

Louisiana State University

LSU Scholarly Repository

LSU Doctoral Dissertations

Graduate School

2005

"I Cried Out and None but Jesus Heard!" prophetic pedagogy: the spirituality and religious lives of three nineteenth century African-American women

Elecia Brown Lathon

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lathon, Elecia Brown, "I Cried Out and None but Jesus Heard!" prophetic pedagogy: the spirituality and religious lives of three nineteenth century African-American women" (2005). *LSU Doctoral Dissertations*. 3120.

https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/3120

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

**“I CRIED OUT AND NONE BUT JESUS HEARD!”
PROPHETIC PEDAGOGY
THE SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS LIVES OF THREE NINETEENTH CENTURY
AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN**

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

**By
Elecia Brown Lathon
B.S., Southern University, 1993
M.Ed., Louisiana State University, 1996
Ed.S., Louisiana State University, 2002
December 2005**

**©Copyright 2005
Elecia Brown Lathon
All Rights Reserved**

**For my mother Laverne S. Brown,
my inspiration, my friend and my first teacher**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All that I am and all that I ever hope to be I owe it all to thee. To God be the glory for the things He has done. I have been humbled, enlightened and inspired throughout this process. The women that I chose to study have opened my eyes to new and exciting spaces that I would never have dreamed of inhabiting. The radical nature, commitment to the call and the devout desire to do the will of God that each of these women exhibited has encouraged me to continue my journey and to follow my dreams. I have been strengthened mentally and spiritually. So I thank Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw for their spiritual legacy and their amazing strength. For they have truly become my “Sisters of the Spirit” (William Andrews).

I would like to acknowledge my major professor, Dr. Petra Munro Hendry. Thank you for your comments, your feedback, your guidance and for helping me learn how to “think outside of the box.” All of these things significantly enhanced the quality of my work. I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to have you as my major advisor throughout this process. Thank you for providing the understanding and support that only a quintessential scholar and major advisor can provide. Thanks for your unwavering confidence in me. When I thought I couldn’t climb a hill, you made me feel like I could climb a mountain.

A special thank you to Dr. Earl H. Cheek, Jr., who worked with me from day one. You always had time for me even in the midst of your busy schedule. I can’t tell you how much your support and encouragement has meant to me. Thanks for always being there. To my committee members: Dr. Leonard Moore, Dr. Joyce Jackson, Dr. James Byo, and Dr. Earl H. Cheek, Jr., the kindness and support of each is beyond words. I am extremely blessed to have had the privilege of their presence and knowledge in assisting me throughout the doctoral process.

As I thank the many people who have helped me I shiver at the thought of leaving someone out. "Please charge it to my head and not to my heart."

A special thank you to Kelly McFatter, Ms. Lois Stewart, and Ms. Joyce Stevenson. You guys have been wonderful. I know I worried you a lot but not once did you complain. I will forever be in your debt.

To my mother, an educator of forty plus years, who instilled in me the value of education at an early age. I admire her for her tenacity, her energy, and most of all her spirituality. You have been a role model and inspiration to all of your children. I thank God for you and your love. Thank you for taking care of me and my little ones while I completed this project. To my dad, George Brown, Jr., thanks for keeping me laughing and for always being confident that I would finish one day.

To my brothers and sisters, Evangelynn Clark, Chandralynn Livous, Elton Brown, Sr., Calvin Brown, Sr., and Rodney Brown: you guys are incredible. Thanks for putting up with me and my moods throughout this process, but most of all thanks for your support and encouragement.

I would like to thank my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Barbara and Eddie Ray Lathon for their support and encouragement throughout this process. My only regret is that my mother-in-law is not with us to see the completion of this project. In the midst of her illness she called and encouraged me. She always asked how things were going. I thank her for that. I know she would have been proud. Mr. Eddie Ray, keep the faith and know that weepin may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning.

To my friends and "sisters of the spirit", Chapreca Fields and Paulette Johnson, Thanks for being my friends. It has really meant a lot to have you in my corner throughout my writing. I

can't say thank you enough for the many times you called to check on me, and for the many times you just listened to me vent. Your friendship is a gift from God. Sandra Compton, Denise Ned, Latoya Stickman and Hazel Stickman, to you I say thanks for checking on me to make sure that I didn't "crack up." I really appreciate you looking out for me and my family.

To Dorian McCoy and Gwen Jackson, thanks for your friendship and listening ear. You guys are the best. I couldn't have done it without you. To my classmate Donna Porsche-Frilot, thanks for introducing me to Maria Stewart. Together we can continue to recover the lost lives of African-American women religious. I look forward to the challenge.

A special thanks to Mr. Mike Mallet at the Cox Communications Academic Center for Student Athletes. Thanks so much for your encouragement assistance, support and for always making me smile. I owe you.

To my students past and present (SU and LSU), I thank you for helping me envision all that I could be. Thanks for helping me to realize what my gifts are and what I have been called to do.

To my children who were born in the midst of my doctoral work: Derrek (three years) and Elise Leigh Ann (4 months). Thanks for putting up with mommy. You are the best kids a mother could ask for. Your smiles helped keep me grounded and focused throughout this process. I love you! Hope, Debra, Ms. Nora, Ms. Diana, Ms. Aleatha, Ms. Barbara, Ms. Joyce, Ms. Audrey, Ms. Pat, Ms. Debbie, Ms. Sharon, Ms. Alicia, Ms. Shawn and Ms. Liz, thanks for taking good care of my babies. I prayed for the best to care for my little ones and that's exactly what God sent me.

To my husband, and best friend, Derrek Sr., who so willingly sacrificed to make sure that this project came to fruition. My research became a part of your life. You never fussed or complained. You always encouraged me and you always told me that I could do it. Thanks for your spirituality, for pushing me, and for being the wonderful husband that you are. I love you and I thank you.

Special thanks to the New Pilgrim Baptist Church and the New Hope Baptist Church for nurturing my budding spirituality many years ago.

Finally, I would like to thank my pastor, Isaiah J. Webster and his wife, Louise Webster. The two of you have been wonderful to me and my family. Pastor Webster, thanks for the books. I can't thank you enough. To Sunday school class #8, thanks for your prayers. Thanks to Ms. Charlotte Anderson for your assistance, Dr. Charles Vincent for suggested readings, Mother Jackson for taking time to talk to me about old negro spirituals and the old church and the Greater New Guide Church family for your love and support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT	xi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Woman’s Rights</i>	1
To Prophecy or Not to Prophecy: That Was the Question	3
Spiritual Influence.....	7
Prophetic Experiences.....	8
Spirituality Defined.....	11
Resistance, Survival and Empowerment.....	13
Agency, Activism and Spirituality.....	17
Understanding Curriculum.....	19
Gendered Ways	21
Dissertation Overview.....	23
Chapter Summary.....	24
CHAPTER 2: “AND STILL I RISE”	26
Narrative and Autobiographical Methodology	26
Autobiography –Writing the Self	28
Conversion Narratives.....	29
Slave Narratives and Spiritual Narratives.....	31
African-American Autobiography	33
Post-bellum African-American Women’s Autobiography	34
Women’s and African-American Women’s Autobiography	35
Recovering Lost Lives	36
Significance of Study	38
CHAPTER 3: “GOD BLESS AMERICA”	43
Nineteenth Century Religion: An American Religious History	43
A Nation in Crisis	44
Women and Religion in the Nineteenth Century	48
Catholic Women of the Nineteenth Century	50
The African-American Experience	51
African-American Religion in the Nineteenth Century	52
The Black Church.....	57
Black Methodist Denominations.....	58
The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME).....	58
The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ).....	58
The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME).....	59

African-American Baptists.....	60
The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (NBC, USA).....	61
National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA).....	61
The Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC).....	61
African-American Pentecostalism.....	62
The Church of God in Christ (COGIC).....	63
African-American Women and the Church.....	63
Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen!.....	65
Women Preachers.....	68
Spiritual Struggles.....	71
Holy Tensions.....	73
CHAPTER 4: MARIA MILLER STEWART: PROPHETIC WOMAN.....	75
Biographical Background.....	75
Prophetic Works.....	79
Rhetorical Strategies.....	82
Radical Obedience – A Nineteenth Century African-American Woman on the Battlefield for the Lord.....	83
A Jeremiadic Tradition – Warnings and Prophecy.....	87
Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality.....	91
Meditations by Maria Miller Stewart.....	92
Four Public Addresses.....	93
Sufferings During the War.....	95
CHAPTER 5: JULIA A.J. FOOT: PROPHETIC WOMAN.....	103
A Brand Plucked from the Fire.....	103
The Plucking Begins.....	103
The Early Years (Birth and Parentage).....	106
Prophetic Works and Sermons.....	107
Rhetorical Strategies.....	109
I Know I Been Changed: The Conversion of Julia Foote and Conversion Rhetoric.....	110
The Road to Damascus: “The Road Less Traveled”.....	114
A Song Filled Conversion.....	117
Resistance Rhetoric.....	118
Resistant Journeys.....	119
Silent Resistance.....	121
Resistant Education.....	122
Resisting a Call to Preach, A Call to Teach.....	123
Continual Resistance.....	125
A Word to My Christian Sisters – A Lesson in Resistance.....	127
CHAPTER 6: ZILPHA ELAW: A SPECKLED BIRD.....	132
Early Life.....	133
‘Til Death Do Us Part.....	133
Educating Young Minds.....	135
A Prophetic Work By A Speckled Bird.....	136

Speckled Rhetorical Strategies.....	138
Spiritual Autobiography.....	138
A Theology of Conflict.....	142
A Eunuchian Approach.....	143
Resisting the Call.....	144
A Theology of Empowerment – Thorns in My Flesh.....	147
Paul and Elaw.....	147
An Unknown End.....	149
CHAPTER 7: “WE’VE COME THIS FAR BY FAITH”.....	151
Rhetorical Remnants.....	152
Divine Differences.....	153
Spiritual Sisters – Striking Similarities.....	155
New Understandings and New Boundaries.....	156
Connecting the Past to the Present: So What Presently Gives Black Women the Will to Survive?.....	157
So Where Do We Go From Here?.....	161
REFERENCES.....	167
VITA.....	174

ABSTRACT

African-American women represent a long line of prophetic women such as Maria Stewart, Julia Foote, Zilpha Elaw, Harriet Baker, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, and numerous others. These women fought to have their voices heard in America. The lives and experiences of these women have been excluded, ignored, and dismissed from academic discourses. This study adds a new dimension (the spirituality of African-American women) to the field of curriculum theory and builds on the scholarship of literary scholars who have and are currently recovering the lost lives of African-American women and their spirituality. Therefore, this research examined the spirituality and rhetorical strategies utilized by three African-American women of the nineteenth century (Maria Miller Stewart, Julia Foote, and Zilpha Elaw) to break down and challenge nineteenth century ideologies around race and gender.

Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw espoused a prophetic pedagogy. Prophetic pedagogy is defined as the art or science of teaching in which the individual appropriates a perceived mandate from God to spread His word in order to teach, preach, and advance a conscious or unconscious political agenda.

Narratives, autobiographies, sermons and speeches were carefully examined in order to explore the spirituality and rhetorical strategies employed by these three women.

The researcher participated in the literal exhumation of Maria Miller Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw, who were crying out from unmarked graves. The researcher conducted an *Academic Autopsy* on the remains (autobiographies, narratives, etc.) of these three nineteenth century women who paved the way for so many African-American women.

The findings of this study conclude that Stewart, Elaw and Foote used rhetorical strategies such as conversion rhetoric, spiritual autobiography, resistance rhetoric, radical

obedience, the Jeremiad tradition, a theology of conflict and a theology of empowerment to break down barriers and cross cultural boundaries of the nineteenth century.

Black women have used any means necessary to speak out and be heard, but for many, their spirituality and religious lives represent devices that allowed them to share their moral wisdom, to empower their communities, to resist stereotypes, and to survive in the face of oppression.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Woman's Rights

*There's neither Jew nor Gentile,
To those Who've paid the price;
'Tis neither male nor female,
But one in Jesus Christ.*

*I am going to tell you friends
Without the slightest doubt,
A day is coming very soon
When your sins will find you out.*

*A day is coming very soon,
When sin cannot hide:
Then you will wish you'd taken,
The Bible for your guide.*

*You'll wish you had let woman alone
When they were trying to teach.
You'll be sorry you tried to hold them down,
When God told them to preach.*

*Come dear brothers, let us journey,
Side by side and hand in hand;
Does not the Bible plainly tell you
Woman shall co-ordinate the man?*

*The hand that rocks the [cradle]
Will rule the world, you know;
So lift the standard high for God
Wherever you may go.*

*Some women have the right to sing,
And some the right to teach;
But women, called by Jesus Christ,
Surely have the right to preach.*

*Some men will call you anti-Christ,
And some would rather die:
Then have the Spirit poured out,
When women prophesy.*

*To prophesy is to speak for God,
Wherever man is found;
Although lots of hypocrites,
Still try to hold them down.
So be steadfast in the Word of God,
Though fiery darts be hurled;
If Jesus Christ is on your side,
He is more than all the world.*

Lillia M. Sparks, *Latter Day Messenger*,¹ 1834
Adapted from a sermon by Ida B. Robinson,²

As I read the above excerpt from 1934, the words encouraged my spirit, impregnated my mind and gave birth to a devout desire and eagerness that spoke prophetically within me and said, “I am an educator, a musician, a mother, a student, a woman, a Black woman, but more importantly I am a spiritual being, an inheritor of a sacred tradition. I am the descendent of a people who are spiritual, emotional and expressive. African-American women represent a long line of prophetic women, such as Maria Stewart, Julia Foote, Zilpha Elaw, Harriet Baker, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, and numerous others.

¹ *Latter Day Messenger* was a monthly publication of the early church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This publication was first published in October 1834, replacing an earlier publication.

² Ida B. Robinson was an African-American female preacher of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

To Prophecy or Not to Prophecy: That Was the Question

After this I shall pour out my spirit on all mankind:/your sons and your daughters will prophesy...I shall pour out my spirit in those days even on slaves and slave-girls.” Joel 2:28-29

The aforementioned biblical passage may be found repeatedly throughout the narratives of African-American women religious of the nineteenth century. Clearly, these women used this biblical passage to show that God had given them authority to speak on His behalf. Nineteenth century pulpits only allowed men to preach; yet according to this passage, sons and daughters (men and women) could prophesy. Therefore, the term *prophetic* for purposes of this research becomes closely aligned with the idea of prophesying. Prophesying in the general sense is “to declare or predict (something) by or as by the influence of divine guidance, to predict a future event in any way, and to teach religious matters; preach” (Webster, 2001). The definition chosen is similar to Chanta Haywood’s definition of prophesying. Haywood (2003) holds that “prophesying is the appropriation of a perceived mandate from God to spread His word in order to advance a conscious or unconscious political agenda” (p. 17). She further suggests, “Prophesying then accords more with a God-inspired critical consciousness that intends to promote social change rather than with popular conceptions of prophesying as the possession of a visionary gift that allows one to see into or predict the future” (p.18). So what is prophetic pedagogy? Prophetic pedagogy is the art or science of teaching in which the individual appropriates a perceived mandate from God to spread His word in order to teach, preach and advance a conscious or unconscious political agenda.

After coining the term *prophetic pedagogy*, I searched for others who had analyzed or labeled the narratives of African-American women as prophetic pedagogy.

My search returned no results. However, I discovered Cornel West's notion of prophetic pragmatism. According to Cornel West, prophetic pragmatism represents "a universal consciousness that promotes an all-embracing democratic and libertarian moral vision, historical consciousness that acknowledges human finitude and conditionedness and a critical consciousness that encourages relentless critique and self-criticism for the aims of social change and personal humility" (West, 1999, p.170). I situate Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw within the Christian tradition in which these women pushed cultural boundaries by identifying and validating self. West's notion of prophetic pragmatism sets the stage for this study, because he maintains that "the act of prophetic pragmatism can be carried out in various political movements and within different religious or secular traditions. He further holds that "the mark of the prophet is to speak the truth in love with courage come what may." (West, 1999, p.171) The women I have chosen to study did so.

I found works by Marcia Riggs'³ *Prophetic Voices* and Chanta Haywood's *Prophesying Daughters* which included chapters on prophetic change, prophetic journeying, prophetic reading, and prophetic works.⁴ Still, I found nothing on prophetic pedagogy. Haywood analyzed the lives of Maria Stewart, Jarena Lee, Julia Foote, and Frances Joseph Gaudet. In her book, she closely examined the works of these four women preachers. The chapters on prophetic change, prophetic journeying, prophetic reading, and prophetic works established how these religious women as pioneers "ontologically situated religion and religious conviction at the center of African-

³ *Can I get a witness?: Prophetic Religious Voices of African-American Women: An Anthology* (Marcia Riggs, 1997).

⁴ *Prophesying Daughters*, written by Chanta Haywood (2003).

American women's literary history, meriting pause for a critical consideration of the serious implications of their views and writings to the field" (Haywood, 2003, p.13). More specifically, in the chapter on *Prophetic Change*, Haywood dealt with conversion beyond the realm of speculation. She opined that "it occurred and empowered these women" (Jarena Lee and Julia Foote). Haywood considered conversion rhetoric in the context of reader distrust. Haywood (2003) "analyzes the use of conversion within the context of the prevalent notion of white reader distrust of black writers in the nineteenth century" (p.35) She continues by noting that "writing within this context of reader distrust meant that discourse and rhetoric around conversion served a dual purpose, (1) it had to be used discursively to convert doubtful readers over to accepting them as legitimate Christians called to preach or do God's work, and (2) it had to be inverted in order not only to interrogate limitations that constructs around gender imposed on them but also to defeat these restrictions" (p.35) *Prophetic Journeying* focuses on the trope of travel in Black women preacher's narratives. Haywood asked why black women preacher's felt the need to chronicle their travel experiences in their narratives and what factors influenced why and how they chose to write about their travel. *Prophetic Reading* analyzes Black women preachers and biblical interpretation, and *Prophetic Works* highlights the life of Frances Joseph Gaudet and social activism.

The prophetic pedagogy of Stewart, Elaw and Foote may be viewed directly as a result of the prophetic voices utilized in their narratives. These women prophesied in the telling of their stories. This analysis of the lives of three nineteenth century women's spirituality as prophetic pedagogy is similar to the work of Chanta Haywood. However, this study focuses on those nineteenth century Black women who advanced political

agendas by means of their spirituality in order to affect social change and to teach through sophisticated rhetorical strategies. Before moving any further I must note that although Stewart, Elaw and Foote were religious figures of their day, their stories help us to understand that all people can prophesy. The whole notion that to prophesy is a call to social action opens doors for those who feel that they have the gift of prophesy. These women traveled all over America and even England (Elaw) prophesying, proselytizing and teaching the word of God to all. The lives and experiences of these women offer a perspective that can assist, inform and help us understand the role that religion played in the lives of African-American women during the nineteenth century. The mere idea that the lives of these women have been excluded should readily raise questions about the completeness of America's religious history. How complete is it? Although this dissertation takes on a religious and spiritual persona, the voices of the women in this study deserve to be heard because they were not passive but active and instrumental in bringing about social change in the midst of turmoil during the nineteenth century. Being able to enter into the lives and personal experiences of these women is a treasure. Such an entrance suggests to all mankind whether religious or not, that the voices of all should be heard and the lives and lived experiences of all should be seen as an opportunity to teach and to prophesy to all mankind. The best way and in this author's opinion, the only way to come to a fuller understanding of what life was like for African-American women religious during the nineteenth century is to read the sermons, autobiographies, and narratives of African-American women of the nineteenth century. Therefore, I must point out that this writing is a direct product of my heritage, because this work assumes an emotional and expressive mode. My spirituality, expressiveness, and emotional sense of

being were passed to me from my mother, my grandmothers, and other women in the African-American community. This emotional and expressive mode is not intended to offend or alienate, but rather to offer an understanding of the world and discourses in which I, together with many other African-American women, thrive. Therefore, I have come to believe that this emotional, expressive and spiritual journey began at birth. However, it wasn't until I had an experience with the *liquid grave*,⁵ that I was truly initiated into the Black woman's world of spirituality.

Spiritual Influence

Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw are unknown to many. This became more and more apparent each time I named the women I had chosen to study for this project. I have yet to meet one person who is actually familiar with Stewart, Foote and Elaw. However, although these women are unknown to the current population that exists in America, during their day they were widely known and even influenced many who followed them years later. The experiences and travel logs of these women suggests that their paths might have crossed at some point and that they might have even influenced one another. Their travels often took them to some of the same areas (New York, Boston, Ohio, etc.). The writings and lives of women like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells and Anna Julia Cooper might also have been influenced by Stewart, Foote and Elaw. In 1851 Sojourner Truth presented her famous speech, "Ain't I a woman," in defense of women's rights at a women's conference. Twenty years prior Stewart wrote for the *Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper under the Ladies Department. The logo for

⁵ Liquid grave refers to being baptized in the Black Baptist church. The individual being baptized is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The preacher and a deacon stand on each side of the person being baptized; these two then lean the person back into the water in a manner in which the person is taken under water and lifted back up quickly.

Stewart's section was "Am I not a woman and a sister?" Stewart began speaking publicly at women's conferences and meetings in defense of women's rights more than twenty years earlier. Was Truth influenced by Stewart's writings? There are no documents or writings to substantiate my claim but I think many were influenced by the writings of Stewart, Foote and Elaw, especially women of the twentieth century such as Alice Walker, Joycelyn Moody, Chanta Haywood, Toni Morrison, bell hooks, and many others who have become part of the African-American women's literary tradition. Stewart, Foote and Elaw are the foremothers of the African-American women's literary tradition. However, I think the greatest influence these women had was on those who came to hear them teach, prophesy and proselytize. Many were converted and many sought Christian perfection after hearing their sermons and speeches. Therefore, they not only influenced people of their day but their work continues to influence generation after generation.

Prophetic Experiences

It was the week before Easter 1978, in a small rural town about 15 miles north of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, during what was known as *Revival time*.⁶ I was eight years old and on the *mourning bench*,⁷ with all of the other young people who had decided they wanted to be baptized and forgiven of their sins. I remember the incident like it was yesterday, especially my grandmother (a light complexioned black woman, large in stature) and a deaconess⁸ at the church, who sang loudly and clearly, "Oh Lord, have

⁶ Revival time, usually a week long event in Black Southern Baptist Churches, is usually held around Easter time, but the event could take place throughout the year.

⁷ The mourning bench is the front pew in the church where prospective candidates for baptism sat during revival.

⁸ Deaconess means messenger, servant, or helper. It comes from the Greek *diakonos* and was first used in the Bible by the Apostle Paul, in Romans 16:1-2, to describe Phoebe, a woman leader and worker in the early Christian community. The deaconesses are dedicated women who dared to be different in order to

mercy, Oh Lord, have mercy on me . . .” I still sing that song today. On Friday night, after getting up from the mourning bench (usually a week long event), I accepted Christ as my personal Savior. I was led by a deaconess of the church to the front of the altar to stand. She then placed a white, cloth rag around my head. This symbolized that I had accepted Christ and that I awaited baptism. The church espoused full baptism in water, so on Sunday morning, I nervously descended into the water with tears in my eyes. I could hear my grandmother singing with the people of the church, the chorus “Take me to the water, take me to the water, take me to the water and baptize me.” As I emerged from the water, the entire group began to sing, “So glad it done got over, so glad it done got over, so glad it done got over, done got over at last. Tone the bells, done got over, tone the bells, done got over, tone the bells, done got over, done got over at last.” The baptism was huge, a big celebration, and a personal epiphany in my sight. At last and indeed, I was now a born-again Christian, a new creature in Christ.

However, at the time of my baptism, I did not understand the words of the songs I heard, nor did I really understand the relationship that my grandmother, my mother and other black women in my church and community had with God. It was not until the age of thirteen, when I began to play the piano as a gospel musician for several area churches, that I began to see God’s presence in my life as a motivating force, as a tool for resistance, as a means to manage oppressive forces in my life, and as an insightful power that had been passed to me from my grandmothers, my mother and other women in my community. Teresa Fry Brown states that “African-American grandmothers and other

give full-time Christian service to the ministry of mercy. These women usually are found at the very front of the church often dressed in white.

mothers transmit values intergenerationally. It is shown in their pedagogy, social location, and their relationships to the recipients of their wisdom” (Brown, 2000, p.81). I now see myself simultaneously as a recipient, a legacy, and a conduit of the profound spirituality that Black women espouse.

As I grew older, the women in my family and community prepared the setting for my budding spirituality and religious life, while I learned and discovered my own spirituality and religious life in a personal way. However, I must admit that initially, I thought the women who exhibited such spirituality were a little strange. I found them to be especially strange when out of the blue they would strike up a *meter*⁹ or song. It seemed as if they had made these songs up. My grandmother and mother would sing songs such as “Precious Lord,” “Guide me over,” “Wade in the water,” and “I shall not be moved,” all of which were old *Negro spirituals*.¹⁰ Today, I find myself singing many of the same songs as I journey through life and the world of academia. My spirituality is by no means separate and apart from the educational journey in which I am traveling. Rather, my spirituality has been the driving force in whatever discourse I find myself as a black woman in America. So what is this spirituality of which I speak?

⁹ Meters are old one-liner songs sung in southern Black Baptist churches during worship service or prayer service as a rhythm in verse; a measured, patterned arrangement of syllables, primarily according to stress or length.

¹⁰ Negro spirituals or African-American spirituals are one mode through which the melodies and rhythms of Africa found their way to America. Spirituals arose out of the songs the slaves would sing working in the fields on the plantations. In the fields, the slaves developed a musical combination of *call and response* which becomes characteristic of gospel singing. Early spirituals acted for a number of practical functions for the slaves. Some were a mode of communication or a map to the North. Aside from these reasons, their song was a cry for freedom and salvation.

Spirituality Defined

With spirituality as the focus of my research, it is imperative at this point that I define spirituality relative to this study. There are countless definitions of spirituality. How then might one define spirituality? Although spirituality is difficult, if not impossible to define, scholars have provided numerous definitions for the term *spirituality*. Much research has led to the conclusion that a person's spirituality is uniquely defined by that person's experience. Spirituality resists placement in a narrowly defined category. However, common threads may be woven into the spiritual experience as the result of an individual's life story. Therefore, the singular thread common to all spiritual experience is the belief in a higher being, a connection to divine reality.

According to Stewart (1999):

Spirituality is the inner content of all religions, but it does not necessarily have to have a religious context. Spirituality represents the full matrix of beliefs, power, values and behaviors that shape people's consciousness and understanding of themselves in relation to divine reality. Spirituality is also a process by which people interpret, disclose, formulate, adapt, and innovate reality and their understanding of God within a specific context or culture. It signifies a style or mode of existence, an ethos and mythos that creates its own praxis and culture, and compels identification and resolution of human problems through divine intervention. (p. 5)

What is African-American spirituality? Gloria Wade-Gayles (1995) states that African-Americans witness for the spirit without defining it. She says that it is doubtful that anyone can define the spirit or spirituality because it defies definition—a fact that speaks to its power as much as it reflects its mystery. She continues by saying, “Like the wind, it cannot be seen, and yet, like the wind, it is surely there, and we bear witness to its presence, its power. We cannot hold it in our hands and put it on a scale, but we feel the weight, the force, of its influence in our lives. We cannot hear it, but we hear

ourselves speaking and singing and testifying because it moves, inspires and directs us to do so” (Wade-Gayles, 1995, p. 2). “African-American spiritual values are a combination of African beliefs, Afro-Christian beliefs and day-to-day common sense passed down from adult to child” (Fry-Brown, 2000, p. 61).

For this study and in the author’s frame of reference, spirituality represents a personal, daily, action-oriented relationship and lifestyle with God; a relationship that knows and understands the word of God and makes every attempt to live by that word and to please God. Thus, spirituality is not only concerned about self, but it is concerned with the community and all who dwell therein.

In order to understand spirituality, we must have a solid grasp on race and gender, because spirituality composes the very center of who we are. We are not human beings, having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience. This, then, would suggest that spirituality informs every part of our being. The religious lives and spirituality of African-American women continue to stand as undiscovered terrain in education, specifically, curriculum theory.

Historically, Black women have not been considered legitimate producers of knowledge. However, if our spirituality informs every part of our being, then why have we neglected to add the spiritual lives of African-American women to the body of knowledge that already exists? Weisenfield and Newman (1996) maintained that despite the relative lack of scholarly attention to African-American women’s personal, spiritual experiences and expressions (women’s communities of faith and their religiously-based impulses to affect change), these same experiences and expressions constitute the core of the personal histories of many women of color. In retrospect, the religious lives of three

nineteenth century African-American women—Maria Stewart, Zilpha Elaw and Julia Foote—definitely constitute the core of their personal histories. Their spirituality and religious lives initiated social change for many African-Americans in the nineteenth century. Therefore, researching the spiritual lives of three Black women intellectuals will serve to enhance the extant body of knowledge.

Resistance, Survival and Empowerment

Collier-Thomas (1998) felt that the study of Black religious history as it pertains to African-American women is importantly progressive:

Acknowledgement of the significance of African-American women in black religious history is one of the most prominent advances in recent African-American scholarship. The study of Black women and religion is crucial to our understanding of American and black religion.” (p. 1)

Although the lives and experiences of nineteenth century women like Maria Stewart, Zilpha Elaw, and Julia Foote cannot speak for all African-American women, a study focused on their lives and religious experiences provides a tapestry for rich, authentic, and scholarly conversations of black religious history and traditions which have historically focused on the Black male. However, the mere suggestion that three women might serve as advocates for all African-American women would be scholarly unproductive and totally misleading.

In the view of researchers Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (1992), “the axes of subject identifications and experiences are multiple because locations in gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality complicate one another and are not merely additive ... nor do different vectors of identification and experience overlap neatly and entirely” (p. 123) Not only are the subjects complex, but no single individual can speak for all. Research in regard to the lives of Stewart, Elaw, and Foote is not intended to suggest that the

spirituality these women espoused represents the norm for all Black women. However, their particular spirituality and the way that spirituality is utilized may speak to many African-American women. These women were not southern women, yet their spirituality still informs, educates, and helps an understanding of the history and experiences of the Black woman. As Black women, their lives profoundly exemplify nineteenth century Black women who utilized spirituality to resist gender and racist ideologies of their day, to survive oppressive conditions, and to be empowered to spread the word of God.

In 1831, Maria Miller Stewart asked, “How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?”¹¹ In 2004, my response to Stewart’s question is that Black women shall no longer be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles. Black women must rise up and free their minds from the iron pots and kettles that have weighed them down, hindering the acknowledgement of Black women as curriculum theorists and legitimate producers of knowledge. This realization instills urgency within for the inclusion of the lives of these women into education and curriculum history. It is critical that education and curriculum history embrace the experiences of these women who have been traditionally marginalized. An embracing of that which remains must take place if we are to understand how these women resisted nineteenth century gender and racist ideologies.

Despite the many contributions made by Maria Miller Stewart, Zilpha Elaw and Julia Foote, only remnants, as scattered fragments of their lives, may be found. Guy

¹¹ Excerpt from “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality: The sure foundations on which we must build.” Presented by Maria Miller Stewart in Boston, October 1831.

Sheftall (1995) held that there are many African-American women whose minds and talents have been suppressed by the symbolic pots and kettles of Black women's subordination. The researcher's view is echoed by Hills-Collins (2000): "Far too many African-American women intellectuals have labored in isolation and obscurity and, like Zora Neale Hurston, lie buried in unmarked graves" (p. 2). Such lives provide infinite possibilities and opportunities for research in the field of curriculum history. This is why we must incorporate the lives and experiences of these women into the field of curriculum history. Pinar, Williams, Slattery and Taubman (1995) maintains,

Perhaps because curriculum specialists did have greater access to the schools in the past, or at least wrote as if they did, their concerns were more focused on curriculum development in and for the schools. Their writing tended to be addressed to elementary and secondary teachers and administrators, as some writing still is. Relatively speaking, there was little sense of developing a field devoted to accumulation of knowledge and to the enhancement of understanding, a field at once theoretical and historical. Mauritz Johnson (1967) expressed succinctly this core idea of the traditional field: The majority of educationists, education practitioners, and scholars active in curriculum reforms are oriented toward improvement, rather than understanding, action and results rather than inquiry. (p. 14)

The lives and experiences of Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw provide understanding, action, and results. Orientation toward these goals is a necessity if one is truly to reconceptualize the field of curriculum history.

Maria Miller Stewart, Zilpha Elaw and Julia Foote may be considered the inception of an era of women's prophetic voices; as prophetic voices, these Black women spoke in the midst of racial and gender unrest during the turbulence of the nineteenth century. Stewart, Elaw and Foote represent the focus of this study through the extreme spirituality that they espoused, together with their radical obedience to God. They used their spirituality and Christianity to educate a people, to teach, to inform, to instruct the

African-American race on how to live in nineteenth century America, and to articulate a prophetic pedagogy during their day.

Stewart, Foote, and Elaw often were not heard nor seen as legitimate producers of knowledge, yet they used the political arena when possible to bring about social reform; more often, they relied upon spirituality and the religious life to empower and to encourage themselves to bring about change. Smith Foster (1993) validated these thoughts on spirituality and the Black woman:

Defying the laws and customs that imposed silence upon them, African-American women testified to their personal experiences and perceptions and to those they shared with their communities. Those who converted to Christianity (virtually every extant text was written by a professed Christian) took seriously the Biblical injunction, to “write the vision, and make it plain” (Hab. 2:2). They used the Word as both a tool and a weapon to correct, to create and to confirm their visions of life as it was and as it would become (Smith Foster, 1993, p.1-2).

Many mainstream feminists consider that change through one’s spirituality and prayer does not pose the most effective or proper way to cause change. Traditionally, mainstream feminists would advocate change brought about through agency and activism. They fail to realize that for the Black woman, spirituality is agentive and through encouragement, Black women are promoted to a degree of activism that in turn brings change. Spirituality continues to empower Black women.

Spirituality played a powerful and consistent role in the lives of Stewart, Elaw and Foote. The same spirituality that lived inside these women makes its presence known in the lives of many African-American women. Nevertheless, the educational system in America neglects to make the connection between spirituality and education. Therefore, as I envisioned this study, I came to the conclusion that rather than viewing spirituality

and education as two separate entities, spirituality and education should be considered as a singular entity, because one informs the other.

Dwayne Huebner, in his essay on “Education and Spirituality,” states in Hillis and Pinar (1999) “Everything that is done in schools, and in preparation for school activity is already infused with the spiritual” (p. 414). He further holds that “all activity in school has moral consequences. The very highlighting of the need to teach moral and spiritual values in schools implies a breakdown not in the spirituality and morality of the student, but a breakdown in the moral activity and spirituality of the school itself, and of the people in control of the school” (p.414). Those in control resist spiritual notions as part of the curriculum, excluding what should be included. Important facets of learning are systematically excluded, i.e., Black women, spirituality, and the spiritual. However, the solution for correcting this problem involves numerous complexities. The curriculum should be newly envisioned, but not necessarily reinvented. As Huebner opined, “It would mean having a different view of people, of our educational spaces and resources, of what we do and what we say—a view that will enable us to critique the embodied images, see obstacles, and recognize alternatives” (Hillis & Pinar, 1999, p. 402). The spirituality that these women espoused instilled an agentic nature within each one. This agentic nature produced a sense of humanity and a need to educate others. For they were truly historical agents writing/righting themselves into history.

Agency, Activism, and Spirituality

Religion/spirituality plays a vital role in the lives of Black women. According to researcher McKay (1989):

Black women used the basic ideals of Christianity and religion (such as being in the world, but not of the world, putting God first, others second and themselves

last and putting their spirituality over the desires of the flesh) to model their response to their world, thereby rendering radical changes to oppressive and dehumanizing conditions. (p. 4)

Lehmann and Myers (1989) aver that one function of religion/spirituality aids individuals in understanding, constructing explanations, and resolving adverse circumstances.

Indeed, religiosity, and spirituality invariably have emerged as critical facets of Black women's efforts to understand, interpret, and cope with adversity (Mattis, 1995; Myers, 1980; McKay, 1989; McAdoo, 1992; Neighbors, Jackson, Bowman, & Guerin, 1983).

This Spirit caused religious nineteenth century Black women intellectuals to prophesy, to live a life of militancy, to become pioneers, to become activists, and to live a life of profound religious faith in nineteenth century America.

Black women's spirituality provided an agency that constituted a form of resistance. Resistance, employed in the quest for liberation and justice, often is not only peaceful, but also practical for the communities in which Black women reside. Marla Frederick (2003), in her work *Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith*, noted that Black women create lives and sustain communities and develop opportunities for success. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes (2001) opined that Black women serve and restore their communities through education and activities that affirm social traditions and validate history. Frederick (2003) maintained that "given the obstacles these women must overcome to participate, these acts, though not always protest-oriented, are nonetheless agentive" (p. 7). The means by which African-American women seek affirmation and participation do not necessarily require protest, violence, or public outcries. The work within their communities uses education to make a difference, to keep traditions sacred, and to continue what has been passed on from one generation to the next. Frederick

(2003) labeled such acts as agentive. In the realization that African-American women have been agents of change through nonviolent and sometimes violent acts raises yet another question: Why has the field of curriculum theory neglected to address such agentive acts, including spirituality, in relation to our understanding of curriculum? Indeed, acknowledging curriculum to be racial text or gendered text is agentive in and of itself. Therefore, acknowledging curriculum as spiritual text would be no different. Why, then do we ignore the notion that curriculum is spiritual text?

Understanding Curriculum

There are numerous books on race, racism, and understanding of curriculum as not only racial text but also gendered text, yet how many books are devoted to understanding curriculum as spiritual text? Were it not for scholars like Dwayne Huebner, James Macdonald, William Doll, William Pinar, and T.S. Eliot, there would be little research to be considered. Scholars have written and added to the existing body of knowledge for years, yet neglected to acknowledge spirituality's connection to curriculum understanding. A good example of such neglect is the institution of racism. Racism is still alive and well in America today. Actually, racism may be worse at present than it was fifty years ago. Yet scholars, intellectuals and educators continue to narrowly conceptualize race and racism. McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) held that "When we acknowledge that we are racial creatures, that we are both what we know and what we do not know, we acknowledge that curriculum is racial text" (p.67). These researchers further suggested that not only the fate of the South, but the fate of the nation for the twentieth century, depends upon a social-psychoanalytic curriculum of Southern studies that communicates a clear and profound understanding of curriculum as racial text. What

about a curriculum that clearly and profoundly communicates an understanding of curriculum as spiritual text?

Through reading texts such as *Understanding Curriculum*, it has become quite clear that there is no Black without white. Pinar holds that historically, European-Americans and African-Americans represent two sides of the same cultural coin, two interrelated narratives in the American story, and two interrelated elements of the American identity. As Pinar (1995) indicated:

One cannot understand the identity of one without appreciating how it is implied by the other. So it is that European-Americans cannot hope to understand themselves unless they are knowledgeable and knowing of those they constructed as “different,” as “other.” The sequestered suburban white student is uninformed unless he or she comes to understand how he or she is also [in a] historical, cultural, indeed psychological sense—African-American. Because white does not exist without Black, the two coexist, intermingle, and the repression of this knowledge deforms us all, especially those who are white. (p. 330)

This study holds that historically European-Americans and African-Americans are two-sides of the same spiritual coin, two interrelated spiritualities in the American story, two interrelated narratives in the American story of religion and Christianity, and two interrelated elements of the American identity. Goldberg (1990) in *Understanding Curriculum*, suggested that:

[T]o a still unacknowledged (by European-Americans) extent, they observe the American nation was built by African-Americans. African-Americans’ presence informs every element of American life. The concept of White is predicated upon an excluded, racialized ‘other.’ For European-American students to understand who they are, they must understand that their existence is predicated upon, interrelated to, and constituted in fundamental ways by African-Americans.” (p. 328)

The American nation was built by African-Americans to a large degree and their presence does inform every element of American life. There is no white without black and no black without white, but this author feels that there is another piece to this puzzle.

There is no male without female and no female without male. Women's presence also informs every element of American life. Therefore, we must accept and acknowledge the presence of women and the role that they played in helping to shape our nation's history, our country's success and our understanding of curriculum.

Gendered Ways

In 1982, Janet Miller, together with William Pinar, wrote that, "Feminist thought to date operates in relative isolation from other eddies of curriculum theory and practice, but its ripples will have profound . . . influence (Pinar, 1985, p. 403). What about spirituality and gender? What role does spirituality and gender play in understanding curriculum and constructing knowledge? Another major consideration is missing, because once again we are spiritual beings having a human experience and our gender is part of that human experience. Our spirituality informs our ways of knowing, who we are, and how we interact. William Doll, Jr. (1995) holds that "Life is spiritual and education should be one with life—too often our sense of teaching and learning excludes life itself" (p. 10). By neglecting to inter-relate spirituality with race and gender, we promote educational failure and thereby create a self-inflicted ignorance that could be intellectually fatal. The history of education is linked intimately with religious movements and controversies (Pinar, 1995, p. 606). Questions are raised which are social, economic, financial, and political. According to Eliot (1952), "Education is a subject which cannot be discussed in a void . . . And the bearings are on more ultimate problems even than these: to know what we want in education we must know what we want in general; we derive our theory of education from our philosophy of life. The problem turns out to be a religious problem" (p. 132).

Barbara Mitrano (1979), in *Understanding Curriculum*, contends that “feminist theologians and curriculum theorists have much in common. Both are interested in lived experience and social transformation, concepts which ought not to be denuded of spiritual content” (p. 655). Mitrano opined:

Another part of the reason I believe the feminist voice needs to be made clearer in curriculum theory lies in the insight . . . which it can bring to the areas of spirituality and community. The feminist example has shown that contact with self is indeed a spiritual, educational experience which leads to community and social action. Feminist experience in women’s studies courses has yielded new insight into a mutual concern of feminists and reconceptualists; that the content of courses be congruent with the lived experience of those who constitute the meaning of that experience. (p. 655)

Mitrano (1979), Daly (1973, 1978), and Carmody (1991) called for an “alliance of feminism, religion, and education. Mary Elizabeth Moore (1989) strongly advocated a process-oriented approach to teaching, rooted in reverent relationships that are founded on deep respect, love and awe” (p. 655).

James B. Macdonald concluded that “the act of theorizing is an act of faith, a religious act . . . Curriculum theory is a prayerful act” (cited in Pinar, 1995, p. 648). Faith is firm belief in something for which there is no proof, something that is believed, especially with strong conviction (Merriam Webster 2005). Therefore, when we theorize we are merely proposing a thought or idea that we firmly believe in, something for which we have no absolute proof.

Curriculum as theological text invites students to explore “divine reality, cosmic meaning, and enchanted nature” (Griffin, 1989, p. xiii). Pinar (1995) felt that

[r]ather than impose denomination-specific dogma, postmodern theology seeks to uncover layers of mystical experience, individual insight, and harmony with creation. Curriculum as postmodern theological text understands that the dogma of fundamentalist denominations seeks to eliminate doubt, uncertainty and struggle while stifling creative and social competence. (p. 659)

All of the research as analyzed provides suggestions and remedies for understanding curriculum, but only the research on theological text and feminism suggests spirituality as a means for understanding curriculum. In order to understand race and gender, we must first understand spirituality, how it affects one's gender, and its racial construct. Reconceptualizing race, gender, and spirituality must take place before we can fully understand curriculum as racial text, gendered text, or spiritual text. Therefore, as we seek to reconceptualize race, gender and spirituality we must ask these questions, (1) How is it that Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw utilized their spirituality during such turbulent times? (2) What is the prophetic pedagogy that these women espoused? (3) What can we learn from their lives and writings? (4) And what rhetorical strategies did these women find useful as they fought to speak and share God's word with the people of the nineteenth century? These are the questions and issues that clamor for research and discovery.

Dissertation Overview

Black women have used any means necessary to speak out and be heard, but for many, their spirituality and religious lives represent tools that allowed them to share their moral wisdom, to empower their communities, to resist stereotypes, and to survive in the face of oppression and impending destruction. Stewart, Foote and Elaw articulate their spirituality and faith with veracity. The women represented in this study were all God-inspired and they worked diligently through their narratives and public lectures to promote social change. They denied self and family in many instances in order to go out and teach God's word. These women were teachers, preachers, essayists, and orators, representing a long line of buried wisdom, knowledge, and spirituality during the

nineteenth century. Research reveals that the lives of these women were complex; further, much detail of their lives is missing from recorded history. Nevertheless, what remains most intriguing is the manner in which the spirituality of these women served as a source of resistance, survival, and empowerment. As advocates for spirituality, their spirituality allowed navigation of the rough waters of oppression, discrimination, and racism of the nineteenth century.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 2, entitled “And still I Rise,” I will discuss narrative and autobiography as it relates to African-Americans who utilized these methodologies to have their stories and voices heard. I will focus on how these women went against traditional hegemonic practices, how they taught an entire people, how they preached, and how they reached hundreds and maybe even thousands of people through their spiritual narratives, autobiographical accounts and public speaking. These women continued to rise, despite many obstacles placed in their paths.

In Chapter 3, entitled “19th Century Religion,” I will provide a historical overview of nineteenth century religion, African-American religion, African-American women’s spirituality and the role of religion and spirituality in African-American women’s lives during the nineteenth century. Much research was conducted in the area of African-American religion, but Francis Kostarelos (1995) in her book *Feeling the Spirit* suggested that “much of the literature has viewed the faith of Black people as ‘otherworldly,’ and compensatory beliefs and practices that help poor Blacks adapt to social and economic hardship and injustice” (p. 4). The research that has been conducted in the areas of spirituality and religion neglects to truly explore religion and spirituality in the lives of

Black women, due to the complexities of religion and faith. This study focuses on the works of scholars such as Marla Riggs, Milton Sernett, Joseph Washington, William Banks, Rosetta Ross, Albert Raboteau, Gayraud Wilmore, Cornel West, and numerous others. These scholars have explored the complexities of religion and spirituality, not only in the African-American culture, but also among African-American women.

In Chapter 4, entitled “Maria Miller Stewart: Prophetic Woman,” I will focus on the life of Maria Miller Stewart (1803-1879), a northern black woman born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1803. Nothing is known about her family except that they were free. Her young years were spent *bound out* as a servant in the household of a minister.

In Chapter 5, entitled “Julia A. J. Foote: Prophetic Woman,” my focus will center on the life of Julia Foote (1823-1900), who was born in Schenectady, New York. Foote was the daughter of former slaves, who purchased their freedom and also espoused a strong belief in Christianity.

In Chapter 6, entitled Zilpha Elaw “A Speckled Bird,” I will highlight the life of Zilpha Elaw (1790-1845), a black woman born to free parents, who brought her up in the vicinity of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Finally in Chapter 7, entitled “We’ve Come This Far by Faith,” I will discuss the implications of study on the educational arena, as well as further research on African-American women’s spirituality.

CHAPTER 2

“AND STILL I RISE”

Narrative and Autobiographical Methodology

Sunday afternoons in the South have been and continue to be story time in most African-American homes. As a little girl, I remember sitting and listening to stories told by my uncles, aunts, grandparents and other older family members. I never had the opportunity to meet my great grandparents, but their stories continue to live in the minds and hearts of their children, their children’s children and a host of other wise and knowledgeable family members. To this day, we still gather at my mother’s home or my aunt’s home (especially during the holidays) to socialize and listen to family stories. The family would meet every Sunday for the traditional Sunday meal.¹² After the meal, everyone would gather in the living room of the house to talk, tell stories and just reminisce.

Many of the stories told on Sundays and in African-American families have yet to be included in our nation’s history. The rich and diverse culture that exists within the black race is all too often ignored, and written off as trivial and insignificant. The only way many Black Americans, especially Black women, have been able to have their stories heard is through their spirituality. Womanist spirituality is expressed through autobiographies like those of Maria Miller Stewart, Julia Foote, and Zilpha Elaw, as well as oral narratives, and biographies, sermons, poems, and any genre appropriate for their day. Emily Townes (1993) states in *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope* that womanist

¹² The Sunday meal was usually held after church at a grandmother or mother’s home with all of the children, grandchildren and other family and friends present. Foods such as chicken, fish, potato salad, sweet potatoes, ham hocks, macaroni and cheese, greens, rolls, peach cobbler, cake, and many other foods are served.

spirituality is the unveiling of what it means for each of us to seek compassion, justice, worship, and devotion in the telling of our stories and experiences. The spirituality that issues from Black women's lives is found in the moral wisdom of African-American women. Womanist spirituality grows out of individual and communal reflection on African-American faith and life. Townes (1993) suggested this spirituality is a social witness born from people's struggle and determination to continue to find ways to answer the question, "Do you want to be healed?" with the "yes!" of our lives and the work we do for justice (p. 9). According to Townes (1993), "Womanist spirituality is not simply a way of living; it is a style of witness that seeks to cross yawning-chasm hatreds and prejudices and oppressions into a deeper and richer love of God as people experience Jesus in our lives" (p.11). Refusing to accept a world as interpreted through the eyes of those who are the key masters and mistresses of hegemony caused African-American women to seek out multiple ways for having their voices heard. Narratives and autobiography were two key tools utilized by African-American women during the nineteenth century to help reconstruct the world view that had been lost or obscured due to hegemony. Townes (1993) declared, "A Black womanist spirituality refuses to accept a world as interpreted through the eyes of those who are the key masters and mistresses of hegemony" (p. 121). Petra Munro (1998) proposed that "women's narratives become a generative space for understanding, not only the complexity of women's lives but how women construct a gendered self through narrative" (p.5). Stewart, Foote and Elaw constructed a gendered self by resisting through their narratives and autobiographies the identity constructs that had been imposed on them by nineteenth century society. These women used the master tools of narrative and autobiography to construct an identity that

would be recognized and accepted. Yet, they rebuked the restrictions that had been placed on them as women. Writing their autobiographies represented an act of resistance for them.

Autobiography – Writing the Self

*“Why hath this lady writ her own life?”
(Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, 1656)*

“Why hath this lady writ her own life? Who cares who this lady is and where she comes from? Who cares how she lived? Why do we need to hear her story?”

Autobiography is an artifact, a construct wrought from words. Memories do not make an autobiography; they constitute what William Earle, in his exceedingly illuminating book of the same title, calls “the autobiographical consciousness. Simply put, the autobiographical consciousness is that consciousness which thinks about itself – its present, past and future. (Olney, 1980, p. 49)

Autobiography allows researchers to look at the past, present and future. That stream of consciousness is what makes autobiography so fascinating and intriguing. By allowing researchers entrance into the lives of others, it raises a level of consciousness in areas that have been traditionally gray, unclear and unknown to the average person. According to Townes (1993), “Autobiography in particular, helps reconstruct a worldview previously lost or obscured” (p. 17). Olney (1980) states that autobiography has been utilized by thinkers in other disciplines to help define and organize disciplines such as American Studies, Black Studies and Women’s Studies. Furthermore, Olney states that the researchers in these fields claim that:

Autobiography-the story of a distinctive culture written in individual characters from within- offers a privileged access to an experience (the American experience, the black experience, the female experience and the African-American experience) that no other variety of writing can offer. (p. 13)

Olney's statement rings true; no other variety of writing, other than oral history, has offered researchers access to the lives and experiences of African-Americans. Autobiography blends history and literature, rendering a historical account of a subject's life while providing new literary forms and styles. It is the dialectic between what the writer wishes to be and what society has determined the writer to be. Townes (1993) noted "The autobiographer examines, interprets and creates the importance of his/her life in the context of a particular historical period" (p.21). Townes contended that autobiography not only expands history but it also has a way of influencing history by providing a model to later generations. She stated that above all, autobiography shows us that human life has or can have meaning. Autobiography reveals that our lives are worth remembering. Further, the genre of autobiography assumes many forms (African-American autobiography, conversion narratives, slave narratives, postbellum African-American women's autobiography, etc.) and offers a variety of ways to view lives. Andrews (1986) stated, "The earliest forms of autobiography in African-American literature are the conversion and captivity narratives that began to appear in England and America during the second half of the eighteenth century" (p.1). Such narratives were the means by which many African-Americans recanted their experiences, hardships and the many trials and sorrows they endured. Further, autobiography as a genre creates, constructs, and gives meaning to the lives of people who otherwise might have been ignored and excluded from American historical accounts.

Conversion Narratives

Many African-Americans utilized what we now know as conversion narrative. Such narratives were deemed powerful and life altering for many. The purpose of

conversion narratives was fourfold: to teach, to persuade, to exhort, and to edify. Those who wrote conversion narratives felt that others could learn from their experiences and their lives, and thereby follow in the authors' footsteps, especially those who were lost and unsaved. The conversion narrative closely resembled a testimony. Such traditions continue today, especially in the Baptist faith. However, the testimonies of today are verbal, not written. Individuals at designated times during the church service have the opportunity to tell how their God brought about a change in their life, and how it was because of God and their spirituality that they were able to come out of a world of darkness into glorious light. By hearing such stories, those who are lost are often inspired to do the same by following the ways of the Lord. Therefore, conversion narratives represent teaching and inspirational mechanisms of the nineteenth century. Brereton (1991) maintained that "what distinguished conversion narratives from a myriad of other teaching vehicles was that they were supposed to help initiate others into an experience that traditionally was difficult to transmit widely because it was in some sense mystical, ineffable, paradoxical" (p. 4). The conversion narrative was the teaching tool of the nineteenth century for many, especially females who were trying to save the lost. According to Brereton (1991), "Narrators claimed that conversion—if it was genuine—brought permanent changes in character and behavior. Most converts became patient, quiet, even tempered, gentle, cheerful, self denying, and uncomplaining. At the same time they revealed more self confidence, courage and inner strength" (p. 8). Through conversion narratives, Black women could not only teach, but in many instances preach the word of God.

Slave Narratives and Spiritual Narratives

Mckay (1989) noted that “Spiritual and slave narratives, one religious and addressed mainly to the black community, the other secular and intended for a white readership, offered profound second readings of the American and Afro-American experiences against prevailing white American views in their time” (p. 140). Mckay (1989) stated that “The first major genre by black Americans and the earliest attempt to produce a historical record of slavery was the slave narrative. Afro-American prose writings began with autobiography: the slave, conversion or spiritual and confessional narratives, preeminent from the middle of the eighteenth century through the middle of the nineteenth” (p.140). It is apparent that these narrative authors wanted more than to create and recreate the self-in-experience in literature. In establishing their claims to full humanity, they wanted their words to change the hearts of the men and women whom they reached (McKay, 1989).

“The spiritual narratives were written by ex-slaves as well as free-born blacks and provide a valuable cross-sectional view of nineteenth century Afro-American intellectual thought” (McKay, 1989, p.141). According to Andrews (1986), spiritual autobiography was launched primarily to argue for women’s spiritual authority that plainly challenged traditional female roles as defined in both the free and the slave states, among whites as well as blacks. (p.2)

Most slave narratives, such as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) written by Harriet Jacobs are strongly Christian. These narratives argue for women’s rights, both in the spiritual and societal realm. They challenge traditional hegemonic practices. Slave narratives provide a first-hand experience on slave lives and reveal the truth about

slavery. Through the writing of narratives, slaves hoped to expose the cruel and inhumane aspects of slavery and their struggles, sorrows, and triumphs. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, slave narratives were important means of opening a dialogue between blacks and whites about slavery and freedom. Some slave narratives were crafted to enlighten white readers about the realities of slavery as an institution and the humanity of black people.

As stated, most slave narratives are strongly Christian. Evangelists of freedom, the authors praise God, prayer, good works, and the anti-slavery cause and denounce all forms of sin, especially drinking, swearing, lying, stealing, fornication, and breaking the Sabbath” (Butterfield, 1974, p.15). They are careful to distinguish between “true” Christianity and the religion used by their masters to justify the slave system and teach them obedience (Butterfield, 1974).

Many of the narratives make blatant and melodramatic appeals to white pity, and piety, but they usually appear side by side with images of defiance. The political purpose of the author is to portray the misery of slavery’s victims while at the same time humanizing and dignifying them. Pity without respect reduces the slave to the level of mistreated cows and dogs” (Butterfield, 1974, p.24).

Scholars such as William Andrews, (*To tell a Free Story*), Marilyn Richardson, (*Maria Stewart: America’s first black woman political writer*), Henry Louis Gates, (*Spiritual Narratives*), Joycelyn Moody (*Sentimental Confessions*) and many others continuously study the lives and narratives of Black women preachers to help provide a greater understanding of the role of African-American women in nineteenth century America. Andrews (1988) provided readers with a detailed account of Black America’s most innovative literary tradition—the autobiography from its beginning to the end of the slavery era. Marilyn Richardson (1987) examined the life and works of Maria Stewart,

America's first Black woman political writer. Henry Louis Gates (1988) in *Spiritual Narratives* (1988) presented his readers with the autobiographies of Maria W. Stewart, Jarena Lee, Julia A. J. Foote and Virginia W. Broughton, four itinerant black women preachers of the nineteenth century. Moody (2001) analyzed and interpreted the autobiographies of six free black women of the nineteenth century: Maria Stewart (1803), Jarena Lee (1783), Zilphia Elaw (1790), Nancy Prince (1799), Mattie L. Jackson (1820), and Julia Foote (1823). These literary scholars have contributed greatly to the field of African-American literary studies through analyses of African-American autobiographies, specifically, the analysis of nineteenth century subjects writing African-American autobiography.

African-American Autobiography

In *Womanist Justice, Womanist Hope*, Bigsby (1993) stated that Black autobiography becomes what he termed a "handbook on life." It is a testament to the fact that an individual can function in the midst of chaos and prevail over the chaos. On the contrary, Blassingame (1993) saw Black autobiography as "a counterweight to the white historian's caricature of black life" (p. 22).

In African-American autobiography, the individual tries to establish her/his identity. In establishing her/his identity, the individual attempts to right the wrongs that society has created in the minds of those outside her/his own culture. The Black autobiography anticipates a future that is not solely possessed by the writer, yet is collectively possessed by African-Americans and vested in national ideals, which are more important than the individual life. The self, in Black autobiography, is a member of an oppressed group with ties and responsibilities to the members of that group.

Autobiography is one way in which African-Americans have been able to assert the right to live and to grow. According to Townes (1993), political awareness, empathy for suffering, the ability to break down the dualism of I and You, knowledge of oppression and the discovery of coping mechanisms, shared triumph and communal responsibility number among the key elements in Black autobiography. When comparing African-American autobiographies to autobiographies written by whites, there is not only a gender difference but there seems to be a cultural difference. Andrews (1986) declared “The African-American autobiographer sought to accrue authority and power via the word. The Black spiritual autobiographer had to lay the necessary intellectual groundwork by proving that Black people were as much chosen by God for eternal salvation as whites” (p. 1).

Postbellum African-American Women’s Autobiography

Cox (1984) contended that the history of America and the history of autobiography developed in tandem with the greatest periods of productivity in autobiography corresponding to the important events in the United States. However, Jelinek (1984) viewed the scenario differently, maintaining that such periods of increased diary writing were male specific. Jelinek further stated that women’s stories reveal a “self consciousness and a need to sift through their lives for explanation and understanding” (p. 32). Jelinek suggested that Black women utilize their autobiographies to convince the reader of their worthiness as well as to present a real self-image (p. 32).

However, Blackburn (1993) maintained that African-American women’s autobiographies communicate to the world at large what both the Black and White worlds have done to them. She noted that Black women tend to first view themselves as

individuals and “then as individuals within the black community, and finally within the general society, [Black women] determine the significance of their lives, how they look at life, what they demand of life, and perhaps, most importantly what they demand of themselves” (p.33). Blackburn noted that as a whole, the autobiographies of African-American women reveal three emerging themes: identity, assigning value to self, and the double jeopardy of being both black and female.

Women’s and African-American Women’s Autobiography

Giddings (1984) insightfully noted that “despite the range and significance of our history, we have been perceived as token women in Black texts and as token Blacks in feminist ones” (p. 5). African-American women typically were subsumed when it came to studying their lives. Generally, African-American women must compete and accept labels that define them as either women or African-American. Little to no emphasis has been placed on the African-American woman as a separate and distinct individual with her own unique experiences. African-American women experience a double bind of racism and sexism. Such an extent of discrimination warrants being set apart from those larger groups usually studied, such as women and/or African-American males.

However, tainted scholarly research suggests and we have all been infected with the idea that women and African-Americans experiences are monolithic in nature. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The autobiographies of African-American women provide us with great variety and larger-than-life pictures of lived experience in relation to other women and African-American males. This alone should open the door for further research as well as challenge the idea of a monolithic nineteenth century

experience for African-Americans, women, and African-American women. Braxton (1989) wrote,

Our knowledge of the literary traditions of Black American women has been, historically speaking, so limited that a study of this nature is doomed to raise more questions, than it can answer. Yet, these texts themselves are partially the answer to Alice Walker's questions, "How was the creativity of the black woman kept alive, year after year, century after century?" Think of how little we know of Maria Miller Stewart, Mary and Nancy Prince, Jarena Lee, Rebecca Jackson, and even Charlotte Forten, whose work has yet to receive the critical attention that it merits. Their agony is our agony" (p.203)

Indeed, their agony is our agony.

Recovering Lost Lives

Through my doctoral course work, I met many women who were amazing, radical, exciting, and courageous. Although I had heard of several Black women religious, thanks to the assistance of classmate Donna Porche-Frilot, I learned of many other courageous women who fought to be heard. I saw the Black woman as a fighter, a survivor, and an agent of change. When I began studying African-American women, I wished to gain personal knowledge. However, as I continued research, I found myself drawn to know more about those women who paved the way for me, especially those who considered themselves women of God. As I prepared to select the women whom I would use as focal points for my study, I decided that three women would provide a short, yet thorough understanding of spirituality among African-American women of the nineteenth century. In the continued search for the writings and biographies of various African-American women, I narrowed the list of potential subjects to study. However, there were a few requirements that each subject had to satisfy:

1. African-American woman
2. Product of the nineteenth century

3. Involved in own public ministry, and
4. Involved in religious social activism

In the initial stage of this process, I purchased every book to be found on African-American women religious and read their autobiographies, articles, and sermons repeatedly. As I analyzed these sermons, autobiographies, and themes of survival, resistance and empowerment emerged from the pages. There was so much with which I could identify. However, there were three women whose lives seemed to speak the loudest. I found myself reading their stories continuously, because I felt a connection. I saw myself; in many instances, I felt I was reading my own story, my own struggle to resist, to survive, and to be empowered. The lives and experiences of Maria Stewart, Zilpha Elaw, and Julia Foote spoke volumes to me as an African-American woman.

Further research on these women revealed even more similarities: determination, perseverance, character, faith, hope, and a love for God that words could not express. These women were nineteenth century, religious Black women intellectuals who used their spirituality and faith to bring about the liberation of men, women, and children. Their lives were testimonies that spoke to me and encouraged me to continue my struggle. It was the longing for a reunion with the Black women that had been absent from my experiences as a Black woman for so long; that longing encouraged me to write and to research the lives of these Black women. Although these women were not southern women, yet I as a southern woman found a connection, even a bond that spoke to my being.

After careful reading and consideration of numerous narratives and autobiographies¹³ of African-American women religious of the nineteenth century, I came to the conclusion that a careful analysis of the narratives and autobiographies of Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw would yield the best and most accurate theoretical analysis for my study. Therefore, this author embraced the narratives of Maria Miller Stewart, Julia Foote, and Zilpha Elaw with great fervor and zeal, and with a thorough analysis of the narratives and autobiographies of this triad of women.

Significance of Study

Although spirituality provided the guiding force in the lives of many Black women, I found little research information on the role of spirituality in the lives of Black women in America. Conducting research on spirituality and its role in the lives of Black women soon brought to mind my own schooling experiences. Growing up in the South and specifically, a small town in Louisiana had afforded few educational opportunities. Neither did those few opportunities include discovering the experiences of Black women. I learned little or nothing about my own race. Whenever I opened a history textbook or any book, I found no one who looked like me or anyone to whom I could relate, and so I came to dislike history. Even while attending a historically Black college, I had few opportunities to learn and examine the lives of Black women. Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth summed up the extent of my knowledge of nineteenth century Black women. After years and years of schooling, I still lacked an introduction to the lives and histories of Black women, but particularly those women who were Black women religious. The stories of nineteenth century Black women religious were not included

¹³ Narratives and autobiographies read were those of Jarena Lee (1783), Zilpha Elaw (1790), Rebecca Cox Jackson (1795), Frances Joseph Gaudet (1861), Harriet Jacobs (1813), Nancy Prince (1799), Maria Stewart (1803), Mattie L. Jackson (1820), Julia Foote (1823), and Sojourner Truth (1797).

either in my studies or my pedagogy. Reflection on my own academic career and the excluded history during my scholastic journey leads me to believe that it is vital that women's spirituality, particularly Black women's spirituality, be included in curriculum studies. A thorough analysis is imperative and critical to the field.

Much may be learned from the lives and spirituality of nineteenth century African-American women. African-Americans were encouraged by women such as Stewart, Foote and Elaw to seek formal education for the betterment of self and African-Americans as a whole. They were legitimate producers of not only knowledge, but of prophetic knowledge. Knowing this, why should the lives, experiences, and philosophies of African-American women deliberately be excluded from history texts in our elementary and secondary schools? Dilla Buckner,¹⁴ in a conversation with Margaret Walker-Alexander on Spirituality, Sexuality and Creativity, maintained that "spirituality is so central to scholarship on women's culture and women's liberation that we can't discuss liberation or empowerment for women without also discussing women's spirituality" (Wade-Gayles, 1995, p. 224). It is time that we embrace the stories, lives and spirituality of Black women as legitimate sources of knowledge.

Therefore, this study developed as a result of discovering historical exclusions, inaccuracies and distortions. The spirituality of African-American women has been labeled as insignificant and unworthy of research not only in the field of education, but also in the field of curriculum theory, a field that permits thought, ponders serious questions, and studies the historical, political, and social aspects of curriculum. In

¹⁴ Dilla Buckner is a professor of English at Jackson State University. Her research includes profiles of African-American slave women, slave narratives, and folklore.

conjunction with education, the spirituality and religious experiences of African-American women, largely have been ignored, overlooked, excluded and underrated. A need to know, a desire to understand the spirituality of African-American women, and a need to personally embrace that which was passed to me, all played pivotal roles in the development of this study.

However, the overarching purpose of this study is to highlight and reveal the importance of spirituality and religion in the lives of three northern nineteenth century African-American women. In addition, this study seeks to position the spirituality and religion of these African-American women as prophetic pedagogy. More specifically, how their spirituality and religious lives have taught and educated the African-American community on how to survive, resist, and be empowered against the hostile forces of the world. Teaching people how to survive, resist and be empowered may not be traditional textbook content, but it is this genre of pedagogy that prepared the stage for many African-Americans to seek educational goals and opportunities during the nineteenth century. It is this form of teaching that encouraged other women of the nineteenth century to stand up as pioneers and feminists of their day. Some traditional feminists may disagree with my decision to call these women feminists, but the women that I chose to study were feminists in their own right, deserving of inclusion in women's history.

Feminists such as Mary Daly (1978), Rosemary Radford Ruether (1983), and Carol Christ (1979), worked tirelessly to see that a new theology be created to include the perspectives of women. Nevertheless, the new theology that came as a result of their labor includes only white women's experiences. In 1979, Audre Lorde responded to this exclusion. Lorde's criticism and critique appeared in *This Bridge Called My Back* (1983).

Published as “An Open Letter to Mary Daly,” Lorde challenged Daly for having lifted up only white women’s experiences, advocating white European images of the goddess and ignoring darker, African goddesses such as Afrekete, Yemanje, Oyo, and Mawulisa (Moody, 1996, p.1). Since that time, ethnic women create their own theological understandings of God based on their experiences. Alice Walker (1983) coined the term *womanist* to refer to Black women feminists. Today, African-American women assume that term describes their own particular type of Black feminist scholarship (p. 2). Knowing this, it would seem that scholars, theorists, theologians, and academia in general would recognize and accept that the experiences of women, whether spiritual or not, are expressly different and may only be understood and described by the specific experiences of each group.

Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (1995), four prolific scholars in academia, aptly discuss curriculum as theological text, but amazingly, they also generalize and place women in a single category, as feminists. This view represents a major exclusion in Curriculum Theory. Womanist theology and curriculum are not addressed, mentioned or referred to in the entire chapter on theological text. Even more importantly, why is the African-American woman missing from this discussion? Why are the experiences and stories of African-American women excluded and dismissed as insignificant to most fields of study? These are the questions that must be answered, and this reveals why it is essential that we investigate not only the social and moral lives of African-American women, but their spiritual lives and religious experiences as well.

My research reflects an effort to provide an intense understanding of African-American women of the nineteenth century and their spirituality, and how that spirituality

directly affected the people of the nineteenth century as these women taught the word of God. Research has neglected to address reality in the lives of many African-American women, presenting a knowledge rift with degrading notions that is far from the truth. It is my hope that this study will add to and extend the current body of knowledge that exists on African-American women and their spirituality.

Current research does not specifically focus on African-American women's spirituality as prophetic and pedagogical in nature. Therefore, my goal through research will show how the lives and writings of a select number of African-American women are prophetic and pedagogical, and thus articulate an understanding of the spirituality and religious experiences of Maria Miller Stewart, Zilpha Elaw, and Julia Foote, three nineteenth century Black women religious. This study will portray how these women utilized their spirituality to contribute and enrich the field of curriculum theory in the area of African-American spirituality.

The pedagogy of these women will provide resources and data for further study in curriculum theory; additionally, the information presented may present a valuable resource for teachers as well. Teachers may present the lives of these women as valuable resources and focal points with which to engage students in critical thinking and thought-provoking activities for classroom instruction.

CHAPTER 3

“GOD BLESS AMERICA”

Nineteenth Century Religion—An American Religious History

There is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.”
*Alexis de Tocqueville*¹⁵ (quoted in Wacker, 2000, p.10)

Irving Berlin (1918) wrote “God bless America, land that I love. Stand beside her and guide her, through the night with a light from above.” Since the writing of this song and many years prior, the presence and guidance of God was requested by Americans in song, prayer, national documents and other historical treasures. America is not what some may deem a holy land, but Christianity has played a major role in the shaping and molding of its history. One might even say that Americans are undeniably a religious people. Since the beginning of time, Americans have chosen to situate their lives around religious ideals and principles. However, no period of American history more aptly illustrates the influence of religion on public life than the nineteenth century, specifically the antebellum period. The camp meetings of the Second Great Awakening produced an unprecedented impulse to reform in the new nation. Americans began to organize benevolent, reform societies—abolitionism, female suffrage, temperance, and prison reforms, with what scholars called a “zealotry unmatched in American history” (Ahlstrom, 1972, p. 29).

Religious sensibilities definitively shaped American culture. A classic example is the Sunday Blue Laws. United States currency and coins have as their motto, “In God we

¹⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, a French traveler visiting the United States in 1831, was impressed by the vitality of religion in the new land.

trust.” The aggregate influence of religion upon American culture, especially in the nineteenth century, is so great that one cannot measure its total impact.

The nineteenth century stands as the century when religion had its greatest impact on both private life and public discourse. According to Haynes (1998),

many momentous social and political changes in the nineteenth century United States—the expansion of the nation, the usurpation of native territory, the defense and abolition of slavery, and the ascendancy of the middle class were undergirded by two separate but interrelated rhetorics: manifest destiny and domesticity. The rhetoric of manifest destiny predicated and celebrated a divinely ordained spread of democracy, individualism, capitalism, and civilization throughout the North American continent, while the rhetoric of domesticity codified “natural” differences and duties of American men and women. (p.xi)

Haynes (1998) suggested that men were placed on pedestals and allowed to function as leaders in the public sphere, while women were relegated to subservient roles.

A Nation in Crisis

After the Revolutionary war, groups and organizations found themselves displaced in relation to their churches and organized religious denominations. There were few ministers to lead the people due to their joining the fight against the enemy. Church groups fought once again to become major religious groups. The Church of England reorganized in 1789 as the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA. The Methodists formed their own sect, known as the Methodist Episcopal Church, which became the largest Protestant body in the nation over the following century (Wacker, 14). According to Wacker (2000), “It was the Congregationalists (or Puritans) and the Presbyterians who fared better than any other religious group because they had supported the winning side during the Revolution” (p. 14). Those who failed to support the winning side endured the most problems. The Lutherans did not support the Patriots; the Quakers not only failed to

support the Patriots, but they refused to fight at all. Therefore, the Quakers were shunned by many Americans (p.14).

According to Wacker (2000), nineteenth century people were not allowed to worship, fellowship, or identify with whatever religious tradition they saw fit. People living in the colonies were expected to fellowship and worship with a singular, religious tradition. There were individuals who opposed the idea of supporting one religious tradition. Thomas Jefferson, Issac Markus (a Baptist pastor in Massachusetts), and James Madison voiced strong arguments against the establishment of one religion. They felt that individuals should be able to choose their own manner of worship. Thomas Jefferson wrote:

The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury to say that there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg...Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error. ...It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself.... [Is] uniformity of opinion desirable? No more than of face and stature.... Is uniformity attainable? Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools, the other half hypocrites....Reason and persuasion are the only practicable instruments. To make way for these, free inquiry must be indulged; and how can we with others to indulge it while we refuse it ourselves [?]
(Thomas Jefferson, quoted in Wacker 2000, p. 17)

Jefferson felt that men and women should be allowed to choose the religion they wanted to follow without interference from the government.

Issac Backus and James Madison echoed the thoughts of Thomas Jefferson, because they also believed that the government should not be involved in religious matters. These independent thinkers felt that it was unsound for the government to choose one religious group over another. The thoughts, ideas and arguments that these

three men presented would later influence the writing of the Constitution, as well as the first amendment. Neither God nor religion is mentioned in these documents.

The first half of the 19th century witnessed the dramatic expansion of a religious movement that had started a hundred years earlier in England and Scotland. Its supporters called it evangelicalism. Evangelists spread the word that Christ's death and resurrection had freed sinners from their shackles and reconciled them to God. They preached this message in meetings called revivals, where they proclaimed that believers' flagging faith could be revived to vigorous new life. The evangelical stirring would rank as the largest, strongest, most sustained religious movement in US history. (Wacker, p. 31)

This was the beginning of America's revivals and camp meetings, commonly known as the Great Awakening. The revivals appeared on and off until 1865. This era would become known as the Second Great Awakening. The Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening were similar, yet there were differences between the two.

Wacker (2000) held that both emphasized the authority of the Bible, a definable conversion experience based upon faith in Jesus Christ, and the importance of spreading the good news to others. However, Wacker (2000) suggested that men and women in the first Great Awakening spoke in the passive mood, as if to underscore God's action upon them. In other words, these individuals felt that they were not worthy of God's grace and mercy because they were of such a sinful nature.

The Second Great Awakening was opposite in thought. Wacker (2000) noted that the preachers suggested sinners had already been given the ability to accept grace when God extended it. All the people had to do was to receive God's grace. This message from the Great Awakening seemed to be the fire needed to encourage religious revival in the nineteenth century. Camp meetings began to surface all over the nation. James McGready, a preacher of the time, is deemed responsible for the start of camp meetings in the United States. Men and women gathered from all regions of Kentucky to hear

McGready speak. According to Wacker (2000), “The camp meeting in the US resembled the camp meetings in Scotland, but more intense” (p. 33). The camp meetings consisted of people gathering together for days or sometimes weeks in the outdoors to hear the word of God. One camper wrote:

Some [said] they feel the approaching symptoms by being under deep conviction; their heart swells, their nerves relax, and in an instant they become motionless and speechless.... It comes upon others like an electric shock, as if felt in the great arteries of the arms or thighs.... The body relaxes and falls motionless; the hands and feet become cold, and yet the pulse is as formerly They are all opposed to any medical application.... They will continue in that state for one hour to 24. (p. 33)

The concept of the camp meeting became popular throughout the United States; in present day America, many religious groups still conduct camp meetings or revivals, especially within the Baptist faith. However, African-Americans of the Baptist faith meet for one week each year, designated as Revival Week. It is during this time that many come to know Christ.

Francis Asbury and Charles Grandison Finney, religious leaders, are noted for their contributions to the history of American religion. According to Wacker (2000), Asbury, a Methodist bishop, and Finney, a Presbyterian (later Congregationalist), together effectively defined the evangelical tradition in antebellum America (p. 35). Asbury, also known as “The Bishop” traveled nearly 300,000 miles during his religious tenure. Bishop Asbury became the prime spokesperson for the developing theology of Methodism in the United States and Charles Grandison Finney led the Second Great Awakening in the northeast through the 1820s and 1830s (Wacker, p. 37). Finney was also responsible for introducing new measures into revivalism. Wacker (2000) noted, “These new measures included allowing women to testify in church, nightly meetings for

praise and preaching, and the ‘anxious bench,’ a place set aside near the front of the meeting house where sinners could give their life to Christ” (p. 39). Interestingly, traditions and customs have a way of being carried from one generation to the next, as well as crossing cultures. African-American religious services also had, and in some churches still have, the mourners’ bench. This was also a place set aside at the front of the church where sinners could give their life to Christ. I had the distinct pleasure of experiencing the mourner’s bench first hand when I accepted the call to give my life to Christ and to follow him. Because these two areas set aside for sinners were the same, I wondered why the names were different. Were African-Americans influenced by Finney’s revivalism, or was the identical usage pure coincidence? It is quite evident that Finney had a major impact on the shaping of American religious history.

The denominations that represented the majority of the people of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists and the Methodists. However, the Baptist denomination, which originated in England in the early seventeenth century, emerged as a new religious group during the nineteenth century. The Baptists emerged as a new group due to a difference in beliefs from the Methodists. Baptists believed that each local church should make its own decisions, whereas the Methodists received detailed instructions from their bishops (Wacker, 2000). Records show that the Baptists were the second largest Protestant denomination by the Civil War and by the end of the century, the Baptists outnumbered the Methodists.

Women and Religion in the Nineteenth Century

“Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies” [Proverbs 31:10]. According to Wacker (2000), Dorothy Ripley in 1806 became the first woman to

preach in the House of Representatives and Harriet Livermore preached in the House of Representatives on more than one occasion. Phoebe Palmer, a wealthy woman from New York preached the gospel on both sides of the Atlantic. Palmer, like Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw, argued for the right of women to speak out by using scripture, frequently making reference to Galatians 3:28 (“There is neither...male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”) and Joel 2:28 (“Your sons and daughters will prophesy”). Like many other women, Palmer was obliged to prove that women, like men, had authority to preach, to teach, and to prophesy.

According to Wacker (2000), women of the nineteenth century also became active in groups such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) of Pennsylvania. Frances Williard, like many women, became concerned about the use and abuse of alcohol. Williard, a Methodist, did everything in her power to stop alcohol abuse during the nineteenth century. As an instructor at the Women’s College of Northwestern University, Williard fought for equal rights for women in higher education, yet her main focus became her concern for alcohol abuse. According to Wacker (2000), “Williard traveled the US advocating self-discipline for the willing, temperance laws for the unwilling” from 1880 to 1910 (p. 164). During her tenure as President of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), Williard also fought for women’s right to vote and women’s right to have business and political careers and staunchly opposed prostitution and child abuse.

Researcher Grant Wacker (2000) noted that women most often assumed on the role of missionary in the United States during the nineteenth century. Over half of all United States missionaries were women. Other women, such as Amanda Berry Smith,

became independent evangelists because they were unable to receive ordination due to gender.

In the early 1830s, a female antislavery society was organized and in 1848, a women's rights convention was formed. These women's groups encouraged women to speak publicly against slavery. A great number of women found themselves becoming members of these organizations so that they could have their voices heard (p.165).

Catholic Women of the Nineteenth Century

American history provides a brief account of what Protestant women were doing during the nineteenth century, so we know that there existed a Protestant tradition. What about the Catholic women of the nineteenth century? According to Wacker (2000), Elizabeth Bayley Seton, affectionately known as Mother Seton, established Sisters of Charity in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1809. The Sisters of Charity opened St. Joseph's Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and also a free school. St. Joseph's Academy, utilized as a day school, boarding school, and orphanage, became the first organized Catholic charitable institution in the original 13 states. In 1830, Seton's Order, the Daughters of Charity, opened St. Peter's Female Orphanage (the present Seton Villa) at Third and West Streets in Wilmington, moving the orphanage several years later to Fifth and West Streets. Seton became the first American Saint.

Wacker (2000) noted that these Catholic sisters provided aid to the sick and the needy. The Sisters also attended to the spiritual needs of the Catholic Indians living in Arizona, New Mexico, and much of Colorado. A national phenomena took place as Catholic women went to live in convents and devote their lives to righteous living and Protestant women left their homes and children and defied the wishes of their spouses to

do the will of God. Catholic women and Protestant women did whatever was necessary in order to submit totally and fully to the work of God in the nineteenth century. These women strongly felt there was much work to be done and that the regions which they inhabited were in great need of spiritual revival and spiritual healing. Subsequently, religious women made a difference, impacting and shaping our country's religious history.

Religion in American life framed the construct that shaped the experiences of all people living in America during the nineteenth century. In some way, it informed every aspect of the American culture. As a result, the religious practices and religious undertones that existed in America during the nineteenth century set the stage for a strong and powerful religious history in America.

The African-American Experience

Quiet as it's kept, black women have been recording and influencing American history since their earliest arrival upon these shores" (Smith-Foster, 1986, p.1).

Smith-Foster (1986) echoed the voices of many who finally realize that African-American women played a vital role in the development of our country. African-American women particularly created a literary tradition that warrants scholarly investigation. These tough women have navigated the rough waters of racism, discrimination, prejudice, and oppression, enduring great scrutiny during the nineteenth century. As Moody (2001) opined, African-American women have and "can endure scholarly scrutiny (p. 175). It is through the lives of these women that we are able to "propel early black holy women's stories into literary studies and through them ... reshape our understanding of nineteenth-century U.S. literature" (p. ix). Joycelyn Moody

(2001) argues that “a void . . . exists in scholarly investigations of early black women’s spiritual autobiographies, as yet unfilled by either womanist theo-ethicists or African-American (ist) literary historians.” (p. 176) Moody continues by saying,

Because the academy purports to privilege ‘reason’ over ‘emotion,’ and because this figure [of ungovernable female ecstatic spirituality] connotes ‘irrationality’ and ‘blind faith,’ and because black feminist scholars occupy so precarious a place in the academy, too few of us are willing to attend to the autobiographies where sister-ministers of the Gospel wait for us so finally this book calls for the reading of early black holy women as more than either literary figures or preachers . . . Reading for theological rather than—or as well as—political, social, literary, or cultural significance requires attention to what early black holy women writers assert and instruct about who and how ‘God’ is and about the kinds of relationships humans (should) have with the divine. . . I urge black feminist scholars, free from the restrictions that have previously bound us, especially to continue the essential work of theorizing African-American women’s spirituality and sexuality. . . (pp. 172-177).

This is work that must continue if we are to deepen our understanding of the literary and spiritual history of African-Americans.

African-American Religion in the Nineteenth Century

An old Negro spiritual echoes how religion and spirituality have been passed from one generation to the next:

Gimme that ole time religion, Gimme that ole time religion, gimme that ole time religion. It’s good enough for me. It was good for my own mother, it was good for my own mother, it was good for my own mother and it’s good enough for me.
(Author unknown)

African-American religion and spirituality sustained the race through turbulent times, brought the race from slavery to freedom, and provided strength to see the race through to the twenty-first century. “Religion and religious institutions have pervaded the lives of Black people as long as they have lived in the United States” (Ross, 2003, p. xiii).

The spirituality of African-American women of the nineteenth century had its roots in the religious worldview of West Africa. The distinctive blend of African

cosmology¹⁶ and evangelical piety produced slave religion, which was neither solely African nor Christian in theology or practice. The African-American women of the late nineteenth century were inheritors of this religion as it matured into a distinctive African-American evangelical pietism with a strong impulse toward Christian duty and moral action on the part of the individual (Townes, 1993, p. 70).

C. Eric Lincoln maintains that “a viable religion is one which has a working reciprocity with the culture that produces it or with which it interacts” (Lincoln, 1984, p. 60). Slave religion¹⁷ was a viable religion for the early Africans and African-Americans of the United States. Slaves interacted and adapted to a new land and a new religion. Their blend of West African cosmology and western Christianity produced a distinct religion which met the needs of those who sought the presence of the divine in the midst of their struggle to survive (Townes, 1993, p.71). This distinct religion was unique in that it blended two types of religion that were quite different in practice and form.

“The Africans who first arrived in the United States knew little of and had nothing to do with Christianity. However, slaves in the South and free Blacks in the North were not without a religious life. With the constant influx of Black Africans because of the slave trade, the traditions and religions of Africa were constantly being renewed and revitalized in the Americas” (Clarke, 1979, pp. 7-8). The religious world of the slave was not that of the white master (Townes, 1993, p.71). Slave Christianity was not organized, structured, or proper in practice like its white counterpart. The slaves met outdoors, in cabins, or wherever they could meet safely. Ex-slave Simon Brown’s description of how

¹⁶ African cosmology represents various forms of African religions.

¹⁷ Slave religion was a religion that was created by the slaves and for the slaves. It was differed from white religion in that it allowed the slaves to sing, dance, shout, and cry out to God for strength and to worship in whatever manner they saw fit.

Black people worshipped in slavery is a vivid description of Melville Herskovits' contention that at the very foundation of Negro religion, the African past exerts a strong influence. Like that of other slaves, Simon Brown's universe was crafted from a blend of West African religions with Christianity. Brown's subconscious was in touch with a cosmology that extended beyond what he saw as the symbols of white religion: pious worship, confinement to church structures, and slavocracy (Townes, 71).

In this context, Brown's description is representative of slave worship throughout the South. Fredrika Bremer's (1801-1865) description of a Georgia camp meeting illustrates this point. Bremer describes two significantly different religious scenes between Black and white. In the Black camp meeting "men roared and bawled out; women squealed about like pigs about to be killed; many, having fallen into convulsions, leaped and struck about them so that many had to be held down. Here and there it looked like a regular fight" (Townes, 1995, p. 72). In contrast, worship was a "quieter scene among the whites" (Benson, 1924, p. 117).

When Brown described the slave worship style free of white people, he noted that "the Spirit would move in the meeting," "that there was a living faith in God who would one day answer the cries of His poor Black children and deliver them from their enemies (Faulkner, 1977, 54)." Brown ends the passage, "but the slaves never said a word to their white folks about this kind of faith (Faulkner, 54)." Slave holders perceived the power and threat of slave worship and Brown notes that paterollers¹⁸ were on hand when slaves

¹⁸ Paterollers were persons named by County courts or citizens of the neighborhoods during the days of slavery to patrol or watch the roads, byways, and places where Negroes were likely to be or congregate. It was considered unwise and unsafe to let Negroes, male or female, go about the country in the nighttime without a written permit from their owners or masters. If found after nine o'clock without a written pass or permit, the Negro or Negroes were punished. This is the name that the Negroes gave to those who patrolled. (Cited in *History of Clay County*, by W.H. Woodson (1920) Topeka and Indianapolis: Historical Publishing House, 85-86.)

gathered for religious purposes. Slaves conformed to white standards when whites were present but when left alone, their worship contained the West African belief in the forces of the universe, both evil and good, being at hand and available for consultation and protection. Also present was the Christian God who would send a man to set the slaves free as Moses had confronted Pharaoh to set the Hebrew slaves free (Townes, 72-73).

This God was not only wholly transcendent, but imminent as well:

[God was] right there in the midst of them. He wasn't way off up in the sky. He was a-seeing everybody and a-listening to every word and a-promising to let His love come down. (Faulkner, 1977, p. 54)

Slave masters were concerned that if slaves were allowed to have their own places of worship, they would eventually plot rebellion against their owners.

However, African-Americans organized their own worship experiences. Through the use of signals and messages that whites could not understand, they summoned believers to “hush harbors”¹⁹ where they mixed their traditions of African rhythms, singing, and beliefs with evangelical Christianity. This reminds me of the work of James Cone, Cecil Cone, and James Roberts (1975), three Black liberation theologians who described the *vertical encounter*. They suggested that the vertical encounter between God and humans constitutes the most salient feature of the Black experience. “This encounter occurs in history and empowers Black people to transform negative, oppressive social forces into positive life-sustaining forms (Cone, Cone & Roberts, 1975, p. 32). Cecil

¹⁹ Hush harbors - a hush harbor was a place where slaves secretly gathered to practice Christianity or syncretic forms of worship, and to sing religious spirituals. The hush harbors were generally located in fields, swamps, or wooded areas so as to make the sounds of the slaves' worship inaudible to nearby slaveowners. As slave spirituality was feared and discouraged in antebellum America, hush harbors were forbidden and participants were often whipped or otherwise brutally punished when discovered in the act of communal worship at hush harbors.

Cone (1975) described the positive psychological benefits Black slaves derived from meeting God:

The power of God ... provided creative possibilities in a noncreative situation. Recognition of one's sinfulness was merely the first step in the dynamic of the Black religious experience. It was followed by what has commonly been known in Black religion as saving conversion. The character of conversion was marked by the suddenness with which the slave's heart was changed. It was an abrupt change in his entire orientation toward reality; it affected every aspect of the slave's attitudes and beliefs... The new level of reality... caused the slaves to experience a sense of freedom in the midst of human bondage. (p. 27).

Through this conversion, many slaves gained strength needed to oppose political and social structures that enslaved Black people. They were freed from political and social bondage. Although they were in physical bondage through conversion their mental faculties were freed and they were able to worship their God in spirit and in truth. Slaves such as Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and Gabriel Prosser connected their slave rebellions with their encounters with God. Women like Maria Stewart, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth connected their radical actions with their encounters with God. Black religion and spirituality are unique and deserve to be investigated as such, especially when it comes to African-Americans and the "Black Church." Joyce Jackson (1988) maintains that

It is commonplace to note that religion is a vital part of both Black-American history and today's Black community. Partly because Blacks were denied access to most institutions, the church became, after the family, the Blacks' most important institution, providing solace and solidarity, a positive self-image, emotional and spiritual release, and an experimental model for leadership. Blacks have taken a Euro-American institution – the Christian church – and reshaped it in significant ways to accommodate their beliefs, ideologies, and practices. (p. 1)

They created the Black Church.

The Black Church

The Black church came into existence because of the racism of institutionalized white religion in the United States. From the perspective of many African-Americans, racism has been and continues to be the heresy and the major church-dividing issue since Christianity was first preached to the enslaved sons and daughters of Africa. These churches came into being because even illiterate slaves saw the glaring discrepancies between what was preached to them and what was practiced towards them. Although racism was not the direct cause of each of the African-American churches, racism is the reason for the existence of the African-American religious enterprise. (Watley, 1993, p. 4).

There are seven major historic black denominations: The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E.Z.), the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.), The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.), The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated (NBC), The National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC), and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). These are the denominations that make up the majority of the *Black church*. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) hold that since the 1960's, the Black church has replaced the older reference, the *Negro church*. They further hold that any Black Christian person is included in the Black church if he or she is a member of a Black congregation. This section of my dissertation will provide a brief but historical overview of the seven major historic black denominations. These denominations are independent, historically, totally Black-controlled denominations, founded after the Free African Society of 1787²⁰ and which constitute the core of Black Christians (Watley, 1993, p.1). The seven major historic denominations provided the training grounds for many African-American women of the nineteenth century. The denominations helped African-American people establish and claim identity, authority and ownership through

²⁰ Free African Society of 1787: Established by Absalom Jones, Richard Allen, and other free blacks in 1787, the Society's purpose was "to support one another in sickness, and for the benefit of their widows and fatherless children." The Preamble, dated April 12, 1787.

the denominations to which they were connected and by means of immersion in a venue that gave them voice.

Black Methodist Denominations

The initial Black church denomination was Methodist, and represented the Black slave response to the generally hypocritical Christian behavior found in the extant white Christian religious organizations. According to Lincoln & Marniva (1990):

The first separate denominations to be formed by African-Americans in the United States were Methodist. The early black Methodist churches, conferences and organizations were organized by free black people in the north in response to stultifying and demeaning conditions attending memberships in the white controlled Methodist Episcopal churches. (p. 47)

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)

The Episcopal denomination may be traced to a singular incident that occurred in 1787. According to Watley (1993), “The African Methodist Episcopal Church dates from a walkout at St. George’s Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1787” (p.5). The church was founded by Richard Allen, a former slave, who became the first consecrated bishop of the AME Church. The AME church at present constitutes the largest of the black Methodist communions. It functions under the motto, “God our Father, Christ our redeemer, man our brother.”

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ)

In a similar fashion, the creation of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church is directly linked to separation from a white church in New York: “The African Methodist Episcopal Zion church had its origin in the late eighteenth century when a group of African-Americans broke away from the John Street Methodist Episcopal Church in New York City.” This church has been known to many as the “Freedom

Church” (Watley, 1993, p. 6). Renowned abolitionists such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglas (who was licensed as a local AME Zion preacher) were part of the AME Zion church. “It was the first Methodist denomination to extend the vote and clerical ordination to women and it is the second largest of the Black Methodist denominations” (Watley, 1993, p.6).

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME)

The Christian Methodist Episcopal church originated as the result of division among white majority churches who had difficulty discerning whether Blacks who had remained with them throughout the Civil War should be allowed to continue worshipping with them. “Originally known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal church, the CME in 1954 became the Christian Methodist Episcopal church. It is the smallest of the three African-American Methodist communions” (Watley, 1993, p. 8). As the Methodist Episcopal Church continued to agonize over what to do, the newly freed slaves began to apply their wisdom and knowledge to start their own church.

In December 1870, a group of former slaves met in Jackson, Tennessee, to organize a separate and independent church for colored persons who had been members of the Methodist Episcopal church while they were slaves and who chose to remain in it in order to get their own independent church upon the authority and goodwill of the white church” (Watley, 1993, pp. 7-8). The tension that hovered over newly freed slaves becoming members of the Methodist Episcopal church ended when the Blacks who wanted their freedom and whites who were all for a split of Blacks and whites in the congregation mutually agreed to a separation. The result of the split was the Christian Methodist Episcopal church. According to Watley (1993):

Because of the amicable terms of this separation the CME describes itself as the only independent Black Methodist body organized with the full co-operation along with the ecclesiastical and legal authority of the white denominations out of which it had come. (p. 8)

In this manner, Black Methodists began their own congregation, the only Black church that had continued with the ecclesiastical and legal authority of the white church.

African-American Baptists

The first independent black Baptist congregations were organized in the last half of the eighteenth century. Ironically, the American colonies and Black Methodists alike issued respective declarations of independence (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990). Although the Methodist communions lay claim to being the oldest denomination, African-Americans hold that their oldest congregation is Baptist. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) maintain that the first two historically acknowledged Baptist churches of African-American ancestry were the African Baptist or “Bluestone” Church of Mecklenberg, Virginia, established in 1758 and the earlier Silver Bluff Baptist Church of Silver Bluff, South Carolina. Official records indicate that the Silver Bluff church was established between 1753 and 1755, although the cornerstone of the present edifice claims a date of 1750. According to Watley (1993), “George Liele founded this [Silver Bluff Baptist] church and one of his converts, a slave named Andrew Bryan, organized the First African Baptist Church around 1788” (Watley, 1993, pp. 8-9).

Watley (1993) holds that these early churches indicate the long tenure of the African-American religious enterprise within U.S. religious history, a reality that has too often been ignored in the literature on the subject. “The exclusionary nature of racist white American scholarship has meant that African-American religious history is either not mentioned at all or treated as if the African-American churches were some

historically late sect or corrupt deviations from the ‘legitimate’ mainstream churches” (Watley, 1993, p. 9).

The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. (NBC, USA)

The Black Baptist communion grew to become a larger organization through the passing years. According to Watley (1993), “The persistent vision of a national Black Baptist communion led in 1895 to the founding of the National Baptist Convention, USA, in Atlanta, Georgia. The NBC, USA, is the largest African-American denomination” (p. 11). Rev. E.C. Morris served as president from 1885 until 1922.

National Baptist Convention of America (NBCA)

In 1915 the NBCA evolved as a result of the 1915 split in the National Baptist Convention, USA. It was originally known as the national Baptist Convention, Unincorporated. When the NBCA was first organized, Rev. E. P. Jones was elected as president. It is the second largest of the three black Baptist conventions having a national constituency, and the third largest of all the black denominations (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 35).

The Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC)

The Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) was created in 1961 as a direct result of conflict within the NBC, U.S.A., Inc. Some of the more prominent members were Gardner C. Taylor, Martin Luther King, Sr., Martin Luther King, Jr., and Benjamin Mays. “As its name implies, the Progressive National Baptist Convention was envisioned as a reformist movement within traditional African-American Baptist circles. It is the smallest of the three National Baptist Conventions” (Watley, 1993, p.12).

African-American Pentecostalism

The beginnings of the Black Pentacostal church is unique in that unlike black Methodists and Baptists, they trace their origins not to white denominations, but to a movement initiated and led by a black minister. Also unlike black Methodists and Baptists, black Pentacostals began not as a separatist movement, but as part of a distinctly interracial movement from which whites subsequently withdrew. The modern Pentacostal movement in the United States, inclusive of both black and white people, dates from the Azusa Street Revival²¹ held in Los Angeles from 1906 to 1909 under the leadership of William J. Seymour, a black Holiness preacher (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 76).

Watley (1993) asserted that any study of current African-American religion and church life must view the rise of Pentecostalism as a vibrant, vital, growing, radicalizing liturgical force in Black American church life. Pentecostalism represented a religious revolt against churches, white and Black, who refused to hold on to a spirituality that they characterized as ignorant and overly emotional. At this point, rampant racism in the white community had combined with a philosophy of political conservatism and spiritual

²¹ The *Azusa Street Revival* (1906-1909) took place in Los Angeles, California, led by William Seymour (1870-1922), an African-American preacher. Seymour preached that *glossolalia*, or speaking in tongues [other languages], was evidence of Holy Spirit baptism; his first Los Angeles parish therefore expelled him. Seymour continued preaching until he and a small group of his followers experienced *glossolalia*. Crowds began to gather and a mission space was found on Azusa Street, in a run-down building in downtown Los Angeles. Worship there was frequent, spontaneous, and ecstatic, drawing people from around the world to a revival that lasted about three years. The Azusa revival was multi-racial, welcomed poor people, and encouraged the leadership of women. Azusa's five-fold doctrine encompassed salvation; sanctification or holiness; tongues as evidence of Spirit baptism; divine healing; and the eminent return of Christ. Although Pentecostalism has earlier roots, the Azusa Street Revival launched it as a worldwide movement.

imperialism to create the spiritual climate of the time. The social context reflected a time of rampant racism by whites, who negated the advances made by African-Americans during reconstruction. While the new era of Pentecostalism was growing, an accommodating philosophy of gradualism was also advocated by Booker T. Washington and his associates. It was in this social and spiritual melee that modern Pentecostalism was born (Reid, 1990, p.38f)

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC)

The Church of God in Christ (COGIC) was originally known simply as the Church of God. In 1897, the original church name was incorporated as the Church of God in Christ in Memphis, Tennessee, eventually growing into a large Pentecostal denomination. “The Church of God in Christ is the largest branch of the Pentecostal diaspora among African-Americans. It was founded in 1893 by Bishop Charles Mason” (Watley, 1993, p. 14).

African-American Women and the Church

Many African-American women during the nineteenth century were active in church life. Jesus meant everything to them. They had a close and personal relationship with their Saviour. Jesus was like a friend, a confidant, a brother, a sister, a mother, a father, joy in sorrow, and hope for tomorrow. This author is confident that this is the case because Townes (1993) indicated that “Through this personal relationship with Jesus, Black women were able to transcend the inhuman structures that surrounded them in the slave South and repressive North” (p. 82). Townes maintained that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, worship and spirituality were expressed in groups as people gathered to worship in a form that blended African survivalisms and white evangelical

Christianity. Women of the Bible became role models for Black women. According to Brooks (1984), “The mother[s] of Isaac, Moses, Samson, and others gave Black women a view of women as more than bodily receptacles through whom great men were born. They saw these mothers as being responsible for raising sons who would deliver Israel from its oppressors” (p.146). African-American women compared themselves to the women in the Bible; this biblical identification appeared to have helped Black women journey through their own difficult lands.

By embracing biblical examples, African-American women found the strength to cope with the stresses and outrages of their lives. Townes (1993) opined:

African-American women did not break from the orthodoxy of the Black church, but restated that orthodoxy in what Evelyn Brooks characterizes as a ‘progressive and liberating’ language for women. Black women took the roles of sister, wife, daughter, and mother, combined them with a personal spiritual experience of God in Christ and understood themselves to be ministers in their homes. (p. 83)

By doing this, Black women shifted from positions of being homemakers and domestic servants to a higher calling by God. However, they were not readily accepted into the Black church as leaders or legitimate ministers, due to traditional religious views. They continued to battle exclusion even in the Black church. Therefore, Black women of the nineteenth century, such as Jarena Lee, Maria Miller Stewart, Zilpha Elaw, and Julia Foote, did what they felt necessary to heed God’s calling. These women believed that they could not remain in a domestic capacity and answer God’s call, so they developed a spirituality that went beyond the confines of home, thus taking their spirituality and worship into the world. The women of the nineteenth century espoused a living pedagogy through their spirituality by practicing what they preached. Over time, Townes (1993)

stated, “They were able to accept the traditional roles handed to them, yet shape and bend them to reflect their understandings of their ultimate relationship to God.”

Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen!

These are the lyrics to an old Negro spiritual that I remember hearing almost every Sunday in church as a little girl growing up in the South.

Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen,

Nobody knows my sorrow.

Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen,

A long way from home,

A long way from home. (author unknown, earliest printed version, 1867)

For a long time I really could not comprehend what trouble they were singing about, but as I grew older I began to understand what my grandmother, my mother, and other women in my family and church were singing. These women were singing of the troubles they had endured as Black women. I heard the horrifying stories and the hurt that Blacks had endured generations for generations. I could hear the anger, the hurt, and the frustration that existed deep down in their souls, but what was this trouble that they spoke of? What were the sorrows of Black women during the nineteenth century?

Family life for Blacks during the nineteenth century was always uncertain, threatened by the practice of selling many of the family members to other plantation owners. Therefore, Black families existed and thrived at the mercy of their masters. Black women tried very hard to maintain family values and family unity. However, doing such a thing proved to be quite difficult. Even women’s femininity, understood in Western concepts of societal chastity, was difficult because the institution of slavery undermined the sacred institution of the family. Therefore, it is not surprising that a woman named

Ellen Craft entertained and testified to strong feelings: “I had much rather starve in England, a free woman, than be a slave for the best man that ever breathed upon the American continent” (Loewenberg & Bogin, 1977, p. 107). The resulting reaction of Black women to their desperate situations brought forth a spirituality that provided an answer for the dilemma. “The notion that African-American women are an invisible group on the sidelines that easily can be combined with other groups is a convenient fiction that conceals their power and importance. They have played major roles in all of American culture and continue to do so in spite of resistance and a variety of formidable barriers” (Etter-Lewis, 1993, p.xvoo).

Marcia Riggs (1997) asserted that the importance of religion in the African-American experience cannot be overstated. The contribution and importance of Black women’s religious and spiritual experience also cannot be overstated. Black women should not and cannot be combined with other groups for the purpose of researching the lives and experiences of Black women. To do so would be to deny the poignancy of the experiential realities of their lives, and in a larger sense, would be a grave injustice to all women.

Black women have been creatures of resistance since the beginning of slavery. Religion seemed to play a role in their rebellious actions. As they expressed their righteous discontent with the society in which they lived, they made reference to God because they felt that they were authored by God and that He would deliver them from the hands of the evil one. Negro women were often seen as troublemakers on the plantations. Delores Williams (1999) reports:

Almost from the day when they first arrived as slaves in America in 1619, African-American women have rebelled against their plight. They have used a

variety of resistance strategies, some subtle, and silent, others more dramatic. They petitioned courts for the freedom of themselves and their children; they were accused of burning buildings and of attempting to poison their owners. They participated with slave men in conspiracies and insurrections. They killed their children to keep them from a life of enslavement. They passed on doctrines of resistance to their children (p. 14).

Numerous accounts of Black women's resistance have been documented. Williams (1993) in *Sisters of the Wilderness* highlights the following accounts:

1. In 1775, a slave woman in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was burned alive for participating in a plot to poison her master.
2. The chief conspirator in the plot to burn down Charleston, Massachusetts, was a [slave] woman named Kate.
3. A mother on a Georgia plantation killed 13 of her babies to save them from slavery.
4. Two women, Lucy and Charlotte, participated in the revolt led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831.
5. A slave woman in Kentucky was sentenced to death for mixing an ounce of pounded glass with gravy, which was intended for her master and mistress.

As we see from these accounts of radical actions, African-American women were not passive when it came to death, destruction, or oppression. Williams (1993), in *Sisters of the Wilderness*, explored the life of an ex-slave woman who told of the doctrine of resistance passed on by her slave mother who refused to be whipped by slave owners.

The daughter claimed that:

With all her ability to work, she [the slave mother] did not make a good slave. She was too high spirited and independent. The one doctrine of my mother's teaching

which was branded upon my senses was that I should never let anyone abuse me. (Katz, 1990, p. 327)

The heart of the slave mother's doctrine of resistance was this: "Fight, and if you can't fight, kick: if you can't kick, then bite" (Katz, et al., 1990). The extreme actions of these women and the courage they possessed are described by them as *Black women's faith*:

Lou Emma Allen ... was often afraid ... [but] she was sure the Lord would see her through... Susie Morgan ... prayed and prayed over the decision to join (the movement in Mississippi) and finally she saw it was what the Lord wanted her to do ... Ethel Gray ... [experienced] rattlesnakes ... [thrown on her porch by people driving by]. She testified, "We stood up. Me and God stood up." (Payne, et al. p. 5)

Black women espoused a strong and incredible faith. Many of them possessed a faith so strong that their faith encouraged them to fight for a voice in church pulpits. They felt that God would make a way, a space for them to preach his word. Therefore, African-American women found their way to the pulpit and to camp meetings but not without resistance and opposition from church leaders and others who felt that women had no right to preach or teach the word of God. So, is this why we know little to nothing about women preachers of the nineteenth century?

Women Preachers

Women preachers had a major impact on society. They pointed the way to a more just society driven by their profound faith and unequivocal understanding of scripture. These women preached the word of God utilizing their sermons as vehicles to steer the "lost" and unsaved in the right direction. Women preachers empowered their followers by sharing their own conversion experiences. Much of their sermon text typically focused on conversion and salvation. They provided their followers and audiences with spiritual and practical tools for living in and fighting against a chaotic and unjust society. Women

preachers taught and led by example as well as by their “words how to negotiate the reality of what the world is with the Christian vision of what the world should be: a world that reflects God’s justice and love” (Collier-Thomas, 1998, p. 8)

Bettye Collier-Thomas (1998) holds that “whether they were evangelists or ordained, most white preaching women and all of the nineteenth century Black preaching women pressed on with their need to preach” (p. 8) The religious life of Anne Hutchinson provides one of the earliest examples of a woman preacher pressing on with her need to preach. Hutchinson faced much opposition in her day. Like many women preachers and evangelists of the nineteenth century, Hutchinson’s only sin was that she had a mind of her own and she used it to discuss scripture, pray and preach in her home. She became a religious leader during a time when women were considered nothing more than chattel or servants, especially according to Puritan rules. Is this why the lives of women preachers was excluded because they were viewed as chattel or servants?

These stories have been excluded from the pages of history, especially the lives and experiences of Black women preachers. The names of those who have been recognized are usually only found in small excerpts, such as that from Jarena Lee (1783-unknown):

And why should it be thought impossible, heterodox, or improper for a woman to preach? Seeing the Saviour died for the woman as well as the man. If a man may preach, because the Saviour died for him, why not the woman? Seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole Saviour, instead of a half one? As those who hold it wrong for a woman to preach, would seem to make it appear. Did not Mary *first* preach the risen Saviour, and is not the doctrine of the resurrection the very climax of Christianity-hangs not all our hope on this, as argued by St. Paul? Then did not Mary, a woman, preach the gospel? for she preached the resurrection of the crucified Son of God. (Andrews, 1986, p.36)

However, women like Jarena Lee, Virginia Broughton, Sojourner Truth, Maria Miller Stewart, Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote and numerous others gradually are becoming topics of conversation and making the pages of history books. These women were vocal and played major roles in the Black church. These women were not allowed to preach, yet through their faith and belief in God, they found ways to have their messages heard. Women preachers of the nineteenth century represent the women that Haynes (1998) in *Divine Destiny* calls African-American Christian Feminists and defines these women as a prominent group of nineteenth century thinkers. Such women operated with mainstream Protestantism and sought “to make religion less sexist [and thus more empowering for women], [and] not to make women any less religious (p.139).

Due to their prevailing social image, African-American feminists not only had to achieve a Christian demeanor in the *politics of respectability* (Brooks Higginbotham) comparable to their white counterparts, but also had to invent unique strategies for combating racism as well as the sexism of the Protestant church (Haynes, 79). These women made a difference for African-Americans of their day, as well as African-Americans of the present day. Some of these women found their way into pulpits across America and many paved the way for others to follow. Some even found acceptance in some churches. Although these women continued to preach and travel throughout the country spreading the word of God, full ordination did not come easily. “Mary J. Small (1898) and Julia Foote (1900) became the first women to achieve the rights of full ordination to the ministry by any Methodist denomination, black or white” (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p. 285). Traditionally, Black women in the AME Church were not allowed full ordination until 1948 and the CME church did not allow full ordination for

women until 1954 (Lincoln, & Mamiya, 1990, p. 285). According to Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), women had an even tougher time seeking ordination in the Black Baptist denominations.

When the Separate and Regular Baptists merged, the freedom to be deaconess and to preach became quite restricted and almost exclusively male in both black and white churches. While there is no specific policy against the ordination of women in any of the Black Baptist denominations, the general climate has not been supportive of women preaching and pastoring churches. The Church of God in Christ, the largest Pentacostal denomination, has taken a firm policy stand against the full ordination of women as clergy. (p. 287)

So how is it that these women were able to negotiate and navigate dual oppressions in nineteenth century America? Did they put on a facade or did they totally rid themselves of their African identity and for one (Elaw) the female identity?

Spiritual Struggles

...she had nothing to fall back on: not maleness, not whiteness, not ladyhood, not anything. And out of the profound desolation of her reality she may well have invented herself.
- Toni Morrison

Stewart, Foote and Elaw wrestled daily with issues of race, and gender. They understood the struggles for Black rights and women's rights. Many may wonder if these women simply forgot their African background. Michael Gomez (1998), holds that "Africans and their descendents did not simply forget (or elect not to remember) the African background. Rather, that background played a crucial role in determining the African-American identity" (p. 13). They understood what they had to do in order to have voice in nineteenth century America. It is quite clear that in many instances these women found themselves assimilating and accommodating so that they could do what they felt God had called them to do. These social activists of the nineteenth century often traveled a contradictory path. In many instances, Stewart, Foote and Elaw agreed with the

American society of their day. However, they also were in opposition to the racist, sexist, and classist ideologies of their day. Paula Giddings (1984) maintains that “Black women were conscious of the pressure on free Blacks to prove they could be acculturated into American society” (p.49). Therefore, women like Stewart, Elaw and Foote were faced with multiple challenges and the burden of being black, female and poor. According to Gomez (1998),

It is an unassailable fact that American Christianity is directly responsible for the psychological impairment of many within the African-based community. The white slaveholder’s promotion of a white god aloft in white splendor, around whom stand the white heavenly host, was imagery sufficient to convey to the African a message of unmitigable disadvantage. The actual presentation of a gospel of apology, purporting to substantiate the immutability of the slave’s condition, combined with such imagery to serve the African with notice of interminable servitude. (p.245)

Were Stewart, Foote and Elaw what we might call psychologically impaired or were they psychologically savvy in their quest to prophesy and spread God’s word. Had these women learned the master’s language and taken on a new way of being? Franz Fanon (1967) holds that, “a language different from that of the group into which he was born is evidence of a dislocation, a separation” (p.25). Africans were dislocated and displaced from their homeland. Therefore, much of what they knew and shared as an African people was lost on that treacherous journey from Africa to America. This would suggest that Africans upon arriving to America had to find something to identify with. Many identified with the religion of their masters but many resisted and rejected the religious practices of their masters. Many had black skin but wore white masks in order to be accepted.

The daily struggles of being black, female and poor came with a high price. The price was sometimes quite high but women like Stewart, Foote and Elaw knew how to

bargain with the people of their day via their rhetorical strategies. As they shared with others the inclusiveness of God's call, they continued to fight for equal rights for women, and blacks and spiritual spaces in the church. This created holy tensions for many.

Holy Tensions

The Black church made it very clear that the pulpit was viewed as "men's space", and the pew as "women's place" (Hull, 1982, pp. 141-152). According to Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), this was not done only in the Black church but in many white churches as well. They hold that "this division follows the patriarchal view that the public sphere is male space and the private sphere is female space. (p.451) Although the Black church depended heavily on women to run its programs, men still held all leadership roles in the Black church. The black church still neglected to recognize the spiritual gifts and talents of black women. However, black women preachers continued to persevere. They fought and spoke out on issues of race, sex, class and education. Though often 'knocked down,' they got up stronger and stronger each time. Why is it that they were able to come back stronger each time? The writings of Black women suggest that it was their faith and belief in God that strengthened and enabled them to press on toward the higher calling. Yet, the experiences of Black women during the nineteenth century as revealed in their narratives further suggests that Black women were not seen as individuals who embodied knowledge and wisdom on any level. So how could they preach the word of God?

On a societal level, Black women were viewed as breeders, cheap labor, mammies, and sexual objects. Women preachers like Stewart, Elaw, and Foote saw themselves in a different light, the light of God. They felt that they had been called by God to preach His word. They felt that it was their duty to erase the ideas and stereotypes

that American society had forced upon them. It is quite clear that Black women were not recognized nor were they seen as worthy to occupy the pulpit. Consequently, Black women found creative ways to serve in their churches. “Many took on the title of missionaries, evangelists, and exhorters. Some even went so far as to join white denominations that recognized and displayed more progressive attitudes on the issue of sexuality” (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990, p.307).

The Black church, from its inception, has modeled the stabilizing force in the black community. Black women viewed the Black church as a site of resistance, survival, and empowerment. This was the one place they could go for solace, while being empowered through the word of God. For many African-Americans, the Black church is—and continues to be—the beginning of God-centered activism. It was here that they found the courage to continue their struggle. Through their religious lives and spiritual fervor, the Black church offered meaning for the lives of Black women, as well as others of the African-American race. The Black church was a site of opposition and tensions but it was also a site of comfort, familiarity, and the discourse in which women like Stewart, Foote and Elaw found some degree of solace and authority from God to teach, preach and speak. These women stand at the forefront of the African-American women’s literary tradition. They were steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the word of the Lord. “They were historical agents writing themselves into existence” (Haywood, 2003, p.20).

CHAPTER 4

MARIA MILLER STEWART: PROPHETIC WOMAN

Biographical Background

The spirit of God came before me and I spake before many...reflecting on what I had said, I felt ashamed ... A Something said within my breast, "Press forward, I will be with thee." And my heart made this reply, "Lord if thou wilt be with me, then I will speak for thee as long as I live. (Maria Miller Stewart, quoted from Richardson, 1987)

Maria Miller Stewart, a bold African-American woman uttered these words when she delivered her 1831 speech, *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality: The sure foundation on which we must build*. The spirit of whom Maria spoke provided the encouragement that she needed to press forward as a Black woman of the nineteenth century.

Considering the need to press forward, it is interesting how the motif of travel and journey is an integral part of Maria Miller Stewart's autobiography for a number of reasons. First, in modeling her life after the apostles, this woman took seriously Christ's command to go empty-handed into the world to spread the Gospel. Second, as a woman and a Black woman, she professed the naïve faith of their stories, "texts from which they discovered Black women's relation to the divine, to one another, and to the self" (Andrews, *Free Story*, p. 7). Although Stewart's career was short-lived, she traveled to cities such as New York, Baltimore, Boston, and Washington D.C. to speak to audiences of both men and women, both black and white. She spoke at women's clubs, lecture halls, Masonic halls and even women's conferences.

Born in 1803 in Hartford, Connecticut and left as an orphan at age five, Stewart was unlike the vast majority of women of her day. She was a reader, a writer, and a

student of texts. She was a published writer²² before she became a public speaker.

Stewart is known as the first American woman to lecture publicly to an audience of both men and women. The lecture that she delivered known as the Lecture at Franklin Hall took place at Franklin Hall²³ in Boston, Massachusetts, on September 21, 1832. A pioneer Black abolitionist, a woman of profound faith, and a champion of women's rights, her writings and speeches present an original synthesis of these diverse concerns.

On August 10, 1826, at the age of twenty-three, Maria was married in Boston, Massachusetts, to James W. Stewart: "A tolerably stout well built man; a light, bright mulatto" (Richardson, 1987, p.3). James Stewart was forty-four years old and worked as an independent shipping agent outfitting whaling and fishing vessels. Stewart had served as a seaman in the War of 1812, and subsequently was captured and held as a prisoner of war in England. At the time of the marriage, he had one or two illegitimate daughters. At her husband's suggestion, Maria Stewart added his middle initial to her name. Maria and her husband settled in as members of Boston's small Black middle class.

From 1820-1830, Boston's Black population increased by 185 individuals to a total of 1875 members, three percent of a total population of 61,392 (Richardson, 4). Blacks worked in a variety of occupations, as waiters, coachmen, sailors, barbers, hairdressers, tailors, musicians, and teamsters, among other jobs. According to the Boston's City Directory of 1826 most Black men were listed as laborers. Black women were listed as cooks, laundresses, and proprietors of boarding houses. There were two

²² In 1831, in the Ladies Department of a weekly abolitionist newspaper called the *Liberator*, Maria Miller Stewart's first work was published. William Lloyd Garrison, the creator of the *Liberator*, published Stewart's pamphlet, known as *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, The Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build* (Richardson, 1985, 11).

²³ Franklin Hall was located at No. 16 Franklin Street in Boston. It was the site of regular monthly meetings of the New England Anti-Slavery Society.

ministers listed in the directory, and no physicians or attorneys. The largest concentration of Black families lived on the lower North Slope of Beacon Hill in an area known to the larger community as Nigger Hill (Richardson, 4). The couple enjoyed three years of marriage until December 17, 1829, when James Stewart died of a “severe illness.” After her husband’s death, the executors of the estate, a group of white businessmen, defrauded Maria of a substantial inheritance through shameless legal maneuvers that took two years of litigation. A year after Stewart’s husband passed, her political and intellectual mentor, David Walker,²⁴ (an acquaintance of her late husband) died. His death remains a mystery today.

Stewart met William Lloyd Garrison in the fall of 1831 when she went to his new office that had recently become *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper. Maria made herself known to Garrison by placing a manuscript into his hands for criticism and friendly advice. Maria had no money, but with the help of Garrison, she entered the public arena. Garrison was impressed by Stewart’s intelligence and excellence of character. In her speeches and lectures to nineteenth century America, Stewart spoke of education, economics, independence, and personal responsibility. She wrote:

Though black your skins as shades of night, your hearts are pure, your souls are white. This is the land of freedom. The press is at liberty. Every man has a right to express his opinion. Many think, because your skins are tinged with a sable hue, that you are an inferior race of beings; but God does not consider you as such. He hath formed and fashioned you in his own image, and hath bestowed upon you reason and strong powers of intellect. He hath made you to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea [Genesis 1:26]. He hath

²⁴ David Walker was the son of a slave father and a free black mother, Born in Wilmington, North Carolina, perhaps in 1796 or 1797, David Walker joined institutions that denounced slavery in the South and discrimination in the North. He became involved with the nation's first African-American newspaper, the *Freedom's Journal*, New York City, to which he frequently contributed. By the end of 1828, he had become Boston's leading spokesman against slavery. He is also famous for authoring the pamphlet entitled *Appeal*.

crowned you with glory and honor; hath made you but a little lower than the angels [Psalms 8:5]; and according to the Constitution of the United States, he hath made all men free and equal. Then why should one work say to another, “Keep you down there, while I sit up yonder; for I am better than thou?” It is not the color of the skin that makes the man, but it is the principles formed within the soul. (Richardson, 1987, p. 29)

In her writings, *Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality: The sure foundation on which we must build*, *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart, The lecture delivered at Franklin Hall, An address delivered before the Afric American Female Intelligence Society of Boston, Mrs. Stewart’s farewell address to her friends in the city of Boston, Cause for encouragement, Meditations, Commendations, and Sufferings during the war*, she wrote about the importance of education, the need for Black unity, collective action toward liberation, and the special responsibilities and rights of women. These themes were echoed by her own activism throughout her life. Although Mrs. Stewart was deeply rooted in the abolitionist movement, she was not only an opponent of slavery, but of political and economic exploitation, racism, and sexism as well.

Stewart’s anguish at her husband’s death, as described in one of her published religious meditations called “Meditation X” written in 1832, led her to reassess the place of religion in her life. “For several years,” Stewart wrote, “my heart was in continual sorrow.” (Richardson, 1987, p. 8) Although she had been previously affiliated with the First African Baptist Church, it appears that Stewart underwent a conversion or “born again” experience which deepened her religious commitment. Her belief became both more personal and more central to her daily life, leading to what anthropologist Paul Radin (1969), in his discussion of Black conversion experiences, refers to as a “new individuation, [and] inward reintegration,” whereby she gave herself over to a secular ministry of political and religious witness (Richardson, 1987, p. 8).

The primary responses of late nineteenth century African-American woman to her struggle with the narrow space and dark enclosure of racial and economic subordination were expressed through her commitments to religious and social organizations. These faithful servants found a rationale and a witness that led them into the public arena to lead reform movements aimed at bringing the kingdom of God on earth (Townes, 1995, p. 30).

Prophetic Works

Maria Stewart produced several writings during the nineteenth century. In 1831 Stewart published “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality: the sure foundation on which we must build,” a twelve page pamphlet. This pamphlet also appeared in the 1835 collection *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (Richardson, 1987, p.xix). In 1832 The Lecture delivered at Franklin Hall was published. “An address delivered before the African American Female Intelligence Society of Boston” was dated 1833. In the same year she published “Mrs. Stewart’s Farewell Address To Her Friends in the City of Boston.” “Cause for Encouragement” was published in *The Liberator* on July 14, 1832. Stewart’s 1879 volume of “Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart is a reprint of the earlier “Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart. The 1879 volume included The “Letters and Commendations” and the autobiographical sketch, “Sufferings During the War” which were not included in the earlier volume of “Productions.” Stewart’s collected works and writings precede the works of Frederick Douglass, who launched his public career at the Nantucket meeting of 1841. Not only did Stewart precede Douglass in her writing career but she was the forerunner in the public arena as a public speaker.

In 1843, Sojourner Truth began her mission of traveling and speaking for abolition and women’s rights, and Frances Harper delivered her first public lecture, “The Elevation and Education of Our People,” in New Bedford in 1854 (Richardson, p. xiv). When women are silent, they often are overlooked, ignored, or thought to be ignorant,

with nothing of value to contribute to anyone. When they speak up, they are branded as insolent, aggressive, or domineering man-haters. In 1832, Maria Miller Stewart saw the need for Black women to articulate, so she encouraged Black women to develop their intellectual, spiritual and occupational abilities in order to work effectively for the liberation of Black people, with no apologies for being female (Fry- Brown, 2000, p. 42). Stewart wanted Black women to claim agency. She wanted them to realize that her call for action was a call that had been passed on intergenerationally, so that they too could carry on the legacy created by women like Stewart.

W.E.B. Dubois's essay, "The Damnation of Women" in *Darkwater* helps to provide "the larger context for the subordinate position African-American women endured and often challenged in nineteenth-century society" (Townes, 1995 p. 31). Dubois provided one of the first analyses ever by a male intellectual that pressed for greatly expanded women's economic, political, and procreation rights. He analyzes the system of gendered oppression in Western societies like the United States. As he saw the treatment of women in society, they were not really "beings, they were relations." Today as then, women are usually described and positioned by their relationships to men--as wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters. Whatever their color, they exist "not for themselves, but for men." Du Bois continues with a brief but insightful analysis of childbearing and child rearing, one that parallels arguments of leading white feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman: "Only at the sacrifice of intelligence and the chance to do their best work can the majority of modern women bear children. This is the damnation of women." (565) He then adds, forcefully and forthrightly, that a woman

must have control of her own body, the “right of motherhood at her own discretion.” Du Bois celebrates the beauty of Black women:

Their beauty,—their dark and mysterious beauty of midnight eyes, crumpled hair, and soft, full-featured faces.... No other women on earth could have merged from the hell of force and temptation which once engulfed and still surrounds black women in America with half the modesty and womanliness that they retain. (p. 576)

Although subordinate in status, African-American women embraced a portion of witnessing²⁵ that enabled them to challenge their “natural” place in the social order.

Black women who were active in the church had a deep, personal relationship with God and Jesus. Jesus was not only Lord and Savior, He was brother and friend. “Through this personal relationship with Jesus, Black women were able to transcend the inhuman structures that surrounded them in the slave south and repressive north” (Townes, 1995, p. 32). African-American women, however, took an intriguing avenue in expressing their spirituality. In her book *Righteous Discontent*, Evelyn Higginbotham (1993) noted that Black women in religious circles did not portray themselves as the larger society portrayed white women—fragile and impressionable with little capacity for rational thought. Rather, Black women viewed themselves as having a capacity to influence men and consistently described their power of persuasion over men as historically positive (Townes, p.33). “Women were compelled by a deep faith to live out an active witness that reflected the values of their piety” (Townes, p. 34).

This author interprets Maria Miller Stewart’s spirituality to be a source of survival and resistance during the nineteenth century. The motif of survival is an integral part of Maria’s spirituality, but abolition of slavery, economic progress, self determination,

²⁵ Witness was a way of speaking out, a type of testimony. African-American women of the nineteenth century by their witness provided evidence and living proof through first hand knowledge and experience. Therefore, they were qualified to testify and bear witness to the facts of nineteenth century American life.

women's rights and responsibilities, and simply righteous living were all part of Maria Stewart's repertoire. Therefore, I will explore the rhetorical strategies and themes that emerge from the writings and speeches of Maria Stewart: radical obedience and the Jeremiad tradition.

Rhetorical Strategies

The narratives of Stewart are prophetic conversations that utilized rhetorical strategies that were typical of the Jeremiadic tradition. Douglas McKnight (2003) maintains that, "a jeremiad is a form of writing, a mix of prophecy, history and biblical and moral excursions into the difficulty of determining right and wrong. The jeremiad evolved primarily as a ritualistic discourse to remind individuals and communities that morality was the root of earthly existence" (p. 10). He further holds that, "the jeremiads also celebrated the historical and sacred opportunity believed to be possessed by the Puritans because they were, as they continually attested to in their writings, God's new chosen" (p.11). Like the Puritans Maria Stewart saw herself as one of God's chosen. In a sense she felt that all people were chosen to do the will of God, so it is everyone's duty to teach others about the word of God.

Maria Miller Stewart used numerous rhetorical strategies to engage the minds and thoughts of their readers and listeners. It would be almost scholarly impossible to read the narratives of these women and overlook the rhetoric used to convey their spirituality, religious lives and their constant insistence to the readers and hearers that they were called by God.

Stewart met much opposition during the nineteenth century. It is quite interesting as well as quite intriguing how a woman who had little or no education was able to write with such eloquence and fervor.

Radical Obedience – A Nineteenth Century African-American Woman on the Battlefield for the Lord

Maria Stewart possessed an obedience to God that was radical in nature. This radical obedience was evident in her daily life, social activism, speeches and essays. Reuther and McLaughlin (1979) define radical obedience as the possibility for insurgency (27). To their definition, I would like to add that radical obedience is an extreme submission to God. Concerns for social justice and moral rectitude were requirements for such extreme obedience.

Maria Stewart was not only an opponent of slavery, but also of political and economic exploitation. Therefore, she invoked both the Bible and the Constitution of the United States as documents proclaiming the universal birthright to justice and freedom. Resistance to oppression was the highest form of obedience to God for Stewart (Richardson, 1987, p.9). Stewart's radical obedience drew her to assume a life of public political activism during a time when it was considered highly inappropriate for a woman to put herself forward in such a way. She defended herself and her radical attitude with an appeal of biblical precedent and by defining herself as a passive instrument in God's hands. She said,

The spirit of God came before me and I spake before many ... reflecting on what I had said, I felt ashamed...A something said within my breast, press forward, I will be with thee. And my heart made this reply, Lord if thou wilt be with me, then I will speak for thee as long as I live. (Richardson, 1987, p. 19)

“With such disclaimers, Stewart attempted a balance between the protective claims of passivity to divine will which early female preachers (Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote and numerous others) used to deflect denominational censure, and the active role she urged her sisters to take with her in assuming greater responsibility for their lives and their communities” (Richardson, 1987, p. 19). Maria began to gain great confidence and determination, developing an even greater resistance to nineteenth century America’s attempts to silence women. Richardson (1987) found that once again Stewart turned to the Bible:

She refuted the most frequently cited injunction against female activism by placing Paul’s admonitions to women to remain silent in religious affairs and to take their cues from their husbands in other matters, against the demands of the Black woman’s social and historical context. ‘Did St. Paul but know of our wrongs and deprivations,’ she argued, ‘I presume he would make no objection to our pleading in public for our rights.’ Ultimately, Stewart claimed full entitlement to speak and to act by way of what she called a “spiritual interrogation.” ‘Who shall go forward, and take of the reproach that is cast upon the people of color?’ asked a voice from within, ‘Shall it be a woman?’ and my heart made this reply – ‘If it is thy will, be it even so, Lord Jesus!’ (p. 68)

Stewart makes reference to a spiritual interrogation. Here we see Stewart validating her right to speak. Maria Stewart’s radical obedience was based upon her submission to God. She used the scriptures, God’s word, to sustain and validate her actions, and to give her authority to speak on behalf of her God as she lectured, lived, and battled against injustice in nineteenth century America.

Aware of how radical and outspoken she really was, in her 1831 pamphlet, “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality, The Sure Foundations on Which We Must Build,” Stewart declared herself prepared to face the possibility of similar consequences for her outspoken militant activism. “Many will suffer for pleading the cause of oppressed Africa,” she wrote, “and I shall glory in being one of her martyrs” (pp. 12-13).

She was able to sustain such equilibrium through her faith that “[God] is able to take me to himself, as he did the most noble, fearless, and undaunted David Walker (her former mentor) (Richardson, 1987, p. 12).” This researcher maintains that much of the force of Stewart’s message was borne by rhetorical power that appealed to the ear as well as to the intellect. The powerful and sophisticated rhetorical strategies that Stewart used (Jeremiad, radical obedience, challenges and responsibilities) were uniquely part of her radical discourse.

Maria Stewart’s life was one of practice, religious inspiration, and activism. Maria never abandoned her calling. Her life demonstrates to the world that female resilience, innovativeness, and determination may be heard. She was able to perceive the true nature of racist problems in nineteenth century America. This remarkable woman’s responsibility as a Black woman is evident by her refusal to let marginality, and its sometimes severe consequences, force her into playing the part of a passive, subservient, take-anything role amidst the oppressive situations of the nineteenth century.

In other words, she did not use her marginality as an excuse to keep quiet. Instead she came out in radical style using all of her ammunition—public speaking, faith, spirituality, education, communication skills, and moral outrage—to remind and inform everyone Black and white, men and women, of their duties as individuals in nineteenth century society. Stewart’s unqualified militancy and willingness to accept armed struggle if necessary set her apart from most abolitionists and showed her true dedication and political pragmatism. Marilyn Richardson (1987), said it best in her biographical account of Maria, “Her calling was not merely reformist, it was subversive (Richardson, 26).” However, Maria Stewart felt that in order to obey God, she must act in contradiction to

the secular identity to which she had once aspired, that of a traditionally refined and accomplished woman, by her own definition “a chaste keeper at home ... possessing a meek and quiet spirit (Richardson, p. 27).

From the earliest formulation of her views in the essay “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality” (1831), Stewart singled out the women in her audience by citing what she considered their special responsibilities within the Black community. “Ye daughters of Africa, Awake! ... Arise! ... distinguish yourselves,” she exhorted. “Show forth the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties (Richardson, 30).” Richardson holds, “The faculties included the ability to achieve intellectual distinction, the cultivation of refined sensibilities such that young men would “fall in love with their virtues,” and the capacity as mothers to “create in the minds of your little girls and boys a thirst for knowledge, the love of virtue....” In this she was generally in accord with the nineteenth-century American ideal of True Womanhood, whereby a woman was measured in terms of her “piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity” (Richardson, 20). Here Stewart is taking up nineteenth century norms of domesticity for women in order to bring about social change and to advocate for formal education for Black women. She was merely encouraging Black women to commit to improving their lives through education as well as the lives of their offspring.

Many African-American women began with an intense personal experience of the divine in their lives and accepted God’s call to salvation into the public realm to reform a corrupt moral order (Townes, 36). These women believed that they were called by God to go and save a lost land. Maria Stewart was no different. With her conversion, there came to Stewart the understanding that her new allegiance to the will of God would place

her in conflict with many of the ways of the world, making her a warrior and even a potential martyr for the cause of oppressed Africa. Nonetheless, moved by *holy indignation*, she began to write and speak out publicly against tyranny, victimization, and injustice as she felt them affecting her life, her community, and her nation:

In 1831 [I] made a public profession of my faith in Christ,” she declared in the document which stands as the first political manifesto written by a Black American woman and pronounced herself willing to place her faith at the service of social activism, as a “strong advocate for the cause of God and for the cause of freedom (Richardson, 1987, p. 8).”

From the start, Stewart’s religious vision and her socio-political agenda were intrinsically bound together, with one defining the other:

From the moment I experienced the change I felt a strong desire ... to devote the remainder of my days to piety and virtue and now possess that spirit of independence that, were I called upon, I would willingly sacrifice my life for the cause of God and my bretheren. All the nations of the earth are crying out for liberty and equality. Away, away with tyranny and oppression! And shall Africa’s sons be silent any longer? (Excerpt from Richardson, 1987, p. 9)

Although Stewart’s actions and writings were often radical in nature, she remained humble before God. She denied self and took up her cross daily to warn, challenge and save her fellow man. For she wanted all to know that it was the word of God that she used as a guide to assist her in her sometimes radical actions.

A Jeremiadic Tradition – Warnings and Prophecy

Maria Stewart’s life provides a model of how important spirituality was to her very being, her identity, and her survival in nineteenth century America. Stewart not only encouraged others to move to a life of activism but she also prophesied and warned the oppressor of what was to come. Prophesying and warnings seemed to be the two things most often found in Stewart’s writings. Her writings read like a spiritual autobiography, also known to many scholars as the Black Jeremiad. Stewart’s complete works assume

the form of a spiritual autobiography, identified as the *Black Jeremiad*, after the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah who warned Israel that it would be destroyed for deserting its covenant with God. In *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms*, Wilson J. Moses (1982) in his astute discussion of the Black Jeremiad, extended the boundaries of the Miller-Bercovitch discourse, using the term to describe “the constant warnings issued by Blacks to whites, concerning the judgment that was to come for the sin of slavery (Moses, 30).” Such warnings delivered to whites on the inevitable outcome of their blindness to the workings of divine justice, though not as central as Moses might have it, were as integral a part of Stewart’s message as the warnings were of David Walker’s. Such detailed descriptions, indeed promises, of the slaveholders’ impending doom were intended as much to hearten and edify the oppressed as to warn the oppressor (Richardson, 17). Corruption and covenant, indignation and urgency, religion and reform characterize the Black Jeremiad. Maria Miller Stewart, in one of her many speeches, makes reference to how her soul became filled with a holy indignation and so she complained. In her writings there is found a profound urgency for reform. Religion was key and central not only to her very being, but also to her platform as a woman of radical obedience. Like the Jeremiads of seventeenth-century American Puritans, African-American Jeremiads are by definition a sentimental form, since they rely on moral persuasion, deep feeling, and a shared sense of social justice. They also optimistically postulate “an errand into the wilderness” to fulfill God’s will and the Manifest Destiny of His chosen people, that is, African-Americans. African-American Jeremiahs blend the discourses of Black Nationalism and Christianity to prophesy, in the first person, the annihilation of racists and Negrophobes. As she or he

condemns raced-based oppression, the Black Jeremiah expressly deplores the social, moral, and spiritual condition of African-Americans (Moody, 2001).

The writings of Maria Miller Stewart, much like the Jeremiad, criticize society, and challenge particular groups such as white women, Black women, men, etc., to evaluate themselves and to help bring about social change. All of Maria Stewart's writings are noted for such criticism and challenges. On the other hand, it is interesting how Stewart always acknowledges her unworthiness in all of her writings. She wrote:

I feel almost unable to address you; almost incompetent to perform the task; and at times I have felt ready to exclaim, O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night [Jeremiah 9:1], for the transgressions of the daughters of my people. (Richardson, 1986, p. 30)

Stewart's early Jeremiads strain, both to divulge the author's life circumstances and to establish her Christian faith. In her Farewell address to her friends in the city of Boston she exhorted:

You have heard me observe that the shortness of time, the certainty of death and the instability of all things here, induce me to turn my thoughts from earth to heaven. Borne down with a heavy load of sin and shame, my conscience filled with remorse; considering the throne of God forever guiltless, and my own eternal condemnation as just, I was at last brought to accept of salvation as a free gift in and through the merits of a crucified Redeemer. Here I was brought to see, 'Tis not by works of righteousness that our own hands have done, but we are saved by grace alone, abounding through the Son.' After these convictions, in imagination I found myself sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed in my right mind. For I have been like a ship tossed to and fro, in a storm at sea. Then I was glad when I realized the dangers I had escaped; and then I consecrated my soul and body and all the powers of my mind to his service, and from that time henceforth; yea, even for evermore, amen. (Richardson, 1987, pp.65-66)

In this mode, her texts are not clear-cut Jeremiads. In fact, Stewart's gender complicates labeling her a Jeremiah, for the Black Jeremiah, like the earlier American Puritan Jeremiah, confidently assumes the power of the patriarch (Moody, 2001).

Although Stewart speaks with sternness, strictness, and harshness, she still does not speak

or write with total patriarchal authority. This is especially evident when she acknowledges her unworthiness, deep sense of guilt, and her poor and needy state.

According to Moody (2001):

Imagining and inscribing herself as deceased is one way she repeatedly dramatizes her insignificance and tacitly coaxes readers to grieve not for the individual loss her demise would signify, but the desperate condition of the nation as her Jeremiads depict it. Thus, death functions metaphorically and pedagogically for Stewart: mourners can be taught to feel sympathy, and weeping over the dead can serve as preparation for a vital religious experience. (p. 38)

The Jeremiad sharply critiques a society and a culture, provoking specific groups into self-scrutiny and social change. A confession, on the other hand, contemplatively turns such matters inward: passion is to Jeremiad as placidity is to the confession.

While the traditional spiritual autobiography counsels conversion Christianity by chronologically narrating an exemplary life, the Jeremiad foments social equity by expressing disdain for the present and hope for the future. Like traditional spiritual narratives, however, Jeremiads are didactic and formulaic. Bristling with discontent, they demand the ideological and ecclesiastical conversion of a mass of people from sinners, slavers, and oppressors to righteous, just Christian folk. (Moody, 2001, p. 30)

“Stewart apparently opted to write Jeremiads rather than a confession, in part because she thought African-Americans would be better served by grim prophecies than by her story” (Moody, 2001, p. 36).

During a public career in Boston of barely three years’ duration, Stewart published a political pamphlet (1831) and a collection of religious meditations (1832), delivered four public lectures (1832-1833), saw her speeches printed in the *Liberator*, and finally, after moving to New York, compiled in 1834 a volume of her collected works that was published the following year (Richardson, 1987, p. xiv). Stewart’s audiences of the nineteenth century accessed her Jeremiads in two forms: public performances and published documents.

Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality

The first paragraph of Stewart's essay of October 8, 1831, in *The Liberator*, "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," does not mention religion. However, immediately in the second paragraph we see the speaker as a woman who has endured hardships, sorrow, and racial discrimination but, because of her religious convictions and persistence in her religious faith, has been able to press toward her goal:

I was born in Hartford Connecticut, in 1803; was left an orphan at five years of age; was bound out in a clergyman's family; had the seeds of piety and virtue early sown in my mind, but was deprived of the advantages of education, though my soul thirsted for knowledge. Left them at fifteen years of age; attended Sabbath schools until I was twenty; in 1826 was married to James W. Stewart; was left a widow in 1829; was, as I humbly hope and trust brought to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus, in 1830; in 1831 made a public profession of my faith in Christ. (Richardson, 1987, p. 28)

Stewart provided only fragments of her life story. It seems that she felt that her readers and listeners would benefit more from the harsh realities and prophecies rather than her own story. In "Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality," Maria Stewart shows us her vehement racial pride. In this essay she addresses several groups, one at a time, but the focus of this essay and the message she is trying to get across is to African-Americans. She wrote:

Truly, my heart's desire and prayer is, that Ethiopia might stretch forth her hands unto God. But we have a great work to do. Never, no, never will the chains of slavery and ignorance burst, till we become united as one, and cultivate among ourselves the pure principles of piety, morality and virtue. I am sensible of my ignorance; but such knowledge as God has given to me, I impart to you. I am sensible of former prejudices; but it is high time for prejudices and animosities to cease from among us. I am sensible of exposing myself to calumny and reproach; but shall I, for fear of feeble man who shall die, hold my peace? Shall I for fear of scoffs, and frowns, refrain my tongue? Ah, no! I speak as one that must give an account at the awful bar of God; I speak as a dying mortal to dying mortals. (Richardson, 1987, p. 30)

However, Stewart does not claim to have been called by God to preach to others—except insofar as she believed it the duty of every Christian to broadcast the Gospel. Stewart averred, “[W] ere I called upon, I would willingly sacrifice my life for the cause of God and my brethren” (Moody, 2001, p. 36).

Meditations by Maria Miller Stewart

Maria Miller Stewart’s “Meditations,” first published as a religious pamphlet in 1832, followed the venue of “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality,” in that Stewart’s meditations neglected to include her life. Fourteen meditations and seven intermittent prayers make reference to Stewart’s life, yet none develop the autobiographical information presented. Nevertheless, “Meditations” seems to be more personal than “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality.” Further, this collection of writings by Stewart is not only personal, but reflective in nature. As a collection of reflections and prayers, this writing demonstrates the author’s private anguish as prophet and penitent (Moody, 40). Modeled on the book of Lamentations, written by the prophet Jeremiah, “Meditations” is full of pathos, pain, and self deprecation. Stewart wrote:

What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Dropt from the dying lips of the companion of my youth. O God, was not my conscience stung with remorse and horror, was not my soul torn with anguish, and did not my heart bleed when the summons came: ‘He must die, and not live.’ Die! Oh, must he die? Must we part to meet no more? And oh, must I be left, forlorn and unprotected? Spare his life, O God if consistent with thy will, was my cry; If not, make me to say, Thy will be done. O my soul thou hast watched the sick-bed of one who was near to thee, even the half of thyself; thou hast heard his dying groans, and seen his restless head turn from side to side in quest of ease; and his dim eye hath turned upon thee, and implored thee for relief. (Richardson, 1987, p. 115)

It also begins similarly to “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality,” with a brief introduction in which Stewart acknowledges her unworthiness. The second paragraph indicates the level of Stewart’s self-deprecation because she denotes herself in the third person: “The author has ... basked in the sunshine of prosperity; and...she has drunk deep in the cup of sorrow” (Moody, 40). “Meditations” is akin to “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality” because it is addressed to “my respected friends.” This collection of writings posits Stewart as a more spiritual author, than does “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality.” Stewart refers to her church congregation in her prayers and appeals. We hear her sweet prayers in “Meditations,” that cry from a deep sense of guilt and unworthiness, her poor and needy state as both orphan and widow, and her wretchedness as a poor, unworthy worm. She sees herself as sick and full of disease in most of her meditations. Stewart also grieves over the premature death of her husband, who died unconverted, “with no God to look to. Heart-rending scene! (Moody, 2001 p. 40)” According to Moody (2001):

Maria Miller Stewart produced “Meditations” at the young age of twenty-nine. However, reading the “Meditations” is exhausting and challenging for many. When reading “Meditations,” it seems like you are on an emotional roller coaster ride. “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality” and “Meditations” further proclaim Stewart’s anxiety about the condition and future of Blacks in America. As a writer, activist, and abolitionist, she clearly hoped to radicalize whites and Blacks in America. Moreover, as a freeborn northern African-American, she appeals in particular to free and recently freed African-Americans, whose plight she considers “but little better than that” of slaves, to involve themselves in the antislavery crusade and to determine their own moral and social uplift. (p. 43)

Four Public Addresses

In Stewart’s Four Public Addresses she immediately discussed her feelings about racial inequality in America, and gender equity issues. Stewart continued to write in

Jeremiadic fashion. She challenged African-Americans and she let her dissatisfaction with traditional hegemonic practices be known. Joycelyn Moody holds that:

These protofeminist lectures, presented by Stewart from the spring of 1832 to September 21, 1834, may also be considered Jeremiads because the lectures are characterized by indignation and warning. Stewart immediately charges free Blacks with indolence. The lecture she delivered at the Franklin Hall on September 21, 1832, began with a demand: "Why sit ye here and die?" She placed the weight of change on the shoulders of Black people. She said, "Were the American free people of color to turn their attention more assiduously to moral worth and intellectual improvement ... prejudice would gradually diminish, and whites would be compelled to say, unloose those fetters! (Richardson, 1987) In this same lecture, Stewart blames European Americans for greed and injustice. Stewart continues by addressing and questioning white women, "And why are not our forms as delicate, and our constitutions as slender, as yours? (Moody, 2001, pp.43-44)

Maria Stewart not only focused on racial issues of her time, but she also spoke of the torture and torment she experienced and tolerated on the platform due to her gender. Although specific details are not provided in her lectures, she does make reference to her rejection as a woman by the church patriarchy and lay people of both races. Her militancy becomes boldly apparent in these lectures, because she repeatedly makes statements such as, "I have enlisted in the holy warfare ... the Lord's battle I mean to fight, until my voice expire in death." In her farewell address of 1833 (p. 65), she uses biblical resources to establish her right to a *public persona*. Stewart makes reference to courageous women of the Bible, such as Deborah who was a mother and a judge in Israel, Queen Esther who saved the Jews and Mary Magdalene who first declared the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The *Productions* thus demonstrates her belief that, as God's foot soldier, she must balance humility with temerity to advocate His cause (Moody, 2001).

In *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart* (Richardson, 1987), prophesying is evident and pervasive throughout the text:

I have been impressed in my mind, my unconscious friends, with the awful idea that God is about to execute upon us the fierceness of his anger, and to pour forth heavy judgments upon this people. And why? Because your sins have reached unto heaven and your iniquities unto the clouds. God has been calling you these many years to repentance, by his loving kindness and tender mercies; and Christ has been knocking at the door of your hearts for admittance, until his locks have become wet with the dews of heaven. Nay, even more; he hath chastened you with the rod of his wrath, and hath deprived you of your kindred and friends; he hath sent death and pestilence among you, and many have become widows, and their children fatherless; and still you go on unconcerned as though all were well, saying with proud Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" You have closed your eyes against the light; you have stopped your ears against the truth; and you have hardened your hearts against the calls and invitations of mercy; and I am fearful that the queen of the south will arise in judgment against this generation and condemn it—for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear of the wisdom of Solomon—and behold a greater than Solomon is here. I am fearful that the men of Nineveh will rise in judgment against this generation, and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold a greater than Jonah is here. O, you that sit under the gospel's joyful sound, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and you that neglect the means of grace, who know your Lord's will, and obey it not! O, you that are exalted to heaven in point of privileges, shall be thrust down to hell; for if the mighty works that have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, it would have remained unto this day. Wherefore, I beseech you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to repent and quickly put away from among you the evil of your doings and turn unto the Lord your God with weeping, mourning and fasting. It may be he will repent himself of the evil that he hath determined against you: lest if ye continue to rebel against the word of the Lord, he will arise in his wrath and say, Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; I will laugh at your calamities, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as a whirlwind, and distress and anguish shall come upon you; then shall ye call, and I will not answer; ye shall seek me early, but ye shall not find me. (Maria Miller Stewart, quoted from Gates, 1988, p. 29)

In *The Productions of Mrs. Maria Miller Stewart*, Stewart prophesied by warning her oppressors of the punishment and a day to come when those who continued to harbor evil ways would be called to judgment for their treatment of the oppressed.

Sufferings During the War

In Stewart's earlier writings her text was radical, forceful and strong. She warned the oppressor, she challenged her people and she made it very clear to all that she had a

right to have her voice heard in nineteenth century America. She argued for space, and she labeled many as arm chair activists. However, when she wrote “Sufferings during the War” her narrative strategies changed. Marilyn Richardson (1987) suggests that “Sufferings” demonstrates Stewart’s interest in experimental narrativization. She describes the sketch as a “curiously hybrid document,” inspired by the novel and the theater. She further exhorts, “Its mid-Civil War and postbellum temporal settings, allows Stewart to use the war as “an epic framework” for her memoir (82-83). It seems that Stewart felt if she had used a different approach in presenting her narrative work, she might have been heard but because Stewart had led such a radical campaign early on, her work and life had been tainted.

“Sufferings During the War,” (1833), elaborates on Stewart’s experiences in the Washington D.C. – Baltimore area between the year she left New York, 1852, and 1879, the year she published the “Meditations” —just months before her death that December. This “Farewell Address” summarizes her activities in Boston and justifies her emigration to New York, but it neglects to provide extensive personal detail. However, one thing that stands out after reading “Sufferings During the War” is the interrupted flow of sequential order. It reads as if Stewart’s writing moves in no distinct order. Stewart seems to have written the piece as she remembered incidents, without providing chronological order. Despite the chronological discontinuity that pervades this sketch, “Sufferings During the War,” conveys the following personal details: Stewart’s midlife poverty, the struggles she endured in order to obtain a teaching position and to steady pupils in a war-ravished South, and her central role in postbellum religious denominational disputes. “Sufferings During the War” also details Stewart’s commitment to African-American

education and her own determination to succeed. The final text in *The Productions* (a reprint of “The Negro’s Complaint”), dated “April 14, 1834” reveals that there were no additional lectures to appear in *Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart*. Apparently, Stewart ceased lecturing once she left Boston in 1833.

Although Stewart’s autobiography displays a departure from that of the traditional spiritual autobiography genre, her writings both participate in and address nineteenth century Black women’s literary tradition. In Moody’s opinion (2001), “The traditional spiritual autobiography counsels conversion to Christianity by chronologically narrating an exemplary life; the Jeremiad foments social equity by expressing disdain for the present and hope for the future” (Moody, 2001, p. 30). Additionally, African-American women wrote the stories of their lives while existing under ideological, emotional, financial, and social duress (Moody, 2001). Stewart’s writings may easily be labeled as Jeremiads. Importantly, the Jeremiad allowed her to avoid direct references to her life, which she evidently felt were both private and superfluous. Nevertheless, Stewart transforms the Jeremiad with her Blackness as well as her womanliness. Moody (2001) stated:

The transformation of the Jeremiad under the guidance of Stewart brings about the critique and inclusion of racism and sexism. Still, Stewart’s writings can be called Jeremiads. Although in her later writing, her dis-ease with autobiography manifests itself in sentimentality, anxiety, and circumvention, as an “I-witness” of her time, Maria Stewart is able to call the spirituality and politically recalcitrant to conversion and transcendence through the example of her own life story.” (p. 50)

For Maria Stewart, life during the nineteenth century was about survival. It was all about being able to survive the racism, prejudice, and discrimination. However, Maria Stewart’s writings suggest that her life was one of suffering. She indeed suffered, but the one thing that Maria Stewart would have us gain from her writings is how she survived.

In all of her writings both public, and private, she wrote of how God would demolish and eradicate all hierarchies and the many institutions that created, condoned, and supported immoral and profane activity. Stewart's goal was to embrace optimism and to generate in African-Americans the hope and anticipation that had not been heretofore a part of their lives. M. Shawn Copeland (1993) defined the theology of suffering as re-evaluative of the "cardinal virtues of patience, long suffering, forbearance, love, faith and hope ... in light of Black women's experiences (p. 122)."

Stewart's writings provide a critique of her day. She wrote:

I would implore our men, and especially our rising youth, to flee from the gambling board and the dance hall; for we are poor and have no money to throw away. I do not consider dancing as criminal in itself, but it is astonishing to me that our fine young men are so blind to their own interest and future welfare of their children as to spend their hard earnings for this frivolous amusement; for it has been carried on among us to such an unbecoming extent that it has become absolutely disgusting. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful [Proverbs 27:6]." Had those men among us who had an opportunity, turned their attention as assiduously to mental and moral improvement as they have to gambling and dancing, I might have remained quietly at home and they stood contending in my place. But I forbear. Let our money, instead of being thrown away as heretofore; be appropriated for schools and seminaries of learning for our children and youth. We ought to follow the example of the whites in this respect. Nothing would raise our respectability, add to our peace and happiness, and reflect so much honor upon us, as to be ourselves promoters of temperance, and the supporters, as far as we are able, of useful and scientific knowledge. The rays of light and knowledge have been hid from our view; we have been taught to consider ourselves as scarce superior to the brute creation; and we have performed the most laborious part of American drudgery. Had we as a people received one-half the early advantages the whites have received, I would defy the government of these United States to deprive us any longer of our rights. (Richardson, pp. 59-61)

Stewart chastised men of the African-American race, suggesting that if the men of the African-American race had not thrown away their money on gambling boards and in dance halls, the African-American race might be in a better state. Appalled that the men were so blinded that they were unable to recognize that they were their own worst enemy,

Stewart felt that she might have been able to have a life like that of her white counterparts if the men had done their part. Therefore, she stated that the African-American race should move on, and use the monies available for schools and seminaries to educate their youth and children.

Joyce Ladner (1971) described the image of the Black woman as one of “obstinate strength and survival (10).” Maria Stewart’s life was certainly one of obstinate strength and survival. This is one of the many qualities evident in her writings and speeches. Stewart had no problem addressing white women, white men, Black men, and Black women of her day. For she felt that God had given her authority to speak on behalf of the people of her race as well as others who had been oppressed. Maria Stewart’s Christian identity, spiritual life, and radical means for achieving justice are what set her apart from other women of the nineteenth century. This was her way of surviving.

In Stewart’s “Farewell Address” to her friends in the city of Boston, delivered on September 21, 1833, she urged Black women to strike out on their own, pursuing education as a means of fulfilling their individual and collective destinies. Her emphasis on Black women’s formal education was not rooted solely in images of feminine cultural refinement; it was a matter of the greatest political urgency. Hers is the earliest recorded call to Black women to take up what would become one of the great traditions in their social and political history: their pioneering work as teachers, founders of schools, and innovators in many areas of Black education. Freedom, literacy, and religion, as Loewenberg and Bogin (1977) remarked in their study of nineteenth century women, were “a trinity of interlacing values” (p. 34).

Black women were, in the Boston of Stewart's day, subject to a domestic double standard. They were admonished by church and society to consider the home their proper sphere, to revere men, to demonstrate an appropriate subservience, all of which suggested a life of protected dependency. Stewart's Farewell address was delivered in late 1833 (when she decided to leave the public arena), the year in which Prudence Crandall²⁶ was harassed, arrested, and ultimately forced to close her Canterbury, Connecticut, school, because she had enrolled a young Black woman as a student. The speech contains Stewart's fullest discussion of the right of women to aspire to the highest positions of responsibility and authority in both religious and public spheres:

What if I am a woman; is not the God of ancient times the God of these modern days? Did he not raise up Deborah, to be a mother, and a judge in Israel? Did not Queen Esther save the lives of the Jews? And Mary Magdalene first declare the resurrection of Christ from the dead? (Richardson, 1987, p. 22)

By drawing on the Old and New Testaments, Stewart placed herself in a line of women activists given divine sanction: "If such women as are here described have once existed, be no longer astonished ... that God ... should raise up your own females... (Richardson, p. 23)."

²⁶Crandall, Prudence (1803-90), American teacher and reformer, born in Hopkinton, Rhode Island, of Quaker parentage. In 1831 she established a private school for girls in Canterbury, Connecticut. She admitted a Black girl into the school, thus arousing the violent opposition of her neighbors. She lost her white patrons, and in 1833 she decided to open a school exclusively for "young ladies and little misses of color." She received 15 or 20 Black pupils. Her neighbors, by boycott, insult, abuse, and enforcement of an obsolete vagrancy law, tried to close the school. Public meetings were called, petitions were circulated, and a few months later the "Black Law" of Connecticut was passed, forbidding anyone to set up or establish any school for education of nonresident Blacks or to instruct or teach in any such school without the consent of local authorities. For resisting this law she was arrested, imprisoned, and, in October 1833, convicted; in July 1834, the court of errors reversed the decision on a technicality. Soon afterward her house was attacked and partially destroyed, and she abandoned her project. The affair intensified the conflict between the abolitionist and anti-abolitionist elements."Crandall, Prudence"[Microsoft\(R\) Encarta](#). Copyright © 1995 Microsoft Corporation.

Maria Stewart's idealized vision of what her life and the lives of Black women might be, based on the ultimate union of religious faith and intellectual discipline, was stated as an explicit challenge first to the women in her audience and then to the men:

Why cannot a religious spirit animate us now? Why cannot we become divines and scholars ... What if such women as are here described should rise among our sable race? And it is not impossible... Brilliant wit will shine from whence it will ... ("Farewell Address," 1833).

Finally, Maria Stewart set the stage for many African-American women to follow. She used a variety of sophisticated rhetorical strategies. Stewart inherited "the sense of otherness, or the sense of the other that has arisen out of the Black [and female] experience" and that is "present when ... Black communities contemplate the meaning of America as a free society." (Morton, 1985, p.49) She did what she felt she had to do in order to usher African-Americans of the nineteenth century into the presence of God and into the war against racism and gender equity issues. She wrestled daily with racism, sexism, and classism. Her struggles represented a triple burden that only found solace in the word of God and the Jeremiadic tradition.

Stewart's complete group of prophetic works found comfort in the Jeremiadic tradition and radical obedience. It was through her own story that she enabled others to join in the battle and make a difference in nineteenth century America for African-Americans. However, the Jeremiad tradition is most prevalent in her writings. Through her narratives Stewart warns, prophesies, challenges and holds her audiences responsible for their actions or lack of action. Stewart never really claims to be called by God in her writings which is typical of most spiritual autobiographies. However, she feels that it is every Christian's responsibility to bring others to an understanding and knowledge of God. She wrote, "were I called upon I would willingly sacrifice my life for the cause of

God and my brethren” (Richardson, 1987, p. 29). Stewart utilized the Jeremiad in her writings because it allowed her to write without having to make reference to her life. The focus was on nineteenth century America not her race or gender. In this sense Stewart added new dimensions to the Jeremiad. Race and gender became part of the Jeremiad which was atypical for the Puritan Jeremiad. Stewart dealt with domesticity, individuals, family race and gender in her writings while the traditional Jeremiad focused on particular societal institutions around the world such as manhood, American identity, God’s plan and the American institutions as a whole. Douglas McKnight holds that “for the Puritans, the process of writing a jeremiad served several functions. In one sense it was a ritual, a thematic reminder to each individual, and to the community at large that moral action was the root of earthly existence.

Regardless of how Stewart gendered or racialized the Jeremiad, her writings participate in the nineteenth century African-American woman’s literary tradition and her writings can definitely be labeled Jeremiads.

CHAPTER 5

JULIA A. J. FOOTE: PROPHETIC WOMAN

A Brand Plucked From the Fire

Refused entrance to many pulpits, Julia Foote stands as a pioneer, a woman, an African-American, a preacher, a teacher and a writer. In “Christian Perfection,” Foote wrote:

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

And a whole gospel she did preach. She preached the gospels whenever and wherever she could. Foote’s labors as an itinerant minister led her to New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Canada and Baltimore. She could be heard spreading the gospel at camp meetings, in private homes, public gatherings, and various halls that had been secured for meetings and religious related events to “the spiritually disinherited heathen” (Douglas-Chin, 2001, p.36).

Julia Foote wrote her autobiography, *A Brand Plucked From the Fire, An Autobiographical Sketch by Mrs. Julia A. Foote*, in 1879. Her autobiography is organized according to her nineteenth century experiences which encompass thirty chapters. Foote’s autobiography begins with chapter one titled Birth and Parentage and ends with how to obtain sanctification. In this chapter I will draw heavily on Foote’s autobiography to provide a thorough analysis of the rhetorical strategies utilized in her texts.

The Plucking Begins

In 1823, twenty years after Maria Stewart was born, a little black girl named Julia Foote was born of a free father who was later enslaved as a child and a mother who was

enslaved at birth. She was born into an African Methodist Episcopal church family in Schenectady, New York. Foote's natural resistance may be deemed intergenerational. "The man who was known as her mother's master whipped her mother because she refused to submit herself to him sexually and then reported his conduct to her mistress" (Houchins, 1988, p. 9).

Her tormentor administered several lashes to her back and proceeded to use salt water to wash her. To further punish the young Black girl for rejecting his overtures, her whipper then let a week pass to allow the clothes to stick to her back. When the clothes were removed, her skin went with them, leaving her back raw and sore. Her mother was sold from master to master. Eventually, Julia's father was able to purchase himself, his wife and their first child (Haywood, 2003, p. 7).

According to Foote's autobiography, she remembers having no distinct religious impressions until around the age of eight. At a church meeting, she remembers being asked by one of the church members to pray. She was so afraid that she immediately fell to her knees and said, "Now I lay me down to sleep" (Houchins, 9). After the minister left, her mother told her that the minister was not God, but that it was important that she say her prayers if she wanted to go to heaven. Foote was excited by this but really did not know how to pray. It was not until a white woman came to her home to sew, that Foote learned the Lord's Prayer. "After learning the Lord's Prayer, Foote was overjoyed. She felt that it was at this moment that she was converted" (Andrews, 1986, p. 169).

Although Foote learned how to say her prayers, she still did not know how to read. Her father was the only one in her family who had learned piecemeal, a small amount of knowledge where and when he could. There were no schools for colored children during her day. However, Foote asked her father to teach her what he knew. Therefore, he began to teach her the alphabet. Julia Foote was deprived of the education

which her white counterparts enjoyed and in which they took part. Foote believed that receiving little to no education was her sole excuse for not proving as faithful to God as she should have done (Houchins, 1988, p. 6 in *Slave Narratives*).

At the age of ten, Foote was sent by her parents to live with an old and influential family in the country by the name of Prime, because the Prime family could give her an education. By living with the Primes, she was privileged to attend a country school. While attending this school, Foote witnessed the public hanging of her first teacher, Mr. Van Paten. Mr. Paten murdered his fiancée's best friend for speaking out against their marriage. His fiancée's best friend had said that she felt that Mr. Paten "was not very smart, and she did not see why this young lady should wish to marry him (Brand, 21)." Enraged by the remark, Mr. Paten went to the lady's house, killed her in front of her five children, and then told her husband what he had done. The community held a public hanging, a macabre event which made a lasting impression on Foote. This event is probably what led Foote at a later date to speak against capital punishment.

Eventually, Foote's parents moved to Albany where they found and joined an African Methodist church. She and her family attended services regularly. Upon moving to Albany, the responsibility of caring for her four younger siblings was thrust upon her, for she had become large in stature. Having grown older, Foote began to taste something of the worldly pleasures that might entice the attention of a young girl. She became somewhat rebellious and began sneaking off to parties and even the theater. Her mother soon found out and punished her. There were times Foote wanted to serve God, but the ways of the world had become a greater influence on her thoughts and actions. While attending a quilting party, Foote decided to dance with an old fiddler. During her dance,

she fell to the floor. Everyone crowded around her to see if Julia was unharmed. The young girl told them that she was not ill, but that it was wrong for her to dance. They laughed and called her a “little Methodist fool,” and urged her to try again. She tried again and immediately she began to hear a voice crying out “Repent! Repent!” After falling to the floor a second time, Foote sank into a nearby seat. The crowd did not laugh this time, and the dance broke up. Foote said, “Thus was I again plucked as a brand from the burning” (Andrews, 78). After this incident, Foote was converted. She spent many days and nights in “an agony of prayer, asking God to have mercy on her” (Andrews, 179). She had once again been saved from the sinful ills of society.

Later, Julia’s mother encouraged her to attend another party. Julia did not want to go, but her mother insisted. Foote attended the party. She said, “So I went to the party. There I laughed and sang, and engaged all the sports of the evening, and soon my conviction for sin wore away, and foolish amusements took its place” (Andrews, p.179). Foote continued by saying, “Mothers you know not what you do when you urge your daughter to go to parties to make her more cheerful. You may even be causing the eternal destruction of that daughter. God help you mothers, to do right.” (Andrews, p. 179) By these words, Foote warns and attempts to instruct mothers about the consequences of their actions.

The Early Years (Birth and Parentage)

“Being the daughter of former slaves who espoused a strong belief in Christianity, Julia learned important lessons about the fruits of slavery through Methodism. The lessons prepared Julia to preach a social gospel” (Andrews, 1986, p. 9). As noted earlier, Julia’s parents could not send her to a Schenectady school, so they were

obliged to place her in service with the Prime family, where the family's influence created an opportunity for her to attend a country school outside of the city. While living with and working for the family, the young girl studied the Bible faithfully, applying herself to the reading of the sacred book. "Although Julia's religious devotion inspired a great yearning in her for education, racial prejudice and economic necessity restricted her opportunities, forcing her to become an autodidact" (Andrews, 1986, p.9) Foote had to teach herself many of the things that she needed to know because she could not afford to attend school and the many prejudices that existed during the nineteenth century may it even more difficult for Julia to receive a formal education.

Julia married George Foote at the age of eighteen, who was a sailor. Julia and George moved to Boston, Massachusetts, where Julia joined the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. She immediately began to proclaim the wonders of sanctification to others in the church. Her husband objected to her activities and threatened to send her back to her parents if she did not desist. Julia Foote challenged the gender conventions of the nineteenth century by proclaiming that she had been called by God to preach. She felt that she had been authored by God to preach and teach the ways of the Lord. Therefore in Foote's mind, she was neither radical nor unconventional, but simply being obedient to the will of God.

Prophetic Works and Sermons

As noted earlier Julia A. Foote wrote her autobiography *A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch* in 1879. It was printed by W.F. Schneider in Cleveland, Ohio. However, twenty-eight years prior to the writing of her autobiography she wrote the first of two sermons, "A 'threshing' sermon which was delivered in 1851 in

Detroit Michigan at the behest of a prominent man in the community, a self proclaimed sinner concerned about saving his soul” (Collier-Thomas, 1998, p. 60) Foote wrote this sermon drawing on text from Micah 4:13, Joel 2:28-29, Isaiah 23:18, and Revelation 12:11.

In 1710 B.C., corn was threshed among the Orientals by means of oxen or horses, which were driven round an area filled with loose sheaves. By their continued tramping the corn was separated from the straw. That this might be done the more effectually, the text promised an addition to the natural horny substance on the feet of these animals, by making the horn iron and the hoof brass. Corn is not threshed in this manner by us, but by means of flails, so that I feel I am doing no injury to the sentiment of the text by changing a few of the terms into which are the most familiar to us now. The passage portrays the Gospel times, though in a more restricted sense it applies to the preachers of the word. Yet it has a direct reference to all God’s people, who were and are commanded to arise and thresh. Glory to Jesus! Now is this prophecy fulfilled (Joel 2:28-29). They are also commanded to go to God, who alone is able to qualify them for their labors by making their horns iron and their hoofs brass. The Lord was desirous of imparting stability and perpetuity to his own divine work, by granting supernatural aid to the faithful that they might perform for him those services for which their own feeble and unassisted powers were totally inadequate. More than this, it is encouraging to the saints to know that they are provided with weapons both offensive and defensive. (Collier-Thomas, 1998, p. 64)

Here we can see Foote calling on all people to thresh out their sins and the sins of others. Her sermon suggests that we are all called to do the will of God and if you lack anything God will provide you with whatever you need in order work in service for God. God provides weapons for His people, offensively and defensively. According to Foote all mankind should “Arise and thresh.”

Fifteen years after the writing of her autobiography, Foote wrote her second sermon titled, Christian Perfection which was published in the Star of Zion in 1894. “It expressed Foote’s belief that perfection a holy tenet was misunderstood and had become

unpopular among Christians. She argues that the use of the perfection and the practice of Christian perfectionism suffered greatly because of the beliefs and practices of various groups” (Collier-Thomas, 1998, p. 62). Foote exhorted:

Dear Editor of the Star: Because I have but one talent I don't see why I should give it to your contributors that have ten. The Lord helping me I shall use it in offering a few thoughts on the all important subject of "Christian perfection," etc. (Matthew 5:48) "If a minister were faithful in speaking the truth in these days, and in denouncing sin as Christ was in His day, he would sacrifice his life" – Dr. Parker, London, Eng[land]. The duty of a true preacher: - "Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col.1:28). Every man's work shall be made to manifest, for the day shall declare it because it shall be realized by fire and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3:13). The great object of the ministry of the Apostle Paul was to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; this master purpose was the secret of his wonderful success. I know it is said [that] the gospel is not adapted to the nineteenth century; men are different now from what they were. Yes, they may be different externally but essentially they are the same. What man was, man is, what man needed he needs still. (Collier-Thomas, 1998, p. 66)

Rhetorical Strategies

Julia Foote employs several rhetorical strategies throughout her texts. Conversion rhetoric and resistance rhetoric are prevalent in her autobiography and sermons. The resistance rhetoric which emerges from the pages of her texts is aligned with what Joycelyn Moody calls a theology of defiance. Moody (2001) holds that Julia Foote's theology "follows that of her nineteenth century holy fore-mother's in that it espouses black women's defiance against sin, generally manifest as verbal protest. Foote is very specific about her theology: African-American women, she insists, must be careful that in fighting oppression and refusing to submit to its diverse and powerful forces they do not

unwittingly forsake God” (p.128). Foote utilizes this theology of defiance throughout her text. Her defiance in the opinion of this author is resistance. She is resistant to the racist and sexist ideologies of her day. Therefore, for the purpose of this study I will refer to her theology of defiance as resistance rhetoric.

Foote’s use of conversion rhetoric seems to be an attempt to erase societal identity constructs that have been created for black women. Here I will examine Foote’s use of conversion rhetoric, and resistance rhetoric throughout her text.

I Know I Been Changed: The Conversion of Julia Foote and Conversion Rhetoric

Julia Foote immediately begins to deal with her conversion experience in her text. The title of her text, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire*, readily suggests that she was on her way down a broad road of destruction but she was plucked from the fire and changed/converted by God. It seems that she is saying she became a new creature in Christ.

As one continues to read the narrative of Julia Foote, it becomes evident how important it was for her to share and describe her conversion experience. Foote immediately begins to prepare the reader for her conversion as she builds her story from childhood to adulthood. She states numerous times throughout her work, that she was like a *brand plucked from the fire*. In her book *Prophesying Daughters*, Chanta Haywood (2003) calls the phrase *conversion rhetoric*. Such rhetoric suggests that she endured numerous trials and tribulations on her journey and she had become a new creature in Christ. William Andrews (1986) supports this notion of a new creature in his book *Sisters of the Spirit*: Andrews writes: “After conversion the self is transformed into a ‘new creature’ free from the bondage of sin and fit for service as an instrument of the divine

will” (13). It is made clear in Foote’s narrative that such a conversion is powerful, empowering, and can only come from God. Andrew further holds that this conversion spurred “a very real sense of freedom for a prior ‘self’ and a growing awareness of unrealized, unexploited powers within” (12).

Foote provides a step-by-step analysis of her life, describing what led to her conversion and how she had accepted the notion that women could not or should not be called by God to preach. Her autobiography is written in a manner that helps the lost and unsanctified to see that their lives can be changed. In order to do God’s will, one must give up the worldly life and take up his/her cross daily to follow Christ. Foote understood her calling, but faced great opposition in trying to help others understand that calling. Women of the nineteenth century were not supposed to preach. They were to take on subservient roles. Chanta Haywood (2003) explores Julia Foote’s use of conversion rhetoric in the context of reader distrust. She explores the use of conversion as a rhetorical device to break down and challenge nineteenth century ideologies around race and gender. William Andrews (1986) maintains that, “conversion created a very real sense of freedom for a prior self and a growing awareness of unrealized, unexploited powers within. He continues by stating that, “After conversion the self is transformed into a ‘new creature’ free from the bondage of sin and fit for service as an instrument of the divine will” (p.13)

It seems that African-American women preachers felt that by discussing their conversion experiences, they would be taken seriously as legitimate convertees in the eyes of their white counterparts, since women, more specifically African-American women, were not allowed to enter the religious world as preachers. T. K. Doty, editor of

the *Christian Harvester* newspaper, prefaced Julia Foote's autobiography with a letter that stated Foote was guilty of three crimes:

1. She was guilty of color.
2. She was guilty of womanhood.
3. She was guilty of being an evangelist.

Foote was no doubt guilty as charged. However, Doty's letter provided the authenticity needed to remove any doubt the reader might have had. Doty was a prominent member of the Cleveland, Ohio community and put herself, her name, and reputation on the line by "testifying to the veracity of the black writer's story." (Haywood, 2003, p. 37)

"Black women of the nineteenth century searched for viable ways in which to have their voices heard. These women sought to write themselves into history, "[k]nowing that they could not assume an equal relationship with the average white American reader, they set about writing their life stories that would somehow prove that they qualified as the moral, spiritual or intellectual peers of whites" (Andrews, 1986, p. 2).

Haywood noted that, "Although slavery had ended when Foote was writing her narrative, blacks were still as Doty states, "under the bondage of society" (p. 38).

Julia Foote urged the church to embrace women like her. However, society refused to acknowledge women evangelists. Therefore, women like Foote began to resist the traditionally rigid gender practices of Christianity and the Black church. Women were not permitted, nor were they considered to have the intellect, fervor and authority to preach the Gospel. Unrelentingly, Foote argued for the rights of women. She pleaded with those in power to hear her arguments, but these individuals ignored her. Foote wrote:

Thirty years ago there could scarcely a person be found, in the churches, to sympathize with anyone who talked of Holiness. But, in my simplicity, I did think that a body of Christian ministers would understand my case and judge

righteously. I was, however, disappointed. It is no little thing to feel that every man's hand is against us and ours against every man, as seemed to be the case with me at this time; yet how precious, if Jesus but be with us. In this severe trial I had constant access to God, and a clear consciousness that he heard me; yet I did not seem to have that plenitude of the spirit that I had before. Though I did not wish to pain anyone, neither could I please anyone only as I was led by the Holy Spirit. I was, as never before, that the best men were liable to err, and that the only safe way was to fall on Christ even though censure and reproach fell upon me for obeying His voice. Man's opinion weighed nothing for me, for my commission was from heaven and my reward was with the Most High. We are sometimes told that if a woman pretends to a Divine call, and thereon grounds the right to plead the cause of a crucified Redeemer in public, she will be believed when she shows credentials from heaven; that is, when she works a miracle. If it be necessary to prove one's right to preach the Gospel, I ask of my brethren to show me their credentials, or I can not believe in the propriety of their ministry. But the Bible puts an end to this strife when it says: "There is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus." Phillip had four daughters that prophesied, or preached. Paul called Priscilla, as well as Aquila, his "helper," or, as in the Greek, his "fellow laborer." Rom. XV: 3; 2, Cor. VIII: 23; Phil. II: 5I; Thess. III: 2. When Paul said, "Help those women who labor with me in the Gospel" he certainly meant that they did more than to pour out tea. In the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians Paul gives directions, to men and women, how they should appear when they prophesy or pray in public assemblies; and he defines prophesying to be speaking to edification, exhortation, and comfort. I may further remark that the conduct of holy women is recorded in scripture, as an example to others of their sex. And in the early ages of Christianity many women were happy and glorious in martyrdom. How, nobly, how heroically, too, in later ages, have women suffered persecution and death for the name of the Lord Jesus. In looking over these facts, I could see no miracle wrought for those women more than in myself. Though, opposed, I went forth laboring for God, and He owned and blessed my labors, and has done so wherever I have been until this day. And while I walk obediently, I know He will, though hell may rage and vent its spite. (Andrews, 1986, p.209)

Foote argued, urged, and pled with Christian ministers and others alike to hear her plea.

Regardless of her eloquent and persuasive plea, Foote still received no mercy or justice in her quest to be recognized as a legitimate evangelist of the nineteenth century.

The use of conversion rhetoric by Foote as a rhetorical strategy was used to convince people of the nineteenth century that she was truly authentic and that she was actually authorized to speak on behalf of God. Foote, like many other women of her day

writing autobiography used the conversion experience of Paul (Saul of Tarsus) as an example paralleled with her own conversion experience. By doing this Foote was trying to prove that she like Paul had been converted by God and was not authorized to do His will and to spread the word of God to others. Paul's story validated Foote's story. However, it is quite interesting how Foote uses Paul's story. Is the use of Paul's story a means to an end? It seems that she is appropriating and utilizing the conversion experience of Paul to advance her own social/political agenda which was the case for many women of the nineteenth century. Even after aligning her conversion experience with that of Paul she continues to identify herself as '*Brand plucked from the fire,*' which suggests that she too had traveled the road to Damascus, the road less traveled.

The Road to Damascus: "The Road Less Traveled"

As stated earlier, to situate her story within the African-American literary tradition, and to provide authentication of her narrative, Julia Foote, much like Jarena Lee, used the biblical story of Paul. There is no person living or dead, other than Jesus Himself, who shaped the history of Christianity as the Apostle Paul shaped it. Paul's personal encounter with Jesus changed his life. Until his conversion, little had been done about carrying the gospel to non-Jews. Paul undertook a missionary journey, the first of three that he undertook to carry the gospel across the Mediterranean Sea to the Roman Empire. Paul worked hard to convince the Jews that Gentiles were acceptable to God, but he spent even more time convincing the Gentiles that they also were acceptable to God. The lives Paul touched were changed and challenged by meeting Christ through Paul's preaching. Paul became a light in a dark world.

When considering the narrative and religious life of Julia Foote, one cannot help but see how her rhetoric is closely aligned with the life and work of Paul. Paul was transformed by God from persecutor of Christians to a preacher for Christ. Foote was converted and changed by God from a “life of vanities” and one of opposition to women preachers to that of a preacher for Christ. God brought about a change in her life that caused her to go out and share the word of God with others. She started a new life on the battlefield for the Lord.

Paul preached for Christ throughout the Roman Empire on three missionary journeys while meeting much opposition. Foote traveled from Ohio to Canada, to Boston, and on to New York on numerous journeys while meeting much opposition. As Paul neared Damascus²⁷ on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. “He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Foote was converted at the age of fifteen; her experience resembles that of Paul’s.

In another instance, Julia had attended a quarterly meeting on a Sunday evening. During the meeting, the minister preached with great force and power. Foote says, “I beheld my lost condition as I never had done before. Something within me kept saying ‘Such a sinner as you are can never sing that new song.’ No tongue can tell the agony I suffered. I fell to the floor, unconscious, and was carried home.” (Andrews, 180) According to Andrews (1986), after she was carried home, several people watched over Foote, prayed and sang [Foote wrote]:

²⁷ Damascus was a key commercial city that was located about 175 miles northeast of Jerusalem in the Roman province of Syria. Several trade routes linked Damascus to other cities throughout the Roman world.

I did not recognize anyone, but seemed to be walking in the dark, followed by someone who kept saying, ‘Such a sinner as you are can never sing that new song.’ Every converted man and woman can imagine what my feelings were. I thought God was driving me on to hell. In great terror I cried: ‘Lord, have mercy on me, a poor sinner!’ That which had been crying in my ears ceased at once, and a ray of light flashed across my eyes, accompanied by a sound of far distant singing: the light grew brighter and brighter, and the singing more distinct, and soon I caught the words: ‘this is the new song—redeemed, redeemed!’ I at once sprang from the bed where I had been lying for twenty hours, without meat or drink, and commenced singing: ‘Redeemed, Redeemed! Glory! Glory!’ Such joy and peace as filled my heart, when I felt that I was redeemed and could sing the new song. Thus was I wonderfully saved from eternal burning (Andrews, p. 180).

Foote’s conversion echoed that of the Apostle Paul. Interestingly, many questioned Paul’s conversion and call to preach. According to Acts 9:20-21: “At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the son of God. All those who heard him were astonished and asked, ‘Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who called on his name?’” The people remembered Paul as the persecutor he once was. In a matter of speaking, Foote also had been convicted, sentenced to a life sentence of exclusion, through silence and unwarranted distrust by her readers because she was black, a woman, and an evangelist. To aligning her life with that of Paul’s represents a radical and sophisticated rhetorical strategy. Foote’s use of numerous sophisticated rhetorical strategies is evident as she utilizes the story of Paul’s conversion to validate her story.

Foote’s autobiography tends to read like a sermon. In his book *Preacher Woman sings the Blues*, Richard Douglass-Chin (2001) held that “Foote transforms her 1879 spiritual narrative into a political and revolutionary sermon in which Foote describes how as a rebellious young black woman, she was saved (p. 121). “ In Cornel West’s opinion, by so doing, Foote engages in an integral move for African-American survival: reclaiming a sense of black community, power, body, and self, a politics of conversion:

Like alcoholism and drug addiction, nihilism is a disease of the soul. It can never be completely cured, and there is always the possibility of relapse. But there is always a chance for conversion—a chance for people to believe that there is hope for the future and a meaning to struggle Any disease of the soul must be conquered by a turning of one’s soul. This turning is done by one’s own affirmation of one’s worth—an affirmation fueled by the concerns of others. This is why a love ethic must be at the center of a politics of conversion.²⁸

While empowering others, Foote too was empowered by her spirit and her call to do the will of God.

A Song-Filled Conversion

Not only does Foote use conversion rhetoric and resistance rhetoric but she utilizes song throughout her autobiography to support her sermon like narrative.

Although Foote’s narrative takes on the characteristics of traditional spiritual autobiography, yet she skillfully incorporates numerous rhetorical strategies to engage the minds, thoughts and ears of her audiences. In the above passage Foote uses a strategy that Richard Douglas-Chin (2001) calls lining:

Foote’s liberal use of music and song throughout her autobiography – in other words, “lining” reflects a practice that began when early white puritan deacons read out a line to be sung back by illiterate congregations. He also holds that it is important to note that lining is used to encourage the efforts of the minister in a climatic building of ministerial and congregational emotion. Thus, lining and call-and-response are used in a supportive manner, and the service becomes a kind of buoying of both preacher and black worshippers, a reenergizing that allows them all to return fortified to a society in which they must face opposition on a daily basis. (p. 130)

Foote embellished her autobiography with music and song. Foote’s conversion was filled with music and references to music:

The minister preached from the text: “And they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and...no man could learn that song but the hundred and

²⁸ Cornel West, “A Politics of Conversion,” in *Preacher Woman Sings the Blues*, Robert Douglas-Chin, p. 121.

forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.”...Something within me kept saying, “Such a sinner as you can never sing that new song.” No tongue can tell the agony I suffered...In great terror I cried: “Lord have mercy on me, a poor sinner!” The voice ... ceased at once, and a ray of light flashed across my eyes, accompanied by a sound of far distant singing; the light grew brighter and brighter, and the singing more distinct, and soon I caught the words: “This is the new song – redeemed, redeemed!”... Such joy and peace as filled my heart, when I felt that I was redeemed and could sing the new song. (Andrews, 1986, p.180)

Foote makes reference to songs and lines from songs and hymns throughout her text.

However, her chapter called My Conversion provides the greatest example of how Foote utilized song throughout her text. She wrote:

Several remained with me all night, singing, and praying. I did not recognize any one, but seemed to be walking in the dark, followed by some one who kept saying, “Such a sinner as you are can never sing that new song.” Every converted man and woman can imagine what my feelings were. I thought God was driving me on to hell. In great terror I cried: “Lord, have mercy on me, a poor sinner!” The voice which had been crying in my ears ceased at once, and a ray of light flashed across my eyes, accompanied by a sound of far distant singing; the light grew brighter and brighter, and the singing more distinct, and soon I caught the new words: “This is the new song – redeemed, redeemed!” I at once sprang from the bed where I had been lying for twenty hours, without meat or drink, and commenced singing: “Redeemed! Redeemed! glory! glory!” Such joy and peace as filled my heart, when I felt that I was redeemed and could sing the new song.

Foote not only utilized conversion rhetoric but she depended heavily upon resistance rhetoric.

Resistance Rhetoric

Through the words and life of a woman like Foote, one recognizes the risk takers, the survivors, those who were empowered and those who resisted the traditional hegemony that existed during the nineteenth century. Like many women of her day she, too, was spiritual. She espoused a prophetic pedagogy that spoke to all who dared listen.

She defied gender conventions of the nineteenth century by insisting that she had a right to preach. Resistance rhetoric demonstrates the writer's ability to resist in the midst of oppressive situations. The text itself is resistant in that it clearly details examples of resistance. As she traveled across the United States she found herself having to be even more resistant.

Resistant Journeys

Foote's ministry led her on a journey to numerous cities. Although many felt that her labor was in vain, she continued to work for God, but met much opposition. Foote pressed into her ministry, despite never-ending difficulties. There was no city that was totally tolerant of her claim that she was called by God. During her time in Philadelphia she wrote:

Had this opposition come from the world, it would have seemed as nothing. But coming, as it did, from those who had been much blessed—blessed with me—and who had once been friends of mine, it touched a tender spot; and had it not been for the precious blood of Jesus, I should have been lost (Andrews, 1986, p. 210).

The opposition that she met daily became overwhelming at times. It took its toll, especially when opposition arose from those she thought were her friends and confidants. However, she continued, resisting and refusing to allow anyone to halt her from doing the work of the Lord.

During her tenure in Philadelphia, Foote met three women, who like herself, also met much opposition from ministers. Committed to their work for the Lord, Foote and the three women began a series of meetings for the community. Foote considered these meetings as a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." In her autobiography, she notes that many people were converted and a few were even cleansed of their sins.

Six years had passed since Foote was home. When the evangelist returned to her father's house in Binghamton, New York, her parents were excited to see her. Foote wrote of the incident:

As my mother embraced me, she exclaimed: 'So you are a preacher, are you?' I replied: 'So they say.' 'Well, Julia,' said she, 'when I first heard that you were a preacher, I said that I would rather hear you were dead.' These words coming so unexpectedly from my mother filled me with anguish. Was I to meet opposition here, too? But my mother with streaming eyes, continued: 'My dear daughter, it is all past now. I have heard from those who have attended your meetings what the Lord has done for you, and I am satisfied' (Andrews, 1986, p. 212).

Foote remained in Binghamton for several months. She continued to labor for the Lord. She also continued to meet opposition, even as she labored. It would seem that the opposition would be at a minimum in her home, but there was to be no respite for Foote. In February of 1855, Foote departed Binghamton for Ithaca, New York. In that city as well, she immediately ran into opposition from an A.M.E. church trustee, who believed that women should not preach in the church. "Foote wrote: Beloved, the God we serve fights all our battles, and before I left that place the trustee was one of the most faithful at my meetings, and was very kind to assist me on my journey when I left Ithaca" (Andrews, 1986, p. 212).

Foote acknowledged that God fought her battles and allowed her to share his word with others through trust, faith, and patience. For Foote, this confirmed that her preaching and teaching was authored by God, because He opened doors and allowed her to speak. She felt no need for the approval of others, for she knew that she was truly a soldier in the army of the Lord.

Silent Resistance

This author found it interesting that as Foote journeyed from place to place, that she never argued, fussed, made a scene or became involved in any altercations. When those in power attempted to justify themselves through the Bible, she gave no reply. How did Foote remain so calm and peaceful, when many became irate with her and attempted to deny her the opportunity to share and teach God's word? On one occasion, Foote arose to speak, when one of the ministers abruptly interrupted her. She spoke only a few words and then left. Foote's undaunted response was "The weapons with which I fight are not carnal, and, if I go to a place and am invited to use the weapons God has given me, I must use them to His glory" (Andrews, 1986, p. 214). While it is fairly certain that the evangelist was disappointed each time incidents like this occurred, she did not allow impediments to stop her work for the Lord. She simply utilized other avenues to share God's word. Although she resisted, she resisted silently. Quiet resistance, rather than irate and violent reaction, served Foote well. This response seems to have yielded a more positive impact on her ministry and those in opposition. However, Foote's responses and reactions may be considered bold, because although there was no personal reaction to the opposition, she continued staunchly down a path that was considered off limits to women of the nineteenth century.

The spiritual concept of using the weapons with which God empowered her was powerful and prophetic. She utilized the weapons of God in her quest to preach and to teach. That provides the key to why Foote remained so calm when she met opposition. God gave her a "peace that passes all understanding."²⁹ Here again, one views Foote using wisdom and knowledge from the Bible to combat discrimination and oppression,

²⁹ This phrase comes from a scripture in Philippians 4:4-7

with a reaction to persecution quite similar to Paul's reaction when he was imprisoned.³⁰ The holy scriptures note that Paul encouraged the Philippian church to be joyful and to remain in God's word. Foote understood this lesson and lived it through her ministry, realizing that one's inner attitude need not reflect one's outward circumstances. Therefore, Foote remained hopeful and joyful, because she knew that no matter what happened to her, Jesus Christ was with her. Foote also realized that the peace she experienced was a peace that the world could not understand nor provide. Foote realized that spiritual peace came from absence of conflict and faith in God. There was no need for conflict, because true peace for Foote came from cognition that God was in control and that He would fight all of her battles.

Resistant Education

After Foote's conversion, she felt the need to be sanctified.³¹ However, her church members, parents, and others told her that sanctification was reserved for the old. Julia met much opposition as she sought to ground herself in her God. A minister told her that many church members disapproved of her actions. He said that she was too young to be acting in such a manner. Foote ignored their complaints and resisted their advice and continued to read the Bible at every spare moment: "The more my besetting sin troubled me, the more anxious I became for an education and the more she resisted. I believed that if I were educated, God would make me understand what I needed" (Andrews, 1986, p.184).

Because Foote was not an educated woman, she pleaded with God to enhance and quicken her mental faculties. "She was a poor reader and a poor writer" (Andrews p.

³¹ sanctified – freed from sin, holy and seeking Christian perfection.

183). Foote felt that if she were educated, she could do greater work for the Lord. Here it seems clear that Foote felt that education was key and critical to one's ability to serve God. Her abilities, she felt, were limited because she lacked education. Therefore, she credits the Holy Spirit with helping her wonderfully to understand God's precious word. It was the Holy Spirit that taught her so that she could teach others the ways of the Lord. Although Foote espoused a prophetic pedagogy through her narratives, she lacked the educational foundation needed to take her prophetic pedagogy to a higher plateau. The lack caused Foote to lean and depend on the Holy Spirit to elevate her to a higher calling in preaching God's word.

Resisting a Call to Preach, a Call to Teach

Foote denied her religious calling for some time, like Maria Stewart, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw and other women preachers of the nineteenth century, who denied that they had been called by God. These Black women preachers were afraid and felt unworthy to preach and teach God's word. According to Andrews (1986) and by Foote's writing:

When called of God, on a particular occasion, to a definite work, I said, "No Lord, not me." Day by day I was more impressed that God would have me work in his vineyard. I thought it could not be that I was called to preach—I so weak and ignorant. (p. 200)

Ironically, Julia Foote had been opposed to women preachers:

I had always been opposed to the preaching of women, and had spoken against it, though I acknowledge, without foundation. This rose before me like a mountain and when I thought of the difficulties they had to encounter, both from professors, and non-professors, I shrank back and cried, 'Lord, I cannot go!' (p.201)

Foote's personal opposition to the preaching of women presented even greater difficulties and struggles for her as she wrestled with accepting or rejecting her calling. Julia Foote toiled with the idea of accepting the call to preach for nearly two months. She tells how

God sent his angel with a message for her: “‘You have I chosen to go in my name and warn the people of their sins.’ Foote replied, ‘I will go, Lord’ (Andrews, et al., p. 202) Foote experienced great joy and peace after accepting her call to preach, but it took many visions, dreams, and internal struggles before Foote accepted that call. Still, there was much opposition. The church threatened to have her excommunicated, including anyone else who listened to her, but Foote refused to let this keep her from doing her Master’s will. She said, ‘I told them my business was with the Lord and wherever I found a door opened I intended to go in and work for my master’ (Andrews, 1986, p. 205) The opposition that Foote encountered in teaching and preaching God’s word was overwhelming, but she continued on the battlefield for the Lord because she had been empowered by God. Foote resisted by (a) ignoring those that thought women had no right to preach, by (b) meeting the opposition with calm and peace, and by (c) finding other places to hold her meetings. Her resistance led her to a mode of survival that came from standing on God’s word, utilizing his word and her spirituality as the foundation and guiding force for preaching and teaching the lost and unsanctified.

In the quest to resist traditional hegemonic practices, Foote spoke of women in the gospel as examples. She utilized Joel II: 28, 29³² to support her teaching that women were counted among those who continued in prayer and supplication, waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. When her brethren challenged her to show her credentials from heaven for her ministry, she challenged the brethren likewise to show their credentials from heaven for one to believe the propriety of their ministry. Foote believed

³² Joel 11: 28, 29 – “And afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young me will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days (Life Application Study Bible – New International Version)

that women and men are classed together; if it is necessary for women to prove their right to preach the gospel, then men ought to be obliged to do the same

Continual Resistance

Although Foote was continually opposed in her preaching, her journey for the Lord did not end. She continued to labor and travel for God, voicing her assuredness in the holy promise: “Though opposed, I went forth laboring for God, and he owned and blessed my labors, and has done so wherever I have been until this day. And while I walk obediently, I know he will, though hell may rage and vent its spite” (Andrews, p. 209).

While preaching in Cincinnati, Ohio, Foote learned of her husband’s death. This almost caused Foote to sink into a debilitating depression. However, she called on God who sustained her and enabled her to say: ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him’ (Job 13:15). Foote returned home to Boston to take care of the funeral arrangements. After completing the arrangements, she went to Albany where her sister lived and held meetings in that city.

From March 1845 until June 1851, Foote continued to labor for God. During these years, she traveled to the cities of Rochester, Utica, Schenectady, Albany, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Boston, Providence, New York, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Columbus, and Chillicothe, Canada, and crossed the Alleghany Mountains for a second time in 1850. On her second crossing of the Alleghany mountains, Foote became desperately ill. Foote remained ill for three weeks, but after a few months of recuperation, was able to resume her labors:

I crossed the Alleghany mountains the second time. I was very sick on the journey, and on arriving in Pittsburgh, was not able to sit up. Finding me in a raging fever, my friends called in a physician, and, as I continued to grow worse, another one. For three weeks my life was despaired of; and finally, on beginning

to recover, it was many months before I felt quite well. In this severe affliction, grace wonderfully sustained me. Bless the Lord! (Andrews, p. 221)

Foote continued to meet fierce opposition as she continued her travels. In 1851, she was invited to speak in the White Methodist church. She wrote:

The white Methodists invited me to speak for them, but did not want the colored people to attend the meeting. I would not agree to any such arrangement, and, therefore, I did not speak for them. Prejudice had closed the door of their sanctuary against the colored people of the place, virtually saying: 'The Gospel shall not be free to all.' Our benign Master and Saviour said, 'Go, preach my Gospel to all'³³ (Andrews, p. 222).

Foote yearned for the word of God to be heard by all. She wanted all people, regardless of color, race or creed, to participate in her meetings, for she believed that the God she served was the God of all mankind and that His word was not created for just a few.

Therefore, she continued to toil and labor until the white Methodists in Zanesville, Ohio, agreed to open their doors to colored people for the first time. As a result, people were turned away each night because the meeting place had become so crowded—a major feat. Doors seemed to be opening more and more as people seemingly became more tolerant of women evangelists. Foote felt that things were changing. She wrote:

Dear sisters, who are in the evangelistic work now, you may think you have hard times; but let me tell you, I feel that the lion and the lamb are lying down together, as compared with the state of things twenty-five or thirty years ago. Yes, yes; our God is marching on. Glory to His name! (Andrews, p. 214)

Julia Foote realized that there were many more difficulties to be faced as a female evangelist in the nineteenth century, but she also realized that trends were changing as the overall attitude of the church leaders shifted in a positive direction and became more progressive. She knew that in the midst of it all, her God was causing the hearts of man to gradually embrace women in the ministry.

³³ Mark 16:15 – He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” (Life Application Study Bible – New International Version)

A Word to My Christian Sisters – A Lesson in Resistance

Julia Foote sought to teach, educate, and train the people around her about the ways of the Lord. She was a teacher, a preacher, and an agent of change. She knew that religious education and training were not only key to her survival, but also key to the survival of others of the Black race during the nineteenth century.

Foote also realized that in order to survive and live during the nineteenth century an individual would have to resist. She specifically addressed her dear sisters on what they could and could not accept.

She wrote:

Dear sisters: I would that I could tell you a hundredth part of what God has revealed to me of his glory, especially on that, never-to-be-forgotten night when I received my high and holy calling. Sisters, shall not you and I unite with the heavenly host in the grand chorus? If so, you will not let what man say or do, keep you from doing the will of the Lord or using the gifts you have for the good of others. How much easier to bear the reproach of men than to live at a distance from God. Be not kept in bondage by those who say, “We suffer not a woman to teach,” thus quoting Paul’s words,³⁴ but not rightly applying them (Andrews, p. 227).

She spoke to her dear sisters concerning their steadfastness in the Lord. She encouraged them not to give in to the ways and words of the world. Foote felt that by embracing what the world has to say about women teaching, rather than what God has to say, causes women to remain in bondage. She literally begged her dear sisters not to remain in or accept bondage as their plight. Foote suggested that her sisters in the Lord resist by standing up, fighting for their rights, and teaching as God has instructed them to do.

³⁴ 1 Cor. 14:34 – “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says” (Life Application Study Bible – New International Version).

Throughout Foote's autobiography, the words *teach* or *teaching* may be found numerous times. Clearly, Foote may be deemed a teacher of the 19th century, since women were most often referred to as teachers, rather than preachers. Her strategies and methods for teaching the people of the nineteenth century were aligned with the religious curriculum that she fought to teach. Foote practiced what she preached. She was able to apply what she had learned in her own life, and she struggled to help others do the same.

Finally, by strength of application, Foote assessed whether or not the religious curriculum (God's word) she taught was actually effective. She found it to be quite effective, because she was teaching her students that which she had experienced. Foote knew her subject and knew it well, aligning daily activities with her goals and objectives. Her pupils were not only her dear sisters, but Christians of all races and gender. Foote's pupils only needed to listen to her pedagogy, as she wrote:

Dear Christians, is not the low state of pure religion among all the churches the result of this worldly-mindedness? There is much outward show; and doth not this outward show portend the sore judgments of God to be executed upon the ministers and ministers? Malachi II: 7 says: 'The priest's lips should keep knowledge,' etc. But it is a lamentable fact that too many priests' lips speak vanity. Many profess to teach, but few are able to feed the lambs, while the sheep are dying for lack of nourishment and the true knowledge of salvation' (Andrews, 1986, p.231).

Foote suggested that there are false prophets teaching and preaching God's word. She elaborated, indicating that although the priests (pastors) were supposedly teaching, the flocks (people of their congregations) shepherded by the priests lacked spiritual food (knowledge). The pastors were unable to provide their congregations with the spiritual nourishment needed because the pastors had failed to tell the parishioners the true will of God. Foote continues:

The priests' office being to stand between God and the people, they ought to know the mind of God toward his people—what the acceptable and perfect will of God is. Under the law, it was required that the priests should be without blemish—having the whole of the inward and outward man as complete, uniform and consistent as it was possible to be under that dispensation; thereby showing the great purity that is required by God in all those who approach near unto him (Andrews, 1986, p. 231).

According to Foote's comments, every priest has a charge to keep as the mediator between God and man. Therefore, every priest who has accepted that charge should know the will and mind of God. All priests should seek perfection, give reverence, glorify God and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Foote believes that those who come into the presence of God should humble themselves and worship Him in the beauty of His holiness. Foote continued in writing:

Do not misunderstand me. I am not teaching absolute perfection, for that belongs to God alone. Nor do I mean a state of angelic or Adamic perfection, but Christian perfection – an extinction of every temper contrary to love. Beloved reader, remember that you cannot commit sin and be a Christian, for 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.'³⁵ If you are regenerated, sin does not reign in your mortal body; but if you are sanctified, sin does not exist in you. The sole ground of our perfect peace from all the carnal mind is by the blood of Jesus, for he is our peace, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood (Andrews, 1986, p. 232).

Foote's concluding comments suggested that all should seek Christian perfection. She actually provided detailed instructions in her lesson on how to achieve this Christian perfection. Foote told the reader that one cannot commit sin and be a Christian. It seems that she does not want the reader to misunderstand or misinterpret what she is saying. She wants the reader to be clearly instructed on what one can and cannot do as a Christian. Her lessons were scripture based and deeply rooted in a pedagogy that was both prophetic and powerful for all who dared listen.

³⁵ 1 John 3:8 – “He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work” (Life Application Study Bible – New International Version)

Foote's final lesson is a brief lecture on how to obtain sanctification, that state of growing in divine grace as a result of Christian commitment after conversion. She believed that she must instruct, train and model how sanctification should be obtained. On her life's journey, she lived a life of faith, sanctification and obedience to God that presented a model for all Christians to follow. She was not perfect, for she like all other Christians had sinned and come short of the glory of God,³⁶ but she worked daily to become more Christ-like and she worked tirelessly to teach others how to become more Christ-like. In the final lesson of her autobiography, she wrote:

How is sanctification to be obtained? An important question. I answer, by faith. Faith is the only condition of sanctification. By this I mean a faith that dies out to the world and every form of sin; that gives up the sin of the heart; and that believes, according to God's promise, he is able to perform, and will do it now – doeth it now. Why not yield, believe, and be sanctified now – now, while reading? 'Now is the day of salvation.'³⁷ Say: 'Here, Lord, I will, I do believe; thou hast said now–now let it be–now apply the blood of Jesus to my waiting longing soul.'

'Hallelujah! Tis be done! I believe on the son; I am saved by the blood of the crucified one.' Now, dear reader, I conclude by praying that this little work may be blessed of God to your spiritual and everlasting good. I trust also that it will promote the cause of holiness in the church. Now, unto Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Andrews, pp. 233-234)

Here Foote provides closure for the prophetic lessons she taught her students. She ends her lesson with a prayer requesting God's blessings on her work and what she has shared with her pupils. Like any teacher Foote wanted her pupils to understand what she had taught and to be able to apply it to their daily lives so that they might become productive citizens of society.

⁴¹ II Corinthians 6:2 – "For He says, in the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" (Life Application Study Bible – New International Version).

Julia Foote struggled like all other Black women of the nineteenth century. She too faced racism, sexism and classism like her contemporaries. It was a daily struggle but Foote used her conversion story, musical inferences and resistance rhetoric to cleverly manipulate the minds of her readers to seek Christian perfection. She empowers her readers through her rhetorical strategies. Her conversion story and her resistance were in this author's estimation a cry for help, a cry to be heard, and a cry to empower people of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 6

ZILPHA ELAW: A SPECKLED BIRD

Little attention has been given to Zilpha Elaw, an African-American pioneer of the nineteenth century woman. Zilpha Elaw, together with Jarena Lee, set the stage for the African-American woman's religious and literary tradition. Douglas-Chin (2001) noted that "until recently, Elaw's text has received relatively brief analysis" (p.32). Douglas-Chin stated that "Frances Smith Foster, Joanne Braxton, and William Andrews devote about two pages each to Elaw in their texts *Written by Herself, Black Women Writing Autobiography*, and *To Tell a Free Story*, respectively" (p. 32). Not only have Frances Smith Foster, Joanne Braxton, and William Andrews failed to include the life and works of Zilpha Elaw in their texts, but Bettye Collier-Thomas (with slightly less than two pages), Chanda Haywood, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, and Sue Houchins also neglected to include this African-American pioneer of the nineteenth century in their texts *Daughters of Thunder, Prophesying Daughters, Words of Fire and Spiritual Narratives*, respectively. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, in her text *Words of Fire*, provides a singular sentence quoting Elaw on her thoughts on the tenacity of racism. How is it that the consideration of Zilpha Elaw has been passed over by the most vocal of those who rally and protest for the recovery and inclusion of African-American women? Why has Elaw, an African-American itinerant minister who lived and preached in the antebellum northeastern United States been excluded? Elaw spent most of her adult life traveling particularly in the mid-atlantic states. Her labors led her to New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Manchester, many of the slave states and even London.

Elaw preached at camp meetings, in some pulpits and wherever she found the opportunity to teach, prophesy and proselytize to those who were lost and unsaved.

Early Life

Zilpha Elaw was born in Pennsylvania around 1790 to religious parents. At the age of twelve Zilpha lost her mother, who died giving birth to her twenty-second child. All of Zilpha's siblings, with the exception of three, died in infancy (Andrews, 1986, 53). After her mother's death, Elaw's sister was sent to live with her aunt; Zilpha was sent to live with a couple by the name of Pierson and Rebecca Mitchel until she was eighteen. The Mitchels were Quakers, who showed no outward religious practices. This was a marked change for Elaw, who had been reared in a devoutly religious household; there, family devotion was a daily occurrence, prayers were offered, and praises were sung to God. Living with the Mitchels soon took a moral toll on Zilpha. With the lapse of her earlier religious habits replaced by the absence of any religious habits, Elaw soon found herself turning to the worldly ways. According to Andrews (1986), Elaw, like Julia Foote, found pleasure in the "paths of folly." Sadly, Elaw's father died a year and six months after she went to live with the Mitchel family.

'Til Death Do Us Part

Zilpha Elaw married Joseph Elaw, who was not a Christian, in 1810. In her autobiography, she immediately warns her sisters in Christ against marrying a man who is not a Christian. She wrote:

Oh! Let me affectionately warn my dear unmarried sisters in Christ, against being thus unequally yoked with unbelievers. In general your lot would be better, if a millstone were hung about your necks And you were drowned in the depths of the sea, than that you should disobey the law of Jesus. [Matthew 18:6] and plunge yourselves into all the sorrows, sins, and anomalies involved in a matrimonial alliance with an unbeliever (Andrews, p.61).

It is interesting how she makes reference to Matthew 18:6, which reads, “But anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.” (Life Application Study Bible – New International Version, 1991, p.1689) This particular scripture appears to refer to children and how those who turn little children away from faith will receive severe punishment. Did she misinterpret this scripture or does she see herself as a child in the eyes of God? Why this scripture? Elaw saw marriage as a sacred institution, but an institution that was bound for failure if the man and woman were unequally yoked. She goes into great detail to discuss the woman’s role as well as the man’s role in marriage. She continues her lesson on marriage by writing:

I now observe, in reference to the marriage of a Christian with an unbeliever, that there is not, there cannot be in it, that mutual sympathy, and affectionate accordance which exists in marriage lives of devoted Christians, when both parties are cordially progressing on the king’s highway. How discordant are the sentiments, tastes and feelings of the Christian and unbeliever, when unequally, and I may say, wickedly allied together in the marriage state. (Andrews, p. 62)

Because Elaw was married to an unbeliever, she found her duties as a disciple for Christ even more difficult. Despite her husband’s continued objections, Elaw endured and persevered without retaliating or disrespecting her husband. His objection to her ministry became more and more harsh each day. He made numerous attempts, trying to persuade Elaw to give up her ministry, her teaching of God’s people. However, she remained faithful and loyal to her husband. She wrote,

After we had been married about a year, he resolved to use every means to induce me to renounce my religion, and abolish my attendance at the meeting-house. It was then that my troubles began, and grew so severe, that I knew not what to do; but that God who is a present help in every time of need was with me still, and enabled me to endure every trial with meekness. I kept my mouth as with a bridle, and sinned not with my tongue. (p. 63)

In spite of her husband's harsh objection, Zilpha continued to do the work of God. She stood by his side and played the role of a good wife. On January 27, 1823, her husband, Joseph Elaw, departed this life, having been ill for some time. Zilpha Elaw had worked hard to keep her little family together and happy during her husband's time of affliction. She was never able to fully persuade her husband toward a conversion to Christianity, but she did all that she could and she learned and taught others that this was frequently the result of being married to an unbeliever and thus being unequally yoked.

Educating Young Minds

After the death of her husband, Zilpha Elaw opened a school in Burlington. Clearly, Elaw's passion was to educate and to teach young minds, strongly believing that she had been called not only to preach but also to teach. In her autobiography entitled, *Memoirs*, she wrote:

I then opened a school, and the Lord blessed the effort, and increased the number of my pupils, so that I soon had a nice little school; many of the [S]ociety of [F]riends³⁸ came and visited it, and assisted me with books and other necessaries for it. They were also much pleased with the improvement of the children; and when any strangers came to visit Burlington, they introduced them to me; and it was gratifying to many of them to see a female of colour teaching the coloured children, whom the white people refused to admit into their seminaries and who had been suffered formerly to run about the streets for want of a teacher (p. 85).

³⁸ [S]ociety of [F]riends - The Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers, is a body of Christians that originated in 17th century England under George Fox. In 1988, the society had 200,260 members, with heavy concentrations in the United States (109,000), East Africa (45,000) and Great Britain (18,000). Quakers unite in affirming the immediacy of Christ's teaching; they hold that believers receive divine guidance from an inward light, without the aid of intermediaries or external rites.

Elaw realized that the children she was teaching had been victims of prejudice and discrimination. She found this to be quite disheartening because as a child she was never denied admission or prohibited from attending any school because of the color of her skin. Therefore, Elaw felt that it was her duty to educate these young minds that had been denied the right to knowledge and the right to schooling. Elaw felt compelled to teach these children because of the hardships they had already endured. During Elaw's school tenure at the school, she was struck with an illness that would not allow her to attend the school. As soon as Zilpha was able, she immediately returned to her duties. However, Elaw never forgot what God had requested of her. She had been instructed to preach the gospel and to travel far and wide spreading the good news of God. Therefore, she soon closed her school and returned to her travels as an itinerant preacher.

A Prophetic Work by a 'Speckled Bird'

Zilpha Elaw and other women such as Jarena Lee represent the initiation of spiritual autobiography. In 1846 Zilpha Elaw published *Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, Ministerial Travels, and Labours of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw, An American Female of Colour in* which she immediately describes herself as a 'speckled bird.'

As noted Elaw refers to herself as a *speckled bird* in her autobiography. Why a speckled bird? Throughout her text, she positions herself within not only the black community, but the white community, as well as the British community in New England. In her text, she speaks of her connection to both the white community and the black community. As she tells of her tenure with a Quaker family, she refers to herself as a "speckled bird." (Andrews, 53) Later in her autobiography, Zilpha discusses a man

named Abijah Janney, who belonged to the Society of Friends. She tells of how she spent many delightful hours at his home. She continues by saying,

One day he requested to speak with me alone; and having accompanied him to another apartment, when we were seated, he said to me, “Now Zilpha, I perceive that thy visit to this place will be attended with much good, if thy deportment amongst the whites and especially amongst the slaves, be prudently conducted, for there seemeth in reference to the great topics of thy ministry to be much interest felt by the people generally. This was a well timed and salutary caution, and most prudent advice to me, situated as I was in connexion with two distinct communities, so opposite in condition, so contrasted in intelligence, and so antipodal in their feelings and prejudice. These words at such a time were to me as apples of gold in pictures of silver. (Andrews, 93)

This suggests that Elaw was concerned as to the manner of presenting herself and her behavior in the company of two dissimilar groups, unlike Julia Foote and Maria Stewart.

Elaw exhibits signs of the African-American double consciousness—that conflicting sense of duality in Africanness and Americanness that characterizes the existence of blacks in America (Douglass-Chinn, p. 35). Was it really double consciousness, or could Elaw have been experiencing what the author deems a *triple consciousness* – a conflicting sense of Africanness, Americanness and Britishness? Elaw sought to please, and therefore wrote in a manner that did not offend. She penned:

Dear Brethren and friends,
After sojourning in your hospitable land, and peregrinating among you during these last five years; in the course of which period, it has been my happiness to enjoy much spiritual intercourse with many of you in your family circles, your social meetings, and in the house of God, I feel a strong desire again to cross the pathless bosom of the foaming Atlantic and rejoin my dear friends in the occidental land of my nativity; and, in the prospect of an early departure from your shores, I feel that I cannot present you with a more appropriate keepsake, or a more lively memento of my Christian esteem, and affectionate desires for your progressive prosperity and perfection in the Christian calling, than the following contour portrait of my regenerated constitution – exhibiting, as did the bride of Solomon, comeliness with blackness [Song of Solomon 1:5]; and as did the apostle Paul, riches with poverty and power in weakness [2 Corinthians 12:9] – a representation, not, indeed, of the features of my outward person, drawn and coloured by the skill of the penciling artist, but of the lineaments of my inward

man, as inscribed by the Holy Ghost, and according to my poor ability, copied off for your edification.” (Andrews, 51)

Whatever the case, it was difficult for Elaw as she attempted to negotiate acceptance within groups who were so different. Such negotiations required sophisticated rhetorical strategies.

Speckled Rhetorical Strategies

Elaw employed a variety of rhetorical strategies throughout her text, such as spiritual autobiography, a theology of conflict and a theology of empowerment. Here I will examine those rhetorical strategies utilized by Elaw in her text.

Spiritual Autobiography

At the onset of Elaw’s autobiography, she immediately notifies her readers that the autobiography is spiritual. This ingenuous approach would suggest that she has set the stage for acceptance and validation of her work, by totally removing the focus from self, and giving God all credit for her efforts. Some might consider that Elaw *sold out*. Her carefully selective use of language is impressive for a poor, coloured female of the nineteenth century. It is interesting how she addressed her audiences. From the above referenced text, it is clear that she consciously removed herself from the totality of what she was doing, labeling herself as unworthy and called by God to journey into foreign lands to preach, teach and educate. She even explained that her text was not depicting the outward person, as seen standing before her audiences, but that the text depicted “the lineaments of her inward man, as inscribed by the Holy Ghost” (Andrews, 1986, p.51).

Like Foote, Elaw too uses song and makes reference to songs throughout her text. By utilizing songs throughout her text she is operating in a fashion of “double consciousness” (to borrow a term from W.E.B. Dubois). In one instance Elaw seeks to

please the master by using his literary style. Yet in another instance she goes against such style by using songs throughout her text. Elaw seems to be playing both sides of the coin. Zilpha Elaw traveled around the country preaching and teaching to racially diverse audiences who were white and black. Therefore, Elaw's narrative suggests that using speckled rhetorical strategies would benefit her agenda the most. By this the author simply means that Elaw used rhetorical strategies that were typical of whites and blacks. She blended her rhetorical strategies to create a narrative that would speak to a diverse community of people because Elaw found herself in what many would consider a difficult position, she preached under no particular denomination.

Zilpha sailed to England in 1840 and preached there until 1845, after which she made plans to return to America. (Douglass-Chin, 33). Richard Douglas-Chin (2001) averred that Elaw, like Jarena Lee, "situates herself within the parameters of a polite, Westernized, Christian identity." (33-34) He continues by saying that Elaw's autobiography "follows the formula of the early American Puritan spiritual narrative" (34). According to Kathleen Swaim (1992), the formula for traditional Puritan spiritual autobiography is the following:

an initial account of the horrible, sinful state of the narrator's soul before conversion; the call of God; the struggle with Satan before conversion; the conversion, generally brought about through the reading of some holy book; the struggle with temptation, despair and doubt after conversion; one last terrific bout with Satan; the promise of glory ever after." (Kathleen M. Swaim in "Preacher Woman Sings the Blues," 34)

Elaw's autobiography reads unlike the autobiographies of Julia Foote and Maria Stewart. The texts and autobiographies of Stewart and Foote seem more direct, accusatory, and harsh in nature when dealing with issues of race, class, gender, and

religion. The texts speak as if the authors are not consumed with worry about what whites or blacks will think of them.

For example, Stewart challenges all people. She makes direct remarks to white women and black women, black men and those who she considers *arm chair activists* in the fight for freedom and justice. Elaw, on the other hand, seems concerned about what the white race will think of her. She treads lightly as she writes. Douglas-Chin (2001) wrote that Elaw was “increasingly concerned with the impact of her testimony upon a readership of predominantly white people.” (34) Why would she be so concerned with what the readership of predominantly white people thought of her testimony if she were equally concerned about the rights of women and blacks? In this author’s opinion, Elaw was not what may be considered radical but rather, was savvy in the manner in which she navigated dual oppressions of race and gender during the nineteenth century. That inner conflict that consumes so many African-Americans today had its grip on Elaw, as well. The crusader, too, fell victim to what W.E.B. Dubois termed *double-consciousness* (from the *Souls of Black Folks*). Since the beginning, African-Americans have sought ways to negotiate being African and American. Elaw felt this tension in her life. In her autobiography, she said to God,

Lord! Send by whom thou wilt send, only send not by me; for thou knowest that I am ignorant: how can I be a mouth for God! – a poor, coloured female: and thou knowest we have many things to endure which others do not.” God responded by saying, “What is that to thee? Follow thou me.” (Andrews, 89-90)

Elaw’s text indicates that although she attempted to avoid the issue frequently, she was reminded many times of what it was like to be Black and a woman in nineteenth century America.

The use of such rhetorical strategies in text during the nineteenth century was profound, bold, creative, and rarely utilized by women of her day, especially black women. Was the language that she used in her text merely manipulative a poor, coloured female using the master's tools to dismantle the master's language? Was it assimilation or was it a genuine attempt to teach all mankind the word of God? Regardless of her motives, Elaw found favor with many, although she met much opposition.

Unlike Julia Foote and Maria Stewart, Elaw was accepted into many pulpits during the nineteenth century, and allowed to teach and to preach God's word. Douglass-Chinn (2001), suggests that Elaw presented herself as a traveler abroad, and in a Britain needing civilization, presented herself as an educator and ambassador of God to the (white) spiritually disinherited heathen there (p. 36). Elaw's tenure in Britain lasted from 1840-1845. She sailed to England to preach the word of God because she experienced a constant nudging from the Holy Spirit to go and preach in this foreign land.

Further analysis of Elaw's text suggests great contradictions and blatant avoidances of the truth. In Elaw's autobiography, she provides us with a description of the Quaker family with whom she was sent to live after the death of her mother. Zilpha was sent to live with Pierson and Rebecca Mitchel. Her autobiography leads one to believe that the relationship she established with this family was that of a mother-daughter, father-daughter relationship. However, later in Elaw's text, she refers to Rebecca Mitchel as her mistress (Andrews, 58). Douglas-Chin, who also notes Elaw's avoidance of the truth, suggests that Elaw was attempting "as a black autobiographer to solicit white approval as a "good nigger." He continues by observing that later in her text, Elaw reveals, "I sometimes met with very severe rebukes from my mistress, and I

endured her reproofs without the exhibition of my former resentments and saucy replies.”(48)

The text also includes Elaw’s remarks as she speaks of the woman and how she [the woman] should be submissive to her husband and her duties as a woman. However, Elaw abandoned her child³⁹ to go and preach. She also went against her husband’s wishes in order to preach. Elaw writes,

Thus, I left my child ... not knowing whither I should go. From Philadelphia I started for New York; and on my journey passed within three hundred yards of my own home, yet did not call there ... I was absent from home for seven months.” (Andrews, 90)

Why would Elaw write all of this in her autobiography, yet actually practice little to none of it? She left her child and opposed her husband’s wishes, but tries to educate other women on their duties as a wife and mother. To whom was she trying to appeal? What did she wish to accomplish? Is this one of the reasons why her work has been omitted and ignored? Being ignored during the nineteenth century evidently weighed heavily on Zilpha Elaw. So heavy was the burden that Elaw felt the need to identify or present herself as a eunuch.

A Theology of Conflict

Zilpha Elaw’s description of herself as an eunuch put her in direct conflict with the sexist ideologies that she had been resisting from the very beginning of her public career. By labeling herself as a eunuch she immediately took on male characteristics. Why did she feel the need to lose her female traits and ways of being?

³⁹ Elaw briefly mentions her child approximately 3 times throughout her text. Little information is provided regarding the child. The only information I was able to find was that Foote left her daughter on several occasions to do the will of God.

A Eunuchian Approach

It seems that Elaw continued her quest to be heard throughout her text by presenting herself as a eunuch. She wrote:

After this wonderful manifestation of my condescending Saviour, the peace of God which passeth understanding was communicated to my heart; and joy in the Holy Ghost, to a degree, at the last, unutterable by my tongue and indescribable by my pen; it was beyond my comprehension; but, from that happy hour, my soul was set at glorious liberty; and, like the Ethiopic eunuch, I went on my way rejoicing in the blooming prospects of a better inheritance with the saints in the light. (Andrews, 1986, p. 57)

Why would she present herself as a eunuch? Is it possible that Elaw's intention was to align herself with the eunuchs in the Bible who had been castrated, with Elaw's perceptions of self being that she was mentally castrated rather than physically? Some eunuchs, as mentioned in the Bible, are born physically unable to engage in sexual intercourse, known as congenital physical deformities. Perhaps Elaw saw herself as being born as a type of eunuch, and therefore forbidden [or unable], and therefore unwilling to engage in spiritual intercourse and spiritual experiences and activities (other than what was allowed for women of the nineteenth century) because of congenital physical deformities. Douglas-Chin (2001) holds that,

For Black Americans, then castration and the castration complex is a condition that pertains not only to daughters as symbolic accident of birth or to sons as fear of paternal reprisal, but to all African-American men and women as symbol—and all too often actual *fact*—of a brutal, sustained and systematic familial rupture and racial degradation enacted on the bodies on black persons. (p. 56)

Therefore, Douglas-Chin suggests the following:

[that the]disfigured body of the castrato, then becomes for Elaw a trope of spiritual power and resistance in the face of a racism and sexism that threatens to spiritually and physically annihilate her.(56)

This was Elaw's manner of resistance, survival, and empowerment. She conquered the impossible by applying manipulative, rhetorical strategies and by making herself look like the one who has actually been conquered, when in all actuality she was conquering the minds and thoughts of her audiences. She had the ultimate power needed to teach, preach and educate her audiences, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Resisting the Call

Zilpha Elaw had only one surviving sister, who lived in Philadelphia. According to Elaw's autobiography, her sister also was a devout Christian woman. Elaw's sister became desperately ill with what Elaw calls a *mortal disease*. Consequently, Elaw left Burlington and retreated to Philadelphia to be at her sister's bedside. Elaw remained for a few days, after which she left, only to return to her sister's bedside to watch her sister's rapidly failing health. Elaw wrote,

After my dear sister had laid swoon for some time, she revived and said, amongst other things which I could not remember, "I have overcome the world by the kingdom of heaven;" she then began singing, and appeared to sing several verses; but the language in which she sung was too wonderful for me, and I could not understand it. We all sat or stood around her with great astonishment, for her voice was as clear, musical, and strong, as if nothing had ailed her; and when she had finished her song of praise (for it was indeed a song of praise, and the place was full of glory,) she addressed herself to me and informed me, that she had seen Jesus, and had been in the society of angels; and that an angel came to her, and bade her tell Zilpha that she must preach the gospel; and also, that I must go to a lady named Fisher, a Quakeress, and she would tell me further what I should do. (Andrews, p. 73)

Elaw had great difficulty believing that God wanted her to preach and teach his word.

Initially, Elaw rejected her calling. She could not accept the idea that God in his infinite wisdom would call such a poor, ignorant, coloured female to do the Master's work. She further exhorted:

I could not at the time imagine it possible that God should select and appoint so poor and ignorant a creature as myself to be his messenger, to bear the good tidings of the gospel to the children of men. Soon after this, I received a visit from a female who was employed in the work of the ministry, who asked me if I did not think that I was called by the Lord to that work? To which I replied in the negative; she then said, "I think you are; now tell me, do not passages of Scripture often open to thy mind as subjects for public speaking and exposition? Weigh well this matter and see; for I believe that God has provided a great work for thy employment. (p. 75)

Even after her dear sister's great proclamation and numerous encouragements, Elaw still wrestled with accepting her call to preach. She was not convinced that she was the one to do God's will. Zilpha continued to ignore her calling for many years after her sister's death. Elaw felt that because she had ignored God's call, He must get her attention somehow. Elaw wrote,

As all other means had failed to move me to proceed upon my appointed duties, the Lord used other means to move me; for when gentle means do not answer, the rod must be applied to bring us into subjection to our Master's will. In 1819, it pleased God to lay me upon a bed of affliction, with a sickness which, to all appearance, was unto death (p. 76).

Elaw considered her bed of affliction as God's way of confirming her appointment to ministry, authorizing her to preach and teach. The death of her sister, together with her illness, played pivotal roles in preparing and training Elaw to travel and spread the word of God. In each instance, Elaw gained much through her losses. In other words, Elaw lost a sister, but gained wisdom and knowledge from her experience. She gained authority from God to do His will. In her book, *Sentimental Confessions*, Joycelyn Moody (2001) asserted the following:

Elaw recounts her sister's death, using the Christian concepts of conversion, salvation, deliverance, exultation, and so on, because the incident can teach readers about God and about the distinctive kind of relationship they should cultivate with God (p. 74).

Elaw gained this unique insight from her sister's death, which allowed her to share and teach others about God. In her own *wilderness experience* (her bed of affliction), Elaw metaphorically lost life for a time. She experienced God and what He could do first hand so she was able to once again teach others through her spiritual pedagogy. Elaw's entire autobiography seems to have been written in a manner that in and of itself taught others how they should live and how they should heed the word of God.

Considering conflict and the contradictory nature of Elaw's narrative, it is both interesting and intriguing how Elaw, alludes to Paul in her narrative. Yet, a full reading of Elaw's autobiography further yields more conflict. This conflict is concerned with Paul's attitude towards women and the church. Why use the life of Paul to validate their mission? The life of Elaw readily identifies with that of Paul, although Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." Elaw seemed to be well versed in the bible; did she interpret Paul's words as something else or did Paul actually mean that women should not be permitted to teach? How could she allude to the life of Paul in her writings, knowing that he felt this way? Perhaps Elaw believed that this restriction was not applied universally by Paul or by others of the bible. As a scholar of the bible, surely Elaw was knowledgeable of the functions women performed as prominent leaders. Women such as Phoebe, Lydia, Euodia, Syntyche, Priscilla, and Junia served as ministers or deacons (Romans 16:1), fellow workers (Romans 16:3), co-laborers in the gospel (Philippians 4:2-9), and apostles (Romans 16:7). Clearly, women played significant roles in the early church (1 Corinthians 11). Perhaps Elaw saw herself as one who could play a significant role in the lives of nineteenth

century people, since Elaw focused on those of her personal experiences that were similar to that of Paul's, notwithstanding her gender.

The theology of conflict is directly associated with a theology of empowerment that emerges from the pages of Elaw's autobiography. Through such conflict, Elaw was once again empowered to do the work of the God. She placed herself on the level with the men of her day and viewed her life's labours similar to those of Paul; yet she utilized such crafty, rhetorical strategies that the comparison was simply overlooked by her audiences.

A Theology of Empowerment -Thorns in My Flesh

The theology of empowerment was at work in the life of Zilpha Elaw. Through her illnesses and consequent mystical experiences, Elaw was not only empowered but her relationship with God became stronger. Each thorn that she experienced represented a new birth and a new start for Elaw. She was able to see firsthand that God's grace was sufficient and that when she was weak, He was strong. It was almost as if God placed her on her bed of affliction so that He could strengthen her and prepare her for her next spiritual journey.

Paul and Elaw

Reading Elaw's autobiography reminds this author of Paul's struggles as an apostle of Christ. Elaw experienced numerous bouts of illness throughout her tenure as an itinerant preacher. The life of Zilpha Elaw has much in common with the life of Paul. Empowerment stands at the forefront of the commonality that exists between Paul and Elaw. Both Paul and Elaw were empowered by God.

The books of Acts and 2 Corinthians detail Paul's travels, making mention of a thorn in the flesh that Paul experienced while doing God's will. Paul met much opposition in his ministry and faced numerous challenges. One of the biggest challenges Paul faced was trying to convince the people of the church at Corinth that he was not just a blustering preacher but a teacher/preacher as well. They did not take him seriously and they did not heed his warnings (Life Application Study Bible, 1991, 2109). There are similarities in Zilpha Elaw's character and experiences. Elaw, like Maria Stewart and Julia Foote, was not taken seriously; many men and women of her day saw women preachers as false teachers. However, they persevered.

Paul experienced a thorn in his flesh that God refused to remove. Paul wrote:

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (Life Application Study Bible, New International Version, p. 2109).

The scriptures do not reveal the nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh and Paul never wrote exactly what it was. However, it is quite clear that the problem was chronic, debilitating and kept him from working. The thorn became an irritation and a hindrance to Paul's ministry, yet the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient."

Elaw, too, suffered several debilitating illnesses that hindered her ministry and kept her from working. Many of the illnesses she thought she would not survive. However, like Paul, she realized that God's grace was sufficient, so she persevered and continued to teach. God healed Elaw of her illnesses each time, but she continued to experience pangs

in the flesh while on the battlefield for God. God's power and presence was revealed through Elaw and her illnesses. She wrote of these times:

The kind Quaker lady, who much visited and attended to me during my illness, being unable to witness the operation, was absent from me on that day: when she came on the morrow, I had scarcely power left me sufficiently to recognize her; and my exhaustion was so extreme, that I could not even raise my hand. I was many weeks ere I recovered from this painful operation, and my debility was long protracted; but at times the presence of the Holy Spirit was so powerful within me that I seemed quite invigorated and strong; and in this illness, I received another striking communication in reference to my future employment in the ministry; it occurred after the renewed dedication of my soul to God as above related. About twelve o'clock one night, when all was hushed to silence, a human figure in appearance, came and stood by my bedside, and addressed these words to me, "Be of good cheer, for thou shalt yet see another camp meeting; and at that meeting thou shalt know the will of God concerning thee." I then put forth my hand to touch it and discovered that it was not really a human being, but a supernatural appearance. I was not in the least alarmed, for the room was filled with the glory of God, who had permitted the veil to be removed from my mortal vision, that I might have a glimpse of one of our heavenly attendants, - of one who had a message to deliver to me from God (p. 77).

Recovery from the illnesses that Elaw suffered was empowering for a woman attempting to break down barriers, resist traditional hegemonic practices, and survive in a nineteenth century world that was not designed for nor accepting of a poor, coloured female. Elaw met her daily struggles with zeal and fervor. Like her contemporaries, Elaw was empowered by the word of God which gave her the authority and courage that she needed to resist and fight against her daily struggles with racism, sexism and classism.

An Unknown End

Elaw's end remains unknown (Moody, p. 76). However, the closing words of her autobiography will remain with us forever:

I have now furnished my readers with an outline of my religious experience, ministerial labours and travels, together with some of the attendant results, both on the continent of America and in England: these humble memoirs will doubtless continue to be read long after I shall have ceased from my earthly labours and existence. I submit them, dear Christian reader, to thy attentive consideration, and

commend this little volume and each of its readers to the blessing of the adorable God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen (Andrews, p. 160).

Elaw did exactly as she wrote. She left us with an outline for teaching and preparing others for a life with God. She espoused a spiritual pedagogy, a prophetic pedagogy that will live on in the minds and hearts of her readers. It is sad that nothing is known of her end, but every effort must be made to recover that which has been lost to our history so that the lessons that Elaw fought so hard to teach will continue to be heard because as of now the few scholars that have studied Elaw have no record of what happened to her. Elaw's ending remains a mystery.

CHAPTER 7

“WE’VE COME THIS FAR BY FAITH”

We’ve come this far by faith,
Leaning on the Lord
Trusting in His holy word
He’s never failed me yet
Oh, can’t turn around
We’ve come this far by faith
(Goodson, 1965)

African-American women have come this far by their faith and spirituality, enabling them to sing the above referenced song with great conviction and spirit. This dissertation is presented after careful analysis of the texts of Maria Miller Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw, an analysis in which I realized that they, too, had *come this far by faith*. I also wanted to participate in the literal exhumation of my dear departed sisters, ignored and omitted from our nation’s history, as well as acknowledge the faith and spirituality crying out from unmarked graves to be heard. My intent was to conduct an *academic autopsy* on the remains (autobiographies, narratives, etc.) of three nineteenth century women who set the stage and paved the way for so many African-American women to follow. My belief is that these women not only deserve a place in history and curriculum studies, but they are owed a space in our country’s history and curriculum studies. Their voices should be heard and valued as legitimate sources of knowledge and wisdom. Through the autobiographies and narratives of Maria Stewart, Julia Foote, and Zilpha Elaw, we are able to see how they were empowered, how they resisted, and how they survived in nineteenth century America. These women espoused a spiritual and prophetic pedagogy to audiences that allowed them to share their stories, their experiences, and their struggles as poor, coloured females. The spirituality that these

women preached, along with the knowledge that they provided to nineteenth century audiences through their autobiographies, speeches, and lectures are authentic sources of knowledge that are rich and worthy to be studied in today's classrooms. Students must be taught to think critically.

Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw used their narratives to construct an identity that allowed them to push the boundaries of the cultural script. These women had a two-pronged approach. They were providing public intellectuals as well as spiritual intellectuals with social, cultural and public education. The education that they sought to teach was based on life experiences. Stewart, Foote and Elaw pushed the boundaries of the cultural script in order to create spaces whereby people would see African-Americans as educable. For so long African-Americans had been deemed as uneducable and illegitimate producers of knowledge. These women spoke to America about the plight of African-Americans through their narratives. The rhetorical strategies of Stewart, Foote and Elaw ranging from radical to assimilative in nature proved to be what was needed in order to push the boundaries of the cultural script. These women caused new boundaries to be set via the rhetorical strategies they utilized in their narratives and public lectures.

Rhetorical Remnants

Conversion rhetoric, spiritual autobiography, resistance rhetoric, radical obedience, the Jeremiadic tradition, a theology of conflict, and a theology of empowerment best describe the nineteenth century narratives of Maria Stewart, Zilpha Elaw and Julia Foote. The rhetorical strategies that these women utilized were the keys that opened many doors for women such as themselves to speak publicly, to teach and to preach in nineteenth century America. However, many women gained entry into pulpits all over America. Many

women gained entry into pulpits all across America by using strategies such as conversion rhetoric, spiritual autobiography, and numerous other strategies. Those that were still debarred from pulpits all across America found themselves creating make-shift pulpits at camp meetings and other public gatherings. Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw each had their own savvy way of attracting audiences and sharing the word of God. There were divine differences between the rhetorical styles of these women but there were also striking similarities.

Divine Differences

Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw addressed audiences that were male and female, and both black and white. Their speeches and lectures were like conversations that provided in great detail how to live a life for God. However, each woman's conversation with her audience was slightly different. Maria Stewart's pedagogy proved to be a pedagogy that warned and foretold what would happen to those who refused to follow the ways of God and who continued to oppress and hurt God's people. She wrote:

The frowns of the world shall never discourage me, nor its smiles flatter me, for with the help of God, I am resolved to withstand the fiery darts of the devil, and the assaults of wicked men. The righteous are as bold as a lion, but the wicked fleeth when no man pursueth. I fear neither men nor devils, for the God in whom I trust is able to deliver me from the rage and malice of my enemies, and from them that rise up against me (Richardson, 1987, p.50).

Stewart's pedagogy utters a pedagogy of resistance. She is resistant to that which silences the voices of women and African-Americans. She is resistant to traditional hegemonic practices. She exhibits resilience in the face of racism and prejudice and she becomes an agent of change through preaching and teaching in nineteenth century America.

Julia Foote's approach is somewhat different, yet the softness of her pedagogical voice also utters resistance. Foote resisted the ideals of the early church that women should not be allowed to preach or to sit in pulpits. However, she was subtle and calm in her demeanor when resisting, unlike Stewart. She quietly resisted and prayed to God for sustainment and courage to continue in her ministry. However, Foote documented in her autobiography one incidence of resistance that left calmness and subtlety. She wrote:

One day, Mrs. Prime, having company, sent me to the cellar to bring up some little pound cakes, which she had made a few days previously. There were but two or three left; these I brought to her. She asked me where the rest were, I told her "I didn't know." At this point she grew very angry and said, "I'll make you know, when the company is gone." She, who had always been so kind and motherly frightened me so by her looks and action that I trembled so violently I could not speak. This was taken as evidence of my guilt. There was a boy working for Mr. Prime that I always thought took the cakes, for I had seen him put his hand into his pocket hastily, and wipe his mouth carefully, if he met any one on his way from the cellar. That night I wished that I could be hung. In the darkness and silence, Satan came to me and told me to go the barn and hang myself. In the morning I was fully determined to do so. I went to the barn for that purpose, but that boy, whom I disliked very much, was there, and he laughed at me as hard as he could. That day, Mr. and Mrs. Prime, on their return from town, brought a rawhide. This Mrs. Prime applied to my back until she was tired, all the time insisting that I should confess that I took the cakes. This of course I could not do. She then put the rawhide up, saying, "I'll use it again tomorrow; I am determined to make you tell the truth." That afternoon Mrs. Prime went away, leaving me alone in the house. I carried the rawhide out to the wood pile, took the axe, and cut it up into small pieces, which I threw away determined not to be whipped with that thing again (Andrews, p.176).

Foote was not proud of what she had done, and reported that this incident, along with her dislike of the Primes after such an experience, made her "quite a hardened sinner" (p. 176). This was her way of rebelling and resisting at an early age. As Foote grew older, and her walk with God became more profound, the ways in which she rebelled and resisted became changed. Stewart, on the other hand, never really resulted to violence;

yet her writings and speeches suggested that she had no problem if violence became necessary.

Zilpha Elaw's pedagogical voice adopts a pedagogy of assimilation and manipulation. A pedagogy of assimilation and manipulation is one in which the teacher seemingly does what is asked and required, based on current standards and practices. However, the teacher also knowingly crafts and creates ways to present what she feels needs to be done and say what she feels needs to be said. Elaw was skillful in both her rhetoric and her pedagogy. In her autobiography, her language is both accepting and familiar to her white audiences. As a result, the pedagogy that she utilized resulted in responsive audiences.

The lessons that these women sought to teach were somewhat different. The lesson plans they created for teaching these lessons may have seemed dissimilar, but the goal for each woman was the same: To introduce and educate their audiences to a life with God, a life in the spirit and a life of Christian perfection. The lives of Stewart, Elaw, and Foote reveal not only the struggles, disappointments, and oppression that each faced, but also reveal agency, empowerment, resistance, and survival tactics. These conceptual approaches became part of their everyday lives in nineteenth century America.

Spiritual Sisters – Striking Similarities

The women analyzed in this study possessed remarkable similarities in their narratives. Elaw and Foote utilized song throughout their text. Each woman at some point in her text (1)proclaimed that she was unworthy to do the will of God. (2)They all met some form of opposition when trying to do the will of God. Stewart. Even more striking is the fact that Elaw and Foote were all widowed before they heeded God's call to do his

will and they each traveled extensively over the United States and into England to preach and teach the word of God.

In the author's opinion, these women deserve to be placed in a category of their own. African-American women traditionally have been clumped into categories with either the Black male or white women. Society has yet to place them in a special category of their own, unless it pertains to negative representations such as welfare mother, lazy, gold-digger, Mammie, etc. The voices of Black women like Stewart, Foote, and Elaw wait to be welcomed into today's classrooms. Their voices represent a long line of prolific, prophetic, and spiritual women. I am a product of this long line as well, and as I read their text, I too, similar to the late Audre Lorde in her book *Zami: A New Spelling of my Name* (1988), began to wonder to whom African-American women owe the power behind their voices.

New Understandings and New Boundaries

From this study we have learned that in order to understand the voices of Black women, we must first understand to whom they owe the power behind their voices. My analyses of Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw reveal that the spirituality of African-American women taught and empowered African-American women to have voice. Through their spirituality that the collective voice speaks when others dare not speak. In the words of Audre Lorde (1988) in "Litany for Survival":

And when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid
so it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive.

Knowing that we were never meant to survive instills an even greater desire in Black women to survive, to be heard, and to be recognized. We build on the faith that our great grandmothers, grandmothers, and mothers had, and it is through this faith and our spirituality that black women find the will to press onward, to survive, and to continue the fight.

So to whom do black women owe the power behind their voices? I believe we owe this power to our ancestors, mothers, grandmothers, other Black women in our community and our spirituality. It was through the earlier generations of determined Black women such as Stewart, Foote, and Elaw, and through their spirituality and faith.

Connecting the Past to the Present: What Presently Gives Black Women the Will to Survive?

In reply to this question, Black women authors sometimes provide insights to the source of strength that gives Black women a strong will to survive destructive social and political forces that threaten their daily lives. bell hooks (1993), in her book *Sisters of the Yam* stated, "Black women have relied on spirituality to sustain us, to renew our hope, to strengthen our faith." hooks discusses fiction authored by contemporary Black women writers. She felt that healing takes place only when black female characters find and nurture the divine spirit within. hooks referenced the following Black female characters who fit this role: Avey in *Praisesong for the Widow*, Celie in the *Color Purple*, Baby Suggs in *Beloved*, and Indigo in *Sassafrass, Cypress and Indigo*. The Black women characters in these novels emulate the real life persons of Maria Stewart, Julia Foote, and Zilpha Elaw. African-American literature has pressed into the literary world to validate the experiences of Black women. Such literature speaks as representative of the voices of

the silenced. It has been the vehicle through which these silenced voices have been heard for many years. Authors such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, bell hooks, and many others have provided the best, more consistent and most reliable vehicle for steering others toward a greater understanding of Black women, together with their ethical and spiritual values. It is also through this vehicle that our minds and ears become attuned to the voices of Black women. African-American authors today resist, survive and are empowered through the fictional characters that they write about. Maria Stewart, Julia Foote, and Zilpha Elaw served as real life role models to help Black women deal with pain, hurt and oppressive conditions of the nineteenth century. The lessons learned from their lives are intergenerational. Bell hooks, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have continued the prophetic lessons by helping Black women identify their pain and imaginatively construct maps for healing through the characters in their novels. Stewart. Elaw and Foote knew the hurt and they spoke to the hurt that Black Americans were facing in the nineteenth century through their narratives, autobiographies and sermons. The novels that are written by authors like hooks, Walker and Morrison Blacks today who are hurting and dealing with much pain. Hooks (1993) maintains that “it is important that black people talk to one another that we talk with friends and allies, for the telling of ours stories enables us to name our pain, our suffering and to seek healing. The conversation has continued over two centuries and if scholars of African-American studies have their way the conversation will continue for many years to come.

To further explore what gives Black women the strong will to survive, let us consider the writings of Alice Walker (1982), *The Color Purple*, and Toni Morrison (1987) *Beloved*, as points of reference and the present ongoing conversations between

Black women of the past and present. In Alice Walker's book *The Color Purple*, the character *Celie* comes to mind when one thinks of spirituality, healing, and discovering one's inner self. The passive character of *Celie* is greatly withdrawn from life. *Celie* suffers abuse at the hands of not only her stepfather but her husband *Mister* as well. She has no self-esteem, and lacks the ability to speak up for herself. Throughout this motion picture, others validate her ideas about herself. When she first meets *Shug Avery*, she is immediately insulted. The first thing *Shug Avery* says to *Celie* is, "You sho is ugly."

Ironically, the love and attention of this same woman helped *Celie* to realize her self-worth, and in addition, a better understanding of God. *Celie*, in one of her many conversations with *Shug Avery*, tells *Shug* how she sees God as a man and then admits that she no longer calls on God or writes to God. In *Celie's* view, she sees God as she sees the men in her life: no good and the cause of heartache and pain. Although *Shug* at last persuades *Celie* to love herself again and to reclaim her own spirit, *Celie* still refuses to acknowledge God's presence in her life. However, Walker (1982) lets *Celie* share some concerns and hang-ups with *Shug*:

All my life I never care what people thought about nothing I did. I say. But deep in my heart I care about God. What he going to think. And I come to find out, he don't think. Just sit there, glorifying in being deaf, I reckon. But it ain't easy, trying to do without God. Even if you know he ain't there, trying to do without him is a strain. (p. 200)

Shug, who also shares her feelings about God, says:

Here's the thing, say *Shug*. The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes you are not looking, or don't know what you looking for. Trouble do it for most folks, I think. Sorrow, Lord. (p. 202)

At this point *Celie* begins to see things differently. She comes to a greater understanding of God, although it is still somewhat hard for her to comprehend. Through

the help of Shug Avery, Celie is able to discover and awaken her spirituality that had been lying dormant for so many years. Celie not only prospers by discovering her hidden wholeness and her spirituality, but those around her benefit as well. People in her family and community are healed and changed. Even her abusive and ill-tempered husband changes. I think this represents the specialness and uniqueness of Black women's spirituality.

Not only Black women, but others around them and those with whom they come in contact profit from their spirituality. Women like Maria Stewart, Julia Foote, and Zilpha Elaw show in text how spirituality impacts an entire community and sometimes communities, as was the case with Zilpha Elaw (America and New England). Toni Morrison (1987) in her book *Beloved*, provides another example of how a Black woman's spirituality can impact an entire community. In *Beloved*, Baby Suggs is a woman of God who has little or nothing after slavery, but she has a strong heart and her spirituality, which is all she needs. Every Saturday afternoon, Baby Suggs sends the Spirit among the people. Through her blessed spirit, the people laugh, dance, sing, and cry in response to their new being, their new way of life, and their new liberation by the Spirit. She preaches the gospel to the people, but it is in no way, form, or fashion, negative or hateful. She preached love of self, thy neighbors and love of one's own body. Baby Suggs' teaching and her spirit impact an entire community and cause change for the better for her people. Baby Suggs tells the people:

No, they don't love your mouth. You got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I'm telling you. And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight. So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it, and hold it up. And all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs you got to love them.

Baby Suggs, Celie, and the real as well as the fictional women who have come before me in text had faith, believed in God, and possessed a spirituality that was unique. This is how they were able to impact and affect others. These women lived their spirituality daily and for many it became contagious, thereby creating a community outbreak of spirituality. This suggests to the author that it is the Black woman's spirituality and ability to connect with a divine spirit (living a life in the spirit) that gives them the strong will to survive the destructive social and political forces threatening their lives daily.

So Where Do We Go from Here?

Women like Maria Miller Stewart, Julia Foote, my mother, grandmothers, and the many women in my neighborhood, were all African-American women educators. We are the daughters and granddaughters of these great women. In addition to those women already listed, I cannot help but think of the many Black women educators who have through their narratives and lived experiences inspired me and caused me to continue in the on-going struggle of being a Black woman in America. I think of Maya Angelou (1978) and her poems, "Phenomenal Woman" and "Still I Rise." These poems spoke to my identity as a Black woman, and to a place where I saw my own self-worth. I saw myself as valuable and worthy of being allowed to run in the race called academia. Zora Neale Hurston (1990) in her novel, *Their Eyes were Watching God*, really spoke to me after I went through a bitter divorce eleven years ago. From this book, I learned that I should never love anyone else better than I love myself. Spirituality involves understanding, loving, and knowing one's self. Although this may have been one of the subtle messages presented in this book, I feel that I gained so much from reading this

book. I began to reflect on my life and I realized that the love I had for myself was not what it should be. It took me years to realize that I was missing from my own life. How could this be? I had bowed down to the egotistical male concepts for women (being passive, quiet, staying in a woman's place—the kitchen and the bedroom), but as I began to rise again, the spirituality that had been passed on to me from my mother, grandmother, and other-mothers, that caused me to rise again to recognize and renew my inner strength and spirituality.

Black women's spirituality is at the very center of Black women's success. I have succeeded and continue to succeed because of other Black women who used their spirituality as a tool for combating racism and other oppressive situations. For so many years Black women have been denied the right to participate in their own story but today many Black women have taken on a pragmatic approach in being. They are the writers of their own stories and the determinants of their own destiny. Black women have told the stories and rewritten the stories by way of literature and autobiographical accounts of their lives.

Currently, Black women create stories of their own by going against the status quo, and by becoming full participants in their own stories. Black women's spirituality and faith are the reasons for this change. In many ways, Black women reminded this author of Hagar (from the biblical story of Sarai, Abraham and Hagar), who was passive and barely a participant in her own story. Diana Hayes (1995), in her book *Hagar's Daughters, Womanist Ways of Being in the World*, felt we are all *Hagar's Daughters*. She not only referred to Black women but to all women. When women are confronted with difficult situations or find themselves in a bind, abused, mistreated and betrayed, we

all need the help of another woman. Like Hagar, we need a woman to help us, to guide us, and to nurture our needs, rather than abuse or exploit us. We need sister friends. Everyone who has read the story knows how Hagar and Sarai were at odds and how betrayal and conspiracy were at the very center of their problems. I do not know where I would be today if it had not been for supportive women, Black and white, my God, and my spirituality. I would probably be like a ship without a sail, lost and still floating aimlessly in the waters of life.

Women such as Audre Lorde have shown through life and writings how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish (Sister Outsider, 1984). Black women have been and continue to be the backbone of their culture. They are tall, strong, and determined. However, they are human and they hurt; they cry and they become tired, yet they possess a spirituality like no other and a spirituality that warrants further scholarly investigation.

The history of African-American women has been omitted and ignored but the lives of women like Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw remind us that we must acknowledge spirituality and its role in empowering people to become educated. If we fail to acknowledge spirituality and the pivotal role that it plays in educating people, especially African-Americans, we will soon find that our understanding of education is distorted and inaccurate. Stewart, Elaw and Foote were African-American women educators who were trying to transform people's understanding of race, and oppression via their spirituality and narratives. Where is the history of African-American women educators? Why have we heard so little about these women? Therefore, I place my theory

of prophetic pedagogy alongside the important, prolific and pioneering efforts already put forth by Chanta Haywood, Richard Douglas-Chin, and Marcia Riggs. Haywood provided the field with a prophesying theory that allows us access to a more comprehensive view of African-American literature through prophesying. Douglas Richard-Chin offered a blues theory that showed how the writings of African-American evangelists form the groundwork for a contemporary womanist literature rooted in spirituality. Marcia Riggs embraced a witness theory which answered the question, can I get a witness, a question often asked by preachers in the Black church. Through her witness theory she answered that question and described the lives of Black women as faithful witnesses and suggested that the “prophetic religious voices of African-American women constitute a distinctive tradition within African-American religious history and experience” (Riggs, , 1997, p.xi).

As we re-envision curriculum theory it is my greatest hope that after completing this dissertation, many more will join in and continue exhuming the remains of lost African-American women who utilized their spirituality to have their voices heard. I hope that the forces (other curriculum theorists) will be with us (African-American women). We must all be a part of the process if we are to construct new epistemologies that affect change in our understanding of the field of education and curriculum theory. We have knowledge built over many years but because of the numerous inaccuracies, distortions and exclusions that exist in our knowledge base, it is time that we initiate an effort to deconstruct that which has been embedded in our minds and began the reconstruction process. The Field of education and curriculum theory have excluded the voices of African-American women, more specifically, African-American women who have utilized their spirituality to empower themselves. Little to no attention has been given to

the spirituality of African-American women and its influences on the rhetorical strategies these women used in having their voices heard. Very little space has been provided for an exploration of the prophetic, prolific, and profound theoretical implications of African-American women's sermons, autobiographies, and narratives. In the field of curriculum theory recovering these lost lives and documents will allow the spirituality of religious women and what they have written to be used as a means of detecting patriarchal flaws in religious institutions and educational discourses. It will also enhance and expand the field of curriculum theory. Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw were social critics, social activists, and educational theorists and they deserve to be treated as such.

The process may be long and painful, but according to Linda E. Thomas (1998), an Assistant Professor of Theology and Anthropology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, there are scholars of all persuasions and backgrounds who are committed to adding diversity to the way that knowledge is constructed. For women like Maria Stewart, Julia Foote and Zilpha Elaw, knowledge was constructed prophetically and spiritually. These women had some education, yet nothing, compared to the education that their white counterparts received, which suggests that the knowledge that they acquired was "Holy Spirit enhanced"⁴⁰ and the result of the prophetic and spiritual nature each one possessed. Scholars who adhere to a paradigm of transformation and reconstruction of knowledge are discovering and accenting those marginalized ways of knowing which have been suppressed and dominated by the discourses which govern our societies. (Thomas, 200?) I, too, am committed to adding diversity to the way that knowledge is constructed. Curriculum theory is fertile ground for such research. It is this type of research that will set the stage for more ground breaking research in the field of

⁴⁰ "Holy Spirit enhanced" - Aided and assisted in all things by God, and the Holy Spirit.

curriculum studies. Curriculum theory should be the leading excavator in the excavation of these lost lives.

Finally, Joycelyn Moody (2001) called for the reading of early Black holy women. She saw them as being more than either literary figures or preachers. She further suggested that feminist scholars may fear that “We ourselves will be thought to embody the stereotype, that even studying religious women taints us, renders us “too subjective,” makes us as “preachy” and “primitive” as our foremothers are said to be” (172). She wrote,

By ignoring or depreciating the theology of these women’s spiritual autobiographies, contemporary scholars perpetuate the academy’s proclivity toward keeping the personal and the private outside its walls, as if it were possible to sever the personal from the professional. (p. 174)

We must act promptly and courageously. If not, the writings of women like Maria Stewart, Julia Foote, and Zilpha Elaw will continue to be omitted, ignored, dismissed and disrespected. Therefore, Moody urges,

feminist scholars, free from the restrictions that have previously bound us, especially to continue the essential work of theorizing African-American women’s spirituality and our sexuality.” (p. 177)

I have been delivered from such restrictions. I am no longer bound, so I along with other feminist scholars can continue the essential work of theorizing African-American women’s spirituality. And now the process begins.

REFERENCES

- Ahlstrom, S. (1972). *A religious history of the American people*. New Haven, CT: Yale University
- Andrews, W. L. (1986). *To tell a free story, the first century of Afro-American autobiography, 1760-1865*. Urbana, IL: University of Chicago
- Andrews, W. L. (1986). *Sisters of the spirit: Three Black women's autobiographies of the nineteenth century*. Bloomington: Indiana University
- Angelou, M. (1978). *And still I rise*. New York: Random.
- Benson, A. B. (Ed.). (1924). *America of the fifties: Letters of Fredrika Bremer*. New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation.
- Bigsby, C. E. E. (1980). *The second Black renaissance: Essays in Black literature*. Westport: Greenwood .
- Blackburn, R. (1993). In search of the Black female self: African-American women's autobiographies and ethnicity. In E. Jelenik (Ed.), *Women's Autobiography*, (pp. 133-148).
- Blassingame, J. (Ed.). (1977). *Slave testimony: Two centuries of letters, speeches, interviews, and autobiographies*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.
- Braxton, J.M. (1989). *Black women writing autobiography: A tradition within a tradition*. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- Brereton, V. (1991). *From sin to salvation*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Brooks-Higginbotham, E. (1993). *Righteous discontent: The women's movement in the Black Baptist church 1880-1920*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Brooks, E. (1984). *The women's movement in the Black Baptist church, 1880-1920*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Rochester, NY.
- Butterfield, S. (1974). *Black autobiography in America*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts.
- Buckner, D. (1995). Spirituality, sexuality, and creativity: A Conversation with Margaret Walker-Alexander. In G. Wade-Gayles (Ed.), *My soul is a witness: African-American women's spirituality*, Boston: Beacon.

- Carmody, D. (1991). *The Good Alliance: Feminism, religion, and education*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Clarke, E. (1979). *Wrestlin' Jacob: A portrait of religion in the Old South*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox
- Collier-Thomas, B. (1998). *Daughters of thunder*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cone, J. (1975). *God of the oppressed*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Copeland, M.S. (1993). Wading through many sorrows: Toward a theology of suffering in womanist perspective, In E. Townes (Ed.), *A troubling in my soul: Womanist perspective on evil and suffering*,(pp.109-29) Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Coslett, T., Lury, C., & Summerfield, P. (2000). *Feminism and autobiography, texts, theories, methods*. London: Routledge.
- Daly, M. (1973). *Beyond God the father: Toward a philosophy of women's liberation*. Boston: Beacon.
- Daly, M. (1978). *Gyn/Ecology: The metaethics of radical feminism*. Boston: Beacon .
- Dillard, C., Rashid, A., & Tyson, C. (2000). My soul is a witness: Affirming pedagogies of the spirit, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (QSE)*, 13(5).
- Doll, W.E. (1995). The Loyola Spirituality Conference: A Journey into "otherness" *Journal for Curriculum Theorizing*. 11(2), 7-11.
- Douglas-Chin, R. (2001). *Preacher Woman sings the Blues: The autobiographies of nineteenth-century African-American evangelists*. Columbia: University of Missouri.
- Dubois, W. E. B. (1920). *Darkwater: Voices from within the veil*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Dubois, W. E. B. (1982). *Souls of Black folk*. New York: New American Library.
- Eliot, T.S. (1952). Modern education and the class. In *Social Criticism*. London: Penguin.
- Etter-Lewis, G. (1993). *My soul is my own, oral narratives of African-American women in the professions*. New York: Routledge.
- Etter-Lewis, G., & Foster, M. (1996). *Unrelated kin, race and gender in women's personal narratives*. New York: Rutledge.

- Faulkner, W. J. (Ed.). (1977). "How the slaves worshipped," *The days when the animals talked: Black American folktales and how they came to be*. Chicago: Follett.
- Foster, F.S. (1993). *Written by herself: Literary production by African-American women, 1746-1892*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Frederick, M. (2003). *Between Sundays: Black women and everyday struggles of faith*. Berkley, CA: University of California.
- Fry-Brown, T. (2000). *God don't like ugly, African-American women handing on spiritual values*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.
- Giddings, P. (1984). *When and where I enter: The impact of Black women on race and sex in America*. New York: William Morrow.
- Gilkes, C.T. (2001). *If it wasn't for the women*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Goldberg, D. (Ed.). (1990). *Anatomy of racism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota .
- Gomez, M. (1998). *Exchanging our country marks*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Griffiin, D. (1989). *Varieties of postmodern theology*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hayes, D. (1995). *Hagar's daughters, womanist ways of being in the world*. New York: Paulist.
- Haynes, C. (1998). *Divine destiny, gender and race in nineteenth-century protestantism*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Haywood, C. (2003). *Prophesying daughters, Black women preachers and the word, 1823-1913*. Columbia: University of Missouri.
- Hill-Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Hillis V., & Pinar, W. (1999). *The lure of the transcendent: Collected essays by Dwayne E. Huebner*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- hooks, b. (1993). *Sisters of the yam*. Boston: South End .
- Hoopes, J. (1979). *Oral history: An introduction for students*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

- Houchins, S.E., (Ed.). (1988). Introduction to *Spiritual narratives*, (Ed.), H.L. Gates. New York: Oxford University.
- Hull, G., Scott, P., & Smith, B. (1982). *All the women are White, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave*. New York: The Feminist Press.
- Hurston, Z. N. (1990). *Their eyes were watching God*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Jackson, J. (1988). Music of the Black Churches. In *Folklife in the Florida Parishes*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana Division of the Arts.
- Jacobs, H. (1988). *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. New York: Oxford University.
- Jeffery, D. (1987). *A burning and a shining light*. Grand Rapids, MI: Erdman Publishing
- Jelinek, E.C., (ed.). (1984). *Women's autobiography: Essays in criticism*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Katz, M. (1990). "She who would be free—resistance," in Hine, *Black women in United States history*, vol. 9 New York: Carlson Publishing.
- Kostarelos, F. (1995). *Feeling the spirit: Faith and hope in an evangelical Black storefront church*. Columbia: University of South Carolina.
- Ladner, J. (1971). *Tomorrow's tomorrow: The Black woman*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska.
- Lehmann, A., & Myers, J. (1989). *Magi, witchcraft, and religion: An anthropological study of the supernatural*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.
- Lemert C. & Bhan E. (1998). *The voice of Anna Julia Cooper*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lerner, G. (1973). *Black women in White America*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Life Application Study Bible (1991). New International Version. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.
- Lincoln, C. E. (1984). *Race, religion, and the continuing American dilemma*. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Lincoln, C. & Mamiya, L. (1990). *The Black church in the African-American experience*. Durham, NC: Duke University.

- Lorde, A. (1983). "An open letter to Mary Daly." In *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*. Cherrie Moraga & Gloria Anzaldua. New York: Kitchen Table – Women of Color Press.
- Lorde, A. (1988). *Zami: A new spelling of my name*. New York: Crossing.
- Lowenberg, R. J., & Bogin, R. (1977). *Black women in nineteenth century American life*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University.
- Marshall, P. (1983). *Praise song for the widow*. New York: Putnam.
- Mattis, J. (1995). Work (i) ngs of the Spirit: Spirituality, coping and the construction of meaning in the lives of Black women. *Dissertation Abstracts International*.
- McCarthy, C., & Crichlow, W. (1993). *Race, identity, and representation in education*. New York: Routledge.
- McKay, N. (1989). *Nineteenth-century Black women's spiritual autobiographies: religious faith and self-empowerment*. In Personal Narratives group (Eds). *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narrative*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- McKnight, D. (2003). *Schooling, the puritan imperative and the molding of an American national identity "Education's errand in the wilderness."* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mitrano, B. (1979). Feminist Theology and curriculum theory. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 11 (3), 211-220.
- Moody, J. (2001). *Sentimental confessions*. Athens: The University of Georgia.
- Moore, M.E. (1989). The art of teaching from the heart: The heart of the matter. Paper presented to the School of Theology at the Claremont College, Claremont, CA.
- Morrison, T. (1987). *Beloved*. New York: Penguin.
- Morton, N. (1985). *The journey is home*. Boston: Beacon.
- Moses, W. J. (1982). *Black messiahs and uncle toms: Social and literary manipulations of a religious myth*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University.
- Munro, P. (1998). *Subject to fiction: women teachers' life history narratives and the cultural politics of resistance*. Philadelphia: Open University.
- O'Connor, L. (1954). *Pioneer women orators*. New York: Columbia University.

- Olney, J. (1980). *Autobiography: Essays theoretical and critical*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.
- Patai, D., Gluck, & Sherna, B. (1991). *Women's words, The feminist practice of oral history*. New York: Routledge.
- Pinar, W., Williams, R., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. (1995). *Understanding curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Reuther, R., & McLaughlin, E. (1979). *Women of spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Reid, F. (1990). *A Black church's understanding of the holy spirit*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, United Theological Seminary.
- Richardson, M. (1987). *Maria Stewart: America's first Black woman political writer*. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Riggs, M. (1997). *Can I get a witness? Prophetic religious voices of African-American women, an anthology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books
- Shange, N. (1996). *Sassafrass, cypress and indigo*. New York: Picador USA.
- Sheftall, G. B. (1995). *Words of fire: An anthology of African-American feminist thought*. New York: New Press.
- Smith, S. & Watson, J. (1992). *The politics of gender in women's autobiography*. (Eds.). Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Smith, S. (1987). *A poetics of women's autobiography*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Sterling, D. (1984). *We are your sisters*. New York: Norton & Company.
- Stewart, Carlyle. (1999). *Black Spirituality and Black Consciousness*. Africa World Press.
- Stewart, M. (1988). *The productions of Mrs. Maria Stewart, 1835*. Reprinted in *Spiritual Narratives*, ed. Henry Louis Gates. New York: Oxford University.
- Swaim, K. (1992). " 'Come and hear': Women's puritan evidences." In *American women's autobiography: Fea(s)ts of memory*, In M. Culley (Ed.), Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- Townes, E. (Ed.). (1993). *A troubling in my soul, womanist perspectives on evil and suffering*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

- Townes, E. (1993). *Womanist justice, womanist hope*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars.
- Townes, E. (1995). *In a blaze of glory: Womanist spirituality as social witness*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.
- Wacker, G. (2000). *Religion in nineteenth century America*. New York: Oxford University.
- Wade-Gayles, G. (1995). *My soul is a witness: African-American women's spirituality*. Boston: Beacon.
- Walker, A. (1983). *In search of our mothers' gardens: Womanist prose*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Walker, A. (1982). *The color purple*. New York: Pocket Books
- Washington, M. H. (1987). *Invented lives: Narratives of Black women, 1860-1960*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Watley, W. (1993). *The African-American churches and ecumenism, singing the Lord's song in a strange land*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Agnes, M., & Guralnik, D.B. (Eds.). (2001). *Webster's new world college dictionary* (4th ed.). Cleveland, OH: IDG Books Worldwide.
- Weisenfeld, J. & Newman, R. (1996). *This far by faith: Readings in African-American women's religious biography*. New York: Routledge.
- West, C. (1999). *The Cornel West Reader*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.
- Williams, D. (1999). *Sisters in the wilderness*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.
- Williams, F. B. (1987). "The Colored Girl." In M.H. Washington (Ed.), *Invented lives: Narratives of Black women 1860-1960*, (pp. 150-159). Garden City, NY: Anchor.

VITA

Elecia Brown Lathon, a native of Zachary, Louisiana, began her teaching career as a language therapist after graduating from Southern University with a bachelor of science degree in speech pathology and audiology in 1993. She spent the next three years teaching language development skills at Progress Elementary School. In 1996, Elecia earned her master's degree in educational administration from Louisiana State University while working at Istrouma Middle Magnet School as a reading and drama teacher. Elecia also coached girls' basketball during her tenure at Istrouma Middle Magnet. Upon leaving the middle school in 1999, Ms. Lathon began working with the I CARE program, an alcohol and drug prevention program, with the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. After working as an alcohol and drug prevention specialist for two years she enrolled in the doctoral program in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University. As a doctoral student, she taught Introduction to College Study, and a student development and diversity course at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, and reading methods courses for pre-service teachers at Southern University, Baton Rouge. Ms. Lathon also had the privilege of working in Directed Studies with student athletes at the Cox Academic Center for Student Athletes at Louisiana State University. In 2002, Elecia earned her specialist degree in curriculum and instruction. She will receive a doctorate in curriculum and instruction in December 2005. Elecia plans to do further research on African-American women and education, as well as work with pre-service teachers as they prepare to enter the educational arena because Elecia is a firm believer that "It is easier to build a child than it is to repair an adult.

Therefore, if her students aren't learning the way she teaches than she teaches the way they learn. Elecia is committed to academic excellence for **all** students.