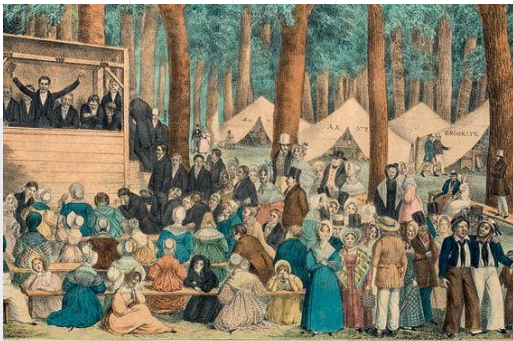


Women in the Restoration Movement

Women in Christian History
MRCC Fall '21

1

Early Revivals



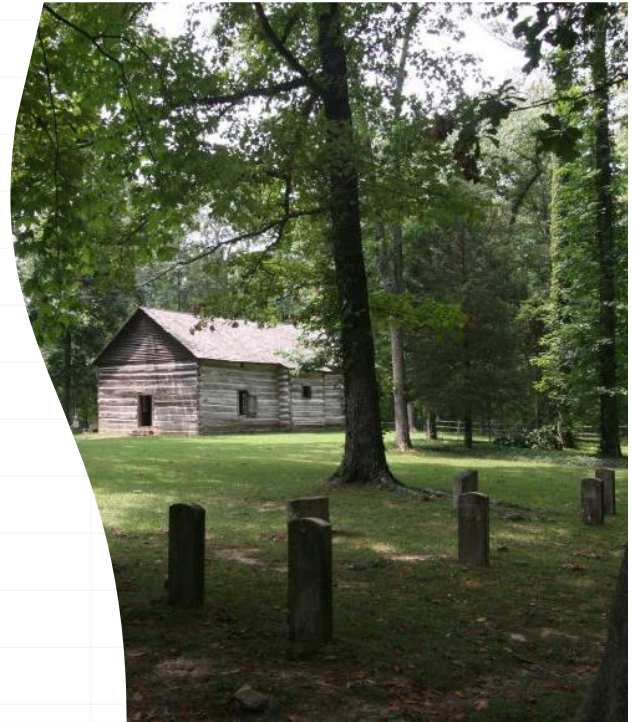
- Revival spirit began with two women who felt God "entered them" at James McGready's Red River camp meeting near Lexington in 1800
- Cane Ridge Revival in 1801 was the largest and most famous camp meeting of the Second Great Awakening, with 25,000 people gathered
 - Attendees were "slain in the spirit," fell down with "holy laughter," went into trances, barked like dogs
 - Women and men exhorted

2

Women Exhorting

“At night, meeting commenced again; the Christians were much exercised, among whom was a woman moved and surely by the power of the Holy Ghost, to speak to the people. I was no little astonished at her flow of speech and consistency of idea... Many felt the weight of her exhortation, and some were mourning under conviction the greater part of the night.”

Journal of Joseph Thomas concerning events of Dec 15, 1810 at a meeting on John Mulkey's property near Tompkinsville, KY



3

Different Roles

- **Preachers** usually ordained; gave sermon, presided at table, baptized
- **Exhorters** gave an emotional appeal after the sermon
- **Evangelists** traveled and preached; not ordained
- **Lecturers** spoke on topics and taught classes



4

Itinerant Evangelists

- **Nancy Cram** (1776–1815), raised Baptist, joined new group of “Christians only”
- After her husband left her in 1812, she became a missionary to Oneida Indians
- After leading a moving prayer a funeral, she was asked to speak at a revival meeting; hundreds were converted
 - Served as unofficial minister in NY for a year before dying at age 39
 - Several of her converts became gospel preachers, including 2 women



5

Nancy Towle (1796–1876)

- After revival experience, she left her family and began itinerant ministry in New Hampshire in 1821
- She traveled by stagecoach, canal boat, ships, railroad, and snow sled to preach in multiple countries; over 15,000 miles total
- Theologically conservative, but argued for women's equality



6

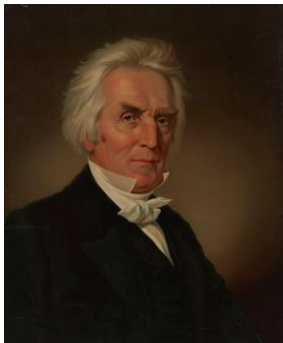
Few Women Exhorted after 1830

Spiritual fervor and apocalyptic expectation generated by revivals died down.



7

Alexander Campbell



- Held conservative position that women should remain in domestic sphere
- Valued higher education for men and women
 - Bethany College became co-ed in 1888
 - Women need education to be good wives and mothers
- Believed women could be deacons in the church
 - Argued that deaconesses like Phoebe served in the early church
 - Several early Churches of Christ appointed female deacons

8

National Women's Societies

- Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1874
- Christian Women's Board of Missions (CWBM) in 1874
 - Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Methodist and Presbyterian all organized boards at this time
 - Unlike others, CWBM was an independent agency run entirely by women with no male oversight
 - Through CWBM, women could serve without serving "publicly"
 - Not just a women's society, men joined to
 - Conservatives (Lipscomb and Sewell) thought it was wrong for women do to anything outside of home
- National Benevolent Association (NBA)



9

Middle Position

"I am not an advocate of 'Woman's Rights,' popularly so called. I only plead for her the freedom in Christ Jesus to use the rights she has... Let us forget the things that are behind, including the sphere prescribed by us in the days of our ignorance. Let us press forward to the things that are before, making for ourselves a sphere that shall be bounded but by the limits of humanity's need, and the love of humanity's Redeemer."

Candace Lhamon Smith, address at the 1896 CWBM Convention

10

- The mission of Christ should take precedence over home life
- Argument from Restorationism
 - Women had experienced perfect freedom in time of Christ
 - Male church leaders during "Dark Ages" had taken that freedom
- Lecturer's spoke on missions efforts and other social programs
 - These address were similar to sermons, and many listeners didn't know the difference
 - Women were learning to speak publicly and energized to proclaim gospel



From Society to Pulpit

11

Women's Ordination

- Earliest preachers from "Christian Connexion" in New England
- Stone-Campbell Movement among earliest Protestant groups to ordain women
 - Women were allowed to speak, but men retained "priestly roles" of presiding and leading as elders
 - Women also organized churches, baptized, and served as missionaries
 - Congregational autonomy allowed each church to decide

12



13

Clara Hale Babcock (1850-1928)

- Spoke to church as a lecturer for WCTU; she kept coming back and speaking
- In 1888 the Erie Christian Church ordained Clara Hale Babcock as the first known woman Disciple preacher
- Baptized over 1500 people, converted denominational preachers, and fought for women's leadership



14

Clara Hale Babcock (1850-1928)

'Well, sister, you may be able to preach, and bring souls to obedience, but you will be obliged to turn them over to us brethren.'

I have fully demonstrated woman's power, physically, as in over three years I have baptized all candidates presenting themselves. I have stood in ice water, and baptized many at once, in and out, any time the occasion demanded, in summer's heat and winter's cold, both in the baptistery and in rivers. I have never taken cold or been hoarse in the work; I am forty-three years old, the mother of six children, and every living relative of mine has been brought to faith and obedience. I have a happy home; each member willing to sacrifice some, if need be, for the salvation of souls and the glory of God. By the encouragement of my family and the blessing of God, my labors have resulted in the conversion of over three hundred and I am still determined to forward preaching the Word."

("Women in the Pulpit," *Christian Standard* 28 [4 June 1892], 482)

Sarah McCoy Crank (1863-1948)

- Ordained in 1892, ministered in Illinois, Arkansas, and Missouri
- “She organized or reorganized 50 Christian churches, led in the building of 18 houses of worship, baptized approximately 7,000 persons, and conducted 1,000 funerals...”



15

Sarah Lue Bostick (1868-1948)

- First known African-American woman preacher in SCM
- She and her husband both ordained in Arkansas in 1892
- She worked closely with CWBM



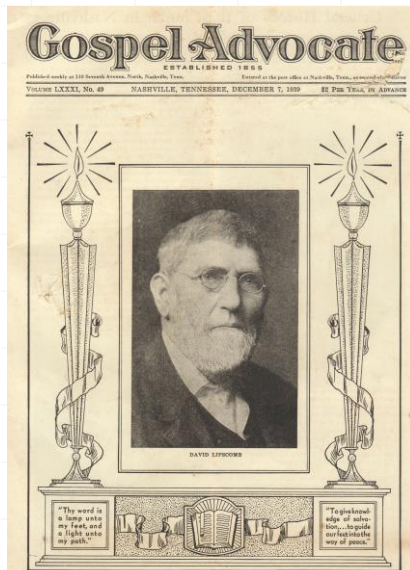
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The Christian Standard Debate (1890s)

- Series of articles over women's ordination
 - Interpretation of scripture that directly spoke of women
 - Perceived biblical status of women in relation to men
 - Authority of those in the preaching ministry
- Variety of positions



17



Gospel Advocate Debate

- Lipscombites were anti-institutional and opposed all "humanmade" organizations like missionary societies and temperance unions
- Tennessee and Texas churches tended to be more conservative, excluding women from all public speaking and leadership in church and society
- Pressing question in 1890s: "Shall the sisters pray and speak in public?"
 - *Gospel Advocate* (Mar 1888) – Does 1 Cor 14 prohibit women from even teaching Sunday school?
 - Lipscomb responded that women could teach children and even husbands, not in "an assuming, authoritative way"
 - Lipscomb advanced the "cult of domesticity" – women belong in the private sphere raising children

18

Silena Holman (1850–1915)

- An elder's wife from Fayetteville, Tennessee, and mother of eight children and leader in the WCTU
- Challenged Lipscomb and GA editors with "Let Your Women Keep Silence" (Aug 1888)
 - Observed inconsistency in NT witness about women – totally silent (1 Tim 2) or praying and prophesying (1 Cor 11)
 - She rejected distinction between "private" and "public" spheres
 - "Suppose a dozen men and women were in my parlor and I talked to them of the gospel and exhorted them to obey it? Exactly how many would have to be added to the number, to make my talk and exhortation a public instead of a private one?"
 - Cited female disciples, Paul's co-workers, and Pentecost



19

Silena Holman (1850–1915)

"In those days Philip's daughters prophesied in the presence of Luke and of Paul. But the modern woman is deemed unworthy to read or even to ask questions about the Bible in the presence of a nineteenth century man. Priscilla was wise enough, and in no wise considered unworthy to instruct Apollos, one of the most learned and eloquent of the early teachers in the doctrine of the new religion. But the modern woman must not venture to express an opinion on any religious subject in the presence of the vast amount of dignity and learning and wisdom and goodness embodied in the presence of some of our brethren of the present day."



20

Silena Holman (1850–1915)

- Rebutted by A.A. Bunner that 1 Tim 2 was the final word
- Holman responded with dozens of complicating questions:
 - How can women sing in church and obey the command to keep silence?
 - Since many of the hymns sung in church were written by women, is it a violation of God's will for women and men to sing them together, since they are women's words?
 - Does a woman have to cover her head when she prays in her own home at night?
 - Was it a meaningless accident that Christ appeared first to a woman after his resurrection and charged her with telling the good news to others?
 - Are women who have the talent to speak publicly sinning against God when they teach the gospel to the unsaved?



21

Silena Holman (1850–1915)



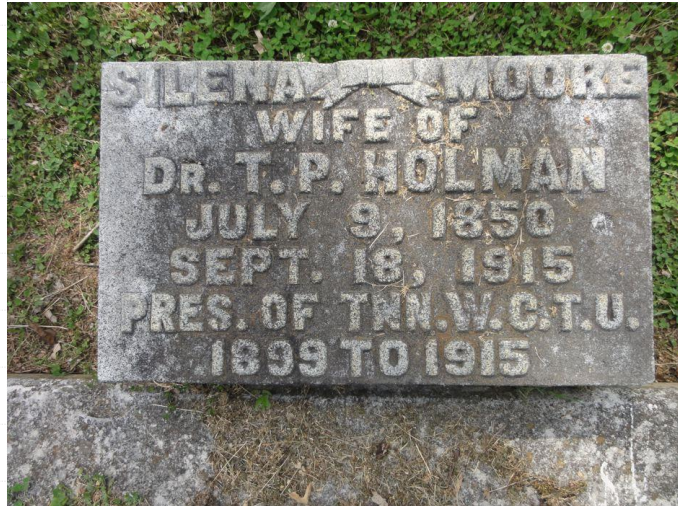
Lipscomb stepped in to say that her incomprehension of Paul's teaching was proof enough that women shouldn't teach

"Her unfitness to lead and teach arises from her strong emotional nature causing her to be easily deceived and be ready to run after anything or body that might strike her fancy against reason and facts. This is still strongly woman's characteristic as the article of our sister plainly shows. Paul says, notwithstanding this characteristic that unfits woman for a leader and teacher or assemblies, if she will devote herself to bearing children, in faith and charity and holiness, as her true work, she shall be saved."

22

Silena Holman (1850-1915)

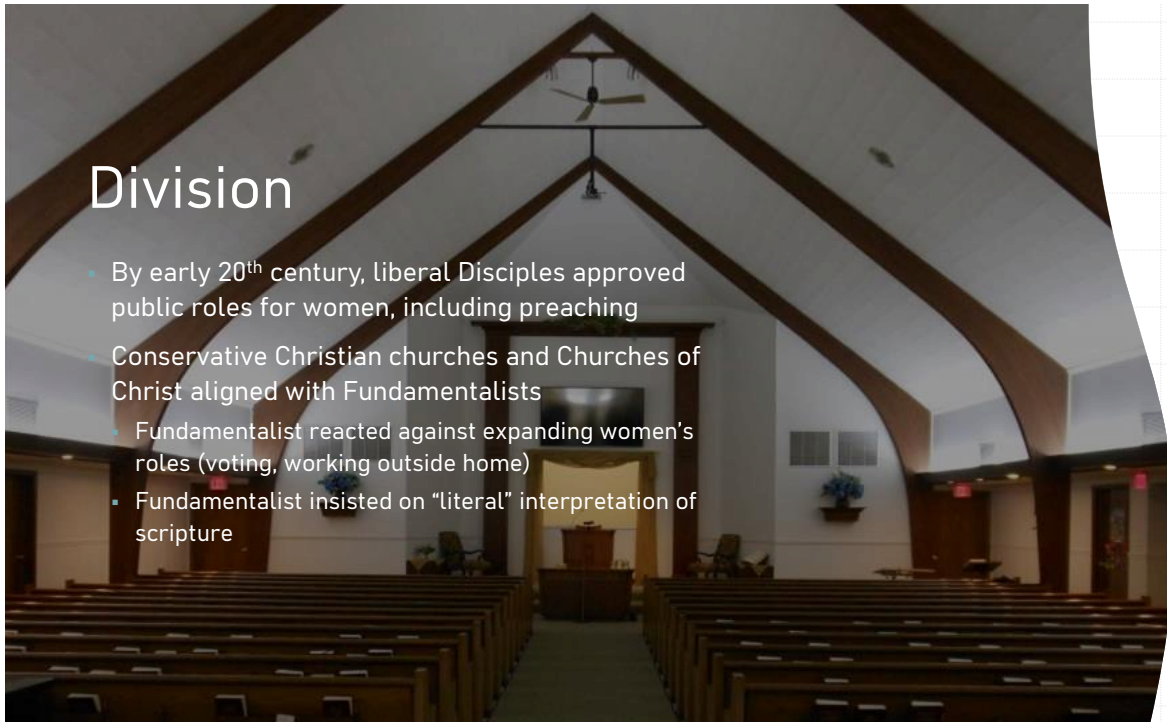
- Lipscomb continued to publish her articles, but said, "It gives a body the blues to read Sister Holman's article[s]."
- T.B. Larimore preacher her funeral. Her picture was hung in the Tennessee State Capitol, only the second woman to receive that honor.



23

Division

- By early 20th century, liberal Disciples approved public roles for women, including preaching
- Conservative Christian churches and Churches of Christ aligned with Fundamentalists
 - Fundamentalist reacted against expanding women's roles (voting, working outside home)
 - Fundamentalist insisted on "literal" interpretation of scripture



24



Deaconess Debate

- Campbell noted the presence of deaconesses in New Testament
- Some churches began ordaining deaconesses
 - Baltimore Church in 1833 "was set in order with three Elders, three Deacons, and three Deaconesses"
 - Chestnut Grove Church of Christ in Kelton, PA appointed 2 deaconesses in 1845
- Tolbert Fanning, founder of GA, advocated for them, as did Robert Milligan and Moses Lard
- Lipscomb and Sewell objected on the grounds that there should be no "offices" at all (including elders and deacons)
- C.R. Nichol, influential TX preacher, wrote in 1938: "It should be known in every congregation that Sister Phoebe, Sister Priscilla, and Sister Dorcas are deaconesses in the congregation, and that when their assistance is needed they are to be called...Many congregations are falling short of the work that should be done, because they do not have women appointed to do certain work for the church...As there was a need for the deaconess in the early days of the church, so there is now"

25

Changing Views in 1960s and 1970s

- *Mission journal* (1967-1988) carried numerous articles supported increased roles for women
- *Leaven* (1994-) also supported women's public roles
- Expansion of campus ministries in 1970s led to hiring of women "counselors"
- Women also employed in 1980s as educational ministers, children's ministers, youth ministers, counseling, and benevolence work
 - Sometimes the word "minister" was used
- Brookline Church of Christ in Massachusetts employed a woman as a pulpit minister in 1989
- A 2010 survey sampled 66 "gender inclusive" Churches of Christ
 - Women publicly read scripture, led prayer, led singing, presided and served at Table
 - Only 20% reported women preaching on Wednesday nights or Sunday mornings

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