to gain access to preaching, these excerpts keep the focus on the pulpit. Pulpit debates are clearly an important chapter in women's rhetoric, and as Roxanne Mountford argues in *The Gendered Pulpit*, the pulpit remains an often-contested, gendered space today. However, the pulpit tends to be the only rhetorical space in the church that is studied—stressing women's "lack" of power as opposed to examining ways that women actually exerted influence within

[3] Roxanne Mountford offers a sample of dates when mainline Protestant denominations began ordaining women. Congregationalist, 1853; American Unitarian Association, 1871; Disciples of Christ, 1888; Assemblies of God, 1935; Methodist Church, 1956; United Presbyterian Church, North America, 1958; Southern Baptist Convention, 1964 (revoked, 2001); Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, 1966; Lutheran Church in America, 1970; Mennonite Church, 1973; Episcopal Church, 1976; Reformed Church in America, 1979 (162).

patriarchal religious institutions. Yet, while the pulpit is the primary rhetorical space recognized in the physical church, the pulpit is not the only rhetorical space in the church as an organization. In fact, if rhetorical historians rely on the pulpit as the primary gauge of women's rhetorical roles in the Methodist Church, we dramatically limit ourselves to a fifty year history beginning with women's ordination in 1956.Emphasizing the pulpit highlights the tendency to assess women's rhetorical power in terms of prominent public roles, which reinscribes the same standards that historical women faced during their own lives and ultimately erases or downplays women's contributions outside of highly-visible public platforms as well as their efforts to maneuver around them.

This emphasis on prominent roles and public voice is also evident in Methodist histories. However, Methodist histories acknowledge that women were quite vocal in the early formation of the church in the new republic. For instance, historian John Wigger claims that, "As a movement, Methodism was created as much by women as it was by men" noting that Wesley's heart-religion with its intimate group meetings and emphasis on religious community attracted female converts (151). Indeed, women were often the first in their communities to become Methodists. Many came to the church on their own or in the company of other women, and they often joined the church even if their fathers or husbands didn't (Andrews 99-101). Although their alignment with the fledgling Methodist movement occasionally provoked ridicule and harassment, women had more freedom to join Methodist societies (Lyerly 101). Whereas men were wary of damaging their positions in the community by associating with an up-start religious sect, women were freer to follow their religious convictions. Women often showed their support for the movement by hosting itinerants and religious gatherings in their homes. Women served as critical allies to circuit ministers—using family and acquaintances to help these itinerants establish networks throughout their territories. Moreover, they acted as caretakers and counselors—providing lodging, feeding and nursing traveling clergy, mending and sewing their clothes, advising and encouraging them, and often giving financial aid (101; Wigger 163). And with regards to Methodism's primary mission—gaining new converts—women proved to be powerful recruiters, often persuading their family and friends to join the church.

Ironically, a narrative of women being "silenced" emerges from the church's growth and its transition from a fledgling sect to a mainline denomination. In the introduction to their collection of essays, *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture,* Nathan Hatch and John

Wigger claim that "More than any other large-scale religious movement of the time, early Methodists allowed women to speak in their meetings, but not without limits. By the 1830s and 1840s Methodists had largely turned their backs on lay female preaching and exhorting in search of middle-class respectability" (19). Like most portrayals of women's roles within the early American Methodist Church, Hatch and Wigger present a *peak and valley* narrative—beginning with women's empowerment during the mid-to-late eighteenth century and ending with women's silencing in the early nineteenth century.[4] In her essay in the same collection, Catherine Brekus likewise asserts that the early Methodist Church encouraged women to "shout, sing and testify in public," but as the church embraced an ideology of domesticity, it deprived women of the liberty to speak, "urging them to 'keep silence in the churches'" ("Female" 143, 172). In his 1998 monograph of American Methodism, John Wigger notes women's public preaching, exhortations, prayers, and their roles as class leaders and deputy preachers, but suggests that the church increasingly concluded that women should not forsake their domestic roles of wife and mother to pursue public, masculine roles as evangelists and class leaders (156-7). Similarly, in her examination of early Methodism in the Middle Atlantic region, Dee Andrews points to female class leaders and women who counseled and guided male itinerants. Yet, she later claims that women's consignment to the domestic sphere removed them from the "public domain of America's fastest-growing religious movement" (118, 122). These histories, which highlight women's decreasing opportunities to speak within the Methodist Church in the early nineteenth century, set the stage for considering women's changing rhetorical roles in the church. My dissertation extends these denomination histories by complicating the spatial correlation of the church with voice and the domestic sphere with silence, which implies that the most meaningful religious voices reverberate from the physical church, particularly the pulpit, during formal worship.

My dissertation is also influenced by postmodernism in the sense that it recognizes that all historical stories are selected and arranged according to the selector's frame of reference. Whereas recovery efforts in women's rhetorical history tend to recognize and celebrate historical women based on contemporary feminist values such as public voice, my dissertation posits a broader definition of women's rhetoric within the antebellum Methodist Church. Recovering the

[4] Specifying exact time lines is difficult because changes often vary between the more established Methodist congregations in the northeast and in metropolitan areas and those newly formed congregations in rural areas and frontier regions.

rhetorical roles both ascribed to and assumed by women requires us to look beyond the pulpit to identify other rhetorical spaces within the Methodist Church. One approach Patricia Bizzell suggests for recovering women's rhetorical roles is "to look in places not previously studied for work by women that would not have been traditionally considered as rhetoric" (51). Similarly, Andrea Lunsford argues that reclaiming women's rhetorical roles is often a matter of "listening hard"—for the voices of women as well as the ways in which their voices have been dismissed or silenced (6). Moreover, recognizing the substantial role played by women "involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of historical significance, to encompass personal, subjective experiences as well as public and political activities" (Gordon, Buhle, Dye 89). Ultimately, *Turning from the Pulpit to the Pages of Periodicals* acknowledges women's tremendous religious and rhetorical influence, too often simply attributed to women's assumed proclivity for religion and their domestic duties as wives, mothers, and caretakers.

As the Methodist Church became more firmly established in America in the 1810s and 1820s, the church relied less on the informal network of women. Instead, the focus turned to the institutional structure of church buildings, settled clergy, and ecclesiastical hierarchy. Yet, even as this shift occurred women did not abandon the movement (Wigger 164; Andrews 119). This loyalty seems to indicate that women's commitment to Methodism was not tied to institutional control but to their beliefs or the spiritual power they felt, and perhaps also to alternative spaces within the institutional structure where they could exercise cultural influence. For some women, simply joining the Methodist Church represented an act of self-assertion. Throughout religious history women have tended to lose public voice and power when dissenting religious movements become institutionalized. This trend appears in the migration of the Puritans to New England, the eighteenth-century Baptists in America, the early Methodist movements in England and America, and even with the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. As religious movements become institutionalized, they replicate male hierarchies. In other words, the roles for women inside an established church align with social and political events outside the church (Westerkamp 176; Juster 216). With this replication in mind, my dissertation considers two social trends occurring within and outside of the antebellum Methodist Church: the development of mass publishing and the rise of domestic ideology. Both of these trends coincide with and ultimately challenge the Methodist peak and valley narrative of "silencing." While arguments against the idea conception of separate spheres, which limited nineteenth-century middle-class

women to a narrowly circumscribed domestic sphere is not new, the church, which is typically conceived as part of women's prescribed sphere of activity, is usually erroneously assumed to operate as conservative and limiting. My dissertation complicates the ideology of separate spheres by claiming that the Methodist Church and its periodicals operated as both private and public spaces that empowered women and expanded rather than limited their sphere of influence.

Depicting Women's Migration through Print

One gauge of Methodism's growth and its transition from radical sect to respectable denomination is the church's publishing activity. Five years after establishing an independent church in America, the Methodists initiated the Methodist Book Concern in 1789. By strategically using the press to spread evangelical values and build their denomination, Methodists asserted themselves as publishing pioneers in America. They continually experimented with different genres, packaging, distribution, marketing strategies, and correspondence with their book agents and customers. The minutes from the 1796 General Conference[5] confirm the important evangelical role early Methodists assigned to publishing. The General Conference stipulated that "The propagation of religious knowledge by the means of the press is next in importance to the preaching of the gospel," and asserted that supplying parishioners with "pious and useful books" so that they "may fill up their leisure hours in the most profitable ways, is an object worthy of the deepest attention of their pastors" (*Journals* 17).

For Methodists the words people read were secondary only to the words emanating from the pulpit. Moreover, Methodists believed that preaching and the press were intertwined; itinerant ministers literally assumed responsibility for providing parishioners with appropriate reading materials by serving as the Methodist Book Concern's primary network for distribution. In a practice dating back to Wesley, itinerant ministers were commissioned as both preachers and colporteurs. Selling Bibles, books, tracts, pamphlets, and hymnals produced by the Methodist Book Concern not only assisted itinerant ministers is spreading the gospel, but also helped them supplement their meager incomes because the church gave ministers a percentage of each sale they made. For instance, in the Ohio conference in 1816, the average book bonus for itinerant

[5] First convened in 1792, the General Conference meets every four years, and is the highest legislative and representative body for the Methodist Church. The General Conference determines the church's future direction, and is the only body with the authority to alter doctrinal standards.

ministers was $75, which is particularly noteworthy when compared to their $100 annual salary (Hatch, *Democratization* 142).

With the addition of periodicals—multi-genre publications issued serially at regular intervals—minister/booksellers also assumed roles as roving reporters. Initially the Book Concern did not employ writers, so most of the original content printed in Methodist periodicals came from either the ministers who served as the periodicals' editors or itinerant ministers in the field. In the roles of editors and contributors, ministers exerted tremendous influence over the content contained in the church's periodicals. Indeed, most viewed these roles as an extension of their ministerial duties, which makes sense considering that the church's periodicals were generally intended to minister, educate, and indoctrinate (Candy Brown 93). In their interpretation, arrangement, and retelling of stories, ministers often cast texts into a particular religious context or pursued a particular rhetorical purpose, thus transforming individuals and events into evangelical appeals.

"Virtually nonexistent in 1800," Nathan Hatch claims, "religious periodicals had, by 1830, become the grand engine of a burgeoning religious culture, the primary means of promotion for, and bond of union within competing religious groups" (*Democratization* 125-26). According to Benedict Anderson the act of reading a mass-produced periodical can instill a sense of unity or belonging. As individuals imagine others reading the same piece, they begin to conceive themselves as part of a larger community (Anderson 35). However, the pervasiveness of Methodist periodicals was more than imagined; a few of the church's periodicals garnered some of the largest subscription lists of their era. Although Methodists had always emphasized publications as a means of cultivating a larger church community, unlike books, tracts, or pamphlets, periodicals provided a timely forum for connecting Methodists across the country (Candy Brown 144-5). In addition to creating a larger Methodist community, periodicals also established new textual communities, which assigned new roles, established new sacred spaces, and ultimately transferred religious authority beyond clergy in the church on Sunday morning to family, home and the publications themselves (109). Within these textual communities, women were cast into new roles that were institutionally-sanctioned and widely disseminated. As a result women were converted into rhetorical agents for the church—extending their influence to audiences beyond their local congregations and communities.

Turning from the Pulpit to the Pages of Periodicals focuses on two of the Methodist Church's most popular general audience periodicals produced during the antebellum period, the monthly *Methodist Magazine,* established in 1818, and the weekly *Christian Advocate,* introduced in 1826. From these periodicals I locate little narratives that depict women as pious models, domestic ministers, religious instructors, fundraisers, benevolent workers, and missionaries in the field. By claiming these little narratives found in the Methodist Church's own periodicals as examples of women performing essential rhetorical roles within the church, my dissertation complicates the peak and valley narrative repeatedly presented in Methodist histories.

In her survey of women in American Methodism, Jean Miller Schmidt reiterates this narrative claiming, "In the countercultural and spiritually egalitarian atmosphere of the early American Methodist movement, women's voices were encouraged, and they played crucial roles in the establishment, expansion, and nurturing of Methodist societies," yet as the denomination moved toward middle-class respectability, she says the "the appropriate sphere for women was more clearly prescribed" (Schmidt 23-24). According to this peak and valley narrative, women, who were both visible and vocal in the establishment of Methodism of America, were relegated to silence in the domestic sphere in the early nineteenth century. Schmidt describes this shift in women's roles in the church from that of "Mothers in Israel" to "True Methodist Women" (79). Mother in Israel, a traditional title of respect taken from the characterization of Deborah in the Old Testament, was used to refer to a woman considered a strong spiritual leader. Conversely, the True Methodist Woman was characterized by the four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity—that Barbara Welter outlined in her foundational article "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860." In essence Schmidt's characterization suggests that women went from spiritual leaders to pious angels in the household. This latter characterization is evident in the following excerpt from an article carried in an 1826 article in the *Christian Advocate's* "Ladies' Department." The article suggests:

> Religion in a female secures all her interests. It graces her character, promotes her peace, endears her friendship, secures esteem, and adds a dignity and worth indescribable, to all her deeds. How sweet! when the mistress of a family is the handmaid of the Lord—when the mother of children is an example of piety—when the wife of the bosom is espoused to the Redeemer! (*CA* 1826: 4).

This transition from Mothers in Israel to True Methodist Women, who act as exemplars of piety and handmaids of the Lord, was influenced by the ideology of separate spheres popularized among the white upper and middle classes during the antebellum period. The ideology of separate spheres drew a stark distinction between the sanctified home and the sin-ridden marketplace. This conception of separate spheres, which carried a prescriptive domestic ideology, was based on the idea that while nineteenth-century white, middle-class men worked in the marketplace pursuing commerce, their wives and mothers preserved the religious and moral foundation of society through their roles in the domestic sphere. Readily apparent in these gendered spatial assignments is the inequitable distribution of power. At the same time that men achieved a firmer grasp on economic, legal, and political power, women's subordinate roles as wives and mothers were more clearly prescribed. The power associated with these public and private spatial consignments exemplifies what Michel Foucault identified as the fundamental relationship between space and the exercise of power (252). Indeed, cultural geographer Gillian Rose acknowledges that "Feminists have long been aware of the importance of spatial structure in the production and reproductions of masculinist societies" (Rose 17). Consequently, feminist scholars have continually debated whether, in its nineteenth-century context, domestic ideology oppressed women or empowered them. Some scholars have depicted domestic ideology to be confining, some have shown it as liberating, and some have suggested ways in which it was both (Schneider, *Way* 169). My examination of women's little narratives published in antebellum Methodist periodicals further interrogates both the concept of separate spheres and the strict boundaries it assumes.

With the rise of capitalism and secularization, some scholars locate the nineteenth-century church, along with the home, in the private sphere because of its irrelevance to materialistic production (Westerkamp 79). Yet, the work of the church wasn't tied to any specific locale—creating a vast middle ground often described as "civil society," "the social," or the "informal public" (Brekus, *Strangers* 13). As both a private and public space, the church provides an important liminal zone or zone of ambiguity in which women could expand their sphere of operation while maintaining social respectability. According to David Sibley, liminal zones or spaces of ambiguity offer the opportunity for change because they mark uncertain boundaries between two spheres (33). Because the church occupied this indeterminate space in

the traditional public/private dichotomy, it provided women with a sanctioned rhetorical site outside of the home, and offered them increased moral authority inside the home (Braude 99).

In its publications, the church further extended women's influence far beyond their own households, congregations, and communities. While depicting women as pious models and religious instructors inside their homes, Methodist periodicals also charted women's migration outside of the home by reporting their participation in social programs and religious missions. Consequently, the Methodist Church sanctioned, publicized, and in some instances, even encouraged women's movement beyond domestic boundaries. For example, a report from the New York Annual Conference printed in an 1831 issue of the *Christian Advocate* directly addresses women in the Asbury Female Mite Societies. Beginning "respected sisters," the report states with regards to their fundraising for superannuated preachers, their widows, and children:

> your labour of love has afforded a sum, if not sufficient to supply every want, yet enough to cause the tears of affliction and poverty to give place to those of gratitude…and we exhort you to use your best endeavors to provoke others to love and good works, that from each of our stations and circuits a rill may flow into the fund of the Asbury Female Mite societies until every necessity is relieved. (*CA* 1831: 155)

As this excerpt demonstrates, women's benevolent and evangelical endeavors clearly took them beyond the domestic sphere and traditional domestic roles. The church encouraged and recognized women's talents as fundraisers and organizers, but rarely recorded those contributions in their histories. However, these contributions were recorded in their periodicals—it is simply a matter of looking for them.

At the same time that the church encouraged women as emissaries of good works, Catherine Brekus notes how the antebellum Methodist Church discouraged and in some locations even banned female preachers. Brekus asserts:

> As ministers' wives, Sunday school teachers, home and foreign missionaries, and charitable workers, women found outlets for their talents that did not require them to overstep the boundaries of acceptable female behavior. Many seem to have concluded that it would be easier to channel their religious ambitions into more "feminine" activities than to face public ridicule or clerical sanction. For example, Eliza Barnes traveled across northern New England as an itinerant

> evangelist for a few brief years in the 1820s, but eventually abandoned her preaching career to become a missionary to Native Americans in Canada. Instead of facing questions about her right to speak in public, she earned wide praise for her self-sacrificing devotion to the 'heathen'. ("Female" 151)

In one sense, Brekus' acknowledges many of the roles women assume in the antebellum Methodist Church. At the same time, she seems to diminish these roles by ranking the pulpit as the sole rhetorical space of consequence within the church. Brekus also seems to emphasize the preclusion of opportunities for a few "extraordinary" women rather than the expansion of opportunities for the majority of Methodist women. By focusing on the pulpit, Brekus presents the church as a limiting rather than empowering rhetorical space for women. My study attempts to broaden this view by turning attention to the contributions of the majority of ordinary women who comprised the antebellum Methodist movement. Indeed, most of the ordinary women who filled the pews in the antebellum Methodist Church would have never considered becoming ministers; hence, rather than limiting their voices, marrying ministers, teaching Sunday school, and joining benevolent and missions organizations opened new rhetorical opportunities and broader spheres of influence.

By characterizing the roles of ministers' wives, Sunday school teachers, home and foreign missionaries, and charitable workers as "more 'feminine' activities," Brekus also acknowledges the tendency to devalue work performed predominantly by females. While the church did not initially view Sunday school teaching and benevolent work as female pursuits, the status of those roles declined as women increasingly entered them. Later in the nineteenth century, many of these roles were also remapped as part of an expanded domestic sphere. In *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910*, Nan Johnson shows how women attempted to expand their influence and access the public platform by broadly mapping domesticity—casting many social concerns as motherly concerns. But these remapping efforts in the late nineteenth century have also concealed and diminished the significance of women's initial steps beyond their prescribed domestic boundaries.

Methodist publications encouraged women to make their homes religious sanctuaries for their husbands, serve as pious models, evangelize to family, friends and neighbors, provide Biblical instruction for their children, and increase their religious knowledge by reading scripture, church published tracts, periodicals, and other religious texts. By doing so, the church

attempted to define and enforce proper roles for women, but a collateral effect of their efforts was to forge new rhetorical roles for women and establish broader spheres of influence. As Chapters Three and Four will show, in women's memoirs and in the church's domestic didacticism, Methodists elevated women to the status of ministers. Additionally, as Chapter Five demonstrates, by encouraging women to distribute tracts, care for the needy, and raise money for the church's missions efforts, Methodist periodicals depict women as purveyors of the gospel and show women's growing awareness of social ills as well as evangelical needs.

Recovering the Role of the Church in American Women's Rhetorical Development

The last fifteen years in the field of Rhetoric and Composition are marked by efforts to disrupt the androcentric rhetorical tradition. Andrea Lunsford's *Reclaiming Rheotrica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* (1995), Cheryl Glenn's *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Rhetorical Tradition* (1997), Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald's *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetorics* (2001), Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg's more inclusive edition of *The Rhetorical Tradition* (2001), and Jane Donawerth's *Rhetorical Theory By Women Before 1900* (2002) are a small sample of the field's growing interest in recovering women's contributions to western rhetorical traditions. In terms of American women's rhetoric, much of this recovery work has focused on early feminists, the most vocal women, who overtly defied the conventions of their era in order to argue for access to public platforms, abolition, women's education, and suffrage. Often missing from these accounts are the voices of seemingly "ordinary" women and the rhetorical roles they assumed within their families, communities, and churches. By privileging these public voices, which often resonated from the pulpit or public platform, we fail to acknowledge the way women used their conventional roles as wives, mothers, caretakers, and religious adherents to exert tremendous rhetorical power. Hence, I suggest that examining the rhetorical contributions of these lesser-known women is the next logical stage in the recovery process. Indeed, because so many of the rhetorical roles assumed by women remain hidden or misidentified, this perceived silence offers a "fertile field of investigation" (Lunsford 6).

Anne Ruggles Gere's *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920* and Carol Mattingly's *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* are two examples of works that begin to till this ground by turning attention to the rhetorical contributions of less visible women. My recovery of women's

rhetorical roles appearing in antebellum Methodist periodicals builds on this work by focusing on ordinary women within the church. Situated on the border between the private and public spheres, the church served as a primary rhetorical site for countless numbers of anonymous women. Although women were excluded from formal administrative and leadership roles within the Methodist Church, the church encouraged and seemingly contained women as moral guardians, pious models, religious instructors, and evangelical foot soldiers within their families, congregations, and communities.

Both the rhetorical roles women performed in the church and the role of the church as an important developmental site for women's rhetoric in the early nineteenth century are often concealed by stereotypes or the reluctance to study religious sites. Anne Gere and Carol Mattingly note that stereotypical representations of women's clubs and the Women's Christian Temperance Union fail to acknowledge how women used their participation in clubs to become more educated and active in social issues such as immigration and consumerism, or how through their opposition to alcohol sales, temperance women assumed roles as social and legal activists pursuing important reforms for women. By claiming the antebellum Methodist Church as an important rhetorical site for women, I am not only disrupting the peak and valley narrative repeated in Methodist historiography but also women's rhetorical historiography, which tends to neglect female church congregants in its consideration of nineteenth-century American women's rhetoric. The sheer size of the church, combined with the fact that women made up of the majority of its members, made it one of the most important institutions for American women.

Even though the church was the primary organization that most nineteenth-century women participated in outside of the home, religious institutions are often overlooked as sites for women's rhetorical studies. Roxanne Mountford acknowledges that feminist scholars and the humanities have generally ignored religious women and religious subject matters no matter how culturally significant (12). "In our secular age," Carol Mattingly also suggests that "scholars tend to disregard women associated with evangelical or religious causes not considered progressive by today's standards" (8). Ultimately, this revisive historical mapping expunges the role religion played in sanctioning ordinary women's voices. Indeed, historian Gerda Lerner claims it is in this manner that historians and institutions often use selective memory to exercise the power of forgetting (52). What doesn't fit within a particular ideological view of the past is simply left out. Affirming this fact, Catherine Brekus notes how early female preachers, who were among the

first women to speak publicly in America, have been excluded from studies because of their ideological stance (*Strangers* 197). While defending their right to speak, these female preachers generally denied any intent to subvert male authority or claim equal legal status with men (223). Believing that true change came through God, few female preachers pursued political, legal, or economic reforms (227). Consequently, "Female preachers stood outside of the two communities who might have tried to preserve their memory. Too radical to be accepted by evangelicals and too conservative to be accepted by women's rights activists, they were caught between two worlds. Remembered by neither, they disappeared into the silence of the past" (339).

Robert Connors argues that history is more a matter of the present than the past. Although history doesn't change, our perspective on history does. In looking at historical women, feminist and rhetorical scholars are searching for a legacy or a path of "how we got here" ("Dreams" 17). Ultimately, the path seems much more direct from extraordinary women like the Grimké sisters, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony. But what appears direct isn't always accurate. Rather than ardent suffragists, most white, American middle-class women today are more likely to find temperance women, missions women, and active church women in their own genealogies, which in itself seems to offer an alternative story about "how we got here." Moreover, it is usually these gradual, less dramatic and less directly confrontational changes that make a bigger difference over time; if fine upstanding Methodist women are accepted in specific roles, it arguably signals a lasting change, unlike the words said by a few famous and exceptional radicals. My dissertation claims that the countless number of anonymous church women, often spurned by scholars, offer a far more accurate historical representation of women's rhetorical prowess than radical feminists. By elucidating women's rhetorical roles in the Methodist Church, *Turning from the Pulpit to the Pages of Periodicals*, begins the work of recovering the rhetorical legacy handed down by the mass of women who filled antebellum American churches.

Chapter 2: Dying Well

> *I have read ever so many memoirs, and they were all about people who were too good to live and so died.*
>
> Elizabeth Prentiss, *Stepping Heavenward* (1869)

"'Her sun has set at noon.' She has gone to the land whence she shall never return." (*MM*[6] 1822: 406). When twenty-seven year old Harriet Neale died, the author of her memoir[7] suggested that few individuals "which are held forth to the public as examples of moral and religious excellence, can be offered with greater propriety than that of Mrs. Neale" (406). In recounting Neale's spiritual journey, her memoirist notes that although she had always led an upright and moral life, in her twenties she began to view herself as a sinner, and "became convinced of the necessity of religion here and hereafter" (409). She attempted to reach out to God, yet struggled in her solitary pursuit of grace until she joined the Methodists and became a loyal member of the local Methodist society. Ultimately, her fellowship in this community of believers helped guide and support her path to salvation and unrelenting devotion.

A few years following her conversion, Neale became sick and had a presentiment that her illness would prove fatal. Imagining death, she was overcome by trepidation, but according to her memoirist "she was entirely resigned to the will of Providence, and confidently believed that God would not let her die in doubts and fears" (409). With this resolve, her doubts soon faded, and she praised God, claiming to be "almost as happy as the angels in heaven" (410). For four months, though she suffered indescribable pain, she bore her afflictions without a murmur. Her memoirist credited her with saying, "see what the Lord has done for me…we can do anything when assisted by his grace" (410). When Neale's condition grew grave, her husband inquired whether she was ready to die, a query to which she was described as joyfully assenting and exhorting her husband to prepare to meet her in heaven.

For those who surrounded Neale's deathbed and the thousands who were later invited to witness her death through the publication of a four-page memoir in *Methodist Magazine*, Harriet Neale became a model of holy dying or dying well. She was also converted into a powerful argument for holy living. In fact, her memoirist noted the persuasive power of Neale's death,

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[6] Abbreviation for *Methodist Magazine*.

[7] Today, we would likely refer to these death accounts as obituaries or memorials, but throughout *Methodist Magazine* they were referred to as memoirs.

claiming that on several occasions during her illness, “the grace of God was manifest,” and “the alluring prospects of heaven so brightened” that Neale’s example “would have convinced the most cold-blooded sceptic [sic] of the efficacy of religion” (407). Memoirs such as Harriet Neale’s were not merely intended to celebrate and honor the memory of the deceased, but to motivate and instruct the living. Indeed, memoirs were carefully-constructed rhetorical compositions. Unlike the first-person accounts and reflections that comprise contemporary memoirs, the pieces customarily labeled memoirs in *Methodist Magazine* are more akin to modern-day obituaries because they were posthumously composed accounts of another person’s life and death. Nonetheless, the memoirs in *Methodist Magazine* are often constructed as testimonials in which dying persons implore the living.

The concept of dying well and the publication of exemplary death for the edification of others was a long-standing religious tradition that preceded the Methodists. John Wesley, drew on this tradition when he began printing and distributing memoirs in his London periodical *Arminian Magazine* in 1781, drew on this tradition. He outlined his rhetorical intent by saying that “nothing is more animating to serious people than the dying Words and Behaviour of the Children of God” (qtd. in Earl Brown 112). Wesley believed that the most genuine example of one’s religious faith came when an individual bravely faced death. With rudimentary medical care in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, individuals often suffered slow, painful deaths in their homes surrounded by family and friends. And it was in these struggles that many believers demonstrated the benefit of their faith by approaching their deaths unafraid. Through the collection, publication, and dissemination of memoirs, the early Methodist Church expanded the audience surrounding the deathbeds of believers in the hope that these accounts would edify and confirm the faith of other followers. In submitting the memoir of Mary Ann Peaco, L.R. Fechtig noted that the practice of recording the lives and deaths of the pious dates back to the primitive Christians and remains essential because “it is often made to serve the cause of religion by convicting the ungodly and leading them to repentance when probably other means have proved ineffectual” (*MM* 1818: 272).

Based on my study of 154 memoirs printed in *Methodist Magazine* during its first seven years of publication (1818-1824), Chapters Two and Three claim that memoirs converted the deceased into agents for Methodism. In Chapter Two, I present memoirs as one example of how the church’s periodicals used language, rhetoric, and ritual to create a far-reaching textual

community and confirm a distinct Methodist ideology. In particular, I outline the formulaic construction of memoirs and the repeated use of certain tropes and conventions. As ideological compositions, memoirs provide insight into Methodist attitudes about spirituality, afterlife, and the fate of the soul. Moreover, while memoirs appear to be mere descriptions or reports, upon closer study, they clearly operate as carefully orchestrated rhetorical compositions. The preponderance of memoirs contained in *Methodist Magazine* also marks the composition, collection, distribution, and consumption of memoirs as important rituals for antebellum Methodists. Indeed, *transmission* and *ritual*, two conceptions of communications described by journalism scholar James Carey, are both evident in *Methodist Magazine* memoirs. Whereas transmission characterizes the basic sending or imparting of information, ritual implies sharing, participation, or association. According to Carey, rather than simply conveying information, ritualistic communication is directed at the maintenance of a society through the "representation of shared beliefs" (14-18). In the sense that they report a death, memoirs transmit information. Yet, because they go far beyond reporting—framing lives and deaths within a particular plot and ideology—they serve a much more ritualistic function for the Methodist Church and the textual community it created.

Vicariously participating in conversions, deaths, and resurrections was a ritual shared between both the people who created and those who consumed these texts. The overarching plot in *Methodist Magazine* memoirs connects conversion and death—presenting these as the two most significant religious events. Memoirs use these two emotional events to motivate readers toward increased spiritual commitment. While it might seem odd thinking of memoirs in terms of a plot, identifying the overarching plot helps distinguish a person's actual life and death from the rhetorically-constructed accounts of holy lives and holy deaths. In Chapter Three, I build on this discussion of memoirs as rhetorical and ideological compositions by highlighting the use of gender and occupation as additional rhetorical strategies employed within memoirs.

Methodist Magazine: Creating a New Textual Church Community

Soon after its inception, the American Methodist Church recognized the importance of periodicals as a means for expanding its membership and connecting individual congregations to form a new textual church community. *Methodist Magazine's* reintroduction in 1818 actually followed two earlier attempts to launch a monthly religious periodical by the Methodist Book

Concern. *Arminian Magazine* (1789-90), named after Wesley's London periodical, and the first *Methodist Magazine* (1797-98) both lasted just two years. In fact, because of worries that "unbound tracts are soon damaged or lost" *Arminian Magazine* didn't actually take the form of a periodical; instead, it was published in two complete bound volumes, which were added to the Book Concern's catalog of available texts (*AM* 1790: 4; Pilkington 85, 110). Yet, even in its bound state, it is important to note that the 1789 *Arminian Magazine* was published the same year the American Methodists initiated their own book concern, thus placing periodicals among the American church's first publishing priorities (Pilkington 81).

Six years after the demise of the American *Arminian Magazine*, the 1796 Methodist General Conference requested the publication of another monthly periodical titled *Methodist Magazine*. Underscoring the church's emphasis on disseminating pious models, members of the General Conference prescribed that in addition to "compilations from the British magazines" the periodicals should include "original accounts of the experiences of pious persons" (*Journals* 17). Responsibility for producing the new magazine fell to the first Book Agent for the Methodist Book Concern, John Dickins. Dickins successfully published issues from January 1797 to August 1798, but during the summer and fall of 1798, a yellow fever plague besieged Philadelphia, the initial location for the Methodist Book Concern. While many fled the city, Dickins, who was a preacher first and publisher second, remained in Philadelphia to minister to the plague victims. Yet, when he succumbed to yellow fever, *Methodist Magazine* died with him.

Easily overlooked in John Dickins' professional narrative is the important role his wife Betsy played in the establishment of the Methodist Book Concern. After Bishop Asbury assigned Dickins to Wesley Chapel in New York in 1783, the couple left North Carolina. Their move north prompted Betsy, the daughter of a North Carolina gentleman, to sell her dower land to her brother-in-law. Then in 1789, when her husband was named Book Agent, and the couple moved to Philadelphia, part of the proceeds from the sale of Betsy's land was used to establish the Book Concern. In other words, a woman provided the seed money to establish what would become nineteenth-century America's most powerful religious press (Pilkington 59-61).

After Dickins' tragic death, fourteen years passed before the conference proposed another periodical and six more years before the Book Concern actually produced one (Pilkington 111; 114). Although the 1812 General Conference requested that the Book Concern resume the publication of *Methodist Magazine*, no action was taken, and the directive was repeated four

years later. The 1816 General Conference resolved that it was "necessary and expedient to publish a periodical work," and prescribed that the "work be issued in monthly numbers of forty pages each, in octavo form, and twelve numbers shall make a volume." Each conference was also instructed to appoint a committee, "who shall receive communications from their brethren, and correspond with the editor in order to furnish him with materials proper for publication" (*Journals* 171-72). Providing smaller, more manageable, affordable, and timely texts is one possible motive for the General Conference's insistence on a periodical. In fact, in an earlier resolution, the conference requested that the managers of the Book Concern publish shorter books (171). Early nineteenth-century Methodists primarily attracted middle- and working-class congregants with limited disposable incomes and little more than a common school education (Wigger 49). Thus, smaller texts and periodicals there were easier for ministers to transport probably seemed an apt fit to reach this intended audience and support the church's continual westward expansion.

With a circulation of several thousand, *Methodist Magazine* enjoyed immediate success, prompting the Book Concern to publish more periodicals, making them an essential vehicle in Methodism's publishing and church-building strategies (Pilkington 163). Periodicals gave the church more control over content than books, which were often nondenominational and simply reprinted by the Book Concern. Periodicals enabled Methodists to establish a distinct denominational identity, explicate and defend doctrine, and efficiently reach its geographically dispersed audience (Candy Brown 141-44). The magazine also provided the church with a means of connecting members and congregations across the country. James Osgood Andrew, a young southern minister and future Methodist bishop, described the favorable reception ministers gave the first issue of the 1818 *Methodist Magazine* noting, "Up to that time we had not even a thumb paper through which we might converse with one another from Maine to Georgia, or through whose columns we might be able to repel the numerous assaults which were constantly being made upon us" (Smith 98).

While the final product was enthusiastically received, Joshua Soule and Thomas Mason, the Methodist Book Concern's Agents and only employees, who bore the burden for producing the periodical, were less enthusiastic in undertaking the venture (Pilkington 161). Whereas the Book Concern's Agents were previously responsible for reproducing, distributing, and collecting payment for books, the addition of a periodical dramatically changed their roles and increased

their workload. Because the General Conference did not provide a budget to hire writers or purchase articles, whatever wasn't solicited from ministers and readers or snatched from British Methodist periodicals and other religious publications had to be written by Soule and Mason. It was a yeoman's task considering that one monthly issue of the magazine contained forty text-heavy pages, which rarely included engravings or graphics of any sort.

Initially Soule[8] and Mason arranged the magazine's content into nine sections: "Divinity," "Biography," "Scripture Illustrated," "The Attributes of God Displayed," "The Grace of God Manifested," "Miscellaneous," "Religious and Missionary Intelligence," and "Obituary." This organization continued for seven years (1818-1824), which is the period I focus on in my study of memoirs. Interestingly, three of these magazine's nine sections, "Biography," "Grace of God Manifested," and "Obituary," primarily contain memoirs. In fact, during these first seven years of the magazine's production, 779 pages or twenty-three percent of the magazine's 3,360 pages were filled with memoirs appearing in these three sections.[9] But why was almost a quarter of the Methodists' flagship publication devoted to memoirs?

Availability is one possible explanation. Continually needing to fill forty pages each month, the editors often solicited content for the magazine, and memoirs, primarily written by ministers or family members, appear to be one of the most common submissions. The formulaic nature of memoirs likely made them a less daunting composition than explications of scripture or doctrinal discussions. Additionally, ministers and family members were motivated by the desire to elegize their parishioners and loved ones. Another explanation for the preponderance of memoirs is usefulness. Usefulness, as opposed to style, was the quality most valued by evangelical publishers, and memoirs were deemed useful in confirming and increasing readers' piety. In their introductory issue, the editors of *Methodist Magazine* impressed their desire for the periodical to be "both useful and entertaining," and to act as an "efficient auxiliary" in the "triumph of evangelical truth" (*MM* 1818: 3-4). As I previously noted, Methodist founder John Wesley believed examples of Christianity provided a powerful doctrine in and of themselves; he "sought, collected, and published texts describing experiences he considered to be sensory

[8] Nathan Bangs, elected Book Agent by the 1820 General Conference, replaced Joshua Soule as editor of *Methodist Magazine*. Thomas Mason continued as Assistant Book Agent until he was replaced by John Emory in 1824 (Pilkington 172; 187).

[9] These calculations include those memoirs extracted from British periodicals as well as memoirs discussing the lives of well-known individuals such as Calvinist John Elliot. Going forward, I have limited my examination to memoirs written by and about American Methodists with the exception of two Canadians. In the Northeast, some Methodist ministers' circuits crossed the border into Canada.

evidence of God's working in individual lives, stating: 'We find by experience, example frequently makes a deeper impression upon us than precept'" (qtd. in Burton 82). Similarly, Candy Brown argues that nineteenth-century evangelicals "privileged memoirs because they considered example a powerful tool to mold Christian 'character'" (89). While well-known individuals such as Calvinist John Elliott, C.F. Swartz, a German missionary in the East Indies, and Dr. Thomas Coke, one of the first Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, appear among the memoirs published in *Methodist Magazine*, emulation of character wasn't restricted to celebrity status or clergy. With publication, ordinary individuals were converted into exemplars through depictions of their struggles to lead holy lives and resign themselves to God during sickness and death.

Rhetorically, memoirs operate by combining praise and persuasion. In upholding individuals as exemplars, memoirs not only ceremonially honor the past life of the deceased, but also persuade the living with regard to the future. In reconstructing the lives of the dead for the living, the authors and editors of these memoirs operated as part of an interpretive community—a group whose perceptions and judgments are based on a set of shared assumptions such as the belief in God's pardoning grace, free will, and eternal damnation for the unsaved (Tompkins, "Introduction" xxi). According to Stanley Fish, these shared assumptions equip members of the community with certain interpretive strategies, so that in the act of writing and editing texts, authors and editors are inviting readers to execute a set of interpretive strategies. In other words, authors project certain messages because of perceptions that they assume exist within their readers (171-173). Thus, interpretation becomes interdependent; authors and editors ultimately relied on readers to extrapolate the significance of a text. The meaning was not contained within the text, but in the reading of it.

In addition to shared beliefs, a shared language provided Methodists with another means of creating textual communities (Anderson 135). Early American Methodist orations and compositions depict a combination of influences from which Methodist historian Russell Richey has identified four distinct languages. These include: (1) *Wesleyan*, which denoted particular beliefs and practices of Wesleyans such as classes, societies, sanctification, and itinerancy; (2) *Episcopal*, which derives from Methodism's emergence out of the Anglican Church, and is depicted in terms such as bishop, elder, deacon; (3) *republican*, which is drawn from the ideology of the American Revolution and includes terms such as virtue, liberty, corruption,

reason, etc; and (4) *popular or evangelical*, an emotional religious language that Methodists shared with other evangelical movements during the Second Great Awakening (83-89). Memoirs predominantly contain this latter affectionate and expressive evangelical vernacular which often gushed of "melting tears," "aching hearts," and "souls in search of mercy" (84). Yet, allusions to Wesleyan practices, Episcopal hierarchy, and republican independence are also present in memoirs. Methodists acquired this unique combination of languages from institutional publications and by participating in an array of ritual gatherings—society meetings, class meetings, prayer meetings, quarterly love feasts, revivals, and camp meetings—at which they preached, prayed, exhorted, sang hymns, and read scripture. Scripture is another language woven throughout Methodist publications. In late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America, Biblical literary and general literacy acquisition usually went hand-in-hand. Because Bibles, Common Prayer books, and church catechisms were often the most widely available texts, they were frequently used in home, school and church literacy instruction. Even reading primers often included the Lord's Prayer and Biblical passages along with the alphabet (Gordon and Gordon 28, 45). The assumption of Biblical literacy among Methodists is evident in memoirs which repeatedly cue[10] readers to scripture.

Formulating Holy Lives and Holy Deaths

As I noted earlier, memoirs appeared in three separate sections of *Methodist Magazine*: "Obituary," "Biography," and "The Grace of God Manifested." While there are some important distinctions between these memoirs, which I will discuss in Chapter Three, there are also many similarities that highlight memoirs' formulaic nature. Memoirs in each of these sections follow a similar arrangement and employ many of the same rhetorical and ideological moves. Typically memoirs included four broad sections which I have identified as (1) religious upbringing; (2) conversion and pursuit of sanctification; (3) holy dying; and (4) conclusion or moral.

Memoirs often began by noting the deceased person's parents and upbringing. Although it is standard biographical information, in many instances family and upbringing also served a rhetorical function by attesting to the importance of religious inculcation during childhood. Methodists urged religious education for children, and one important distinction usually noted in

[10] According to David Nord, a cue within a text prompts readers to think of another canonical text such as the Bible or Constitution (253).

a memoir was whether the subject was of pious parentage (Schneider, *Way* 137). Early religious education by pious parents was portrayed as an advantage or blessing that could influence the course of an individual's life. For instance, Reverend Jason Walker's memoir suggested that his early religious instruction helped shield him from sin by "keeping him from those follies and vices to which the youth are strongly inclined" (*MM* 1819: 257). Just as Reverend Walker's memoir highlighted the benefit of early religious instruction, those individuals who did not receive this early influence were portrayed at a disadvantage. For example, because his parents professed no religion, Colonel J. Burrus was described as "destitute of the advantage of religious instruction, in those years when the mind is ready to receive any impression that may first be made upon it." As a result he was said to have lived a corrupt life until he was forty years old (*MM* 1822: 222). At the same time that these different depictions attempt to persuade readers of the importance of early religious inculcation, they also show that pious parents and instruction alone don't ensure a person's conversion. For example, Washburn Peck's memoir notes that both his parents were pious, and their home was a regular site for Methodist preaching; "but notwithstanding these religious advantages, the salvation of his [Peck's] soul occupied but little of his attention in the early part of his life" (*MM* 1820: 330). Methodists believed that God spoke to individuals and that God's grace was resistible; while God reaches out to humans, each individual has the free will to accept or reject God's call (Wigger 16). Thus, a religious upbringing might fortify a child against sin or make the child more open to hearing God's call, but it afforded no guarantee that the child would heed that call.

Denominational references were another common notation accompanying early religious upbringing. From their memoirs we learn that Anna Nickerson's father was a deacon in the Congregational Church (*MM* 1818: 305), Elizabeth Dolson's mother taught her the tenets of Catholicism (*MM* 1821: 374), Elizabeth Hough was raised in a society of Quakers (*MM* 1822: 178), Elizabeth Keagey's parents were Mennonites (*MM* 1823: 258), and John Corry was previously a member of the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) (*MM* 1824: 143). Yet, all of these individuals became Methodists, which creates a subtle hierarchy. While any religious upbringing seems preferable to none, Methodism is presented as superior due to the fact that Methodist preaching and rituals ultimately led the subjects to a lasting conversion. Often, memoirs show individuals choosing Methodism as the preferred path to salvation, which also charts the migration to evangelical churches that took place during the Second Great Awakening. Many

individuals were attracted to Methodism primarily because of its doctrinal emphasis on *active* rather than *passive* spirituality. By exercising humility and self-denial, and by praying, reading scripture, and proselytizing, Methodists believed they were actively pursuing God's will (Campbell 58; Lyerly 7, 32).

In late the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Cynthia Lyerly claims, denominational affiliations were fairly accurate predictors of behavior and values. Thus, to call someone or identify oneself as a Methodist described "a way of life and thinking that was relatively distinct" (Lyerly 27-28). Because of their emotional religious zeal, early Methodists were often considered radical. They were also deemed a threat to social order because they ignored traditional class, gender, and racial hierarchies in their efforts to establish a new separate world order. Not surprisingly, persons associated with the Methodists were often persecuted. This persecution frequently appears in the opening section of memoirs. For example, Tamzey Causey's memoir says her father threatened to disinherit her if she joined the Methodists (*MM* 1822: 307), and according to William Burnham's memoir, the constant threats from neighbors made it difficult for his small group of northern Connecticut Methodists to hold class meetings (*MM* 1822, 79-80). Sharing these incidents of persecution served several rhetorical purposes: aligning Methodism with the Primitive Church, which also suffered persecution; showing the strength of Methodism; highlighting the resolve of the first generation of American Methodists; and emboldening the current generation of Methodists.

After describing a person's upbringing, most memoirs quickly proceed to an account of the person's conversion. Frequently the refrain "nothing very remarkable occurred during the early part of his or her life" was employed to cross the gap in time to conversion. This jump itself underscores the evangelical belief that a person's true life began with conversion. Jerald Brauer defines conversion as "a profound, self-conscious, existential change from one set of beliefs, habits, and orientation to a new structure of belief and action" (227). At issue in conversion was the destiny of one's soul. Methodists along with other evangelicals believed a crisis-like conversion resulting in regeneration was essential for a Christian, and because of the narrative structure of Methodism's Wesleyan spirituality, individuals were encouraged to share their conversion testimonies at class meetings, society meetings, and love feasts (Conkin 65, 68; Lobody 136). Because of their prevalence, conversion narratives also served as an antecedent genre that influenced the way memoirs were structured.

In her extensive study of conversion narratives, Virginia Lieson Brereton observes that nineteenth-century conversion narratives followed a fairly uniform pattern that progressed from the convert's early life, increasing sense of sinfulness, climatic conversion, to the fruits of regeneration (3-4). Schneider describes this pattern by outlining three stages: awakening, conviction, and conversion. He defines *awakening* as involving "some cognitive understanding of the alarming facts of sinfulness and the need to live a better life" (Schneider, *Way* 43-44). With this awareness, individuals became dissatisfied with their current lives. This dissatisfaction then led to *conviction*, a stage accompanied by tremendous guilt as individuals abhor themselves and their sins and begin to fear "the wrath to come" (44). John Mann's memoir offers a fairly typical account of the progression from awakening, to conviction, to conversion.

> Under his [Reverend Stringer's] preaching it pleased the Lord to awaken him to the sense of the awful state he was in. He immediately forsook his follies and sinful companions, and attended statedly on the means of grace. His mind at the time was filled with keen anguish, and bitter reflections on his past life, the misery he had brought upon himself, and distress upon his family and connexions [sic]. He was made to feel sensibly the plaug [sic] of his own heart, and was penetrated with a consciousness of his miserable condition as a sinner before God. His convictions were deep and lasting, nor could he rest satisfied until the healing balm of a Saviour's blood was applied to his guilty conscience. (*MM* 1819: 14)

Generally, conviction was depicted as a stage of extreme anguish. During this stage, believers turn their focus inward, and it was through this introspective examination of their souls that believers were prepared for conversion.

Through conversion, believers felt their guilt removed; Schneider notes, "they were pardoned rather than condemned, and their pollution was washed away sufficiently to avoid eternal death" (*Way* 45). By stipulating that conversion was available only through the grace of God, Methodists believed that humans could submit to God's will, but they could not control their conversion. Hence, part of the drama surrounding conversion was timing; when would the climatic conversion occur? In a sense, conversion became a *kairotic*[11] event. Schneider notes that early Christian writers considered *kairos* "a special crisis moment" (*Way* 19). In other words, the

[11]Ancient Greeks had two concepts of time: *chronos* or continuous, linear, measurable time, and *kairos* a more situated or opportunistic time (Crowley and Hawhee 31).

progression from awakening through heart-wrenching conviction eventually brought a person to a kairotic moment that was both a crisis and an opportunity, and this was when conversion occurred. Consequently, whereas linear time, *chronos* might be referred to as human time, *kairos* can be seen as God's time.

The inability to control conversion underscored the sense of individuality inherent in a conversion experience. Christine Heyrman asserts, "Humbling as it was to sound the depths of private wickedness, that plunge into the self also persuaded sinners of the utter singularity of their experience" (41). For Methodists, the fact that individuals were asked to provide testimony of their conversion experience, regardless of social status and gender, reinforced their belief that individual religious experiences were important, which aligns with the Methodist doctrine on individual free will. Thus, while conversion ultimately brought one into the fold, it also cemented a sense of individuality and a personal relationship with God. Consequently, for many individuals, submission to God paradoxically became an act of independence and recognition of self worth.

Methodists also believed that conversion was a never-ending process or what Donald Matthews characterizes as the "continuous struggle to live a holy life" (21). In a journal entry included as part of his memoir, Reverend John Pitts wrote that after his conversion, "I thought that my enemies were all slain, and that I should know war no more. But alas! I soon found there was a tempting devil, and that all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Pitts acknowledged that conversion did not end a Christian's toil, but later he also recognized God as a loyal advocate in the struggle (*MM* 1821: 206). According to Methodist doctrine, spiritual life began with a person's repentance of past conduct and sin through conversion, but that was just the beginning. The never-ending work of a Christian was an underlying theme in Methodist memoirs. Methodist adherents viewed conversion as an on-going journey toward deeper levels of holiness, and they believed at death the results of this spiritual pilgrimage were most evident.

In addition to conversion, death was the other climatic event *Methodist Magazine* memoirs describe in detail. Part of this emphasis was derived from the connection Christians drew between life and death. Rather than viewing death as a conclusion to life, life was viewed as preparation for death or afterlife, and the way a person died provided evidence of a "genuine conversion and holy life" (Cline 45; Brereton 9). Interestingly, the general stages leading up to death, repeatedly depicted in memoirs, mirrored the three stages of conversion. An awareness of

possible or impending death was similar to awakening; the period of suffering, restlessness, or doubt aligned with conviction; and resignation to God's will resembled conversion itself. Of course, conversion was also a death of sorts in the sense that a spiritual rebirth required the death of one's former self, and just as conversion required submission to God, believers facing death also had to resign themselves to the will of God. In both cases, submission did not eliminate suffering, but it did provide the individual with a measure of peace, comfort and enduring patience.

The emphasis on death in Methodist publications was based on the belief that individuals could distinguish themselves by the manner in which they died. To evangelicals, death represented a pivotal point between heaven and hell, thus a "happy" or "triumphant" death was usually perceived as the culmination of a good Christian life (Schneider, *Way* 50). In his introduction to an 1819 memoir, Coles Carpenter asserted, "The infidel may die in a state of insensibility, the philosopher submit in silence to his fate, and the hero rush thoughtlessly into eternity; but the Christian conquers as he falls, and proves a victor in the arms of death" (*MM* 1819: 18). Rather than insensibly, silently, or thoughtlessly rushing to death, Methodist memoirs present a consistent deathbed ritual in which a dying person, surrounded by family and friends, makes final preparations for death. In the pulpit and in print, nineteenth-century evangelicals attempted to take the dread out of death by converting it into a victory—a victory that believers prepared for throughout their spiritual lives (Schneider, "Ritual" 353).

The Methodist belief in free will meant that every person ultimately made the choice between eternal life or damnation, and to Methodists, no choice was more important. Consequently, dying unrepentant or unredeemed was one of the gravest concerns for Methodists. In her journal, Elizabeth Peck described seeing one of her school friends die with the "horrors of a guilty conscience." She wrote, "We found him just expiring in the most frightful appearance…the awful scene so alarmed me that I awoke" (*MM* 1823: 291). The experience of watching this unredeemed classmate die awakened Peck to her own unrepentant state. Indeed, memoirs often alerted survivors to their own mortality and rhetorically served to wean them from worldly to heavenly concerns (Saum 40).

Methodists did not believe in shielding individuals from death. Even if persons did not sense the seriousness of their conditions, Methodists felt an obligation to inform them if it was apparent that they were about to die, so that they could prepare. This exchange was part of the

rich dialogue that occurred between a dying person and the people surrounding the deathbed. According to Spicy Meek's memoir, when her physician believed that her death was imminent, he reluctantly said, "'Madam, you must prepare for death,'" and to his great surprise, she replied with a cheerful expression, "'Sir I am prepared'" (*MM* 1822: 79). While individuals like Spicy Meek were depicted approaching death completely at peace, others often suffered through periods of restlessness and doubt. The source of this doubt and anguish varied. Often this suffering was physical, due in part to crude medical care. There were also those dying persons who felt they were not spiritually prepared to die as well as those who were not ready to leave their families. In each case, resigning oneself to God's will was repeatedly depicted as the key to achieving peace while facing death. In essence, death became a test as well as a witness of one's faith.

In Hannah Lathrop's memoir, her husband observed that his wife was resigned to death even though she suffered from bodily pain and concerns about her family. He wrote, "Her mind, amidst great distress of body, seemed to be exercised about the future welfare of her family, but more especially for the cause of God. She watched every symptom of approaching dissolution with a kind of submissive anxiety, and every evidence of her departure, as a welcome friend" (*MM* 1822: 102). Emblematic of many memoirs, Lathrop's memoir depicts a general reordering. Again, mirroring the reorientation that takes place during conversion, dying persons were depicted placing God's cause above physical pain and earthly worry. This narrow focus on heavenly concerns is evident in Mary Douglas's memoir. Readers are told, "Her affection seemed to be unglued from earthly objects and set on things above; she would kiss her little babes and calmly resign them to the arms of her husband and the protection of God" (*MM* 1818: 20). Such moving acts of separation and resignation made a powerful pathetic appeal, demonstrating the strength of dying believers' faith. Hence, memoirs provided inspiration and a heuristic in the sense that they implicitly asked readers to assess their own faith by gauging how they would react in similar circumstances.

While deathbed inquiries took form in various questions, the purpose was the same—to provide consolation that the dying person had come to terms with God and was prepared to die (Schneider *Way* 145). As Reverend Richard Emery approached death, his memoirist says he turned to his wife saying, "Betsy, I leave you in the hands of God; let this be your consolation, I am happy. The Lord is good, he has been with me and comforted me in all my distresses; he has

not left nor forsaken me" (*MM* 1821: 329). Providing ample evidence of consolation to the immediate audience surrounding the deathbed as well as the secondary audience reading the memoir was a crucial part of the deathbed drama. In fact, there was tremendous discomfort in not "knowing" if someone died at peace, because it called into question that person's eternal status. The author of John Wesley Bond's memoir expressed this discomfort noting, "We trembled lest in this state of mind he should be deprived his senses, and be carried off without leaving us the only consolation…that of an assurance, that he died in peace" (*MM* 1819: 327). In the case of Reverend Edward Paine, who drowned, the author of his memoir attempted to provide consolation that Paine was spiritually prepared to die by reporting that Paine had often told his wife "that for him death had no terrors, that he was no more afraid to die than he was to fall asleep" (*MM* 1820: 408). Sarah Wood, according to her memoir, was so worried about providing adequate consolation that she even asked the crowd surrounding her bed, "if I should say no more, have I given you sufficient evidence that I have gone to heaven?" (*MM* 1822: 453). Similarly concerned about offering consolation, Sally Agard and her husband worked out a sign where she would raise her finger as a signal of her "happiness in God" if she was unable to speak at the end of her life (*MM* 1821: 335).

Offering the hope of a heavenly reunion was another way dying individuals tried to console their families. Indeed, Methodists often pointed to the love of family as evidence that there was life beyond current existence, and that faith was the key to maintaining those familial bonds in eternity (Schneider *Wa y* 46-7). Hannah Howe's memoirist says she told the group around her deathbed, "I hope we may all meet in heaven where parting can never come" (*MM* 1818: 24). Hope for a heavenly reunion also provided a motivational appeal for exhorting friends and family to prepare for heaven. Another sign of consolation that memoir writers frequently provided as evidence of a happy death was a description of the dead person's countenance. The assumption was that facial expressions provided some insight into a person's soul by revealing the deceased's level of comfort or peace at death. The author of Elizabeth Ackerman's memoir wrote, "So strong were her consolations in death, that her countenance evinced all who saw her, that she sweetly slept in Jesus" (*MM* 1822: 449). The deceased's last words were the final means of consolation presented in memoirs. Memoirists supposedly recorded these words because they believed they were imbued with meaning. According to her memoir, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," were Hannah Lathrop's last words (*MM* 1822: 102), and John Thomas' memoirist

recounts “Lord receive my precious soul,” as his last words (*MM* 1819: 217). Indeed, most of these last words resemble prayers, thus serving as a final testament to these believers’ steadfast faith and holy deaths.

The last section included in most memoirs is a conclusion, which typically outlined how the author wanted readers to use the memoir. The desire for deceased individuals to instruct the living was persistent throughout memoirs, particularly in conclusions. Generally memoirists ended by employing at least one of three methods: cataloguing the deceased’s character traits or virtues worthy of emulation, appealing to readers to remember these individuals and model their lives after them, and memorializing by evoking scripture or religious poetry.

More Rhetorical Moves

As well as following a formulaic arrangement, memoirs employed several common conventions and tropes intended to persuade followers and confirm Methodist ideology. Eidolopoeia, or depicting a dead person speaking, was one of the most common rhetorical moves employed in memoirs. By assigning words to the deceased, authors resurrected the dead in order to testify to the living. As a result the memoir became a testimonial that used both authority and example to persuade. In addition to the emotional appeal inherent in the deathbed scene, attributing words to the deceased added to the ethos of a person on the brink of death, which resulted in an increased sense of urgency and perceived truth.

Assigning a cause (aetiolgoia) is another rhetorical move repeatedly found in memoirs. For instance, many memoirs reference Divine Providence as a cause for events. A believer’s willingness to trust Divine Providence was often viewed as a measure of faith. This trust is evident in Reverend Edward Paine’s memoir. While lamenting the tragic loss of Paine, who drowned en route to the annual church conference, the author of Paine’s memoir asserted confidence in the inexplicable, when he wrote, “God’s ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts. It only remains for us to submit to the dispensations of Divine Providence” (*MM* 1820: 408). Rather than questioning his tragic death, Paine’s memoir expressed faith in divine plans even if humans were not privy to them. Moreover, these observations about Divine Providence appear intended not only to console but also to forestall questioning. Indeed, a consistent rhetorical strategy running throughout memoirs was to suppress

or discourage doubts. The dying, the individuals surrounding the deathbed, as well as the readers invited to witness these deaths were all encouraged to accept events and ask no questions.

Memoirs, which in themselves operate as emotional appeals, induce pathos through a variety of methods. One of these is through descriptions of physical suffering. Late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Americans lived with the constant threat of illness and death; women frequently died in childbirth, many children did not reach adulthood, and even the common cold carried threat of death. On average, white persons in the early nineteenth century only lived to the age of forty;[12] as a result, families, neighborhoods, and church communities frequently witnessed suffering and loss (Haines). The rudimentary medical care available (bloodletting, tonics, and plasters) combined with descriptions of excruciating pain offered moving appeals for individuals to reach out to heaven for bodily as well as spiritual comfort. In fact, memoirs often depict individuals dealing with their pain by comparing it Christ's suffering on the cross. According to her memoir, when one of her sisters, sitting by her bedside expressed sympathy for Mary Douglas' pain, she replied, "These pains are nothing compared to what my Saviour endured for me" (*MM* 1820: 20). Similarly Reverend Jason Walker's memoirist says he wanted his parishioners to know that, "I suffer, but Christ's sufferings were greater—I sweat, but Christ sweat great drops of blood—Let them think what Christ has done for them" (*MM* 1819: 261). Not only did dying persons gain some measure of comfort from the comparison, but their empathy and the empathy they inspired in readers brought about a closer identification with Christ's crucifixion (Schneider, *Way* 145).

The soul as a synecdoche for the entire person is another rhetorical trope repeatedly found in memoirs. The soul, generally viewed as an immaterial entity that according to Christian teaching becomes a disembodied spirit at death, was a logical focus for memoirs. As one's bodily existence came to an end, the path of the soul became the primary concern. The preeminence of the soul as one approached death was evident in the frequent antithesis presented between the weakening body and the strengthening spirit. James Banks' memoir noted, "while his body was sinking to its mother dust, his soul was rising to its father God" (*MM* 1820: 139). This juxtaposition serves to reinforce Methodists' emphasis on heavenly concerns over earthly or bodily matters. Emphasis on the soul also reinforced the Christian conception of death.

[12] Interestingly, 40.9 is the average age of the deceased in the memoirs included in my study. This average is based on the memoirs that provided an age for the deceased.

According to Douglas Walton, whereas secular death is conceived as "total and irreversible extinction of consciousness and sensation" including the termination of the individual personality, Christian death "postulates actual survival of the individual personality and continuation of postmortem consciousness and sensation" (41). Simply stated, Christianity as well as other religious traditions believe in the potential for some form of life after bodily death. Overall, memoirs can be seen as arguments for this religious conception of death.

Much of the metaphorical language contained in memoirs also serves rhetorical and ideological purposes. For instance, evangelical language, metaphors such as "awakening" and being "born again" are frequently used to describe spiritual conversions. "Awakening" implies that an individual is asleep or in a state of slumber on some level. Similarly, being "born again" or rebirth suggests a previous state of lifelessness. Thus, these metaphors construct conversion as the path to a more alert or intense state of living.

Familial metaphors such as brother, sister, father, and mother, which are used throughout memoirs, also signify antebellum Methodists' belief that they were part of a larger spiritual family. Referring to each other as brothers and sisters also signified as special bond between parishioners. Because westward expansion usually separated individuals from extended family, Methodists' spiritual families often filled a painful void.

Methodist memoirs also frequently used war metaphors to describe dramatic conflicts between God and the devil, heaven and hell, and individuals' on-going battle to focus on heavenly concerns rather than the allurements of the world. Many memoirs cast believers into the role of loyal soldiers waging war with a corrupt, evil world. After death, memoirs frequently describe individuals transcending from the "Church Militant" to the "Church Triumphant." Hence a Christian's life on earth was depicted as a constant battle, whereas heaven was deemed victory for those who in the words of Apostle Paul have "fought the good fight."[13] Reverend George Shadford's memoir compared him to "an old soldier who had survived many a campaign" (*MM* 1818: 174). In a letter to her sister, which was included in her memoir, Elizabeth Peck also described herself as "a soldier enlisted under the King Eternal, to fight against the powers of darkness" (*MM* 1823: 295). Peck further notes, "It is nine years since I have been instructed with the spiritual weapons of the Christian warfare, in which time I have

[13] "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

been enabled to gain many glorious victories to the confusion of the armies of the aliens" (295). Similarly, Harriet Dusinberry described her community good works as "spiritual warfare" (*MM* 124: 172), and John Allen, who was superintendent for a Sunday school described the children under his charge as a "company of young soldiers" (MM 1823: 38). Overall, the use of militaristic tropes contributed to memoirs' dramatic quality by emphasizing the high stakes battle between heaven and earth.

Memoir authors also used metaphorical language to rename death or personify it. Ironically, people in Methodist memoirs rarely die. Odd as that may sound, while people occasionally expire, they generally do not die. Instead, the act of dying was almost always conveyed through heightened figurative language. In my study, I recorded more than fifty different tropes used to convey death in Methodists memoirs. Yet, renaming death or personifying it was more than semantics; Methodists were redefining death. By giving death another signifier, they accorded death a different significance. Metaphorical phrases such as "the spirit took its flight" (*MM* 1818: 400) or "her ransomed soul ascended to the regions of the blessed" (*MM* 1821: 336) present death as a flight or ascent from earth to heaven. Ultimately, this flight depicts the end of earthly life and the beginning of a heavenly existence. The idea of ascension also mirrors Christ's ascension.

Much like the ascent of the soul or spirit, many depictions of death describe deceased individuals breathing out their spirits to God. For example, Tamzey Causey's memoir says, "she breathed out her soul into the hands of her gracious God" (*MM* 1822: 309). In scripture, breathing is a common means of transferring a person's spirit or the Holy Spirit. In fact, the depiction of individuals breathing out their spirit to God represents the reverse of the creation story where "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). Thus, this scripturally-laden concept of breathing out one's spirit affirms the separation of the soul from the body and its reunion with its creator.

Sleep and rest are two other themes that emerge from the tropes used to convey death. Phrases such as, "fell asleep in the arms of Jesus" (*MM* 1823: 400), portray death as a soothing and peaceful end to suffering. The comfort of sleep and rest may relate to the tremendous physical suffering which often preceded death or simply refer to the termination of earthly toil and temptation. Another interesting aspect of the theme of sleep and rest is the maternal

depiction of Jesus cradling the deceased. Similarly, personifications of death such as "he sunk into the arms of death without a struggle or groan" (*MM* 1820: 440) and "death has entered our dwelling" (*MM* 1823: 295) offer a comforting rather than frightening image of death. Several metaphors also depict human bodies as earthly tenements such as "his spirit had taken leave of its cumbrous clay, we doubt not to inhabit a more glorious mansion" (*MM* 1820: 406). As well as cuing readers to several scriptural references,[14] characterizing the body as an earthly structure reinforces the temporal nature of the body compared to the eternal nature of the soul. Overall, the tropes used to rename death convey the Methodist view that for Christians death was nothing to fear; death was a beginning rather than an end.

For the individuals described in *Methodist Magazine* memoirs, death marked a beginning instead of an end. Through the composition, dissemination, and consumption of their memoirs, these individuals were resurrected. Depictions of their holy lives and holy deaths as well as their own voices were used to instruct the living and cultivate a textual church community. Examining the common tropes used in *Methodist Magazine* memoirs as well as their formulaic arrangement highlights their rhetorical and ideological functions. Much more than mere descriptions of death, memoirs were intended to both elegize and persuade. In Chapter Three, I continue to explore the persuasive nature of memoirs by analyzing the ways in which rhetorical roles were assigned based on the subject's gender and occupation. Additionally, I discuss editors' inability to control those assignments and some of their unintended effects.

[14] The Old Testament refers to God as the potter and mortals as clay (Job 10:9; Isaiah 64:8). In the New Testament, Jesus refers to destroying the temple and raising it again in three days, which is usually recognized as a reference to his own resurrection.

Chapter 3: Deathbed Pulpits: From Humble Helpmates to Iconic Ministers

> *She was so enlivened in prayer, that while her lips were stiff with death, she smiled, (looking at each other in the room) and faintly, though with great vehemence, said, 'Make it your business to get to heaven.'*
>
> Memoir of Sarah Tomlinson (*MM* 1818: 151)

Hannah Howe was seventeen when she was awakened by Methodist preaching, and "after labouring for some weeks under the burden of her sins, it pleased the Lord to speak peace to her soul" (*MM* 1818: 22). Although she suffered "much opposition and persecution from a gainsaying world," Hannah "held fast to her profession" (22). She met her husband, a Methodist minister, in 1805 and married him a year later—becoming a valuable helpmate in his ministry. Hannah's husband, who wrote her memoir, described his wife as "plain and open in her manners, close and cutting in her reproofs" and "sympathetic and feeling in her advice and counsel" (23). Reverend Howe further noted that Hannah was "humane to her fellow creatures in distress"; she wept over the sick and cared for the poor and those wounded in spirit (23). Also, highlighting her humility, Reverend Howe wrote that his wife was "often known to weep and mourn that she was not more watchful over the rising of her temper fearing most of all lest she should wound the precious cause she had embraced" (23).

When Hannah was thirty, the loss of one of her children prompted a serious decline in her already weakened health. Her husband wrote that Hannah's "complaint, which proved to be the consumption, became more alarming and her dissolution drew near" (23). During this time, she was said to be "much engaged with God in prayer for resignation to his will, and often expressed a wish that she might die shouting, and have an easy passage over the Jordan of death" (23). Throughout his wife's illness, Reverend Howe portrays Hannah expressing her fullest confidence in God. One evening, her husband even claimed to be awakened out of deep sleep by her fervent prayers. He recalled that "her language was the most feeling, and enough to move the hardest heart. She rejoiced in God her Saviour, and shouted aloud for joy; and witnessed that the Lord was good to her amidst all her afflictions" (24). Remarking on her anticipation of death, her husband overheard Hannah tell one woman at her bedside, "I often thought when I came so near death, it would appear gloomy, and awful, but, glory be to God, it appears pleasant" (25). In fact, shortly before her "soul took its flight," her husband said she turned her attention from all things

below and “appeared to be conversing with invisible guests, and was distinctly heard to say, ‘Glory! Glory! Angels, Angels, Jesus loves me.’”

Converted into a heavenly messenger communing between those in heaven and those on earth, Hannah, in her memoir, ascends above the role of pastor’s wife and helpmate to that of celestial oracle. Promoted in death above her status in life, Hannah Howe is emblematic of many of the women whose memoirs appear on the pages of *Methodist Magazine*. Unlike contemporary, first-person memoirs, these posthumously-composed accounts were primarily written and edited by clergy. Ironically in the hands of these male authors and editors, women whose spiritual voices were limited in life were often expanded after death. For the women in these memoirs, the deathbed becomes a pulpit—elevating them to the role of minister, a position they were precluded from during their lives. In her book *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces*, Roxanne Mountford notes the common trope, “a woman’s place,” highlighting the correlation between space and roles traditionally assigned to women (24). Mountford contends one of the reasons women were banned from preaching was because preaching primarily takes place in the public sphere, and women were confined to the private sphere (9). Moreover, she argues that cultural traditions, homiletics, and architecture combined to make the church pulpit a masculinized space (3). The expectation was that strong, confident, masculine bodies would fill church pulpits. Conversely, I claim the deathbed as a feminized space. Whether the dying person was male or female, women have traditionally supervised the sickroom. A deathbed was also occupied by a weak, inferior body—the often-accentuated characterization of women’s bodies. Moreover, the deathbed was usually contained in a bedroom—one of the most private spaces within the domestic sphere, and one typically embellished with handmade quilts, bedding, and decorative handiwork. Thus, the deathbed pulpit from which women are depicted delivering exhortations is clearly a feminine space.

Although women were excluded from certain sacred spaces such as the pulpit, too often their roles in other holy spaces are overlooked. From its emphasis on memoirs and the need to confirm dying persons’ preparedness for eternity, the church clearly recognized the deathbed as a sacred space; and within that space women assumed the roles of compassionate caretakers and were ascribed the role of iconic ministers. Through the publication of deathbed scenes, depictions of women’s voices and actions resonated far beyond the walls of their homes and the intimacy of family and friends. By appearing in church periodicals, their voices and actions not

only became public, but also institutionally sanctioned as models for emulation. Hence, women's deathbed pulpits further call into question the traditional private/public. The depiction of women exhorting from their deathbeds also undermines the exclusive authority often granted to the lone man who speaks from the pulpit during formal worship.

To illustrate women's elevation to public ministers, in this chapter I examine the different rhetorical roles assigned to women, laymen, and ministers in their memoirs. Of the 121 memoirs of American Methodists published in the magazine from 1818-1824, 50 honor women, 47 honor ministers, and 24 honor laymen. Clearly, in terms of being memorialized, women align more closely with ministers than laymen. The rhetorical roles assigned to women also align more closely with those of ministers. As I noted in the previous chapter, during *Methodist Magazine's* first seven years of publication, memoirs appeared in three different sections: "Obituary," "Biography," and "Grace of God Manifested." The memoirs arranged in these sections often serve different purposes and employ different means of persuasion, punctuated by the gender and the occupations of the subjects whose memoirs appear within those sections. By comparing the memoirs of laymen and ministers to women, I argue that in death women were elevated to the role of ministers. Women's promotion, although unintended, was a collateral effect of the gendered depictions constructed within memoirs. Like the formulaic arrangement and tropes I outlined in Chapter Two, the assignment of roles based on gender and occupation become additional rhetorical strategies employed by the memoirists and magazine editors to persuade followers. Women's deathbed ministry can also be viewed as an example of women erupting out of the roles prescribed to them by society and the church. As they approached death, the ministers around their deathbeds and the ministers who wrote and edited women's memoirs were unable to contain the rhetorical force of women's memoirs and thus unable to contain women in their conventional roles.

Gendering Death

Certainly, it might seem odd to draw gender distinctions after death. Momentarily setting religious and secular distinctions aside, death would appear to be the great equalizer; whatever a person's gender, race, class, age, or legal rights, everyone dies. However, a person's actual death and an account of that death are two distinct events. In essence, memoirs provide a different construction of death—often casting laymen, ministers, and women into distinctly different roles.

The time lag between individuals' deaths and the publication of their memoirs lends credence to my argument that memoirs were constructed to motivate and instruct the living as much as they were intended to elegize the dead. For example, Hannah Howe's memoir, which I excerpted to open this chapter, was published more than five years after her death. In fact, the memorial's opening alludes to its rhetorical intent. Hannah's husband, Reverend Howe, wrote, "Agreeably to the request of the Conference I shall attempt to give you a short, though it may be somewhat imperfect account of the Experience and Death of my beloved wife, who departed this life October 11th, 1812, in the thirtieth year of her age" (*MM* 1818: 22). Before the conference deemed it a testament worthy of publication and wider dissemination, Hannah Howe's memoir was probably an oral narrative repeatedly shared by her husband during religious gatherings, and the story of Howe's life and death was likely modified as a result of these recitations. Hence through oral performance, her husband's written descriptions, and the church's publication of her memoir, Hannah Howe was resurrected into a religious archetype—intended as a model of faith for Methodists across America.

Ascribing particular gender identities and behaviors to women was common practice in antebellum conduct books, women's magazines, and even sentimental novels. Indeed, the woman on her deathbed was a popular literary trope. According to Barbara Welter, "As every reader of popular fiction knew in the early nineteenth-century, woman was never more truly feminine than when on her deathbed, the innocent victim of male lust or greed, she forgave her cruel father, profligate husband, or avaricious landlord" ("Feminization" 161). In fact, the deathbed depictions of women in *Methodist Magazine*, primarily written by men, seem to anticipate female novelists' didactic acquisition of the deathbed pulpit later in the century as is evident in scenes such as little Eva's dramatic death in Harriett Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). In *Sensational Designs*, a cultural study of antebellum American fiction, Jane Tompkins claims Eva's death was intended as the supreme act of heroism. "Stories like the death of little Eva are compelling for the same reason that the story of Christ's death is compelling; they enact a philosophy, as much political as religious, in which the pure and powerless die to save the powerful and corrupt, and thereby show themselves more powerful than those they save" (Tompkins, *Sensational* 127-28). Preceding most of these popular fictional accounts by thirty years, *Methodist Magazine* cast real women into the roles of spiritual heroines as a means of persuasion. Like these later fictionalized heroines, Methodist women not only comforted, but

also boldly exhorted those around them. In his study of women in early Methodism, Earl Kent Brown claims that "as one reads the published materials on Methodist women produced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, one soon becomes aware that most of them are intended to hold the woman discussed as a model for the imitation of other women and men" (107).

The repetition of these depictions raises the question whether these models are authentic or the manifestations of a particular agenda. Postmodern theories would claim that there is no one reality; memoirs simply offer one view of a person's death. Moreover, the language authors use in their descriptions both arbitrates the initial experience and creates an experience of its own (Brodkey 72). As I noted in Chapter Two, the authors and editors of memoirs make several rhetorical choices. Initially, authors decide what to remember or record, and in the acts of composing, revising, and editing, authors and editors decide what to include, what to exclude, how to arrange the material, and what to accentuate or embellish. Embedded in all of these choices are particular worldviews and ideologies (88). Memoirs, which are often constructed to perform a ritualistic function, uphold and encourage Methodist beliefs about conversion, death, the afterlife, and appropriate gender roles.

In her study of protestant female preachers from the mid-eighteenth century through the antebellum period, Catherine Brekus observes that the books *written by* female preachers shared little in common with the books *written about* other devout churchwomen. She asserts that these "posthumous tributes" to churchwomen which were "carefully edited by clergymen and middle-class matrons" usually "praised women for leading charitable societies, visiting families as home missionaries, and teaching Sunday school" as well as emphasizing "virtues of domesticity" (Brekus, *Strangers* 261). In *Methodist Magazine* women are rarely authors but primarily subjects in memoirs written by male clergy. Both Kent Brown and Catherine Brekus' observations corroborate the practice of assigning women certain rhetorical roles in religious writing based on a particular ideology. Indeed, these memoirs reflect the pervasive views about religion and women in the early nineteenth century. Women's overwhelming majority in church congregations was viewed as validation for the generally-accepted notion that women were more religiously inclined than men. Additionally, middle class white women's separation from the

marketplace was believed to preserve their purity. Thus, women's superior piety and purity made them ideal models (Westerkamp 135).[15]

"Dying well" was an accomplishment for which women, in particular, were recognized, exalted, and held up as models. According to Jean Miller Schmidt, "Women became the exemplars of the good, righteous, victorious Christian death for the community of faith; it was a final act of faithfulness" (43). Tompkins notes that women, particularly mothers, dying to redeem the unregenerate were a recurring theme in nineteenth-century fiction and religious literature (*Sensational* 128). Because of their perceived symbolic power, *Methodist Magazine* presented women as pious models in order to move the ungodly toward repentance. Through publication, activities that women were authorized to do in private became public acts of piety, and because the primary space where women appear in the magazine is in memoirs, death became women's ticket for admittance into the magazine as well as the ministry. Although Methodist books had previously transformed women such as British Methodist Hester Ann Roe Rogers[16] into models of piety, the majority of these books honored men—primarily ministers. The church's monthly magazine not only provided a more current and affordable medium than books, but one that offered women greater access into print.

Determining Where a Person's Memoir is Laid to Rest

In Chapter Two, I outlined several common conventions and tropes used in the "Obituary," "Biography," and "Grace of God Manifested" sections in which memoirs appear; however, some important distinctions also exist between these sections. While no strict criteria for determining the section in which a memoir would be placed emerges, some general patterns are evident. For instance, memoirs in the Obituary section typically reported deaths, providing "just the facts"—who died, when, where, and how. Averaging one page in length, Obituary memoirs were also much shorter than the memoirs printed in the Biography and Grace of God Manifested sections, and they were more timely, usually appearing in the magazine within six

[15] This construction of piety excludes black women and lower-class women who were not protected from the marketplace (Westerkamp 136).

[16] Hester Ann Rogers was already influential in her local Methodist society—leading classes, visiting the sick and exhorting—before she married preacher James Rogers. She was also an intimate friend to John Wesley, who encouraged her to publish her spiritual journals and letters. *The Account of Hester Ann Rogers*, published after her death, was a popular religious memoir throughout the nineteenth century—issued in over forty editions (Collins 545-46; Schmidt 17-19).

months of a person's death. Conversely, in the Biography section, timeliness and reporting the facts tend to be less important. On average, Biography memoirs were printed twelve months after the person's death; they often omit details such as the date of death and the age of the deceased, they average a longer six and a half pages, typically providing detailed descriptions of a person's conversion, occupation, and death. The two memoirs written about Reverend Aurora Seager by two different authors highlight these distinctions. One of these memoirs, published in the February 1820 edition of the magazine, appears in the Obituary section just two months after Seager's death. Less than a quarter of a page in length, the memoir primarily serves as a death announcement. Conversely, another memoir about Seager appears in the Biography section of the October 1821 issue of the magazine, almost two years after his death. Filling nineteen pages, this memoir describes in detail Seager's upbringing, conversion, preaching career, and holy death. Clearly, these two memoirs, placed in different sections, serve distinctly different purposes—the obituary primarily transmits or reports information, and the biography serves a much more ritualistic purpose, affirming and persuading readers toward a particular worldview.

Like the Biography section, the memoirs included in the Grace of God Manifested section were even less concerned with reporting and timeliness. Published on average almost two and a half years after the subject's death, these memoirs generally emphasized the deceased individual's conversion and the events leading up to the person's death. However, unlike Biography memoirs, the Grace of God memoirs rarely discuss occupation, which highlights two more important distinctions between these memoir sections—gender and clerical status. The Biography section primarily contains memoirs about men (27 of 35 or 77 percent), and all but four of these were ministers. Conversely, the Grace of God Manifested section primarily contains memoirs about women (27 of 38 or 71 percent), and only one minister's memoir.

Not surprisingly, women's memoirs do not include discussions of occupation; it appears that none of the women memorialized had professional occupations outside of the home. And while ministers' memoirs typically outline their ministerial careers, laymen's memoirs often mention their professional occupations, but do not provide the level of detail found in clerical memoirs. Instead, laymen's memoirs emphasize their religious roles such as class leader, Sunday school superintendent, trustee, or member of the church's administrative board. In other words, memoirs do not simply emphasize professional occupations, but formal roles within the church. However, these roles were not open to women. Although some women served as class leaders in

the late eighteenth century, in the nineteenth century class leadership increasingly became a role designated solely to men (Andrews 118-19). Moreover, while women's memoirs often mention their conversion and their personal faith during their lives, they primarily focus on their "victory" in death—usually presenting dramatic scenes from the woman's deathbed. Ironically, memoirs represent one of the earliest institutional spaces where discussions of American Methodist women appear. Yet, as Cynthia Lyerly notes, memoirs usually exclude much of women's "pre-death lives" (109). Based on her study of nineteenth-century consolation literature Ann Douglas similarly notes that "life gains its interest chiefly as a prelude to death" (201). In fact, Lyerly's term—"pre-death lives"—underscores not only the exclusion of women's lives in memoirs, but also the way in which memoirs resurrected women through depictions of their deaths, in essence granting them a second existence. While early issues of *Methodist Magazine* seldom noticed women's first existence, the periodical exuberantly recognized their second.

Whereas Biography memoirs recognized men for their lives, Grace of God memoirs recognized women for their deaths. Through accounts of their deaths, women ultimately became exemplifications of God's grace. The author of Mary Ann Peaco's memoir claimed, "the bed of affliction and the chamber of death were proper places to look for the triumphs of true—believers—here is no disguise; but all is real," (*MM* 1818: 276). Depictions of death in *Methodist Magazine* are carefully orchestrated rhetorical constructions. All *is not* real. This scrupulous construction of memoirs is particularly apparent in the accounts of women's deaths. In the hands of authors, editors, and publishers, ordinary women's painful deaths often became ritualistic religious affirmations.

Instruments and Icons: Posthumously Assigning Roles to Laymen, Ministers, and Women

Invoking the terms *instruments* and *icons* offers another way to describe the different roles typically assigned to men and women in *Methodist Magazine* memoirs. In his discussion of Methodism's social religion, Gregory Schneider describes a dialectic with both iconic and instrumental moments. Broadly, he distinguishes iconic moments as inner spirituality and instrumental moments as those instances when inner holiness operates as a "transformative power" for virtue and morality (Schneider, *Way* 151). In my conception of instruments and icons, both exert transformative power, but instruments transform others through formal *external* roles and icons transform others through their real or perceived *inner* holiness. Although these

two functions can overlap, laymen and clergy are often depicted as *instruments* of God—outwardly exerting transformative power in their official capacities as class leaders, clergy, and pious patriarchs. Conversely, women are more frequently cast into *iconic* roles in which they symbolically exert transformative power through their *inner* piety. In memoirs, the author directs both instrumental and iconic action toward the same end—moving readers to pursue greater holiness; it is simply the way in which instruments and icons operate rhetorically that distinguishes them.

Reliance on external actions characterizes the pious patriarch—the most common depiction of laymen in memoirs. Like women's memoirs, the memoirs of pious patriarchs show the home as an important node in the Methodist itinerant network and a central place for the expansion of religion (Schneider, *Way* 69-70). According to Colleen McDannell, "In the 'truly Christian' homes of American Protestants, the religious life of the family was seen as an extension of the religious life of the individual" (77). Although both women and men were depicted as hosts for traveling preachers and benefactors to the needy, women are usually depicted as faithful congregants within the church and devoted caregivers within the home, while laymen are described as class leaders, church administrators, and spiritual heads of households. For instance, almost half of the twenty-four laymen's memoirs list offices held by those individuals. William Burnham served as circuit steward (*MM* 1822: 158), John Allen was superintendent over a large Sabbath school (*MM* 1823: 38), Andrew Mckenna was a church trustee (*MM* 1818: 399), and several laymen were recognized as class leaders including Peter Bonnet, who was appointed to that post by Francis Asbury.[17] According to his memoir, Bonnet served as class leader for forty years. Bonnet's memoir also credits him with re-gathering the Methodists in White Plains, New York following the Revolutionary War and helping to build the first Methodist meeting house in the country (*MM* 1824: 184-85).

Spiritual head of household was another role honored in laymen's memoirs. For example, Thomas Tucker's memoir shows him providing spiritual counsel to his daughter (*MM* 1822: 54), and John Corry's memoir notes that he led family prayer and strictly observed the Sabbath much to the chagrin of his frontier neighbors (*MM* 1824: 144-46). Similarly, Colonel Burrus' memoir credits him with bringing his wife to religion and establishing family worship (*MM* 1822: 224).

[17] Francis Asbury was one of the first ministers dispatched to America by Wesley in 1771, and one of the first American Methodist Bishops. During his forty-five years in America, Asbury solidified the Methodist movement and laid the plans for its populist success.

As both Corry and Burrus' memoirs demonstrate, Methodists believed that the heads of households had a duty to lead family prayer, which was an important part of spiritual instruction and moving family members into the Christian fold (Schneider, *Way* 71-72). For instance, John Thomas's memoirist called him "a man whose pious example proved a very great blessing to his family" (*MM* 1819: 216). He was credited with bringing his wife to religion and helping to awaken his youngest son (216).

In new, fledgling Methodist societies, women usually preceded men into the church, and ministers recognized women as effective recruiters and spiritual counselors in their families and neighborhoods (Lyerly 101, 104). Consequently, there are memoirs in the magazine that similarly depict women operating as spiritual leaders within their households, yet it is significant that these roles were particularly emphasized in laymen's memoirs. Rhetorically, these memoirs appear to encourage laymen to assume the roles of religious leaders within their churches and within their homes. Unlike ministers and the women who overwhelmingly made up the majority in most Methodist societies, laymen were more closely aligned with the secular world and considered more apt to fall prey to the corrupting influences of business and economic interests. This risk of corruption is further illustrated by five laymen's memoirs that I characterize as eleventh-hour conversion narratives. Laymen more often than women appear in these vivid narratives that describe the frantic conversions of reluctant believers on their deathbeds. For instance, John Newton's memoirist wrote, "He like most young men in affluent situations, had the allurements of the world to contend with, which but too effectually prevented him from thinking seriously on his latter end" (MM 1824: 199). According to his memoirist, shortly after his marriage, Newton was "visited with the pulmonary consumption, which he soon recognized as the hand of the Lord" (199). With death approaching, his memoir notes that Newton "became deeply concerned for his future safety, and believing he was guilty in the sight of his God, betook himself earnestly to prayer and reading the sacred scriptures. He clearly saw that he had hitherto done no good thing. He now resolved to seek the salvation of his soul" (199). Unlike most of the memoirs in *Methodist Magazine*, eleventh-hour conversion narratives are not included as examples for emulation, but more as cautionary tales. Rather than models, eleventh-hour narratives, convert individuals into warnings. They show the desperate state of individuals who put off concerns about their spiritual welfare until the last minute. With regards to laymen, just as depictions of pious patriarchs encouraged men to assume spiritual leadership in their

homes and communities, eleventh-hour conversion narratives warned them against placing secular pursuits ahead of their own salvation.

Overall, the memoirs of laymen make up the smallest portion of the memoirs in *Methodist Magazine,* comprising less than twenty percent. Moreover, the subjects of laymen's memoirs raise another distinction between laymen's, ministers', and women's memoirs—age. While the average life expectancy for white persons in the early nineteenth century was forty (Haines), the average age at death for the laymen elegized in my study is fifty-three, for ministers forty-three, and for women thirty-three.[18] Thus, the older subjects depicted in laymen's memoirs and younger subjects presented in women's memoirs also contribute to their different representations as instruments and icons.

Ministers' memoirs that extend beyond mere death announcements also tend to depict their subjects as faithful instruments by charting their clerical careers including their initial paths to preaching. For example, John Pitts' memoir outlines his progression from conversion, to Methodist society member, to class leader, to the itinerant ministry (*MM* 1821: 206-07). Similarly, Alba Beckwith's memoir notes his path from licensed exhorter, to local preacher, to traveling minister. The posts of class leader, licensed exhorter, and local preacher comprised the lay ministry in local Methodist societies and often served as a training ground for future full-time clergy. All of these offices were supervised by the itinerant minister over the circuit, but because itinerant ministers constantly traveled throughout their circuits, lay leaders provided the backbone of most Methodist societies.[19] Indeed, preaching circuits often encompassed hundreds of miles of rural landscape with small Methodist societies scattered throughout. They were called circuits because ministers were expected to "go round" them every four to six weeks (Wigger 58-59).

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[18] These average ages in my study are based on those memoirs that provide ages 17 of 24 for laymen, 37 of 47 for ministers. and 35 of 50 for women.

[19] Class leaders were responsible for holding regular class meetings, visiting class members as well as advising, reproving and exhorting them along their spiritual journeys. The class leader role represented the lowest rung of the lay ministerial hierarchy. Licensed exhorters, the next step on the lay ministerial hierarchy, were responsible for assisting preachers with prayer and exhortation during meetings, and local preachers, the highest post on the lay ministerial hierarchy, sometimes assisted itinerants and also ministered to individuals in their neighborhoods. Opposed to traveling itinerants, local preachers were stationed in one location (William Sweet 573). Typically local preachers were not paid, so they pursued secular employment in addition to preaching (Heyrman 101). For some, local preaching provided a stepping stone into itinerancy; for others, it offered an alternative to those preachers unable to travel because of family, health, or financial reasons. Yet, in the Methodist hierarchy, local preachers were clearly a notch below traveling ministers. When individuals left the itinerancy to be stationed as a local preacher, they were excluded from previous activities and participation in the annual conference (Kirby, Richey, and Rowe 103-04).

In addition to tracing ministers' progression through different ministerial posts, clerical memoirs also chart their various appointments across the country. John Haggerty's memoir lists appointments to the Berkly, Baltimore, Calvert, Chester, and Frederick circuits; then the author notes his appointment as presiding elder in New York, Annapolis, Baltimore, and Fell's Point (*MM* 1824: 211). Unlike the overwhelming majority of Congregationalist ministers, who served one parish for their entire careers, early Methodist itinerants generally changed circuits every one or two years (Wigger 63). Thus, these long lists of appointments highlighted ministers' devoted service and offer a subtle message about faithful sacrifice to followers. Like the eleventh-hour conversion narratives found in laypersons' memoirs, what I label the "itinerant minister as martyr" narrative was a common narrative found in the memoirs of clergy. John Wigger claims that early itinerants endured arduous travels because they the believed "bringing the lost to Christ was the highest calling," and "their reward in heaven would more than compensate for their sufferings on earth" (56). Indeed, after a few years of traveling, most ministers settled in locations or died amidst their travels. Nathan Hatch notes over seventy percent of the traveling ministers who died in the field between 1780 and 1818 had served less than ten years, and almost two thirds of them were under the age of forty (Hatch *Democratization* 88). Itinerant ministers embodied early Methodism's rabid missionary zeal; and just as these ministers' devotion inspired followers during their lives, so too was the intent of memoirs depicting their sacrifices and deaths as loyal instruments of the lord. Contrary to eleventh-hour narratives, which present Methodism's most resistant believers, the itinerant minister as martyr narratives depict the church's most fervent followers, and uses their martyrdom to inspire other adherents and affirm key religious tenets.

In most clerical memoirs a catalog of the minister's Christian traits provided a more overt message by spelling out qualities the memoirist deemed worthy of emulation. While the memoirs of laymen and women occasionally include lists of traits, they appear to be a required element in ministers' memoirs. For example, Reverend Henry Foxall's memoirist wrote that he was "a man of sterling worth—his understanding was strong—his piety sincere and deep—his benevolence and charities extensive. He loved the cause of religion in general; and his attachment to Methodism was exceeded in no one that I have known" (*MM* 1824: 371). Indeed, piety, a zeal for religion, devotion to God, fervor, diligence, economy, and sincerity, are traits that repeatedly appear in ministers' memoirs. Usually the author lists these character traits toward the end of the

text—reinforcing why the minister is worthy of emulation, and directly prescribing how he should be emulated as an instrument of the Lord.

Oddly, along with these glowing descriptions, many ministers' memoirs also include guarded or backhanded praise. For instance, the author of Reverend John Haggarty's memoir states that his "talents were above mediocrity" (*MM* 1824: 211). Similarly, John Wesley Bond's memoirist observed that "his steady piety, promised much future usefulness; but there was little of what the world calls genius, and religious people denominate 'gifts,' manifested in his preaching" (*MM* 1819: 288). Indeed, much of this guarded praise refers to ministers' pulpit oratory, which belies a wariness toward eloquence and ornamented style. Reverend John Man's memoirist claimed, "Though he was not eloquent, yet he possessed a sound judgment and clear understanding" (*MM* 1819: 18). Likewise, Reverend Edward Paine's memoirist observed, "As a preacher he was plain and pointed, he studied more to profit his hearers than to please them—to win their souls to Christ than to gain their applause" (*MM* 1820: 408). Unlike Congregationalist and Presbyterian ministers, the first generation of American Methodist ministers was not trained and many of them had little formal education. Additionally, Methodist founder John Wesley advocated a plain style of preaching—challenging "the efficacy of sermons designed merely to impress the hearer with stylistic eloquence" (Westerkamp 112). Both Wesley and the memoirists appear to be engaging in the age-old rhetorical debate between style and substance. Rather than empty eloquence, these memoirs applaud steadiness, sound judgment, and perspicuity. They rank sincerity over ornament and a true call to minister over oratorical talents and pulpit theatrics. In other words, the authors of these memoirs advocate the pious man who speaks plainly as opposed to the insincere man who speaks eloquently. In fact, Reverend William Wayne's memoirist clearly drew this distinction, observing that although Wayne "did not excel in pulpit oratory; yet very few pulpit orators ever excelled him in genuine piety and fervent zeal" (*MM* 1818: 459).

Blurring the Roles between Women and Ministers

In addition to praising ministers' plainspoken sincerity, clerical memoirs also recognized them for their modesty and meekness as well as affectionate, tender, and unassuming demeanors. Interestingly, these were many of the same traits celebrated as feminine virtues in the nineteenth-century. As a result, early Methodism forged a natural alliance between its two most fervent

groups of followers-women and clergy. In her foundational text *The Feminization of American Culture,* Ann Douglas argues that liberal northeastern clerics who had lost their economic, political, and intellectual standing by the nineteenth century increasingly turned to moral and emotional appeals—traditional feminine sources of power—thus allying themselves with their white, middle-class, female parishioners. A similar alliance between clergy and women exists in early Methodism, although Douglas' book intentionally does not consider evangelical protestant movements. Unlike Calvinists, the evangelical Methodists viewed emotion and sentiment as a means of creating a "heart-felt" religious experience for both women and men. Emotion was a core element of Methodism from the beginning, and virtues such as meekness and gentleness, "once despised as womanly," were celebrated by Methodists as "fruits of the Spirit of Christianity" (Schneider, *Way* 173). Opposed to the rituals of traditional patriarchal honor, Methodism's evangelical rituals required individuals to declare themselves weak—ceding all strength to God (115-16). By doing so, they were trying to imitate a "self-sacrificing, submissive Christ" (Lobody 142). Still, as suggested by the subjects of *Methodist Magazine* memoirs, these virtues appear more frequently in women and clergy. Some overlap and blurring is also apparent in certain traits and roles ascribed to ministers and women.

One of these traits is using writing for spiritual reflection. Based on the memoirs in my study, keeping spiritual diaries and journals as well as examining one's spiritual pilgrimage through written correspondence appear to be much more common literate practices among women and clergy than among laymen. Methodist founder John Wesley, who maintained a personal journal, encouraged followers to record their spiritual experiences in journals (Burton 82). Traveling ministers also kept journals as a practical means of providing quarterly accounts of their circuits, cataloguing the societies under their charge, and providing a record to successors—all of which were duties outlined in the Methodist *Doctrines and Disciplines* (44). Nevertheless, Schneider suggests that showing one's inner spiritual state was a more common and comfortable practice for women (*Way* 132). Jean Miller Schmidt adds that charting one's spiritual development through diaries and letters was not only consistent with Wesley's instruction, but became "an important means of self-construction" particularly for women (35-36). Indeed, by including extracts from letters and journals, the memoirs of women and clergy

not only offer personal insight into their spirituality, but allow memorialized individuals to speak for themselves.[20]

In the combined memoir of husband and wife Lancaster and Harriet Dusinbery, more than ten pages, or half the memoir, is devoted to Harriet's spiritual life, while less than four pages are devoted to Lancaster's. The memoir recognizes both Harriet's and Lancaster's active participation in religious pursuits—listing the church and charitable offices Lancaster held as well as the offices Harriet held in several charitable concerns.[21] The difference in content is primarily the inward spiritual reflection that comprises most of Harriet's depiction and is absent from Lancaster's. To present Harriet's spiritual views and struggles, the memoirist relied on extracts from her diary and letters, yet this type of personal writing is not available for Lancaster. In fact, the memoirist notes, "We are not able to speak so particularly in regard to the private exercises of his mind, as it respects religious things, as we have of Harriet, as he has not notices of these in writing" (*MM* 1824: 177). Because extracts from letters and journals are more commonly employed in memoirs of clergy and women than in laymen's memoirs, the latter tend to present their outward actions rather than their inner thoughts and reflection. Again, this difference places laymen in an instrumental rather than iconic role.

Blurring between clergy and women also occurs in depictions of deathbed scenes. Ministers' final deathbed scenes more closely resemble those of women than laymen. Both ministers' and women's memoirs convert the deathbed into a site of worship; dying individuals along with the crowds surrounding their deathbeds are presented participating in prayers, devotions, hymn singing, scripture reading, and praise. Reverend John Man's memoirist noted, "he sometimes called us into his room to read, sing, and pray" (*MM* 1819: 17). Indeed in comparing these three groups in terms of the space devoted to deathbed descriptions and depictions of deathbed worship, women clearly rank at the top, laymen at the bottom, and ministers in the middle. While men's memoirs elegize by focusing on their holy lives, the primary focus of women's memoirs are depictions of their holy deaths. In making these compositional choices, memoirists likely emphasize descriptions of a minister's professional

[20] It is important to note that authors and editors still controlled which extracts were included in memoirs; thus they could use these selections to construct individuals in certain ways.

[21] This is one of the few memoirs that shows a woman holding offices in charitable organizations, which can be attributed to location, social rank, and timing. The Dusinbery's appear to be mid- to upper-class members of New York City society. Additionally, formal charitable organizations, particularly those run by women, become more common further into the nineteenth century, which is evident in Chapter 5.

activities believing that these exemplify his faith. In fact, two activities consistently depicted in ministers' deathbed scenes—the deathbed inquiry and praise—seem to serve more of an iconic function, but they are usually situated as secondary to ministers' clerical careers. Conversely, because women were precluded from the pulpit and other official roles within the church, memoirists turn to the deathbed for evidence of women's faith. As a result, men become religious instruments and women become holy icons. Not surprisingly women's memoirs generally rely on emotional appeals for their rhetorical thrust. Indeed, the amplified use of *pathos* in deathbed depictions signals an important distinction between ministers' and women's memoirs. This emphasis on emotion in women's memoirs aligned with the Enlightenment's construction of natural gender differences. Women were believed to be governed by sentiment and emotion; they *felt* with their *hearts*, whereas men were governed by intellect; they *thought* with their *heads* (Westerkamp 135). Although clerical memoirs such as Reverend Richard Emery's describe him exclaiming in "raptures of joy," and "enraptured with the love of God," amplified depictions of "rapture," "ecstasy," and "glory" are generally reserved for women's memoirs (*MM* 1821: 329). For instance, Sally Agard's memoirist described her "in an ecstasy of joy," exclaiming "in rapturous triumph, O precious Jesus! O glorious Redeemer! O glory to God. I am going home! I am glad I have born the cross, for now I see a crown of glory reserved for me. O glory! Glory! I am going. O Jesus, why do thy chariot wheels delay?" (*MM* 1821: 335). Similarly, Mary Hollowell's memoirist wrote, "Her whole soul seemed wrapt [sic] in the mantle of devotion while we were singing: we then kneeled down to prayer, and the display of divine presence was unusual, and many who were present will long remember the solemn, awful and glorious scene" (*MM* 1822: 376). Such overwrought displays of melodrama, a common feature found in women's memoirs, contribute to the construction of women as religious icons. Rather than service, these iconic depictions tend to celebrate women's intense inner holiness and the divine bond their spirituality has forged.

In addition to distinguishing women from men, these ecstatic depictions often place women in a liminal state between earth and heaven, ascending beyond all earthly matters. For instance, the author of Tamzey Causey's memoir acknowledged, "The writer of these lines has more than once beheld her, when her soul appeared filled with the divine afflatus, that, like Moses, her face shone. And so fervently would she look upward, that it seemed as if she had penetrated the veil, and the glories of the eternal world in full view" (*MM* 1822: 309-10). Thus,

women are cast into the role of heavenly scouts, who see visions and provide those around their deathbed with a glimpse of heaven and the afterlife. Applying Kenneth Burke's concept of consubstantiality—where individuals remain both separate and joined by some shared belief—women's memoirs show how the living are often joined and transported with the dying because of their mutual belief and desire for eternal life. Certainly, this opportunity to catch a glimpse of heaven drew many believers to the sides of deathbeds—either in person or in print. Describing Susan Wyval's death chamber, her memoirist also acknowledged a "divine presence," and later observed, "The day before her departure I called to see her, and found her, surrounded by female friends, in an extacy [sic], pouring out her soul in torrents of praise to God, in language which seemed to be almost more than human" (*MM* 1818: 182). Depictions of women ascending above earthly concerns and channeling the everlasting signal a different type of spirituality that is more outward and emotional. Memoirists attempt to depict the depths of women's holiness by describing traces of the divine inscribed on their bodies and souls. At the same time, it is important to note that these depictions signal a distinct, emotionally-charged deathbed experience for women. In essence, women's elevation to icons represents a collaboration between the dying women and their memoirists. The ministers, who wrote and edited women's memoirs recognized women's distinct death experience and purposefully used it to persuade others.

Women Preaching from their Deathbed Pulpits

Women's powerful exhortations present another distinguishing feature between the deathbed scenes of clerics and female adherents. Surprisingly, in memoirs, men who preached as part of their professional careers were far less often depicted exhorting the people around their deathbeds than their female followers. In fact, two thirds (18 of 27 or 67 percent) of women's memoirs in the Grace of God Manifested section present women exhorting, whereas only five out of twenty-three (or 22 percent) of ministers' memoirs in the Biography section portray ministers exhorting. Generally, the early Methodist movement in America had always offered women more liberty to speak than established churches. Women were encouraged to pray publicly, offer testimony at class meetings and love feasts, reprove sinners, and counsel fellow congregants and clergy. As opposed to formal worship, class meetings and love feasts, were considered social gatherings, yet Catherine Brekus notes the line between social gatherings and

worship occasionally blurred in these ostensibly social gatheirngs, and laypersons who felt divinely inspired delivered exhortations ("Female" 143-44). However, early American Methodist women were almost never permitted to preach. Unlike the early Methodists in Britain, the American Methodist Church did not support female preaching. In fact, of the more than one hundred female preachers Catherine Brekus has recovered in her study of female preaching in America between 1740 and 1845, only nine belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, which is a miniscule representation considering the size of the Methodist movement (*Strangers* 133). While some women were recognized as gifted exhorters, they were never formally licensed; moreover, instances of female exhorting became increasingly rare in the early nineteenth century as the Methodist movement matured (Wigger 157-58). So, why are depictions of women exhorting so prevalent in these memoirs? And is exhorting preaching?

The explication of Biblical texts usually delineated preaching from exhorting. Exhortations primarily centered on personal stories of repentance and salvation (Brekus, "Female" 136; Heyrman 167). In the eighteenth century, exhorters were identified as "informal evangelists" who urged individuals to repent; they had no formal authority, were not allowed to deliver sermons, and if they were in a church, they generally spoke outside of the pulpit (Brekus, *Strangers* 48). Early Methodist preaching was less formal and predominately evangelistic in intent. Instead of prepared texts, ministers typically delivered extemporaneous sermons relying on moving personal testimonies, illuminating anecdotes, and direct emotional appeals. In fact, Wigger argues, "Since only a thin line separated much of early Methodist preaching from exhorting, Methodist female exhorters undoubtedly used their public speaking opportunities to preach what were, in effect, sermons" (Wigger 152). However, none of the women in these memoirs were recognized as exhorters prior to their actual deathbed exhortations. Albeit devout Methodist adherents, these were seemingly "ordinary" women. Yet, as they approached death, their memoirs assigned them to roles they were not depicted performing during their lives. Second, because the church licensed exhorters, the Methodists clearly viewed it as an important ministerial function. Thus, the church's willingness—even eagerness—to publish and disseminate so many memoirs depicting women exhorting from their deathbeds provides evidence of the authority posthumously granted to these women as exhorters. Third, women who appear in memoirs clearly were not delivering scriptural exegeses, but I believe by delivering exhortations intended to save the lost they were cast into a role that Methodists usually reserved

for ministers. Finally, although Methodism offered women more opportunities than other religious movements to speak publicly, most Methodist women did not.

Even in their efforts to prioritize heavenly over secular concerns, female adherents were still products of a society that raised women to avoid public display. In his history of composition-rhetoric Robert Connors offers an illustrative example showing that even when women were permitted and encouraged to read their compositions aloud in mixed classes at Oberlin in 1839, they refused to step beyond that societal restriction (*Composition-Rhetoric* 50). Similarly, Methodist memoirs often present women as reluctant public speakers. In her memoir, comprised of extracts transcribed from her diary, Margaret Anderson described her fear of public speaking:

> It was immediately impressed upon me, that the Lord who had given me a heart to pity the miseries of my fellow mortals, had also given me a tongue to speak in his name. And that I must tell my associates, in plain terms that they must be converted or eternally lost…but how gladly I would have excused myself from that duty! Lord, I have neither courage nor ability to pray in public; and if I speak to any they will mock me, and I shall be despised for my pains." (*MM* 1820: 416)

According to her memoirist, Anderson felt empowered—even obligated—to publicly advocate the Lord, yet she was stymied by the fear of being mocked or despised. Encouraged to speak by God, most women remained silenced by patriarchal-imposed strictures. Elizabeth Keagey's memoirist also described her reluctance to offer public testimony noting that "joined with her natural timidity of mind, she was led to speak of her religious enjoyments with much caution" (*MM* 1823: 258). Even when women were presented as confident speakers, memoirists were careful to confirm these women's femininity and acknowledge their equal devotion to family and domestic concerns. For example, Hannah Lathrop's memoirist noted that, "She continued to testify of the goodness of God and the work of grace in her soul, from time to time, publicly and privately, with great boldness," but also stressed that "marks of humility" and "female modesty" were clearly evident (*MM* 1822: 101). Anna Nickerson's memoirist, who described Nickerson with "a peculiar gift to speak" was also quick to note that while she "delighted in public and social ordinance and the social means of grace, her religion was not confined to these. How much she cared for her family, and how ardently she laboured for their good, is known and recollected by them" (*MM* 1818: 307-08). In her study of women reformers in the late nineteenth

century, Nan Johnson highlights this same convention, labeling it “the eloquent mother trope.” Implicit in the eloquent mother trope is a double standard in which women speakers must be depicted fulfilling their domestic duties in order to maintain respectability (Johnson 119-21). In other words, even when speaking about religion, women’s public speech raises concerns that these women have stepped beyond their accepted roles as wives, mothers, and quiet congregants sitting the pews. Thus, women’s memoirs occasionally provided additional evidence of feminine virtue in order to position women’s public evangelism within accepted gender norms.

One way in which memoirs lend further credence to women’s speech and their ultimate elevation to ministers is by attributing their emboldened speech to their impending deaths. According to Diane Lobody, women were also bolstered by a “fundamental evangelical conviction that no human authority could be permitted to stand between the believer and God” (135). If spiritual truth was revealed to a woman through experience, prayer, or her reading of the scripture, she was obligated to share it despite ecclesiastical or social convention. However, women appear more willing to communicate these spiritual truths as they approached death; and long after they’ve spoken, the church seems more comfortable acknowledging these women’s revelations. For instance, the author of Ellenor Everdige’s memoir noted “now that she was called to depart, she could confidently speak of her joys and hopes without fear of reproach from her acquaintance, and without any dread of future misery” (*MM* 1823: 382). Mary Douglas’s memoirist observed,” that she was strongly impressed to witness for her Lord…but this duty appeared to her almost impossible” (*MM* 1820: 19). Later, her memoirist shows that Douglas was emboldened to speak on her deathbed: “She exhorted those that came to see her to prepare to follow her, and faithfully declared that unless they should follow Christ in the humble way of the cross they would never be able to enter in at the strait gate” (20). If these women felt societal constraints loosen as their deaths approached, if they simply felt a stronger call to warn others, or if these emboldened depictions of women are the result of some measure of editorial license, it is unclear. Memoirs unmistakably elevated these women to a ministerial role that few ever dared to perform before being confined to their deathbeds. Yet, these elevations result from the rhetorical force inherent in many women’s deaths and the inability to contain them in conventional, subservient roles.

In Nancy Spears’ memoir, the author describes the emboldened young woman exhorting an adult man about the state of his soul from her deathbed: “She gave an impressive exhortation,

entreating him with more than human energy, to seek the salvation of his soul" (*MM* 1823: 302). Similarly, Elizabeth Keagey's memoir described her upstaging the minister when a society meeting was held by her bedside. Her memoirist observed, "Sister Keagey broke forth in ecstasies of joy, praising God aloud for his mercy and goodness. Similar feelings were kindled in kindred spirits through the congregation. The preacher in the meantime deferred his discourse till her raptures subsided saying, *this is the best of preaching*" (*MM* 1823: 259). Sally Agard's memoir offers another example of deathbed preaching. Her memoirist explained that Agard asked the friends around her deathbed to send for a family who had denied the power of religion. After Agard emphatically exhorted the family, her memoirist wrote, "Those Christian friends who were present, rejoiced from feeling sense of the presence of God; while unbelievers wept, and acknowledged it must be the power and work of God" (*MM* 1821: 337-36). Finally, it is important to note that this elevation was a temporary promotion. Women who were emboldened to preach because of their impending deaths were clearly granted a limited ministerial appointment.

Just as women primarily gain admittance to the pages of *Methodist Magazine* by dying, the only pulpit granted to early American Methodist women appears to be a deathbed. In their deathbed exhortations, women are depicted in fits of ecstasy and rapture using their intermediary position between heaven and earth to deliver powerful appeals to both steadfast and reluctant believers. While memoirists' emphasis and descriptions assigned laymen and ministers the role of religious instruments, in print women were not only elevated to position of preacher, but also converted into religious icons. In the next chapter, which examines the prescriptive advice delivered to women in the *Christian Advocate's* "Ladies' Department," I will look at how the domestication of religion increasingly transfers responsibility for religious conversion and counsel from Methodist ministers to women—once again elevating women to the position of preachers.

Chapter 4: Contained within the "Ladies' Department"

> *In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes.*
>
> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1840)

In a letter describing the reception of the Methodist Church's new weekly newspaper, the *Christian Advocate*, printed in the February 24, 1827, edition of the paper, Revered Cyrus Foss wrote:

> I can assure you that the Christian Advocate meets with a very cordial reception by its patrons on Suffolk Circuit; and, indeed, who would not cordially receive a friend that every week, imparts so much useful knowledge and comes so richly laden with good news from a far country. As far as my observation extends, the happy influence of its circulation is discoverable in every neighborhood in which it is taken. (*CA* 1827: 98)

According to Foss, one aged sister even told him, "I never enjoyed myself so well in my life, as I have since we have taken the Advocate;" the religious news it contained from across the country and around the world confirmed to her that the saving arm of the Lord would eventually prevail (98).

Just as the *Advocate* delivered consistent images of God's work underway, the paper depicted consistent images of the individuals carrying out these Christian endeavors. The pages of the *Advocate* especially spotlight the male clergy who guided and reported the expansion of Methodism across the country. But the paper also depicted the emergence and popularity of Bible, Tract, Sunday school and benevolent societies led and managed by local laymen and laywomen. Reports on the establishment of missions among North American Indian tribes as well as reports from missionaries dispatched to foreign lands were regularly featured in the newspaper. Additionally, the *Advocate* targeted and dispensed advice to important constituent groups, including ministers, children, and women, through a series of regular columns.

Based on my study of the weekly *Christian Advocate* from its inception in 1826 to 1832, when the church spun off several regional *Advocate* papers, Chapters Four and Five examine the textual and material spaces in which women appear in the newspaper. In addition to chronicling the genesis of the *Christian Advocate*, Chapter Four focuses on the back-page "Ladies'

Department" column—the space to which "women's concerns" were initially consigned in the newspaper. The content *within* the "Ladies' Department" overwhelmingly prescribed women to the roles of wife, mother, and domestic manager *within* the domestic sphere. Ultimately, Chapter Four highlights the way in which spaces are socially constructed through discourse. In the same manner that women were assigned to the domestic sphere in society, the *Advocate's* "Ladies' Department" designated a particular space for women in its newspaper—with this latter space reinforcing the former. Both spatial consignments demonstrate what Foucault identified as the fundamental relationship between space and the exercise of power (252). Cultural geographers likewise have noted the way in which power is exercised through the monopolization of desirable spaces and the relegation of less desirable spaces to weaker groups (Sibley ix) as well as the way in which power, politics, and ideology are often "inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life" (Soja 6). In this chapter I argue that the relegation of the "Ladies' Department" to the back page of the *Advocate* and the column's content, which reinforces women's relegation to the home, exemplify the church's use of space to exercise institutional power.

Antebellum America increasingly used space to both map and symbolize appropriate gender roles. According to the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres, upper and middle-class white men operated in the broad realms of commerce, professions, and politics while upper and middle-class white women were appointed to the narrow realms of the domestic sphere. Whereas men's occupations increasingly took them outside the home, women's occupations as wives, mothers, and domestic managers kept them within the home. Even though recent scholars have identified several faults in the conception of separate spheres, the attempt to spatially assign women to the domestic sphere clearly represents an effort to limit further women' access to power and ensure their subordination to men (Harvey 419). Assigning women to the domestic sphere precluded women from commercial and political activities in the public realm. This secular ideology of separate spheres also aligned with a recurring spatial pattern found in evangelical Methodism in which sacred inner private spaces were juxtaposed against what were deemed threatening external public spaces (Schneider, *Way* 150). Repeatedly, Methodists were encouraged to focus on the internal—soul, heart, hearth—rather than the external—appearance, wealth, society, and the marketplace. This pattern is also evident in Methodists' view of the church and the home as "inner sanctums" from the sinful world (150).

Earlier Methodist texts reflected this view by consistently contrasting the love and warmth of the church and the home against the cold, competitiveness of the world (167). However, in the early nineteenth century Methodism's spatial pattern becomes increasingly gendered. Men were no longer discouraged from delving into the worlds of commerce and politics as long as the home and church—two spaces dominated by women—provided purifying sanctuaries. As a result of this gendered structure, women were often transformed into symbols and purveyors of piety.

Although some scholars locate the nineteenth-century church in the private sphere because of its irrelevance to materialistic production, Marilyn Westerkamp notes that the work of the church is both private and public in nature, which further complicates the conception of separate spheres (79). As both a private and public space, the church provided an important liminal zone or zone of ambiguity in which women could expand their sphere of operation while maintaining social respectability. In that context, the *Advocate* itself operated as a zone of ambiguity. In both its content and its distribution, the newspaper provided a sanctioned forum for traversing between the public and private—often blurring the boundaries between the two spheres.

The *Christian Advocate*: A "Powerful Preacher"

The Methodist Book Concern launched the *Christian Advocate,* on September 9, 1826, eight years after *Methodist Magazine*. Unlike the magazine periodicals that preceded it, the *Christian Advocate* was a church-wide weekly newspaper, which followed on the heels of other regional Methodist newspapers—the *Zion's Herald* (Boston, 1823) and the *Wesleyan Journal* (Charleston, 1825) (Pilkington 179; 199). The weekly newspaper reflected the vitality of evangelism and the growing popularity of newspapers in the early nineteenth century. Although the *Advocate* was not intended as a substitute, but a timelier supplement for the monthly *Methodist Magazine*, soon after its introduction, the *Advocate* quickly usurped *Methodist Magazine* as the church's flagship publication.[22] The introduction of a national newspaper dramatically expanded the church's textual community. Less than ten years after its introduction, the *Advocate* faced its stiffest competition from its own imitating offspring. Combining regional news and articles with general features from the original *Advocate*, several regional Methodist

[22] In an effort to revive *Methodist Magazine*, in 1830, the editors changed it to a quarterly publication under the title *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review* (Pilkington 215-16).

Advocate newspapers emerged across the country including the *South-Western Christian Advocate* (Nashville, 1832); the *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate* (1833); the *Western Christian Advocate* (Cincinnati, 1834); the *Southern Christian Advocate* (Charleston, 1837); the *Richmond Christian Advocate* (1839); the *Northern Christian Advocate* (Syracuse, 1841); as well as the St. Louis, Northwestern (Chicago), and California *Advocates* which were established in the 1850s (Norwood, *Story* 214). By 1860 the total circulation for all the official Methodist newspapers exceeded 400,000, which places Methodist periodicals among the most successful periodicals of that era (Candy Brown 156).

The original *Christian Advocate* was the brainchild of Nathan Bangs, who was elected by the General Conference to head the Methodist Book Concern in 1820. The Methodists continued the practice of assigning ministers rather than publishing professionals to head their Book Concern. Bangs had served as a missionary and preacher in Canada and New York for twenty years including stints as "preacher in charge" of the New York City circuit and presiding elder for the New York Conference. Stressing Bangs' "indelible imprint" on Methodism, historian Nathan Hatch suggests that whereas Francis Asbury's career emblemized Methodism's triumph as a populist movement, Nathan Bangs' represents Methodism's pursuit of social standing and respectability. The Methodist Book Concern was one of the primary vehicles Bangs used in the church's quest for social respectability (Hatch, *Democratization* 201-202). When Bangs inherited it, the Methodist Book Concern was debt-ridden and resided in rented quarters. More disconcerting was what Bangs perceived as a general apathy toward literature, which he believed was due to the Book Concern's practice of reprinting English publications rather than creating and promoting American texts. Bangs' strategic visions for the Methodist Book Concern—including the purchase of the Book Concern's first property; establishment of its own bindery and press; expansion of the Book Concern's publications; and close alignment with the Methodist Sunday School Union, Tract Society and Bible Society—ultimately set the course for the Book Concern to become the largest publishing house in the world by 1860 (Hatch, *Democratization* 204; Pilkington 176-210).

Bangs, with Assistant Book Agent Thomas Mason until 1824 and John Emory until 1828, juggled his responsibilities as Book Agent, editor of *Methodist Magazine,* and editor of the *Advocate* until 1828 when Emory succeeded him as Book Agent and Bangs became full-time editor for the *Advocate*. The assignment of a full-time editor for the paper confirms the strategic

importance of the newspaper as a means of communication for the church. Bangs continued as editor of the *Advocate* until 1832 when he was replaced by John P. Durbin, who was assisted by Timothy Merritt (Pilkington 211; 225).

Promoting the need for a general Methodist newspaper in 1826, James Pilkington claims that Nathan Bangs almost had a "sixth sense" for the desires of his constituency (199). The *Advocate* provided frequent communications and a distinctly American voice. During the antebellum period, newspapers quickly became a popular medium for Americans. While there were only 200 newspapers in the country in 1800, by 1835 more than 1,200 existed, and religious newspapers, a uniquely American invention, proved to be leaders in this burgeoning market (Hart 67). Religious newspapers, which were generally weekly journals containing secular news along with denominational intelligence and religious miscellany, initially competed against secular newspapers (Mott 206). In 1829, the *Christian Advocate* and the non-denominational *American National Preacher* attracted 20,000 and 25,000 subscribers respectively, the highest numbers then recorded by any periodical (Albaugh xiii). In fact, during the same period, no secular periodical garnered a circulation higher than 4,500 (Candy Brown 155).

The *Advocate's* extensive national circulation benefited from special postal rates granted to newspapers and the church's network of traveling and local ministers, who sold the paper as part of their ministerial duties (Albaugh xvi). In return for each subscription sold, ministers received 25 cents (*CA* 1826: 1). Yet, rather than viewing the paper as merely a means for additional compensation, preachers were encouraged to view the *Advocate* as a colleague in spreading the gospel. In the first issue of the *Advocate*, the editors even characterized the paper as "a powerful preacher," whose voice extends to America's frontiers carrying intelligence, warning, peace, and delight (*CA* 1826: 2). A free copy of the first issue was sent to every Methodist preacher, and letters from ministers poured into the paper reporting the *Advocate's* reception across the country. Writing from Amelia, Virginia, Reverend George C. Chesley asserted, "I have been highly gratified as I have gone around my circuit this time, in finding that the 'Christian Advocate' had been received by most of the subscribers that I obtained, and with the manifest pleasure they seemed to enjoy in perusal of it." Concluding his letter, Chesley noted the word-of-mouth buzz surrounding the new paper. As evidence, he recited the comments of a recent subscriber who stated, "'I will take the Christian Advocate: I hear it recommended so

highly by the brethren'" (*CA* 1826: 50). Similarly, another minister claimed that the *Advocate* had helped garner support for the Methodist movement across the Missouri District (*CA* 1828: 206).

With an annual subscription price of $2 in advance or $2.50 after receipt, the price of the paper was intentionally kept low to make it accessible to a wide audience. It is also interesting to note that the *Advocate* did not carry any commercial advertisements to offset its costs during its first twenty years of publication (Pilkington 205). As the title indicates, the primary objective of the newspaper was to serve as an advocate for Christianity. With this goal in mind, the paper targeted a broad audience—crossing both class and denominational boundaries. The editorial in the first issue underscored this objective, asserting, "Our highest desires will be answered if our paper affords delight and instruction to all classes of men, and be found in the hands of the missionary of the cross, in the humble mansion, in the splendid drawing room, and in the lonely chamber of sickness and death" (*CA* 1826: 2). Confirming the paper's reach beyond Methodist adherents and across different age groups, one reader from Berks County, Pennsylvania wrote:

> Since I received your first number I have taken pleasure in showing it to as many persons as I could, both of our own and of other Churches….Several gentlemen of the Presbyterian Church, who have examined this first number, have expressed to me their pleasure; and one of them, on subscribing for it, remarked, that he was particularly desirous of leaving such publications in the way of his *children* as he found that they were often interested and profited by them in leisure moments, which might otherwise be spent in idleness, or worse. (*CA* 1826: 10)

As is still true today, circulation numbers for antebellum periodicals were not an accurate representation of a publication's reach. Even though the head of the household typically subscribed to newspapers, entire families often read them. Moreover, the practice of sharing subscriptions—common among the poor and individuals in remote areas—would have certainly been a practice employed within small church congregations as well (Albaugh xiv).

The editors of the *Advocate*, who included material specifically directed at women, youth, and children, encouraged families to read the newspaper as a means of religious instruction. One *Advocate* article even asserted "There is hardly anything so much needed in a family as a newspaper…a good virtuous, well conducted newspaper, in a family, is the best economist of time and the aptest instructer [sic] of the mind" (*CA* 1828: 189). Content contained

in the Advocate's "Children's Department," "Ministers' Department," "Ladies' Department," "Parents' Department," and "Youths' Department" was directed at those particular audiences. Outside of these audience-specified departments, the newspaper featured sermons, moralistic treatises, statements of doctrine, doctrinal debates, Biblical explications, religious anecdotes as well as reports on revivals, church growth, Sunday schools, Christian mission's efforts, and memoirs.

Secondary to these concerns, the paper also carried secular news. In the nineteenth century, tremendous overlap existed between religious and secular newspapers with religious newspapers carrying secular news and secular papers often including religious news and religious columns. However, unlike secular newspapers, which arranged content based on timeliness and coverage, religious newspapers selected and arranged content with regard to its usefulness in achieving the paper's overall purpose (Candy Brown 177). Indeed, each issue of the *Advocate* followed the same general arrangement. The front page typically included explications of scripture, extracts from sermons, and doctrinal debates over topics such as predestination. The second page usually carried reports from missionaries abroad and domestic Indian missions, other general religious intelligence, and reports on revivals and camp meetings from Methodist clergy. These reports were often continued onto the third page, which also featured secular news such as reports about scientific inventions, economic and political reports, medical information, domestic and international news briefs, marriage announcements and obituary listings. And the fourth page was reserved for the paper's audience-specified departments or columns, previously mentioned, as well as a "Poet's Department" for original and reprinted poems and a "Biographical Department" for memoirs. Although much shorter, the memoirs printed in the *Advocate* used the same conventions and arrangement as those discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

The content, frequency, and wide distribution of the weekly *Advocate* extended and strengthened the church's textual community. In his travels across antebellum America, Alexis de Tocqueville observed the power of newspapers to effectively dissolve all geographic and temporal barriers by dropping "the same thought into a thousand minds at the same moment" (Candy Brown 181; Tocqueville 220). The *Advocate* was particularly effective in cultivating a broader community among Methodists because its content reflected their common language, doctrine, and ideology. Indeed, Benedict Anderson suggests that a newspaper provides the

technical means for representing a particular kind of imagined community through the selection of content and by interpreting or refracting information in a particular way (25; 63). In other words, the *Advocate* was distributing Methodism or at least a Methodist view of religion and the world. Moreover, the *Advocate* literally bound the Methodist community together by serving as the primary vehicle for communicating with book agents and customers. Each issue of the *Advocate* acknowledged communication and transactions by printing a list of individuals from whom letters were received and for whom book and periodical orders were filled. The paper also allowed Methodists to chart the church's westward expansion and keep track of itinerant ministers, who were frequently reassigned.

Candy Brown argues that in addition to creating a broader religious community, the frequency of weekly religious newspapers helped to extend the Sabbath beyond Sunday services by "infusing sacred influences into everyday times and spaces" (173). The *Advocate* blurred boundaries between the sacred and the public and private and the sacred and secular. The newspaper also broadened boundaries by helping readers see their religious activities as part of a larger movement extending far beyond their own communities and congregations. In a letter to the editor one reader remarked, "It affords me great pleasure to find from the pages of your excellent paper that the work of God is progressing through different parts of our highly favored country" (*CA* 1827: 119). Likewise, Reverend Cyrus Foss stated, "Many who have heretofore known little concerning the state of religion, except in their own neighborhood, now with pleasing surprise, behold, in the columns of the *Advocate*, a prospect of the rapid extension of the Redeemer's kingdom" (*CA* 1827: 98). However, at the same time that the *Advocate* expanded the boundaries of evangelism, it also reinforced existing gendered boundaries. Through the content of its "Ladies' Department" the newspaper drew tight borders around the domestic sphere containing women in the roles of wives, mothers, and domestic managers.

Wives and Mothers Contained Within the "Ladies' Department"

> It is her happiness to be ignorant of all that the world calls pleasure; her glory is to live in the duties of a wife and mother: and she consecrates her days to the practice of social virtues…Her house is the residence of religious sentiments, of filial piety, of conjugal love, of maternal tenderness, of order, peace, sweet sleep,

and good health…She diffuses around her a mild warmth, a pure light, which vivify and illuminate all that encircle her." (*CA* 1827: 76)

The above excerpt from the article titled "A Model" presents a view of women's happiness characteristic in most "Ladies' Department" pieces. This view is heavily laden with prescriptions of women's proper sphere—the home, and women's proper pursuits—serving as wives, mothers, and models of virtue and piety. Overwhelming, the articles contained in the "Ladies' Department" address the three broad themes explicit in "The Model"—women's roles as wives and mothers, female influence, and women's virtue. These three subjects, which were repeatedly addressed in the popular advice literature for women in the 1820s and 1830s, fall within the realm of what Nancy Cott termed the "canon of domesticity" and what Barbara Welter dubbed the "cult of true womanhood" based on her study of nineteenth-century women's magazines and religious literature (Cott 63-64; Welter "Cult" 151).

Merging the domestic sphere with the idealized true woman centered on four related ideas: (1) the clear demarcation between home and the marketplace, which paralleled the differences between men and women; (2) the designation of home as women's sole sphere of influence; (3) granting women religious and moral superiority over men; and (4) idealizing women for their sacrifices to men and children (Harris 33). From this view, true womanhood was primarily the purview of married, white, middle-class women, which excluded women without families as well as non-white and lower class women primarily focused on earning family income.[23] According to Susan Lindley, "The nineteenth-century image of the True Woman was both continuous and discontinuous with previous ideals or expectations. Some roles, such as subordination or domestic concerns, had a long heritage," yet the rigid insistence on gendered spheres was a radical change distinctive to the nineteenth century (Lindley 53).

From the *Christian Advocate's* beginning in September 1826, the "Ladies' Department" column was a standard feature appearing in most issues. Situated on the back page of the newspaper, the "Ladies Department" ran alongside other targeted departments that similarly dispensed advice to their intended audiences. Summarizing the purpose for the section, the paper's editors opened the November 23, 1832, column asserting, "Ladies—We have been at some pains to promote your usefulness and happiness in the selections we have chosen for this

23 Marilyn J. Westerkamp (131-32) and Lori Ginzberg (6) both acknowledge that the concept of middle class was still evolving during the antebellum period.

department of our paper" (*CA* 1832: 52). This statement raises two immediate questions, which I will address in my analysis of the "Ladies' Department." First, why did the editors feel compelled or "at some pains" to promote women's usefulness and happiness? In other words, how did they perceive wives and mothers contributing to the newspaper's overriding objective to advocate Christianity? And second, how exactly did these male editors construe women's usefulness and happiness? Generally the articles carried in the "Ladies Department" were unsigned, which was a common journalistic practice until the 1840s. Many of the pieces were also reprinted from other periodicals and conduct literature (Candy Brown 158). Yet, while many of the pieces were not written specifically for the *Advocate*, the male editors' selections for the "Ladies Department" offer insight into their conception of a happy and useful woman.

Methodism's explosive growth in America coincided with, and, in many ways, helped confirm the canon of domesticity. Indeed, Methodists' embrace of the domestic canon can be viewed as part of the church's pursuit of mainline institutionalization and social respectability in the nineteenth century (Schmidt 79). Because women made up the majority of most church denominations and because women were primarily relegated to the domestic sphere, the domestic sphere became an essential religious space. According to Jean Miller Schmidt, "Women in their domestic roles were to sustain traditional values and, by their selflessness, to compensate for and counteract the commercial and acquisitive values of the male world." As mothers, women were also advised "to view their children's salvation and moral character as their primary responsibility (indeed, their major contribution to society)" (Schmidt 79). In her book *Feminism and Geography*, Gillian Rose outlines the mutually reinforcing relationship between assigned space and roles. She argues, "The limits of women's everyday activities are structured by what society expects women to be and therefore to do. The everyday is the arena through which patriarchy is (re)created and contested" (17). Indeed, at the same time that the church was elevating women as models of piety, by reinforcing prescribed roles in the domestic sphere, it was also attempting to contain them within a patriarchal structure. Nancy Cott suggests that women's containment in the domestic sphere was intended to preserve evangelical ministers' perception of proper social structure (i.e. women's subordination to men including ministers) (159). By encouraging women as purveyors of piety, ministers were strengthening the resolve and commitment of their most fervent followers, and by keeping them in subordinate positions in the kitchen, parlor, and pews, ministers were also protecting their own authority over

women. Or, so it seems. Even in the "Ladies' Department," women are moving into other roles. Similar to women's elevation to ministers in memoirs, discussed in Chapter Three, as a collateral consequence of what Mary Ryan terms the "domestication of religion," women began to perform many of the roles formerly under the purview of ministers such as religious counsel and conversion. Children, husbands, and friends were increasingly converted through the words and actions of their mothers and wives. Thus, ministers were increasingly relegated to simply preaching and performing sacraments (Ryan, *Cradle* 98-104). In essence, the "Ladies' Department" demonstrates that even within the home, the church could not control or contain women's rhetorical power or the roles they assumed.

The Methodist Church's contribution to the domestication or religion is evident in many of the "Ladies' Department" articles. The column acted as an ideological apparatus for the church, encouraging woman's spirituality while reinscribing her "proper" place. Repeatedly the advice in the "Ladies' Department" emphasized home and hearth as women's appointed stage where her pursuits revolved around her religious influence and making her "domestic circle happy" (*CA* 1827: 108). In a "Ladies' Department" article titled "A Word to a Wife," the author advises married women to turn their backs on the outside world:

> No longer let your fancy wander to scenes of pleasure or disappointment. Let home be now your empire, your world! Let home be now the sole scene of your wishes, your thoughts, your plans, your exertions. Let home be now the stage on which, in the varied character of wife, of mother, and of mistress, you strive to act and shine with splendour. (*CA* 1826: 24)

This article encourages women's spatial containment in both the home and in their roles as wives and mothers. In fact, while the "Ladies' Department" carried articles advising women what type of men they should marry—temperate and religious—there was little suggestion that women would not marry. For most early nineteenth-century women the choice wasn't between independence and housewifery, but between marriage and the social isolation or poverty often associated with spinsterhood (Epstein 75).

In the role of wife, a woman was instructed by one "Ladies' Department" contributor to make it "her business to serve, and her pleasure to oblige her husband…conscious that every thing which promotes his happiness must in the end contribute to her own" (*CA* 1832: 16). Likewise, another contributor encouraged female readers to place all their pride, joy and

happiness in the "merited approbation" of their husbands (*CA* 1827: 120). According to the authors of such pieces, as a wife, a woman's happiness was a collateral product of her husband's happiness. Consequently, women were also advised to avoid any behavior that might displease their husbands. "A Letter to a Young Married Lady" instructs women to patiently bear their husbands' absence suggesting that wives can best welcome the return of the "preserver" of both their lives by creating a "convivial home" (*CA* 1827:108). The same article also warns ladies not to disturb their husbands while they are reading and not to burden them with lowly domestic concerns, suggesting that, "While you enjoy the society of your husband around the social board, think him not unkind if he does not listen to every nursery tale, or inquire into some frivolous domestic concern. These may properly come under your notice, but they are beneath the dignity of a man" (108). As this article demonstrates, the "Ladies' Department" affirmed the prevailing social order. Even though its articles repeatedly asserted the importance of women's domestic duties, both women and the roles they performed were clearly ranked as subordinate to those of men.

According to the "Ladies' Department," women's "usefulness" required them to be both subservient and submissive in order to create a congenial home. The article "Matrimonial Paragraphs" instructed women that it was a wife's duty to concede in order to ensure reconciliation on any disagreement. The author also warns women to "never join in any jest or laugh against your husband…assiduously conceal his faults, and speak only of his merits" (*CA* 1832: 12). Combined, this advice suggests that women are responsible for the maintaining the congenial atmosphere in the home—especially through their silence. Along these same lines, women's tempers were also a particular concern. Repeatedly women were advised to guard their tempers. One author even outlined a good woman's characteristics as "mildness, complaisance, and equanimity of temper" (*CA* 1827: 104). Similarly, another article asserts, "Sweetness of temper, affection to her husband, and attention to his interests, constitute the duties of a wife, and form the basis of matrimonial felicity" (*CA* 1831: 196).

Overall, the marriage advice dispensed by the "Ladies' Department" encouraged women to serve husbands within their homes and marriages. To do this they are subtly, yet repeatedly advised to detect their husbands' needs and attend to them. One article, which describes woman as "the mere dependant and ornament to man" during his happiest hours, asserts that wives must become their husband's "stay and solace" when calamity occurs—"tenderly supporting the

drooping head, and binding up the broken heart" (*CA* 1826: 28). In "Reflections on the State of Marriage," which was purportedly "written by a married man," readers were told, "O how dear to the memory of a man is the wife who clothes her face in smiles who uses gentle expressions, and who makes her lap soft to receive and hush his cares to rest" (*CA* 1827: 104). In addition to stressing women's need to adopt a subservient stance toward their husbands, Barbara Epstein notes that marriage advice instructed a woman "to make herself totally receptive and responsive to her husband's emotional needs, sparing no effort to provide him with a refuge from the harsh outside world" (78). While advances in the nineteenth century removed both women and the home from the production of goods, attempts were made to try to maintain that division for women (Harris 33). With the help of the domestic canon delivered through vehicles such as the "Ladies' Department," the home was converted into a religious sanctuary that supposedly shielded middle-class, white women and young children from the cruel competitive world and provided men a place of refuge from their economic toil. Moreover, women were instructed to become part of their husband's sanctuary by assuming the roles of angels, silent ornaments, administers of comfort, and purveyors or religious salvation.

"Ladies' Department" articles stipulate wise domestic management as another imperative for wives and mothers. Domestic management encompassed all matters from ensuring order and a tranquil environment to household economy—the frugal use of financial and material resources. In essence, men and women were assigned different economic roles—men earned and women spent. As a good provider, a man earned sufficient money to support his family, and as good domestic managers women efficiently used the money they were allocated by their husbands to manage their households. The authors of advice literature often used domestic economy to substantiate women's work within the home as a vocation. Most notably, Catharine Beecher attempted to elevate women's position in society by recognizing women's contributions within the domestic sphere (DuBois 16). Nancy Cott notes the irony; while rhetorically the vocation of domesticity gave women the domestic sphere to control, women remained under the legal and economic dominion of husbands and fathers (84). Consequently, it is no surprise that women were repeatedly instructed to manage "their" sphere with their husband's best interests in mind.

Often, domestic economy was depicted as another means by which women could support and comfort their husbands. One anecdote carried in the "Ladies Department" describes a

woman who uses wise domestic economy to bolster the family's finances thus assuaging the effect of her husband's poor business management (*CA* 1830: 140). Inevitably, all of the advice delivered to wives ultimately suggests that they exist primarily to serve and please their husbands. Among the "Ladies' Department" selections a few stories show women who literally sacrifice themselves for their husbands. One article, titled "Female Heroism," relays the story of a missionary's wife who saves her husband's life by stepping between him and a group of violent "heathens" on the Sandwich Islands (*CA* 1828: 124). An article reprinted from the *New-England Review* also tells the story about a wife who willingly sacrifices her life for her husband's by disguising herself and trading places with her husband, who was convicted of a crime and about to be hung. Ironically, these depictions also show women bravely operating outside the confines of the domestic sphere, which subverts the conception of wholly separate spheres and demonstrates the editors inability to fully contain women within the boundaries prescribed by the "Ladies' Department."

In addition to the role of wife, the "Ladies' Department" emphasized motherhood as another critical role for women within the domestic sphere. Lindley suggests that "The very prevalence of the stock figure of the pious mother in nineteenth-century sermons, folklore, and literature testifies to the real roots in American experience, however standardized or even caricatured that figure became" (63). Although Puritans had viewed motherhood as simply one of women's many tasks, through the domestication of religion in the nineteenth century, motherhood was elevated to women's most important responsibility—upholding a mother-child relationship that was almost sacred in nature (Epstein 76). During the nineteenth century, increased emphasis was placed on children's early impressions; thus the domestic sphere was identified as a primary space where children's moral and religious beliefs were forged. Because fathers increasingly worked outside of the home, and because men were considered less religiously inclined than women, the domestic canon assigned mothers the main responsibility for molding the next generation of citizens and church congregants. Articles carried in the "Ladies' Department" counseled women that it was their "duty" to affectionately instruct their children and instill essential moral and religious principles. According to one author, "A pious, intelligent, and faithful mother is the greatest earthly blessing that a merciful Providence can bestow on a child. If she performs her duty, her offspring will rise up and call her blessed" (*CA* 1826: 8). Similarly stressing the consequences of ineffectual motherhood, another author

cautions, “I would not be understood to insinuate that the misconduct of children is always caused by errors in domestic education…yet still there is reason to hope that good seed, if sown when the heart is tender and the understanding unbiased, may prevent the weeds of vice from occupying the whole soul” (*CA* 1830: 136). Like these, most discussions of motherhood in the “Ladies’ Department” echo its importance but offer little if any concrete advice. True women were assumed to have some ingrained understanding of how to be effective religious and moral instructors—reinforcing the perception of women’s natural predilection for religion. Indeed, the domestic canon positioned religion as the “core of woman’s virtue,” and “the source of her strength” (Welter, “Cult” 152). Barbara Epstein suggests that a woman’s willingness to sacrifice herself for her husband and children was the source of her “special morality” and the “near sanctity” assigned to her role (77).

Overall, discussions of motherhood conflate religion and gender. Most “Ladies’ Department” articles regard motherhood as a “project in salvation” (Cott 88). One author even claims that a child’s conversion is prompted *more* by the piety of the mother than the piety of the father (*CA* 1828: 196). Another author asserted that, “an engine of uncomputed power is committed to her hand. If she fix her level judiciously, though she may not, like Archimedes, aspire to move the earth, she may hope to raise one of the inhabitants to heaven” (*CA* 1827: 112). Through their own piety and religious instruction mothers were assumed to possess the power to save their children. By conflating religion and gender and emphasizing the home as the primary space for religious instruction and salvation, women within the home eventually assume functions formerly performed by clergy within the church. However, this promotion was no doubt unintended and unrecognized. In fact, women’s roles as ministers who converted and instructed Christians were generally obscured by attempts to contain them within the domestic sphere. Moreover, ministers were increasingly distinguished by the space they occupied (the pulpit) and the formal sacraments the church licensed them to perform (baptism, communion).

Female Influence and Education in the “Ladies’ Department”

Female influence and appropriate education for women were also two regular subjects of advice found in the “Ladies’ Department.” Although contributors to the canon of domesticity often argued that men and women held comparable degrees of power in their separate spheres, Barbara Epstein claims that the delineation of separate spheres increased the imbalance of power

between men and women (77). “Ladies’ Department” discussions of influence underscore the relationship between space and the exercise of power. The contents of the “Ladies’ Department” suggest that women were limited to exerting power through their influence in their roles as wives and mothers in the domestic sphere. In an article titled, “Female Influence,” the writer claims that although woman is “bound to ‘honor and obey,’ those on whom she depends for protection and support,” her voice “of reason and affection may ever convince and persuade” (*CA* 1832: 20). While articles such as these acknowledge women’s persuasive power, this power is usually exerted on willing subjects within the boundaries of the domestic sphere, further demonstrating the relationship between power and space. Their identification as dependents located in the private, domestic sphere generally precluded women from all means of economic and political power. According to one article, “Though she may not teach from the portico, nor thunder from the forum, in her secret retirements she may form and send forth the sages that shall govern and renovate the world” (*CA* 1830: 116). While affirming women’s influence as mothers, this article affirms the idea that a woman’s impact on the outside world was limited and indirect—based on her actions within the home.

As well as guiding their children, women were encouraged to apply their influence to reform grown men. Women in their roles as mothers, sisters, wives, and attendants were encouraged to use their influence to bring men to conversion, bring men to church, and bring them within the boundaries of acceptable moral behavior—responsibilities which also traditionally fell under the guise of ministers. Emphasizing their power to influence, one article suggests, “nineteen times in twenty, while he thinks he is pursuing an independent course, and assumes all the credit of his success, the suggestions or persuasions of his companion are influencing his opinions and controlling his conduct” (*CA* 1826: 8). In an extract from a speech delivered in Warren Country, GA, Robert Fleming encourages women to employ this influence to discourage drinking. He instructs, “Let the young man who thinks it a small matter to indulge too freely in spirits, feel the potency of your frowns” (*CA* 1826: 24). Although these selections encourage women to exert their influence by assigning them to roles formerly performed by ministers, they also acknowledge that women’s power is limited to suggestions and frowns.

Much like women’s influence, “Ladies’ Department” articles also conceived women’s education in very limited terms. Because the education individuals receive is directly tied to the roles they are assigned within a society, rather than affording a path to break boundaries,

education often reinforces them. Hence, women's education usually reflected the limited conception of women's roles within society. In the "Ladies' Department" women's education was related to women's domestic occupations as wives, mothers, and domestic managers. One author claims that "female education is of immense importance," because "intelligence and piety throw the brightest sunshine over the dwellings of private life" (*CA* 1829: 16). Likewise another author asserts that "cultivated genius sheds a cheering light over domestic duties" (*CA* 1828: 148). In both of these articles, education was viewed as an avenue for cultivating better wives and mothers. Rather than expanding women's boundaries and opportunities, education simply enhanced women within their current sphere. This idea is evident from selected remarks on female education by Reverend Burroughs which were posthumously printed in the "Ladies' Department." Burroughs suggested that:

> The importance of female education as connected with the general happiness of the community will be readily admitted if we advert to the powerful moral influence which women hold over their children, at the periods of infancy and childhood, and which is continued with their female children, almost to the age of maturity…As her condition is elevated or depressed, as she is learned or unlearned, licentious or pure, so rises and falls the character of the institutions of the morals and of the manners of the community." (*CA* 1828: 140)

Burroughs' connection of women's condition with that of the community reiterates the late eighteenth-century argument for republican motherhood, which claimed that women required an education beyond cultured arts in order to properly raise the republic's next generation of citizens and leaders. Through their influence on their children and by preserving families women were often accorded responsibility for sustaining society (Epstein 85).

Even when authors encourage women to continue pursuing their own education it is tied to some general intrinsic merit that they associate with learning. For instance extracts from an address delivered to the young ladies of Mr. Estabrook's Seminary in Staunton, Virginia, the speaker urges the audience to:

> Endeavor still to continue a portion of your attention to those studies, in which you have been engaged; as well as to widen the range of your readings. Remember you have but just laid the foundation of knowledge in your minds. Let the superstructure progressively rise as fast as time and circumstances shall

> permit. Useful knowledge will not only strengthen, elevate, dignify and adorn your minds, but it will give a tenfold charm to every personal attraction you may possess. (*CA* 1826: 48)

In essence, the speaker suggests on-going education adds to a woman's attraction. Yet, again the authors draw a distinction between the external and internal. Just as "Ladies' Department" articles depicted women as happiest and most useful within the home, education for women is deemed most useful in enhancing a woman's intrinsic beauty, which will ultimately assist her in performing her domestic duties. Instead of expanding women's sphere, conceptions of education in the "Ladies' Department" reinforce domestic boundaries.

Virtue before Beauty in the "Ladies' Department"

The body was another space in which the church attempted to contain women through "Ladies' Department" prescriptions on dress. Articles carried in the "Ladies' Department" repeatedly linked virtue and dress. Moreover, attempts in "Ladies' Department" articles to redefine beauty and dictate proper dress offer evidence that the church considered women's bodies and material trappings powerful rhetorical mediums. Dress was often viewed as an external sign of internal piety and morality. Early Methodists used plain dress both as a form of ascetic discipline and distinction. Removing ruffles, lace, and costly apparel from their wardrobes became a symbol of reprioritization from the ephemeral to the eternal (Lyerly 39). For instance, after her conversion, ruffles were banished from Frances Cook's wardrobe as the "most pernicious appendages of pride and vanity" (*MM* 1824:61). The following anecdote, published in the "Ladies' Department" also links spiritual priorities to concern with appearance.

> A godly minister of the gospel occasionally visiting a gay person, was introduced to a room near to that wherein she dressed. After waiting some hours the lady came in, and found him in tears. She inquired the reason for his weeping. He replied, 'Madam, I weep on reflecting that you can spend so many hours before your glass, and in adorning your person, while I spend so few hours before my God in adorning my soul.' The rebuke struck her conscience. She lived and died a monument of grace. (*CA* 1826: 44)

As this anecdote instructs, if a woman puts too much time and emphasis on her appearance, it was assumed she was not putting enough time and emphasis on her soul. Additionally, she might

not be putting enough time into her private vocations of wife and mother. Thus, by showing the proper internal/external balance, dress became an indicator of a woman's virtue.

In her book *Appropirate[ing] Dress: Women's Rhetorical Style in Nineteenth-Century America*, Carol Mattingly identifies dress as a powerful rhetorical form particularly for women. According to Mattingly a woman's dress communicated her ethos in terms of race, class, gender, morality, and even her religious convictions (*Dress* 12). Conveying this same view, a "Ladies' Department" article titled "Dress Indicative of Character" blames "the sinful negligence of ministers and pious parents in not holding up the scriptural standard, and insisting that plain, simple, chaste, tasteful, modest apparel, is as much an enjoined duty as the observance of the Lord's day" (*CA* 1830: 76). By suggesting that proper dress was just as important as observing the Sabbath, the author was cuing readers to two Biblical injunctions against women's immodest dress: 1 Timothy 2:9—"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array," and 1 Peter 3:3—"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel." The "Ladies' Department" author concludes by warning readers that "fondness for show, ornament, brilliant appearance, and the love of distinction and applause are natural to the depraved heart" (76). At issue in this article is the space of women's body and attempts by the church to exercise control over that space. In this article, the author not only raises dress to a form of Biblical obedience but also relegates dress to a binary representation of piety or depravity. While these two often-cited Biblical injunctions addressed women's appropriate dress for worship, the focus on women's dress inside and outside of church worship demonstrates how women became embodiments of religion both in and outside the domestic sphere. In essence, dress became women's public mantle of domesticity and religious virtue.

For women in the nineteenth century, Barbara Harris asserts that, "the appearance of virtue was almost as important as virtue itself" (44). Virtue was linked to intrinsic merit, and beauty was linked to external show, thus, reiterating the internal/external or private/public dichotomy. Virtue supposedly protected women from being absorbed or tempted by vanity, fashion, and dalliance. In the nineteenth century, women's appearance was also tied to the accomplishments often taught in female seminaries—etiquette, painting, music, and needlework. In an article titled "Accomplishments" reprinted from Sarah Hales' *Ladies' Magazine*, the author

asserts, “I have been too often led to hope for elevation of feeling, purity of taste, and cultivation of mind, in those who have been termed accomplished, and too often been cruelly disappointed” (*CA* 1830: 84). This author draws a similar distinction between intrinsic beauty and matters of style and show suggesting that “showy branches of education” ultimately “fail to raise the female mind above the mere trifles of the day” (84). Similarly, an article titled, “Wisdom Better Than Beauty,” claims that “Beauty address, form, courtesy, softness, delicacy, ease, may characterize you as women that are amiable, but it is only wisdom and knowledge that can render you happy at home, useful in society, calm in a dying hour, and for ever blessed in a better world” (*CA* 1831: 172). This author similarly juxtaposes external beauty with internal wisdom—claiming that internal wisdom contributes to happiness, usefulness and even one’s preparation for death and eternity

Articles selected for the “Ladies’ Department” repeatedly warn readers about the dangers of frivolous amusements and dress. The selection “The Victim of Innocent Amusements” offers a cautionary tale of Elizabeth Hazlewood who, “brought up in the lap of luxury, and in the indulgence of every harmless pleasure,” eventually faced her death destitute of religion and any relationship with God (*CA* 1828: 180). Likewise the *Advocate* carries one lady’s critical observations of New York’s social scene in which she claims that the city’s “fair daughters of luxury” are so obsessed with amusing themselves that they neglect the source of “their real dignity,” which she defines as religion. Indeed, she further asserts, “I am certain that female beauty is never so attractive, as when lighted by the rays of ardent piety, and attended by those satellites, good sense and cultivated intellect” (*CA* 1827: 104). Again this author attempts to redefine external beauty with the tempering of internal virtues.

Altogether, “Ladies’ Department” prescriptions about women’s appropriate roles, education, influence, and dress draw both a limited conception of women’s concerns and confining boundaries around women in the domestic sphere. At the same time, by acknowledging women’s power to convert children and offer salvation to their husbands via their domestic sanctuaries, the church assigned women in their homes roles previously reserved for ministers in the church. Similarly, through repeated prescriptions about women’s dress, the church recognized women’s bodies as an important public rhetorical space. Ultimately, the church’s efforts to encourage women spiritually while containing them spatially as subordinates through the content in their back-page “Ladies’ Department” reveal these two zones of

ambiguity where women could exploit the borders dividing the private and public. Chapter Five identifies several additional zones of ambiguity revealed in the *Advocate* as women take their spirituality beyond the spatial confines of the "Ladies' Department" and the domestic sphere.

Chapter 5: Stepping Outside the "Ladies' Department": Women's Expanding Rhetorical Boundaries

> *Those who have urged women to become missionaries and form tract societies…have changed the household utensil to a living energetic being; and they have no spell to turn it into a broom again.*
>
> Lydia Maria Child, "Free and Slave Labor," *The Liberator* (July 23, 1841)

The "History of Amelia Gale," published on the front page of the June 20, 1828, *Advocate* tells the story of a poor widow in England who spent most of her life eking out an existence by carrying a gaming board to fairs and wakes. Late in life, she was awakened by a minister's preaching, and for the first time considered life in the hereafter. Eventually, Amelia requested and received redemption and became a passionate believer in word and deed. When a missionary society was established in her parish, she was moved by the sacrifices people made in order to contribute to the church's mission efforts. Amelia, who had little to sacrifice, thought about tea, which was her only beverage and sometimes her only meal. Then she decided to forego sugar in her tea. Depriving herself of this one luxury enabled Amelia to contribute one cent a week to the Bible and missionary fund. In order to raise more funds, Amelia began to collect money. In a basket from which she now earned her living selling needles and cotton balls, she carried a missionary box and collected donations. Through these and other efforts, Amelia was able to increase her annual contribution to six pounds a year.

Altogether, Amelia's personal sacrifices created a powerful emotional appeal—persuading others to increase their donations. Additionally, individuals often stepped in to provide Amelia with clothing and food when she donated beyond her own means of sustenance. In one instance a lady attending a missionary society meeting invited Amelia to her house in order to give her several articles of winter clothing just after Amelia had donated the money she had set aside to buy some much needed winter clothes. Even in the end, Amelia gave all that she had. Abiding by her wishes, upon Amelia's death, the money remaining from the sale of her scant earthly possessions was donated to the mission causes she had fervently supported during her life. The author of the Amelia's history concluded by stating that "far from being made poor by her remarkable liberality, she actually died rich, in one sense of the word" (*CA* 1828: 165).

The author is referring to the eternal sense—while Amelia endured earthly poverty, she earned heavenly riches.

The "History of Amelia Gale" is one of the rare instances when a story featuring a woman occupied space on the *Advocate's* front page. The front page was the purview of male clergy and their explications of scripture, sermon extracts, and doctrinal discussions. Conversely, the story of Amelia Gale presents a model of piety, compassion, and generosity—a role generally ascribed to women, but typically placed on the two interior pages of the four-page weekly paper. The persuasive power attributed to the narrative of Amelia Gale's life, which had become a popular tract distributed by London's tract society, likely explains why this woman's story was allowed into traditional male territory. Indeed, the story of Amelia Gale encompasses many of the recurring themes of female benefactors and beneficiaries depicted in the *Advocate*. By collecting money for the church's mission efforts, Amelia carried her church work into the public realm and became a spokesperson for the causes she supported. Moreover, the front-page *Advocate* article and the tract created by the London tract society converted Amelia into a model of piety and Christian charity. As I will discuss later in this chapter, stories of poor widows who willingly give generously out of their poverty were lauded in the *Advocate* as mimetic examples of the Biblical "widow's mite." Depictions of poor women were repeatedly used to convey the message that heavenly riches exceed earthly possessions.

In this chapter, I outline how women like Amelia Gale moved beyond the confines of the back page "Ladies' Department," the institutional space to which "women's concerns" were initially consigned. By juxtaposing the images contained in Chapter Four's discussion of the "Ladies' Department" with the images of women that appear in other spaces in the paper, I highlight distinctions between private and public spaces and the different opportunities available to women within those spaces. Political theorist Carole Pateman underscores the significance of the public/private dichotomy for women suggesting that the past two centuries of women's struggle for equality with men primarily centers around this division (118). The tension inherent in the public/private dichotomy emerges in comparisons between the institutional space ascribed to women in the *Advocate* and the other spaces they occupy. At the same time that content *inside* the "Ladies' Department" contained women in the roles of wife, mother, and domestic manager *inside* the domestic sphere, depictions of women as public models of piety and charity, benefactors, benevolent organizers, Sunday school teachers, and missions' workers *outside* the

"Ladies' Department" moved women *outside* the confines of the domestic sphere. The *Advocate's* male editors managed the textual content that portrayed women in both spaces. However, women's assignment to the domestic sphere through the "Ladies' Department" was an intentional assignment whereas women's movement onto page two and three of the paper—outside the "Ladies' Department" and the domestic sphere—was far more subtle and cumulative in effect. In the end, women's movements outside the margins of the "Ladies' Department" further complicates the conception of separate spheres and proved that the *Advocate* editors could not contain women or dictate their good works.

Overall, the distinction between women *inside* and *outside* of the "Ladies' Department" confirms Roxanne Mountford's assertion that "spaces [in this case textual and material] are productive of meaning as well as endowed with meaning" (33). The *Advocate's* portrayal of women outside of the "Ladies' Department" overwhelming places them outside the domestic canon and beyond the concerns and confines of the domestic sphere. Women outside the "Ladies' Department" also appear as *active* participants in reports of foreign and domestic mission activities, Bible and Tract societies, Sunday schools rather than the passive recipients of prescriptive advice. Additionally, by appearing amidst reports on missions' efforts, Sunday schools, and charitable contributions, women also entered spaces in which they were situated alongside men. The appearance of women's activities on pages two and three of the *Advocate* places women's and men's activities within the same sphere. For instance, reports from women's missionary societies were dispersed amidst reports from male-led missionary societies thus blurring their prescribed gendered roles.

Altogether, these "little narratives" of female fundraisers and benefactors, missionary assistants, and Sunday school teachers appearing in the newspaper interrupt the overarching narrative frequently repeated in church histories that Methodist women were relegated to the domestic sphere during the antebellum period. With regards to women's rhetorical history, I believe these narratives depict the first steps most nineteenth-century white, middle-class, American women made beyond the domestic sphere. Because many of these roles were later relegated to women as "women's work," they are often dismissed or ignored in contemporary mappings of American women's rhetorical history. Indeed, by contemporary measurements these steps appear small if not insignificant, yet they laid the groundwork for the next generation of female common school teachers, social reformers, and temperance workers. In fact, Barbara

Epstein argues, "Women's piety and religious activity in the first half of the century helped to create the networks and give women the experience that made possible the flourishing of women's reform organizations in the later part of the century" (87). Women's benevolent activities beyond the domestic sphere also demonstrate women's eagerness to band together to address religious and social needs as well as their growing awareness of social ills particularly with regards to women. However, because antebellum Methodist women's benevolent and educational endeavors were located in indeterminate realm of church work—between domestic activities and market enterprise—they are often dismissed or discounted.

As I noted in Chapter Four, the church is often an ambiguous location in the public/private division of society. At the same time that the antebellum Methodist Church attended to individuals' private souls, it also condemned public activities such as drinking, gambling, slavery, prostitution, and the pursuit of wealth. Additionally, the church distributed Bibles and tracts, staged camp meetings and revivals, and established community Sunday schools, colleges and seminaries, orphanages and missions among North American Indian tribes. Consequently, it blurred boundaries between the gendered separate spheres by creating middle ground shared by both men and women. Again, applying David Sibley's concept of liminal zones in which ambiguous spaces mark opportunities for change by designating uncertain boundaries, I argue that the church provided white, middle-class women with a safe space in which they could step beyond the domestic sphere and still maintain their appropriate Victorian womanliness. Of course this sanctioned space not only existed in women's benevolent organization meetings, Sunday schools, and missions' schools; it also existed in the *Advocate* itself. Women's movements outside the domestic sphere were sanctioned within the Methodist Church's flagship publication. Moreover, according to Benedict Anderson, by printing and transmitting these movements to readers across the country, the *Advocate* constructed a new reality for white, middle-class women enabling readers to imagine new spaces where women could serve as Christian agents (81).

Model benefactors

Surprisingly, women who had limited opportunities for earning money or were economically dependent on husbands were repeatedly depicted on the interior pages of the *Advocate* as model benefactors. Like Amelia Gale, the *Advocate* converted women into

exemplars of charity often stressing women's motivation more than their means. As a result, depictions of Christian generosity appearing on the newspaper's interior pages are gendered. Whereas men gave out of their means, women gave out of their devotion. Under the heading "Good Examples," the *Advocate* portrayed one Virginia woman as a model because of her decision to donate $20 to the church's Missionary Society rather than spending the money on what she termed "some indulgence" (*CA* 1830: 87). Historian Susan Lindley claims, "Whether in the more settled East or on the advancing frontier, women's financial contributions were significant for a church's well-being or even survival; their contributions could also be a way of exercising real if indirect power in churches at a time when few women had the formal power of a vote in congregational organizations" (66).

Another article describing a revival at Washington Female Academy in Washington, Mississippi made mention of the academy's benefactor, Mrs. Elizabeth Greenfield, who gave the academy its edifice and 100 acres of land. In recognition, the Mississippi Conference renamed the school the Elizabeth Female Academy in Mrs. Greenfield's honor (*CA* 1827: 106; 1828: 162). Similarly, an article reprinted from the *Journal of the Episcopal Convention* of Ohio reports that Mrs. Betsy Reed of Putnam, Ohio gave the church 1000 acres (*CA* 1826: 2). One of the most amazing female benefactors recognized in the *Advocate* was a former slave woman, who left $693, the greater part of her estate, to benevolent and religious causes when she died at age 33 (*CA* 1826: 6). However, these large sums contributed by women represent exceptions not the norm. Typically individual women contributed sums far less than those of men; thus in many instances recognition is directed at the sentiment more than the sum. For instance, one article highlights the practice of a Female Class in which members give a weekly cent offering to be divided up among the Missionary, Bible, Sunday school, and Tract Societies of the Methodist Episcopal Church. According to the article, the cent offering enabled fifteen to twenty women "mostly of circumscribed pecuniary abilities" to make an annual contribution of about $45 (*CA* 1832: 37). Of course it is important to acknowledge that women were relegated to these limited means of contributions because of their dependent economic status.

Women who were unable to make substantial contributions during life were often recognized for their bequests after death. A letter printed in the *Advocate* states, "Enclosed you have $20, the amount of a bequest of the late Miss Elizabeth Butfield, of this city, deceased, and, as expressed in the will, to be applied towards feeding and clothing the Indians" (*CA* 1829: 15).

Women's benevolent acts were also frequently recognized in their memoirs, which appeared alongside the "Ladies' Department" on the back page. Hannah Sutton's memoir notes that "in her house the needy found assistance" (*CA* 1830: 108). Likewise, Mrs. Jerusah Crane's memoir claims, "The poor, who freely shared in her liberality, were never forgotten. She always regarded herself as a steward of the Lord, intrusted with a portion of goods for charitable distribution" (*CA* 1829: 64). In addition to articles, news briefs, and memoirs highlighting acts of benevolence, each issue of the *Advocate* regularly printed lists of contributors to both the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Publishing Fund for the Bible, Tract, and Sunday School Societies of the Methodist Episcopal Church. These two lists, which usually appeared on the interior pages of the paper, included names of individuals and organizations and recorded contributions ranging from twenty-five cents to hundreds of dollars.

The Missionary Society and Publishing Fund's intent in printing these names was to show popular support for these causes and encourage more contributors. At the same time, these lists provided a forum for individuals to demonstrate their commitment to these charitable endeavors. For women in particular, this forum enabled them to publicly demonstrate their individuality and support. While this may not seem significant, in antebellum America, there are few opportunities where women were acknowledged in print as individuals apart from their husbands or fathers. Nevertheless, many women and men chose to remain anonymous due either to social custom or religiously-inspired humility.[24] The following list of contributors to the Missionary Society printed in the May 16, 1828, issue of the *Advocate* offers an example of the variety of ways in which contributions were made and acknowledged.

> Contributions to the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | From So. Ca. Conf. Mis. Soc. By Rev. J.O. Andrew, | $30.00 |
> | Rev. O. Sykes, to constitute him a life member, | 20.00 |
> | Six children of the Rev. George Lane, one dollar each, Sally Ann, Harvey Bradburn, George Washington, Charles Asbury, Mary Butler, and Joseph Jameson, | 6.00 |

[24] Christians were warned to avoid performing religious acts for personal acknowledgement. See Matthew 6:1-4: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."

P. Crossthwaite,	0.50
H. O. Sheldon, from a friend to missions—avails of a Watch key,	1.50
Mrs. W. Dye,	0.25
A female friend—avails of gold beads,	9.00
Mrs. F.A. Franks,	1.00
J. Worthing—from a lady,	6.00
E. Curtis, for Western Indians,	5.00
First Female Missionary Society of Leroy auxiliary By Rev. C.V. Adgate,	17.00
New Rochelle circuit Mis. Society, by Rev. J.M. Smith,	32.55
Young Men's Mis. Soc. of New-York, by Mr. W.H. Bangs,	170.00
A Friend—donation,	0.50
N. Gratham, Hartford, Ga.,	2.00
"A Brother," by E. Atlee,	5.00
"A Junior Preacher"—for mission to Liberia,	5.00 (*CA* 1828: 147)

In this list, some individuals are simply acknowledged as "a friend of missions," "a female friend," or "a brother." The minister who collects the contribution was also listed. As this list demonstrates, all levels of contributions were acknowledged, which underscores the message that every gift was valued. This message was particularly important as the makeup of the church changed. While Methodism's early and strongest resonance was among lower income groups, Methodists gradually gained more adherents among the middle classes in the early nineteenth-century. From this list it is also interesting to note that individuals who were unable to give cash often donated material items. H.O. Sheldon donated a watch key, and a female friend donated gold beads. Indeed, women frequently donated jewelry: earrings given by Eliza Foster were noted as a $1 contribution (*CA* 1829: 59); Mrs. Redfield's gold chain was recorded as a $2.75 contribution (*CA* 1832: 54); and a report from the New Hampshire Conference Missionary society listed "a string of gold beads from an aged mother and her daughter from Berlin, VT" among its donations (*CA* 1832: 6). Notably, the donation of jewelry by women carried a dual message. Jewelry was usually one of the few possessions women owned worth a substantial monetary value; thus, donating it was a personal sacrifice. Jewelry was also a vanity in the sense that it accentuated one's appearance, so applying it toward the conversion of lost souls aligned with the recurring pattern of reprioritization from the external to the eternal.

Apparel was another material item women donated—usually to assist domestic Indian missions. In a report from the Indian Mission House in Upper Sandusky, Thomas Thompson

recognizes the bequest of a box of clothing donated by sister Larkin, (*CA* 1830: 70). Another report recognizes a box of apparel valued at $88.25 "prepared by the praiseworthy exertions of the Female Missionary Society of Potsdam" (*CA* 1831: 142). The second and third pages of the *Advocate* are also filled with examples of women who step beyond the role of domestic dependents to raise money through their own time and labor. Sewing offered women one method for raising money. In the same way that indigent women often turned to the needle as a source of income in their homes or in textile mills, women also used the needle as a method of fundraising. Sewing allowed women to earn their own money and maintain their respectability. For instance, the Dorcas Society of John Street Church in New York contributed $100 to the Indian missions in the Canada Conference. The sum was the result of membership subscriptions and money earned from sewing done between the hours of two and nine p.m. during monthly meetings (*CA* 1830: 139). Similarly, "An Infant's Offering" tells the story of a seven year-old girl who earned $13 dollars by making thirteen fine ruffled linen shirts. According to the story, the desire to give a Bible to some destitute person motivated the girl's efforts (*CA* 1831: 156). In another example, a foreign news brief acknowledged that the Church Missionary Society had recently received nearly $1,800 from the public sale of ladies' works, which were likely sewn materials (*CA* 1826: 2). A letter printed in the paper also explains the efforts of Indian women at the Mayhew Mission School, located on the Choctaw nation, to raise money for the Female Bible Society in Ceylon. The letter from the Mission School states:

> We thought we would endeavor to assist you in some way in your benevolent exertions of distributing Bibles to your poor countrymen who are in the road to hell; and for that purpose we formed ourselves into a society, which we call the Female Bible Society of Mayhew School, and have sewed Saturday afternoons from about 2 o'clock until five, and have earned twelve dollars, which we sent to the American Board [of the Missionary Society]." (*CA* 1826: 10)

In this instance, women, who have been the recipients of the church's missions' work, were now applying the skills they had acquired to contribute to foreign missions efforts. Certainly, the religious community would have considered these contributions evidence of the effectiveness of their missions' work; these women represented "heathen converts," who through their own salvation have become concerned with saving the souls of others.

Collections such as those raised by Amelia Gale offer another example of women's labor to support the church's charitable endeavors. The lists of contributions to the Missionary Society often include money collected by women such as Mrs. Ann Thompson, who was recognized for collecting $7.25 (*CA* 1830. 107), and a woman simply acknowledge as "a lady in Lynn, Mass.," who collected $3 in her contribution box (*CA* 1830: 131). Embedded in these collections are women's advocacy and activism. In order to collect money from family, friends, fellow congregants, and people in the community, women had to become vocal proponents for the church's missionary efforts. Stepping beyond their prescribed domestic roles, women often felt empowered by the call to spread the gospel. By sending letters with accompanying donations, donating jewelry and apparel, sewing to raise money, or simply possessing the fortitude to raise collections, women repeatedly emerge as model benefactors in the pages of the *Advocate*. More than the sums they contribute, women's willingness to give whatever they can as well as the public, vocal advocacy inherent in many of their collected contributions make their donations noteworthy and powerful examples for emulation.

The Widow's Mite

> And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living (Mark 12:41-44).

A mimetic narrative of the New Testament widow's mite story repeatedly appears in the interior pages of the *Advocate*. Through the widow's mite narrative, poverty is converted into a trope for piety as the two become intermingled in depictions of unwavering faith amidst dire circumstances. Not surprisingly this combined face of poverty and piety is almost always feminine. With antebellum coverture laws and few "respectable" avenues for earning an income, women seldom faced the temptation of riches, but frequently endured the plight of poverty. The nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres made women dependents by precluding them

from all but the most meager realms of economic activity. This fact is pathetically depicted in numerous stories of poor destitute mothers and widows, who were spatially relegated to the lowest rung of society when they lose their male bread winner. Ann Douglas suggests that because a widow is essentially a woman "deprived of male support" the attitudes toward widows provides a gauge of a society's opportunities for women to support themselves as well as views toward independent women. Whereas widows in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries frequently exerted tremendous influence in their communities and churches and even chose not to remarry, by the nineteenth century widows were increasingly relegated to "pitiful charity cases" and in writing often became representations of extreme sentimentality particularly in nineteenth-century women's fiction (Douglas 51-52). In the *Advocate*, the *pathos* associated with widowhood was exacerbated in stories of young mothers. For instance, a news brief noting a contribution of $20 from a group of women in Wheatland, N.Y. tells the story of their beneficiary Mrs. Morgan, a twenty-year old woman, who is left destitute with two infant children and no means of support, after her husband mysteriously disappeared (*CA* 1827: 115).

A report by the New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children further emphasizes the plight of women, asserting:

> It has been alleged against societies of this nature, that they do but increase the number of the poor; and that if people are honest and industrious, they may always make a decent living in this happy land. There may be some truth in this assertion as it respects the other sex, for they are well paid for their labour: but what can a bereaved widow do with five or six little children, destitute of every means of support but what her own hand can furnish (which in a general way does not amount to more than 25 cents a day)? What can she do without some aid? Her children to provide for and keep decent, house rent to be paid, fuel, food and raiment to be procured. (*CA* 1826: 50)

Rhetorically, this female benevolent society's printed statements and actions condemn the inferior economic status to which women are relegated. Situated on an equal footing with men on the second page of the *Advocate*, the author attempts to dispel the assumption that the poor were merely men, who were unwilling to work rather than women who were unable to earn sufficient means through the few respectable avenues open to them. Exhibiting a measure of frustration, the author further emphasizes women's economic dependence with a series of her rhetorical

questions that stress women's limited options for earning money and the paltry wages awarded for women's work.

In the *Advocate*, women repeatedly appear as both benefactors and beneficiaries. Like many women's groups, the New York Society for the Relief of Poor Widows is an example of women helping women. It also demonstrates women's growing awareness of the economic plight imposed on women through the ideology of separate spheres. Several articles similarly note women's limited means of supporting themselves and their children. For instance, the *Advocate* shares the story of a widow who opens a shop in which she sells rum to try to support her large family (*CA* 1828: 189), and another woman turns to fortune telling to add to the thirty pence her husband earned as a wood cutter (*CA* 1827: 112). In both stories the women eventually renounce what the church views as sinful practices. Indeed, while these stories were clearly intended to spotlight women's renunciation of sinful acts, these stories also inadvertently underscore the few morally acceptable options available for women to earn income.

In the stories of poor mothers and widows, religious faith often becomes women's sole ballast against despair. As a result, women's poverty was seemingly presented as an unimpeded path to Christianity. One *Advocate* article tells the tale of a pious old lady who lived alone in a remote little thatched cottage. A young man passing by the cottage thought he would see if the structure was inhabited. Inside, he found a sick, old woman on the verge of death "lying in the corner of the room on a little straw, with a tattered garment wrapped around her as her covering to screen her from the chilling blast." When the young man suggested that the woman was suffering with no one to relieve her distress, the woman claimed she had all she needed with Jesus and a crust of bread (*CA* 1830: 133). Similarly, another story tells of a preacher visiting a poor blind woman. When the preacher inquired about her temporal circumstances, she admitted they hadn't had a morsel of food in the house in three days, but had survived on milk from their cow and whortleberries picked up in the woods by her grandchildren. The widow then, added, "And we have God too." The story concluded claiming, "Often since then, when the preacher has been at tables where there was an abundance, he has asked himself this question—have those people got God too?—if not, the poor blind widow is abundantly the richest" (*CA* 1826: 49).

By pitting piety against riches, *Advocate* articles appear to romanticize poverty. This is clearly the case with an article titled, "Poverty a Blessing." The article asserts, "The rich are seldom very pious, nor are they very benevolent generally speaking." Conversely, it argues that

the "poor have their evil things in this life…nevertheless, they are (the pious part of them) happy in the abodes of poverty and wretchedness; and in the world to come they will be comforted, while many of the rich will be tormented." By suggesting that the poor will receive their riches in heaven, the author is cuing readers to several scriptural passages including the New Testament beatitude: "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6: 20) and "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25). In addition to cuing readers to scripture, the author employs another common convention by concluding with the example of an impoverished but pious widow (*CA* 1827: 101). Similarly the anecdote titled, "Poor Mary, an Aged Female, and the Rich Professor" offers another comparison between earthly wealth and heavenly wealth. This anecdote shares the story of a poor woman who encounters a rich woman—a "professed" Christian. The rich woman relates several sorrows and apprehensions to poor Mary, who listens with the "kindness of Christian sympathy," and then encourages the woman to abide by her faith reminding her that God has promised never to forsake his followers. When the two women arrive at Mary's home, Mary invites the rich woman into her humble dwelling and proceeds to show the rich woman that every closet in the house is empty. Even though she owns nothing, Mary asks the rich woman, "Why should I be unhappy? I have Christ in my heart and heaven in my eye" (*CA* 1826: 5). Clearly, this anecdote upholds the model of the woman who is rich in faith although poor in possessions. Altogether, these different depictions of poor widows demonstrate the superiority of a faith-filled soul over external riches. At the same time, they expose a tension between aiding the impoverished and romanticizing poverty. Most of these stories highlight women's faith along with an acceptance of their dire circumstances. Indeed, curiously missing from these stories is any effort to alter these women's poor conditions. In other words, they are honored, but not assisted.

The *Advocate* consistently assigns the heart rather than the pocketbook as the measure of charity. Echoing the moral from the widow's mite tale, many of the stories of poor widows also convey the message of benevolence out of poverty. An anecdote, actually titled "The Widow's Mite," tells the story of a missionary for the American Home Missionary Society who, after preaching at the local church, goes door-to-door taking up collections. Coming upon the house of a widow, the missionary suggests to the woman answering the door, "your domestic burdens are so great, that, perhaps, you ought not aid our object, except with your prayers." To which the

woman replied, “I was so afraid you had passed me by.” The woman and all her children precede to hand the man small contributions, primarily coins. Then the woman shares how her family received the gospel from missionaries, whom she credits for the hope she feels in Jesus and her prospect for heaven. Finally, she instructs the missionary to take her family’s small contributions so that it “may carry to some weary sinner in the wilderness, the consolation which I have found” (*CA* 1827: 102). Similarly, another article also titled “The Widow’s Mite” reports the donation of a Bible by a “poor, pious widow” to the missionary society of Connecticut. According to the widow, the Bible represented “all her living,” and she hoped that it would be “bestowed on some one who is destitute of the word of God,” because the Bible had provided her with “consolation” in her poverty and, and ultimately “an inheritance among the saints.” The author concludes the article offering the same juxtaposition—although “poor in this world, [the widow] was rich in faith” (*CA* 1826: 38). Ultimately, each of these “widow’s mite” narratives triangulates gender, poverty on earth, and heavenly riches. Clearly, the intended focus is on these women’s unwavering faith, yet these stories also seem to imply that it is by their *relegation to* and *acceptance of* abject poverty that they gain access to eternity. Moreover, these little narratives put the spotlight on women’s unequal status, the tenuous situation of women and children who were solely dependent on men for survival, and women’s limited choices for what the church and Victorian society deemed “proper” employment.

Women’s Benevolent Organizations

The women depicted outside the “Ladies’ Department” are almost always tied to indigence or benevolence. In addition to the depiction of widows as pious models amidst abject poverty, women repeatedly appear in the *Advocate* organizing to support benevolent and evangelical causes. Indeed, women’s movement beyond the “Ladies’ Department” and the domestic sphere are readily apparent in reports from and about women’s benevolent organizations, which regularly appear on pages two and three of the *Advocate*. According to Lori Ginzberg, an ideology that conflated femininity and morality underpinned women’s benevolent activities in the early nineteenth century (11-35). Noting the changing rhetoric of benevolence, Ginzberg suggests that whereas benevolence in the late nineteenth century was increasingly associated with controlling poor and vagrant populations, during the antebellum period benevolence was viewed as a “mission of moral regeneration”(5). Indeed, secular-social

concerns often overlapped religious endeavors because of the belief that social change required moral transformation (180). Women's benevolent organizations, which were either tied to specific churches or ecumenical in nature, enabled women to safely situate themselves in the liminal zone while they exercised their intellectual and physical powers in private and public spheres. In fact, Mary Ryan claims that women's benevolent and social reform activities provided women with a circuitous route to public action and influence ("Gender" 284).

Although charitable societies initially included both male and female members, in the early nineteenth century, these societies emerge as a vehicle for women to band together and operate autonomously. Reports of new societies printed in the interior two pages of the *Advocate* confirm a trend toward women establishing and running their own societies: A new Dorcas Society was established by the women of Morriston, New Jersey (*CA* 1830: 131); a Female Missionary Society with sixty members was organized on the Kent Circuit in the Philadelphia Conference (*CA* 1830: 86); the new Roscoe Circuit in the Ohio Conference reported a new Female Missionary and Tract society (*CA* 1832: 34); a newly established Female Missionary Society in Lynchburg, Virginia attracted fifty members and contributions totaling $100 (*CA* 1832: 19); a Female Assistance Society was formed in Mississippi (CA 1827: 134); a Female Methodist Tract Society in Homer, New York attracted forty members (*CA* 1828: 170); and according to a letter to the editor reprinted from the *New York Baptist Register* two Female Missionary Societies were established in Clinton Upper Canada (*CA* 1826: 2). Anne Firor Scott insists that throughout American history women have organized themselves into groups in order to pursue goals important to them (2). Whereas men more often pursued charitable endeavors individually, women acted collectively (Scott 23). Several national benevolent societies are comprised in what Nancy Hardesty dubs the "Benevolence Empire,": the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), the American Bible Tract Society (1816), American Colonization Society (1817), American Sunday School Union (1824) American Tract Society (1825), American Education Society (1826), American Home Mission Society (1826), American Temperance Society (1826), American Peace Society (1828), and American Anti-Slavery Society (1833). In addition to these major organizations, women participated in an array of smaller organizations addressing diverse social needs. Indeed, women, who comprised the majority of most church congregations, considered charity a Christian responsibility; tied to Christian duty, the growth in formal benevolent activities paralleled the religious fervor of

Second Great Awakening (Lindley 65). Dorcas and Mite societies even drew their names from charitable women in the Bible. Other societies appearing in the *Advocate* included cent societies, widow and children aid societies, Bible and tract societies, Sunday school unions, and missionary societies. Most of these local societies were auxiliary members of larger societies overseen, by their circuit, conference, or the General Conference of the Methodist Church.

Until 1835 almost all women's associations were allied with churches, and denominational organizing continued as the most common form of women's grassroots organization throughout the nineteenth century (Cott 132-33; Ginzberg 37). This fact in itself underscores how the church served as a primary site for women's rhetorical development during the nineteenth century. Of course all the societies mentioned in the *Advocate* were not necessarily associated with the Methodist Church. Reports in the *Advocate* reflect how members of Methodist Churches often participated in ecumenical charities, organizations sponsored by other churches, or efforts to address community needs such as the New-York Magdalen Society, which tried to assist prostitutes.

While general oversight usually rested in the hands of clergy or prominent laymen, women overwhelming provided the labor whether it was fundraising, distributing tracts, or teaching Sunday schools (Westerkamp 155). Interestingly, with benevolent and evangelical activities, church periodicals began to acknowledge women as important instruments—a distinction that Chapter Two noted was primarily reserved for laymen and ministers. Indeed, *Advocate* articles often depicted women as the primary foot soldiers in charitable endeavors. An article titled "Utility of Tracts," comprised of extracts from the annual report of the American Tract Society, offers several anecdotes of women handing out tracts (*CA* 1828: 186). A report from the Brooklyn Female Tract society notes that the women distributed 8,000 tracts the previous year (*CA* 1826: 58). Additionally, a treasurer's report from the New York Missionary, Tract, Bible and Sunday School Society provides a list of debits and credits with a note accompanying the credits stating that, "The above sums were collected principally by females, who visit every house in the place for that purpose" (*CA* 1832: 39). Distributing tracts and collecting donations for benevolent activities allowed women to traverse between private/public and class boundaries in order to observe social problems first hand. The persuasion and preaching that often accompanied these activities encouraged women to assume new rhetorical roles. However, one has to look hard for them, because these rhetorical roles were often

discounted by the characterization that women had merely expanded their domestic moral and maternal roles. Indeed, women's passionate embrace of missions and other "good works" perpetuated a growing belief that charity was women's work in much the same way that women's overwhelming majority in the church had given rise to the perception of religion as a more "naturally" feminine quality. This view is evident in a letter to the editor titled, "Our Finances in England and America," in which the author compares England and America's commitment to missions. Arguing that Americans need to step up their missions' efforts, the author points to females as the primary group that should pursue this work. "It seems to have entered the minds of but few, that the main business of the preachers as to these matters is to set our members to work, especially our female members. O! what a commanding influence have these women over society, if they could but be brought to exert it here as they do in England" (*CA* 1832: 9). Likewise, C. V. Adgate describes the females in the Genesee Conference as "helpers in the gospel." He writes, "The zeal which burns upon their hearts will not suffer them to stand all the day idle while they see the grand movements of Zion and the noble exertions of her sons" (*CA* 1828: 146).

Benevolent endeavors, which were initially undertaken by both men and women, were increasingly placed under women's purview. The feminization of benevolent efforts ultimately reduced the status of the work. This trend mirrors what Barbara Reskin and Patricia Roos identify as the "feminization of occupations" in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth. As occupations such as clerical workers, telegraph and telephone operators, food-service waiting staff, public school teachers, and bank tellers were increasingly dominated by women, both the prestige and pay for these positions were reduced (Reskin and Roos 11-15). Moreover, women's participation in benevolent causes were characterized, often by women themselves, as an extension of women's domestic and maternal roles rather than a means of activism and advocacy. Notably, Catharine Beecher claimed that through their efforts to help indigent women, distribute tracts, and collect money for missions, women were merely acting in their appointed roles as mothers and moral guardians for society (Hill 29). Minimizing the boldness of these efforts can also be viewed as a way for women to ensure they actions are deemed socially acceptable, which highlights an important distinction between image and reality. As women step beyond their prescribed roles, they must maintain an acceptable image—even if that image doesn't necessarily mesh with reality.

What is missing in these characterizations of women's benevolent work as mothering and moralizing is that women had assumed roles outside the domestic sphere that have little resemblance to the motherly roles prescribed to them in the "Ladies' Department" and the rest of the domestic canon. Women's participation in benevolent societies proved to be an education in itself. They acquired skills in grass roots organization, compiling minutes, submitting reports, keeping financial accounts, and fundraising. Lori Ginzberg claims that the business side of some benevolent organizations offered women a respectable means for gaining business skills (36-66). Although the women who worked in benevolent organizations often acquired and exercised many of the same skills that men used in commerce, the fact that these endeavors were still considered outside the realm of public enterprise demonstrates the imbedded and pervasive nature of separate spheres (Ginzberg 59). Indeed, in the same way that Chapter Four notes how women's relegation to the domestic sphere hid their roles as ministers, women's participation in charitable activities masked their business activities.

Similarly concealed was the acceptable channel benevolent societies provided for women to learn and begin exercising untapped leadership and rhetorical skills. Even the Methodist Church appears to perceive some benefit in forming separate male and female missions' societies. In a report to the corresponding secretary of the Tract Society of the MEC, Elias Crawford admits that when "numbers are not sufficient in one place to form male and female societies separately, we connect both together, by electing our managers from both sexes," which suggests that separate societies were preferable (*CA* 1823: 62). Women likely felt more comfortable actively participating in separate societies; this gendered space enabled women to act freely while maintaining their social propriety (Ginzberg 39). In societies with both male and female members, even when equal numbers of male and female managers were appointed, the offices of president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer were almost always reserved for male members. Conversely, in female societies women were in charge. For instance, a report from the New York Female Assistance Society submitted by their treasurer Maria Harper, lists the group's transactions for the year as well as the names of female officers and managers (*CA* 1830: 77). Similarly, the report on the annual meeting of the Asbury Female Mite Society lists its female officers and reports $230 was collected the previous year (*CA* 1828: 162). Today, seeing women listed as organizational presidents, vice presidents, or treasurers or even seeing a report written by a woman is commonplace, but in the early nineteenth century it was a relatively new

experience for many of the women who served as officers and for male and female *Advocate* readers.

Voluntary organizations helped women redefine a "woman's place" by adding new responsibilities and expanding women's sphere of influence (Scott 2). At the same time that women's organizations generally fell under the purview of centralized, male-dominated boards, women frequently stipulated how they wanted their contributions to be applied. For instance, in a letter to the Treasurer of the Missionary Society of the MEC, Elizabeth Mercein, secretary of the John-Street Dorcas Society explains that while the society is pleased to use "the proceeds from their own work" to make their pastor Reverend Herman Bangs a life member of the Missionary Society of the MEC, "the board of managers of the John-street consider it their duty to apply the subscriptions and donations of their friends exclusively to the establishment and aid of Indians schools" (*CA* 1830: 71). In other words, they are giving the money in Reverend Bangs' name, but they still specified how they want the money to be spent. It is also interesting that the society proudly acknowledges that the proceeds came from "their own work." Earning their own money offered women in organizations a new sense of independence. In a report from the Dorcas Society attached to the Allen Street Church the treasurer, Francie B. Reese, notes that the society sent $100—"the proceeds of our first year's labours in the cause of missions" to the Indian missions in the Canada Conference (*CA* 1830: 135). Participation in benevolent societies enabled women to earn and spend money and to establish identities apart from their husbands outside of the domestic sphere (Scott 27). To men, good works were simply part of their larger careers, but for women charitable endeavors offered them careers beyond their domestic duties (24). Indeed, many women cobbled together full-time careers juggling their work as Sunday school teachers, church visitors, and members of multiple benevolent societies.

The nature of benevolent societies often concealed the power they wielded both in terms of finances and influence (Ginzberg 65). Societies frequently used their reports printed in the *Advocate* to raise social concerns or to promote their causes. A letter to the Baltimore Conference from Mary Hewitt on behalf of the Female Preacher's Aid Society discusses the plight of preachers who are no longer able to work and the families of deceased preachers. Hewitt writes, "the Methodists love their preachers too well to see them suffer, if they are only made acquainted with their situation." She closes her letter acknowledging the society's $210 contribution to be appropriated to preacher's widows and children under the Baltimore

Conference's charge (*CA* 1828: 142). As I noted earlier in the chapter, the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children also used their reports to emphasize women's economic plight. For instance, Mary Murray, treasurer for the society and Hannah L. Murray, secretary, note that the society visited and assisted 246 widows with 651 children during the previous year. The women conclude their report asserting that their efforts are directed at, "the poor widow with small children—the very personification of dependence a name which cannot be uttered by a humane person without sympathy" (*CA* 1829: 58). Other than poetry, benevolent society reports are the *Advocate* pieces most commonly written by women, which underscore the new rhetorical space and stature opened to women through their participation in women's charitable organizations, and through the publication of their efforts on the interior pages of the paper.

Women's societies which passionately supported missions' work often maintained direct correspondence with missionaries in the field. Nineteenth-century missions' efforts focused on both domestic Indian tribes and less-developed foreign countries. The *Advocate* reprinted a letter from Mr. Bardwell, one of the missionaries of the American Board, to a Female Missionary Society in Middletown, Connecticut, in which he described a revival among the Choctaw Indians. Bardwell wrote:

> All the former amusements have ceased; the Sabbath is almost universally regarded—people throng in multitudes to hear the word of God—and the domestic altar has been erected in most of the houses around us. The yell of the savage which used to salute our ears from every quarter, has given place to the songs of Zion. Indeed the change is so wonderful, so apparent, that we feel almost surrounded by a new race of beings" (*CA* 1829: 42).

In a sense, Bardwell's letter reports the "return on investment" to an important group of stakeholders. Missionaries as well as church leadership recognized women as an essential constituency in missions' work. Through their contributions, women also moved into the problematic space of religious and cultural imperialism. Female missionary societies were complicit in the conflict, disruption, and decimation of Indian culture that resulted from government policies and religious missions' efforts. Missions' efforts generally spread the gospel and white American culture hand-in-hand (Forbes 209). Thus, converting Indians to Christianity often entailed eliminating anything white Americans deemed savage.

Just as Methodist women empathized with the conditions of poor women and Indian women in their own country, they also empathized with oppressed women in other countries. Through their support of foreign missions' efforts, women expanded their worldviews, but again they became active participants in cultural imperialism. Frequently, women were rallied to foreign missionary causes with descriptions of women's treatment in non-Christian countries, which were commonly referred to as "heathen" countries throughout the nineteenth century. For instance, a report from the Oneida Conference Missionary Society made the following appeal to women, "After taking a view of the debased and servile state of females in heathen and savage countries, and after considering that you own your elevation in society to the blessed influence of the gospel of Christ, can you withhold a helping hand in the promulgation of the gospel?" (*CA* 1830: 138). An article reprinted from the *Christian Register*, titled "Heathen Cruelty" carried a similar message. The article began, "Let me remind females how much they owe in society to the diffusion of gospel light, and let me thereby attempt to stimulate them to employ their influence in diffusing its healing beams. Could you behold the cruel slavery and degradation of your sex in heathen nations. I should scarcely need any other argument with you" (*CA* 1828: 165). The article later lists examples of mothers forced to destroy female infants in South America, and widows in the East Indies being burned to ashes alongside their husband's graves. As these appeals demonstrate, through their domestic and international mission efforts, women believed they were helping improve the condition of women. Indeed, one of the primary goals of women's missionary societies was to spread Christianity throughout the world in order to elevate all women to the same status as Christian women in America (Hill 23). In that sense, women's evangelistic missions worldwide can almost be classified as feminist in intent—a word rarely used to describe women's church work. Even though white, middle-class women's position in antebellum America was not a feminist ideal, for many women around the world it represented dramatic improvement. At the same time, it denotes a problematic conflation of feminism and imperialism.

The local women's missionary societies that flourished during the antebellum period also established a legacy of gendered mission's work. Later in nineteenth century, Methodist women formed the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in 1869 and the Woman's Home Missionary Society established in 1880. Both groups were autonomous organizations operating outside the Methodist Church's General Missionary Society (Keller 332-36). The Woman's Foreign

Missionary Society eventually became the largest organization in the broader woman's foreign mission movement. By 1915, more than three million American women contributed membership dues to 40 different denominational missionary societies—making the woman's foreign mission movement by far the largest mass woman's movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hill 3, 8). While no direct link exists, it is certainly not hard to draw connections between women's missions' efforts in the first third and last third of the nineteenth century. At the same time, these separate efforts suggest that we should resist the temptation to cast women's assumption of rhetorical roles outside the domestic sphere into a direct evolutionary march. The little narratives that comprise women's rhetorical roles in the Methodist Church are more accurately depicted as disparate leaps rather than a linear path, which may explain why the church is often overlooked as an essential rhetorical site for women in antebellum America.

Instructors in Methodist Nurseries of Piety

Instilling religion into the tender minds of children by serving as Sunday school teachers was another role women assumed that was frequently depicted in the interior pages of the *Advocate*. Just as participation in benevolent organizations are often discounted as examples of women's expanded rhetorical roles, women's efforts establishing and teaching Sunday schools are typically excluded as early roles women assumed outside of the domestic sphere. Volunteering as Sunday school teachers allowed both men and women to enact and deepen their evangelical beliefs and assume broader social responsibility by influencing the next generation (Boylan 101). Based on her extensive study of American Sunday schools and Sunday school teachers' diaries, Anne Boylan suggests that young, single women were particularly drawn to the role of Sunday school teacher out of their search for individual identities apart from their families and from a desire for increased responsibility and spiritual commitment (Boylan 101). Susan Lindley notes that "For some young women, Sunday school teaching was a "bridge," preparation for a religious career as a writer, a minister's wife, or a missionary teacher," but in the twentieth century, "'religious education' would become a formal and paid professional role for women in the churches, with its roots stretching back more than a century" (64).

By teaching Sunday school, women also helped execute an important church-building strategy. Antebellum churches considered Sunday schools a vital evangelical enterprise. Sunday

schools served as nurseries of piety and morality for the benefit of church congregations and communities at large. This sentiment is evident in the following *Advocate* article.

> It is estimated that there are in the United States 300,000 children. To these it is reasonable to look to the future actors in the affairs of our country. When arrived to manhood they will be expected to take their stations in active life as the servants of the nation. But it must be recollected that a great number of these children are the offspring of poor, and in many cases profligate parents. The question arises by what means are they to be prevented from pursuing the course presented by their ungodly parents, and qualified to answer the demands and expectations of their country. It is the benevolent object of Sabbath schools to effect [sic] these ends by instilling into their young and tender minds the salutary precepts and sentiments of the gospel. In the majority of cases, it is doubtful whether the attendants in Sabbath schools would receive this instruction at home; but here they enjoy the most favourable opportunities for receiving it. Instead of spending their Sabbaths roaming the streets and engaging in crime and wickedness, they are led to the church by the hand and there instructed in those things that tend to their present and eternal happiness. (*CA* 1827: 93)

Since its inception the Methodist Church encouraged religious instruction for children. The Discipline adopted by the newly-formed American Methodist Episcopal Church in 1785 instructed preachers to preach on education, pay special notice to children, pray for them, and wherever possible gather children together to teach them. Chapter Two's discussion of memoirs also noted that early religious instruction was a frequent topic found in *Methodist Magazine* memoirs. With Sunday schools Methodists attempted to formalize this religious instruction and provide basic literacy instruction. In 1785, Methodist laymen William Elliot established one of the first American Sunday schools in his home in Bradford's Neck, Virginia, and later transferred the school to the local church (Wardle 46). Sunday schools were initially a British import intended to help poor (white and black) children, who were prohibited from attending schools because of cost, custom, or because they held weekday jobs. Sunday schools were typically open on Sundays before and after worship. Serving a less altruistic purpose, Sunday schools were also used to control unruly groups of working class children, who gathered to play

on Sundays. Thus, in addition to imparting basic literacy, these schools also attempted to teach working class children self-control and respect for authority (Boylan 6-8).

Between 1810 and 1830, the increased availability of free local public schools changed the focus of most Sunday schools to primarily providing religious instruction; thus Sunday schools became an important vehicle for spreading evangelical Protestantism (Boylan 10-13). In 1827, Methodists established a centralized denominational Sunday school Union. With the shift in focus to religious instruction, middle-class children as well as the children of church members began to attend Sunday schools, and Methodists began to view Sunday schools as an important part of the church's religious mission (Kirby, Richey, and Rowe 180). The goal of the Methodist Sunday School Union was to encourage local church congregations to form Sunday schools "to aid in the instruction of the rising generation, particularly in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and in the service and worship of God" (*CA* 1827: 130). To their members, churches were careful to position Sunday schools as an extension of the family's religious instruction not a replacement for it (Boylan 17). As outlined in Chapter Four, churches considered mothers in the home the most appropriate instrument for religious inculcation; Sunday schools, however, reached beyond white, middle-class families.

Ultimately, Sunday schools had an underlying missionary impulse, which reflected changing views about childhood and adolescence. Anne Boylan notes, "No longer were [children] considered capable merely of receiving religious information; they were candidates for evangelization, perhaps even conversion" (Boylan 14-15). Additionally, Gregory Schneider suggests that Methodism's push to establish Sunday schools underscores its own shift in focus from the religious indoctrination of adults to the indoctrination of children (204). This shift is also evident in the expansion of mission's schools among North American Indians. In the nineteenth century, churches began to believe that it was easier to mold the malleable minds and souls of children than to persuade willful adults. A Sunday school address reprinted in the *Advocate* espoused a similar view. The unnamed speaker asserted:

> The astonishing pertinacity of young minds in retaining first impressions is a reason why the morality of the gospel should be first implanted there, that it may take deep root, and check the evil propensities of the heart, which are ever ready to spring up, and to prevent those evil habits which are perpetually forming and

> gaining strength when they are not counteracted by divine truth and instruction in righteousness. (*CA* 1830: 105)

At the same time that Methodist churches eagerly established Sunday schools, the church's traditional adult class meetings were falling by the wayside. In many places class meeting attendance was no longer a requirement for church membership, and class meetings had ceased to be open forums in which adult church members held each other accountable for religious practices such as prayer, fasting, scripture reading, and family devotions (Wigger 186).

As Sunday school teachers, women became essential agents enacting the church's shift in educational focus from adults to children. Sunday school teachers guided children through the Bible. Along with Bible lessons, students were assigned Bible verses to memorize. Both the lessons and memorization were intended to instill basic Biblical knowledge and "Biblical truths" (Kirby, Richey, and Rowe 180). Because the Bible was a seminal text in both nineteenth-century sectarian and secular society, Sunday school teachers ultimately contributed to students' cultural literacy as well. Sunday school teachers also transmitted cultural values such as self-discipline, orderliness, cleanliness, benevolence as well as honoring the Biblical commandment to keep the Sabbath holy (Boylan 22-52).

Teaching Sunday school extended women's role beyond the private religious and moral inculcation of their own children to the public indoctrination of the children in their classes. Again, this shift is often characterized as merely an extension of women's maternal domestic roles. However, this characterization not only overlooks the spatial shift from private to public, but also the fact that Sunday school teachers were not always women, and teaching Sunday school required new rhetorical skills and supervisory responsibilities. While stereotypical representations of Sunday school teachers often portray spinsterly women, articles in the *Advocate* tell a different story—depicting a fairly even split between male and female teachers.

Increasingly, announcements about the formation of new Sunday schools across the country filled the paper. *Advocate* editor Nathan Bangs even added a regular Sunday school column to the paper, and in 1841 the Methodists launched a separate Sunday school periodical, the *Sunday School Advocate* (Kirby, Richey, and Rowe 183). Reports from Sunday school unions across the country, appearing on pages two and three of the paper, typically included the number of students, teachers, and even the cumulative number of Bible verses that students had memorized. For instance, a report from the M'Kendrean Female Sabbath School Society of

Baltimore notes that the society has five schools managed by thirteen superintendents, serving 531 students, who are taught by ninety teachers. During the past year the scholars have recited 113,679 verses of Scripture, catechism, and divine songs (*CA* 1830: 85). Occasionally reports also provided a breakdown of the number of male and female teachers. For instance, a report from the large New York Sunday School Union reported that their combined schools had 10,116 pupils and 1,551 instructors of which 794 were male and 757 were female (*CA* 1828: 146). Reports in the *Advocate* of 17 smaller Sunday school unions across the country, which provide a breakdown of male and female teachers, show a cumulative total of 162 male teachers and 193 female teachers. These numbers illustrate that while teaching Sunday school was a role open to the females, it was not solely considered women's work. Moreover the equivalence of male and female teachers complicates the idea that teaching Sunday school was merely an extension of women's domestic sphere duties.

Opposed to the assumption expressed in the "Ladies' Department" that religious instruction was an ingrained skill for women, teaching Sunday school required women to learn new rhetorical skills such as preparing lessons, leading classes, and mentoring students in their spiritual growth. Sunday school unions typically provided teachers with materials to assist them in these duties. Sunday schools also provided women with opportunities beyond teaching. A report on the Trinity Church Sunday School notes that the school was actually organized and established by a group of women in 1825. These women, who felt "a deep interest in the welfare of the rising generation" decided to gather children in the surrounding area to offer them religious instruction. These women's efforts were supported by the Female Bible Society of Poughkeepsie, which donated six Bibles and several testaments to the new school (*CA* 1828: 158). In many cases, Sunday schools represented an extension of women's benevolent and organizational work. Sunday schools often benefited the church's efforts to distribute Bibles and tracts by putting these materials in the hands of children who might otherwise not receive them. Additionally, the *Advocate* was filled with stories of children who become conduits for their parents' religious education and conversion. Through Sunday schools women also assumed leadership roles as managers, directors, superintendents. In reporting the opening of the Peekskill Sabbath School, Reverend L. Clark acknowledged:

> I am greatly indebted to our sister Taylor, for the lively interest she has taken in the prosperity of the school. She is the superintendent of the girls, and indeed has

> the principal management of the affairs of the school. Some of the poorer children would not attend for the want of decent apparel; and she has kindly removed their objections by furnishing them with the clothing they need. (*CA* 1826: 37)

Interestingly, this report suggests that women likely assumed additional roles such as clothing children that may have been overlooked by male Sunday school teachers. The report also reflects the common practice of segregating Sunday schools by sex, then assigning female teachers to teach girls and female superintendents to manage female teachers. While women had opportunities to manage other women in Sunday schools, they were customarily placed in subordinate positions to men. Even when women represented the majority of Sunday school teachers, it did not necessarily translate into decision-making power within Sunday school unions. Female teachers, even female superintendents, were usually subordinate to male teachers and male superintendents. Only when women ran their own Sunday schools such as the M'Kendrean Female Sabbath School did they garner decision-making power (Boylan 119-122).

The rapid expansion of Methodist Sunday schools continued until the church's schism in 1844. Between 1830 and 1844, 2,000 new schools were opened and 100,000 students were added (Kirby, Richey, and Rowe 182). However, as the initial excitement of a new Sunday school abated, local Sunday school unions often faced a continual challenge recruiting teachers. Increasingly, Sunday schools turned to single women and young male and female students in their own upper-level courses for new recruits (Boylan 114). As a result, Sunday school teaching increasingly became viewed as a female occupation even though this was not the case throughout much of the antebellum period. Nonetheless, even though women remained in positions subordinate to men, they believed Sunday school work was useful, liberating, and ennobling work that enabled them to establish clearly defined social identities (Boylan 103; 122). As Sunday school teachers, women received public recognition for their religious and moral instruction as well as their leadership and organization. Moreover they shifted from private to public agents in shaping the next generation of Christians.

Ministers' Wives: Martyrs, Companions, and Partners

In her memoir, Mrs. Shuah Virgin, the wife of Reverend Charles Virgin, was described as "A woman of great courage—mild and cheerful in her disposition; through life she was an amiable and agreeable companion; such a one as her husband needed through the varied scenes

of sacrifice and sufferings he was called to pass. She was strongly attached to a missionary life, and would never listen to any thing about locating" (*CA* 1829: 68). Like many ministers' wives, Shuah Virgin was as much attached to the work of spreading the gospel as her husband. Unlike the wives lauded in the *Advocate's* "Ladies' Department," who were defined solely by their duties within the domestic sphere, descriptions of ministers' wives and missionaries' wives depict women publicly ministering to believers alongside their husbands. Becoming the wife of an itinerant minister or missionary in the early nineteenth century represented one of the few respectable career choices for women. The wives of ministers and missionaries usually assumed responsibilities beyond their commonly prescribed domestic duties—often becoming assistants, helpmates, and partners in their husband's profession. In his book *The Minister's Wife*, Leonard Sweet outlines four often overlapping roles ministers' wives typically assumed: (1) *Companion*, a subservient wife, who encouraged her husband; (2) *Sacrificer*, a martyr figure, who enabled her husband to pursue his calling by requiring little financial or emotional support and by assuming sole responsibility for their home and raising the family; (3) *Assistant*, a wife who worked alongside her husband assisting in his ministry; and (4) *Partner*, a wife who developed and pursued her own ministry parallel to that of her husband's endeavors (3-11).

Because marriage and families were considered a distraction from a minister's higher calling, most early Methodist itinerant ministers remained single. Marriage was also impractical for this first generation of Methodist itinerants because they could not support a family on their meager salaries or attend to a family while constantly traveling. Consequently, the decision to marry usually required ministers to quit traveling and leave the itinerancy. In the 1810s and 1820s opinions about itinerant ministers marrying began to change. Larger and more prosperous Methodist congregations considered it appropriate for their ministers to marry; thus the church began supporting ministers' families (Wigger 64-69). Moreover, based on both the preponderance of women in churches and the nineteenth-century view that women were more spiritually inclined, Julie Roy Jeffrey suggests that clerical wives were perceived as an asset. "Woman's innate religious nature made her eminently qualified to serve as a preacher's helpmate, especially in an evangelical denomination such as Methodism, which focused not on the head, but on the female domain of the heart" (Jeffrey 143-44). Increasingly, the dual role of wives/missionary assistants became a coveted vocation for women committed to spreading the gospel, and choosing a mate became an important career decision for ministers and prospective

wives (143-44). Reverend Herrick Eaton's *The Itinerant's Wife: Her Qualifications, Duties, Trials, and Rewards* (1851) as well as Mary Orne Tucker's *Itinerant Preaching in the Early Days of Methodism by a Pioneer Preacher's Wife* (1872) represent two attempts to outline the qualifications of an ideal preacher's wife and dispel any romantic illusions held by prospective ministers' wives. These texts also cast ministers' wives as a public career that moved women into the public sphere.

Alongside their husbands, itinerant preachers' wives often endured tremendous hardship as a result of traveling, continually relocating, and living in remote areas. Similar to the memoirs written in honor of itinerant ministers, which I discussed in Chapter Three, the memoirs of ministers' wives, printed in the *Advocate's* back page "Biographical Department" often recognize women for their sacrifices and devotion as well as their own efforts to spread the gospel. According to her memoirist, Elizabeth Larkin, who lived with her husband Reverend Benjamin Larkin on the Ohio and Kentucky frontiers, shared both her husband's religious commitment and the toils, suffering, and privations he endured on the frontier. Her memoirist wrote, she "seems to have possessed a large share of the missionary spirit, and to have felt an ardent love for souls and an earnest desire for their salvation. She was diligent and persevering both in the public and private means of grace, in which she took great delight." Sarah's memoir also suggested that the fatigue and exposure she suffered while traveling with her husband likely laid the foundation for her early death (*CA* 1828: 144). Similarly, her husband's assignment to the northern New York district ruined the health of his wife, Mary Ann Pier, who was predisposed to consumption. Nonetheless her husband claimed that, "She remonstrated against soliciting any alternation of my appointment on her account." Likely, as a result, Mary Ann died seven years into their marriage at age 27 (*CA* 1830: 76). Laura Gary's memoir also notes "a willingness to endure many privations and sufferings to encourage and help her husband [Reverend Gray] in the great work in which he was engaged" (*CA* 1827: 121).

Itinerant ministers' wives were repeatedly celebrated for their willingness to endure these difficult conditions and dissuade their husbands from permanently locating. For instance, Sarah Starr's memoirist claimed, "Instead of fettering him [Reverend William H. Starr] in the work, as some her sex have done, she always held up his hand, and urged him forward" (*CA* 1831: 204). Ministers' wives' willingness to make sacrifices in order to help their husbands spread the gospel

is also expressed in the following excerpt from the poem, "The Methodist Minister's Wife to Her Husband," which appeared as a poetry selection on the *Advocate's* back page.

> The one dear thought that I am thine, can more than compensate
> For all I have resign'd for thee, ease, pleasure, friends, estate,
> And surely I have gain'd in rank, the chosen wife of one
> Commission'd from on high to preach redemption thro' the Son!
>
> True, I have left my father's smile, and O! all else above,
> The looks which beam'd on me will all a mother's sacred love
> A sister's depth of tenderness, a brother's fond regard.—
> And still I feel, to soothe thy lot, no sacrifice too hard! (*CA* 1829: 16)

Similar to the wives depicted in the "Ladies' Department," ministers' wives were lauded for sustaining and encouraging their husbands. At the same time, they were recognized for contributing to their husband's ministry through their efforts outside the domestic sphere. In addition to acknowledging Sarah Starr's support, her memoirist also described her as "a valuable assistant in the ministry." Her memoirist noted her participation in class meetings and her work in Sabbath schools. Moreover she was said to be, "profitable in prayer meetings; an active assistant in the altar, at camp meetings, and useful among mourners in Zion elsewhere" (*CA* 1831: 204). Likewise, Sarah Henry was described as not only useful "in holding up her partner's hands, but in assisting in female prayer meetings; in labouring with mourners; in persuading persons who she saw affected, to go forward to the altar." Her memoirist asserted, "Never, it is thought, did a preacher's wife on that circuit secure to a greater extent, the confidence and affections of the people" (*CA* 1831: 175).

In her study of itinerant ministers' wives on the Trans-Mississippi frontier, Julie Roy Jeffrey also acknowledges ministers' wives' struggle to balance their domestic duties as wives, mothers, and housekeepers with their ministerial duties, which often included accompanying their husbands on pastoral visits; leading women's prayer and Bible groups; caring for sick and dying parishioners; assisting mourners at camp meetings; teaching in Sabbath schools; and even fundraising (153-156). Ultimately, ministers' wives offer insight into women's changing relationship with the domestic sphere. Instead of defining women, domestic duties become part of a tenuous balance that women have continually negotiated as they assume vocations beyond the domestic sphere. Unlike most nineteenth-century men, who exchanged their responsibilities when they moved from the private to the public sphere, women simply added new ones. With

these expanded roles, ministers' wives become domestic and public women celebrated outside the bounds of the "Ladies' Department."

Missionary Wives

Marriage also provided women with an early avenue into foreign missions—carrying them far beyond the domestic sphere and their own domestic continent. Although foreign missions work was denied to single women during the antebellum period, both men and women frequently married in order to pursue missionary careers (Welter, "Femization" 164; Westerkamp 144). The interior pages of the *Advocate* were filled with announcements of English and American missionaries and their wives departing for stations in foreign lands. A report from the London Missionary Society announced that Reverend John Smith and Mrs. Smith had set sail for Madras (*CA* 1828: 199); a Wesleyan Missions report announced Mr. and Mrs. Rule sailed for Malta, Mr. and Mrs. Dawson for Sierra Leone, intending then to proceed to St. Mary's in Gambia (*CA* 1826: 2); another report noted that Mr. and Mrs. Parkin departed for Jamaica and Mr. and Mrs. Edwards for South Africa (*CA* 1826: 58). Following the example of England, antebellum American churches took up the charge of converting non-Christians in foreign lands. The initial leader in this endeavor was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions founded in 1813 by the Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Dutch Reformed Churches. The American Board for Foreign Missions recruited missionaries for overseas stations and for North American stations among Native Americans. The Board then supported their efforts through finances, supplies, and regular communications. In 1815, the Baptists formed their own missions society, and the Methodists established The Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America in 1819 (Westerkamp 142; Bangs 27). The object of the Methodist society was "To supply the destitute with Bibles gratuitously, to afford a cheap supply to those who may have the means of purchasing, and to enable annual conferences more effectually to extend their missionary labours throughout the United States" (Bangs 27).

It is often difficult to determine the church denomination or missionary organization sponsoring the various missionary activities reported in the *Advocate*. Indeed Methodists and other denominations appear to minimize denominational identities when discussing foreign and domestic missionary endeavors. Considering the overwhelming number of individuals Christians claimed as heathens requiring salvation (i.e. North American Indians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews,

and Buddhists) they likely viewed it as a task requiring all hands on deck. This daunting missionary task is evident in a September 8, 1829, report from the Methodist Committee on Foreign Missions, reprinted in the September 28, 1832, *Advocate*. Offering its own religious mapping of the world, the report estimates the world's population to be 650 million 600 million, "3 million Jews, 50 million protestants, 72 million of the Greek Church, 100 million of the Roman Church, 100 million Mohammedans, and 325 million pagans," of which they describe as "fellow beings, without hope, without God, famishing and dying, amidst all the gloom and wretchedness" (*CA* 1832: 17). Hence, from this view of the world, the Christian missionary task becomes saving "twelve thirteenths of the world's population" living in a "forlorn state" (17). While antebellum American missionaries were religious and cultural imperialists—determined to impose their own religious and cultural views with little regard for native beliefs or customs, unlike the British, Amanda Porterfield suggests that they were not militaristic or political imperialists. American foreign missionaries in the early nineteenth century were not overtly complicit in any nationalistic imperialist goals (19). However, America's domestic missionary efforts were clearly militarily, politically, and culturally imperialistic. Missionaries were often complicit in the American government's takeover of Indian lands and the dismantling of Indian culture.

Most missionary reports printed in the *Advocate* only provide glimpses of the contributions and sacrifices made by missionary wives. For instance on at least three different occasions, reports on American Missionaries Adoniram and Ann Judson in Burma appear in the *Advocate*. The first of these communications acknowledge receiving word from the Judsons after an anxious two-year silence (*CA* 1826: 21-22). The next year the newspaper includes excerpts from "Mrs. Judson's Narrative of the sufferings and deliverance of the Missionaries in Ava." Initially printed in the *London Missionary Register*, the narrative outlines some of the trials the Judson's endured as Burman missionaries. These trials included her husband's imprisonment as a suspected spy during the war between Britain and Burma, and Ann's efforts to communicate with him by writing on a baked flat cake which she hid in a bowl of rice. Of these and other efforts, the *Register's* editor asserts, "the presence of mind and heroic fortitude evinced by Mrs. Judson at every new peril which threatened either her husband or herself, will give her name an immortality of the brightest luster." Stressing the importance of *their* mission, Mrs. Judson concludes the narrative claiming, "Burmah will yet be given to Jesus for this inheritance! We

shall have as many schools as we can support at Mergui or Tavoy, to which places the Burmese population are flocking in crowds" (*CA* 1827: 102). The final mention of Ann Judson appears later that same year in the *Advocate* announcing Mrs. Judson's death in late October 1826. According to the report, she died while her husband was away working as an interpreter for British Commissioners; he learned of her death two months later (*CA* 1827: 134). While reports in the *Advocate* present a sketchy view of Ann Judson's life, the *Memoir of Mrs. Judson* written by James Knowles in 1829 became a classic missionary biography and established Ann Judson as an inspirational model for future generations of female missionaries (James 13; Hill 39). Indeed, Ann Judson was one of the first American females to pursue missionary work traveling with her husband to Burma in 1813. In Burma, Ann established her own vision of the vocation by working alongside her husband as a teacher, translator, and publicist (James 13). Lindley adds, "While Adoniram worked on a mammoth project of Bible translation and corresponded with the mission boards on official business, Ann fulfilled a direct missionary calling by writing short tracts and catechisms and teaching the women. She also wrote letters home to be published in missionary journals, which had enormous influence" (Lindley 72).

As the sparse *Advocate* reports about Adoniram and Ann Judson demonstrate, foreign missionaries were isolated from their home churches and communication was difficult. Travel was also dangerous and medical care rudimentary at best. A report from western Africa notes that soon after missionaries Reverend W. K. Betts and Reverend Alfred Scholding and their wives arrived at Freetown they were overcome by fever, and Mrs. Betts died (*CA* 1826: 2). In promoting what they call an "affective narrative" that will appear in upcoming issue of *Methodist Magazine*, the *Advocate* also describes a tragic shipwreck in which five Antiguan missionaries died along with two of the missionaries' wives and three children. Only one of the missionary's wives was spared (*CA* 1826: 6), and the following year, the Methodist Book Concern published an account of the tragedy written by Mrs. Jones, the sole survivor (*CA* 1827: 111). While women such as Ann Judson were rarely recognized as missionaries themselves in the early nineteenth century, missionary wives typically pursued missions' efforts alongside or independent of their husbands. Although these women were not institutionally recognized as missionaries, their actions were sanctioned and publicized in print. For instance, a report from the Sandwich Island Mission reprinted from the *Missionary Herald* notes the scope and effect of a female prayer meeting initiated by the women at the mission. The prayer meeting eventually grew so large that

it was organized into 30 classes led by 30 native leaders under the direction of Mrs. Bingham, Mrs. Clark, and Mrs. Chamberlain (*CA* 1831: 144).

In addition to missionary wives, other women are frequently mentioned in missionary reports as housekeepers at missions' houses and stations, teachers in missions' schools, and leaders of women's Bible studies (Westerkamp 142). Because of the segregation of men and women in many societies, women were often needed to teach and evangelize to women (Westerkamp 147). Both missionary wives and female missionary assistants addressed this need. Moreover, through their faith, dedication, and compassion, missionary wives and assistants were often held up as Christian models for the women they served (Porterfield 21). An article titled "American Schools in Asia Minor," reprinted from the *Daily Advertiser*, reports on a mission established to aid poor children in Greece and recognizes the contributions of a missionary wife and female missionary assistant. The report states, "By the indefatigable efforts of the American ladies, many of the children were in a short time enabled to gain a living by their needle; some of these were orphans without friends or relatives" (*CA* 1831: 146).

Further highlighting the general ambivalence or reluctance to acknowledge female missionaries in the early nineteenth century, a report on the Missions efforts of the United Brethren notes that at the close of 1825 the church had thirty-eight stations staffed by "one hundred and eighty-seven missionaries, including females" (*CA* 1828: 186). Are the aforementioned females missionaries or not? The language used in the report seems to indicate that they are, yet the need to clarify women's inclusion in that total number suggests that missionaries were assumed to be male. Conversely, a report from the American Board of Foreign Missions clearly designates women as missionary assistants. Of its 44 mission stations including missions among North American Indians, the board reports having 46 ordained missionaries, 5 licensed preachers, 3 catechists, 171 (47 men and 124 women) missionary assistants, 41 native assistants, 41 native assistants, and 600 native teachers (*CA* 1830: 81-82). As these categorizations indicate, some of the confusion may be due to the fact that missionaries were often ordained or licensed ministers—posts that were not available to women. Because single women who pursued missions' work usually reported to a male missionary they were considered missionary assistants. Although many of these women performed the same work as missionaries, most weren't officially recognized until the late nineteenth century.

Reports about the Methodist Church's expanding mission efforts among Indian tribes in Upper Canada repeatedly mention a lady by the name of Miss Barnes. A review of these reports offers further insight into the types of mission roles typically performed by women. One article reprinted from the *Zion's Herald* depicts Miss Barnes as a teacher. According to the article, two schools for Indians in Upper Canada were established. One school was headed by Miss Barnes and another by Miss Hubbard. The author reported that, "Both [women] are in health and are delighted with their task of training their increasing charge in the ways of piety and industry" (*CA* 1828: 195). Almost two years later, Miss Barnes appears again; an update from the Indian Mission in Upper Canada reports, "Our sisters E. Barnes and Phebe Edmunds arrived…Miss Barnes brought with her many things for the convenience of the house and families in these new missions in this wilderness, which are much wanted, and will be of great use. I pray God the donor may not lose their reward" (*CA* 1830: 89). In this instance, Miss Barnes appears to have assumed the role of managing the care and provisions for new mission houses. This role is also suggested in a letter from William Case to Sister Barnes in which he reports on the state of the mission house and school at the Snake's Island Mission. Case writes, "At Snakes Island we found the mission house and school house in good order. Every thing was neat and cleanly. Sister, Crane, daughter of brother Snake, keeps the house nicely" (*CA* 1830: 118).

In other articles Miss Barnes acts as a fundraiser for the Upper Canada Indian missions. In one letter, William Case updates Sister Barnes on the missions' work in Upper Canada and then asks:

> Wherever you can obtain cash turn your attention to that subject. Boxes are liable to delay. Besides, they are expensive and difficult to get to the stations. You will however, not refuse the offers of clothing. You will not forward any more old books. We don't need these, as we have many now on hand, and we don't wish to pay out money for the freight of articles which we don't at present need. Maps, books, and pictures for the infant schools will be highly acceptable." (*CA* 1830: 138)

In this letter, it appears that Miss Barnes has been dispatched stateside to raise funds for the Upper Canada missions. In fact, an earlier report from William Case warned that without additional funds [the Upper Canada mission] would be unable to maintain its sixteen schools which serve 400 students (*CA* 1830: 122). A report from the anniversary meeting of the John

Street Dorcas Society also notes a presentation by Miss Barnes, who is described as a "teacher of the Canada mission schools." According the article, Miss Barnes described the several mission stations in Upper Canada with which she is connected noting progress at Grape Island, Rice Lake, Lake Simcoe, Yellow Head's Island, and Snake Island. The author said, "there was so much simplicity and artlessness, so much fervency and feeling derived from the relation of circumstances occurring under her own observation, and withal so much touching incident that the congregation paid to the tribute of many tears, which flowed from eyes unused to weeping." In addition to prompting tears, a collection taken up after Miss Barnes' speech raised $167 and several gold rings (*CA* 1830: 139). Moreover, Miss Barnes received a $100 donation from the John Street Dorcas Society. The society's secretary wrote, "this is but a small portion of our heart's desire toward them, yet we understand from our beloved sister Barnes that it will be thankfully received" (*CA* 1830: 139).

From this report, it is evident that Miss Barnes was well-versed in the progress of the Upper Canada Mission as well as a gifted public speaker. In fact, Eliza Barnes had preached in both America and Canada, although she is best known for her missionary work in Upper Canada and eventually became a missionary wife when she married William Case, the Superintendent of Indian Missions (Muir 108). From these different glimpses it is apparent that Miss Barnes and certainly other women who entered public missions work juggled many different responsibilities including teacher, property manager, public speaker, and fundraiser—all of which moved them outside the realm of the domestic sphere. For instance, according to record books, journals, and newspaper accounts, Eliza Barnes is only one of twenty-five women in the 1820s and 1830s who held leadership positions in the Methodist Indian Missions in Upper Canada (Muir 114).

Raising money for benevolent causes, forming organizations, volunteering as Sunday school teachers, marrying ministers and missionaries or even entering mission field work as missionary assistants—the roles which women primarily assumed outside of the *Advocate's* "Ladies' Department" chart women's initial steps outside of the domestic sphere. Patricia Hill acknowledges that women's participation in such benevolent endeavors did not transform them into radical feminists, but these activities "served as a bridge between the domestic sphere and the male-dominated arena of public life." Moreover she argues, "Crossing that bridge eventually changed women's estimation of themselves and their capabilities, but they initially ventured out of the home on missions suited to their notions of woman's nature and her special talents" (Hill

25). Although many of women's roles in the early nineteenth century were later claimed under the purview of an expanded domestic sphere, it is important to remember that these domestic boundaries were intentionally enlarged by women claiming the right to speak and advocate social change. Later in the nineteenth century, women purposefully broadened the domestic sphere in order to claim new spheres of influence. Yet, these expanded boundaries conceal many of women's initial steps outside the domestic sphere. Ultimately, if we believe space is endowed with power, accurate remapping of women's movement between the private and public (a crucial battle line for women) as well as the church's role in containing and enabling movement between those spheres represent important areas of recovery for women's rhetoric.

Chapter 6: "Getting some Religion" in American Women's Rhetorical History

> *When whole areas of people's lives are closed off as unworthy of academic attention the academy misses important information.*
>
> Beth Daniell, *Literacy, Spiritual Practice and Women in Recovery* (2003)

> I have long felt that the amount of reading matter included in the "Ladies' Departments" of our periodicals, was altogether inadequate to the just and reasonable wants of that interesting class of our readers…when we consider the pervading and powerful influence of [women], in the formation of individual and social character, it cannot fail to occur to every candid and cultivated mind, that they should share munificently in the benefits of periodical literature, as well as in every other means of intellectual and moral culture. (*LR*[25] 1841: 28)

In his letter addressed to Reverend Leonidas Lent Hamline, the editor of the *Ladies' Repository*, J. S. Tomlinson welcomes the church's introduction of a new ladies' magazine and affirms its need. In 1841, the Methodist Church dramatically expanded women's space within its publications by introducing the *Ladies' Repository*, a monthly women's periodical. Initially intended to be the Methodist version of *Godey's Lady's Book*, the *Ladies' Repository* was created to draw women readers away from popular secular magazines full of fashion and sentimental tales (Gillespie 249). Consequently, the creation of the *Ladies' Repository* signified the church's recognition that women were a valuable, sought-after audience who deserved a space beyond the back page of the *Advocate*. *The Ladies' Repository* also began to signify the church's changing conception of women's roles and its broader view of appropriate education for women. Early American women's magazines, such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, generally included etiquette, conduct advice, sentimental fiction, and fashion. Conversely, in the first issue of *Repository*, editor Hamline declared the magazine's purpose, "to promote the healthful cultivation of the female mind, and draw it from trifles into its appropriate sphere of privilege" (*LR* 1841: 7). In fact, Hamline asserted an intellectual variation of the "eat your vegetables" approach to reading the Methodist women's magazine warning women in the habit of reading "lighter works of taste" that unless they were "willing to resign the luxury of being beguiled," they would not be able to read the *Repository* with "pleasure" or "patience" (7). Instead of

[25] Abbreviation for the *Ladies' Repository*.

discussions about social etiquette and clothing, the *Repository* engaged female readers in discussions of religion, women's religious roles as well as various intellectual debates of the era (Gillespie 250).

From deathbed preachers, domestic evangelists, benevolent workers, ministers' wives, Sunday school teachers, and missionary assistants to sought-after readers deemed worthy of their own publication, my examination of antebellum Methodist periodicals ultimately charts women's changing roles in the church by mapping the spaces and rhetorical roles they occupy in the church's periodicals. With the 1841 introduction of the *Repository*, women, whose roles were often hidden or obscured on the pages of Methodist periodicals, finally arrived on the title page. Moreover, while women had always played important roles in the consumption and even the production of many Methodist publications, these were often hidden behind lists of male subscribers and male editors and book agents. Nonetheless, just as women helped build the church, they helped build its publishing ventures as well.

In 1822, Methodist Book Agent Nathan Bangs rented the basement in the Wesleyan Seminary building in order to establish the Methodist Book Concern's own bindery. There, printed and cut sheets could be stitched together—allowing the book concern to reproduce its own publications. Until the invention of a book binding machine in the latter half of the nineteenth century, books and magazines were stitched together by hand; and just as women were able to turn their household experience sewing into paid work in textile mills, women were also hired to stitch together books and magazines in the Methodist book bindery. In fact, by the early 1830s the Book Concern employed thirty-nine women in its bindery (Pilkington 177; 232). As the Book Concern's initial venture into production, the bindery also represents the seed that eventually grew into the Methodist Publishing House, which by 1860 was one of the largest publishers in the world.

In the same way that women's sewing provided the backbone for many antebellum Methodist publications, women provided the backbone of the antebellum Methodist Church. Women filled the pews, participated in religious rituals, provided financial support, drew their friends and family to church, and advocated Christianity through their good works. Yet, just as the stitches binding a book are rarely acknowledged, the women who represent the core of the church usually goes unnoticed. Too often the roles assumed by and ascribed to women in the church are overlooked. Even though women are often absent from church histories, historian

Ann Braude claims that the story of religion in America is actually a story of women's presence; she asserts, "Where women are present, religion flourishes, where they are absent, it does not" (92). That fact in itself seems to acknowledge that women were far more than a passive presence occupying church pews. Women were essential participants in the Second Great Awakening that swept across the country, and they were a crucial part of the Methodist Church's rapid ascent to the largest denomination in nineteenth-century America. Evangelical theology, which stressed action and usefulness, combined with women's own personal religious convictions, emboldened them to step into new roles often carrying them beyond the domestic sphere into public activism. Antebellum Methodist women were appointed as domestic evangelists assuming roles previously under the purview of ministers. They also carried their evangelism into the public sphere through an array of religious and benevolent activities. Women enacted their faith through their actions, exhorted and evangelized fellow Christians, converted non-believers, taught and trained the next generation of Christians, and labored as missionaries in foreign lands, among Indian tribes, and along America's frontiers. Through their depictions in Methodist publications women also became spiritual models, exemplars, and heroines for a rapidly expanding Methodist community.

In *Turning from the Pulpit to the Pages of Periodicals*, I have outlined these and other essential rhetorical roles performed by women in the antebellum Methodist Church. Using the little narratives appearing in the church's periodicals, I have challenged the overarching narrative in Methodist historiography that women were silenced in the domestic sphere during the early nineteenth century. In outlining women's rhetorical roles, I have also attempted to shift the institutional emphasis, both religious and academic, away from the historically male-dominated pulpit. Too often, religious historians and rhetoricians have narrowly defined women's rhetorical roles in churches where they comprised the overwhelming majority. Women's absence from the pulpit has generally precluded them from historical and rhetorical concern. Recognizing women's presence and significance in churches requires us to look beyond the pulpit to identify other sacred and rhetorical spaces. This recognition also requires us to acknowledge the relationship between space and power so that we avoid mapping institutions in a manner that simply reinscribes patriarchal power.

In recent years, women's rhetoric has focused both on recovery and redefinition. In addition to recovering women rhetoricians excluded by the early male compilers of the rhetorical tradition, the field has also begun to examine activities by women and other marginalized groups

that were not previously considered rhetorical. My study of the women appearing in antebellum Methodist periodicals participates in both of these efforts. At the same time that I am recovering rhetorical roles assumed by and ascribed to women in the church, I am redefining the significance of these roles in American women's rhetoric. In doing so, I am moving away from the accounts of extraordinary women to chart a more accurate rhetorical legacy for ordinary women in America. By outlining women's private domestic rhetorical roles, which became public through publication and mass distribution, and by tracing women's movement into the public sphere through their religious and benevolent endeavors, my dissertation maps the first steps most nineteenth-century white, middle-class, American women made beyond the domestic sphere. Moreover, my study shows how churches served as essential developmental sites for American women's rhetorical practice.

Critiquing the institutional emphasis on the pulpit and extraordinary women, my study also reveals the general reluctance to acknowledge churches as primary rhetorical sites for both extraordinary and ordinary women. Indeed, why have women's rhetorical roles in the church and the church's role in women's rhetorical development received relatively little scholarly attention? Just as Carol Mattingly, in *Well-Tempered Women,* and Roxanne Mountford in the *Gendered Pulpit,* acknowledge feminist scholars' reluctance to study women in religious institutions, in her 2001 *College Composition and Communication* article, "Enacting Faith: Evangelical Discourse and the Discipline of Composition Studies," Lizabeth Rand also points out academic institutions' reluctance to admit religious identities into the classroom. Rand claims academics frequently "feel suspicion toward religion—particularly Christianity—as a cultural and social force that has been used too often to oppress and dominate people" (351). She notes academic tendencies to discount, trivialize, and even disdain evangelical faith. In particular, she focuses on the way composition instructors typically perceive and frequently dismiss student writing that asserts a student's religious beliefs and identity. Similarly, in the 2001 *College English* article, "The Politics of the Personal: Storying Our Lives against the Grain," Anne Ruggles Gere describes her own struggle negotiating her scholarly and religious identities in the academy. Gere contends:

> It is much more acceptable to detail the trauma of rape or abuse than to recount a moment of religious inspiration. Coming out as a Christian or an observant member of any faith can be as dangerous as making public one's sexual

> orientation because the academy has so completely conflated the disestablishment of religion (which opened the way for Jews, Catholics, and agnostics) with secularizing (banishing religion altogether) higher education. (Brandt et al. 47)

While I believe it is important to acknowledge the ways in which religion has been used as an oppressive force in the past and continues to be used as a form of coercion in the present, I'm reluctant to throw the baby out with the bath water. Categorically ignoring religion as a rhetorical influence or an essential part of one's identity—in today's composition classroom, current academic scholarship, or in efforts to remap the history of rhetoric—runs counter to the critical thinking and complication or disruptions of perceptions that our discipline so strongly advocates.

When discussing topics such as religion, which tend to make people uncomfortable, I am often reminded of the student in one of my own composition courses, who remarked after reading *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Sa that she didn't like reading books by or about Native Americans because they make her feel bad. One of her classmates quickly quipped, "Well you know, we really weren't very nice to the Indians." While those aren't the exact words I would have chosen, I agree with the gist of her classmate's comment—there's nothing wrong with being honest, feeling bad, or even acknowledging a reluctance to identify with other groups. Hence, I am the first to admit that organized religion and individuals under the banner of religion have not always been very nice. Yet, avoiding a subject altogether does not change history; it simply ignores it, and leaves it unquestioned and undisturbed. In her book, *Why History Matters*, Gerda Lerner claims that treating history with a selective memory has deprived women and men of the ability to construct truthful pictures of the past (206). Likewise, my dissertation claims that by discounting large groups of women or ignoring whole areas of their lives as unworthy of academic attention, rhetoricians limit our ability to accurately construct women's rhetorical histories and legacies.

The church's role in both containing and empowering women is evident in my study of the antebellum Methodist Church's most popular general audience periodicals. The ministers, who primarily authored and edited women's memoirs, constructed women's deaths in *Methodist Magazine* as powerful religious affirmations. In doing so, they transformed their female subjects into spiritual heroines, models of piety, and even into preachers exhorting from deathbed pulpits. At the same time, the church tried to contain women in the domestic sphere through the prescriptive "Ladies' Department" advice dispensed in its weekly *Advocate*. However, a

collateral effect of this didacticism was assigning women religious duties previously under the purview of ministers. By reporting women's participation in religious and benevolent organizations, Sunday schools, and missions, the church also recognized and applauded women's efforts beyond the domestic sphere. Moreover, through its publications the church institutionally sanctioned and disseminated women's voices and actions to audiences far beyond their homes, congregations, and communities.

In most instances, women's assumption of new roles and their movements beyond private to public spaces were subtle and often obscured. Women's roles as deathbed preachers were hidden in the memoir genre, and their business and leadership roles were masked behind charitable organizations. Both the church and its publications acted as liminal zones that allowed women to easily traverse between private and public boundaries. However, the indeterminate location the church occupied also concealed the redefinition of women's roles and the expansion of their spheres of influence. Indeed, the subtlety of women's subversive movements in their church work may help explain why they have been overlooked. Moreover, women's early advances into the public sphere seem to contradict the linear path into public activism often outlined by women's rhetorical histories. Rather than an evolutionary advance, women's rhetorical roles in the antebellum Methodist Church depict disparate leaps into the public sphere as well as women's ability to assume powerful rhetorical roles from within the domestic sphere. Yet, I don't want to suggest that no relationship exists between the rhetorical roles my dissertation outlines and the women frequently discussed in surveys of nineteenth-century American women's rhetoric. Religion is an essential element in both stories.

When the Nineteenth Amendment that granted women the right to vote initially passed in the House of Representatives in 1918, the women in the gallery celebrated by singing the Doxology (Hardesty 134):

> Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
> Praise Him, all creatures here below;
> Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
> Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

This image of feminist activism and religious praise so closely intertwined seems peculiar today because feminist activism and religion are seldom cast as complementary activities. However, the harsh line of demarcation dividing feminism and religion is a modern construction. Women

continue to represent the overwhelming majority in most churches, and many still bring their partners and children along with them. Although churches' influence within American society has decreased, women's influence within churches has increased—impacting doctrine as well as churches' evangelical and social agendas. Consequently proponents of feminist theology have continued to exercise influence from within and outside of religious institutions. Advocating the use of neutral language including God-language[26], as well as women's ordination and women's reproductive rights, particularly in Roman Catholicism, are a few highly-publicized examples that link feminist activism and religion.

Turning to the nineteenth century, the relationship between religion and women's reform is even more evident. In her book, *"You Have Stept Out of Your Place": A History of Women and Religion in America*, Susan Hill Lindley stresses the complex relationship that linked religion and women's moral and social reform efforts in nineteenth-century America. She claims that religion:

> provided the motives, means, and locus for much early reform, yet 'religion' in the form of clergy, biblical injunctions, and institutional churches sometimes opposed or restricted women's reform work. As a result, some women backed away from a given cause. Other women moved away from 'religion,' at least in its orthodox and institutional forms. Still others redefined the content of their faith and its implications for action, reinterpreting the Bible as they did so. (Lindley 116)

Too often, modern religious and rhetorical histories eliminate the blurred boundaries that existed between religion (in all its forms) by removing religious influences from early feminist activism and removing feminist activists from their early religious roots. In fact, even the religious connections of women who are included in the rhetorical canon sometimes seem diminished in biographical sketches. For instance, Sojourner Truth had established a reputation as a preacher even before she adopted the name Sojourner and began traveling the country as an itinerant minister and women's rights activist (Westerkamp 170-1). Many early female abolitionists and suffragists were also Quakers, fortified by Quaker doctrine, which granted women equal authority under God (Westerkamp 50). In fact, three Quaker women, Lucretia Mott, Martha

[26] Feminist theologians generally advocate a view that because God is not literally male, all language about God is metaphorical or symbolic (Lindley 428).

Coffin Wright, and Mary Ann McClintock collaborated with Elizabeth Cady Stanton in writing the "Declaration of Sentiments" and organizing the Seneca Falls Convention, which was held in a Methodist Church (Griffith 51). Mott, who was also an itinerant minister, always received her Quaker Meeting's permission before she traveled (Westerkamp 163). Susan B. Anthony and Alice Paul, who organized the non-violent Silent Sentinels that protested in front of the White House during Woodrow Wilson's presidency, were also influenced by their Quaker roots. Phoebe Palmer, leader of the Holiness Movement, and Frances Willard, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, two of the most celebrated female speakers in antebellum America, were both members of the Methodist Church. For a brief period, Willard even traveled as an evangelist with the famous revivalist D. L. Moody (Hardesty 1-12). Religious historian Nancy Hardesty also links Stanton, Willard, Palmer, Lucy Stone, Antoinette Brown, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Paulina Wright Davis to influential revivalist Charles Grandison Finney. Indeed, the list of nineteenth-century women reformers who were not influenced by religious movements would be far shorter than the list of women who were. Yet, why are these women's religious identities and influences often downplayed or completely expunged from discussions of these women?

While religion has both oppressed and empowered women, an emphasis on oppression has often overshadowed religion's emancipatory effects on women. Women's participation in religious causes often enabled women to broaden and redefine roles. During the first third of the nineteenth century, almost all women's associations were allied with churches, and denominational organizations continued to be the most common form of women's grassroots organization throughout the nineteenth century (Cott 132-33; Ginzberg 37). Church-related women's groups often bridged women's movement between the private and public spheres—expanding women's social interests and concerns and equipping them with crucial skills such as writing, public speaking, organizing, fundraising, record-keeping and budgeting (Lindley 68). Many of the women nurtured and trained in these church-related groups moved into other social causes and reform activities. Although they were not usually connected with specific denominations, most of the major reform movements of the nineteenth-century including moral reform, temperance, and anti-slavery movements were religious in nature. These movements' most passionate proponents were often motivated by their religious beliefs that identified prostitution, drunkenness, and slavery as sins against God and neighbor, and blots on a moral and

Christian society (Lindley 90-91). In her study of the women's temperance movement, Carol Mattingly notes that temperance work was repeatedly described to women as their God-authorized Christian duty (*Well-Tempered* 13-38). Ultimately, combating these sins emboldened many women to disregard or at least craftily maneuver around prescriptions of women's proper behavior.

Many women were especially prompted to action by nineteenth-century evangelical revivalism. In her book, *Women Called to Witness*, Nancy Hardesty charts this relationship between evangelical revivalism and early feminists. Evangelical revivalism, which emphasized free will, experience, and activity, also opened the door to more contemporary, commonsense Biblical interpretations and theological shifts. Moreover, by recognizing all individuals as sinners in need of salvation, evangelical revivalism encouraged individuals to repent and pursue moral and holy lives. Hardesty notes that the key for women was that "all persons were seen as free moral agents," a concept which empowered some women to break with social conventions in order to pursue the higher purpose of creating a moral Christian society (Hardesty 49). The conception of women as divinely created *free moral agents* is continually repeated in nineteenth-century women's justifications for social and political activism. In 1838, Sarah Grimké wrote, in the first letter of her *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes, and the Condition of Woman*, "God created us equal;—he created us free agents;—he is our Lawgiver, our King and our Judge, and to him alone is woman bound to be in subjection, and to him alone is she accountable for the use of those talents which her Heavenly Father has entrusted her" (34). Sarah's younger sister, Angelina similarly claimed, in her *Letters to Catherine E. Beecher* that "Human beings have rights, because they are moral beings;…whatever it is morally right for man to do, it is morally right for woman to do" (64). Karylyn Korhrs Campbell, who does outline the complex relationship between religion and early women's reform in her study of early feminist rhetoric, similarly identifies this idea of a single moral standard as another key argument used to assert women's rights (37-48). Female reformers were disturbed by the double moral standard that existed for men and women in nineteenth-century society and persists in some areas of society today. Women's religious motivations as well as their frustration with the discrimination exercised by patriarchal religious institutions are evident in the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions" that came out of the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. Campbell notes how three clauses in the declaration specifically address religious discrimination—including women's

subordinate position in the church, the different code of morals assigned to men and women, and men's audacity to assume the prerogative of God (Campbell 55).

In their attempts to reinstate God's authority over both men and women, women used scripture to defend their right to speak, pursue social and legal reforms, and to motivate other women to action. The Bible not only provided a powerful source of evidence to defend their voices and actions, but scripture was also a common and comfortable language for women. Mattingly notes that nineteenth-century women were generally much better versed in the Bible than men, and many believed in the authority of scripture even if they did not agree with institutional and patriarchal interpretations (*Well-Tempered* 50). Women repeatedly used three types of scriptural defenses. First, they cataloged women who played prominent religions and political roles in the Bible including Deborah, Miriam, Huldah, Jael, Anna, Priscilla, Phoebe. Second, female reformers offered their own interpretations of scripture passages such as the creation story and Paul's oft-quoted decrees against women speaking in church (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11-12) that men used to support their views that women were subordinate and should remain silent in public. Ultimately, women's reinterpretations became of a form of *antistrephon* in which they were able to turn their opponent's arguments to their own purpose. Finally, women also emphasized scriptural passages that advocate equal treatment of individuals, such as the Golden Rule and 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" (Hardesty 64).

Although scriptural defenses for women's rights continued throughout the nineteenth century, Hardesty notes that the women's rights movement consciously turned away from that strategy by mid-century. At the 1852 and 1853 Women's Rights Conventions, Antoinette Brown, who attended Oberlin's theological seminary and in 1853 became the first woman ordained as a minister in America, proposed resolutions to acknowledge the Biblical justification for women's rights. Specifically, she proposed, "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 536). At both the 1852 and 1853 convention, lengthy debates followed these resolutions with participants finally concluding that the women's movement did not need any written authority (Hardesty 67). Hardesty notes from that point on,

the movement proceeded in a more secular direction focusing on strictly political goals and principles. Hardesty muses:

> One wonders what might have happened if the feminists had instead followed the example of the abolitionists, who built their movement on the conviction that slaveholding was not only a violation of a person's political rights but morally sinful. What would have happened if nineteenth-century feminists had called patriarchy sin in an age that still believed in the concept of sin? Their reinterpretation of the Bible gave them a base from which to confront misogyny at its roots, but some of them chose to abandon it. (Hardesty 67)

The links between religion and women's reform offer insight into the complex relationship that often existed between nineteenth-century women and religion. Like contemporary women, nineteenth-century women often felt resentful toward deeply-rooted, religious patriarchies, particularly in institutions where women comprised the majority of members and the most loyal adherents. Yet, the religious motivations, spiritual identities, and the conflicted feelings about religion evident among many of the most vocal woman's reformers are another often-overlooked facet of the story of religion in American women's rhetorical history. In the same way that women's rhetorical roles in churches and the church's role as a rhetorical site for women are often excluded from rhetorical histories, the religious motivations and influences of many well-known female reformers are often downplayed or completely ignored.

By recovering the rhetorical roles ascribed to women in the Methodist Church, the largest and most influential religious movement in the antebellum period, my dissertation also sheds light on the way religious institutions influenced many of the well-known female reformers. However, it is also important to note that throughout the nineteenth century many women active in religious movements were not comfortable associating with the women's rights movement. In her discussion of the women's missionary movement, which grew into the largest women's movement around the turn of the century, Susan Lindley claims that women in the missionary movement often "opposed what they perceived as radical and unwomanly demands. A widespread image of the women's rights movement, however unfair, was of women, loud and strident in their public posture, selfishly concerned with their own advancement to the detriment of husband, children, and less fortunate neighbors" (86). Yet, in the end, history has remembered this relatively small group of loud, strident women that comprised the women's reform

movement and forgotten the throngs of women who made up the women's missionary movement, Women's Christian Temperance Union as well as the women who taught Sunday school or participated in an array of religious and benevolent organizations. Nonetheless, these latter groups offer women a more accurate rhetorical legacy.

Exploring the rhetorical roles ascribed to and assumed by women in religious movements highlights the blurred boundaries that often existed between religion and feminist activism, and the tricky task involved in trying to historically separate them. For instance, in the 1841 introductory issue of the Methodist *Ladies' Repository*, Caleb Atwater weighs in on female education, a topic of heated debate, particularly among women's rights proponents throughout the nineteenth century. In his article, Atwater asks:

> Are our females to be mere kitchen maids, without a particle of information…If they are taught any thing more, shall it be only how to play the harp, the guitar, and the piano forte; to draw figures on paper or cloth with a painter's brush or a needle? To dance a waltz; walk gracefully on their toes; make a handsome courtesy; keep an album; sing a fashionable song; wear corsets, false curls and artificial flowers; hold a silly conversation on nothing; leer and look languishing; and—net the fool? (*LR* 1841: 10)

Atwater contends that a proper education for women would include the traditional subjects of reading, writing, English, grammar, and arithmetic as well as geography, chemistry, botany, astronomy, algebra, rhetoric, philosophy, civil and ecclesiastical history, and the "lives of great, good and distinguished women" (10). In his article, he refutes common arguments against women's education which include: education for women takes too much time and costs too much money; makes women disagreeable companions; and prevents women from attending to their domestic duties. Atwater also scolds male opponents, writing, "pompous men, who fear women as their rivals in knowledge, prefer ignorant women, yet men of liberal minds and true politeness, enthusiastically prefer, a learned woman as their wife, companion and friend, and for the mother of their children" (11). Additionally, Atwater subtly implies the independence that accompanies education—noting that an educated woman will be less likely to be misled. For instance he suggests that if a woman becomes a widow, men will not defraud an educated woman because she will know her rights (12-13).

In their 1995 examination of women's periodicals, Kathleen Endres and Therese Lueck note, "Unlike other women's magazines of the period, the Methodist Church's *Ladies' Repository* did not emphasize that woman's place was in the home. It was more concerned about educating men and women alike" (182). Rather than teaching women how to dance, sing, and flirt, during its thirty-five years in publication (1841-1876), the *Repository* engaged readers in discussions of religion, morality, poetry, science, history, and book reviews (182). Additionally, in her study women's letters to the editor printed in the *Repository,* Joanna Bowen Gillespie notes that the magazine enabled women to comment on essays in male-defined intellectual fields, and examine their own inner internal experiences in print (250). By opening new textual spaces to women, the Methodist Church both acknowledged and helped forge new identities for them. In its periodicals, by offering alternatives to the "true woman," who was relegated solely to the roles of wife and mother in the domestic sphere, the church, albeit sometimes inadvertently, acknowledged the "new woman," and her right to define her own rhetorical spheres of influence.

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