Hopes were high among suffrage supporters when South Dakota became a state on 2 November 1889. Recent news from Wyoming and Utah seemed to indicate growing support for enfranchising women in newly formed states and territories. Although several attempts to achieve suffrage in Dakota Territory had been narrowly defeated during the 1870s and 1880s, suffrage supporters had gained a victory of sorts. South Dakota's constitution included a provision that the question of woman suffrage would be placed on the ballot in the first state election, to be held on 4 November 1890. National suffrage supporters responded with a vigorous campaign. During 1890, more than five thousand dollars was spent, nearly two thousand public speeches were delivered, close to four hundred local suffrage clubs were organized, and prosuffrage literature was distributed to every voter in the state. National leaders like Susan B. Anthony, Anna Howard Shaw, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Henry Blackwell spent a great deal of time traveling by rail and wagon to all parts of the new state.1

Despite the extraordinary efforts made to enact suffrage, South Dakota's male voters rejected enfranchisement for women by the decisive margin of 45,862 to 22,072. The suffrage workers were discouraged and disappointed. Ida Harper reported that Anna Shaw had never been more exhausted, that Carrie Chapman Catt had contracted typhoid fever and nearly died, and that Susan B. Anthony for the first time looked and acted like an old woman. While many factors contributed to the defeat of suffrage in South Dakota, one of the most significant obstacles to the campaign was the silence and opposition of the churches. Just two months before the 1890 election, Carrie Chapman Catt assessed the situation, writing: "We have not a ghost of a show for success. ... 1st. — The Lutherans, both German and Scandinavian, and the Catholics are bitterly opposed. The Methodists, our strongest friends everywhere else, are not so here." A careful examination of South Dakota convention reports, church newsletters, sermon collections, and national denominational journals supports Catt's contention and reveals little or no outright support for suffrage in the state. Indeed, these sources often characterize the suffrage movement as both radical and dangerous.

The ill will between suffrage proponents and churches that manifested itself in the 1890 suffrage campaign had been growing throughout the 1880s as a number of suffrage leaders became increasingly critical of the churches' opposition to women's rights. At national conventions of the National Woman Suffrage Association, for example, resolutions were passed that encouraged women to absent themselves from churches (1877) and to withdraw their support from any organization that taught the dogmas of woman's secondary status in creation, her subordination in

2. Ibid., 4:557.
4. Those factors that contributed to the defeat included the failure of all three political parties to endorse suffrage at their 1890 conventions, the connection of suffrage with the prohibition movement, the merger of the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association in 1890, differences between Susan B. Anthony and state suffrage leaders like Marietta Bones, and other election issues such as the location of the state capital and suffrage for Indians. By October 1890, virtually no discussion of suffrage appeared in the state press. An excellent summary of press coverage of the campaign is available in Cecelia M. Wittmayer, "The 1889-1890 Woman Suffrage Campaign: A Need to Organize," South Dakota History 11 (Summer 1981): 199-225.
marriage, or her being cursed in maternity (1885). Other resolutions denounced the "theory of a masculine head to rule the family, the church, or the state" as being "contrary to republican principles" and rejected the churches' assumption that "woman has no right to participate in the ministry and offices of the church" as "theocratic tyranny" (1880). By 1890, resolutions were demanding that churches give woman the same recognition she demanded of the state, that is, to allow her "to assume her right and duty to take part in the revision of Bibles, prayer-books and creeds; to vote on all questions of business; to fill the offices of elder, deacon, Sunday-school superintendent, pastor and bishop" (1890).

In January 1890, suffrage leader Matilda Joslyn Gage also organized a new and radical antichurch organization called the Woman's Liberal Union. Its platform was dominated by a strong attack on the Christian church as the real enemy of women. Gage wrote to her son, Thomas C. Gage, in Aberdeen, South Dakota, explaining her growing alienation: "I did not at first think of attacking the foundations of the church itself - I am as much as ever, a believer in the invisible church - but not in this rotten thing known to the world as 'the Christian Church.'" Leaders like Gage and Elizabeth Cady Stanton continued to develop and refine their radical critique of churches throughout the next decade.

By 1890, however, the churches' suspicion and hostility toward the suffrage movement was already at its height, and the failure of the 1890 campaign in South Dakota can be credited in part to the churches' refusal to use their influence in support of women's rights. An examination of the published church documents of the period uncovers the basic attitudes toward women that suffragists like Gage found so objectionable. The various denominational publications also show that the role assigned to women within a church body varied according to the theological heritage and politics of each denomination. According to the 1890 census, South Dakota at that time had 85,490 church members in 1,589 congregations.

7. Ibid., 3:152.
8. Ibid., 4:165.
9. Matilda Joslyn Gage to Thomas C. Gage, 7 Mar. 1890, Sally Roesch Wagner Collection, Sacramento, Calif.
tions. Ninety-two percent of these members belonged to one of only seven church bodies: 25,720 were Roman Catholics; 23,314 were Lutherans; 12,116 were Methodists; 5,164 were Congrega-
tionalists; 4,778 were Presbyterians; 4,052 were Baptists; and 2,649 were Episcopalians. Each denomination expressed itself differently concerning the roles of women.

The two largest denominations in the state, the Roman Catho-
lies and the Lutherans, virtually ignored the suffrage question. One significant exception to this silence and opposition was the

position of Father Robert Haire of Aberdeen. Father Haire, a convert to Catholicism, had immigrated to Dakota from Michigan in 1880, when there were only twelve priests in the territory. His parish covered nearly a quarter of the present state of South Dakota, and he was instrumental in found ing churches in nearly thirty communities. Father Haire was an active and open supporter of both suffrage and prohibition, publishing a church newspaper, the Dakota Catholic American, that promoted both causes. During the 1890 campaign for suffrage, Father Haire appeared at suffrage rallies, giving the invocation and benediction at the rally in Mitchell, on 25-26 August 1890, that preceded the Republican convention. Martin Marty, the bishop of South Dakota, however, opposed both prohibition and suffrage, and he soon silenced Father Haire, removing him from the pulpit after his public appearances. All in all, the Aberdeen priest proved to be atypical of South Dakota Catholics. Sister M. Claudia Duratschek concluded: “Father Haire’s stand was not in harmony with the sentiment of his confreres and that of the majority of the Catholics and immigrant Protestants of the State. As a citizen, Father Haire was entitled to his opinion on merely political questions. Still, as he became more involved in the socialistic program, he became more reckless and abusive though the words of a priest should be marked by restraint and dignity.”

Even progressive Catholics like George Tyrrell, a major figure in the Roman Catholic Modernist controversy, maintained that the suffrage movement was not only unnecessary but opposed to the church’s teachings. Writing in the America Catholic Quarterly Review in 1897, Tyrrell maintained that the woman’s movement “contains within itself the principles of its own decay and death.” It also seemed clear to Tyrrell that the new ideals of suffrage proponents could cause “the downfall of the family, the profanation of marriage.” If the “New Woman” continued to “elbow her way to the front,” Tyrrell said, a strong male backlash and reaction would follow. To Catholic women, Tyrrell offered a simple choice: either they accepted the elevated status offered

12. Duratschek, Beginnings of Catholicism, p. 239.
them by the church, or they subscribed to a selfish suffrage movement based on rationalism and individualism.\textsuperscript{13}

The Lutheran church, which constituted the second largest religious body in South Dakota in 1890, was comprised primarily of German and Scandinavian immigrants. They ignored the suffrage campaign itself but spent much time discussing the proper role of women in the church, an issue that included the right of women to vote in congregational meetings, to speak in church assemblies, to occupy the pulpit, and to be ordained. As early as 1874, in a Lutheran Quarterly article entitled “Women in the Church,” Rev. R. A. Fink had devoted most of his attention to the natural incompatibility of the roles of pastor and mother. He concluded that women’s “Labor in the gospel” was motherhood and that even single women should be excluded from the male sphere of service. “If it should be alleged,” he stated, “that the above remarks do not prohibit women who are not mothers from preaching the gospel, we reply, that the precepts of the gospel are founded on the general characteristic of the sex, and not on a few exceptions from a general rule.... If those who are not mothers cherish an ardent zeal for the cause of Christ, there are other fields of usefulness in which their zeal can find ample employment.”\textsuperscript{14} Such fields included visiting the sick, helping the pastor, and raising funds for the church.

Lutheran opposition to suffrage was based upon scriptural prohibitions and injunctions. In an 1899 article in Lutheran Church Review, F. P. Mayser answered his question “Shall Women Vote in the Church?” with a decided “no.” He contended that voting was a way for women to govern and that women governing was “clearly in violation of the original and fundamental order established at creation and continued in the New Testament dispensation.” He supported his contention with four points:

a. To vote is speaking, and very effective speaking by an act, and it means to aid in or to contribute to making a decision....

b. The election of a pastor... may either be carried or defeated by the single vote of a woman, ... and this is certainly a very effective way of ruling in the Church....

c. If women are to take an active part by voting,... why should women not have the right, or at least the permission, publicly, to give a reason

\textsuperscript{13} George Tyrrell, “The Old Faith and the New Woman,” American Catholic Quarterly Review 22 (1897): 645, 633.

for their vote? ... To Paul the exclusion of women from such public acts was a divine order. ... 
d. There is no instance on record in the New Testament of a woman voting in the Church, nor in the history of the Church. ... Our own church never practised nor sanctioned any such measure as seems now to be desired in some of our congregations."

If Lutherans were basically silent on the question of woman’s suffrage during the 1980 South Dakota campaign, it is nevertheless clear from their polity and theology, their restriction of women’s roles in the church, and their reasons for restrictions, that Lutherans were uniformly opposed to suffrage. There is no evidence of even a maverick Lutheran clergyman who championed the cause at suffrage organizations, rallies, or conventions. There was no Lutheran Father Haire to oppose his church’s stand.

The only church in South Dakota that provided some support for suffrage was the Methodist church. That church, however, supported suffrage primarily as a means of securing prohibition’s passage, and its zeal waned as 1890 drew near. At the annual sessions of the Dakota Conference in 1887, there were separate reports on prohibition (Report “I”) and universal suffrage (Report “N”). Suffrage was discussed on its own merits: “Believing that a partial suffrage, that excludes from the right of franchise, the pure, intelligent and largest part of our population is not equitable; therefore, Resolved, That we will favor the cause of Universal Suffrage, and will educate our people and agitate public sentiment on this grand movement.”

By 1889, the suffrage resolution submitted to the Methodist conference was included in the “Report on Prohibition.” Only the eleventh (and final) resolution dealt with suffrage: “In view of the fact that the question of equal suffrage is to be submitted to the people of South Dakota at the next election, we take pleasure in giving our unqualified endorsement to the measure and will work and vote accordingly.” One year later, at the meeting immediately preceding the 1890 election, the question of suffrage was ignored altogether. A report on prohibition listed eight resolutions but included nothing on suffrage. It did, however, endorse the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), resolving: “That we recognize the potency of the W. C. T. U. as an organized force

in this great reform, and are grateful for their unflagging zeal and Christian courage.”

In summary, what began as an “unqualified endorsement” of suffrage by Methodists in 1887 had been erased before the crucial 1890 election.

Individual Methodists, nevertheless, continued to support the suffrage cause apart from the prohibition issue. Most notable was Rev. T. H. Youngman of Woonsocket, who preached a prosuffrage sermon the Sunday before the election. The sermon, entitled “Woman’s Suffrage from a Scriptural Standpoint,” was printed and circulated in the state as a tract favoring suffrage. Youngman cited five arguments in favor of suffrage: (1) no valid reason has been offered against suffrage except the argument that scripture is opposed to it, and scripture is not so opposed; (2) women are competent to vote; (3) women outnumber men in churches three to one, while men outnumber women seven to one in penitentiaries, and, therefore, women are morally qualified to vote; (4) women are treated unjustly by many laws, and it is only fair to give them the vote so that they can begin to remedy their own grievances; and (5) women’s votes are necessary to save the Republic from corruption and overthrow. Youngman’s sermon was a courageous but isolated endorsement of suffrage by South Dakota’s Methodist clergy. It was not, however, atypical of Methodist sentiment nationally.

As Carrie Chapman Catt had pointed out, on the national level most Methodists supported woman’s suffrage for reasons similar to Youngman’s. An important theological foundation for their support was the more critical view of scripture adopted by Methodists. In the 1891 Methodist Review, the editor compared the question of woman’s eligibility for membership in the Methodist general conference to the question of church polity. Neither, he suggested, was clearly mandated in scripture, and therefore common sense and reason must prevail. When Paul referred to the man as head of the woman in 1 Corinthians 11:3, it “may only imply executive function without any legislative power whatever.” The headship of man, the Methodist Review editor concluded, applied only to the family, not to church or civil government. Even

19. An incomplete printed copy of Youngman’s sermon can be found in Box 1, Folder 4, Jane Breeden Papers, South Dakota Historical Resource Center, Pierre. Only two pages of Youngman’s sermon survive. The 1890 Woonsocket newspapers that may have contained a copy of the sermon are not available.
the editor, however, balked at ordination: "the position of the Review will be the position of the Methodist Episcopal Church—women in the General Conference, but not in the ministry."^{20}

It is important to note, as well, that the Methodist Review article was simply in support of women's right to participate in the Methodist general meetings, a right they had lost since the death of John Wesley in 1796. Ellen Battelle Dietrick, writing in 1897,

compared the growing restrictions on women's participation in the Methodist church to the exclusion of women from leadership roles in the early Christian church by the church fathers. Wesley, like Jesus, had treated women as equal partners in ministry, according to Dietrick, but by the 1850s, Methodist women were excluded from ministry, pulpits, and leadership roles. Rather than being supportive of women's further participation in the church, Methodist leaders were in the process of rescinding women's rights to belong to the general conference. The Methodist Review editor's support for women's membership was then not a step forward for women but a slight delay in the backward slide of women within Methodism.

The Congregational church, the fourth largest church body in South Dakota in 1890, had no hesitation about endorsing significant political causes during its annual meetings. In 1887, it passed resolutions asking the territorial legislature to forbid "re-marriage of divorced parties for one year after granting divorce" and protesting "the recent order from the Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs forbidding the use of the Indian language in all schools on the Indian reservations." In 1888, church members requested "legislation...prohibiting the sale of tobacco to boys under 18 years of age," and in 1890, they suggested that one day in seven at the "great Exposition [World's Fair]...be suspended for a Sabbath of rest and worship." Congregationalists, in short, discussed issues and passed resolutions on nearly every political issue of the day, but not once in their annual meetings from 1885 to 1890 did they even mention suffrage. They did acknowledge nearly every year the efforts of the WCTU to secure prohibition, but they never joined it in its support of suffrage as a means of achieving that end.

Women were the foundation of the Dakota Congregational church in its early years, but that circumstance, it seems, was largely a cause for regret. According to the secretary of the board of directors: "In many instances the only offering from a church has been from a small band of devoted women, not because there were no men in the church, but because the women

23. Ibid., pp. 20, 25.
informed themselves and became interested while the men and probably most of the women unenlightened, continued to nurse their prejudices against missions and missionaries. ... Brethren let us awake to our duty and privilege in this most important matter. Evidently it is meant that Dakota must furnish more men and more means before we can hope to take Dakota for Christ.”

Congregational women were frequently chided for working for prohibition, which probably included suffrage work, or for other causes that did not bring money into the church coffers. An early church historian suggested that the women often excused themselves by saying, “We have been so engrossed in temperance work that we have done less for missions than usual.” The historian concluded, “All honor to Missionary Societies for their temperance work but I presume the depleted treasuries would say ‘This ought ye to have done and not leave the other undone.’”

Fund-raising efforts were usually considered an appropriate female activity in Dakota churches of the time, but other activities were not as open to women. In the 1870s, the Congregational Quarterly had published a series of articles on the subject of women’s right to speak in public assemblies. Only one article defended speaking rights, and even that author, H. Loomis, was careful to distinguish the right to speak from the dangers of the suffrage movement. Loomis reassured his readers that allowing women to speak in church would not result in “the modern ‘woman’s rights’ spirit and insubordination” overwhelming the church.

Those Congregational writers who opposed women’s right to speak held even lower opinions of suffrage supporters. A woman writer, Augusta Moore, suggested that, since woman’s instinct is “to shrink from public view,” when she did attempt to speak in public her jangled nerves would cause colic in her baby. Also, Moore went on to say, “not one woman in ten can control her voice,” so if given the right to speak, she “whispered, squeaked, or screamed.”

In the Dakota Presbyterian church of the late 1880s, which approximated the Congregational in size, both Indian and non-

24. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
Indian women focused on fund-raising efforts to support home and foreign missions. Church historian Ethel Burkholder reported: "The gift to foreign missions the first Synodical year [1884] was $586 of which $412 was given by Indian women. The Dakota women of Yankton Agency won the title banner Society that year by giving $100, more than any other society, earned by making and selling forty quilts." Women continued to be the financial backbone of the Presbyterian church, organizing all kinds of fund-raising events. In the general assembly meeting of 1890, they did not hesitate to challenge the men in the church to match their support. The Woman's Missionary Society annual report concluded: "Everybody has most sagaciously said that the past year has been one of great financial depression. Even the ministers have said it and in a manner, too, to lead us to imagine that it was an unusual thing for them to be financially depressed. However it may be with the brethren, you will see by the financial

statement that the women have risen beautifully to the occasion, and you may possibly by our example be led to go home praying for financial depression.”

The challenge to men’s stewardship continued at the 1892 synod meeting. Mrs. J. Y. Ewart, synodical secretary, contrasted the women’s efforts with those of the men, suggesting: “In the majority of cases there is a manse or church to build or a minister to pay. The Scriptural injunction to ‘Help those women’ is so altered as to read ‘Help those men.’”

In spite of the recognition of women’s important contributions to the growth and maintenance of the Presbyterian church in South Dakota, a strong theological stance limited women’s sphere within and outside the church. In an article in the Presbyterian Review entitled “Woman’s Position and Work in the Church,” Samuel J. Niccolls argued that the subordination of women was not only biblical, but it also made the suffrage movement unnecessary:

> The terms “subordination” and “dependence” are doubtless hateful to some in these days, who insist upon woman’s emancipation from man’s tyranny; ... But in their true Gospel meaning, they no more imply inferiority or servile subjection than complete submission to Christ implies dishonor to the believer. ... Woman’s divinely appointed mission is one of love. And it is in exact conformity with the nature of that mission, that the position given her by her Creator, in her relation to man, while not one of inferiority, should still be one of subordination and dependence. In accepting it she acquires her sweet and all-powerful supremacy of love, and in her legitimate empire influences man more powerfully than he controls her.

It is not surprising that Niccolls ended his article with the bromide, “She who rocks the cradle rules the world.”

Throughout the decade following the 1890 South Dakota suffrage campaign, a growing suspicion of and hostility towards the suffrage movement is evident in articles in the Presbyterian Review. Authors placed a strong emphasis upon the importance of motherhood for the well-being of the family, church, and state, and they portrayed the suffrage movement as an attempt by some women to abandon their primary role and function. The articles, which are quite lengthy, utilize every imaginable argu-

29. Minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Synod of South Dakota, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., in Session at Sioux Falls, Oct. 2-6, 1890 (Yankton, 1890), p. 209.
30. Minutes of the Ninth Annual Meeting... Presbyterian Church (1892), p. 304.
32. Ibid., p. 279.
ment against the suffrage movement and display the broad range of polemics that Christian churches used against the movement in the 1880s and 1890s. The arguments can be divided into three main types: praises of the status quo, warnings and predictions about the dangerous influence of the suffrage movement, and threats of revenge and reaction.

In praising the status quo, Christian writers penned flowery descriptions of the importance of motherhood. The physical, medical, social, emotional, and moral health of the family all depended upon the dedication, effort, and moral purity of the mother. There was no position anywhere in society, according to the Presbyterian writers, that was more important. All other functions of women were "incidental, collateral, subsidiary, and comparatively unimportant." Nevertheless, all the beautiful language about motherhood was not proving effective enough, and woman needed "to be convinced that her life in the home and her work there are the two things which the world can last and least afford to lose." Writers found support for the emphasis on motherhood in the biblical portrait of women's status and role. They believed that the Bible emphasized domestic virtues and motherhood for women: "On her body, her temperament, her affections, her traits of character, her Maker has stamped the noble seal and mission of Motherhood. She is made for Motherhood." Surveys of the Bible admittedly uncovered exceptions to woman's exclusive preoccupation with motherhood—Ruth, Deborah, the daughters of Philip, and so forth—but, because there were so few, the exceptions served "rather to strengthen the home theory than weaken it." P. D. Stephenson admitted that the women who followed Jesus were also an exception to the emphasis on motherhood, but they were excused because "these women of the gospel saw in the religious teacher they were following their adorable Messiah, Saviour, and Lord; their conduct was not only therefore excusable, it was in the highest degree indicative of faith and duty." For all other women, however, the biblical injunctions were to concentrate their energies and efforts on the home.

34. Ibid., p. 590.
36. Ibid., p. 693.
37. Ibid., p. 699.
Not only was the domiciling of women a faithful adherence to the biblical picture of the family, but Presbyterian writers also agreed that the patriarchal arrangement was best for women. One writer claimed that the "real" rights of women could be protected only in a patriarchal structure. These real rights included a monogamous marriage; the mistress-ship of the home; honored and voluntary subordination to the husband's headship; marital fidelity on the part of the husband; the right to divorce the husband on grounds of adultery and abandonment; the right to obedience from children and servants; the right to set the religious tenor of the home; the right to love, honor, respect, and support from husband and sons; and the right to protection and privacy. The last two rights meant, in the writer's opinion, that women should not have to leave "the God-given protection of the home [to go] into the innumerable perils of public life to do man's work" and that they should not be pressured to leave their homes even to undertake voluntary activities in the church.

However diligently the Presbyterian writers labored to convince women of the importance, advantage, and responsibilities of motherhood, they had to acknowledge some doubts about the effectiveness of their arguments. "All of these changes," said Stephenson, "are silently but very swiftly going on amongst us, with a subtle stealth consciously and unconsciously to them no doubt, stealing into the hearts and minds of our own maidens, wives, and even mothers, making different women of them day by day, giving them more and more the stamp this revolution gives women everywhere." It is not surprising, therefore, that the carrot of praise for motherhood was often supplemented with the stick of warning against the dangers of the suffrage movement.

Opponents did not hesitate to characterize the suffrage movement as radical and dangerous. Stephenson warned, "This 'woman's movement' is a revolution, radical in nature and influence, completely uprooting and destroying all the ideas, convictions, customs heretofore cherished by the Christian world as to woman's sphere, woman's training, woman's rights, and even woman's character and nature." A number of different arguments were used to convince readers that the suffrage movement

38. Ibid., pp. 694-98.
39. Ibid., pp. 698, 702.
40. Ibid., p. 687.
was indeed radical. Most frequent were suggestions that the movement went against nature. William M. Cox believed, for instance, that women's physical characteristics (frail, weak, delicate), social characteristics (modest, shrinking, retiring, dependent), mental characteristics (imaginative, sentimental, emotional), and moral and spiritual characteristics (less selfish, more enduring, more loyal to duty, sublimer in self-renunciation, less questioning) all made her very different from, even the opposite of, man. The suffrage movement, by encouraging more masculine traits in women, perverted nature. Another writer saw evidence of perversion everywhere. Women could be seen riding men's bicycles, frequenting restaurants, appearing masculine in dress, making advances to young men, and even "voting against her husband, or running for office against him." Not only were women ignoring all the traditions, customs, and natural limitations assigned to them, they were also evading their responsibilities as mothers. William Cox viewed the single state of some suffrage leaders as an attempt on their part to promote female celibacy as a means to "shirk the duties and responsibilities for which woman was specially designed." Thus, the author concluded, "if society would not commit moral suicide, it will not tempt woman to a life of celibacy."

To the contention that the suffrage movement perverted nature, these writers added the argument that woman's rights conflicted with the rights of others. Cox insisted "first upon the right of every man to a wife, a pure woman whose destiny is linked to his for life." She was to be neither a rival nor a competitor to him but a "helpmeet, his home-maker, his chief comfort and solace, his moral guide, and spiritual exemplar and inspiration." Cox also insisted that the woman's own right to shelter and protection meant that she must "renounce ambition, and relinquish her aspirations to win for herself wealth, power, and fame." However, the most important right was "the right of a child to a mother" who was "an old-fashioned mother, a home-keeping mother." The right of a child to a mother, Cox said, is one "to which all conflicting pretensions must yield," especially those of a woman drawn towards the cares of the world.

45. Ibid., pp. 602-5.
Writers warned that the woman’s movement also endangered the state, and they made extensive efforts to connect the increase in divorces to the movement. Stephenson criticized South Dakota’s “fearfully loose laws on divorce,” which were being used as an incentive to immigration. Noting that the number of divorces nationally had reached twenty-five thousand by 1886 and attributing that to the “emancipation of women” since the Civil War, Stephenson predicted dire consequences if the trend continued.46

A final warning was reserved for the churches. Stephenson summarized the problem, asking, “How can we dismiss the fear that the mounting the platform, the assuming the other public functions, the running around to Church conventions here and there, etc., is nothing more nor less than training for political publicity and the other concomitants of Woman Suffrage?”47 Even women’s voluntary activities within the church were suspected of linking them to the radical suffrage agenda. Religious movements such as the Shakers, Christian Science, and Theosophy—all begun by women in the nineteenth century—also received general condemnation. A preacher pointed out that “all the modern spiritual fallacies...have been fostered by women.”48

Along with predictions and warnings, the Presbyterian writers offered threats of revenge and reaction against the suffrage movement. William Cox suggested that even if women received the vote, “A majority of men could always find means to render inoperative any legislation passed over their protest by a majority vote of women.” Men would prevail ultimately because “the ballot, in its final analysis, is, at best, only a conventional substitute for the sword.” If their wishes were defeated by women’s votes, men would simply resort to force to accomplish their plans, Cox suggested.49 He followed his political threats with more personal ones. In order to retain a man’s respect and regard, he argued, a woman “should be modest, somewhat retired, fenced off by native reserve from rude approach or pert familiarity.” Lacking these qualities, a woman would lose a man’s reverence and respect, Cox indicated, concluding, “She will then, indeed, step down from her place of household queen to become the vilest and most despised of slaves.”50

47. Ibid., p. 721.
48. Quoted ibid., p. 225.
50. Ibid., p. 599.
In his threats, Stephenson added racial overtones to the enfranchisement issue, querying, "What ... will be the effect of the maturing of the 'Woman Movement,' among us, on the 'Negro Question'?” The effect in black society would be even worse, he suggested, for it would act “like a rapid rot” because blacks were "a vast black, undigested mass, lying unassimilated in the stomach of the body politic, a source of chronic and increasing fever and decay, yet—they cannot be expelled.” The impact of the woman’s movement on the South would thus be “the climax of all evils.” Because the movement was “a revolution so radical as ultimately to break up the foundations of the church, produce anarchy in morals and religion, and destroy the authority of the Sacred Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice,” Stephenson pledged himself “to oppose it and at whatever cost.”

The Presbyterian writers Cox and Stephenson were not unique in their hostility toward suffrage and the woman’s movement. They simply aired their views at greater length and with more urgency than some Christian writers of the period. Though no such overt statements appear in local South Dakota Presbyterian records of the 1890s, the growing suspicion toward the movement that was evident in national journals does much to explain the absence of any support for suffrage among South Dakota Presbyterian clergy. The fear of the potential ill effects of women’s assumption of “public functions” in the Presbyterian church is, however, in sharp contrast to some of the attitudes of the Baptist church.

The South Dakota Baptists, the sixth largest religious group in the state in this time period, strongly endorsed prohibition in their annual conventions from 1885 to 1890. “We want,” they said in 1889, “prohibition put into the constitution to stay with us as long as the sun and moon shall endure.” While Baptists pledged to “use every legitimate means in our power during the coming campaign to secure the adoption of constitutional prohibition for the new state,” suffrage was evidently not one of the means that occurred to them. Baptist churches, however, differed from

52. Ibid., p. 227.
53. Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the South Dakota Baptist Convention and the Ministerial Union, Held with the Baptist Church at Mitchell, October 3, 4, 5, and 6, 1889 (Huron, 1889), p. 11.
54. Ibid., p. 45.
other churches in their understanding of the relationships between men and women. In addressing the Ministerial Union in 1890, Mrs. T. M. Shanafelt began by remarking, "I am glad that you expect no apology from the women for being on the program." Instead of focusing their attention on motherhood as the unique sphere of women, Baptists appealed to women to enter home and foreign mission fields. Shanafelt declared, "Unless the women of heathen lands can be reached by women missionaries, they cannot be reached at all." The appeal to women even belittled traditional "women's work" skills:

In listening to the accounts given of the strange gods in foreign lands, I thought of a great god in this country,—the god of money, and how I would like, if this god were set up, to make a pilgrimage to it, and gain temporal favors to carry on our work. What we need is women of courage, as Deborah had courage to go with Barak; as Phoebe, to do her work; as Mary, with her alabaster box. . . . If Paul were pastor of a church today we should have one more letter in our New Testament, addressed to all the women. Let us not expend all our strength foolishly in "Crazy Socials," "Donkey Socials," and making cake, sandwich and coffee, to give the men nightmares, and make the children cross. If God is God, he will take care of his church without any of these means. If we had a greater knowledge of the Word we should need less money, for we might ourselves be teachers of the Word.

"Sisters," the speaker concluded, "see that you have a good reason before you neglect to answer the letters of the superintendents."

At the Sioux Valley Baptist Association Woman's Meeting of 1888 in Dell Rapids, Dakota, a leaflet entitled The Voices of Women was read and recorded. This amazing document described the vision of an American woman trying to ignore the plight of women in foreign lands. In a series of scenes, she saw a procession of women from many lands: women of Siam sold into slavery, Muslim women beaten by their husbands at home, Chinese women with crippling footbinding imposed on them as little girls, African women kept in harems, Hindu women burned on their husband's funeral pyres. At the end of these visions, her guide (also female) identified herself:

"I am Conscience," she replied, "and I stand here to tell you that your vision of to-night is no disordered dream. I have brought truth to your door; shall it knock in vain? I gave you an elevated position, for you are

56. Ibid., pp. 9-10.
above the sisters whom you have seen, but the platform that raises you is
the Rock, Christ Jesus. Will you be content to stand there alone, or have
you at last interest to spare for the nations low in the dust at the feet of
Allah and Brahma?" ... I promised my Saviour that henceforth His cause
should be mine, and that I would give to the women of other lands as free-
ly as I had received from Him.58

Many Baptist women responded to such dramatic appeals for mis-
sionaries to serve in both foreign and home missions. One of the
most notable was Belle Pettigrew, who became general worker
and superintendent of mission bands in South Dakota. Pettigrew
was the sister of United States Senator Richard Pettigrew, an ac-
tive supporter of the suffrage movement.59 Even though the ef-
forts of Baptist political figures like Senator Pettigrew were con-
sonant with the Baptist theological emphasis on women’s inde-
pendent mission and responsibility, South Dakota Baptist con-
ventions took no direct action to support suffrage.

Perhaps this failure to endorse the broader rights of women on
the state level was a response to the increasingly negative atti-
dude of national Baptist publications, which were displaying an
adverse reaction to the involvement of women in home and for-
eign missions. This national stance was clearly based upon hostili-
ty towards the suffrage movement. In an 1888 "Baptist Quarterly
Review" article, James W. Willmarth proclaimed that it made no
difference how much good women missionaries did since their ac-
tivity was contrary to the will of God and should not be allowed.
Female preachers and evangelists were “abnormal,” “irregular,”
and caused “fanatacism and grave moral perils.” Even the activi-
ties of the WCTU were suspect, for when temperance leaders
spoke in churches, it was “flagrant disobedience to explicit divine
commands.”60

Willmarth’s 1888 article anticipated many of the later Presby-
terian arguments: woman’s primary role was motherhood; wom-
an’s physical, mental, and moral characteristics were different
from man’s; woman’s emergence into public life (both in and out of

58. Minutes of the Seventh Anniversary of the Sioux Valley Baptist Association
and Sunday School Convention, Held with the First Baptist Church of Dell Rapids,
Dakota, June 7, 8, 9 and 10, 1888 (Elkton, 1888), p. 24.
59. W. H. Bayles, Finer Than Fine Gold, the Faith and Fellowship of South Da-
kota Baptists: The Story of the South Dakota Baptist Convention, Its Churches,
and Some of Its Leading Personalities (n.p.: South Dakota Baptist Convention,
[1956]), p. 82; History of Woman Suffrage, 4:559.
60. James W. Willmarth, “Woman’s Work in the Church,” Baptist Quarterly Re-
the church) was contrary to God’s will; woman’s welfare was best served by the continued patriarchal societal structure; and woman’s moral purity was to be conveyed by quiet example and influence. Willmirth also maintained that the demand for equality and suffrage was “logically incompatible” with the demands for “strict divorce laws and enforced moral purity.” Willmirth did recognize the legitimacy of single women serving as missionaries, but they had to limit their activities to “womanly work, without anything like assuming or aping ministerial functions,” and they certainly were not to encourage the women with whom they worked “to engage in political work, or anything approaching it, not even in the supposed interest of ‘moral reform.’” Women’s “mite societies,” on the other hand, and “pastor’s aid societies” had Willmirth’s full blessing, as long as they were guided by the pastor and served only as auxiliaries to his work.

While Willmirth was willing to tolerate a limited role for women in the church, he flatly condemned the secular suffrage movement as atheistic and dangerous: “This whole movement is part of the infidel and anarchical outcome of the French Revolution. It now frequently masquerades in a Christian dress, but it is thoroughly anti-Christian. It is based upon the idea that each man and each woman is an equal and independent unit of society, and that the family is not a monarchy, but a union of two co-equal partners.” Willmirth considered this concept woefully misguided, of course, because there must be an authority who settled differences of opinion, and God had made man that authority in home, church, and state. Since woman’s nature was to “love the man of her choice with absolute devotion, to idealize him, to trust him with implicit confidence, to merge her very existence in his,” the church must silence the suffrage voices that told her she was making “a mat of herself for him to walk over.” Even if there were bad marriages and “a woman finds herself united to a man inferior to herself, the remedy is not for her to usurp his place”; instead, she should be the “guiding power ‘behind the throne.’”

Willmirth presumed that most Baptist women were happy in their traditional roles, and he regretted that the United States Congress even permitted hearings on the subject of woman suf-

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61. Ibid., p. 477.
62. Ibid., pp. 486-87, 484.
63. Ibid., pp. 476-77.
64. Ibid., pp. 479, 477.
frage. In his opinion, Congress had succumbed to pressure from the suffragists, and he considered it "a slander upon the sex to make this kind of woman its representative." Evil things would happen if women's rights supporters were allowed to change society, and Willmarth therefore invoked divine wrath upon the suffragists: "May Heaven bring to naught the projects and teachings of those who, in their self-will and blindness, are seeking to deface God's ideal of saintly womanhood." Given these attitudes concerning woman's place at the national level, the failure of the Baptist church to support suffrage within South Dakota is understandable.

In the Episcopal church, the seventh largest church body in South Dakota in 1890, the attitude toward women was shaped by one dominant personality—Bishop William Hobart Hare. Father Hare came to southern Dakota in 1873 and later became the first bishop of the South Dakota Episcopal church. He was a colorful person who held firm convictions on nearly every subject. Annual meetings of the church were highlighted by the bishop's address, and he maintained regular communication with South Dakota Episcopalians through the Church News, a monthly newsletter from his office. One of the first activities undertaken by Bishop Hare was the construction of a school for girls, All Saints School, which was established in Sioux Falls in 1885. Hare wanted the school to "bring to perfect fruition the buds of promise in each girl" through "the strengthening of mental ability, the direction of emotional impulse and the guidance of the fingers to works of usefulness." Hare assured parents that their children were "going to spend the day profitably, shielded from harm, surrounded by refining influences, and separately cared for by the thought of the Principal, who knows each scholar personally."

Between 1885 and 1890, the Church News contained a number of articles that outlined the nature of True Womanhood, stressed the moral superiority of women, and challenged men to emulate women's moral purity. One month before the crucial 1890 election, the newsletter contained a reprint of the spring com-

65. Ibid., p. 475-76.
66. Church News (Sioux Falls), July 1889. Bishop Hare's Church News was the most complete and regular church periodical in South Dakota in 1890.
67. The concept of women espoused by the Dakota Episcopal church is best defined as "the cult of True Womanhood," which is thoroughly explored in Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966): 151-74.
mencement address at All Saints School. The commencement speaker, Rev. Clinton Locke of Chicago, described the students in the following way: "A young and inexperienced girl . . . is a tender flower, which needs to be shielded from every rough wind that blows, a spotless lily floating in a muddy pool, on which even the gentlest breeze may throw a stain, and over which the guardian must watch with strictest scrutiny so that he may ward off even the appearance of harm. Is there anything more interesting than a young and lovely girl, standing in that archway which sep-
arates girlhood from womanhood, pure as unsunned snow, her heart given to God.”

Calling the United States the “paradise of women,” Locke went on to outline woman’s place in this Eden: “Her position is one of great and curious power. To her all men bow down and all society is constructed for her benefit. . . . even the roughest stage driver, in the roughest stage in the wildest west, will never forget that the women under his charge are to be the objects of a chivalric attention on his part. . . . a woman, to an American, is a being for whom any sacrifice must be made.” An elevated status of this sort might, Locke recognized, lead young women into pride, arrogance, vanity, idleness, and assertiveness. Thus, he warned, “it is no mark of a lady to know how to do nothing. . . . It will not detract one whit from your delicacy or your sweetness to be a good cook and a good housekeeper. . . . Your place, my daughters, is in the background, not in the fore-front of everything, pushing aside your mother as knowing nothing about the world.”

An organized attempt by men to imitate this concept of True Womanhood was the White Cross Society, an interdenominational organization of men pledged to approximate the moral purity achieved by women. Bishop Hare, who was an active supporter of the White Cross Society, sought men’s pledges to five principles:

The pledge is as follows: “I promise by the help of God: 1. To treat all women with respect, and endeavor to protect them from wrong and degradation. 2. To endeavor to put down all indecent and coarse jests. 3. To maintain the law of purity as equally binding on men and women. 4. To endeavor to spread these principles among my companions, and to try and help my younger brothers. 5. To use every possible means to fulfill the command, ‘Keep thyself pure.’”

The promotion of moral purity for men and women emphasized the differences between the sexes. Each had its separate sphere of rules, and women, while exalted, were to be in the background, where men would protect them from “wrong and degradation.”

The various attitudes displayed by South Dakota’s seven major church groups explain, in part, the reluctance of these denominations to support suffrage during the 1890 campaign. The unequivocal failure of that campaign, which involved large expenditures of money and time on the part of national leaders, was a watershed for a movement that was in the process of rethinking its di-

69. Ibid.
70. Ibid., Oct. 1887.
rejections. The refusal of the churches to support the suffrage effort underscored for radical suffragists like Matilda Joslyn Gage the conviction that the churches were the real enemy of progress for women. After the 1890 campaign, she wrote from Aberdeen, South Dakota, that she did not "think women will get suffrage until after the war that is sure to come within the next dozen or fifteen years. We, the workers, will go into the kingdom unenfranchized and with only the consciousness of having done good work." 71 Three years later, convinced that no accommodation of the churches would succeed, Gage published a major criticism of

the Christian church, entitled *Woman, Church, and State*. In 1895, Elizabeth Cady Stanton brought out *The Woman's Bible*, a radical critique of the traditional Christian use of scripture to enforce women's subservience in the social order. These women and their works found supporters, but after 1890, other suffrage leaders, including Susan B. Anthony and Carrie Chapman Catt, began to separate themselves and the national suffrage organization from such radical criticism of the status quo and to take a more placating approach toward the churches.

In 1896, for instance, the National American Woman Suffrage Association disavowed both Gage's *Woman, Church, and State* and Stanton's *Woman's Bible*, resolving in convention that the association was "non-sectarian, being composed of persons of all shades of religious opinion, and has no official connection with the so-called 'Woman's Bible' or any theological publication." By putting distance between themselves and the more radical viewpoints of Gage and Stanton, the suffrage leadership of the 1890s brought a change in the relationship between the national suffrage association and the churches. Gradually, the churches' criticisms, threats, and warnings of the 1880s and 1890s were replaced with resolutions of congratulations for suffrage victories in various states. During the 1899 national suffrage convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist, and Unitarian churches all offered their pulpits to suffrage leaders. After 1900, the churches continued to respond and slowly began to allow women greater participation within church structures.

In 1901, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, then eighty-six years old, sent a last message to the National Woman Suffrage Association convention. Although her sentiments were by that time an embarrassment to the organization, the leaders allowed the reading of Stanton's message. "The canon law," she wrote, "with all the subtle influences that grow out of it, is more responsible for woman's

72. History of Woman Suffrage, 4:263. Some church groups did not find this move reassuring enough. Presbyterian P. D. Stephenson, for instance, suggested that the rejection "may only mean that the free thinkers are not in a majority, or that the 'times are not ripe enough yet' for so advanced a step." Even in 1899, Stephenson remained convinced that the woman suffrage movement was "championed and led still by free-thinkers, Socialists, agnostics, evolutionists and other foes of the Bible and of Evangelical Christianity" (Stephenson, "The Woman Question," pp. 225, 227).

73. History of Woman Suffrage, 4:337.
slavery today than the civil code." Stanton demanded an expur- gated Bible to be employed in churches and denounced the doc- trine of original sin, but no one at the convention any longer pub- licly agreed with the woman who had been a founding mother of the organization. By 1901, the radical antichurch criticism within the suffrage movement was virtually extinct. Its fate had been foreshadowed in the 1890 South Dakota suffrage campaign.

75. Ibid., 5:4-6.
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