

## HISTORICAL ESSAY:

# IN THE NAME OF GOD; AN AMERICAN STORY OF FEMINISM, RACISM, AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE: THE STORY OF ALMA BRIDWELL WHITE.

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## FOREWORD

I first conceived of this article while taking *Gender and the Law In American History Seminar* at the Georgetown University Law Center in the Spring Semester of 1995, with Professors Wendy Williams and Richard Chused. I had earned my Certificate in Women's Studies at

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Duke University in 1989, and realized then that much of women's history still remained undiscovered and left untold.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, I was interested in taking this seminar, and in researching more women's history from a legal perspective.

I came across Alma White's history entirely by accident. While researching a different topic at the Library of Congress, I discovered Alma White's writings. After reading several of Alma White's books, I decided to focus my topic on her. I was fascinated to discover through Alma White's many books and other relevant sources that historical civil rights movements were not only fragmented, but in many cases, diametrically opposed. For instance, Alma White could be considered a nineteenth century feminist—as she believed in legal equality for women and the Suffrage Amendment—but did not believe in equality for blacks and other racial minorities.

Like much of women's history, I discovered that Alma White's story remained largely untold. I found nothing written about Alma White, except for limited coverage in a few books about the rise of the Holiness Movement and in two unpublished theses about her that were written from a religious, historical perspective.<sup>2</sup> I therefore decided that I would write about Alma White and share what I found in this article. Thus, this article will attempt to tell Alma White's story from both a historical, and legalistic viewpoint.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Alma White was born Alma Bridwell in 1862, and died in 1946.<sup>3</sup> Within these span of years, Alma Bridwell lived a remarkable life. Claiming a spiritual calling since an early age, Alma Bridwell felt compelled to join the ministry during a time when established churches prohibited women from preaching.<sup>4</sup> Despite rejection from family members, profound discouragement from her husband, and obstruction by church elders, Alma Bridwell began to preach in Methodist churches.<sup>5</sup> However, after repeated rebuffs and a lack of acceptance from Methodist Church leaders, Alma Bridwell left the Church and formed her own religious sect, eventually called the

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1. See GERDA LERNER, *THE CREATION OF PATRIARCHY* 227 (1986) (stating that "[t]he lack of knowledge of the female past has deprived us of female heroines, a fact which is only recently being corrected through the development of Women's History.").

2. The only exception to this was mention of Alma Bridwell White in Kathleen Blee's book about women of the Klan, *infra*, note 22.

3. See ALMA B. WHITE, *I THE STORY OF MY LIFE* 9 (1919) [hereinafter VOLUME I].

4. See *id.*

5. See *id.* at 42.

"Pillar of Fire."<sup>6</sup>

Alma Bridwell was able to accomplish many feats despite the social barriers placed on women during her lifetime. She gained a fairly considerable following within the Pillar of Fire,<sup>7</sup> opened many missions across the United States and Europe,<sup>8</sup> and founded a Bible college.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Alma Bridwell wrote extensively, publishing over forty books and periodicals.<sup>10</sup>

Alma Bridwell's writing contained elements that appealed to both traditionally progressive and conservative movements.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Alma Bridwell herself both adhered to and rejected the prevailing nineteenth century viewpoints surrounding traditional sex roles within the "Cult of True Womanhood" ("Cult"), which demanded that women be pious, pure, domestic and submissive.<sup>12</sup> Though Alma Bridwell was ultimately able to break free of the "Cult's" demand that she stay within the domestic sphere, she continually battled against the dictates of being "submissive."<sup>13</sup> Alma Bridwell also accepted the "Cult's" philosophy without question that women were naturally more "pious" and "pure."<sup>14</sup> Due to the need to maintain piety and purity in women, Alma Bridwell simultaneously promoted suffrage and the 1923 Equal Rights Amendment ("ERA"),<sup>15</sup> advocating that white

6. See ALMA B. WHITE, 4 THE STORY OF MY LIFE 240-42 (1928) [hereinafter VOLUME IV].

7. See ALMA B. WHITE, 5 THE STORY OF MY LIFE 19 (1943) [hereinafter VOLUME V] (noting that a significant number of followers were looking to White and the Pillar of Fire for "spiritual leadership").

8. See Susie Cunningham Stanley, *Alma White: Holiness Preacher with a Feminist Message* 26-112 (1987) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Illiff School of Theology and University of Denver (Colorado Seminary)) (on file with author) (illustrating the spiritual journey of White's public ministry).

9. See *id.* at 190 (noting that the Pillar of Fire sponsored the London Bible Seminary, which was later renamed Alma Bible College in honor of Alma White).

10. See *id.* at 177-84 (mentioning many of Alma White's books and periodicals, including *WOMEN'S CHAINS*, discussed *infra*, note 160).

11. As will be explained more thoroughly below, Alma Bridwell both wrote and spoke about issues that were considered historically progressive, such as suffrage and women's rights, as well as issues that appealed to more historically conservative elements, such as racism and nativism. See *infra* Part IV.A-B and accompanying text. Alma Bridwell's ideas and theories were accepted by diverse groups, such as the National Woman's Party, the Women's Christian Temperance Union ("WCTU"), and the Ku Klux Klan. See *infra* Part IV.B and accompanying text.

12. See generally Barbara Welter, *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860*, 18 AMERICAN QUARTERLY 151 (1966) (explaining that although Alma Bridwell was born at the end of the "Cult," which peaked from 1820-1860, its influence extended well into the twentieth century).

13. See *id.* at 153, 174 (asserting that Alma Bridwell reflected the struggle that befell many of her colleagues within her era who attempted to carve a larger role for women outside the constraints permitted by solidly defined gender roles). Even after the apex of the "Cult," its influence brought "guilt and confusion in the midst of opportunity." *Id.*

14. *Id.* at 152.

15. See ALMA WHITE, *THE KU KLUX KLAN IN PROPHECY* 129-30 (1928) [hereinafter

women needed protection from immorality by white men.<sup>16</sup>

Also unusual were Alma Bridwell's books that praised the Ku Klux Klan, a group that typically did not support women in "masculine" professions, such as the Ministry.<sup>17</sup> Alma Bridwell's writings on the Klan are even more fascinating in that they recorded a women's voice in a time when such women's voices—especially those aligned with the Klan—were rarely published or given significant weight.<sup>18</sup>

Alma Bridwell's life reflects the changing social phenomenon occurring during her lifetime. For instance, her rise as a Bishop and leader within the Pillar of Fire reflected the rise of Holiness groups in general. These groups allowed women more space and freedom to break away from mainstream religion and start their own religious sects. Alma Bridwell was also exemplary of her times in her political and religious opinions, which blended pleas for women's rights with elitist and racist arguments.

To modern feminists, who advance the notion of gender equality along with racial equality,<sup>19</sup> she is no doubt an anomaly. Alma Bridwell must also appear as an aberration to many current fundamentalist religious groups, who, for example, state that they deplore racism and discrimination against religious groups, but nevertheless believe that women have a limited, God-defined role within the home and must submit to their husbands.<sup>20</sup> However,

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PROPHECY] ("The Nineteenth Amendment brought to an end the long-fought battle for the enfranchisement of women; thanks be to the chivalry and votes of men who helped to bring it about.").

16. See Welter, *supra* note 12, at 156 (asserting that despite the immorality of men, women "managed to withstand men's assaults").

17. See PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 134-35 (rationalizing the principles of the Ku Klux Klan); ALMA WHITE, HEROES OF THE FIERY CROSS 187 (1928) [hereinafter HEROES] (glorifying the Ku Klux Klan organization).

18. For instance, women who fought oppression based on race were often published. These women were usually feminists, such as Ida B. Wells and Jessie Daniel Ames. See generally JACQUELYN DOWD HALL, REVOLT AGAINST CHIVALRY: JESSIE DANIEL AMES AND THE WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN 78 (1993). However, women who supported race bias and groups like the Ku Klux Klan were rarely at the forefront of these groups, much less published. For this reason, White is quite extraordinary.

19. See, e.g., NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN, 1998 DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WOMEN (1998) (advocating rights for both genders, all races, the disabled, etc.).

20. See Edd Doerr, *Promise Keepers: Who, What, and Why?*, USA TODAY MAGAZINE, Mar. 1, 1998, at 30 (noting that 90% of the men who gathered in Washington, D.C. for a Promise Keeper rally considered themselves "fundamentalist, evangelical, or charismatic Christians"); Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Mixed Messages on the Mall*, CHRISTIAN CENTURY, Oct. 22, 1997, at 933 (stating that Promise Keeper "leaders continue to equivocate on the nature of gender reconciliation in a way they don't on racial reconciliation"); *Promise Keepers and Race*, CHRISTIAN CENTURY, Mar. 6, 1996, at 255 ("At the Southern Baptist Convention's 150th meeting last year, delegates overwhelmingly passed a resolution apologizing for the denomination's past defense of slavery and acknowledging continuing racism."); Karen Uhlenhuth & Edward M. Eveld,

during the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, a woman who advocated greater rights for women on the one hand, but accepted the persecution and oppression of groups such as African Americans, Catholics, and non-white immigrants on the other hand, was not at all unusual.<sup>21</sup> In fact, in many ways Alma Bridwell reflected the early twentieth century, a time of fluctuating political ideas and ideologies.<sup>22</sup>

This article seeks to explore these competing views and their effect on the law. Part I describes Alma Bridwell's early life. Specifically, subpart A describes Alma Bridwell's attempts to break out of her family's confining atmosphere, or her self-described "prison," through her desire to pursue a calling to preach; subpart B explores her marriage, and her re-entry into "prison." Part II analyzes Alma Bridwell's role as a preacher and leader in camp meetings, and how religion through the Holiness movement became her ultimate liberator from "prison," enabling Alma Bridwell to pursue her divine calling and begin the Pillar of Fire.

Finally, Part III probes Alma Bridwell's competing beliefs in equality for women and oppression of racial and religious minorities, ideologies which she increasingly made public in her role as Bishop of the Pillar of Fire. Discussion of Alma Bridwell's ideas and advocacy for legal change will be divided into subparts. Subpart A will examine Alma Bridwell's claims for suffrage, the ERA, and legal equality for women; subpart B explores Alma Bridwell's beliefs in segregation, racism, and support for the Klan; subpart C analyzes Alma Bridwell's intolerance towards the Catholic Church—which was an ironic outgrowth of Alma Bridwell's feminism, support for Prohibition, and First Amendment claims on behalf of the Pillar of Fire.

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*Baptist Amendment Brings Mixed Reaction*, KAN. CITY STAR, June 11, 1998, at A-1, A-11 (reporting that many religions, including the Southern Baptists, believe that a wife should "submit" to her husband).

21. See REBECCA EDWARDS, *ANGELS IN THE MACHINERY: GENDER IN AMERICAN PARTY POLITICS FROM THE CIVIL WAR TO THE PROGRESSIVE ERA* 168 (1997) ("At least until the 1910s, advocates of women's political rights and government action for economic and racial justice found it difficult to advance these projects simultaneously. . . . Conversely, movements to advance women's rights found elitist and racist arguments to be powerfully persuasive.").

22. KATHLEEN M. BLEE, *WOMEN OF THE KLAN: RACISM AND GENDER IN THE 1920S* 177 (1991) (stating that although there were firm alliances of social class and party that emerged after World War II, there were not any such solid alliances in the 1920s). Indeed, "[u]nder the conditions of the 1920s, political movements fused odd, even contradictory, ideologies and political agendas." *Id.*

## II. THE STORY OF ALMA BRIDWELL WHITE'S EARLY LIFE, BREAKING OUT OF HER "PRISON WALLS."

### A. From "Prison" to a Desire to Preach

Alma Bridwell was born in 1862 in Kentucky.<sup>23</sup> She wrote that her "earliest" memories were of the Civil War,<sup>24</sup> when the propaganda supporting slavery and complaints of oppression by the North were firmly engrained in her mind.<sup>25</sup> It was gender and physical appearance, however, that would define her life, consigning her to a life of drudgery for her first eleven years.<sup>26</sup>

Alma Bridwell grew up in a family of eleven children.<sup>27</sup> From a very early point in her life, she was a disappointment to her parents.<sup>28</sup> She was the seventh daughter born to the Bridwells,<sup>29</sup> and her parents were acutely disappointed that she was not a boy.<sup>30</sup> From the start, she was treated differently because of her sex. In addition, Alma Bridwell was also a disappointment to her parents because of her physical appearance. She wrote that she recognized early in life that she was "homely."<sup>31</sup> In fact, she was often told that she was so homely that she should have been a boy.<sup>32</sup> Her sisters, in contrast, were all physically attractive. This disparity in physical appearance caused the Bridwells to treat her differently than her sisters.

It is interesting that Alma Bridwell's "homely" appearance worked to her disadvantage. She was born during the height of the "Cult," which placed heavy emphasis on marriage and domesticity for women.<sup>33</sup> Given that her sisters were more attractive, it would have

23. See VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 9.

24. See VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 161 (reflecting on her childhood).

25. See INFORMATION PLEASE ALMANAC 770 (46th ed. 1993) (describing Kentucky during the Civil War as a "slaveholding state with a considerable abolitionist population, Kentucky was caught in the middle of the conflict supplying both Union and Confederate forces with thousands" of people).

26. See *infra* notes 33-44 and accompanying text.

27. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 9-10.

28. See VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 144 (asserting that her parents often said that she should have been a boy).

29. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 9.

30. See, e.g., BLEE, *supra* note 22, at 104 (surmising that the initial reason her parents were disappointed in Alma was because she was not born a male).

31. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 12.

32. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 66.

33. See Welter, *supra* note 12, at 151 (contending that women were "hostages of the home"); Dawn M. Colson, *The Woman's Christian Temperance Union from 1874 to 1989: The Union Signal's Promotion of Woman Suffrage and the Prohibition Party* 8 (1991) (unpublished M.A. thesis, Auburn University) (describing that women, during this era, were considered "pious, pure, submissive, and domestic").

been more characteristic of this era if the Bridwells had trained her sisters for domestic chores, to make them even more suitable for marriage, while sending Alma Bridwell, less attractive and thus less suitable for marriage, to school.

Instead, the Bridwells did the opposite. They confined Alma Bridwell to her home and a life of drudgery, or "prison," as she herself called it, while her sisters were allowed to go to school.<sup>34</sup> She wrote that her parents were very concerned about the education of their children, but that her father assumed her sisters were more talented,<sup>35</sup> presumably due to their more pleasing looks. Her father often remarked that "it would be more profitable" to send her sisters to school rather than her.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, Alma Bridwell was impatient to learn and ambitiously taught herself to read.<sup>37</sup>

Her disappointment at being kept home was profound. At an early age, she felt that there was "no relief from the kitchen."<sup>38</sup> While her sisters went to school, she felt "confined to prison walls."<sup>39</sup> She described herself as a "bird in a cage" in a "prison house."<sup>40</sup> Like Cinderella, Alma Bridwell was kept home while her sisters were allowed to leave.<sup>41</sup> Her parents had her work so hard that she reached the point of physical exhaustion.<sup>42</sup> She had only the assistance of one brother old enough to help with the chores.<sup>43</sup> Despite being one of the youngest children, Alma Bridwell worked so hard that her strength was soon "taxed to the limit."<sup>44</sup>

As an older child at the age of eleven, however, Alma Bridwell was allowed to attend school.<sup>45</sup> Finally, she was released from her "prison" of house care duties. Though she feared she would be severely behind her peers intellectually, she was surprised to find that she was far ahead of them.<sup>46</sup> She won her first Bible in a spelling contest, beating an older sister who had been a top student at the local

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34. See VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 40.

35. See ALMA WHITE, LOOKING BACK FROM BEULAH 29 (1929) [hereinafter BEULAH] (reporting that Alma Bridwell's sisters were physically more attractive than her).

36. *Id.*

37. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 26, 40.

38. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 40.

39. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 40.

40. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 43.

41. BEULAH, *supra* note 35, at 29.

42. BEULAH, *supra* note 35, at 29.

43. BEULAH, *supra* note 35, at 28-29.

44. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 43.

45. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 102.

46. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 103.

school.<sup>47</sup>

Alma Bridwell saw teaching as a chance to have a pulpit for her religious beliefs, and in 1879, at the age of seventeen, she obtained her teaching certificate.<sup>48</sup> Though she considered preaching her true calling, she realized that women were not allowed to preach within the Methodist Church.<sup>49</sup> The “only place allowed women” in Methodism was to go abroad and mission to the “heathens.”<sup>50</sup> At first, Alma Bridwell planned to become a missionary, but she would later hear God tell her to stay in the country,<sup>51</sup> and for a while, she and her sisters attended “Female College” in Millersburg, Kentucky.<sup>52</sup> She did not appear to think that sex segregation in education was anything notable.

It was in Millersburg that Alma Bridwell first wrote about black people. She wrote that “[t]here were so many colored people that the white man who had to earn wages for a living could scarcely find anything to do.”<sup>53</sup> In this regard, she saw tobacco farming as a necessary evil, stating that “[t]he poor white man had no alternative but to raise it to keep the wolf from the door” because of the encroachment of blacks upon the job market.<sup>54</sup>

Alma Bridwell also began to develop her views on gender roles while in Millersburg. William Godbey, a prominent Methodist preacher and lecturer that Alma Bridwell first met during a revival meeting, told her that she ought to be a Preacher’s wife.<sup>55</sup> Though Alma Bridwell initially accepted his advice and the limits on her ability to evangelize, she knew in her heart that “she had a call to preach.”<sup>56</sup>

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47. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 136.

48. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 255.

49. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 228.

50. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 102.

51. See VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 228-29 (exploring Alma Bridwell’s many callings).

52. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 272, 277.

53. See VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 273-74; ALMA WHITE, 2 THE STORY OF MY LIFE 62 (1919) [hereinafter VOLUME II]. In expressing her outrage at the black wage earner, Alma Bridwell reveals that even as a young woman, she held clearly formed beliefs about how society was supposed to be structured. See VOLUME II at 62. Alma Bridwell accepted the fact that men were to be wage earners, and that white men in particular ought to hold social and economic positions above those of the “colored.” *Id.*

54. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 274.

55. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 274-75.

56. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 273.



*B. Alma's Marriage and her Return to "Prison"*

Just as "Cult" philosophy imprisoned Alma Bridwell in childhood, it also temporarily served to confine her as an adult. Alma Bridwell's return to a self-described prison occurred because her new husband subscribed wholeheartedly to the "Cult's" philosophy by insisting that the home was to be her workplace, and that she existed for the sole purpose of making him happy.<sup>57</sup>

At first, Alma Bridwell resisted the "Cult's" prescriptions that marriage and motherhood were a woman's ultimate destiny. She wrote that throughout her teaching career, she was not on the "marriage market," as her heart was already "fixed" in her love for God.<sup>58</sup> According to Godbey's advice, "no person but a preacher," had even a chance at "winning her favor."<sup>59</sup> In 1887, her preacher, Kent White, finally arrived.<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, while Alma Bridwell may have temporarily escaped her prison—as Cinderella ultimately escaped hers—her new husband proved to be anything but a prince.

Though Alma Bridwell described such matters as religion and women's rights with a fiery passion in her books, she wrote about her marriage to Kent White with a sense of apathy. This demonstrates Bridwell's resistance to some of the "Cult's" philosophy, which placed a heavy emphasis on women marrying, for instance, for love over other practicalities.<sup>61</sup> Alma Bridwell failed to mention or describe any emotions of love or excitement in connection with her engagement and wedding. This apathy, however soon turned to anger due to Kent White's treatment of her and his resistance towards her desire to preach.

During the beginning of their marriage—and despite her initial rejection of "Cult" ideology—Alma Bridwell, (now Alma White), appeared to accept certain tenets of the "Cult," referring to her husband as "Mr. White" and stating that he was her "spiritual superior."<sup>62</sup> Immediately after their wedding day, Alma White moved with her husband to Denver where only he was assigned to preach.<sup>63</sup>

However, after Kent convinced her to see the opera, Alma White,

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57. See Welter, *supra* note 12, at 152 (explaining the "Cult" ideal of women as submissive and domestic).

58. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 274.

59. VOLUME I, *supra* note 3, at 274.

60. BEULAH, *supra* note 35, at 113.

61. See Welter, *supra* note 12, at 171 (explaining that proponents of the "Cult" stressed that "true love" was the motivator for marriage, rather than other reasons, such as acquiring wealth).

62. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 157.

63. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 157.

who believed that the theater was full of sin and debauchery, realized that she could not "take the advice even of her preacher-husband where her conscience was involved."<sup>64</sup> It became apparent that early in the marriage Alma White began to reject "Cult" ideology that dictated that the husband be "head" of the wife in all aspects.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Alma White wrote that Kent's poor judgment soon spilled over into all areas of their lives, particularly in the care of his wife. Thus, Alma White chose to follow the "Cult's" dictates of piety and purity for women, but not its dictates of submissiveness and an absolute male supremacy over matters concerning the household.

After moving to Denver with Kent, Alma White felt isolated, and soon began to feel that she had returned to "prison."<sup>66</sup> Not long after their move, Alma White became ill, and after suffering from a "burning thirst," she begged her husband for some ice.<sup>67</sup> Kent left, ostensibly to get her ice; he disappeared for the entire day, however, and returned empty-handed.<sup>68</sup> After Kent repeated this tactic on several occasions when she became ill, Alma White began to feel that the "prison" gates were locked.<sup>69</sup>

Ironically, it was a "colored" preacher who showed Alma White the path out of her "prison."<sup>70</sup> Though she believed that "colored" people held an inferior place in society, she nevertheless accepted the gospel of this "colored" preacher,<sup>71</sup> named Rebecca Grant.<sup>72</sup> Grant quoted scriptural verse, which stated that "there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ."<sup>73</sup> During this sermon, a huge burden lifted from Alma White.<sup>74</sup> She suddenly realized that God does not make distinctions between men and women, and the

64. BEULAH, *supra* note 35, at 115.

65. See Welter, *supra* note 12, at 159-63 (noting that while the "Cult" advocated that a woman be pious and even lead an erring husband back to Christ, it contradictorily held that the husband was to be the spiritual head of household).

66. See VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 178-90 (remembering her experience as a child growing up as a "hostage of the home"); see also Welter, *supra* note 12 (noting that during Alma White's lifetime, women were "hostages of the home").

67. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 173-90.

68. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 171-72.

69. See VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 170-73 (describing her feelings of isolation).

70. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 175-77.

71. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 176-77.

72. ALMA WHITE, 3 THE STORY OF MY LIFE 173 (1924) [hereinafter VOLUME III].

73. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 176. See *Galatians* 3:28 (New Oxford Ann.) (stating in its entirety that "[t]here is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."). The "colored" preacher emphasized the lack of gender in God's eyes when preaching to Alma White. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 176.

74. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 176.

path was "cleared for her to preach."<sup>75</sup>

However, this path was again soon blocked—at least temporarily. Kent's mother from West Virginia came to visit,<sup>76</sup> and Alma White soon felt as if she were once again living in a "prison" in her own home,<sup>77</sup> where the "Cult" once again reared its ugly head. Alma White's mother-in-law disapproved of her due to her "homely" looks and imperfect figure.<sup>78</sup> Kent and his mother openly lamented the fact that Kent did not marry a "small-waisted" or petite woman.<sup>79</sup> His mother then rudely compared Alma White to her idolized and more physically attractive daughter, Lizzie.<sup>80</sup>

Despite domestic discord, Alma White bore her first child in 1889.<sup>81</sup> Because she was already in poor health, her pregnancy exacerbated her problems.<sup>82</sup> She continued to feel excruciating pain after her pregnancy, mostly due to an infection in her right breast.<sup>83</sup> Immediately after the birth of her child, Kent's mother relieved the nurse who attended Alma White despite her continuing health problems.<sup>84</sup> Kent's mother stated that her daughter, Lizzie, did not need a nurse after her pregnancy, thus Alma White should not need one either.<sup>85</sup>

Alma White continued to suffer, but her husband dismissed her pain, and even refused to summon a doctor.<sup>86</sup> In the midst of her

75. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 177.

76. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 186.

77. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 190.

78. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 189.

79. See SARAH EISENSTEIN, *GIVE US BREAD BUT GIVE US ROSES: WORKING WOMEN'S CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE UNITED STATES: 1890 TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR* 67 (1983) ("All women . . . were presented with the image of a protected, delicate, elegant, pure and idle creature as a model of 'true' womanhood."). Alma White's thicker body frame contrasted with such an image. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 189.

80. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 187.

81. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 198.

82. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 169-208. In fact, the visit of Alma White's mother-in-law worsened her health problems. *Id.* at 190-91. Alma White's mother-in-law became dissatisfied with her own sleeping arrangements and decided to close the bedroom door and cover the cracks in the room, even though Alma White was feeling ill and needed fresh air. *Id.* One night, after her mother-in-law refused to open the door, Alma White got out of bed and attempted to breathe through the cracks in the door. *Id.* Kent woke up to a furious exchange between his mother and Alma White, prompting him to become angry with Alma White. *Id.* In order that Kent's sleep not be disturbed in the future, Kent's mother decided to sleep alongside Alma White and let Kent have her bed. *Id.*

83. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 201-02.

84. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 200.

85. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 200.

86. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 204, 209.

extreme illness, Kent left Alma White to go out of town to preach.<sup>87</sup> Finally, in the middle of the night, her right breast—which had been infected for some time—erupted in a burst of putrid milk.<sup>88</sup> The doctor was finally summoned and upon arrival, he expressed his horror at not being called earlier.<sup>89</sup> He stated that authorities should have been notified, as this was definitely a case of neglect.<sup>90</sup> However, nothing was done because Kent was a preacher.<sup>91</sup> Later, the baby, named Arthur Kent (the name did not please his father, who wished to be the only “Kent” in the family<sup>92</sup>), became very ill and almost died.<sup>93</sup> Throughout Arthur’s illness, Alma White stayed up night and day with him in spite of her own poor health, while her husband read books.<sup>94</sup>

After Alma White’s poor health continued unabated, her husband took her for treatment in Colorado Springs.<sup>95</sup> Kent, however, immediately left her there, and the doctor proceeded to make “improper advances” towards her.<sup>96</sup> Alma White wrote to Kent and begged him to allow her to return to Denver, but he refused.<sup>97</sup> Later, that doctor was brought to trial due to the complaints of “a score of women,” and he was eventually excommunicated.<sup>98</sup>

In 1892, Alma White gave birth to a second child.<sup>99</sup> To her, a second child meant double responsibility.<sup>100</sup> During the birth of this child, Kent once again left her side, presumably to preach.<sup>101</sup> As with Arthur Kent, Alma White’s second child, Ray Bridwell, became very ill.<sup>102</sup> Once again, in spite of her own fragile health and proclivity to physical exhaustion, Alma White stayed up night and day to attend to her child, while her husband slept and refused to summon a

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87. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 205.

88. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 208-09.

89. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 210.

90. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 210.

91. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 210.

92. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 204-05.

93. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 227-30.

94. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 228.

95. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 234.

96. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 235.

97. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 235.

98. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 235.

99. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 299.

100. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 307.

101. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 298-99.

102. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 308.

doctor.<sup>103</sup> When the doctor was finally dispatched, he arrived drunk and misdiagnosed Ray's illness as not very serious.<sup>104</sup> After Alma White realized that Ray was dying of pneumonia, it was too late to do anything else but resign herself to watching her child die.<sup>105</sup> During her vigil, Alma White claimed she heard God, who made her promise that if he saved her baby, she would preach in return.<sup>106</sup> She agreed, and Ray miraculously recovered.<sup>107</sup>

Finally, after many illnesses and brushes with death, Alma White came to see that her husband was anything but her "spiritual head;"<sup>108</sup> in fact, Alma White believed that Kent resided in "spiritual darkness."<sup>109</sup> At this point in her autobiography, Alma White began to refer to Kent as "my husband," rather than "Mr. White,"<sup>110</sup> demonstrating her deepening rejection of the "Cult's" demands that her husband be her superior. Alma White, however, did not immediately go to the Pulpit, as Ray again became very sick and appeared to be dying.<sup>111</sup> Kent nevertheless left to preach in Erie, Colorado.<sup>112</sup> Alma White renewed her promise to preach the Gospel.<sup>113</sup> Ray again recovered.<sup>114</sup>

### III. FROM PREACHING TO THE "PILLAR OF FIRE," RELIGION LIBERATES ALMA WHITE FROM HER "PRISON"

This time, Alma White kept her word. Even though she was finally beginning to pursue the calling that she believed she possessed since she was a little girl, she nevertheless found the path to be filled with "poisonous serpents among the rocks."<sup>115</sup> Once again, her sex proved to be an obstacle, and Alma White faced opposition both publicly from church leaders, and privately from her husband at home. In many ways, mainstream church doctrine and "Cult" ideology clashed:

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103. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 309.

104. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 309-10.

105. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 311-12.

106. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 313-15.

107. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 313-15.

108. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 332.

109. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 332.

110. See generally VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 331; VOLUME III, *supra* note 72; VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6; VOLUME V, *supra* note 7; Alma B. White, 6 THE STORY OF MY LIFE (1924) [hereinafter VOLUME VI].

111. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 341-42.

112. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 342.

113. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 348.

114. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 348.

115. BEULAH, *supra* note 35, at 36.

the "Cult" dictated piousness among women—and even that women bring their straying husbands back to God—while mainstream churches banned women from all leadership roles.<sup>116</sup>

Alma White began to speak and preach in her church through her own initiative.<sup>117</sup> At first, her husband viewed her preaching ambivalently, and allowed her, with some reservations, to take the pulpit on several occasions. Kent seemed to tolerate Alma White's preaching because the Methodist Church allowed women more latitude in speaking and other roles during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>118</sup> However, Kent began to rebuke Alma White in private.<sup>119</sup> The more she took the podium, the more irate Kent became, often challenging her scriptural interpretations.<sup>120</sup> Rather than being pleased with Alma White's newfound passion, Kent worried more about what other people might think.<sup>121</sup> He feared that his wife's passionate and vociferous prayers to the Lord might cause people to view her as an "extremist."<sup>122</sup> As Alma White's resolution to preach continued unabated, her husband became even more critical, sometimes keeping her up all night to argue scriptural interpretations and staying away from meals to punish her.<sup>123</sup>

Indeed, Alma White and her husband were completely at odds in their preaching and evangelistic styles. Alma White faulted her husband for devoting his time to "books and studies," instead of dedicating all of his time to the "salvation of souls."<sup>124</sup> Kent, on the other hand, was more erudite, and often took issue with her interpretation of the scripture, preferring a more intellectual approach to the pulpit over fiery heartfelt pleas to the Lord.<sup>125</sup>

Alma White, however, remained resolute. She organized the Colorado Holiness Association, whose aim was to provide "sanctification" (spiritual purification and a direct link to God) and

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116. See Welter, *supra* note 12, at 162-63.

117. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 349-50.

118. See Ronald D. Graybill, *The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century 2* (1983) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University) (noting that "of the 37 women designated 'religious leaders' in the biographical dictionary NOTABLE AMERICAN WOMEN, many were nuns and only [four] can be said to have had husbands who aided their movements or shared their careers.").

119. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 350.

120. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 350, 353-54.

121. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 354.

122. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 354.

123. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 354.

124. BEULAH, *supra* note 35, at 119.

125. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 352-53.

spiritual enlightenment.<sup>126</sup> The Holiness Movement has been described as "one of the nineteenth century's most persistent and socially significant themes."<sup>127</sup> This movement was rooted in Methodist theology,<sup>128</sup> and strove to revive the faith and worship styles of the "primitive" Christian church.<sup>129</sup>

Alma White encountered great resistance from Methodist Church leaders while taking a greater leadership role in the Holiness Association. She organized outdoor camp meetings to provide sanctification; the first of which took place in Erie, Colorado.<sup>130</sup> In Erie, as well as in many other camp meetings that followed, many Methodist preachers were present.<sup>131</sup> Though Alma White founded and organized these events, the ministers nevertheless refused to let her preach.<sup>132</sup> At one meeting, the ministers confronted her directly, telling her that a "woman's place [was] to stay at home and look after her husband and children."<sup>133</sup>

126. See Volume III, *supra* note 72, at i-viii; see also Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 6 (noting that sanctification, or holiness, was based on the theology of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism). "Sanctification" was an act of grace following conversion to Christianity in which the "sinful nature" of the convert was destroyed. *Id.* Holiness adherents believed that perfection was attainable through the work of the Holy Spirit in the experience of sanctification. *Id.*

127. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 5 (noting that the Holiness Association founded by Alma White was only one group within the Holiness Movement in general).

128. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 203 (stating that the founders of breakaway holiness churches, including Alma White, sought to return to primitive Methodism).

129. See Lee Casey, *Bishop White of Denver—A Cromwell in Skirts*, ROCKY MTN. NEWS, June 28, 1946, at 15. There are many theories as to why the Holiness Movement arose. According to Casey, it was an attempt to return to the ways of the early church. *Id.* This was most likely a reaction to the industrial era, where there was a general feeling that churches were too commercial and intertwined with the sinful nature of society. In the attempt to restore the church to its pre-Constantine nature, there was also an acceptance of women as preachers, as it was believed that women preached alongside men at that time. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 247-48. In addition, the Holiness Movement sprang from the reform movements of the nineteenth century, which advocated abolition and women's suffrage. See generally Graybill, *supra* note 118; Stanley, *supra* note 8. In addition, women left established churches to form their own holiness sects since many of the attacks on reforming society came from clergy men. See, e.g., 2 ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER & ROSEMARY SKINNER KELLER, *WOMEN AND RELIGION IN AMERICA, The Nineteenth Century* 300-01 (1982). Many of these women connected arguments advocating equality for blacks with theories advancing equality for women. *Id.* Although Alma White's theology evolved from the influences of many of the above predominating ideas, she did *not* attribute her piety and enlightenment on women's rights to anti-slavery ideology, as will be explained *infra* notes 303-10 and accompanying text. The Holiness Movement also spawned such groups as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, who, like the Holiness groups, strove to cleanse society of its sinfulness. See Colson, *supra* note 33.

130. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 15-16.

131. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 123.

132. See, e.g., VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 197 (recounting Reverend Brother McKay's admission that "[the ministers] know you have held the revivals and gotten the converts; they want the credit, but thank God, I am clear; I will not have to go to the judgment with this on my soul. God is with you, Sister White, keep up your courage.").

133. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 42.

Methodist authorities continued to rebuff Alma White at every camp meeting.<sup>134</sup> She wrote that "[i]t was most humiliating to churchmen to have a woman wield the sword of truth, when no recognition had been given her by ecclesiastical authorities, and she was supposed to have no place except that of servant to her husband."<sup>135</sup> Alma White, however, continued to assert her authority at camp meetings and to open missions, and she eventually gained a considerable following, despite such strong opposition. She opened her first mission in Denver in 1896.<sup>136</sup> By attempting to provide information about the progress of her mission at camp meetings, however, she evoked the continuously growing wrath of male church leaders.<sup>137</sup> One minister informed her that women should not speak, as they were responsible for the downfall of mankind.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, many individuals came to these camp meetings to hear Alma White preach.

After repeated snubs from Methodist preachers, Alma White broke free and started her own church. She wrote that mainstream church leaders demanded all claims to leadership as well as credit for her efforts at organizing camp events.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, she decided to start an independent church, without "strife for leadership."<sup>140</sup> To her, the great Methodist "Church Mother" had fallen from grace and away from the calling of God, thus presenting a need for a new spiritual organization.<sup>141</sup> The coup de grace in her breakaway resulted from another camp meeting, occurring in 1899, where the handbills advertising the event left out her name.<sup>142</sup>

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134. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 123, 199.

135. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 105.

136. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 165.

137. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 198.

138. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 123.

139. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 272.

140. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 199.

141. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 64-65. In addition to the rejection and marginalization that Alma White suffered at the hands of the Methodist Church, she also became disenchanted with the Methodist Church for other reasons. Alma White noted that at many church meetings, preachers would sit by the fireside and gossip. VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 305. She noted with disdain how one bishop married a very wealthy widow. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 56. In addition, she believed that most ministers, due to their salaries and pressure from the Church, were primarily motivated by ambition and desire for advancement, and thus had lost their spirituality and connection with God. *Id.* at 275. Finally, and perhaps most revolting to Alma White, she heard rumors that women had been the victims of unwanted sexual advances by several unscrupulous church leaders. *Id.* at 261. Instead of taking any action, the Church leaders transferred the culprits to a different congregations, where the abuse often started again. *Id.* at 262-63; 300-01.

142. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 283-84.



In 1901, Alma White founded the Pentecostal Union, later renamed the "Pillar of Fire."<sup>143</sup> Alma White's original followers consisted solely of her two sons,<sup>144</sup> although fifty people joined her new movement, which eventually expanded to include thousands.<sup>145</sup> According to her contemporaries, Alma White possessed "extraordinary preaching gifts."<sup>146</sup> As evidence of her incredible speaking abilities, over one thousand people would crowd into auditoriums in Denver to listen to her sermons.<sup>147</sup> The Rocky Mountain News described her as "terrifying in her intense earnestness,"<sup>148</sup> and bestowed upon her the moniker "a Cromwell in skirts" because "she was emotionally intemperate, despite her insistence upon what she considered temperance on the part of others."<sup>149</sup>

In addition to Alma White's gifts as a speaker, she also was able to overcome the obstacle of her gender within the Holiness Movement. Though Methodism did not grant her a preacher's license, the Holiness Movement, which sought to reform mainstream religion and society itself, advocated the right of women to preach.<sup>150</sup> Due to the influence of the Holiness Movement, even Rev. William Godbey, who had prior to 1891 advised White to accept her fate as a preacher's wife, began to advocate for women as preachers.<sup>151</sup>

The Holiness Movement promoted women ministers because its followers believed that the early Christian church accepted women religious leaders.<sup>152</sup> The theory of sanctification promoted the idea that anyone could have a direct link with God, and that those who

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143. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 302.

144. See Casey, *supra* note 129, at 15.

145. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 116 (stating that in 1946, at the time of Alma White's death, the Pillar of Fire had approximately 5,100 members).

146. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 171. Many of White's followers described her preaching as "heavenly dynamite." BLEE, *supra* note 22, at 72.

147. VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 172.

148. Casey, *supra* note 129, at 15.

149. Casey, *supra* note 129, at 15. Oliver Cromwell was a staunch Puritan, who gained control over England after the execution of King Charles I. See MORTIMER CHAMBERS ET AL., *THE WESTERN EXPERIENCE TO 1715* 497 (3d ed. 1983).

150. See Stanley, *supra* notes 8, at 247-48. Other female religious leaders of this era who broke from mainstream churches within the Holiness Movement include Mary Baker Eddy, the "discoverer" of Christian Science; Catherine Booth, who with her husband William built the Salvation Army; and Ellen White, founder of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. See Graybill, *supra* note 118, at ii.

151. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 32.

152. See *infra* note 159 and accompanying text (offering support for the concept of female ministers from the Christian scripture).

experienced holiness must testify publicly, or risk losing her gift.<sup>153</sup> This belief helped religious women, such as Alma White, to work outside the traditional women's sphere and bypass the male church hierarchy in their quest for God.<sup>154</sup> In addition, Alma White, as well as other religious leaders in the Holiness Movement, advocated total submission to God. Thus, followers of Alma White were not actually submitting to her authority, but instead to that of God. Such reasoning may well have made it easier for many adherents to accept a female religious figure. Finally, Alma White was not without encouragement from male supporters. Just as Dio Lewis encouraged the women of the Women's Christian Temperance Union ("WCTU") to fight a war against alcohol,<sup>155</sup> so too did Rev. W.B. Godbey encourage women to preach, and Alma White in particular.<sup>156</sup> Furthermore, though Alma White's husband offered her his reluctant support,<sup>157</sup> Alma White had the unyielding encouragement of her two sons.<sup>158</sup>

Alma White fervently advocated the pulpit as an appropriate place for women, and she based her beliefs on biblical claims as well.<sup>159</sup>

153. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 243.

154. See *id.* at 251.

155. See Ruth Bordin, "A Baptism of Power and Liberty": *The Women's Crusade of 1873-1874*, 87 OHIO HIST. 393, 394-95 (1978) (discussing how Dio Lewis made appeals about the power of women's prayers "in the grog shops," and how he inspired many groups of women to march praying into saloons across the Midwest).

156. See VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 271-72 (reporting that Rev. Godbey's last words to Alma White were, "God has appointed you my successor.").

157. See ARTHUR WHITE, SOME WHITE FAMILY HISTORY 401-02 (1948) (reporting that Kent White "stood in combined awe, admiration and fear" of Alma White).

158. See Graybill, *supra* note 118, at 54. Graybill noted that:

[i]f leadership duties sometimes placed women 'at odds' with their husbands, their relationship with their sons provided them both masculine support and an acceptable female role—that of Mother. In Victorian culture, a dominant mother was more acceptable than a dominant wife, sometimes making their sons more helpful to the women founders than their husbands.

*Id.* Indeed, Alma White's sons believed that their father was "selfish" in not supporting Alma White, especially in that they believed that Alma White had a greater spiritual calling. *Id.* at 60-61.

159. See *supra* note 73. In addition to *Galatians* 3:28, Alma White believed that several other verses verified the biblical foundation of women preachers. *Id.* at 53. For instance, she believed that *Acts* 2:16-18 (King James) justified women's right to preach:

[B]ut this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophecy, and young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those of my Spirit; and they shall prophecy.

*Id.* Alma White also quoted 1 *Corinthians* 11:5, which reads "[B]ut every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head[.]" Ignoring the prospect that female preachers should cover their heads, Alma White nevertheless stated that to "prophecy" means to preach. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 251. She relied on 1 *Corinthians* 14:3 for the

According to Alma White, "the pulpit [was] no place for a man who has not the courage of his convictions."<sup>160</sup> In addition, she wrote that "men had held the reins of government in the church for nearly two thousand years, and it was time for a change."<sup>161</sup> She recognized the inequality of roles based on sex, and stated that "the strength of others is in their limbs rather than in their brains, and they [men] might better furnish the pedal power for a sewing machine and let the women do the preaching."<sup>162</sup>

However, while Alma White garnered a respectable number of followers, her husband was not among them. Alma White wrote that women's ministry "had come closer to [Kent] than he had contemplated and he was found totally unprepared for it."<sup>163</sup> To Alma White's dismay, Kent White proved to be the biggest foe in the launching of her new organization.

In Denver and in other cities where various converts were sent to preach the gospel, her followers began holding "open air meetings," which consisted of preaching in public on various street corners.<sup>164</sup> At first her husband was opposed to open air preaching.<sup>165</sup> However, after several workers were arrested for evangelizing and her organization began to attract publicity, Kent became willing to publicly lead the street marchers.<sup>166</sup> To Alma White, the origin of the attacks by Denver police and arrests of her street workers came from one source alone: the Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus.<sup>167</sup> She believed that the politics of Denver were controlled

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proposition that women were doing this in the apostles' time: "[B]ut she that prophesieth unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." *Id.* In addition, Alma White believed that Jesus' seeking out the Gentile woman at the well, where she went back to tell her people about the Messiah, was also evidence of Jesus' desire that women should preach. VOLUME VI, *supra* note 110, at 94-95. Finally, Alma White explained 1 *Corinthians* 14:34, where Paul tells "women to keep silent in the churches," as a reference to situations where married women disrupted church services by speaking to their husbands. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 251. This was not a general statement to all women to keep silent with respect to preaching, but only to the women in that church at that time. *Id.*

160. VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 79.

161. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 125.

162. Alma White, Speech reprinted in *WOMEN'S CHAINS* 9 (Apr. 1954).

163. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 125.

164. See VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 89 (commenting that the police arrested the preachers and held them until morning when they would begin again).

165. VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 155.

166. VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 155 (noting that Kent was eventually arrested by Denver police for leading a march without a permit).

167. See generally EDWIN S. GAUSTAD, *A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF RELIGION IN AMERICA SINCE 1865* 189 (1986) (stating that The Knights of Columbus was the "major Roman Catholic fraternal order," which "started out as a heavily Irish mutual aid society in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1882. In World War I it served as the chief channel of assistance and support for Roman Catholic servicemen.").

by the Roman Catholics, who she presumed to be openly hostile to her work.<sup>168</sup>

In 1908, Alma White moved the Pillar of Fire headquarters to Zarephath, New Jersey, after a new member deeded a large farm to the organization.<sup>169</sup> She felt that it was God's will to move there, though she retained her mission in Denver.<sup>170</sup> Kent White continued to be dissatisfied with the ongoing success of the Pillar of Fire. Alma White's accomplishments collided with Kent's beliefs on the proper roles for men and women. The more successful his wife became as a preacher, the less successful he viewed himself.<sup>171</sup> Alma White stated that Kent was known to be ambitious and "wanted to be the leader or head of the organization which at first he had opposed."<sup>172</sup> She wrote that "[t]his ambition was at the root of most of his difficulty. He would oppose any step of progress until it had proved to be a success, and then would brood over the fact that someone else would take the credit."<sup>173</sup> Like the Methodist pastors at Alma White's camp meetings, Kent wanted to take credit for her successes, but not share in the efforts needed to achieve them.

Kent preached only a few times to the organization, and when the papers gave him only passing notice, with the *Denver Post* calling Alma White the "real head" of the organization,<sup>174</sup> "he was sorely grieved, and his attitude toward [her] and [their] Church became even more estranged."<sup>175</sup> He told his wife that "he would not take second place and be known as 'Mrs. White's husband,'—that people should speak of her as 'the wife of Kent White.'"<sup>176</sup> Kent strongly felt that because

168. VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 89-90 (arguing that Roman Catholic political officials across the country acted openly and clandestinely to destroy Pillar of Fire and other Protestant churches).

169. VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 264-65. Alma White named the farm Zarephath, which the Post Office later adopted. *Id.* at 303-04. Zarephath is a biblical term, meaning "a workshop for refining metals." *Id.* Alma White stated that "no more appropriate name could have been chosen for a place where human character was to be transformed, molded, and refined." *Id.* at 304-05.

170. VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 300.

171. The "Cult" promoted the notion that a wife should let her husband take credit for her work. See Welter, *supra* note 12, at 160. The "Cult" maintained that "[a] wife who submerged her own talents to work for her husband was extolled as an example of a true woman." *Id.* Alma White therefore defied the "Cult" by refusing to allow Kent credit for her successes as head of the Pillar of Fire.

172. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 124.

173. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 124.

174. VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 256.

175. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 152; DENVER POST, *quoted in* VOLUME V, *supra* note 110, at 43-45. Both Alma White and her husband preached in Zarephath and all over the country, including Colorado at Alma White's missions and various other locations.

176. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 152.

"of his sex he should be the head [of the Church], that it was the wife's duty to submit to a place of subordination, and that [the] people should accept his leadership[.]"<sup>177</sup> The Pillar of Fire, he contended, was "blocking the way to the goal of his ambition, and he was at times uncivil and even hostile toward [the congregation]."<sup>178</sup> Alma White wrote that the congregation felt that Kent did not merit the place he sought.<sup>179</sup>

When Kent did not get his way, he finally left the Pillar of Fire,<sup>180</sup> and only returned upon illness or asthma flare-ups, in order that his wife could nurse him back to health.<sup>181</sup> Rather than accepting a more insignificant role within the Pillar of Fire, Kent chose to separate from Alma White.<sup>182</sup> In his own words, he analogized his marriage to a horse and buggy, asking rhetorically, "[w]hy hitch up two horses again that are contrary and will not pull together? Better they work single and far apart."<sup>183</sup>

Kent joined the Pentecostal Movement, which believed in speaking in tongues,<sup>184</sup> and went against the beliefs of Alma White and the Pillar of Fire.<sup>185</sup> To Alma White and her followers, speaking in tongues was nothing but satanic "gibberish," as they believed God only spoke in languages that could be understood by those present.<sup>186</sup> While Alma White and her congregation diligently prayed for Kent's

177. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 154.

178. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 152.

179. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 153-54.

180. See VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 18-19 (mentioning that Kent's ambition for leadership and Alma White's refusal to incorporate Pentecostal theology into the Pillar of Fire were the major reasons behind the separation).

181. VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 166. Kent left the organization permanently in 1909 and visited Alma White infrequently. VOLUME VI, *supra* note 110, at 53.

182. VOLUME VI, *supra* note 110, at 53.

183. ALMA WHITE, MY HEART AND MY HUSBAND 88 (1923) [hereinafter HEART]. Alma White wrote MY HEART AND MY HUSBAND as a "fair and impartial" record of her relationship with Kent to correct, as she describes, misconceptions among her followers and the public. *Id.* at 3.

184. See VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 18 (describing how Kent had taken up the dogma of his new religion, the "unknown tongues" movement). Pentecosts believed that "glossolalia" or speaking in tongues was not merely a sign of God's "second blessing"—it was *the* sign. See also GAUSTAD, *supra* note 167, at 300-301 (explaining that, according to the Pentecostal world-view, no one understands the spirit, but the spirit is speaking the mysteries of God through its adherents). See generally CATHERINE L. ALBANESE, AMERICAN RELIGIONS AND RELIGION 105 (1981) (discussing the second baptism of the spirit vis-à-vis speaking in tongues and the additional scriptural gifts of prayer, prophecy, and healing).

185. See VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 18 (explaining the conditions under which Alma White could no longer continue her hostile relationship with Kent).

186. See VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 190; VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 18-19 (explaining that Kent's coercive attempts to persuade Alma White to accept the tenets of his newly found faith lead to their eventual separation); see also HEART, *supra* note 183, at 4.

release from his new religion,<sup>187</sup> Kent wrote her, stating that he would return to his family only if she promised never to speak in public again, and to consider her mouth closed unless she had his permission.<sup>188</sup> Alma White refused to agree to this, but charitably paid his way home.<sup>189</sup> Kent lectured her upon his arrival, and when she preached in front of the congregation, he jumped up and covered her mouth with his hands in the middle of the service.<sup>190</sup> The congregation disapproved of his actions, and when Kent was unable to convince them of the validity of his new religion, he left the Pillar of Fire once again.<sup>191</sup>

Kent's departure did not impede Alma White's success in building the Pillar of Fire.<sup>192</sup> She opened a new mission in London,<sup>193</sup> opened a Bible College at Zarephath,<sup>194</sup> and published over forty books and periodicals, including *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, a magazine devoted exclusively to excoriating the discrimination women face in mainstream church and in secular society.<sup>195</sup>

Alma White lived the remainder of her life apart from her husband, though they occasionally visited one another.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, Alma White stated that although she was able to bear the brunt of outside opposition directed at the Pillar of Fire, she was very burdened by the criticisms emanating from her husband.<sup>197</sup> She stated that his opposition would take the "joy out of life," especially as the heart was "the seat of affections."<sup>198</sup> A prolific poet and hymn

187. See VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 42-43 (stating that "a number of persons were praying for him in our back parlor").

188. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 136 (informing Alma White prior to his leaving London that she was never to speak in public without his permission).

189. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 136 (noting that Kent's fare was paid through an intermediary).

190. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 136.

191. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 136; see also VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 24 (noting that Kent White went on to repudiate his earlier defense of women's right to preach and write a book condemning women's ministries).

192. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 143 (explaining the expansion of the Holiness Movement continued despite Alma and Kent White's marital separation).

193. See VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 240 (remarking that in London, thousands attended Pillar of Fire events).

194. See VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 288 (discussing the degree programs offered by the college).

195. See generally ALMA WHITE, *WOMAN'S CHAINS* 11-179 (1924) (highlighting religious, social, and political discrimination faced by women at that time).

196. See VOLUME VI, *supra* note 110, at 276 (relating an episode where her husband visited her in London for a few hours on his way to Wales).

197. See VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 24 (stating that when Alma White learned that Kent was working with attorneys to seize Pillar of Fire real estate, she filed for divorce).

198. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 135 (reporting that Kent's attitude became so antagonistic

writer, Alma White wrote in MY HEART AND MY HUSBAND:

I loved him more than tongue can tell—  
 Alas! my love he spurned,  
 And far away in distant lands  
 From me his face he turned . . . .<sup>199</sup>  
 When he had failed to grasp the prize—  
 The leadership he craved—  
 He scorned a woman's work and place  
 And over "tongues" he raved.<sup>200</sup>  
 His purposes she should fulfill,  
 And all for him forsake;  
 And though achievements she should win,  
 The honor he should take.<sup>201</sup>

Nonetheless, Alma White refused to give up her leadership, even for love.<sup>202</sup> It was a cruel choice, one men of her time were rarely forced to make.<sup>203</sup> Nevertheless, she clung to her feminist beliefs to justify her life and her calling.<sup>204</sup> Alma White began to voice her beliefs from the pulpit, arguing that women were entitled to equality in both the religious and secular arenas.<sup>205</sup>

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that it became almost impossible for Alma White to live in the same house with him).

199. HEART, *supra* note 183, at 7.

200. HEART, *supra* note 183, at 17.

201. HEART, *supra* note 183, at 19.

202. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 139 (noting that Alma White filed a legal complaint against Kent for desertion in order to establish her sole right to Pillar of Fire properties). In fact, fearing that the Pentecosts were using Kent as a weapon to take over the Pillar of Fire, Alma White suffered humiliating publicity as she brought her husband to divorce court. However, the court, while finding that Alma White was the sole leader of the Pillar of Fire and thus that her husband had no claim to its assets, nevertheless threw out the divorce case on its merits finding that the couple still loved one another. See *id.* at 139 (reporting the court's finding that Kent and Alma White "shared a mutual affection").

203. See Graybill, *supra* note 118, at 2-3 (noting that in Alma White's lifetime, the marriages of women religious leaders were twice as likely to fail as other marriages). The expectation "that wives would be subordinate supporters of their husband's careers" played a large role in marital dissolution. *Id.* at 3. This unfortunate expectation "made marriages for male leaders less problematic, and, by the standards of the time, more successful." *Id.* (internal quotation marks omitted).

204. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 204 (affirming marriage as "a divine institution, but allowing divorce in case of infidelity, for personal safety, or for legal protection").

205. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 196 (arguing that women can change the world by aggressive involvement in the political sphere).

## IV. BALANCING POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINTS

A. *Religious Equality, Suffrage, the ERA, and Legal Equality – Concepts Mandated by the Bible*

It is not surprising that Alma White, who suffered so much opposition both at home and in the church, would advocate equality for women both in and out of the pulpit.<sup>206</sup> She believed that concepts of sexual equality originated in the Bible, and should be extended to secular life as well.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, Alma White advocated that equality extended beyond the home and the pulpit, and publicly supported passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, voting rights, and general equality for women in all areas of the law.<sup>208</sup>

Alma White was a trailblazer in her advocacy of equality for women in both the religious and secular spheres.<sup>209</sup> In 1902, she was ordained Minister of the Pillar of Fire.<sup>210</sup> In 1918, she became the first female bishop of any Christian religion at the age of 56, forty years ahead of any other female Protestant leader.<sup>211</sup> If Alma White had chosen to stay in the Methodist Church, she would have died waiting to be ordained, as women were not awarded full clergy rights until 1956.<sup>212</sup> It was certainly paradoxical that the "Cult" advocated

206. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 354 (describing Alma White's renunciation of the boundaries imposed on women by the doctrine of "women's sphere").

207. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 199 (presenting Alma White's contention that the Gospel and equal rights for women were consistent, and that God was an active participant in women's emancipation).

208. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 198 (relating how Alma White frequently combined politics and religion in her preaching).

209. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 350 (discussing the contrast between Alma White's recognition of the importance of motherhood and her rejection of attempts to confine a mother to the home).

210. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 81-82 (reporting that the authority to perform the sacraments and perform marriages symbolized for Alma White her freedom from the restraints of the Methodist Episcopal Church).

211. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 167 (noting that Alma White was the only female religious leader of her time to keep her religious sect completely autonomous from male leadership). See also *id.* at xi (quoting Barbara Brown Zikmund). Zikmund stated that "today fundamentalists are hardly feminists, and feminists are rarely bishops. Yet Alma White was all three." *Id.* To Alma White, however, the two principles of feminism and fundamentalism were congruent. She described the Pillar of Fire's guiding principles as "emancipation for women and ultrafundamentalist doctrine." *Id.* at 20.

212. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 167; see also *Bishop Alma White, Preacher, Author*, N.Y. TIMES, June 27, 1946, at 21 (noting in her obituary that although White was frequently called "the only woman bishop in the world," some editors would place quotation marks around her title); *Mrs. McPherson Asked to Explain Kidnapping, 'Bishop' Alma White, Pillar of Fire Head, Heckles Evangelist in London Sermon*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 10, 1928, at 2 (recalling a sermon by Mrs. McPherson during which Alma frequently interrupted).



that women cleanse society of sin, yet women were nevertheless forced to sever their formal religious affiliations—as did Alma White—in order to do so.<sup>213</sup>

In many ways, Alma White turned “Cult” philosophy on its head.<sup>214</sup> Alma White was able to manipulate “Cult” philosophy by agreeing that women should be pious and pure.<sup>215</sup> However, according to Alma White, such piety and purity meant an expansion of women’s sphere, rather than a limitation.<sup>216</sup> Nevertheless, Alma White’s appeals for equality within the political arena were not always couched in egalitarian terms.<sup>217</sup> Alma White, like many feminists of her era, often advanced arguments for women’s political equality with non-egalitarian ideas.<sup>218</sup> Rebecca Edwards described the feminist movement in the early twentieth century as one that was fragmented and loosely constructed.<sup>219</sup> Specifically, Edwards described two main brands of feminism that existed at that time.<sup>220</sup> The first argued for equality for all minority groups, while the second argued for women’s equality at the expense of other minorities.<sup>221</sup> It was this second brand of feminism that appealed to a wider population base at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>222</sup>

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213. See RUETHER & KELLER, *supra* note 129, at 230 (commenting that Alma White left her marriage with Kent, which at one time had been a “colleagueship in ministry,” to actively live in the “separate sphere” she was promoting). In fact, many male religious leaders not only opposed the idea of women preachers, but also any expansion of women’s rights within the secular realm as well. Many evangelicals believed, for instance, that suffrage was a “violation of God’s will and a sign of women’s lust for temporal power. Domino theory held that changes in the traditional female role would mean the downfall of the home and the . . . destruction of society.” *Id.* at 231.

214. See Stanley, *supra* note 8 at 355 (arguing that the “experience of holiness enabled women to effectively challenge the confining strictures of domesticity”).

215. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 371 (contending that such “gender differences emphasized that women’s influence should pervade the broader world of politics and religion”).

216. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 371 (advocating women’s involvement outside the sphere proscribed by the “Cult” by placing God as “head,” instead of the husband).

217. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 356 (expressing a “qualified” belief in male headship).

218. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 365 (maintaining that the husband and wife were equal, but that the husband was still considered the head of the family).

219. See generally EDWARDS, *supra* note 21 at 168 (facing difficulty in simultaneously advancing women’s political rights and racial justice, which had elitist and racist arguments gaining force).

220. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 168 (stating that these two groups were the Radical Republican Suffragists and the Populists).

221. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 168 (fighting to promote their ideals during the Reconstruction and Progressive eras).

222. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 168 (seeking federal action, the movement appealed to lawmakers—white, wealthy, males by fostering elitist and racist arguments); see also GLENDA E. GILMORE, *GENDER AND JIM CROW: WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1896-1920*, 92-99 (1996) (stating that after 1910, black and white women began to forge interracial links, whereas before, white women actively participated in the violence of the white supremacy campaign). See generally JACQUELYN D. HALL, *REVOLT AGAINST CHIVALRY:*

Alma White belonged to the latter group.<sup>223</sup> Ironically, Alma White, who suffered strong rejection from Protestant males in leadership roles, often argued for promotion of suffrage in terms of benefiting Protestant men.<sup>224</sup> Alma White's logic was that white women would vote for candidates that would retain the supremacy of the white-Protestant race.<sup>225</sup> She therefore resorted to nativist and racist appeals to advance the idea of suffrage, as will be explained more thoroughly in the next section.<sup>226</sup>

She also revealed contradictory and conflicting philosophies in her public support for suffrage.<sup>227</sup> She found herself "in the difficult position of promoting some characteristics of the model [Cult] woman while rejecting others."<sup>228</sup> Indeed, Alma White wanted both equality and a separate sphere for women.<sup>229</sup> She also advanced conflicting ideals concerning equality—especially suffrage—by simultaneously arguing that women deserved the vote because they were both equal to men and "innately superior to men morally and spiritually."<sup>230</sup> Feminists such as Alma White often ignored scientific evidence which existed at the turn of the century that showed that there were no innate differences between the sexes, and instead chose to cling to beliefs of innate spiritual and moral superiority.<sup>231</sup>

During her sermons, Alma White continued to demand passage of the Suffrage Amendment.<sup>232</sup> Indeed, a 1916 newspaper article reported that the Pillar of Fire had advocated for suffrage since its inception in 1901: "The Woman Suffrage movement is one in which the Church is deeply interested and which has always received its

JESSIE DANIEL AMES AND THE WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST LYNCHING 1-266 (1979) (explaining that Jessie Daniel Ames, at first a prominent feminist activist who supported white supremacy, came to realize that her claims of equality were identical to the claims of black Americans).

223. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 220 (aligning with the Ku Klux Klan to propagate a militant Protestantism).

224. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 241 (creating an "unholy alliance" with the Ku Klux Klan).

225. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 220 (sharing the platform with the Ku Klux Klan based on a shared, fervent, patriotism and anti-Catholicism).

226. See *infra* Part IV.B (detailing Alma White's alliance with racist ideals and movements).

227. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 343 (promoting feminist hermeneutic belief that women are "innately superior to men morally and spiritually," while at the same time claiming men and women are equals).

228. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 338-39.

229. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 337 (denying categorically "any argument that women's only sphere was the home by contending that women's place was every place").

230. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 343.

231. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 343 (noting that Alma White was not alone in adhering to this inconsistency).

232. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 196, 372-411 (promoting from the pulpit women's active role in the public realm of church and state).

heartiest backing . . . not until women vote will this be a truly free nation."<sup>233</sup>

In 1919, Congress ratified the Suffrage Amendment.<sup>234</sup> This Amendment stated that "[t]he right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."<sup>235</sup> Alma White at first believed that the battle for equality had finally been won.<sup>236</sup> She wrote that the right to vote "brought an end to the long-fought battle for the enfranchisement of women" and that women had been liberated from "the chains of oppression."<sup>237</sup>

However, Alma White came to realize that the Suffrage Amendment alone would not bring equality for women.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, eighteen years after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Alma White wrote that the Suffrage Amendment had been a mere formality, and that "only slight recognition has been accorded to women in what should be their real political sphere by men who have so long held the reins of power."<sup>239</sup> Alma White also deplored the fact that unjust laws that discriminated between the sexes were still on the statute books in every state.<sup>240</sup> She stated:

Just laws for woman must be made  
If penalties man would evade.  
If God's precepts he does not keep  
The nations still in blood must weep.<sup>241</sup>  
In ev'ry state there may be found  
The laws by which the woman's bound,  
Discriminating 'gainst her sex,  
While man her soul would longer vex.<sup>242</sup>  
'Tis all because the laws complex  
Discriminate against her sex,

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233. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 389 (quoting DENVER POST, July 16, 1919, at 7 (noting Alma White's promotion of suffrage during her sermons)).

234. See U.S. CONST. amend. XIX (bringing an end to gender-based disenfranchisement).

235. U.S. CONST. amend. XIX.

236. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 391.

237. PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 130. See VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 369.

238. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 393.

239. WOMAN'S CHAINS, *supra* note 195, at 14.

240. See WOMAN'S CHAINS, *supra* note 195, at 14-16 (stating that "[w]here any progress has been made in behalf of equality it has been accomplished through great suffering and against unyielding opposition of men.").

241. See WOMAN'S CHAINS, *supra* note 195, at 20.

242. WOMAN'S CHAINS, *supra* note 195, at 21.

Of which some men advantage take,  
 And wife and children do forsake.<sup>243</sup>  
 'Tis man who holds her destiny,  
 And he controls her progeny,  
 When 'neath his level she is bound,  
 How can she rise to higher ground?<sup>244</sup>

In *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, Alma White published the "Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions Adopted at Seneca Falls Convention in 1848."<sup>245</sup> Within this Declaration, the inequities of the laws were spelled out.<sup>246</sup> And even though Alma White was writing almost one hundred years later, the status of these laws had not changed extensively.<sup>247</sup> Alma White bemoaned the fact that no laws of any state conferred "the same property rights, the same rights of inheritance, and the same rights over children" to women as they did to men.<sup>248</sup> Alma White also lamented that there existed "a state of inactivity and indifference among women voters" who "continue to shift their obligations and let the male sex in the lower grades of society elect men to office and operate the machinery of government."<sup>249</sup>

Indeed, Alma White believed that women's political participation should extend beyond the ballot box.<sup>250</sup> She declared, "we hear much of woman's equality with man, but where are our women senators, where are our women judges, where are our women jurors?"<sup>251</sup> It is hardly surprising that Alma White, who led her own organization, believed that women were more than capable of participating in government.<sup>252</sup>

The more Alma White became involved with the laws of the secular

243. *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 23.

244. *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 24.

245. *See WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 25.

246. *See WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 25-27 (setting forth a list of facts deemed by Alma White as not negotiable between the sexes in law).

247. *See WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 27 (noting the continual "disenfranchisement of one-half of the people of this country, their social and religious degradation—in view of the unjust laws").

248. *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 149.

249. *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 149.

250. *See WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 151 (encouraging women to actively take part in societal affairs, and noting that "[s]ociety without women would be like home without a mother.").

251. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 398.

252. *See Stanley*, *supra* note 8, at 402 (recognizing that the ultimate goal is the realization and actualization of equality among women).

world, the more she became an advocate of women's legal equality.<sup>253</sup> For instance, as leader of the Pillar of Fire, Alma White led a growing organization that would acquire property in various cities and countries.<sup>254</sup> In her property dealings, she became painfully aware that she knew little about property laws, and that such laws were not in her favor.<sup>255</sup>

Alma White also spoke out against laws that subjugated women within marriage.<sup>256</sup> For instance, she advocated the need to protect women from wife-beating.<sup>257</sup> She also spoke out against unequal marital property laws, citizenship and legal domicile laws—the latter specifying that a husband's citizenship determined his wife's citizenship, and the husband's place of residence determined his wife's domicile.<sup>258</sup>

In addition, Alma White opposed laws that discriminated against divorced and widowed mothers.<sup>259</sup> Though the Pillar of Fire frowned on divorce in general – as did most political and religious institutions at the turn of the century – Alma White was nevertheless ahead of the time by encouraging women to seek a divorce for infidelity, personal safety, or legal protection.<sup>260</sup> Alma White also protested the fact that divorced mothers generally did not get custody of their children and condemned the laws allowing fathers to transfer guardianship of their

253. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 372 (coupling her plans for equal rights in the church with the demand for equality in the state).

254. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 192 (documenting Alma White's founding of several missionary homes and branches on both sides of the Atlantic).

255. See VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 21. The inequity of such laws soon became apparent after a debacle involving her sister Nora's husband, who attempted unsuccessfully to both reclaim a gift of land Nora had deeded to Alma White, and then disqualify Nora from transacting her own business. See VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6, at 250. For an example of inequitable property laws, see CURTIS J. BERGER, LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE 461 (3d ed. 1983) (stating that "[a]t the moment of marriage, the husband acquired immediate control over his wife's property . . . [and] was entitled to rents and profits of her freehold estates . . . . The wife was powerless to protest."); George L. Haskins, *Curtesy at Common Law: Historical Development*, 29 B.U.L. REV. 228, 228 (1949) (highlighting the inequitable property laws of Normandy, France, and England from which the United States' property laws are derived).

256. See WOMEN'S CHAINS, *supra* note 195, at 3 (observing that "[a] woman would better die single than to put her head in the matrimonial yoke in some states in this country").

257. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 367 (lamenting at the fact that laws did not protect wives from abusive husbands).

258. See Stanley *supra* note 8, at 367 (commenting that in her sermons and articles, Alma White referred to such laws that discriminated against married women). Before passage of the Cable Act in 1922, a woman automatically assumed her husband's citizenship at marriage, however the Cable Act did not guarantee equal citizenship rights for women. See *id.* at 368.

259. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 368 (speaking out against laws regulating guardianship of children that discriminated against widowed and divorced women).

260. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 204 (fostering a view generally more liberal than the holiness consensus which deplored divorce whatever the circumstance).

children to individuals other than their wives in their wills.<sup>261</sup>

Because of such vast legal inequities, Alma White advocated adoption of the 1923 Equal Rights Amendment ("ERA").<sup>262</sup> The ERA, in its original form, stated "men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction."<sup>263</sup> Throughout her book, *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, and her bimonthly periodical, also entitled *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, Alma White continued to advocate legal equality for women and insisted that such equality stemmed from the Bible.<sup>264</sup> She was also ahead of her time in her advocacy of the ERA.<sup>265</sup> In fact, the Pillar of Fire was the only religious group that supported this Amendment from its inception, as all other women's groups, religious or secular—except the National Woman's Party (NWP)—opposed it.<sup>266</sup> This opposition arose from a belief that the ERA would abolish protective labor legislation for women.<sup>267</sup> Apparently, Alma White's periodical, *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, had its basis in promotion of the ERA.<sup>268</sup> Susie Stanley believed that "it [was] no coincidence that the first issue of *WOMAN'S CHAINS* appeared in January 1924, less than one month after the [NWP] submitted the amendment [ERA] to the Judiciary Committees of both houses of Congress . . . . Alma staunchly defended the necessity of the ERA."<sup>269</sup>

It is certainly ironic to note the alignment of Alma White with the NWP in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>270</sup> Alma White was a conservative religious figure, who, by promoting the ERA, aligned herself with

261. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 368 (denouncing the double moral standard in society and its affect on women legally and socially).

262. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 401-02.

263. S.J. RES. 21, 68th Cong. (1923).

264. See WHITE, *WOMAN'S CHAINS*, *supra* note 195, at 111 ("Jesus Christ is the great Emancipator of women, and respect for the equality and purity of womanhood is based on His teachings.").

265. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 401 (endorsing the ERA and its introduction in 1923).

266. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 402 (standing alongside the National Women's Party ("NWP") rather than the social reformers of the 1920s and 1930s who opposed passage of the amendment). Such legislation included minimum wage laws for women, laws limiting the number of hours women could work, and laws exempting women from working at night. See, e.g., *Muller v. Oregon*, 208 U.S. 412, 422-3 (1908) (holding that women did not have equal contract rights with men, and thus striking down an Oregon statute denying women "special protection").

267. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 403 (presenting Alma White's view that women needed protective labor legislation because of the differences between women and men).

268. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 405 (noting Alma White's support for the ERA in her sermons and in Pillar of Fire literature).

269. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 405.

270. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 402 (aligning herself with the NWP rather than with the other social reformers).

NWP—a group that was considered to be on the “radical fringe” of the women’s movement.<sup>271</sup> As a result, Alma White was at odds with the social reform arm of the feminist movement who comprised the majority of women’s groups during this time and who opposed passage of the ERA.<sup>272</sup> Alma White and the NWP shared a passion for female equality, as well as approval of aggressive methods in order to attain such goals.<sup>273</sup>

In summary, Alma White was a trailblazer in both the religious and secular arenas.<sup>274</sup> She founded the Pillar of Fire and became the first female bishop.<sup>275</sup> She advocated greater roles for women through promotion of suffrage and the ERA.<sup>276</sup> In promoting equality for women, Alma White often advanced conflicting and contrasting arguments.<sup>277</sup> Her most profound limitation, however, will be discussed in the next section, which demonstrates that Alma White’s promotion of equality came at the expense of blacks and other minorities.<sup>278</sup>

*B. Segregation, Racism, Feminism and the Ku Klux Klan: A Combination Divinely Ordained by God.*

Alma White may have been a trailblazer for women’s rights, but she did not challenge the prevailing views on race discrimination during her lifetime.<sup>279</sup> Contrary to challenging such views, Alma White embraced them, argued that women’s equality—particularly suffrage—would sustain white supremacy, and believed that segregation and racial discrimination were Biblically mandated.<sup>280</sup> Raised in a slave-holding state where her first memories were of the northern states oppressing southern states, Alma White

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271. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 411.

272. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 402 (emphasizing the similarities of the sexes rather than the differences).

273. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 411 (believing that aggressive methods were necessary to accomplish the goal of equality).

274. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 415-17 (endeavoring to alter society as a whole through religious and political activism).

275. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 413 (undertaking independent evangelistic and mission work to insure her autonomy as a preacher).

276. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 416 (supporting the ERA to ensure women’s equality by abolishing all activities that discriminated against women).

277. See *supra* notes 217-231 and accompanying text (couching equality in non-egalitarian terms).

278. See *infra* Part IV.B. (discussing Alma White’s conflicting notions of equality).

279. See *infra* notes 280-324 and accompanying text.

280. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 226 (comparing the Klan favorably to biblical personalities and the founders of the United States).

wholeheartedly adopted prevailing viewpoints about racial hierarchy. She did so despite the support of Grant, the “colored saint,”<sup>281</sup> and her own ideas of gender equality that were first culled from this black preacher.<sup>282</sup>

Alma White may have aligned herself with the NWP in her advocacy for the ERA; but in terms of suffrage, she found herself aligned with the majority of feminists at the turn of the century.<sup>283</sup> Rebecca Edwards stated that before 1910, the branch of feminism that found the most popular support advanced elitist and racist arguments on behalf of women’s rights.<sup>284</sup> Alma White was certainly aligned with this majority on racism, and she maintained such a position into the 1920s. In this way, Alma White was certainly a reflection of her times and not a trailblazer on the issue of race.<sup>285</sup>

Alma White and the Pillar of Fire were unique, however, in their public alliance with the Ku Klux Klan (“Klan”). In fact, the Pillar of Fire was the only religious group to publicly associate itself with the Klan.<sup>286</sup> Alma White wrote several books praising the Klan, including *KLANSMEN: GUARDIANS OF OUR LIBERTY*,<sup>287</sup> *HEROES OF THE FIERY CROSS*,<sup>288</sup> and *THE KU KLUX KLAN IN PROPHECY*.<sup>289</sup> There are many reasons why Alma White resorted to racism and supported the Klan while advocating equality for women.

The primary reason Alma White advocated racism was her belief that white women, though deserving of equality, needed protection from black and other ethnic males.<sup>290</sup> Alma White believed that

281. See VOLUME III, *supra* note 72, at 173 (describing Grant as “one who knew how to keep her place,” but noting that she refused to eat or sleep until the “big preachers” moved aside and let Alma White speak).

282. See VOLUME II, *supra* note 53, at 176-77 (recalling preacher Uncle John’s biblical message and her realization that “God makes no distinction between the sexes”).

283. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 378 (describing the alliance between Alma White and public feminist groups as one based on the promotion of women’s participation in the public sphere).

284. See EDWARDS, *supra* note 21, at 168 (finding that factions that had greater influence incorporated elitist and racist theories in their arguments for women’s suffrage).

285. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 241 (noting Alma White’s contention that “the Klan was God’s instrument for conquering common enemies”). Stanley also cites to a survey conducted between 1922 and 1928 by the National Catholic Bureau of Information, disclosing that 26 out of 39 national Ku Klux Klan lecturers were Protestant ministers. *Id.* at 227.

286. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 226-27 (noting the Pillar of Fire’s association with the Klan while no other Protestant denomination officially condoned the Klan or its activities).

287. See ALMA WHITE, *KLANSMEN: GUARDIANS OF LIBERTY* 6 (1926) [hereinafter *GUARDIANS*].

288. See WHITE, *HEROES*, *supra* note 17, at 14-17.

289. See WHITE, *PROPHECY*, *supra* note 15, at 23.

290. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 238 (quoting Alma White as stating, “[w]e are looking to the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan to champion the cause of woman and to protect her rights”).



Jewish<sup>291</sup> and black men,<sup>292</sup> in particular, sought to ruin the purity and virtue of the white race, especially that of white women.<sup>293</sup> Specifically, Alma White believed that “[a] class of cultured Negroes have organized societies to promote mixing of white and colored blood. The members of these societies are oath-bound to marry none but white women.”<sup>294</sup> Therefore, she characterized the Klan’s protection of white women as both benign and chivalrous, as well as absolutely necessary to maintain a segregated society.<sup>295</sup>

Alma White also believed that the Klan served an important role in protecting Protestant America against the influx of immigrants.<sup>296</sup> She was terribly concerned that America had become “the dumping ground” for criminals from Europe, who came to America to “plunder, pillage, rape, and murder.”<sup>297</sup> She perceived these immigrants as taking advantage of American hospitality and of those who had already made significant sacrifices.<sup>298</sup> These immigrants brought over socialism and anarchism and had “become so well organized as to crowd out almost to the last man the native-born, Protestant Americans, who [found] it impossible to make an honest living.”<sup>299</sup> She believed that the passage of restrictive immigration laws should be credited to the efforts of the Klan.<sup>300</sup>

291. See generally WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 33 (noting that “[a]s to moral standards, the modern Jew has no code to restrain him in his dealings with Gentile women”).

292. See generally WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 144-45 (explaining that Black men are seeking “racial suicide” by attempting to marry white women).

293. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 187 (discussing the Klan principle of protecting white women’s “pure womanhood”).

294. WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 144.

295. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 187. As Alma White stated unequivocally:

Let the white man remain white, the black man black, the yellow man yellow, the brown man brown, and the red man red. God drew the color line and man should so let it remain . . . This is a stand for the purity of our home, for morality, for the protection of our mothers, our sisters, our wives, our daughters.

*Id.* Alma White advocated for the protection of white women, but she did not appear to believe that women needed the benefit of protectionism labor law. See *supra* note 267 and accompanying text (discussing protective legislation).

296. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 232-36 (discussing Alma White’s nativism).

297. WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 116-17.

298. WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 117-18 (“They have taken advantage of our hospitality, monopolized our American industries, and carried the spoils back across the seas.”). Alma White believed that such sacrifices were made by our “Pilgrim fathers” who “launched out on perilous sea to endure the hardship of pioneer life among savages.” WHITE, PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 22.

299. WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 10.

300. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 132 (“For our restrictive immigration laws let us give honor to whom honor is due. To the knights of the Ku Klux Klan belongs the credit.”). The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 created restrictive immigration quotas which significantly curtailed the number of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 235-36 (discussing restrictive immigration legislation passed as a result of efforts by the

In addition to protecting white women's purity, Alma White considered the Klan a true friend to women because of Klan support of the Suffrage Amendment.<sup>301</sup> Conversely, she held black men at least partially responsible for the postponement of women's suffrage and the oppression of white women:

They gave the black man the ballot sixty years in advance of white women [and thus the] colored man had a voice in making the laws of the land, while half of the white and black races remained in political bondage. When the black man received the franchise, the white women bore the sting of their humiliation for more than half a century, being placed in an inferior position to colored men in the use of the ballot and the rights of citizenship. Such reflections make one feel that man's delinquency has been almost unpardonable.<sup>302</sup>

Rather than identifying with the plight of the black man and realizing that they struggled against many similar barriers, Alma White blamed them for many injustices that white women suffered.<sup>303</sup> While her failure to understand that similar obstacles existed for both women and minorities is disappointing, it is not completely surprising given her background: she was born in a slave-holding state and had limited contact with Blacks and other minorities in her youth.<sup>304</sup> And as shown above, Alma White found it "humiliating" that the black man gained the right to vote before the white woman, and blamed the black man, at least in part, for the oppression of women.

Just as Alma White believed in a Biblical basis for women's equality,<sup>305</sup> so too did she believe that the Bible justified racial segregation and discrimination. Specifically, Alma White believed that Blacks descended from Ham, the son of Noah mentioned in the book of Genesis, whose descendants were cursed because he saw his father's nakedness and did not cover him.<sup>306</sup> Therefore, Alma White

Immigration Restriction League).

301. See WHITE, PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 130 (discussing the Klan and the 19th Amendment); see also *supra* notes 227-39 and accompanying text (outlining Alma White's pro-suffrage stance).

302. WHITE, WOMAN'S CHAINS, *supra* note 195, at 168-69.

303. See WHITE, WOMAN'S CHAINS, *supra* note 195, at 168-69 (expressing her bitterness and resentment that black men were granted the right to vote before white women).

304. See *supra* Part I (describing Alma White's early life).

305. See *supra* Part IV.A. (outlining Alma White's belief that the Bible mandated women's equality).

306. See Genesis 9:22-25 (New Revised Standard), which reads in pertinent part:

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and he told his two brothers outside [who] covered the nakedness of their father . . . . When Noah awoke . . . and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said 'Cursed be Canaan; lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers.'

believed that Blacks were an inferior race. In addition, she believed that Blacks deserved divine punishment since they failed to abide by the divine mandate by attempting to mix with whites.<sup>307</sup>

Incredibly, Alma White did not consider slavery a terrible institution, provided the master did not mistreat his slaves.<sup>308</sup> In fact, according to her, Black slaves were happy when their masters did not abuse them.<sup>309</sup> In addition, even if maltreated, Black slaves would not be in nearly as bad a position as the working-class white man, since Blacks were usually “less moral”—and thus less conscious of misery—and because the white man had become a slave to the factory, and therefore spiritually bankrupt.<sup>310</sup>

Consequently, the Klan became the enforcer of God’s mandate that the races remain separate.<sup>311</sup> Alma White proclaimed that “[f]or the best interests of all concerned, the black race should occupy the place intended for it by the Creator.”<sup>312</sup> Since segregation and white supremacy were divinely mandated, they would “not work a hardship on the colored race or cause injustice to the colored man.”<sup>313</sup> According to Alma White, secular laws should reflect divine decrees of segregation; she supported Jim Crow laws<sup>314</sup>—believing that such

*Id.*

307. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 144 (explaining that “God’s laws governing the races are immutable, and woe unto the men who would try to change them”).

308. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 135 (referring to the “better class of slave-owners” as “the good people who had the welfare of their dependent[ ] [slaves] at heart”).

309. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 135 (“Where the slaves were well-treated they were happy and contented . . .”). As for abusive slave owners, Alma White argued that “[t]he slaveholder, in many instances, was as much to be pitied as the slaves . . . He, too, was a victim of the system, often having inherited slaves along with his plantation.” *Id.*

310. See VOLUME V, *supra* note 7, at 31. Alma White stated that:

The poor black slave, while he may suffer much in body, is not always wholly conscious of his misery, since his moral standards are usually very low. But the white slave of the corporation has a keen sense of tyranny under which he lives. He is a victim, morally, spiritually, and physically, to the powers that are over him; and while he may not have indignities heaped upon him or be beaten with a rod, like the black slave in legal bondage, his suffering is even greater, for he labors with a wounded conscience, being compelled to do things in order to hold his position which makes him lose his self-respect.

*Id.*

311. See HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 187 (“The Klan is eternally opposed the mixing of the White and colored races.”).

312. WHITE, PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 135.

313. WHITE, PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 135.

314. Jim Crow laws and segregation policies were widespread during Alma White’s lifetime, affecting many of the basic rights of black people, including the right to travel, vote, and obtain an education. For further explanation of such laws, see generally ANITA HILL, SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER 23-25 (1997) (explaining Jim Crow laws and recounting her family’s history as it related to these laws).

laws did not oppress minorities<sup>315</sup>—and considered the Klan to be a staunch defender of morality and the law.<sup>316</sup> Alma White claimed the Klan itself never broke the law,<sup>317</sup> writing that the Klan was “misrepresented,”<sup>318</sup> and in fact was *against* “mob violence.”<sup>319</sup> Alma White sincerely believed that the Klan was opposed to lynching, and had “succeeded in abolishing them in places where they were of frequent occurrence.”<sup>320</sup> She stated that accusations of such cruelties against the Klan were either misrepresentations by the Jewish and Catholic presses,<sup>321</sup> or were committed by “men in disguise.”<sup>322</sup> Alma

315. See WHITE, PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 135 (“It is within the rights of civilization for the white race to hold the supremacy; and it is no injustice to the colored man.”).

316. The Klan, however, did not see its goal of protecting order as a primary mechanism in the promotion of women’s rights. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 238-39. Instead, the promotion of order was an attempt to enforce a hierarchical notion of society with Whites not only in control, but white men in particular. The Klan’s policies concerning women were contradictory, not unlike a Klan publication titled *The American Woman*, which was an amalgam of recipes, fashion tips, news, and woman’s rights. See BLEE, *supra* note 22, at 49. The Klan saw their women members as “helpmates” and strong “moral influence,” but not as mature in judgment. See *id.* at 32, 49. On the one hand, the Klan did work to pass the suffrage amendment, but this was largely out of self-interest, as they saw a white women’s voting block as a mechanism to guarantee white supremacy. See *id.* at 53. On the other hand, the Klan, fearful of the potential of a women’s voting block, thought that women might “overstep their bounds” or at least be “masculinized,” rather than retain their natural dignity and modesty. See *id.* at 31, 58. Thus, the Klan attempted to integrate the language of women’s rights within an “agenda to support conventional moral standards.” *Id.* at 72. However, though women in the Klan advocated legal equality, they did little to challenge the existing women’s sphere, and thus were overall not seen as a significant threat to masculine power. See *id.* at 107. Finally, Blee states that the male members of the Klan viewed women with a mix of paternalism and misogyny. See *id.* at 83. The paternalism was part of the Klan’s belief in the need to protect white women from immoral forces, while the misogyny would manifest itself against any woman who was viewed as overstepping her bounds. See *id.* For instance, the Klan was not above lynching women, black or white, who transgressed the Klan’s view of the proper role of women. See JAMES ELBERT CUTLER, *LYNCH-LAW: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE HISTORY OF LYNCHING IN THE UNITED STATES* 172 (1909).

317. See WHITE, PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 131 (stating that “[i]t is yet to be proved that the [Klan] are not sincere and law-abiding”).

318. See WHITE, PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 128 (arguing that the Klan has been “misrepresented and persecuted in a similar manner as have other great reformers”).

319. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 189 (noting the Klan’s position against “mob violence” and remarking that “[d]eaths by mob violence have fallen off very materially since the advent of the Klan”).

320. WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 147. See generally RALPH GINZBURG, *100 YEARS OF LYNCHINGS* (1988) (providing a comprehensive compilation of articles on lynching from 1880 to 1961).

321. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 186 (“The press is largely controlled by the Roman Catholic priesthood and the Jewish advertisers. As a result, the people are fed on propaganda instead of truth.”). Alma White possessed an ambivalent attitude toward Jews. See generally ALMA WHITE, *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE* (1910) (outlining her beliefs about Jews). She believed that they controlled many of the industries in America and that they used such resources to harm Protestant America. See WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 10 (discussing the “Hebrew syndicate”). Nevertheless, she believed that Jews were God’s “chosen people” and that in their refusal to “mix” with cultures and people around them, they followed God’s mandate for the separation of the races. See WHITE, *THE CHOSEN PEOPLE*, at 13 (“Until this day they have maintained their race identity. Their refusal to marry among the Gentiles shows that God’s

White refused to believe the Klan capable of any injustice, and closed her eyes to the many atrocities occurring around the country,<sup>323</sup> calling the Klan “the greatest moral and political movement” of her generation.<sup>324</sup>

Nevertheless, Alma White was not unusual for holding a high regard of the Klan during the 1920s.<sup>325</sup> Perceptions of Klan members during this time were vastly different than the image that exists today.<sup>326</sup> Indeed, according to one former Klanswoman, the Klan members were average, everyday individuals such as “[s]tore owners, teachers, farmers, . . . the good people all belonged to the Klan . . . . They were going to clean up the government, and they were going to improve the school[s] . . . .”<sup>327</sup> Rather than comprising the outcasts or marginalized in society, the Klan of the 1920s encompassed many respectable white Protestant individuals: “All the better people . . . were in the Klan.”<sup>328</sup> Indeed, Klan members included Christian ministers, Senators, Congressmen, and Governors.<sup>329</sup> Alma White was therefore typical of her era in this way, stating that she saw the Ku Klux Klan as a “Star of Hope,”<sup>330</sup> and stated that “[t]here [was] no good reason why every true American cannot sympathize with the

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hand is upon them in a special manner, and that He is overruling in the affairs of their lives.”); see also Part IV.C (discussion of Alma White’s views on Catholics).

322. See WHITE, *HEROES*, *supra* note 17, at 147 (arguing that the Klan was “charged with floggings and other cruelties where crimes have been committed by men in disguise”).

323. See, e.g., Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 415 (“Alma confused patriotic fervor with religious piety as did many Americans in the 1920s who were caught up in the Ku Klux Klan frenzy. Her patriotic vision of a Protestant America failed to conform to biblical standards of justice.”).

324. *Klan Will Sweep Colleges, She Says - Princeton will Soon Be Vitally Interested in The Order, Woman Bishop Asserts*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 1, 1923, at 18. This article quotes Alma White criticizing Princeton for being “detached in her own little eddy of oblivion” by ignoring the Klan, who, according to her, “is on the verge of sweeping through the colleges of the country as it swept through the masses.” *Id.*

325. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 218-19 (reporting that Klan membership in the 1920s ranged from 3 to 6 million). Stanley notes that:

[A] revisionist study of the Ku Klux Klan . . . during the 1920s . . . challenges prevalent stereotypes of Klan members . . . . Members in the 1920s lived in all sections of the country, not just the South. Very few members were vicious and cruel; neither were Klan members “uprooted men and women suffering from psychiatric and societal disorders. Instead, Klan membership represented a normal individual’s decision to confront real and immediate problems.” Sympathizers such as Alma . . . believed the Ku Klux Klan was a legitimate channel for addressing serious issues confronting the nation.

*Id.* at 219 (internal citations omitted).

326. See BLEE, *supra* note 22, at 3 (remarking that “the Klan’s power was devastating precisely because it was so well integrated into the normal everyday life of white Protestants”).

327. BLEE, *supra* note 22, at 2.

328. BLEE, *supra* note 22, at 2.

329. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 172.

330. WHITE, *PROPHECY*, *supra* note 15, at 32.

Klan or be affiliated with it."<sup>331</sup>

Alma White's alliance with the Klan did not last beyond the 1920s.<sup>332</sup> Although this would seem to indicate a change of opinion, Alma White never published the reasons why the Pillar of Fire drifted from their association with the Klan. However, the Klan itself was experiencing a rapid decline.<sup>333</sup> According to one historian, "battles between contending leadership factions, disclosure of rampant corruption, and public exposure of Klan atrocities marred the image of the Klan and allowed public authorities to intervene against Klan violence."<sup>334</sup> Nevertheless, Alma White's opinions on the need for gender equality, as well as her views on Blacks, immigrants, and other minorities, appeared to remain constant throughout her life.<sup>335</sup>

In conclusion, Alma White was both a feminist and a racist. She justified equality for women, and inequality for minorities, as Biblically mandated. She saw the Klan as a powerful force that would liberate women, while simultaneously keeping minorities in their place. To Alma White, the Klan was desperately needed to protect white women. She also found the Klan appealing because it vehemently opposed the Catholic Church, as will be explained in the next section.

*C. Religious Intolerance – An Outgrowth of Feminism, Prohibition, and First Amendment Concerns.*

While Alma White believed in the inferiority of blacks and other minorities, she most vehemently opposed the Catholic Church.<sup>336</sup> To Alma White, the Catholic Church was the embodiment of evil,<sup>337</sup> and

331. WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 17.

332. See Graybill, *supra* note 118, at 122.

333. See BLEE, *supra*, note 22, at 175 (noting that "by 1928 membership declined to several hundred thousand" and by the 1930s, membership was down to below fifty thousand).

334. BLEE, *supra*, note 22, at 175.

335. Stanley notes with some interest that, despite Alma White's fierce rhetoric about the ordained position of Blacks, the Pillar of Fire did have minority members. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 222 n.73 (explaining how Stanley, on a visit to Zarephath, discovered an undated photo of a group of women—one of whom was Black—wearing Pillar of Fire uniforms).

336. See Stanley *supra* note 8, at 231 (noting that "[t]he Klan promoted a gospel of bigotry directed primarily at Catholics"). Stanley also remarked that:

Alma's hatred of Catholics preceded the Klan's vitriolic campaign against them. It stemmed in part from her early career as a preacher. She claimed that the police who broke up her street meetings in Colorado and [New] Jersey were Catholic or controlled by Catholic politicians.

*Id.* at 216.

337. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 217 ("Quoting biblical references that she claimed symbolized the evils of Catholicism, Alma asserted that all Catholics were pagans rather than Christians. The harlot mentioned in Revelation 17 as well as the fallen Babylon in Revelation

strove to subjugate women within their convents and in their fight against Prohibition. In addition, the immigrants who came to America were increasingly of the Catholic faith.<sup>338</sup> Alma White saw this as unacceptable. Therefore, she viewed the Klan—in their opposition to the Catholic Church, immigration, and fight for Prohibition—as an ally of women.<sup>339</sup>

Alma White held the Catholic Church responsible for much of the oppression that women suffered, blaming the Pope and Rome for keeping women subordinate.<sup>340</sup>

[Rome] hates any movement that tends to the uplifting and enlightenment of the tender sex. When Christ came, He placed woman by the side of her husband and sons, but Rome has never ceased to make a protest, and is therefore opposed to equal rights for the two sexes.<sup>341</sup>

She also interpreted Catholic opposition to women's suffrage as a sign of Catholicism's general antipathy toward women.<sup>342</sup> In her words:

The Old Roman law which made women the chattels or the slaves of men, is now in effect behind the walls of papal prisons. The Roman hierarchy has succeeded for ages in keeping women in ignorance, superstition, and degradation. Many of the old Roman laws discriminating against women are still on the statute book in this country . . . .<sup>343</sup>

Alma White believed that the Catholic Church's oppression of women, however, was most profound within its own walls — particularly within the Convents. Alma White wrote that the iron bars and the walls surrounding many of these institutions were a clear sign that women were being kept there against their will:

In some of these places inmates are sentenced to lives of silence. Why should they be doomed to silence unless there is fear that

18:2-5 represented Catholicism, according to Alma's interpretation . . . . The pope was 'the man of sin' or 'the son of perdition' described in 2 Thessalonians 2.").

338. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 232 (explaining that the majority of the 18,218,761 immigrants to the United States between 1891 and 1920 were Catholic).

339. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 238 ("At first glance, it appears that Alma looked to the wrong group to join her in the fight for women's rights . . . . One source for Alma's belief that the Ku Klux Klan favored women's causes was its emphasis on law and order.").

340. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 237 ("Alma traced the Catholic Church's opposition to women's rights to the Pope who thwarted any progress in women's status.").

341. WHITE, GUARDIANS, *supra* note 287, at 121.

342. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 236 ("Other than a few notable exceptions, most Catholic journals, newsletters, and clerics opposed suffrage for women . . . . Alma contended that Catholic opposition to women's suffrage reflected antagonism against granting any rights for women.").

343. WHITE, GUARDIANS, *supra* note 287, at 131-32.

through their conversation the iniquitous system may be exposed? It is time to give the proper officials the keys to these nunneries; let them inspect their dark chambers and allow the women confined there to speak and act for themselves.<sup>344</sup>

She described the Convents the same way she described her childhood and her marriage to Kent White – as a “prison.”<sup>345</sup>

In addition, Alma White considered the Catholic Church an opponent of women because she believed that the Church actively opposed Prohibition, embodied by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution.<sup>346</sup> To Alma White, Prohibition was necessary to combat the evils and vices of society.<sup>347</sup> She believed that alcohol had a negative impact on society, but most notably for women.<sup>348</sup> She proclaimed that “women have always been the greater sufferers under the violation of the law,” and that the “liquor curse” served to “enslave women and children.”<sup>349</sup> Therefore, Alma White construed the Klan’s support of Prohibition as a sign of their kinship to women.<sup>350</sup> In addition, Alma White praised the WCTU for fighting to pass Prohibition. Alma White declared that the WCTU was “one of the greatest influences for good the world has ever known.”<sup>351</sup>

Alma White became especially concerned about the Catholic

344. WHITE, *HEROES*, *supra* note 17, at 173.

345. WHITE, *GUARDIANS*, *supra* note 287, at 127-28 (noting that when young girls got into trouble, the police, judge, or court would often turn the girls over to the “keeper of these places for correction”). To Alma White, this was equivalent to turning the girls over to “prison” when such places were operating ostensibly under the “name of charity and religion in defiance of the law.” *Id.*

346. U.S. CONST., amend. XVIII (declaring that “the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited”). See GAUSTAD, *supra* note 167, at 102 (“The passage of Prohibition [or the Eighteenth Amendment] occurred in 1917, and its ratification one year later.”). This amendment was finally repealed in 1933. See U.S. CONST., amend. XXI, § 1 (“The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.”).

347. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 349 (“Fighting alcohol was not merely a moral crusade. Alma White’s insights regarding alcohol support Mary Daly’s revisionist view of temperance workers . . . . Who were well aware of the social problems that stemmed from alcohol and drunkenness, their aim was broader than simply regulating moral behavior.”); see also MARY DALY, *PURE LUST* 286 (1983) (“The crusaders against intemperance were . . . fighting against the rape and battering of victims of all ages, against deprivation of needed food, drink, clothing, not to mention respect, kindness, health, independence.”); .

348. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 348 (observing that both Alma White and the WCTU believed that alcohol created “adverse family conditions”).

349. WHITE, *PROPHECY*, *supra* note 15, at 129-30.

350. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 238-39. However, there is no evidence that Alma White or any of her converts in the Pillar of Fire were members of the WCTU. Alma White was too busy running the Pillar of Fire and speaking on the Ku Klux Klan lecture circuit. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 225. Conversely, some Pillar of Fire members were members of the Klan. *Id.* at 224-225.

351. WHITE, *HEROES*, *supra* note 17, at 51.



Church because in the latter part of the Nineteenth century, the religious and racial makeup of immigrants started to change, as more Catholic immigrants left Eastern Europe to come to America. Alma White began to worry that Catholics would take over America.<sup>352</sup> She did not exaggerate her fears, but believed literally that the Pope wished to conquer America. While "Samuel Morse, inventor of the telegraph, [first] conceived the papal plot theory which presumed that the Catholic hierarchy in Rome intended to overthrow democracy in the U.S. by encouraging Catholic immigration,"<sup>353</sup> both Alma White and the Klan kept these theories alive.<sup>354</sup>

Finally, Alma White vehemently opposed Catholicism on First Amendment grounds. The First Amendment states in part that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . . ."<sup>355</sup> Specifically with regard to the Free Exercise Clause, she believed that Catholics, along with "Jewish advertisers," controlled the press in America.<sup>356</sup> This control resulted not only in the misrepresentation of the Klan, but represented Rome's attempt to corrupt politics in the North.<sup>357</sup> Most importantly, Alma White believed that the Catholic Church was a relentless opponent of other religions, particularly the Pillar of Fire. From an early point in her preaching career, Alma White was convinced that the officers arresting her mission workers in the midst of their street corner revivals were sent by the Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus.<sup>358</sup>

Thus, Alma White saw the Catholic Church as an arch enemy of women. The Catholic Church, in her eyes, had been a staunch opponent of suffrage, and strove to enslave women within its Convents and through its opposition to Prohibition. Indeed, Alma White believed the Pope might one day occupy the White House, as well as banish the Pillar of Fire. Therefore, the Klan's opposition to the Catholic Church was another sign to Alma White that the Klan

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352. See *supra* notes 300-04 and accompanying text (discussing Alma White's view of immigrants).

353. Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 232 ("Increased immigration corroborated widespread fears that Rome's goal was to take over America.").

354. See Stanley, *supra* note 8, at 232 ("Alma utilized [her anti-Catholic magazine] GOOD CITIZEN to spread the word of the alleged papal plot.").

355. U.S. CONST. amend. I.

356. WHITE, HEROES, *supra* note 17, at 186.

357. See WHITE, PROPHECY, *supra* note 15, at 77 ("Rome has so corrupted the Democratic Party north of the Mason and Dixon line that the time has come for a change of policy on the part of the South.").

358. See VOLUME IV, *supra* note 6.

was a supporter and protector of women, and of female equality in general.

## V. CONCLUSION

Alma White was many things—an early feminist, a founder of a religious group, and the first female Bishop. Everything she did was with an eye towards liberating women—whether promoting suffrage or the ERA, supporting the Klan and racism, or fighting the Catholic Church and the repeal of Prohibition. Alma White truly evolved over time, from becoming a preacher to publicly advocating her secular views from the pulpit. Her philosophies and beliefs in many ways reflect the evolution of modern civil rights and constitutional law during her lifetime.

However, Alma White consistently failed to see some of the inherent conflicts in her views. She advanced competing views on equality, simultaneously claiming that women were both morally superior and equal to men. She both accepted and rejected the “Cult’s” limitations on women’s role in society. She also failed to connect the bias underlying racism and religious discrimination to sexism. In addition, her views on equality often aligned her with widely divergent groups, such as the WCTU, the NWP, and the Klan.

Most importantly, Alma White neglected to see that her pleas for protection of white women—whether for protection against blacks, immigrants, or the Catholic Church—were inherently contradictory to her pleas for equality for women. One can not be equal if she depends on her benefactor for protection. Ultimately, true equality can never rest on a foundation of inequality for others, or for a need for protection from the prevailing, dominant group in the enforcement of laws or social values. Despite all of her groundbreaking achievements, Alma White never seemed to grasp this concept.