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Chapter 6 - "Organized Mother Love": Moral Governance and the Maternal State in Late Nineteenth-Century America

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CHAPTER SIX

"Organized Mother Love": Moral Governance and the Maternal State in Late Nineteenth-Century America.

This draft comprises two sequential pieces of a work very much in progress.* They are unreconstructed first drafts which represent an attempt to get primary sources down on paper; and to draw a philosophy of governance out of a wide range of materials from the woman's temperance movement, most of which do not purport to be formal or theoretical statements. The first describes how evangelical women developed theories of moral governance within the home; the second how they translated those precepts into canons of civil governance.

As they stand , these two pieces are far too internalist. Unlike the writings of liberal feminists of the period, evangelical feminists carried on their business in a highly gendered, sentimental language which I'm afraid after some struggle I have all too successfully adopted. These pieces need to be set in the religious and political context of progressivism, the social gospel movement, and the settlement house movement, in a way that makes clear what is uniquely feminist about these positions, and what takes from (and gives back to) the mainstream (male) culture. Some other questions to pose are the implications of a "maternal" politics in an ethnically, religiously, and racially fragmented society; whether these ladies have any political starch or represent simply an unusually vapid and sappy brand of communitarianism (a question which involves a critique of Christian socialism); the extent to which a common moral language based on Christian teachings (not universal but far more familiar than today) provided a base for a significant lay critique of legal and political institutions; and what significance a "maternal" politics which spread widely at local levels had in laying the groundwork for the idea of the welfare state. Finally, the conflict between liberal and evangelical suffragists in the nineteenth century juxtaposed many of the same issues as contemporary liberal and cultural feminism, often in identical terms; in what proportions was religion a crucial ingredient or only an effective expression of feminist ideals, and has there been a persistence of religious influence in our overtly secular culture?

*This introductory note was written by Elizabeth Clark. The material that follows was drawn from her dissertation and stood at the death as the preliminary draft for the final part of her intended book. (Eds.)

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Moral Governance

In 1875 the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) sent a telegram signed by Lucy Stone and Mary Livermore to the newly formed Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), reading "the AWSA bids your convention godspeed. Soon may women, armed with the ballot, help make the laws which concern human welfare." By return wire Frances Willard and

Eliza Thompson politely replied, "the WCTU returns your kindly greetings and in Christian faith and charity abides God's will awaiting His future providence."[1] Apparently God had suffrage work in store for temperance women; by the early 1880's their national organization had endorsed the woman's ballot and they were working, if not arm in arm, at least side by side with women's suffrage groups for that common goal.

A focus on that important point of agreement obscures a world of difference. A number of scholars have explored the WCTU's instrumental vision of the ballot as an agent of social reform, comparing it (usually unfavorably) to groups like the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the American Women's Suffrage Association with their more abstract vision of fundamental rights.[2] Unlike more liberal groups, which sought to elevate the individual woman through civil rights, the WCTU's strategy linked woman's welfare inextricably with that of her family, seeking both to control the behavior of other members of the family (husbands and children) through a series of moral regulations, and to shore up the working-class family in particular through a series of programs and provisions, Christian socialist in flavor, designed to provide a stable basis for family life.

The liberal and evangelical programs represented not merely different political strategies; they were different at the root, from their first assessment of human nature and the fundamental relations to their blueprint for a polity. A similar rift divides feminists today. Likeness and

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[1]Stevenson, Katherine L., *A Brief History of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union* (2d ed.; Evanston, Ill., 1907), p.12.

[2]See in particular Barbara Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Conn. 1981); and Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty*, 1873-1900 (Philadelphia, 1981).

difference of male and female, family and self, have been the basis of much dispute in the last decade of feminist writings. Without trying to collapse time—much has changed in women's lives between then and now—the WCTU is an interesting study in themes we still debate.

Arguments from women's difference, whether they see difference as socially constructed or as essential, usually center around the experience of child-bearing and -raising, and the caring, noncompetitive style which results. For temperance women, too, the construction of themselves as mothers was central, to their own identities and to their politics. The WCTU was clearly a mothers' movement; their slogan, "organized mother love," shows their delicate perpetual balance between the maternal and the programmatic. The WCTU represents the largest and most influential mothers' movement in our history, actual practitioners of a kind of "connective politics" of which many cultural feminists dream today.[3] How did they mediate between the love and intrusion which constitute personal intimacy and social compassion? How does maternalism compare to paternalism, or liberalism, or other styles of governance?

The Relational Basis of Temperance Politics

For evangelical suffragists, motherhood was not merely a political strategy, as some have suggested, but part of a larger world view. Unlike Stanton, unlike other liberals, evangelical women did not glorify the absolute freedom of the individual from ties and obligations to others, whether family or strangers. Far from being their ideal, evangelical women pitied the unattached, even condescending sympathetically to Stanton's kingly libertarian hero, Robinson Crusoe, who "had a sorry time of it, and wasn't so useful by half as he might have been under more social

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[3]Robin West, "Jurisprudence and Gender," *Chicago Law Review*, vol. 55 no.1 (1988), pp.1-72.

influences."[4] For Frances Willard, Crusoe's absolute liberty was compromised when he saw footprints not his own on the shore of his island: "From that moment his personal liberty was divided by two; from that moment self-hood ... had to take cognizance of *otherhood."*[5] Far from being a comedown, though, the presence of another was what gave the self definition, purpose, rootedness. The idea of bonds, so repugnant to many liberals in the aftermath of slavery, signified for temperance women their binding, submissive relationship to God; as well as the second great commandment, love to neighbors.

Stanton had never met an obligation she liked. But evangelicals found such assertions of personal independence misguided and unrealistic, and raised obligations to define the highest point of humanity and spirituality both. In some very real way they took on themselves the identity of a "'bond servant' ... and the bondage is—love."[6] Far from seeing a polity as a collection of discrete individuals, it was a group that "like all creation is bound together by invisible cords, and through all pulsates a common life ..."[7]

Family life, love for spouse and children, represented the closest, most common manifestation of such bonds. In WCTU ideology the family became the paradigm for social relations. The Christian ideal of brotherhood was the foundation of a relational view of community where "whosoever will do the will of my Father, who is in heaven, the same is my mother and

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[4]Frances E. Willard, "An Open Letter," scrapbook 4, WCTU Series, reel 30.

[5]Frances E. Willard, *Woman and Temperance* (Hartford, Conn., 1883), p. 491.

[6]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 36.

[7]W.C.T.U. Declaration of Principles, in Stevenson, *Brief History*, p.99.

sister and brother ..."[8] Family ties between union members were stressed insistently; every woman was "sister" to every other, and a title conferred to honor a few of the Crusade's leaders was "Mother." Frances Willard and others travelled the remotest parts of the country ten months a year stressing the essential kinship of the union members with each other and with the rest of society; her greatest compliment, paid to some audiences, was that she felt as much at home with them as with her own mother.[9] As WCTU members often expressed it, their goal was "to make the whole world kin."[10] A typical poem ends, "will not every wife and mother/seek to help some erring brother ?/ Will not every loving daughter/seek to lift some fallen father?/ Will not sister, wife, and mother/help a brother, son, or father?/ Self-proclaimed sisters to each other, union members saw themselves as mothers to the community—a powerful image in a society which had elevated "mother" to a uniquely revered position.

In this world, one's rights, duties, even one's self-worth were measured by the fulfillment of obligations to others. Willard's favorite book, one she constantly recommended as embodying the core of the WCTU's philosophy, was Frances Power Cobbe's *The Duties of Woman.*[11] Duty itself—a concept which liberals held in low esteem—was the backbone of evangelical feminism, far more than rights. Cobbe lights into the subject of duties with relish. Her hierarchy of duties has three main categories: Religious, Personal, and Social Duties; and she subdivides Social Duties in four parts. Duties for Cobbe arise out of relationships, the most important being the

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[8]Bessie Lathe Scovell, *A Brief History of the Minnesota W.C.T.U...*1877-1939 (Minneapolis, 1939), p.55.

[9]Willard, "An Open Letter."

[10]Quoted in "The Granite State Outlook," vol, 1 no.2 (Feb. 1891).

[11]Frances Power Cobbe, *The Duties of Woman* (Boston, 1881).

"natural ties of *proximity in blood*—the reciprocal first claims of Parents and Children, and then of Brothers, and so on." The second are duties arising out of those claims founded on contract, among which Cobbe includes marriage. The third category is that of prior indebtedness, those who have been benevolent to us in the past; and the fourth the claims of *"local Propinquity*, " or neighbors.[12] Duties, then, were all around, both contractual and involuntary, and impossible to shake; you could incur a duty to someone simply by living near him.

Union members who were housewives had their share of home tasks, and like all housewives sometimes found them wearying.[13] Evangelical women, though, never expressed such weariness in public.[14] The obligations to family, neighbors, strangers were not the punitive weights imposed from without, as Stanton pictured them, but willingly assumed—"faith which turns as readily to works as steam to water."[15]

Nor is it clear that this difference between liberals and evangelicals can be traced to different material circumstances: one comparative study of leaders of both movements found that in terms of class, education, and amount and type of work outside the home, the two groups were remarkably alike.[16] Religion, this study suggests, was the break point between the groups. Liberal

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[12]Cobbe, *Duties*, p. 94

[13]Indeed, a clear strain in Stanton's brand of liberal feminism was an acknowledgment of the dehumanizing burden of home and child care, and a plea to women to reject the primary identification as domestic workers.

[14]Except for one wonderful jailed Crusader who, when her husband pleaded to be allowed to bail her out for the sake of the baby responded, "Baby? What baby? I wouldn't be got out of here for twenty babies!"

[15]Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 79.

[16]Janet Zollinger Giele, "Social Change in the Feminine Role: A Comparison of Woman's Suffrage and Woman's Temperance, 1870-1920," Ph.D. diss., Radcliffe College,

suffragists were far more likely to fall within the "liberal" sphere of religion—Congregational, Quaker, Unitarian Universalist—while temperance women more likely belonged to the evangelical denominations, particularly Methodism. The liberal God--offstage most of the time—demanded more in the way of individual growth and autonomy, while the evangelicals' God—center stage—stressed kinship and care. Evangelicals measured their own happiness and self-worth by their lovingkindness to family and others; one hoped to have as her epitaph "she was dependable."[17]

Maternal Governance

Glorification of home and family did not mean that those institutions could not be improved. Historians have been critical of the WCTU for accepting the monogamous nuclear family as it stood. In fact, the WCTU early on mounted a campaign to transform governance in the home as well as the state quite radically. Traditionally labeled "conservative" in their religion, they nonetheless shared with liberals a common enemy, the twin-headed orthodoxy of patriarchalism and Calvinism. The stories nineteenth-century women activists told of their religious experiences were varied. But for the first generation of reformers there were common themes: all grew up in Charles Finney's America, were deeply touched by the Second Great Awakening, and wrestled in their own lives with Calvinism's harsh legacy. Feminists as different as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frances E. Willard shared the experience of sitting under the preaching of Charles Finney, terrorized into insomnia by his visions of the hell awaiting the

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1961.

[17] _____. On deposit in the Widener Library.

unsaved.

The archetypal woman's story was of a childhood made miserable by a harsh, authoritarian Calvinist father, buttressed by a threatening (male) minister and a distant, unloving (male) God. Fathers in these stories exercised a sole, arbitrary authority without consultation or leniency. In one of the richest accounts, Mary Livermore's father imposed a severe Sunday regime on the family—no cooking, no reading but the Bible, incessant prayer meetings harping on the frailness of the hope of salvation until "I was sometimes shaken to the center of my being, and...frequently felt a bitter regret that I had ever been born."[18] Snuffling, creeping sextons, austere ministers, cold dark specter-filled churches scared her so as a child, Mary Livermore recounts, that she would cling to her father for hope and reassurance which he could not give. One Sunday, her eighth birthday, she received a beautiful, rare gift, a copy of *Robinson Crusoe* bound in red leather. Unable to leave the book alone, she was caught reading it several times by her father, who finally threw it in the fire—an act of gratuitous cruelty Livermore recounts with rage in her autobiography over sixty years later.[19] Reform women depicted such displays of patriarchal authority as common, and as abusive, arbitrary, damaging—the exercise of blind, unreasonable, unloving force designed to break the spirit of the child. Liberals and evangelicals both unanimously rejected this male model of governance through fear in home and church both, substituting a loving, suffering, feminine Christ for the feared, patriarchal God of Calvinist

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[18]Mary A. Livermore, *The Story of My Life, or the Sunshine and Shadow of Seventy Years* (Hartford, Conn., 1899), p. 56.

[19]Livermore, *Story*, p. 59. The story of the attempt to break Mary's spirit is recounted in detail in Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 427.

religion. Livermore even substituted "Our Jesus" for "Our Father" in her childhood prayers.[20] The idea of a womanly model of domestic and religious authority began to assert itself with the feminine Christ, and was one which women eagerly developed and applied. "Our Mother" became the counter to "Our Father" in temperance women's writing, and she exercised a radically different style of authority. Mary Livermore as a child was deeply concerned with religious things, and despite her hatred of abusive authority, was torn for many years by the process of working out her stance toward God. She hated the distant, frightening ministers, but loved the more jovial ones, and longed to preach herself; often as a child she did preach to an audience of logs. Occasionally her mother consented to sit as one of the congregation (impossible to imagine her father there, even in play): when Mrs. Livermore laughed, Mary "rebuked" her "severely," telling her that "laughter did not become God's house."[21]

Her deep conflict between the patriarchal and maternal models, between her father's influence and her mother's, also expressed itself during one visit from her cousins, when the children eagerly devoured the "ghastly chronicles" in Fox's Book of Martyrs. They were especially taken with the story of the burning of Archbishop Cranmer, a tale her father used to illustrate the nobility of martyrdom. Later, alone, the children decided to reenact the story using Mary's best toy, an expensive London wax doll. Like Cranmer, the doll perished quite satisfactorily in the flames; Mary was immediately overcome with "the remorse of matricide," and was for months inconsolable that Christian zeal had led her to "sacrifice" her only child—a sacrifice which fathers might but

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[20]On the feminized nature of Christ in the nineteenth century see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York, 1977), chaps. 3 and 4.

[21]Livermore, Story, p. 70.

mothers would never make.[22]

Occasionally this conflict over styles of governance showed itself in open warfare between mother and father for control of the children. Despite women's deprecation of power, the home was clearly a charged environment; they very often spoke of it in military terms as their "domain," their "kingdom," their "fortress." Conflict could arise between individual parents within the home; and clearly despite the lip service paid to equality it was not in sorrow that Mary Livermore reported that although her mother never argued with her father, "no man was ever more completely under the control of another."[23] A father who flouted mother's authority and instincts about children often brought down tragedy, as did John Mason in *The Voice of the Home* when he became a drinking companion to his son, whose appetites he could not curb. But mothers engaged in a larger fight as well, with the "traps and snares" which the wide male world set, particularly for sons but for daughters as well.[24] For without their children women were without their raison d'etre. Frances Raymond, a Civil War widow and mother of an only son, looked to her country for help: "if it could not provide so tender, yet should it not a *larger* fatherhood?" Yet in her battle against her son's drinking she was scorned and challenged by a bartender to provide "superior attractions" to keep her son at home, a competition in which the state sided with the man.[25] Often providing "superior attractions" in these texts leads to an eroticized mother-son relation at the expense of the conjugal. Temperance women hoped to be

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[22]Livermore, *Story*, pp. 93-96.

[23]Livermore, *Story*, p. 40.

[24]Sarepta Henry, *The Voice of the Home* (New York, 1882), p. 312.

[25]Sarepta Henry, *Frances Raymond's Investment: Or, the Cost of a Boy* (Chicago, 1889), p. 36.

"adored by their sons, depended on by their husbands and friends."[26] In one of the best known cases in which the father used overriding influence, one woman commended the son, Christ, who "in his hour of mortal agony did not forget his mother."[27]

For the child in temperance writings, the home as governed by maternal authority was a far more congenial place—safer, warmer, more loving. Fathers tended to disrupt families. They were bossy; they drank; frequently and against mothers' wishes they uprooted families from loved homes to seek their fortunes on inhospitable land, "like Eve driven from Paradise."[28] Frances Willard's father committed an act of unthinkable cruelty; when Frances was in her early twenties her sister Mary died, and in an effort to wipe out her memory Josiah Willard, over the protests of his wife and daughter, sold at auction not only their family home but all of their personal possessions—the household goods of thirty years.[29] Critics have portrayed home for temperance women as stuffy, stilted, inegalitarian. But the motherly home was a haven, not for men but for women; it became an alternative to the harsher, unforgiving love of the patriarchal God and father. Mary Livermore recounted a time when, as children lost in a storm, parental love had rescued them, father bringing them home to the "beloved mother ... with dry clothing; a good supper, and the unspeakable blessedness of home, love, and welcome." As an adult she longed for

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[26]One article on the children's page of the Union's official organ, the *Union Signal*, urged boys to "fall in love" with their mothers (vol. 9, no. 45 [Nov. 22, 1883]); see also *Arena*, vol. 6 (1892), p. 371 (the definition of a clubwoman is given as "her children adore her. Her husband and friends rely on her good sense.")

[27]Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 163.

[28]Livermore, *Story*, p. 42.

[29]Frances E. Willard, *A Great Mother: Sketches of Madam Willard* (Chicago, 1894), p. 65.

an equally loving God and a similar resolution to problems by the "clear voice of our Father sounding out from the gloom, 'Lo, I am here.'"[30]

The home as governed by mother was even safe from the gravest danger—eternal damnation. In another archetypal story, the death of the sister (or brother, or lover), the father is unable to assure his grieving family that the sister has been saved. In Mary Livermore's account, a minister reinforces her doubt and counsels the family to "accept the inevitable." Years later, the elderly Mary Livermore is still anguished over the death of the young girl; "not one intimation that she had entered a larger, nobler, and happier life. Flung out of existence into the dark, a delicate, white-souled child..."[31] Doubt precipitated a crisis; Mary needed reassurance that her sister was not lost, which no male figure could give. "My mother alone was able to comfort me ... No amount of theological disputations removed her from her anchorage ...(a) belief that religion is love to God and love to man; that it is not possible for God, whose very nature is love, to send into life any creature, knowing that eternal torment awaits him." Again, the figure Mary Livermore later came to call "God the Mother" would not sacrifice even one child to the harsh regime of God the Calvinist Father.

Female intuition in WCTU literature is repeatedly posed against loveless male disputation; the mother's love and experience is privileged over the father's theology. "Men preach a creed; women will declare a life. Men deal in formulas, women in fact. Men have always tithed mint and rue and cumin in their exegesis and their ecclesiasticism, while the world's heart has cried out for

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[30]Livermore, *Story*, p. 117.

[31]Livermore, *Story*, p. 135.

compassion, forgiveness, and sympathy ..."[32] The evangelical reform women were part of a liberal movement within the church that rejected Calvinist orthodoxy, Biblical literalism, hair-splitting disputations. Temperance women would put in their place a simpler religion based on the two great commandments—love for God and man—interpreted not through the intricacies of ancient languages but through love and common sense, virtues which mothers held in equal measure with fathers. Temperance leader Hannah Whitall Smith's popular religious tracts were all based on a "theology...learned in the nursery with my children."[33]

Many of the first generation of suffragists, liberals and evangelicals alike, were formed in their early years by struggles against Calvinist patriarchy and its male authoritarian model: despite their differences, Stanton shared with evangelicals a real dislike of orthodox "creeds and codes." The alternative models of governance which both liberals and evangelicals advocated shared some features; a commitment to a tolerant, liberal, reasoning style (words, however, which evangelicals and liberals could interpret quite differently) which eschewed the use of force or coercion. But unlike the liberals, temperance women developed a science of maternal government as a prototype for the exercise of power in both home and state, a deeply gendered model based on women's biosocial role. But although it was a style any woman could aspire to, it was not instinctive.

At times it seemed the WCTU had taken on the task, not just of mothering the world, but of first teaching women how to be mothers. Huge numbers of tracts, pamphlets, books, speeches,

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[32]Frances Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit* (New York, 1888), p.47.

[33]Quoted in Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 199.

and meetings were devoted to celebrating good motherhood or developing it in others.[34] Temperance mothers told their stories in first-person narrative or lightly disguised as fiction; mothers' meetings were at the heart of the Union's program. The mothering blitz was directed, not just at the new immigrants or the poor, but at the middle and upper classes, the Union's own rank and file, past mothers, future mothers—any woman who would listen. For union members identified a variety of personal and social evils as resulting from poor mothering in the home, and saw improving the quality of mother-child relations as fundamental to social change.

The new good mother was in every way the reverse of the patriarch. She led, not drove; used smiles and rewards rather than stress and punishments; never imposed arbitrary judgements on her children but reassured them instead. One such mother reinterpreted the biblical rod—man's punitive staff—as a mere "symbol," representing not chastisement but the care and love of the shepherd.[35] The watchword here was not coercion but "voluntary compliance." A Minnesota temperance worker coined an optimistic slogan which became popular: "no labor strikes, no strikes in the family; the best-governed children are those who seem to govern themselves."[36] Like the government of God where "no coercion is found but absolute liberty," such a home was an "ideally practical democracy." The family government was approved and rejoiced

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[34]Willard, *A Great Mother*; Mary Allen West, *Childhood; its Care and Culture* (Chicago, 1892); Hannah Whitall Smith, *Educating Our Mothers, or, Wise Mother hood* (London, 1896); Sarepta Henry, *Studies in Home and Child Life* (New York, 1887). See also leaflets of Union's Mothers' meetings, W.C.T.U. Archive, Evanston, Ill. Occasionally there were slip-ups. The Boston temperance ladies accidentally put out a cookbook called *Massachusetts W.C.T.U. Cuisine* (Boston, 1878) in which several of the recipes were found to be "poisoned with wine. It is impossible to testify to the sorrow of the committee in charge of the book..." (errata slip).

[35]Henry, *Studies*, p. 95. See also Willard, *Great Mother*, pp. 134 ff.; Smith, *Educating Our Mothers*, p. 34.

[36]Emily H. Miller, quoted in scrapbook 10, WCTU Series, reel 31.

in by each child. There was equality and deference "to parents and children alike, and children's voices were heard in the settlement of difficult questions in the counsel of the whole."[37] Unlike the traditional family, mother and father were equal partners sharing both power and responsibility equitably.

Mothers secured voluntary compliance with prizes, rewards, encouragement as the tools of persuasion. Many evangelical suffragists had used such theories in their work as teachers as well and had first tested them out as Frances Willard did at Northwestern Women's College, where girls who routinely obeyed the code of conduct advanced to the "corps of the self-governed."[38] "Voluntary" here held a rather different meaning for evangelicals than it did for liberals, though, and the contrasting uses lay at the core of the conflict between the two groups. Despite the emphasis on "voluntary" action, the writings of the WCTU overall do not manifest the same belief in human choice and free will that the liberals often did. "Free will" for evangelicals retained its older sense, not of unlimited human freedom, but of choice exercised in the context of God's will: choice to do or not to do wrong. With the declining emphasis on sin, the phrase was often used by temperance workers to mean "the exercise (of) that free *choice* of duty wherein virtue consists."[39] Willard, for example, writes in her later years that watching her father sign the Washingtonian temperance pledge as a child was her first lesson in personal liberty.[40] One temperance paper, *The Granite State Outlook,* laid out a three-pronged scheme of family

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[37]Henry, *Studies*, pp. 84 ff.

[38]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 26; Livermore, Story, p. 368.

[39]Cobbe, Duties, p. 28.

[40]Frances Willard, "Address Before the 22nd Annual Meeting of the National WCTU...Oct. 18-23, 1895, p. 3.

governance which encapsulated both the common program of evangelicals and liberals, and their splits. "Household tyranny" or old-style patriarchy, the common opponent of both groups, was one extreme. The other extreme was characterized by "Household anarchy," presumably the domestic environment which Stanton advocated and fostered. The third option, happily placed in the middle, was a house governed through the mechanism of "cheerful, trusting, love-inspired confidence in the parent's will."[41]

Occasionally, of course, some child's (or spouse's) cheerful self-government broke down; but writers on mothering assured women that praise not blame, the carrot not the stick, was the way to secure "voluntary compliance."[42] Temperance women were hypersensitive to the open exercise of power, and to the unsexing that came with coercion and the use of force—so much the patriarch's role. Sometimes a temperance matriarch would vent righteous anger at barkeepers or saloon owners, and took pleasure in dressing them down with a kind of brutal maternal authority that made grown men quail like small boys.[43] But usually, toward all the world but barkeepers, temperance women rejected the confrontational tactics of liberal suffragists, adopting as a policy methods of control which drew on womanly "influence," like gentle persuasion, coaxing, imploring—considered the traditional weapons of the weak. Temperance women sought to

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[41]*Granite State Outlook*, June, 1891, p. 2.

[42]Smith, *Educating Our Mothers*, p. 34. See also Livermore, *Story*, p. 41.

[43]*Union Signal*, vol. 4 no. 6 (Feb. 8, 1883), p. 3; vol. 9 no. 49 (Dec. 20, 1883), p. 3. Despite their own efforts and self image, the WCTU ladies were often perceived as confrontational and forceful in the public literature; alternately they were cast as whiney, as on the stone grave marker some wag put on the site of a former saloon reading, "Died, A Saloon, Nagged to Death by a Woman" (Additon, *Twenty* Years, p. 61).

"suggest without the slightest appearance of arbitrary dictation."[44] The best power was that with fewest outward manifestations, like the message of comfort a wife sent to a sick husband miles away which simply "by the power of that woman's will" soothed him into his first restful sleep in days.[45]

This style of persuasion was unconfrontational, artificial, and highly gendered. But one of its better characteristics was its reluctance to adopt male models of force. For one thing, in a society still deeply Christian in its ethos, if not wholly in its belief, the victory of force over gentleness was not a foregone conclusion; the figure of the loving, forebearing, womanly Christ which temperance women adopted as their emblem still held a powerful charge, though less than in the antebellum period. Frances Willard and many others stressed that it was Christianity which had raised human society above the level of brute force to a plane where women could share the rule of brain, heart, conscience, love.[46]

In addition, noncoercion was a critical part of the WCTU's political agenda as well, which in its Department of Peace and Arbitration anticipated the special nexus which exists today between feminism and the peace movement. As they rejected the brutal, forceful God of the Old Testament and of Calvinism, so temperance women rejected authoritarianism in the home and in the administration of both domestic and foreign politics. Rather, they saw themselves as gifted arbitrators, painting Mother as a skillful diplomat who "drew up treaties, subdued kingdoms, and

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[44]*Union Signal*, 4 January 1883, p. 3.

[45]Union Signal, 5 November 1885, p. 7. Another letter suggests that members sidle up to a drunk, slip their hands into his side pocket, and replace the flask with a copy of the New Testament (scrapbook 9, reel 31, WCTU Papers.)

[46]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, pp. 392 ff.

wrought righteousness" in settlement of disputes within her domain.[47]

The repudiation of force and of a confrontational stance is not the element of the WCTU agenda most at odds with a liberal feminism; both broadly rejected as a matter of theory and principle violent restructuring measures imposed from without. But the WCTU's alternate model of maternal care was deeply illiberal in some of its presumptions. In rejecting an authoritarian God temperance mothers also rejected traditional privileges of the (male) Creator as "architect to shape the young immortal according to...(his) preconceived plan." Rather, mothers were gardeners, growers, assistants in the natural practice of evolution; children were trees not to be pruned or clipped but "to grow with sun and soil, dew and shower and growth unhindered and untransformed; the work of parent and instructor being to remove hindrances, to see that no deforming influence had power, to feed and stimulate, never to repress or abridge its beneficent possibilities."[48]

This description recalls liberal strictures about the value of care, education, and the opportunity for unfettered development. But the liberal garden held a wild variety—no genus, no species, but each plant once blossomed entirely individual and distinct.[49] Evangelicals focused instead on the process of growth and the teleological forces which, if conditions were right, would produce a homogeneous field. Within the gentle structure of maternal evolutionary thought the child found nurturing and license; but not license for the acorn to grow into an elm or a tulip. As

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[47]Willard, *Great Mother*, p. 143.

[48]Willard, *Great Mother*, p. 138; Henry, *Studies*, p. 54.

[49]The most extreme statement of this comes in Elizabeth Cady Stanton's speech "The Solitude of Self," printed as "Hearing of the Woman Suffrage Association Before the Committee on the Judiciary...1892" (n.p., n.d), p. 2.

Hannah Whitall Smith described the sowing, "voluntary obedience is a deed which is performed after the right state of feeling towards the thing has been induced. Compulsion is an attempt to manufacture the fruit without planting the seed."[50] In a similar vein, WCTU literature eschewed the open-ended question. But one of the most common formats for their material for children and adults both was the catechism, or pamphlets consisting of questions and answers, to be read chorally, resolving even the most complex moral issues and leaving nothing open to doubt.[51]

Temperance women also drew on evolutionary thought to recast the biblical notion of sin, a staple of Christian theology which plagued religious liberals throughout the nineteenth century. The sin which drew down the lightening wrath of God was a relic of orthodoxy, as the physical punishment of a child was a relic of patriarchy. Punishment became rather a natural operation which resulted automatically from the infringement of one of God's natural laws, teaching the sorrowful child (or adult) a healthy lesson without the need for punitive parental intervention.[52] The WCTU's philosophy took perfectionism to new heights in their sunny confidence that sin was not inherent in the human condition but could be permanently vanquished. Not for them the anguishing, life-long struggle and self-examination of their Calvinist ancestors: the WCTU wholeheartedly endorsed the liberal tenet that all were saved, as consonant with loving parenthood.

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[50]Smith, *Educating Our Mothers*, p. 34.

[51]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 401; Sarepta Henry, *A Manual of Evangelical Temperance Work for ALL WCTUs* (New York, 1881); "Annual Leaflet of the National WCTU" (Chicago, 1898).

[52]Smith, *Educating Our Mothers*, p. 40; Frances E. Willard, "Address Before the Second Biennial Convention of the World's Christian Temperance Union..." p. 53 ("the law of ethics is the law of cause and effect"); *Union signal*, 14 January 1886, p. 4. See also an article by Henry Wood, "The Universality of Law," in *Arena*, vol. 5 (1892), at p. 201.

But in protecting children from the dark, mortal terrors of their own childhood, the good mothers also seemingly denied them something of the autonomy towards which liberal religions strove. In the WCTU's philosophy, a child, hedged around by God's "natural" laws (a comprehensive code) and full maternal guidance, no longer had the responsibility of facing God directly, and little experience of the ongoing process of self-government through daily struggles with moral and ethical questions, learning to resolve them on her own rather than through mother's guidance. Good mothers tended to make doing right an irresistible, even a thoughtless process, believing that individual struggles with sin and temptation could be circumvented by a loving regime of guidance and care.

"The Home Going Forth Into the World"

The WCTU in the last quarter of the nineteenth century relied heavily on motherhood as the source and model of its power. But in order to expand its program outward from the home, it was important not to base women's authority strictly on essentialist arguments, thereby limiting it to relations between biological mothers and their children. Rather, Union literature showed the qualities of motherhood as common, even to women who had never borne children; Sarepta Henry thought it possible for a woman to actually bear a child without even knowing "one throb of genuine motherhood," while a virgin aunt could be the sweetest mother of all.[53] Hannah Whitall Smith cast her argument as a spiritual, rather than a biological essentialism, and felt that there

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[53]Henry, *Studies*, p. 23. See also the poem for Mother Stewart in scrapbook 10, WCTU Series, reel 31 ("Our physical law makes that grand word [mother]/ A natural consequence/But when 'tis born of spirit/ And unselfish love..." then mother becomes like George Washington); and the poem for Frances Willard in Lucia F. Additon, *Twenty Eventful Years of the Oregon WCTU*, 1880-1900 (Portland, 1904).

were very few women in whom the elements of "spiritual motherhood" could not develop "unless they be utterly abnormal."[54]

The Union's "science of motherhood" and maternal training and education programs conveyed the message "any woman can." Another common story is of temperance woman whose skills were not innate, whose clothes were spotted, whose biscuits were not light and whose floors were not clean. Mary Livermore was one who represented herself as lacking intuitive domestic skills, and feared that through an angry household god she had been "elected to ... (a) desolate future of shiftlessness and celibacy." But, using the means and agency so celebrated by Finney, upon marriage she "put myself under instruction as I had done when I wished to know a language, and found the domestic arts not difficult to acquire."[55] Detaching motherhood from actual childbirth and making it an art which virtually all women could learn laid the groundwork for the exercise of mothering as a social and political skill.[56]

Another strong appeal to women to extend their mission outside the home came from the Union's mandate to work for other mothers' children as well as one's own.[57] Mrs. A. E. Hall undertook a municipal post to purify the streets of Chicago as "a work of salvation for other

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[54]Smith, *Educating Our Mothers*, pp. 12-13.

[55]Livermore, *Story*, p. 90. But see also Mrs. A.M.M. Payne, "One of Them," in the *Union Signal*, 12 November 1885, where a suffragist earns respect for her ideas through her beautiful housekeeping. Livermore's language is reminiscent of the language of means to salvation which Charles Finney made common during the Second Great Awakening.

[56]In contrast to the story of non-intuitive domestic skills, Frances Willard's political skills came to her in a revelation after a marathon prayer session.

[57]Frances E. Willard, "*The Daughter of the Republic*," in Scrapbook 3, WCTU series, reel 30; *Union Signal*, 15 November 1883, p. 2.

mothers' little children" after her only child died of diphtheria.[58] Such potential for public good through maternal care could be multiplied until with "ten thousand local unions, everybody in this country has ten times ten thousand mothers willing to look after him and help him to the good."[59]

Such arguments were especially appealing to mothers whose sons and daughters were beyond their command, caught up in the swirl of distant big-city life. The mother in her small home was no match for a big world, for the saloon, the vice dens, the "cunning avaricious monopolists" out to seduce and ruin her child.[60] But through motherly surrogates in Unions in other cities she could perhaps exercise a proxy control, as in Sarepta Henry's popular novel *Voice of the Home.* There Roy Mason begins a downhill slide into fast company and drink when the railroad comes to town; he is eventually forced to leave, with no word of his whereabouts to his heartbroken mother Mary. Mary pours out her maternal love and good works on another troubled young alcoholic, a Masonville bartender named Frank Barton—whose own mother, it turns out, is nursing Roy in the town where Frank grew up.[61]

The Union's philosophy of connection stressed a theme common to the broader culture of the late nineteenth century as well, in everything from religious tracts to beer-hall songs: though men and women alike may abandon or be wrenched from their birth-family ties in an increasingly anonymous world, "every girl is someone's daughter" (a parson's daughter?), every

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[58]Frances E. Willard, *Occupations for Women* (New York, 1897), p. 360.

[59]Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 155. The exchange was not quite one for one; a midwestern town had an ordinance allowing any parent or guardian, or any three respectable citizens, to commit a wayward juvenile to a home. *Union Signal*, 26 November 1885, p. 4. The idea of "ten times ten thousand mothers" sounds like a Woody Allen nightmare

[60]Sarepta Henry, *Frances Raymond's Investment*, p. 39.

[61]Sarepta Henry, *The Voice of the Home* (New York, 1882).

boy is someone's son.[62] The abandoned, the dispossessed, are only temporarily outside the network of relations, and deserve to be treated and valued—not as the liberal individual—but by the loving family ties they once had, and in an effort to restore them, to redeem the loss of one mother by "ten times ten thousand mothers."[63]

For the hand that rocked the cradle the reach out into the world was easier when its object was extended mothering. Nor did evangelicals feel that they were breaking a barrier; they emphatically rejected the classic liberal formulation which split the world in two. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other liberal feminists in this period urgently pressed a split between public and private, promoting a home insulated from external and regulating influence. Liberal feminists sought to break down the boundaries of women's sphere while leaving the division between public and private intact.[64] Evangelicals sought to deconstruct the two barriers simultaneously, understanding them in fact as interdependent, common borders of one problem. The idea that public and private could be separated was repugnant to their fundamental belief in accountability under a single Christian law and moral code, which was the measure of all actions. God's stricture, "inasmuch as ye have done unto the least of these thy brethren, ye have done unto me," precluded a double standard for male and female, rich and poor, officeholder and housewife, family and

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[62]*The Temperance Songbook*, edited by Emmet G. Coleman (Canada, 1971) is full of songs with titles like "The Prodigal Girl" (p.8); "Oh Johnny Come Back To the Farm" (p.12); "Breaking Mother's Heart" (p. 27) (with a chorus "She'll break the heart of her old gray-haired mother/She'll break it, yes, break it tonight (tonight"); "The Orphan girl" (p. 30); "Somebody's Boy" (p. 52); as well as the famous "Father, Dear Father, Come Home With Me Now" (p. 60).

[63]Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 40.

[64]Ellen DuBois has commended as liberal suffragism's greatest strength its bypassing the domestic sphere entirely to seek equality in the public sphere. Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of An Independent Women's Movement in America*, 1848-1969 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1978).

stranger.

The evangelical model for relations between social spheres was not bifurcation but concentric circles; the rings extended outward from the human heart to encompass the home, the church, and then society; and finally government, "a circle that includes all hearts, all homes, all churches, all societies."[65] The circle theory acted as a radical counter to bifurcation. Through a theory of reverberation it set up a standard of accountability based on a cause-and-effect process that worked like ripples in a pond. "There is a theory...that anything once started never ceases its actions; the sound, once wakened, goes on and on in endless vibrations, as if it were a chain, whose ever-added links went on to infinity. If this is true in the natural world, something quite like it is true in the moral world..."where ever widening circles of influence agitate "to the remotest bounds" first the home, then society and the nation.[66] The home here is not a rival kingdom to the state but incorporated into it. The concentric model, each ring nestled into the next and affecting it and all the others, laid the groundwork for evangelical feminists' efforts to make the outer rings—corporations, industry, government—accountable by standards of social justice derived from the governance of the middle-class home. A mother realizes that "the safety of the cradle is dependent on the purity of the executive mansion; and the father sees that the nation is served by every pair of baby shoes he buys, and that international justice is linked with the sweetness of his own fireside."[67]

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[65]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p.46, p. 29: Henry, *Studies*, p. 51. This metaphor was commonplace in temperance circles.

[66]Jane Stebbins, *Fifty Years: History of the Temperance Cause* (Hartford, Conn., 1876), p. 183. Such language is very reminiscent of ante-bellum feminist rhetoric.

[67]Scrapbook 10, WCTU series, reel 31.

The march of the WCTU was "the home going forth into the world," both symbolically and literally.[68] Many historians of the WCTU have noted its reformist agenda for a maternal politics, its emphasis on the special womanly qualities of moral vision and integrity.[69] The WCTU subscribed fully and unhesitatingly to a women's agenda, casting themselves as coming to a sleazy world of male politics as they would to a bachelor's hall, armed with brooms and dustpans, to clean and ventilate the place.[70] On a material plane, WCTU women were "homemakers" in the most literal and persistent sense. Following their goal of making "the world more homelike" they made homes in unlikely places—jails, churches, halls, rented rooms. WCTU meetings were famous for their domestic decor, replacing the dusty halls of early nineteenth-century reform meetings—eccentrics on hard benches—with auditoria adorned with bunting, curtains, cushions, plants, pictures, furniture—anything to create a homelike atmosphere. Local, state, and national Unions were constantly opening "homes"—not institutions or asylums—where the wayward, the orphaned, the lost, the needy, the drunken could heal in an atmosphere which recreated the discipline and love of the ideal birth family.

The agenda of many local WCTUs was ambitious. "Rest cottages" at resorts and state fairs provided temperance refreshments in a cozy atmosphere.[71] Perhaps the most common mission local

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[68]Frances E. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years* (Chicago, 1889), p.471.

[69]See in particular Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity*; and Bordin, *Woman and Temperance.*

[70]Willard, *Glimpses*, p. 594. Note that liberal feminists used this language sometimes as well.

[71]Additon, *Twenty Years*, p.70; Harriet Van Meter, *First Quarter Century of the WCTU of Salem, N.J.* (n.p., 1909), p. 60; *Monroe Country WCTU Annual Report* (New York, 1888), pp.27 ff. The ladies of Monroe felt that such efforts "may save us from a horrible revolution in our social fabric." Their booth at the State Fair was soon wrecked, seemingly by vandals.

unions undertook was to provide "noon rest" rooms for local working women. One Oregon worker called their apartment a "headquarters for industrial womanhood" and suggested that the work emanated from "the study of the ethical side of the great labor question." That room was actually open all day for "rest, advice, and loans to working girls." The local WCTU in charge planned eventually to broaden their agenda to encompass much of what was included in "settlement work." Unions in Portland, Oregon opened in quick succession the "Baby Home," which in 1888 took in 132 babies, and the "Industrial Home," later called the "Refuge Home," for working women needing shelter.[72] The WCTU attributed many of the ills of the residents to being "left motherless in childhood...(they) have been allowed to roam the streets and form such acquaintances as their restless fancies dictated...Some have mothers living, and have been ungrateful and disobedient, and some poor girls have not had good homes or careful mothers." The workers hoped that the "organized mother love" they provided would help heal their charges.[73] Nor was politics immune from the Union's domestic labors. The Littleton, New Hampshire Union, for example, served lunch at town meetings, seeking to create a pacific environment. On one occasion they actually interrupted a brewing fight bybursting into song; "the voters had no more trouble that day."[74]

Another common tactic was carried out enthusiastically on an election day in Iowa when

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[72]This kind of work was typical of local unions across the country, although typically also from my reading the projects didn't last more than several years, seemingly from lack of organization rather than from lack of success, although the WCTU's own records and local histories obviously don't tell the whole story.

[73]Additon, *Twenty Years*, pp. 50, 70-72.

[74]*Historical Sketch of the WCTU of Littleton, N.H., 1881-1896* (Littleton, N.H., 1897), p. 10.

prohibition was on the ballot. In towns around Iowa the night before the vote women decorated polling places with pictures, evergreens, flowers, and mottos like "the father's constituency is his family." On election day in Marion the WCTU opened a homey, decorative lunchroom right across from city hall with a banner saying "WCTU Free Lunch for All," where they wooed male voters with meat, pie, and good coffee. At the instigation of the WCTU, ministers and small children roamed the streets with songs and flowers, pressing themselves imploringly on potential voters; more than one succumbed and cast the ballot "for Sallie and the children."[75] The WCTU here countered the male brand of electoral politics with its own slightly more dignified street theater, answering the bartender's challenge to Frances Raymond to keep her men at home with "superior attractions." Nor were Union members under any illusion about the nature of the contest; as Frances Willard said of a similar successful election strategy, "hundreds of voters were fed and won."[76] The evangelical image of the home was sentimental, sweet and cloying. At the same time it represented a clear critique of male politics—the smoke-filled hall, the vote-buying candidates, the sodden, corrupt electorate. The WCTU did their best to bring their counter image, the well-run rational home, into the public sphere.

How can we evaluate the WCTU's efforts at a "connective" politics, or mothering the world? Their reform of household discipline—the replacement of punitive, Calvinist-based patriarchy by a more rational, affective, mother-centered household—seems all to the good; it was this part of their agenda that they shared with liberal feminists. In addition, most Union members were motivated at least in part by a genuine desire to improve the lives of those around

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[75]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, pp. 404ff., p. 416.

[76]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, pp. 360-61.

them out of their own plenty. In addition to "rest" rooms and refuges, local unions, with complete autonomy over their own programs, worked variously on nutritional programs, kindergartens, prison reforms (largely, it is true, supplying them with Bibles and temperance literature), campaigns for an eight-hour day and a living wage—all out of a sense of obligation to others which did not motivate Stanton or many of the liberals. Evangelical feminists shared a strong sense, based in their understanding of the Christian ethic, of taking and giving back; "To the large number of saleswomen who so graciously wait on us at the stores," Lucia Additon wrote, "we ask the privilege of also being gracious to them, by supplying them with a comfortable convenient place to rest ..."[77] Willard in particular strove to extend the claims of "local propinquity" widely, particularly toward the needy.

On the inevitable other hand, the class and racial assumptions of the WCTU workers—some relatively benign, many malignant—were never far below the surface. The suggested regime for "wayward" girls in the "Hope and Help Rooms," for example, is described in a leaflet put out by the National Union's Social Purity Department and sent to all interested locals. The regulations admonish the girls to "conform strictly to the rules, be neat and industrious, and listen attentively to such advice as may be given them by the ladies in charge." The girls must submit to being thoroughly searched on entering for liquor, firearms, or "objectionable literature;" letters written and received must be read by the Matron; and all "inmates" must learn general housekeeping skills. The leaflet dictated that the discipline of the home should be "strictly

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[77]Additon, *Twenty Years*, p. 51.

parental," including "family" worship in the morning and the evening.[78] Perhaps this was an effort by Union workers to recreate what they believed to be the atmosphere of the birth home their "inmates" had grown up in; most likely they did not search their own daughters for firearms when they came home.

Clearly the Union was out not just to "help" but to reform. An early history of the temperance movement, Joseph Gusfield's *Symbolic Crusade,* made much of the panic which Protestant, Anglo-Saxon Americans felt at the influx of disorderly foreigners and the consequent decline of their own status and culture.[79] The "social control" interpretation has been rightly viewed with suspicion by subsequent historians,[80] in part as caricaturing the motives of reformers.

And yet temperance women had every good reason to fear the effects of male alcoholism on the family, a concern they shared with all other feminists. Class concerns were a real issue for temperance women, though. They did fear the changing nature of Protestant culture as it became more heterogeneous; diversity threatened the commonality that marked the evangelical feminists' view of society. More important, perhaps, were the fears they had for their own children. "Class," not as a concrete assignment to a category but as an experience of social relations,

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[78]"Rules and Regulations for Hope and help Rooms," Social Purity Department, WCTU (n.p., n.d.).

[79]Joseph Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status, Politics, and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana, Ill., 1966).

[80]Starting with Lois Banner, "Religious Benevolence as Social Control: A Critique of an Interpretation" (*Journal of American History*, vol. 60 no. 1 (1973), pp. 23-41), social historians have enthusiastically insulted the social control theory of reformer-reformee relations in addition because it posits a lifeless and passive lower order who sat around waiting to be reformed. Recently Linda Gordon's book on family violence, *Heroes of their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston, 1880-1960* (New York, 1988), also treats with sympathy and understanding the middle level caseworkers in social service agencies.

constituted a set of expectations, in this case expectations mothers had for children. In the changing work settings of the late nineteenth century, and with the wholesale departures of sons and daughters both for the city, "class" expectations were confused. Who they would be, where they would work, who their friends would be, what they would do with leisure time, how well they would live—answers to these questions were vaguer than in the pre-industrial world, and left mothers fearful. In seeking to reform the "wayward" sort according to their own lights, mothers tried to establish a middle-class milieu for their children as they knew it, and eliminate dangerous alternatives. Often this was done at the expense of their "clientele."

On occasion, class concerns emerged in an even more self-interested way, as with the Salem, New Jersey's, local Kitchen and Garden Dept., which functioned openly as a training school for household help, rescuing girls from a looming "shiftless, indolent womanhood" and maintaining "its reputation for efficient table servants." The work was supported one year by a public exhibition, to which 400 tickets were sold to watch pupils set tables, "accompanying their work with songs and recitations."[81]

The maternal politics of the WCTU presented particularly acute problems in a country with the large racial and ethnic minorities of the United States, and raises questions about what kind of society a "connective politics" could flourish in.[82] A maternal relationship is loving; but it is not a relationship of equals, and it is not the obviously appropriate paradigm for the

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[81]Harriet Van Meter, *First Quarter Century of the WCTU of Salem, New Jersey* (n.p., 1909), pp. 42-52.

[82]In her article *Gender and Jurisprudence* Robin West does not go far toward defining what a "connective politics" would actually mean when translated into a political system; nor is it clear exactly how a feminist "connective" politics would differ from a socialist politics.

relationship between citizens within the state. A conversation between parent and child, or people who have taken on those roles, differs greatly from a conversation between adults: There is an overlay of obligation, judgment, perhaps guilt or fear, that sets it off from a conversation between rational strangers at arm's length. Further, the tendency of the mother, properly in the early period of life, is to infantilize the child by caring for it, making decisions for it, tending to its needs. But the goal of good parenthood is to have your children leave home; and while the WCTU had a strong sense of charity, they also envisioned a kind of permanent dependence, of children and the working class both. Consciously or not, the Union's "maternalism" particularly toward racial and ethnic minorities was extremely offensive and condescending. This attitude was manifest in frequent parodies of heavily accented speech, transcribing it cutely as they would baby talk. One particularly awful pamphlet, "A Temperance Picnic" by Mrs. Nellie H. Bradley, was an original temperance musical based on the story of the old woman in the shoe, updated to give her a large adopted brood of mixed heritage. The speech of each group—represented by Fat Fritz, Lean Pat, Hop Sing Choo, and Saucy Sambo—was caricatured relentlessly by "von laty mit leetle vite ribbons." Fat Fritz—and Germans in general as the chief beer guzzlers—were the main targets; one story showed the low type of humanity who insisted on his "rights" to drink or sell liquor by parodying a German saloon keeper who, when closed down by the law, rushed off "to see mein gounsel when I no got some right to mein own proberty."[83]

Stories like these were of a piece with the WCTU's attitude towards other ethnic practices; their ruthless campaign against the German family beer hall showed how little

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[83]Nellie H. Bradley, *A Temperance Picnic* (New York 1888); Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 70.

tolerance they had for customs that outraged their own sensibilities. Intolerance is not confined to mothers; but the license which WCTU women felt that a "maternal" politics gave them seems to have exacerbated the perception of dependency and the distance between themselves and the people they were trying to influence, and to re-enforce the inegalitarian nature of the relationship. Perhaps in another time and a more homogeneous society, a "maternal" politics would come out looking quite different. But at least in nineteenth-century America, with the heavy ideological baggage already attached to the maternal role, and the deep class and race divisions, maternal politics had to work against heavy odds to be truly democratic. The paradox of maternal governance, in the home as in the state, lies in the tension between care and coercion; the WCTU seemed to have mastered both.

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"Organized Mother Love" and the Maternal State

> Under the curse, man has mapped out the state as his largest sphere, and the home as woman's largest; under the blessing, man and woman shall map out home as the one true state, and she who, during centuries of training, has learned how to govern there, shall help man make the great, cold, heartless state a warm, kind, and protecting home ... The White Ribbon women would invade the masculine ... hierarchy of church and state; and ring out in clear but gentle voices the oft-repeated declaration of the Master whom they serve: "Behold, I make all things new."[84]

With these words Frances Willard, the president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), revealed a cherished goal of the temperance movement: the transformation of national, state, and local governments into agents of moral reform. Its achievement required a revolutionary reinterpretation of the relations between church and

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[84]Frances E. Willard, WCTU presidential address of 1887, quoted in Nancy Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the 19th Century* (Nashville, 1984), p. 154.

state, and the creation of a maternalist government with Christ as its acknowledged head, caring for the needs and regulating the moral behavior of its citizens. Dissatisfaction with social conditions led temperance women initially to imagine a more perfect state. The regulation of gender relations was clearly an element of temperance, in allowing women to regulate male drinking habits, an important part of male culture and the source of much conflict within the home. But the Union's political theory went well beyond sexual antagonism and repression.[85] Seeking an expanded role for women in defining and securing government redress for domestic wrongs and the brutal conditions of wage labor, temperance women necessarily reenvisioned government. As they articulated new welfare obligations and capacities in the state, they also pictured government in their own image—the feminization of the state. The watchword here was not paternalism but maternalism, or "organized mother love," and a healthy extension of domestic values into the canons of government. By seeking to make "politics a home question" temperance women were asserting more than their right to participate: their entry into the political arena coincided with the transformation of government from "a coarse and clumsy instrument by which military and police forces are dictated" to "the flexible, changing, and delicately adjusted instrument of many and varied educative, charitable, and supervisory functions".[86] As Willard pictured it,

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[85]This is the interpretation for much of the woman's temperance movement suggested by Barbara Epstein in *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Conn., 1981).

[86]Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years* (Chicago, Ill., 1889), p. 593; Anna Garlin Spencer, "Fitness of Women to Become Citizens," in *The History of Women Suffrage*, Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, et al., eds., (6 vols., New York, 1881-1922), vol. 4, pp. 308-9; Frances E. Willard, "The Coming Brotherhood," *Arena* vol. 6 (1892), p. 320.

women would help men to make "the great, cold, heartless state a warm, kind, and protecting home..."[87]

A state so construed needed the services of women "wherever the state touches the personal life of the infant, the child, the youth, or the aged, helpless, defective in mind, body, or moral nature..." Stressing government's increasingly "maternal" or welfare functions, women asserted the need for their services in a government which, whenever it undertook such work, entered into "the area of distinctive feminine training and power" in pursuit of the ends of "justice" and "fraternity".[88] Frances Willard said "reform and philanthropic movements are but associated efforts to make the world more homelike. Society and government have long been fathered, but they have not been mothered enough to make them normal."[89]

This vision of the maternal state was rooted in a Christian ideal which sought to extrapolate the individual obligation to charity to bind the state, so that "the manifestation of love to one's neighbor is the duty of the state as a public community."[90] For evangelicals, the ties between citizens were analogous to the ties between family members, as binding and as permanent.

The contrast with liberal feminists was clear. Antebellum liberals had relied heavily

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[87]Frances E. Willard, Presidential address, WCTU annual meeting, 1887 (see Minutes of Annual Meetings, WCTU microfilm series).

[88]Spencer, "Fitness of Women."

[89]Willard, *Do Everything: a Handbook for the World's White Ribboners* (Chicago, 1895), p. 165.

[90]Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 30.

on the language of slavery to describe their legal position under coverture; disenfranchised, unable to hold property or keep their earnings. After the war, Stanton in particular, influenced by free-love thought, extended the paradigm of slavery and freedom to describe the physical relations of unhappy husbands and wives as well as their property relations, advocating "divorce at will" as a remedy analogous to emancipation. In her writings on divorce Stanton pictured the essence of slavery as the slave's inability to change employers at will and bargain for the terms of service. She sought to recast marriage as a consensual relationship, entered into voluntarily by the parties, and dissoluble when either of the parties wished to end the contract. In Stanton's view the bonds which bound family members should no more be permanent than those which constituted employer-employee relations or a business partnership. All might be dissolved, not without thought, but certainly for cause: otherwise mistakes were too costly.[91]

The WCTU never came to espouse divorce in this period. It recognized that wives of drunkards needed legal separation with provisions for maternal custody and financial support; but for most evangelical feminists, as indeed for many of Stanton's own supporters, the concept of dissoluble marriage was too troubling. They rejected the analogy to slavery and the call to women's "emancipation" as having "associations and...history...not to our advantage."[92]

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[91]For Stanton's views on marriage and divorce, see Elizabeth Clark, "Matrimonial Bonds"; "Slavery and Divorce in Nineteenth-Century America," *Laws and History Review*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1990) [above, pp._____].

[92]Frances E. Willard, "Address Before the Second Biennial Convention of the World's WCTU...1893" (London, 1893), p. 35.

Further, evangelical feminists rejected notions of free contract as a model of family relations. Such language for many feminists undercut the depth, the gravity, the permanence of the marriage and maternal bond. They accepted, though sometimes ruefully, that "we are tied from the moment we enter the world, and are probably the better and happier for it, though we may rebel against it..."[93] Rather than the freely willed, voluntary contractual agreement, incorporating the freedom to untie a bad marriage and try again, they stressed the mutual obligations of the ongoing relationship, a particular version of the obligations each owed all human beings.

For both liberal and evangelical feminists, their views of the structure of family obligations extended outward to shape their views of the obligations of the state. Stanton's notion of individual self-ownership and radical bodily autonomy became the basis of her view of citizenship. "Protection" for Stanton was a word cut of the feudal past, which smacked of slavery and the harem, as well as the traditional family. Evangelical feminists, by contrast, extrapolated what they saw as the duties of family out into the civil sphere to create the maternal state, where the ideal of the obligations of each to each other was mediated through a benevolent welfare state.

Willard openly espoused "protection" as the state's highest duty, (deriving the Union's suffrage slogan "Home Protection" from the language of tariff.[94] Willard's use of the term "wage slavery" recognized the powerlessness and dependence of the worker, but she did not

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[93]Jane Croly, *For Better or Worse: A Book for Some Men and All Women* (Boston, 1875), p. 4.

[94]Willard, *Glimpses*, p. 401.

see the contractual model as the remedy for inequality in the state, either. By the 1880's and 90's, free labor ideology as a way of restructuring the labor market had lost its appeal particularly for evangelicals, with their social outlook and critique of industrial capitalism.

Further, the obligations of citizens to each other were not so fragile as contractual ties. As in the family, duty to others was a divinely imposed, life-long relationship, not revocable by human will. This idea of non-voluntary obligations as the foundation and the measure of what the state owed its citizens put evangelical feminists outside an important ongoing dialogue in the broader society on individual rights based on the language of slavery and on notions of free contract, a dialogue into which Stanton fit quite well.[95] At the same time, by continuing in part in the explicitly religious tradition of antebellum feminists, in which rights were sought to enable an individual to perform duties to the whole, evangelicals could hold government and industry to a standard of legitimacy based, not on its dealings vis-a-vis any individual, but on its performance within the whole social context. For example, the Union sought to set up a strict standard for "legitimate industry, which was "that every other industry is benefited and helped by it."[96]

The brand of gospel socialism which Willard and the WCTU espoused in the last quarter of the century was informed in important ways by their religious outlook. Evangelical feminists' Christian statism depended on a corporate rather than a pluralistic community, and to this end Union literature repeatedly rejected any kind of sectarianism or denominationalism

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[95]See Amy Dru Stanley, "Conjugal Bonds and Wage Labor: Rights of Contract in the Age of Emancipation," *Journal of American History*, vol. 75 no. 2 (Sept. 1988), pp. 471-500.

[96]Willard, "The Coming Brotherhood," *Arena*, vol. 6 (1892), pp. 317-324.

in favor of common goals and drawing together as wide a circle as possible. Such tolerance obviously furthered the Union's recruitment power, without being strained too far: the overwhelming majority of members were white Protestant women.

But Willard's theory of the state necessarily implied a homogeneous society as well, and both the Union's rhetoric and active agenda stressed, not just missionary outreach, but transcending barriers between races, classes, ethnic groups, and sexes.[97] Willard even campaigned to heal the split between still-estranged Northerners and Southerners, returning from extensive travel in the South to tell her flock that Southerners were "just our sort of folks."[98] As Willard's aspirations moved from a national to an international temperance movement she became increasingly liberal in her religious views, stressing ethics "found in the Bible and questioned by no sane mind whether Jew, Gentile, Catholic, or Protestant."[99] Eventually her tolerance grew to the point where "nothing good seems secular to me."[100]

This commonality, the ability to make ethical generalizations across class, race, religious, and sexual divisions, served as a critical prop of the feminized Christian corporate state. For Stanton, the state's reaching to "touch the personal lives" of its citizens was tantamount to assault; in her radical individualist world that state could never touch each citizen according to each one's different needs, and its "protection" was only universal degradation: better to keep the state away. Evangelicals, by contrast, subscribed to the

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[97]The language used here is often the language of the mother reconciling siblings.

[98]Willard, *Glimpses*, p. 372.

[99]Willard, Glimpses, p. 463.

[100]Frances E. Willard, "Address Before the 22nd Annual Meeting of the National WCTU..." (See Minutes, Annual Meeting, WCTU microfilm series), pp. 7-8.

Golden Rule as the first principle of governance, a rule far more potent for its assumption that you *could* know how to treat others, because in fact they were like you. The implication was that you could know and love your neighbor in some deep way not possible in Stanton's world. This knowledge allowed an empathy which served as the compelling basis of charitable obligation, so that "eventually we shall conceive of society as a unity which has such relation to every fraction thereof that there could be no rest while any lacked food, clothing, or shelter, or while any were so shackled by the grim circumstances of life that they were unable to develop the best that was in them both body and mind."[101]

At the same time, this commonality served as the basis of the regulatory impulse; what Stanton saw as officious and coercive, temperance women saw as encouraging or enforcing the behavior which would naturally prevail in each individual in the absence of sin or the depredations of poverty. Willard often pictured teetotalism as the foundation, prohibition as merely the legal superstructure which must rest on a base of public sentiment, and she sought to create the conditions for uniform behavior. For evangelicals, unlike liberal individualists, free will still did not lie in the ability to do anything, but in the ability to do good; as the first of the WCTU's Declarations of Principle stated, "we believe in the coming of His kingdom whose service is perfect freedom...[102]

By the 1880's and 90's the language of the WCTU in its war against liquor had changed; most of it did not support restrictive or penal measures against drunkenness and other offenses because they were sinful or individual transgressions, but because they harmed

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[101]Willard, "Address...2nd Biennial Convention," p. 52.

[102]Willard, "Address...22nd Annual Meeting," pp.1, 3.

society, robbing it of the individual's contribution, as well as being offenses against the family and the self.[103] This broad vision of public accountability to the community of those like you included vices as well as crimes because they were antisocial and detrimental to the common good, where "each man's habits of life should be an example safe and beneficent to every other man."[104]

The Evangelical Theory of Rights

The concept of private rights, private assets—of privacy itself—meant much less in such a world. In a single body—the corporate state—where "injury to a part is injury to a whole" no part is free to act alone; each must give up the "abstract right of unrestricted behavior."[105] Nor can any member enforce privacy as against other members of the same body, for where a single normative standard applies privacy has little value, and usually signifies deviation.

The WCTU understood "private" as describing, not the home, but the plethora of male institutions closed to women, from the saloon and smoking car to the voting booth; the secrecy of those places nurtured behavior harmful to the family and community. Members of the WCTU worked for complete openness within communities, so that each individual's behavior could be scrutinized by all. One resolution urged prohibition of painted or frosted

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[103]Willard, Address...2nd Biennial Convention," p. 31. See also Stevenson, Katherine L., *A Brief History of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union* (2d ed. ; Evanston, Ill., 1907), p. 99.

[104]Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 1.

[105]Stevenson, *Brief History*, p. 99; Willard, Frances E., *Woman and Temperance* (Hartford, Conn., 1883), p. 491.

windows or doors in saloons and bars, so that all could have a "distinct view" of the goings-on inside; another stressed municipal installations of street lamps to prevent evildoers from doing their evil—"And God said 'let there be light.'"[106] Union members understood that the advances of science would aid the quest for transparency, happily quoting Thomas Edison's belief that "in a few years the world will be just like one big ear; it will be unsafe to speak in a house until one has examined the walls and furniture for concealed phonographs." In the world of benign authority imagined by the WCTU, this civil libertarian's nightmare held out instead the hope of "a cessation of gossip in the earth, and then the millennium. God speed the phonograph!"[107] Here we have the encephalitic corporate body swollen with outsized eyes and ears, and those clearly female.

In refusing to romanticize Robinson Crusoe,[108] Frances Willard rejected the state of nature, or as she defined it "the solitary state," as any kind of Golden Age, and as completely incompatible with the ideal of Christian community. For Willard the "solitary state" was an artificial construct rendered invalid because it failed to account for one of humankind's two natural instincts—the primal instinct of self-preservation and "another far more high and sacred—I mean the instinct of a mother's love" (a civilized, Christianized version, perhaps, of the species' instinct to propagate).[109] The "solitude" of the state of nature, then, was compromised from the beginning by the maternal relationship. Crusoe himself, lordly in his

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[106]*Union Signal*, 18 January 1883, p. 12; 24 October 1889, p. 1.

[107]*Union Signal*, Jan. 16, 1884, p. 9.

[108]See above, p. ___.

[109]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 453.

prime, would still have perished a helpless infant without maternal care.

In addition, using solitude as a measure of an ideal life was the merest delusion; who, Willard asked quite sensibly, knew anyone living on a desert island? And the translation of solitary practices to the "crowded realm of civilization" would be catastrophic. "Out on his island, Robinson could reach forth his nimble fingers and gather whatever seemed to him good for food...but suppose him transferred to this capital city of Iowa, and practicing the same light-fingered method in your grocery store, good citizen, or at your pantry shelf, dear lady!" Where all live cheek by jowl, freedom is "but a drawing of the circuit of one person's liberty just so large around and far across as is consistent with the number of circles to be drawn within a given space."[110]

Liberals and evangelicals alike agreed on the circle that separated one's fist from another's nose. Other circles proved harder to draw. Despite Willard's claim to be able to delineate the spheres of rights with "mathematical precision" the two sides disagreed vehemently over the definition and boundaries of the individual's "personal liberty."[111] Liberals prized it; and used it as a shield against a variety of regulatory assaults, including prohibition measures. Evangelicals were enraged by what they saw as the irresponsible and antisocial use of "personal liberty," and crusaded to discredit the term and reveal the selfishness and malice concealed by its noble ring. They put the phrase into the mouths of the supposedly disreputable; the black father who would not interfere with his children's personal liberty and so let them rob chicken coops; the drunk who believed in "human rights—the right

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[110]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 491.

[111]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 491.

to think/as one pleases, on issues of the day/in the fullest the right to drink...."; the master who claimed the right to enslave.[112] Willard warned of the dangers in store for a society which worshiped liberty excessively, melodramatically quoting Mme Roland on her way to the Paris scaffold—"Oh Liberty! What crimes are committed in thy sacred name!"[113]

"Personal liberty" was an anachronism for Frances Willard, soon to be superseded, because it pretended to a false scope of action. The law, as it should, protected noses, and denied a "personal liberty" to break them. But the law, too, was a blunt instrument: it accorded to bartenders "the right" to pour the equally harmful drink, and to factory owners the right to keep workers laboring in killing conditions for little pay. Willard's view, for its flaws, tried to comprehend the broader scope of harm in human relations, the injustices not compassed under existing tort or contract law. In "love thy neighbor" vein Willard insisted that personal liberty in Christian civilization required a citizen to give up certain "rights," to understand that "otherhood must be fully recognized in preference to selfhood."[114]

Injunctions against overt harm were inadequate: each citizen had a responsibility to know how his or her behavior affected others indirectly as well, perhaps even an affirmative duty to help them. Implicit and sometimes explicit in this reasoning was a critique of legal doctrines of causation, which limited culpability to certain restricted fact situations. In Willard's broad assessment of responsibility, even a vote could be culpable: a vote for license made a "ballot...a link in the chain of causation, which shall lengthen itself out into every

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[112]*Union Signal*, 4 January 1883, p. 2; Granite State Outlook, vol. no. 7 (July 1891), p. 2.

[113]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 495.

[114]Frances E. Willard, speech, in scrapbook 7, WCTU series, reel 30; Frances E. Willard, address (1894), scrapbook 11, WCTU series, reel 31.

misery and every sin."[115] Several states actually made bartenders liable in civil suits brought by drunkards' impoverished families, and the WCTU enthusiastically aided the bringing of such actions, the closest they came to establishing the legal culpability they felt should naturally flow from the moral guilt.[116]

Liberty, then, was a relative and not an absolute value; and "personal" an inapt modifier for a power which could only be properly used in reciprocity with others. In 1883 Hannah Whitall Smith gave a "Hobby Party" with a theme of personal liberty, and each guest was to come representing his or her definition. The *Union Signal* reported that, while some went for the "German idea" of unfettered freedom, most thought it a "relative" term; the definitions included "liberty to do right," and one which credited the greatest personal liberty to those who "most unconsciously obey...most laws"—laws as the larger principle laid down by God for the happiness of all.[117]

While they negated the concept, or at least the scope, of the liberal conception of personal liberty, evangelical women put forth their own definitions. Rights necessarily occupied a different place in a relational than in a liberal, individualist scheme, although they were not nonexistent there as some have claimed. Temperance women did not completely eschew individual rights; in fact they endorsed the individual rights argument for

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[115]Frances E. Willard, in *Werner's Recitations and Readings* (New York, 1898), p. 24. This is the same language used by antebellum feminists.

[116]Stebbins, Jane. *Fifty Years: History of the Temperance Cause* (Hartford, Conn., 1876), p. 296; Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 150; Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 70, p. 83; Samuel Unger, *A History of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union* (Ph.D. thesis, Ohio State University, 1933), p. 12.

[117]*Union Signal,* 11 January 1883, p. 9. The article does not attempt to describe the costume.

the woman's ballot as self-evident. But the extension of suffrage was an easy case which represented an enlargement, not a reapportionment or conflict of rights; no one's vote was directly threatened or withheld by enlarging the voter pool to include women.

Individual rights which fell at the intersection of others' interests became a more complex case for Willard, without the easy trump quality which liberal proponents claimed for them. In large measure this was because for evangelical women the purpose of rights was not to promote the individual, but to reconstitute the family and the community. WCTU women's claims that their work as mothers to the community entitled them to vote was not a ruse, or even necessarily proof of a second-class feminist agenda. Since they defined themselves relationally and not individually, rights were most meaningful in a context; most useful when used for others; most earned by the work which put "otherhood....in preference to selfhood"—again, a Christian ideal.[118]

Rights represented in large part a remedial measure to compensate for the defects of families, who through death, dissolution, or incapacity could not protect the physical and emotional well-being of their members—a growing class in industrializing urban America. The ballot's value was in caring for "the impoverished, disgraced, widowed, orphaned, crazed, and idiotized through strong drink...as the wards of the stranger."[119] Just as a connected individual had a stronger identity than the isolated individual, so suffrage had more meaning as a right earned by women's work for others than as a trump to be used for one's own ends

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[118]Frances E. Willard, speech, scrapbook 7, WCTU series, reel 30; *Woman and Temperance*, p. 454.

[119]*Union Signal*, vol. 15 no. 43, 24 October 1889, p. 7.

against the world at large. By the same token, evangelicals understood that, in their relational scheme, rights were necessarily curtailed as well as enhanced by a connection to others—the more familiar, repressive face of the WCTU's program. But again, the restriction of rights—say the "right" to drink—was not cast as a merely punitive measure taken because drinking was a sin, but because the results of the individual's asserting his right to drink were terrible harm to the family, and to the community, which lost the drinker's labor and had to pick up the pieces of his domestic responsibilities. In a relational world, there is a social right—a right of "others"—which balances the individual right; "the right of the individual ceases where the rights of his family, his neighbors, and his country begin."[120] Even the drinker without family ties was committing a wrong; against his community, which had an interest in all its members' well-being; but more especially against God the Father who had created and loved him, and agonized over his degradation. "Christ's Golden Rule," Frances Willard said, mandated her abstinence for her own sake and the sakes of those around her, as well as "because of my purpose, by God's grace, to invest my life in hastening the day when all men's weal shall be each man's care."[121]

Union members in the last quarter of the century increasingly drew on natural rights language to justify suffrage arguments. Willard suggested that it went without saying that women had a natural right to the ballot.[122] She was sincere—but like most evangelical

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[120]*Union Signal*, 25 September 1884, p. 4.

[121]Frances E. Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 36.

[122]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 355; Frances E. Willard, "Questions to Specialists," *Our Day: A Record and Review of Current Reform*, vol. 1 (1888), p. 169; Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard, A Biography* (Chapel Hill, 1986), p. 100.

feminists probably relieved that such rights were a given, and did not merit full discussion. Evangelical feminists were not fully comfortable with the free-standing notion of "rights": any right, including the ballot, was far more meaningful when seen as a part of the web of talents, powers, and responsibilities which bound all together.[123] Although the union between rights and responsibilities was sacred in antebellum feminism, liberal feminists in the later nineteenth century had tried to uncouple rights and duties. The temperance women continued to insist that "we are responsible to humanity in exact proportion to the power of which we are custodians," and acted accordingly.[124]

Evangelical feminists shared with liberals a sense of the "natural" or physical laws which governed human life, as well, using them as a standard by which to judge the human. The WCTU did not develop this standard into a full-blown or precise set of anterior claims, as revolutionary Americans had; nor did claims to civil rights define its content. Rather, temperance women invoked the broad, perfectionist principles of antebellum feminism before they focused on legal remedies.

The early woman's movement had derived much of its program from a newly liberal interpretation of God's designs, most explicitly set out by outlying denominations like the Unitarians and Universalists, and by ministers like Theodore Parker and the Channings.

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[123]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 454; Stevenson, *Brief History*, p. 15. Such an interpretation obviously raises questions debated within contemporary feminism–does it signify an immaturity, insecurity, lack of autonomy? An ethos of care? Is it progressive? Regressive? An element unfamiliar to us but critical to evangelical belief was the sense of divinely imposed affirmative duty to others–an idea with more starch in it than the psychologically based "ethos of care," and one which mandated political action.

[124]Willard, Address...2nd Biennial Convention," p. 33.

That vision recast the scowling Calvinist God casually damning his children into a benevolent deity whose ultimate goal was the perfection and happiness of each individual human life, and the full development and use of its talents. For liberals in the post-war period God's new concern for human welfare became a mandate for self-development.

Although evangelical feminists did not stress individual development with the same enthusiasm as liberals, evangelical and liberal feminists alike acknowledged the "natural" laws of human health as conducive to woman's full development, and showed a dedication to the naturalistic health movements of the nineteenth century aimed at releasing women from the unhealthy prison of their confining clothes and inactive lifestyles. Willard even spoke of the WCTU as an exponent of "the reign of a religion of the body," where a body healthy through abstinence becomes "the temple of the Holy Ghost."[125]

Unlike liberals, evangelicals went on to interpret freedom from alcohol as a critical condition of physical as well as moral and financial health, and so established an anterior principle by which many laws failed; "No legislation can bargain away the public health or public morals."[126] Holiness deriving from physical wholeness translated not just into self culture, but into platforms and programs which encompassed welfare obligations as well as more structural reforms like support for the living wage, on the grounds that physical well being was necessary for the individual's full growth. From our vantage point it is easy to underestimate the power of the religious critique; but in a time when Christian forms were

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[125]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 42; see also Leach, William, *True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society* (New York, 1980), passim.

[126]Frances Willard, in *Werner's Recitations*, p 72 ("Home Protect")

deeply embedded in the public consciousness, and Christian language still resonated in the public as well as the private ear, such a critique sprang from a common ethos external to the realm of law and politics through . which to formulate criticism and reforms. Religion provided the lay public in this period with a route of powerful and legitimate criticism not available today.

In addition to their focus on rights as a route to self culture, evangelical feminists distrusted liberals' abstract talk of rights for another reason: they saw them as only an intermediate step in achieving just governance, not as the final and most important protection for the individual. Ultimately, an era of "rights" was a stage to be superseded. In her annual address to the convention of 1892, Willard laid out her theory of rights as an evolution in three stages. The first was "set up in the camp of the savage," and consisted of a primitive theory of "personal rights" to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." (Seemingly she would consign much of traditional American political philosophy to this camp.)

The second, more advanced state recognized "meum and teum," in the ability to say "thou shalt, and thou shalt not"—the prohibitory power, or the recognition of communal over individual rights, representing the present age. But this stage too was deficient.

The highest evolutionary stage was to be achieved in the Christian state where "government by law is exchanged for that mightiest of all government—public sentiment. The moral tone of society declared by resistless common consent what the law demanded by fines and penalties."[127] Here Willard pictured the withering away of the state in favor of

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[127]Frances E. Willard, annual address, WCTU Convention 1892. (See Minutes of Annual Meeting, WCTU Microfilm Series.)

citizens' advancement to "the corps of the self-governed" living under the Golden Rule.[128] Rights in a liberal scheme served to protect individuals from each other and from the government. In a true moral community, where standards were consensual, where all were "sisters" and "brothers," and where government was the "organ of social consciousness, " there is no need for "rights."[129]

But Willard also acknowledged that Gilded Age society fell short of a real moral community, and worked to impress on the public a hierarchy of rights not congruent with that of the liberals. As shown by the prohibition of social offenses less than crimes (drunkenness, for example), the right of society superseded the individual when the two came into conflict. Willard and other union members often spoke of the "equally self-evident social right" which balanced the rights of individuals. Towards the end of her life, as Willard's interests and dedication to socialist principles grew, she increasingly pursued the social over the individual good.[130] But from early on it was a utilitarian tenet of the movement that "the public good far transcends private interest and convenience. The law is for the greatest good of the greatest number, and therefore it is for the individual to yield when his plans would subvert the

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[128]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 26.

[129]Spencer, "Fitness of Women"; Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 20; Stevenson, *Brief History*, pp. 102-103; *Plan of Work and Circular Letter of the WCTU* (n.p., n.d.), p. 2. Willard's vision resembles Stanton's in anticipating the demise of a system of laws, but substitutes an ongoing moral community as the ordering force instead of Stanton's self governing individual.

[130]*Union Signal*, 25 September 1884, p. 7; Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 493; Frances E. Willard, "Address" (1894), Scrapbook 11, WCTU microfilm series, reel 31.

broader foundations."[131]

The assertion of "social rights" ultimately undergirded what became after Willard's death an increasingly regressive campaign against human pleasures, and a theocratic agenda which included not just prohibition but curfews, media censorship, school prayer and Bible reading, and a host of other moral regulations. But in the heady period of the 1880's and 90's, the WCTU, though it had its own agenda, worked in harmony with the burgeoning labor movement, particularly the Knights of Labor; Christian socialists; ethical economists like Richard Ely; and progressive and populist political movements. Particularly in this political context, the idea of social right took on a more positive content as well.

Far more than the idea of "individual" rights could (a concept which does not work well in our legal system for those without titles or deeds), the idea of "social right" or public good expanded to claims for economic justice. Coming at the problem not from the standpoint of "what do I own" but "how can society's needs best be met," the WCTU developed a standard of redistributive justice based on God's design for human happiness, and for the sanctity and full development of each mind," soul, and body. As one Union member said in support of the living wage, a cause the Union fully subscribed to, "To hinder one of the least of our brethren from properly fulfilling his appointed place in the great whole, is to disturb the equilibrium of the entire moral and social structure...and to interfere with the plan

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[131]Stebbins, *Fifty Years*, p. 285. See also Daniel T. Rodgers, "Why Was There No Utilitarianism in Nineteenth-Century America?", paper delivered at the Davis Seminar, Princeton University, Oct. 17, 1986.

of the Great Architect."[132]

Local Governance

Unlike the "liberal" state, whose citizens were always looking over their shoulders, fearful of intrusion, the benevolent maternal state which "touches the personal life" of its constituency presented little threat to its constituents. Although they drew on antebellum feminism, the evangelical feminists of the later nineteenth century differed in their enthusiastic recourse to the state, reminiscent of the theocratic Christian nationalism George Frederickson finds in male thinkers of the war and postwar period.[133] Their growing fidelity to the institution of government was only possible, though, because temperance women saw government as the most effective means of administering protective measures.

More importantly, the state was not a separate or alien being, not the public realm to any private: in common form it was simply the largest of the concentric circles moving outward from the heart, or "the great, kind, farsighted human family as a corporate firm of We, Us, and Co .,."[134]

Edward Bellamy's Utopian novel "Looking Backward" came out in 1887, and by late that year Frances Willard was corresponding with Bellamy, and an enthusiastic supporter of the Nationalism Movement touched off by his tract. Bellamy seems to have brought to life

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[132]Stevenson, *Brief History*, p. 104. See also *Union Signal*, vol. 15, no. 40 (Oct. 3 1889), p. 2. This language is also reminiscent of antebellum formulations of rights.

[133]George M. Frederickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the crisis of the Union* (New York, 1968), Chapter 9.

[134]Frances E. Willard, "Address...(to the) Woman's National Council of the United States at Its First Triennial Meeting...1891" (Indianapolis, 1891), p. 20.

many of the Union's dreams with breathtaking sweep in his design of a benevolent state which would step in to care for every aspect of its citizens' lives, very like the maternal state envisioned by temperance women. A number of writers have pointed out the contradictions, overlooked by Willard, between the democratic, egalitarian bent of feminism, and potential for anti-individualism in even a "benign" all-powerful state.[135] Certainly Bellamy's state had much to offer women, whom Leach rightly portrays as less fearful of appealing to a strong state than men.[136]

But to speak of "state" in the monolithic is deceptive in a time when the functions of government were beginning to differentiate into the complex organism of today's state. Unlike Stanton and Matilda Gage, Willard and her followers dreamily underestimated the malignant and coercive potential of the strong state, in part a result of the religious lens through which they saw state power. But their creed also mandated a level of grass-roots power and activity in the WCTU's theory and practice, both of which compromised the growing power of the centralized, monolithic state in this period. While contributing to a theory of the strong state, they also helped create a counter-ethic of local action, incongruous with centralization.

The idea of a single great state was irresistible to temperance women. Their corporatism and socialism were *Christian* corporatism and socialism, and despite other progressives' secular language the advent of a perfectly caring and moral government

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[135]William Leach, "Looking Forward Together: Feminists and Edward Bellamy," *Democracy*, January, 1982, pp. 120-34; Bordin, *Frances Willard*, pp. 145 ff.

[136]Leach, "Looking Forward," p. 129.

represented for them the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the establishment of the kind of Christian state which they knew would prevail after the millennium.[137] Evangelical women did not fear government, in part because the omnipotent state was God in some real way. In this light, no groups needed to fear discrimination or coercion; denominations, political parties, race, gender, and all other artificial barriers—results of "destructive criticism of the incomplete masculine mind"—would be brought down.[138] Late-nineteenth-century liberals and evangelicals engaged each other in an intense struggle over the nature of governance in a post-Calvinist world. Evangelicals for their part pushed a theocratic vision of a strong Christian state; to be suspicious of such power would be to scrutinize God.

But in the meantime, while working toward the millennium, strong current of localism ran in the Union. The Gilded Age mania for association into clubs and leagues, fraternities and orders, unions and granges, and other types of nationally organized societies had its counterpoint in the continual breakdown of these organizations into groups that were smaller, purer, more narrowly defined. The WCTU brilliantly institutionalized the tension between national and local within its own structure by organizing Unions at local, county, state, and national levels. Each larger unit encompassed the smaller in its jurisdiction, but neither was preeminent; "the organization...is a system of links, every part of which is essential to the makeup of the whole since if one link is missing the chain is broken and

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[137]Ida Treatault Miller, "Frances E. Willard: Religious Leader and Social Reformer," (Ph.D. thesis, Boston University, 1978); on millennialism see especially pp. 177 ff.

[138]Willard, "Address... at the First Triennial Meeting...1891," p. 34; see also *Union Signal*, vol. 4 no. 7 (15 Feb. 1883), p. 11.

rendered incapable of doing full service."[139] Local and state meetings could rely on the national as much or as little as they chose, but had full autonomy at their own levels to accept or reject national positions.[140]

Just as no individual was without significance in the Christian scheme, individual effort was paramount to the Union'sphilosophy. Such an emphasis might seem to contradict the anti-individualism of the evangelical's outlook, but it did not. Although each individual woman had to put forth her best work both for herself and for the success of the initiative, victory was gained, never through the efforts of an individual, but only through the combined work of the group. Temperance women often described themselves as worker bees in "the great hive of true and loving Christian women," or spiders spinning huge, complex silken webs. As one WCTU member busily transforming the world exclaimed, "Why I feel just like a ray of light through a prism!"[141]

Such images are coy, and may reveal a lack of confidence in women's ability to change their political environment. But Willard and others were stressing interdependence and group skills. In direct opposition to Stanton's sense of the uniqueness and irreplaceability of the individual, here no individual was omnicompetent, and all were expendable: like dipping your hands in water, if one left, more would rush in to fill the vacancy.[142] But the

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[139]*WCTU Handbook* (2nd ed., Chicago, 1890), p. 8.

[140]In the southern states, for example, few Unions endorsed suffrage, labor issues, or the more adventurous social outreach work.

[141]Ann Elmore, *A Mother's Story* (Newark, N.J., 1879), p. 2; *Granite State Outlook*, vol. 1 no. 9 (Sept., 1891), p. 4; Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 77.

[142]Frances Willard, "Address Before the 2nd Biennial Convention, " p. 29.

pride of the movement was in each giving from their own store of power, and at least in theory the speech writer at the temperance gathering and the Irish serving girl who stood in the rain to prop her mistress gave equal shares.[143] This theory of contribution was exactly the strength of the early mission movement, or "mite societies" among women; the idea that many humble donations could spark a mighty work helped mobilize the energies and loyalties of a wide range of women.[144]

By this accretion theory, progress is made "a stitch at a time, a prayer at a time, a sacrifice here and a supreme effort there..."[145] This "holy call of individual responsibility and systematically united effort" was the key to political success; when women and workmen each combined, Frances Willard suggested, "the war-dragon shall be slain, the poverty viper shall be exterminated, the gold bug transfixed by a silver pin... and the last white slave liberated from the woods of Wisconsin."[146] A no-license vote, too, on closer viewing turned out a pointillist "snow-storm of pure Christian prohibition ballots."[147] The outcome in some way depended on each ballot as much as on the combined power. Each Christian was equally bound to participate personally, to give of themselves in some form; under Christian government the idea of delegated responsibility could not be squared with individual

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[143]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 143.

[144]Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household: The American Woman's Foreign Mission Movement and Cultural Transformation*, 1870-1920 (Ann Arbor, 1985).

[145]Stevenson, *Brief History*, p. 112.

[146]Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 29; Willard, "Address...at Its First Triennial Meeting...1891", pp. 3-4.

[147]Willard, Werner's Recitations, p. 38.

conscience.[148]

The metaphor of the chain, the web, the wire which connected the dots and gave them power was one of the most commonly used by temperance women, and one critical to their political theory.[149] For evangelical Christians the moral (i.e., political) world was deeply responsive, a moral ecosystem balanced as delicately as we now know our ecology to be; any minor act or omission could cause unlooked-for changes many links down the chain. No part of the system could thus be insulated, neither public nor private; again in the concentric model, ever-widening rings of influence agitated and effective "to the remotest bound" of the outside circle.[150] One end of a chain of influence was tethered by the humblest citizen, the other held in the hand of God; for "society and government are but the connecting wires of God's great telegraphic system along which he sends shocks of power from His own heart."[151]

Such a political model—the WCTU's in both practice and theory—repudiated any centralized state in which God is not yet fully realized. The Union's emphasis on the importance of individual action, the personal obligation of each to each other, created an opening for a genuinely participatory politics. Many Union women understood maternal government as a loving, hands-on operation; their message to drunkards was "you take the pledge, we'll take it too; you wear the badge of ribbon, blue or red, we'll wear it too ,.."[152]

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[148]W.C.T.U., *Plan of Work*, p. 1.

[149]Again, note the similarity to antebellum language.

[150]Stebbins, *Fifty Years History*, p. 183; Stevenson, *Brief History*, p. 99.

[151]Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 147.

[152]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 177. In another place Willard recounts the thrill she had with her first experience of being hungry and without money, and how she walked the

The moving force here is not bold legislative strokes, nor presidential decrees from on high, but local action, accretion, stitches, steps. Evangelical feminists did not distinguish between the coming of righteous government and the coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth. And both, in their brand of pre-millennialism, were achieved in the same way, "not suddenly, but little by little, imperceptibly," an accretion of pure habit and good deeds.[153] Like raising a child, raising a society was not done by edict, but was an ongoing evolutionary process furthered by "faith and courage and hope all the time, and God overhead," and it was fully participatory.[154]

Anti-Legalism

In addition to the mandate for personal participation at all levels, the WCTU's broad, branching agenda included yet another safeguard against electoral polities' growing monopoly. The WCTU departed sharply from antebellum evangelical precedent in their love affair with regulatory legislation. Male and female temperance groups alike were infatuated with the heady sense of power, the instant results, which a sweeping prohibition amendment or statute could bring. But female reformers were ambivalent as well about the prospects of the electoral and legislative spheres, standing as they did with one foot in and one foot out. Their optimism was tempered by their sense of betrayal by the political system, and its

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streets addressing herself in her mind to the poor, "I am a better friend than you dream; I know more about you than you think, for...I am hungry, too!" (*Glimpses*, p. 344). In practice, of course, "participation" often ended up functioning rather undemocratically.

[153]Willard, "Address...at Its First Triennial Meeting...1891" p. 35.

[154]Stevenson, *Brief History*, p. 112.

corruption. After all, the kingdom of electoral politics had not yet arrived for women; their place in the legislative process was tenuous at best.

Temperance women understood from bitter experience that the potential for good implicit in the lawmakers' power was undercut by high numbers of drunken and dishonest congressmen, governors, judges, and state legislators whose treacherous double-dealing defeated so many reform initiatives. They felt a strong sense of betrayal by such male "allies;" losing faith in men, one woman wrote, left only God and woman to redeem society, since legislative halls themselves turned out to be the font of the "seething, foaming tide of beer and whiskey." The court room proved no fairer battleground: some of Satan's "most efficient agents" were covered in "judicial ermine."[155] Lawyers"experienced in technicalities of law, guileful in device" also confounded courtroom justice with tactics like dismissing all temperance sympathizers from the jury panel in a prosecution for illegal sale of liquor, forcing the sheriff to complete the panel "a tales" with "drinking men."[156]

The evangelical temperance movement was in large part a movement of people untrained and unimpressed by the complexities of the common law, and reluctant to let legal process hinder a "just" result or provide a cloak of respectability for wrongdoing. As one Josiah Allen's wife asked, if a serpent is writhing through your town eating people, "Do you suppose they would rent out that serpent at so much a year to crunch and swaller folks accordin' to law? And would it be any easier for folks that was crunched and swallered, and

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[155]See inter alia *Union Signal*, vol. 4 no. 5 (1 Dec. 1883), p. 1; vol. 4 no. 9 (1 March 1883), p. 1; Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, pp. 70 ff., 350,. 379; Julia Ames, *Platform Voices: Choice Temperance Recitations for Old and Young* (Chicago, 1887), p.26.

[156]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 263.

for surviving' friends of the same, if they was killed by an act of Congress?"[157] Mrs. Allen's folksy tone conveys the conviction that law in its complexity was itself a serpent in the garden. WCTU women often and fluently expressed their disgust with the strategems and devices of lawyers and theologians as a way of envisioning a world where anger, corruption, and self interest disguised as professional canons did not succeed.

Temperance women renounced the "legal striving" in order to find a "simple way," a route which required "entire surrender and perfect trust in God."[158] Electoral politics was only capable of redemption to the extent that that process became simplified and purified, in the "good time coming" when "methods, useful in themselves but hitherto secular, shall be informed by the spirit which giveth life." I n a fictitious debate over the moral nature of parliamentary procedure, Mrs. Plymouth Rock rhapsodized about an "election, so simple and unpremeditated, nominations all made in open meeting, and hymns, tears, and prayers coming in as freely as if no 'red tape' existed to besmirch the world."[159] Willard found a local Arkansas law "superb" which allowed "No 'remonstrance' or counter-petition...the simple question 'Do we want dram-shops?' is answered by the signatures of men and women and that settles the matter—not for a year only, but 'once for all.'" Only with such transparent and simple procedures can *"conviction...be correlated with* law."[160]

Legal elaboration only allowed the possibility of corruption, "politics" in its worst

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[157]Ames, *Platform Voices*, p. 26.

[158]Willard, Woman and Temperance, p. 203 (quoting a letter from Hannah Whitall Smith.)

[159]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 141.

[160]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, pp. 340-41.

sense, to defeat the pure will of the people, and provided a shield for chicanery. It was out of real frustration and apprehension that their interests were not being attended to that evangelical feminists expanded their precept "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" to cover politics as well.

In fact, the WCTU's parallel rejections of formalism in law and theology gave birth to a reinterpretation of the relative roles of faith and works which was critical to their political theory. The Reformation had produced an emphasis on faith which, despite the lightening spontaneity and unpredictability of grace, became mired in theological wrangling and disputation—a dry, loveless legalism. By the Gilded Age, the minister modelled on the austere, colonial theologian had lost face. Congregations demanded attention be paid to "what the Pews Want from the Pulpit," not preaching or instruction but an active example. In the face of overwhelming social dislocation, many Christians rejected a "velvet-lined pew religion" in favor of "that Christianity that treads the streets."[161]

The WCTU fell in the same tradition as the economist Richard Ely, whose views they often cited. Ely explicitly criticized the church since the Protestant Reformation for ignoring the second of the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," a commandment which Ely placed on a par with the first.[162] Ely represented the "applied Christianity" of the social gospel movement, Christianity in the streets. He suggested that the true study of religion was sociology and not theology; man, he believed,

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[161]Lady Henry Somerset, *Werner's Recitations*, pp. 86-87.

[162]Richard Ely, *Social Aspects of Christianity* (New York, 1889), p. 1.

"'had been placed in this world to save it.'"[163]

Re-enforcing temperance women's instinctive dislike of hair-splitting theology, Ely openly substituted a standard of works for one of faith. In this light, the Christian social movement, of which the WCTU formed a part, can be seen as a counter-reformation of sorts—a conscious attempt to shift Christian thought away from legal questions of personal salvation and the nature of God, and to focus instead on worldly obligations to neighbors.

Regulatory Bureaucracy

The shift to a spiritual emphasis on works clearly reverberated in the political sphere. Temperance women had an ambivalent relation with law and faith, but they lauded the "faith which turns as readily to works as steam to water." The rejection of formal theology turned women's attention to work in the public sphere; and their rejection of and exclusion from the legal culture turned them toward less official networks of authority. The two combined to inspire temperance women all over the country to participate in creating and staffing a nascent bureaucracy designed to allow women to re-establish traditional networks of power at more official levels, while circumventing the unreliable political arena.

Women were not excluded from social programs at local levels by any civil barrier; they could conceive, implement, direct, and staff them. WCTU-affiliated women in many towns took advantage of this to turn their formidable organizing talents toward the state. Although such work—largely centered around health, welfare, and education—had fallen within the restricted scope of women's charitable activities, WCTU workers did not classify

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[163]Ely, *Social Aspects*, p. 72.

their works as private action, but rather as alternative public action. In fact, Willard and others pictured themselves as establishing through their organization and programs a whole separate government, so that

> we should thus have within National Government, as carried on by men, a republic of women, duly organized and officered...and tending toward such mutual fellowship among women ... as should establish solidarity of sentiment and purpose throughout the Nation of woman Workers, (and) put a premium upon organized as against isolated efforts for human betterment.[164]

One power of this republic of women lay in the combination of "the two great principles of co-operation and personal effort, in order that Christian public opinion concerning the political or moral welfare of Town, City, State, or Nation, may quickly and emphatically be heard." The WCTU fostered a network of organization and opinion which encompassed like-minded groups nationwide who could band together to express public sentiment to legislative bodies and combat "the evils existing at the caucus, convention, and ballot box"—an effective alternative to electoral politics.[165] One important tactic was to forge alliances with other sympathetic voluntary associations through communications networks, legislative alerts, solicitation of common members, exchange of periodicals, and simply contributing to others' causes—activity which merited an entire department for "Presenting Our Causes to Influential Bodies" to seek their cooperation in programs and petition drives.[166] In her address at the World's WCTU meeting at the Columbian Exposition in 1893, Willard described the coalition approach of the Fabian socialists, and urged members to look for contacts in all other clubs and organizations—an "extended concept of duties

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[164]Willard, "Address...at the First Triennial Meeting...1891," pp. 5-6.

[165]"Annual Leaflet of the National WCTU" (Chicago, 1902), p. 46.

[166]"Annual Leaflet," p. 3.

and privileges."[167]

This approach was so successful that the Woman's National Council sought to replicate the WCTU's organization by confederating locally organized woman's societies—clubs, service societies, temperance organizations, and others—and coordinating their work, the local confederation functioning autonomously under similar state and national confederations. Such a system could more efficiently pursue the "overthrow of all forms of ignorance and injustice, (and)...the application of the Golden Rule to society, custom, and law."[168] In their initiatives the WCTU cooperated with reform, health, medical, and teachers' associations, and with groups of all descriptions.

In addition to co-opting voluntary associations, the Union's strategy included gaining access for women to power within local governing bodies. If such positions did not exist, they lobbied to create them. Willard argued that

> Locally, a woman's council should, in the interest of that 'mothering' which is the central idea of our new movement, seek to secure for women admission to all school committees, library associations, hospitals and other institutional boards entrusted with the care of the defective, dependent, and delinquent classes; also to boards of trustees in schools and colleges and all professional and business associations.[169]

Women seem to have had considerable success in this period in gaining such seats, or in lobbying

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[167]Willard, "Address...2nd Biennial Convention...1893," p. 43.

[168]Frances Willard, "The Political Future of Prohibition," *Our Day*, vol. 3 (April, 1889), p. 172.

[169]Willard, "Address...at the First Triennial Meeting...1891," p. 7. See also Willard, "Political Future of Prohibition;" Willard, *Do Everything*, p. 128; Cobbe, Frances Power, *The Duties of Woman* (Boston, 1881), esp. Chap. 6, "Woman as a Citizen of the State"; and "Minutes of the Monroe County WCTU" (New York, 1888), p. 27.

those who did. Such victories were often reported triumphantly in the *Union Signal.*

One of the WCTU's most effective initiatives, pursued nationwide at state and local levels, was the drive to introduce compulsory Scientific Temperance Instruction into public school curricula. In the course of this highly successful campaign workers in the department of STI mercilessly lobbied doctors' groups, teachers' organizations, boards of health, school boards, and legislative bodies at all levels. When they could the Union stacked boards with their own members, using their influence in local affairs to gain appointments. When they could not, the Dept. of S.T.I, often formed its own boards of experts from respected educators, clergy, and health care professionals to produce and pass on the quality of material to be used in public school instruction. Their recommendations were usually accorded great weight.

Under the meticulous planning and direction of Mary Hunt, the Union gathered its contacts and experts into a battering ram of "public opinion" which crushed opposition. According to Mrs. Hunt, "It is not too much to say that the school boards of the country...are in a state of siege at the hands of mothers, urging that the schools shall utter nature's solemn warning against the cup."[170] The Union in the 1890s had great success in persuading schools both at state and local levels to include WCTU-approved temperance materials as mandatory parts of public school curricula.[171]

Such a wide mandate clearly moves well beyond the concern for alcohol abuse which was the Union's founding principle; in fact, it is hard to exclude any aspect of civic governance from the Union's stated list of concerns. The broad, perfectionist commitment to the community's health and

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[170]Quoted in Stevenson, *Brief History*, p. 34.

[171]The materials from and on this department are voluminous; the department itself published a series of tests, tracts, and leaflets, many of which are preserved in the WCTU microfilm series.

welfare translated into a mandate for inquiry and reform of many state and local services—all under the broad banner of "Prohibition." One recitation, "Prohibition Defined," included a verse lumping the baker selling bad bread and the butcher selling bad meat with the saloon keeper selling rum. Halting such abuses, the Chorus reminds us, is public spirited—"And this is prohibition."[172] Willard and others continued to reiterate the maternal basis of public action. In *Occupations for Women,* for example, she stressed the importance of women's gaining municipal government posts as "the work of salvation for other mother's little children."[173] But the type of power which evangelical women were trying to appropriate for themselves went well beyond the bonds of private charity or home care. If laws were not being enforced, the WCTU was prepared to mount its own commission of inquiry, packed with influential citizens, male and female alike. A private commission, for example, was set up to investigate the liquor traffic in its relation to a broad range of subjects from domestic violence and the impoverishment of women to crime, unemployment, the collection of municipal revenue, and lawmakers' potential to profit from the liquor trade.[174] Bypassing electoral politics, this strategy effectively restored to women some of the power lost in the breakdown of the traditional community. While this grass roots strategy did not put them in the legislature, temperance women thought of themselves as "the power behind the throne" in the battle for municipal improvement.[175]

Sometimes women actually sat on the throne: an article entitled "Petticoat Rule" lauded the

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[172]Ames, *Platform Voices*, p. 75.

[173]Willard, *Occupations for Women* (New York, 1897), p. 360.

[174]Willard, "Address Before the Second Biennial Convention...1893," p. 10.

[175]Additon, *Twenty Years*, p. 73.

success of a woman mayor an all-female council elected in a Kansas town in 1889. By this account the women managed to pass and enforce a series of municipal ordinances improving morals and services both, and although the local merchants became "a trifle ugly" when the Sunday observance law was enforced for the first time, the board enjoyed great popularity and success. One initiative seemed doomed when the city attorney vetoed a ban on spitting tobacco juice on the sidewalk (where it clung to trailing hems) as an infringement on personal liberty. But citing the power of the moral community over statute, the councilwomen instead made a personal appeal to every chewer to spit elsewhere, and claimed that the cooperative approach proved even more effective than an ordinance.[176]

In Delavan, Illinois, women who were not elected officials nonetheless raised money from exhibitions and concerts to build sidewalks. As the (male) officials let them fall into disrepair, women lamented.

> There are the sidewalks broken and worn,
> And here is the Town Board all forlorn,
> And there are the men who talk and talk,
> Though once there were women who built a walk
> In this town of Delavan.[177]

The women's exhibit at the Columbian Exposition of 1893 opened a futuristic perspective on the world of the maternal state which evangelical feminists imagined. The female world of philanthropy and reform–"and in the last analysis this includes church and state"–was to illustrate a socialized haven of the future with nurseries, day care centers, hospitals, cafes–everything

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[176]Reel 31, scrapbook 10, WCTU microfilm series.

[177]Willard, *Woman and Temperance*, p. 471.

touching the "health, holiness, and happiness of the home people."[178] For Willard and many others, this was a vision of a future that worked; they expected each woman to "come away with the feeling that God has given her a mighty work to do in the world."[179]

Temperance women shared their program for better governance with a broad range of male and female citizens who considered themselves progressive and subscribed to what the WCTU called "the maternal state" as the most enlightened response to the problem of their day–the restructuring of work and family relations around the tenets of industrial capitalism. But temperance women took a unique approach, scattershot in seeking multiple avenues of influence. Frances Willard called women, unlike men, "natural branchers–out" who sought their goals through a variety of methods.[180] Certainly they worked vigorously in electoral politics supporting candidates and initiatives, and they sought the ballot in anticipation of the day when the woman's vote could help establish their programs and reforms by legislative fiat. But they also strove consciously to develop an alternative to electoral politics through a two-pronged scheme: a national, loosely organized voluntary network of groups which could exert influence as a block; and an effort to create and fill posts at state and local levels with members of these groups, in a broadly defined area which included education, public health, and the provision of municipal and relief services.

When the WCTU was formed, the American state was just beginning to develop into the

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[178]Willard, Address...at the First Triennial Meeting...1891,"p. 30.

[179]William Cameron, *The World's Fair* (Chicago, 1893), p. 11. The women's exhibit included a detailed miniature model of a Swedish leper colony, which Willard thought showed "the sublime heights to which self-sacrifice can reach in caring for the afflicted" (p. 462).

[180]Willard, "Frances E. Willard and Woman's Temperance Work" (n.p., n.d.), p. 14.

complex structure of today; and certainly Frances Willard for all her prescience never envisioned our national bureaucracy. But temperance women's efforts were channeled into the creation of agencies and departments below the national level, and in attributing to government through those departments obligations to the welfare of the general citizenry, in a way which helped set the stage for the later assumption of these obligations by a national bureaucracy. Although they never laid out a formal proposal or theory, WCTU women fully understood that they were cre69ating an alternative type of politics, one over which they had more control and through which they could more effectively implement their own agenda. To some extent, Willard's vision of a "republic of women" within a national government was fulfilled in the next several decades, as women connected to the settlement house movement and related reforms continued the drive to create local bureaucracies through which to administer public welfare programs, culminating in the influence of women in the administrative bureaucracies of the New Deal.[181]

[181]A great deal of work is currently being done, most of it unpublished as yet, on women's role in the growth of administrative agencies in the Progressive era and up to the Second World War. Linda Gordon and Kathryn Kish Sklar are both working on books in this field, as are a number of other scholars.