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## Chloe Tyler Whittle: Religion, Gender, and Identity in Norfolk, Virginia, 1865-1876

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CHLOE TYLER WHITTLE:  
RELIGION, GENDER, AND IDENTITY  
IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA,  
1865-1876

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

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by

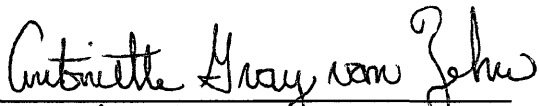
Antoinette Gray van Zelm

1992

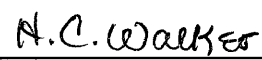
APPROVAL SHEET


This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of


Master of Arts

  
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Antoinette Gray van Zelm

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## ABSTRACT

Chloe Tyler Whittle was born in Norfolk, Virginia, on September 25, 1843. This biography focuses on her life as a young woman from 1865 to 1876. During this period, she lived with her father, a lawyer who owned considerable property, and her widowed sister.

A close reading of Chloe Whittle's diaries reveals that religion was the defining characteristic of her identity. In her writings, she projected an evangelical world view that incorporated scriptural passages, remembrances of sermons, and literary excerpts. She attempted to meld her gender, regional identity, social position, and religiosity into a whole that reconciled piety and worldly existence.

Knowledgeable about Episcopal Church history and practices, Whittle wanted above all to be a useful Christian woman. She played an active role in her church, St. Paul's Episcopal. In her efforts to encourage others in their faith, she described herself as both a soldier of the Cross and an instrument of God.

Whittle experienced two crises during the period from 1865 to 1876. A fervent supporter of the "Southern cause," she viewed the defeat of the Confederacy as a personal setback. In 1868-69, Whittle received treatment at a mental hospital. She later characterized her disability as a spiritual and rational lapse that she had endured only with God's assistance.

From 1872 to 1876, Whittle and her distant relative John Newport Greene courted. In her journals, Chloe debated whether she should give up her life as a single woman. Using religious and literary imagery, she ultimately depicted a union with Greene as inevitable. The couple married in 1876.

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## INTRODUCTION

On April 11, 1865, twenty-two-year-old Chloe Tyler Whittle confided to her journal that she had envisioned herself to be immortal. She mused over the likelihood of everlasting life and acknowledged that her prophecy might be faulty:

It may be that some eye will light on this page when mine are closed forever on earth, if so it will be strong proof of the worthlessness of presentiments.<sup>1</sup>

Yet it would also be a confirmation that she had attained timelessness through words. In her diaries, Whittle sought to create an identity of eternal significance.

From the last days of the Civil War to the time of her marriage eleven years later, Whittle attempted to reconcile her ageless spirit with her mortal existence. She used religious belief to inform her everyday life in Norfolk, Virginia. Through evangelical Christianity, she hoped to influence others and make a tangible contribution to the world.

In addition to religion, Whittle defined herself with

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<sup>1</sup>Chloe Tyler Whittle, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 11 April 1865, Whittle-Greene Papers, 1855-1924, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

reference to gender, region, social position, and literature. Her understanding of each of these secondary elements was affected by her religious consciousness. Most provocative is the selective way in which Whittle incorporated these components in her effort to harmonize piety and earthly existence. Historian Peter Walker has described biography as a problematic form of history because individuals are easily turned into symbols.<sup>2</sup> Examining the discerning manner in which Chloe Tyler Whittle constructed her identity unfolds the human dimension of her story.

Chapter One provides the background for an analysis of Whittle's world view. Elements of the historical scholarship on Southern women, aspects of Whittle's family history, and features of her milieu supply the necessary framework. Chapter Two describes Whittle's religious beliefs and activities with a focus on their relationship to her conception of gender. Her reaction to the defeat of the Confederacy is examined in close detail. Chapter Three explores Whittle's social life. Her use of both religion and literature to interpret her interactions with others affords particular insight. Finally, her courtship with John Greene and her decision to marry him are discussed with reference to her identity as a single woman.

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<sup>2</sup>Peter F. Walker, Moral Choices: Memory, Desire, and Imagination in Nineteenth-Century American Abolition (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1978), xvi.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Family and History

"One of these simple books of my life"

Although many historians have written about elite women, few have studied those who shared Chloe Tyler Whittle's late-nineteenth-century urban South environment. Scholarship on Southern women has focused on individuals who lived on plantations during the antebellum period. In 1989, Anne Scott described the subject of Southern womanhood in the late nineteenth century as "terra incognita," and Sandra Treadway recently made a similar observation about the field of Virginia women's history.<sup>1</sup> Detailed studies of urban women, before or after the Civil War, are few.

Nonetheless, there is much in the available literature that is relevant to an interpretation of Chloe Whittle's life. A sketch of pertinent, and sometimes divergent, contributions to the broad topic of women's history provides an introduction to this close analysis of one Southern woman.

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<sup>1</sup>Anne Firor Scott, "Southern Women...Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going--A Summing Up," in Priscilla Cortelyou Little and Robert C. Vaughan, eds., A New Perspective: Southern Women's Cultural History from the Civil War to Civil Rights (Charlottesville: The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 1989), 81; Sandra Gioia Treadway, "New Directions in Virginia Women's History," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 100, no. 1 (January 1992): 18.

In Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese suggests that the experience of antebellum urban women did not differ radically from that of their rural counterparts. Southerners who lived in towns and cities espoused the ideal of community represented by the networks of rural, self-sufficient households spread across the region. Fox-Genovese asserts that cities did not provide models that women could use to alter their experience as women.<sup>2</sup>

Specifically, Fox-Genovese contends that the rural nature of Southern society prevented women from engaging in group activity, a circumstance that retarded the development of a female consciousness and, ultimately, of organized feminism. Jean Friedman, who has studied evangelical women in the South, reaches a similar conclusion.<sup>3</sup> Friedman further maintains that communities remained defined by kin and church after the war. White evangelicals continued to promote traditional racial and sexual roles. Postbellum women did play a more active role in the churches, however, as many of them relaxed

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<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1988), 74, 78, 80-1.

<sup>3</sup>Jean Friedman, The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985), 127.

institutional discipline in response to secularism.<sup>4</sup>

In her influential survey, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930, Anne Scott depicts post-war urbanization as a positive development for women. From her analysis of middle-class women's diaries and letters, she concludes that women used urbanization to dissociate themselves from the image of the pious and submissive "Southern lady" and to become politically active "new women." She describes the town, with its many venues for female association, as "the essential milieu in which the new woman could develop."<sup>5</sup> Religious activities played a role, although the church retained a conservative outlook on women's place in society.<sup>6</sup>

In her epilogue to Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860, Suzanne Lebsack challenges the view that the Civil War ushered in positive change for white or free black women in the South. Lebsack suggests that the "war-as-watershed" thesis be re-evaluated with a closer look at the power that women actually exercised

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<sup>4</sup>Jean Friedman, "Women's History and the Revision of Southern History," in Joanne Hawks and Sheila Skemp, eds., Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South (Jackson, Ms.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1983), 12; Friedman, Enclosed Garden, 109, 113.

<sup>5</sup>Anne Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), 228-29.

<sup>6</sup>Anne Scott, "Women, Religion, and Social Change in the South, 1830-1930," in Samuel S. Hill, ed., Religion and the Solid South (Nashville, Tn.: Abingdon Press, 1972), 116.

in public life.<sup>7</sup>

The issue of public versus private influence has been extensively debated by scholars of women's history. In her analysis of middle-class women in New England during the early national period, Nancy Cott highlights the paradoxical nature of "separate spheres." While the ideology of domesticity placed men in the world and women in the home, it based this separation on the goal of a common social good. Women helped to create the canon of domesticity that endowed their sex with the capacity to stabilize society through moral influence.<sup>8</sup>

Linda Kerber proposes that the ideology of separate spheres was attractive to religious women as a way to challenge secularization. She notes that Barbara Welter and Joan Jacobs Brumberg have shown how "religious women of virtually all persuasions sustained a pattern of separateness both in their religious activism and in their own religiosity."<sup>9</sup> This theme is prevalent in Chloe Whittle's diaries.

In his essay "The Discovery of Southern Religious History," John Boles contends that the conventional depiction

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<sup>7</sup>Suzanne Lebsock, Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860 (N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1983), 240, 244, 248-49.

<sup>8</sup>Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven, Ct.: Yale Univ Press, 1977), 64, 97, 205.

<sup>9</sup>Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," Journal of American History 75 (1988): 26, 38-9.

of the victimized Southern lady disregards the significance of religion in many women's lives.<sup>10</sup> Donald Mathews has found that Southern Protestant evangelical women began to posit themselves as the domestic guardians of Christianity during the 1830s. They tried to reshape society along religious lines by exemplifying Christian values and performing good works. Anne Boylan, who has studied women's entrance into the field of Sunday School teaching, emphasizes that evangelical womanhood was a conscious role choice. Women made decisions about friendships, everyday activities, and jobs on the basis of their desire to be true to their conversion experience.<sup>11</sup>

Barbara Welter has described the first half of the nineteenth century as a period in which religion became feminized. As more active members of churches, women sought to make Christianity more reflective of themselves and more responsive to their needs. Religious institutions became increasingly flexible in outlook.<sup>12</sup>

David Reynolds has challenged the use of the term

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<sup>10</sup>John Boles, "The Discovery of Southern Religious History," in Boles and Nolen, eds., Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higginbotham (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1987), 546.

<sup>11</sup>Donald Mathews, Religion in the Old South (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977), 112-116; Anne Boylan, "Evangelical Womanhood in the Nineteenth Century: The Role of Women in Sunday Schools," Feminist Studies 4, no. 3 (1978): 66.

<sup>12</sup>Barbara Welter, "The Feminization of American Religion, 1800-1860," in Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Athens, Oh.: Ohio Univ. Press, 1976), 84.

"feminine" to describe religion and other aspects of nineteenth-century culture. He notes that the growth of sentimentality, usually understood as "feminine," was accompanied by greater faith in human will, a "masculine" characteristic.<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese contests the traditional assertion that women outnumbered men in Southern churches during the nineteenth century. She asserts that attendance and membership figures are inconclusive regarding gender.<sup>14</sup>

Fox-Genovese overlooks religion as a significant aspect of identity formation. According to her, for the majority of both Northern and Southern white women in antebellum society, the self was defined by gender. She also cites class, nationality, and race as influences on self-definition.<sup>15</sup>

The Southern female writers studied by Anne Goodwyn Jones (and read by Chloe Whittle) concentrated on this very issue of self-definition. Augusta Jane Evans, Ellen Glasgow, and Kate Chopin created female characters who developed independent personalities and became stronger by articulating them. According to Jones, female writers used such characters to

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<sup>13</sup>David Reynolds, "The Feminization Controversy: Sexual Stereotypes and the Paradoxes of Piety in Nineteenth-Century America," The New England Quarterly 53 (1980): 101, 106.

<sup>14</sup>Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household, 45-6.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 42-3, 372.

criticize the prescription of the Southern lady.<sup>16</sup>

Jones thus finds in women's professional writings a similar theme to that Anne Scott traces in the diaries and letters of upper- and middle-class women. Fox-Genovese warns against inferring too much from the discontent expressed by elite Southern women. Most of them, she asserts, did not promote an alternative to the ideal of the lady as the prototype for Southern womanhood.<sup>17</sup>

Like the metaphor of "separate spheres," that of "image versus reality" has a limited analytical range because of its dichotomous character. While it is important to acknowledge the pervasiveness of the ideals of the Southern "lady" and the Northern "true woman," it is restrictive to classify women according to the extent of their rejection of these models. By focusing on departures from the ideal, historians continue to place women under the same lens that many of their contemporaries used. It is more useful to examine the creation of identity as a complex process influenced by various experiences and motivations.

A diary can provide an account of a person's actions, feelings, and decisions. The identity set forth in a diary is not, of course, an exact reflection of the self. Diary editors Mary Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter caution that

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<sup>16</sup>Anne Goodwyn Jones, Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936 (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 353-54.

<sup>17</sup>Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household, 47.

women are particularly inclined to write in their diaries when they are troubled.<sup>18</sup> Other scholars point out that the reader never knows what a diarist decided not to include. Sometimes, however, the "'silences' of the text" are apparent and extremely telling.<sup>19</sup> The presence of such gaps can be explained in part by the fact that people almost never keep diaries just for themselves. All diarists have an audience.<sup>20</sup>

Especially revealing are the repetitions contained in a diary. In her analysis of the 1785-1812 diary of New England midwife Martha Ballard, historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich elevates the "exhaustive, repetitious dailiness" as the essence of the text.<sup>21</sup> The constant, everyday demands that Ballard described in the sparest of terms coalesce into a powerful life story.

As the nineteenth century progressed, women increasingly viewed the diary as a repository for their personal feelings and thoughts.<sup>22</sup> Anne Goodwyn Jones contends that Southern

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<sup>18</sup>Mary Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter, eds, Revelations: Diaries of Women (N.Y.: Random House, 1974), 10-11.

<sup>19</sup>Margo Culley, ed. A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women From 1864 to the Present (N.Y.: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1985), 22.

<sup>20</sup>Thomas Mallon, A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries (N.Y.: Ticknor and Fields, 1984), xvi-xvii.

<sup>21</sup>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812 (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1991), 9.

<sup>22</sup>Culley, ed., A Day at a Time, 3-4.



women viewed the diary as a refuge from the constraints of a prescriptive and patriarchal society. Donald Mathews points out that the devotional diaries of middle-class women reveal the intense self-examination required by the evangelical faith.<sup>23</sup>

Mary Chesnut is perhaps the most famous nineteenth-century female diarist. A South Carolinian with a keen interest in politics and society, she spent the 1880s transforming her Civil War diaries into a book on the sectional conflict. In her manuscript, which she did not live to complete, Chesnut used the diary form to present a literary interpretation of her life during the war. Although her manuscript was not a literal transcription of her diaries, it was presented as such in two twentieth-century editions of her work, both of which were entitled A Diary from Dixie.<sup>24</sup>

Chesnut's actual diaries, published by C. Vann Woodward and Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, reflect the anxiety and dislocation that she and members of her family experienced during the war. Chesnut did not focus solely on her extended family but described the comings and goings of others, especially those with political connections. Chesnut's diaries contain intelligent, witty, and moving insights into the devastation

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<sup>23</sup>Jones, Tomorrow is Another Day, 23-4; Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 114.

<sup>24</sup>C. Vann Woodward and Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, The Private Mary Chesnut: The Unpublished Civil War Diaries (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984), ix-xxix.

of war and the ironies of everyday life.

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Like Mary Chesnut, Chloe Tyler Whittle began keeping a journal in 1861 so that she could describe the events of the Civil War. Unlike Chesnut and many of her other contemporaries, Whittle did not stop writing when the hostilities ended.<sup>25</sup> She continued to shape a paper legacy for sixty more years, until just before her death at age 81. Whittle's diaries are more literary than Chesnut's; Chloe saw herself as an aspiring writer and viewed her diaries as a means toward this end.

Whittle recorded her activities and thoughts in plain, uncalibrated journals. She chose how to chart her life and then evaluated herself according to the time periods that she had established with each volume. She also used her diaries to keep track of significant anniversaries. On February 18, 1867, she placed herself in this historical context:

Two years ago today I was in Charleston  
and the Yankees entered the city in the morning.  
It is the 44th anniversary of my mother's  
wedding day.<sup>26</sup>

Chloe melded personal experience and family history in her narrative.

Whittle wanted to have a chronicle that she could look

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<sup>25</sup>Suzanne Lebsock and Kym S. Rice, "A Share of Honour:" Virginia Women 1600-1945 (Richmond, Va.: The Virginia Women's Cultural History Project, 1984), 99.

<sup>26</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 18 Feb. 1867.

back to in later years. After visiting Jefferson Davis in prison in 1866, she sought to register accurately her meeting with the former president of the Confederacy:

I feel so inadequate for the attempt to portray suitably such a conversation that I am reluctant to try it, at the same time when years have passed away I know I should regret that I did not record it while so vividly before my mind.<sup>27</sup>

Chloe filled twenty-nine pages with a comprehensive description of the day. For her, the goal of creating a document for posterity helped to justify the self-absorption inherent in keeping a diary. "In case when I am an old lady I care to see how I decked myself for the occasion I shall describe," she wrote in one entry devoted to the details of a summer dinner party.<sup>28</sup>

Whittle viewed her journals as useful and companionate creations. Completed volumes were picked up and re-read.<sup>29</sup> Understandably so, for Chloe saw her diaries as extensions of herself. In 1868, she wrote:

Again I am about to close one of these simple books of my life. There is a strange, sad feeling in this parting with a portion of one's existence.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 22 Aug. 1866.

<sup>28</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 28 Aug. 1872.

<sup>29</sup>Mary Chesnut read over each volume after she had filled it. Woodward and Muhlenfeld, Private Mary Chesnut, xxviii.

<sup>30</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 23 April 1868.

Whittle's metaphysical description of her journals reflects her dedication to the construction of a personal history.

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The outlines of Chloe Whittle's past inform the present that she described in her diaries.

Whittle was named after her mother. In 1802, Eliza and Samuel Tyler had christened their third daughter. Like many other parents during the early days of the American republic, they chose a name that evoked classical antiquity. The Tylers called their daughter "Chloe," perhaps after the Greek pastoral romance "Daphnis and Chloe."

Chloe Tyler grew up in Williamsburg, Virginia, where her father served as chancellor. She left home in 1824, when she married Conway Whittle, a young lawyer who had studied at the College of William and Mary. By 1843, the couple had raised two daughters and buried three others in infancy. That September, at age 41, Chloe Tyler Whittle gave birth to another daughter, who became her namesake.

On her twenty-seventh birthday, Chloe Tyler Whittle II listed her "orphaned girlhood" as one of the sorrows that she had experienced in her life. Her mother had died shortly before Chloe turned fifteen. She acknowledged her loss in terms of gender, describing not her childhood but her girlhood as "orphaned." In stressing the importance of the mother-daughter relationship for young women, Chloe echoed a trend that had begun at the beginning of the century.

Her father lived until 1881, and she frequently expressed love and respect for him in her diary. Like his daughter, Conway Whittle bore a family name. His father, Conway Whittle I, had come to Virginia from County Antrim, Ireland, in 1784. Joined several years later by his younger brother Fortescue, Whittle established himself as a merchant in Norfolk. Ships owned by the brothers successfully engaged in the West Indian trade until the outbreak of the War of 1812. Their schooners supplied Norfolk with Antigua sugar and Barinas cotton, as well as coffee, cocoa, and rum.<sup>31</sup> In 1801, Conway I used his earnings to buy land from Robert and Catherine Boush, members of one of Norfolk's founding families. Whittle purchased twelve lots near the center of town for \$14,323.33.<sup>32</sup>

Conway Whittle II spent much of his early life overseas. Afflicted with recurring chills, at age nine he was placed on board a ship bound for England. His father hoped that the ocean crossing would restore the boy's health. After Conway II had completed his early education in Liverpool, he enrolled in Dublin University. He later returned to Virginia to pursue his study of the law.

Several years after he and Chloe Tyler began their family

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<sup>31</sup>Transcription of three advertisements from the Norfolk Gazette and Publick Ledger, 1807, "Norfolk, Virginia--Biography--Whittle Family," Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Public Library, Norfolk, Va.

<sup>32</sup>Land deed, April 24, 1801, Conway Whittle Papers, Box XI, Folder 3, Special Collections, Earl Gregg Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Va.

in the 1820s, Whittle was appointed Collector of Customs for Norfolk and Portsmouth, a position that he held until mid-century. He later served as one of Norfolk's city magistrates and as a director of the Dismal Swamp Canal Company. In 1860, Whittle declared that both his real estate holdings and his personal property were worth twenty-five thousand dollars. That year he paid taxes on two slaves and one white male. By 1870, he held the bulk of his wealth in real estate, which he valued at sixty thousand dollars.<sup>33</sup>

In 1865, the Whittles lived on Boush Street, in the large brick house that the family had occupied for almost twenty years. After a fire destroyed part of the interior in 1856, Conway Whittle spent more than three thousand dollars to have the turn-of-the-century house modernized and embellished. Carpenters constructed a two-story piazza at the rear and enlarged all of the windows. Lights were installed over each door on the second story, and cornices were added in all of the rooms on the first floor.<sup>34</sup> Whittle elaborated his house at a time in which other prosperous Americans were doing the same.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>U.S. Census, City of Norfolk, County of Norfolk, 9 Aug. 1860, p. 235; Tax Receipt, City of Norfolk, 1860, CW Papers, Box IX, Folder 19; U.S. Census, First Ward, City of Norfolk, County of Norfolk, 28 July 1870.

<sup>34</sup>"Papers Regarding the House on Boush Street, c.1799-1932," CW Papers, Box XI, Folder 1.

<sup>35</sup>Colleen McDannell, The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900 (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986), 25.

During the 1860s, Conway Whittle and his daughter Chloe shared this spacious house with Conway's older sister, Frances Lewis. Lewis had been a widow for half a century. She and her sister Mary lost their husbands, who were both naval officers, in 1815. The two men died when the sloop "Epervier" went down carrying a peace treaty negotiated by Commodore Stephen Decatur and the Dey of Algiers. Both sisters received pensions from the United States government, and they lived together until Mary's death in Philadelphia in 1861.

That year, Lewis wrote a new will. In it, she urged her brother "to prepare an Instrument by which after his death his Daughters may inherit--they to draw the Interest and Dividends themselves." She added, "The effort I make to secure to my Nieces the little I leave is in consequence of having seen the dependence of Ladies on their Friends." In an accompanying letter, Lewis explained why she hoped that her brother would place conditions on his estate: "The Girls have seen little of life, and would (I judge them by ourselves) put a future support at hazard. We would not have wanted so much, if we had not trusted so much."<sup>36</sup> Lewis indicated that she and her siblings had made some poor decisions with their inheritance. She wanted her brother to use the law to assure her nieces a degree of financial independence.

Mary Whittle, Conway's oldest daughter, was married to

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<sup>36</sup>Will dated May 11, 1861; Letter from Frances M. Lewis to Conway Whittle, May 11, 1861, CW Papers, Box II, Folder 26.

the Reverend Julius Sams. They lived in Chester, South Carolina, and later, Manchester, Virginia, with their three children. Grace (Gay) Whittle Sams,<sup>37</sup> Chloe's second sister and closest confidante, returned to Boush Street in 1865 after her husband died of typhoid fever. Horace Sams, a cotton planter, had been a captain in the Confederate Army. Accompanying Gay were her two young children, appropriately named Conway and Fannie. When Fannie Lewis died in 1870, Grace took over supervision of the domestic activities of the household, which included the work of a cook and a maid.

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Not far from the Whittle home on Boush Street, the Elizabeth River swelled and ebbed with the tides. The river had long provided Norfolk's inhabitants with easy access to the Atlantic Ocean through the southernmost reaches of the Chesapeake Bay. The vigorous West Indian trade that had attracted Conway Whittle I and his brother to Norfolk contributed significantly to the early growth of the port.

Throughout the nineteenth century, ships docked with both goods and people, including slaves. Disease came to the port as well. In the summer of 1855, Norfolk was devastated by yellow fever. Not until 1860 did the city return to its pre-epidemic population level. That year, Norfolk boasted more

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<sup>37</sup>It is possible that Mary and Gay were married to brothers. "Sibling exchange" was a common marriage pattern in the antebellum South. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 217-18.



than 14,500 inhabitants, which made it the ninth largest city in the South.<sup>38</sup> As urban dwellers, the Whittles and Norfolk's other citizens were a distinct minority in the United States during the nineteenth century. In 1860, less than 20 percent of all Americans, and less than 10 percent of Virginians, lived in cities.<sup>39</sup> Norfolk's civic leaders established such typical urban institutions as a public school system for white males and an association for poor relief. Conway Whittle II served on the Board of Health.

Because of its strategic location, Norfolk was an early objective of the Union Army. Occupied for the final three years of the Civil War, the city soon rebounded economically and structurally. The expansion of railroad networks coincided with the development of the cotton, coastal, and coal trades. Urban improvements included a new waterworks and a horse-drawn streetcar system.<sup>40</sup>

Chloe Whittle attested to her family's financial well-being in the years following the war. For New Year's Day in 1867, visitors to the Whittle home enjoyed "cake, wine,

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<sup>38</sup>Blaine Brownell and David Goldfield, eds., The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1977), 71-2, 93.

<sup>39</sup>Howard Rabinowitz, Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890 (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), 4; Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household, 72-3.

<sup>40</sup>By 1874, Norfolk was the third cotton port behind New Orleans and Galveston. Rabinowitz, Race Relations, 4-5; Thomas Wertenbaker, Norfolk: Historic Southern Port (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1962), 286, 247; Brownell and Goldfield, eds., The City in Southern History, 96, 98.

lemonade, raisins & almonds &, at Father's suggestion, spiced beef and crackers."<sup>41</sup> Five months later, Chloe invited ten women and thirteen men to the house for a party. She spent \$25.50 on refreshments, which included two lobsters for \$.50, and paid \$10.00 to rent an additional piano for the evening.

That summer, Chloe and her father took advantage of Virginia's repaired rail lines to travel to the Springs in the western part of the state. They met both Robert E. Lee and Jefferson and Varina Davis at White Sulphur Springs, the most famous of these elite watering places. Open for the first time since the war, the resort charged rates of \$3.50 per day and \$90.00 per month. The Whittles visited the area for a month, staying first at White Sulphur and then at Healing Springs.<sup>42</sup>

Politically, Reconstruction ended in Norfolk in 1870, when voters returned pre-Civil War leaders to office in the midst of racial violence. Blacks had flocked to federally occupied Norfolk during the war. They organized in support of equal rights around the Union Monitor Club and the Freedmen's

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<sup>41</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 2 Jan. 1867.

<sup>42</sup>There were seven hundred people, including the Whittles and Lee, at the White Sulphur Springs on August 15, 1867. Perceval Renier, The Springs of Virginia: Life, Love, and Death at the Waters, 1775-1900 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: 1941), 208, 215. In the years after the war, Southern leaders met at the White Sulphur Springs to discuss the future of the South. William MacCorkle, White Sulphur Springs: The Traditions, History, and Social Life of the Greenbrier White Sulphur Springs (N.Y.: Neale Publishing Co., 1916), 406.

Bureau.<sup>43</sup> Conway Whittle opposed the local civil rights movement in 1867. He and the rest of Norfolk's city magistrates refused to allow an attorney to introduce evidence from blacks into a larceny case.

According to Chloe Whittle, the officials were arrested "for having opposed the action of the Civil Rights Bill." She described the arrest as "a step in the gradual oppression of the South." The magistrates were freed on bail of five hundred dollars each.<sup>44</sup> Later that spring, Conway Whittle demonstrated at least the appearance of a change in attitude when he publicly introduced a black man to Jefferson Davis. Chloe wrote:

...Father came in with a negro as black as the ace of spades & introduced him as a citizen of Norfolk rather to my astonishment but to the infinite amazement of everyone, except Mr. Davis, who shook hands with him with all the gravity possible.

On the rare occasions that she referred to blacks in her diaries, Chloe articulated standard views for nineteenth-century Southern women. She noted her dislike of mulattoes, and she criticized Mary Lincoln for her friendship with

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<sup>43</sup>See Wertebaker, Norfolk, 233; Betsy Fahlman et al., A Tricentennial Celebration: Norfolk, 1682-1982 (Norfolk, Va.: The Chrysler Museum, 1982), 13; Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1988), 111, 169.

<sup>44</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 1 March 1867; Harrison W. Burton, The History of Norfolk, Virginia (Norfolk, Va.: Norfolk Virginian Job Print, 1877), 107.

Elizabeth Keckley, a black woman.<sup>45</sup>

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In 1876, Chloe Tyler Whittle described herself as a "high-tempered" member of a like-minded family.<sup>46</sup> Within her family, Whittle received recognition for her strong personality. After she returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., one Christmas, her brother-in-law Julius Sams told her, "Chloe, your self-willed ways were much missed."<sup>47</sup> Whittle clearly exhibited independent thought and feeling in her everyday interactions. An acquaintance's accurate summary of her personality focused on her solid ego:

He undertook to read my character for me. He said I was strong, that I was a little obstinate, but liked those who made me yield, nevertheless I did not yield gracefully, that I suffered, & determined others should suffer too. I was almost aghast, for I had never been read so clearly before, & was foolish enough to admit it.<sup>48</sup>

In striking contrast to this characterization is Whittle's

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<sup>45</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 14 May 1867. In 1874, Chloe's brother-in-law Julius Sams was caricatured in Harper's Weekly when a black woman attended his church in Manchester, Virginia, near Richmond. In a cartoon, the magazine portrayed Julius as a wolf and the black woman as a sheep, and showed the congregation running out the door. According to Chloe, there had been no disturbance; the woman had simply listened to some of the singing and then left quietly.

<sup>46</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Virginia, 1876," 23 Feb. 1876.

<sup>47</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun September 25, 1874," 25 Dec. 1874.

<sup>48</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 11 Dec. 1873.

depiction of herself earlier the same year, when she envisioned the outcome of her most recent visit to a photography studio:

The result I believe will be a good picture, as regards prettiness, but much more dreamy looking, much more like an enraptured saint than like Chloe Whittle. The large, dark eyes are cast heavenward, with only a look of intelligence, which might descend if it would to remind you they belong to anything on this mundane sphere.<sup>49</sup>

Within a six-month period, Whittle acknowledged the reality of her strong character and established the ideal of a saintly existence. She related the former to her ancestry; her religious sensibility had roots in her upbringing, but she did not explicitly connect it with her family in her diaries. Although ideal and reality appear dichotomous at first glance, they were closely intertwined. Whittle's vision of herself as a saint was perhaps the greatest embodiment of her desire for autonomy.

Whittle was an active member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where she had been confirmed at age fifteen and where her father served on the vestry. She attended weekday services in addition to two ceremonies on Sunday, sometimes frequenting the other two Episcopal churches in Norfolk, Christ Church and St. Luke's.

In her description of herself as a saint, intelligence was the one human characteristic that Whittle wanted to present to the world. She valued knowledge and hoped to be

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid, 16 June 1873.

viewed as someone who exercised reason. Whittle had attended school until age eighteen. She especially enjoyed math. Grace Whittle related Chloe's scholastic achievements to her aunts in 1860: "You will not think it vanity in my telling you, that she is universally considered as the head of her school, in every respect. Indeed in Algebra and Geometry, there is no one who pretends to compare with her."<sup>50</sup>

Although in her "enraptured saint" soliloquy Chloe depicted intelligence as a digression from spirituality, she did not always view the two as so disparate. The Bible describes wisdom in female terms, and Chloe took note when ministers preached on the "Wisdom text" from the Book of Proverbs: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace."<sup>51</sup> Whittle was dedicated to self-improvement, a goal pursued zealously by educated women during the nineteenth century.<sup>52</sup> Religion played the primary role in Chloe's quest for personal betterment, and she did not often distinguish between spiritual growth and intellectual and cultural refinement.

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<sup>50</sup>Letter from Grace Whittle to Aunts, Norfolk, Va., Feb. 23, 1860, CW Papers, Box VI, Folder 26.

<sup>51</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 3 Aug. 1873; "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun Jan. 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 17 Aug. 1874.

<sup>52</sup>In her study of Margaret Fuller, Barbara Welter notes that the women of Fuller's generation and class devoted themselves to the ideal of perfectionism, using the diary to record their progress toward this goal. Welter, Dimity Convictions, 152.

Whittle expressed disdain for the standard of education in the United States and patterned her intellectual life after an English model. She upheld personages from the book Memorials of a Quiet Life as representatives of well-educated people. A popular biography written by a man about his godmother, the book described men and women who were educated in the classics, literature, and oration.<sup>53</sup> If there was a degree of national alienation in Chloe's intellectualism, there was also an element of detachment from current scholarly inquiry. She embraced a humanistic, religious education and rejected much of contemporary scientific thought that characterized the "infidel age" in which she found herself living.<sup>54</sup>

Whittle took piano and singing lessons, learned German, and studied Greek with her father. She avidly read books, religious periodicals, and newspapers. She looked forward to engaging in challenging conversation. She mastered chess and prided herself on occasionally beating both her father and her cousin William Whittle. She enjoyed traveling and visited museums and historic sites when in such cities as Richmond and Washington, D.C. While in the latter city, she went to the Capitol to hear speeches by the President and members of Congress.

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<sup>53</sup>Memorials of a Quiet Life was written by Augustus J.C. Hare in 1872.

<sup>54</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun September 25, 1874," 18 June 1875.

Chloe's search for self-enrichment was hardly a solitary one. In 1866, for example, she and her friend Ginnie Langley decided to reserve Sunday afternoons to study together "the Articles of the Church."<sup>55</sup> With Lucy Gilmer, Chloe took up Horace Walpole's writings during the winter of 1870.<sup>56</sup> That fall, she tackled a mathematical problem ( $x+y=35$ ;  $x^43-y^43=5$ ) that a friend had enclosed in a letter. Sewing, embroidering, gardening, writing letters, and assisting her father with his responsibilities could be undertaken individually or jointly.

Many late-nineteenth-century women who had leisure time took part in communal activities for the benefit of others. Intellectual stimulation was a hoped-for byproduct.<sup>57</sup> Chloe taught Sunday School--often twice each Sunday--and for a short time instructed children at the Parish School during the week. She served as secretary of St. Paul's women's sewing society, contributing weekly dues toward various church projects.

In 1866, Chloe, Gay, and their Aunt Fannie joined the Norfolk chapter of the Washington Lee Association "for the purpose of founding an Orphan Asylum in the Capitol of every State of the Confederacy for the benefit of the children of

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<sup>55</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 23 Aug. 1866.

<sup>56</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara, commenced July, 1869," 12 Feb. 1870.

<sup>57</sup>Sara M. Evans, Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America (N.Y.: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1989), 139.



the Confederate Dead."<sup>58</sup> Chloe also belonged to a "Society," possibly an early women's club, made up of a few of her close friends. Charity was one of the group's concerns. "Today Our Society sent off a box of dry-goods for Julius to distribute among the poor," she wrote on June 27, 1867.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, Whittle was involved with an association that ran a small library. With her father's encouragement, in 1867 she wrote a letter to the Norfolk Journal in response to an article calling for the establishment of a public library. "It is not the want of a library which afflicts Norfolk, it is the want of the desire for a library," Chloe wrote, explaining that the seeds of a public library had already been planted. She lamented the "fatal isolation of gifted minds in which intellectual growth is all but impossible" and concluded with an appeal to the press that combined evangelical fervor and social progressivism:

Proclaim aloud to those in easier circumstances that the fire of genius burning amongst the poor and unknown, may, if duly fed, be a beacon light, and not under the devil's guidance, prove an element of destruction, and may heaven grant, that at the close of another year, the disgraceful fact may no longer exist that, in a population of over 20,000 but thirty-three persons can be found to

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<sup>58</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 13 Sept. 1866. White women throughout Virginia established memorial societies to honor the Confederate dead. Lebsack and Rice, "A Share of Honour", 115.

<sup>59</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced Aug. 23, 1866," 27 June 1867.

support the only public library in this city.<sup>60</sup>

Although she received some satisfaction from her benevolent activities, Chloe struggled to find purpose in her everyday life. She voiced the same type of frustration expressed by the young Jane Addams, who felt "shame that for all my apparent leisure I do nothing."<sup>61</sup> After her twenty-third birthday in 1866, Whittle wrote that almost all of her usual pursuits--reading, sewing, composing, visiting with friends--gave her a headache. She enjoyed playing the piano, but found it "a very-good-for-nothing life to be hours at the piano, entrancing as music is." So she went on to discuss her father's activities: "For a more important subject--Father went to New York last Thursday on business."<sup>62</sup>

Religion provided one escape from this sense of futility. In 1872, Whittle wrote:

Fruitless seem to have been all these years  
I have lived, and fruitless apparently are to  
be the years that are to come. I would not  
wish to rush unprepared into life's work, yet  
I am now nearly as old as our great Exemplar  
was when he began actively 'to be about his  
Father's business,['] and all the instincts

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<sup>60</sup>"Books, Books," Norfolk Journal, 11 March 1867. Signed only "C.", Whittle's letter was introduced by the editors as having been written by a male correspondent. Conway Whittle had accommodated his daughter's aversion to "notoriety": "Father promised to 'father it,' so he made a fair copy of what I had written and carried it to the Journal Office." "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866, Norfolk, Va.," 14 March 1867.

<sup>61</sup>Evans, Born for Liberty, 139.

<sup>62</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced Aug. 23, 1866," 26 Sept. 1866.

of my energetic nature cry out for work to do and strength to do it.<sup>63</sup>

Whittle compared herself to Christ. To proclaim her readiness to engage in the kind of ministry that He had begun when He reached age thirty, she cited a biblical verse attributed to Him at age twelve. On the eve of 1873, she further defined the occupation to which she aspired:

I want to lead a truer, more genuine life than I have ever done, to be a Christian woman, useful in my generation, & to it; humble, quiet, 'strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.' Oh! my Saviour, help me; make me Thine.<sup>64</sup>

Evangelical piety emphasized the importance of usefulness for women.<sup>65</sup> Chloe Whittle viewed the role of Christian woman as a way to contribute to the world and remain true to her religious beliefs. She sought to merge gender and religion into a satisfying whole.

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<sup>63</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 1 Dec. 1872. According to the Book of Luke, when Jesus was twelve years old, he stayed in Jerusalem after his parents had left the city. They found him in a temple: "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Lk. 2.49). The Bible used in all scriptural notations is The New Scofield Reference Bible: Holy Bible, Authorized King James Version, edited by C.I. Scofield (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967).

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 31 Dec. 1872. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6.10).

<sup>65</sup>Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 114.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Religion and Identity

"Not only 'polished' but  
a polished corner of a temple"

Chloe Whittle's diaries proclaim the primacy of religion in her life. They are filled with prayers, longings for spiritual growth, and descriptions of church activities. Anne Scott has found this emphasis common in journals of nineteenth-century white Southern women, and she points out that women's penitent preoccupation with religion in their diaries does not necessarily indicate religious absorption in daily life.<sup>1</sup> In her scholarship, Scott focuses more on women's religious activities than their beliefs, which she dismisses too readily.

Whittle's religious allusions and insights include reflections of guilt and indoctrination. Significantly, however, she articulated religion as the essence of her life. The participatory nature of her spirituality is particularly striking; she viewed herself as actively engaged in a reciprocal relationship with God. Her religious sensibility often empowered her to act in everyday life.

Whittle believed that God had the power both to destroy

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<sup>1</sup>Scott, "Women, Religion, and Social Change," in Hill, ed., Religion and the Solid South, 100-01.

and to forgive. To prevent the former and encourage the latter, she sought to enhance her faith through prayer and study and to share God's teachings with others. She acknowledged her sinfulness and accepted the Lord's righteousness. She tried to elevate her mind above the consideration of self to the contemplation of higher things. She viewed the promise of salvation as a source of strength in a harsh world. Scott's research in diaries and letters unearthed similar strivings, all of which were presented to Southern women through sermons and religious periodicals.<sup>2</sup> Broadly defined, Whittle's religious beliefs represent the outlines of evangelical Christianity. Viewed intimately, they form the basis of an identity constructed with deliberation and emotion.

Whittle filtered her religious beliefs through a vibrant imagination that brought Christ alive for her. In 1870, she invoked religious imagery from both the Old and New Testaments to thank God for His Son:

. . . life were a howling wilderness full of birds of ill omen and ravenous beasts of prey were it not for the protection of God, and the hope of heaven that sustains us in our passage through it, else would our hearts fail for fear.<sup>3</sup>

Chloe confided to her diary that she most appreciated a sermon that enabled her to visualize the blood of Christ. His

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 95.

<sup>3</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., Oct. 1st, 1870," 28 Dec. 1870.

physical suffering was real to her. On Good Friday in 1871, she wrote:

It is a lovely Spring day. How warm it must have been in Judea when our dear Savior toiled up that long ascent bearing His heavy cross until He at last sank under the burden.<sup>4</sup>

Whittle's association of herself with Christ was fostered in part by teachings that ascribed female characteristics to Him. In 1870, she described a sermon given by St. Paul's minister, the Reverend Nicholas Okeson:

He spoke of Christ's womanly fortitude, and manly resistance to wrong. [He] spoke of a Christian learning to bear pain and suffering "meekly, heroically, as a woman."<sup>5</sup>

With her pen, Chloe emphasized the comparison made between Christ and woman. At times, she sought to exhibit such "womanly fortitude" by embracing the roles of quiet sufferer and sacrificial being. After learning of her brother-in-law Horace's death, she expressed a willingness to forgo marriage for her sister's sake:

I had been thinking as I was singing in Church yesterday, for it is inexplicable how such thoughts come over one, that if Gay had never married it was most likely I wd [sic] never have married either but have devoted myself to her & now I thought if Gay comes home a

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 7 April 1871.

<sup>5</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara commenced July 30, 1869," 22 May 1870.

widow it may be the same thing.<sup>6</sup>

As historian Colleen McDannell summarizes, the maternal model of religion promoted by female writers emphasized the concept of self-sacrifice, as well as the themes of love, interior devotion, and other-worldliness. This paradigm encouraged women to feel secure in their communion with God.<sup>7</sup> On the fifteenth anniversary of her mother's funeral, Chloe placed God in a maternal role: "The Lord has guided me and fulfilled his promise, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.'<sup>8</sup>

Yet, on another occasion, she depicted the Lord more as a lover than a mother:

All through life I have developed slowly and feel as if I were learning now what 'womanhood' means. Its strength evolved from weakness; its firmness born of tenderness subdued; its passion; its power. Germs are in the breast of a girl but who dare say what the flower or fruit will be. She, surely needs to cry 'That which I know not, teach Thou me.' Rudely would the world give the

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<sup>6</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22nd, 1865," 22 May 1865. Whittle's verb use here suggests that she was married at the time; she was not. She sometimes used the abbreviations "wd," "cd," "shd," and "wh" for would, could, should, and which.

Chloe may have been influenced by prescriptive literature. In her essay on "True Womanhood," Barbara Welter retells a story from a women's magazine in which a young unmarried woman devotes her life to her sister, a widow with children. Welter, Dimity Convictions, 37.

<sup>7</sup>Colleen McDannell, The Christian Home in Victorian America, 128.

<sup>8</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 21 June 1873. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Is. 66.13).

knowledge. God teaches slowly, silently . . . .<sup>9</sup>

Whittle used the terms of sexual awakening to describe her growth toward an understanding of the vitality of womanhood. She found the image of female strength particularly attractive. As she told two of her woman friends, the Bible described women as "'the polished corners of the temple,' not only 'polished' but a polished corner of a temple."<sup>10</sup> The scriptural passage that she referred to actually contains the word "palace" rather than "temple." Chloe's rendition enabled her to associate women with the physical support of the church.

Whittle also ascribed to more romanticized versions of Christian womanhood. In 1872, she copied into her diary a missionary's verses published in the Southern Magazine. She was struck by the "high opinion of Woman" contained in his "odd but lovely poetry":

"Oh! woman violet garden blooming  
Upon Love's watch-tower sweetly looming  
Of tender love true agate-stone!  
Then virtue's girdle, pressing tightly,  
As gold into the gold clasps brightly

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<sup>9</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara commenced July 1869," 25 Sept. 1869. "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement; I will not offend anymore; That which I see not, teach thou me. If I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (Job 34.31-32).

<sup>10</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun January 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 13 June 1874. "That our sons may be like plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be like cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace" (Ps. 144.12).



The glow's fire of the two in one."<sup>11</sup>

Whittle appreciated this image of woman as a radiant symbol of virtue and creation. Other verses that she transcribed included paeans to woman's chastity, humility, wisdom, and ability to bring man happiness.<sup>12</sup>

Chloe responded to masculine religious imagery as well. After the Reverend Mr. Okeson presented several male examples in his explication of the text, "Be not conformed to this world," she wrote, "Every nature that is deep, longs for the enduring, but how few seek it in the only available way."<sup>13</sup> The absence of female models did not prevent her from applying the sermon to the world in which she lived. She considered one of Okeson's best sermons to be his interpretation of the text, "Wholly at ease, and quiet." In his oration, Okeson asserted that quietness was not good for individuals or nations, and he contrasted "the effete civilisation" of China with "the robust manhood" of England.<sup>14</sup>

Whittle's expressions of religious self-abasement, which

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<sup>11</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 10 July 1872.

<sup>12</sup>Chloe also copied poems and prayers from the Southern Churchman, the Protestant Churchman, and Hyperim.

<sup>13</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun January 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 16 Aug. 1874. "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12.2).

<sup>14</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Virginia, 1876," 26 March 1876. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet". (Job 21.23).

did not usually contain references to gender, were many. She routinely confessed that she did not pursue the Christian faith as earnestly as she should. "I wish I loved the Bible more," she wrote one Sunday; a year later she lamented not having enough "warmth of feeling in prayer and praise."<sup>15</sup> When her brother-in-law Horace Sams died, Chloe expressed particular pride that he had read the Bible "for pleasure"; she wanted to do the same.<sup>16</sup> She was heartened after reading "the heart-records of other Christians," which recounted spiritual dilemmas similar to her own.

As she struggled with her faith internally, Whittle evangelized among family, friends, and strangers. The Reverend Mr. Okeson "said God speedily destroyed those who would not serve him," and Chloe believed that she had "lived long enough to verify his words."<sup>17</sup> Through oral and written means, she sought to encourage others in their religious faith. She tried to convince her sister Grace to send her children to Sunday School more regularly. She communicated with the local Episcopal ministers, suggesting Bible classes, hymns, and fund-raising projects. She corresponded with a Confederate prisoner toward the end of the Civil War, advising

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<sup>15</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 18 June 1865; "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 16 Sept. 1866.

<sup>16</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 22 May 1865.

<sup>17</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 5 Jan. 1873.

him that the Bible was "the best companion in prison as in every other situation in life" and experience "the best commentary upon the Bible, a fact of wh I had become more and more aware as the events of the past four years had come to pass."<sup>18</sup>

She wrote religious commemorative poetry and transcribed excerpts from spiritual writings for friends and relatives. One holiday season, she recorded some of the Reverend Mr. Okeson's remarks on the "sin and shame" of serving alcohol on New Year's Day and then sent these lines to the newspaper for publication.<sup>19</sup> When she published a description of her trip to the New River White Sulphur Springs in the summer of 1875, she included several "beautiful thoughts" that a minister had shared with her and some of the other travelers.<sup>20</sup> "My pen has, I hope, been of service to others, and in some degree 'a defender of the faith,'" Whittle wrote in 1866.<sup>21</sup>

She took seriously her role as a Sunday School teacher. Chloe described this commitment as a privilege--"It is such an honor to have the right to speak to any one of the love of Jesus and His willingness to save"--and as a duty to be

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<sup>18</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22nd, 1865," 22 April 1865.

<sup>19</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30, 1875," 31 Dec. 1875.

<sup>20</sup>"Letter from the New River White Sulphur Springs," Norfolk Virginian, 18 Aug. 1875, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 23 April 1866.

fulfilled accordingly:

I think it is especially annoying to have holy things blundered over--the mysteries of our faith broken and blurred by a careless child, and no effort of mine shall be wanting to prevent it.<sup>22</sup>

In 1874, she compared herself to John the Baptist, "a voice in the wilderness" attempting to point, rather than lead, children in the right direction.<sup>23</sup> Although she found teaching discouraging because it seemed to turn out few examples of true piety, Chloe appreciated both the opportunity to serve and the ties that she established with ministers and fellow teachers.

One of her evangelical and spiritual challenges came in the form of a colonel named Bonner, a Deist whom she met at the White Sulphur Springs in the summer of 1867. After meeting him, Whittle promptly lent him her Bible and provided him with a Testament. She believed that it was her duty to try to convert Bonner, despite what she perceived as her female vulnerability to his "cunning and worldly wise" manhood:

. . . If as a soldier of the Cross I attempt to contend with the Devil for this soul I must run the risk of encountering . . . [his dangerous qualities] . . . with a woman's weakness of heart and mind, so far as I am personally concerned . . . . I do not dare trust to myself if

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<sup>22</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., June 26, 1871," 31 Dec. 1871; "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 3 Feb. 1867.

<sup>23</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun January 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 5 July 1874.

I may be an humble instrument in the hand of the All-Powerful I hope & pray He will keep me from the competing influences to which I may be exposed . . . . I fear I am always attracted as a bird to a serpent & here lies my danger. Without . . . [God] . . . I would not dare to speak or act knowing not the dread consequences the future might bring--Father keep me! Father bless me!<sup>24</sup>

Whittle saw herself as moving between the roles of agent and servant. Describing herself as both "a soldier of the Cross" and "an humble instrument," she embarked on a mission to try to change Bonner's religious beliefs.

When she looked back on her encounter with the colonel several months later, Chloe portrayed the incident as pre-ordained: "I firmly believe that I was brought from the wave-lashed shores of the Atlantic and he from the hot waters of the Gulf of Mexico that I might proclaim to him the Name of The Lord . . . ." Again, she described her interaction with Bonner in sensual terms. She then lamented that she had missed similar opportunities: ". . . but oh! that more had been done, that I had watched and waited better, that there were more of 'life's fair, ripened grain,' God only can know how great, and how many the failures have been."<sup>25</sup> Whittle's God was an all-knowing Being who presented openings to his

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<sup>24</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 18 Aug. 1867.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, 23 April 1868. Whittle alludes to the parable of the mustard seed, in which Jesus compares the kingdom of God to the grain of the mustard seed. Although both begin small, they flourish when planted. See Mt. 13.31, Mk. 4.31, Lk. 13.19.

followers. Christians had a duty to be vigilant so that they could exploit such occurrences.

For Whittle, this belief engendered both action and guilt. She struggled with this tension throughout the period from 1865 to 1876. Even as evangelical religion provided meaning to a life that seemed filled with "busy idleness," it required acceptance of human imperfection.<sup>26</sup> Although her evangelism promoted agency, it also set limits on mortal accomplishment.

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One April Sunday in 1873, Whittle, "late as usual," approached St. Paul's Episcopal Church. She walked toward a simple brick church built in the cruciform style in 1739. Chloe first entered the churchyard, which was surrounded by a low brick wall, and then stepped into St. Paul's. The interior of the church featured Victorian decorative elements added when the building was repaired at the end of the Civil War. The Whittle family rented a pew, which they sometimes shared with friends or neighbors. When late, Chloe sat at the rear of the church; on such occasions, she remarked, solitude encouraged reverence.<sup>27</sup>

St. Paul's had more than 250 communicants. Whittle and her fellow female parishioners provided financial support for

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<sup>26</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 6 April 1873.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 9 April 1873.

the church. For seven years after the war, they paid the Reverend Mr. Okeson's rent. The sewing society bought furniture for the chancel, a silver communion service for the church, and a pocket communion service for the minister to use when visiting the poor.<sup>28</sup> In 1873, Whittle indicated that some of the women at St. Paul's hoped to transform, rather than merely support, the church. After accompanying other female members to visit a dying woman, she wrote: "We had a discussion about altering the church."<sup>29</sup> That summer, Chloe initiated a subscription in support of a new bell for the Episcopal church in Warm Springs, Virginia. If achieving liturgical change was a goal, spearheading physical modification was a reality.

The Reverend Nicholas A. Okeson presided over St. Paul's from 1856 to 1882. Chloe approved of his leadership and appreciated the vast majority of his sermons. She felt an evangelical affinity with him; when he remarked that some people could not understand him when he spoke about religion, she sympathized with him completely. She was less content with their personal relationship. In her journal, Chloe indicated that the pastor treated her like a child, and she

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<sup>28</sup>There were 270 people on St. Paul's communion list in 1877. "Substance of Remarks made by Rev. Dr. N.A. Okeson in St. Paul's Church, June 17, 1877 (From notes made at the time)," "Norfolk, Va., Churches--Episcopal, St Paul's Church (1)," Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Public Library, Norfolk, Va.

<sup>29</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 8 April 1873.

resented his condescension.

Intimately involved with St. Paul's, Whittle demonstrated broad knowledge of Episcopal Church politics, history, and doctrine. During her lifetime, the Protestant Episcopal Church experienced less sectional conflict than other denominations in the United States. The Church did not split into Northern and Southern factions until after the Civil War had begun. Reunification was complete by mid-1866, when Virginia became the last diocese to rejoin the national Church.<sup>30</sup> Chloe, a staunch secessionist, did not record her views on reconciliation, but she had monitored Southern bishops' loyalty to the Confederacy. In 1866, she discussed their respective allegiances with Jefferson Davis when she and her father visited him in prison.

In the 1860s, Episcopalians in the United States, like their Anglican cousins across the Atlantic, were divided over the fundamentals of religious worship. Put simply, high church Episcopalians sought more ritual and greater ministerial control. Low church Episcopalians shunned ceremony and viewed ecclesiastical authority with suspicion. Dissent within the Church heightened before the Civil War, when traditionalists began to reassert institutional authority in response to the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening. In the postbellum period, high church supporters achieved

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<sup>30</sup>Mark Mohler, "Episcopal Church and Conciliation," Political Science Quarterly 41 (1926): 571, 586.



considerable success in the United States.<sup>31</sup>

Chloe and her family, including Conway's cousin, Virginia Bishop Frank Whittle, were low church Episcopalians. In the fall of 1866, Chloe expressed concern about a "Report of the Council on the State of the Church": "It urges excommunication, as a reformation measure, very strongly, upon the Clergy, this will require an exercise of authority to which America has been long unused."<sup>32</sup> When she learned that her cousin Jennie Whittle had been suspended from communion for opposing her minister's demand that she give up dancing, Chloe wrote:

I think Mr. McGuire has the right to require any promise of the kind & yet I also think an immense power will be put into the hands of the clergy if the proposals of the VA. Council be adopted, wh. [sic] may prove highly dangerous, when wielded by bad men.<sup>33</sup>

Whittle's primary concern lay not with the clergy's attempts to dictate social behavior but with its access to harsher punitive measures.

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<sup>31</sup>McDannell, The Victorian Home in Christian America, 17-8; Winfred Garrison, March of Faith: The Story of Religion in America Since 1865 (1933; reprint, Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 192.

<sup>32</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced Aug. 23, 1866," 23 Sept. 1866.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, 25 Nov. 1866. Chloe would later side with Jennie after learning that Mr. McGuire had allowed her to join the church although he knew that she intended to continue dancing. Nineteenth-century Episcopal ministers sometimes stipulated that their communicants refrain from gambling, dancing, theatergoing and other diversions. Mathews, Religion in the Old South, 121.

At St. Paul's on Easter in 1867, Chloe objected to the introduction of customs that she associated with the high church: "At Church we had music of the most operatic kind . . . & the pulpit & desk were covered with white."<sup>34</sup> Whittle believed that low church supporters should actively oppose such changes. One day, she demonstrated her aversion to ritual:

The responses in the Ante-Communion service were chanted. I rose from my knees and sat down, as I have done before. I do not know whether I am right or wrong, but my wish is to raise my feeble remonstrance against the innovations that are sweeping over the Church.<sup>35</sup>

Whittle had enough faith in her convictions to act upon them in front of both clergy and fellow congregants.

Six years later, she was more forthright in presenting another concern to church leaders. She pressed Pastor Okeson for more congregational singing, fewer choirs and solos. At an evening service in 1873, Whittle noted that two hymns had included solos performed by a female member of the choir:

This is a perfect abomination to me. If we meet for Common Prayer do we not also meet for Common Praise? The women are certainly not keeping silence in the Churches when the whole Church has to keep silent to hear them.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced Aug. 23, 1866," 21 April 1867.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 3 Feb. 1867.

<sup>36</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 26 Jan. 1873. "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law" (1 Cor. 14.34).

In outlining her opposition to what she viewed as restrictions on communal worship, Whittle invoked the traditional Pauline teaching that advocated limited female participation in church services. By using the Church's stance on women to argue against the presence of female solos, Whittle underscored the hypocrisy inherent in contemporary adherence to Paul's dictum. She exhibited resentment of both the solos and the requirement that women keep silent.

In her diaries, Whittle sometimes disagreed with the sermons that she heard. When Okeson claimed that, to be Christians, people must love one another as God loved them, "he went beyond the Master who knows his poor creatures are not capable of such love."<sup>37</sup> After a visiting minister stressed the importance of following church ordinances, Chloe wrote that his emphasis was misplaced: "When people are denying the divinity of Christ & the efficacy of prayer & even a personal God to spend time in anathematizing such things!"<sup>38</sup>

In 1872, she privately challenged the Reverend Mr. Okeson's interpretation of a scripture about women. After a sermon on the gospel concerning "the healing of the ruler's daughter & of the woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment as he walked," Chloe wrote: "Mr. Okeson said it was in her sex we were to look for examples of beautiful piety!

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<sup>37</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun January 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 11 June 1874.

<sup>38</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30, 1875," 12 Dec. 1875.

How little good men understand women! They are worth little if they do not think well of them, mistaken though their veins be."<sup>39</sup> The woman who had touched Christ's garment had been hemorrhaging for twelve years; when she touched His clothing, the bleeding stopped. In her cryptic response, Whittle was possibly criticizing Okeson for focusing on the woman's "sex"--her menstrual cycle--as the ultimate representation of holiness. Or, she was simply disagreeing with his use of such an extreme example of devotion in the figure of the long-suffering woman.

Religion provided Whittle with a calling and an outlet for expression. She saw some tangible results from her evangelical activities but few from her intellectual engagement with religion. Impressed by a sermon on the barren fig tree one Sunday before her thirty-second birthday, she wrote:

There are plenty of leaves on me, but almost no fruit. Why? People have thought & I have thought I had abilities above the common but other people bear fruit and I consume much but produce nothing. Do I not cumber the ground which others might occupy profitably.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va., 10 Nov. 1872. The story of the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage appears in Matthew 9.18-26, Mark 5.21-43, and Luke 8.40-56. While visiting her cousins in Staunton, Virginia, in 1874, Chloe noted that the minister had preached a good sermon on this same story. "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun September 25, 1874," 16 Nov. 1874.

<sup>40</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30, 1875," 19 Sept. 1875.

Chloe did not interpret the metaphor "to bear fruit" in the traditional manner. Rather than associate the imagery with childbirth, she defined "fruit" as the product of her "abilities." She was fully aware that society placed a high value on the concrete representation of one's strengths. Religion did not fully satisfy her need to turn her talents into perceptible contributions to this world.

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Whittle's reaction to the Confederacy's defeat in the Civil War provides an opportunity to examine closely her use of religion to define herself and to understand the world around her.

On May 10, 1862, Union troops entered the city of Norfolk. The mayor and the city council refused to take an oath of allegiance to the United States government and stated their desire to be ruled as a "conquered people." General Benjamin Butler, in charge of the city from November 1863 until January 1865, suspended the civil government on the basis of a vote by citizens loyal to the Union. He strictly enforced the oath of allegiance and arrested the city magistrates who attempted to hold on to their authority.<sup>41</sup>

Although some of Chloe Whittle's relatives from her mother's side of the family were partial to the Union, her father was an ardent supporter of the Confederacy. Conway

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<sup>41</sup>Betsy L. Fahlman et al., A Tricentennial Celebration: Norfolk 1682-1982, 70, 75.

Whittle had received an appointment from Confederate General Erwin in the spring of 1861.<sup>42</sup> In June 1865, one of Chloe's cousins told her that the commander of the occupying Federal army had called Conway "the worst Secessionist in the place." Chloe responded that she certainly hoped that he was.<sup>43</sup>

In late 1863, Chloe left Norfolk to visit her sister Mary in Chester, South Carolina. She remained there for almost a year. Stymied by the fighting, her return trip took four months. Conway Whittle sent his daughter a permit that would enable her to cross enemy lines and return to Norfolk--provided that she sign an oath of allegiance to the United States and promise never to return to the Confederacy.<sup>44</sup> After considering her own misgivings about the plan and weighing the advice of her brother-in-law, Chloe decided to stay in Charleston rather than attempt to cross the lines. After Charleston fell, she returned home via a circuitous route to New York by sea and south to Norfolk over land.

Whittle spent the remainder of the war and its aftermath

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<sup>42</sup>Former president John Tyler congratulated Whittle on "the honorable and important appointment" he had received. "One more important is not connected with the army--and I doubt not but that you are perfect now in the discharge of its duties," he wrote. John Tyler to Conway Whittle, June 12, 1861, CW Papers, Box VIII, Folder 6.

<sup>43</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 22 June 1865.

<sup>44</sup>Conway may still have had some connection to the Confederate government. During her trip home, Chloe addressed all of her Norfolk correspondence to her Aunt Fannie and refrained from mentioning her father.

defiantly loyal to the Confederacy. She equated her constancy with her dedication to God. That she infused religious intensity into the conflict reflects, at least in part, a larger trend. Historian Charles Reagan Wilson asserts that the experience of war strengthened the religious culture throughout the South. He emphasizes the religious nature of the difficulties facing the region. At the surrender, the South was confronted with death and suffering despite allegiance to a cause that had been constructed as holy. Defeat challenged essential beliefs. According to Wilson, many Southerners responded by seeking comfort, communal acceptance, and assurance that life had meaning.<sup>45</sup>

In the last days of the war, Chloe Whittle proclaimed that she was willing to die for the Confederacy. On the day of Lee's surrender, she wrote:

Submission to the Yankees! to the race that we have ever despised, & detested, & some, alas! many of us have hated. Were I a man I wd court death on the battlefield before that awful day would come.<sup>46</sup>

Chloe wished that she could enter the male arena of war. She reacted to reports about deserters similarly, placing the opportunity to fight in a religious context: "To be a Christian soldier contending for the rights he has received

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<sup>45</sup>Charles Reagan Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of the Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920," Journal of Southern History XLVI (May 1980): 220, 238.

<sup>46</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 11 April 1865.

from his Creator--what higher destiny can a mortal man obtain?"<sup>47</sup> Whittle recognized that her gender limited the extent to which she could defend the Confederacy, and, by association, the degree to which she could serve God. She denounced men who did not seize the opportunity presented to them.

Although Chloe was not alone among Southern women in expressing a desire to take part in combat, she may have been unique in the constancy of her dedication to the Confederacy.<sup>48</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust contends that by the closing days of the war many Southern women had become alienated from the Confederate cause. Throughout the conflict, Southern leaders prescribed sacrifice as the proper wartime response for women. Many women ultimately rejected this ideology because it did not speak to their basic concerns about survival. Faust asserts that women undermined the South's military and economic readiness by shoplifting, encouraging desertion, and rioting for food.<sup>49</sup>

Chloe Whittle did not reject the ideology of sacrifice but embraced it. Within her circle of friends, she remained

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid, 19 April 1865. With less religious fervor but equal passion, Mary Chesnut also extolled death on the battlefield and expressed disgust with able men who had not fought. Woodward and Muhlenfeld, Private Mary Chesnut, 239, 247.

<sup>48</sup>Lebsock and Rice, "A Share of Honour", 91.

<sup>49</sup>Drew Gilpin Faust, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," Journal of American History 76, No. 4 (March 1990): 1206, 1228.



one of the most attached to the Confederacy. In May 1865, a friend wrote to her: "I feel it deeply, you will be crushed; but only for a time xxx [sic] to give strength to others you must be strong yourself."<sup>50</sup> Indeed, all of the emotion and prayer that Whittle had invested in the war made the idea of defeat seem "almost like tearing out my heart strings." She found herself close to envy when she learned that several Charleston citizens had been killed by an explosion in that city. Contemplating defeat, Whittle compared herself to Moses when he had requested that God kill him along with the children of Israel. She then attempted to convince herself of the futility of such thinking: "But I will not do myself much good by writing on in the same strain over & over may God strengthen us all to bear the future."<sup>51</sup> Whittle drew on her religious faith to sustain her and to continue to resist. Although she had not been allowed to fight on the battlefield, she could demonstrate her unshaken loyalty to the Confederacy by refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the United States:

May heaven help me never to soil my soul  
with that infamous Oath! Whatever may be  
the consequences may I be true to myself,  
my country & my God. These are certainly

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<sup>50</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 3 May 1865.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, 11 April 1865. In the days following Lee's surrender, Mary Chesnut similarly expressed a preference for death on several occasions. Woodward and Muhlenfeld, Private Mary Chesnut, 246, 249, 252.

times that try men's souls.<sup>52</sup>

Whittle considered disloyalty to the South a sin. Taking the oath would be treasonous, for she considered the South, not the United States, to be her country. In alluding to Thomas Paine's famous remark from the early days of the American Revolution, she equated the South's resistance with the British colonists' rebellion a century earlier.

Whittle privately expressed feelings of hostility toward the Federal troops in Norfolk. After a visit from officers Tolbert and Hayward, who had assisted her during her exodus from Charleston, she wrote:

I am sure I could have taken their lives tonight without the slightest agitation even, much less an emotion of sorrow. I wd [sic] not kill them because I do not think it wd be right but if a voice from heaven were to tell me to do it I do not believe my hand wd even have trembled in putting the command into execution.<sup>53</sup>

Whittle wanted very much to prove that she could be a Christian soldier if so requested. She would be courageous and unemotional if called upon to carry out a divine command. She yearned to fulfill the role of crusader.

In addition to religious imagery, Chloe used a familial

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<sup>52</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 11 April 1865.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, 29 May 1865. Chloe genuinely liked Tower, in part because of his attitude toward women. From Charleston, she had written to her Aunt Fannie, "Captain Tower has the intelligence and the gentlemanly feeling to appreciate independence of sentiment and expression when not paraded in an unladylike way and we are the better friends for being open enemies." CTW to Mrs. Frances M. Lewis, Charleston, February 25th [?], 1865, CW Papers, Box IX, Folder 6.

metaphor to articulate her allegiance to the Confederacy. She rationalized her violent feelings toward Hayward in this manner:

To be sure it was partly his fault for bringing himself before my notice when, in view of the South, to use a homely & rather fierce simile I feel like "a bear bereaved of her cubs . . . ." <sup>54</sup>

Whittle described herself as a female bear, an animal characterized by strength and intense devotion to its young. According to Anne Goodwyn Jones, Southern women's extreme loyalties to the region caused them to allow themselves to be seen as symbols rather than as people. In her diary, Whittle chose her own symbol. She described the South as a family with her at its head.<sup>55</sup>

Chloe embraced the role of outsider. She told Hayward, "I am an alien enemy of the United States & always shall remain such." She denied his request that the South work with the North to rebuild the country. When he brought up the subject of the former slaves, she declared that the North was going to have to solve that "knotty question" on its own.<sup>56</sup> Later, she recorded this account of the conclusion of her first visit to Jefferson Davis in prison, which included a

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<sup>54</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 12 June 1865.

<sup>55</sup>Anne Goodwyn Jones, Tomorrow is Another Day, 24. In 1868, Chloe presented herself as a symbol of the Confederacy when she attended a masquerade party dressed as "The Spirit of the Confederacy," complete with white lace veil.

<sup>56</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Norfolk, Virginia, March 22, 1865," 12 June 1865.

kiss for her from Davis:

I could feel that kiss burning on my cheek for moments afterwards & I am afraid my heart burning too against those creatures who can keep that Christian man a prisoner in the boasted land of freedom.<sup>57</sup>

Whittle had translated her defiance into bitter disassociation. Other women shared her alienation. One of her aunts, Gilberta Whittle, expressed her disaffection to her husband, Conway Davies Whittle, who relayed it to Chloe's father:

She feels a thousand times more interest in [England] than in this Country, in fact it is a very Common Wish of hers that some Nation will whip the U.S. well, she don't include Africa, I suppose because her Sons have already done so! Her prayer is to get out of the Country, cursed as it is by both God & Grant!<sup>58</sup>

Gilberta's husband may have exaggerated in his description of her feelings, but the essence of her views is plausible. Mary Chesnut recorded estrangement from the United States and resentment toward Federal forces. She took particular umbrage at the scorn with which she believed Northerners and conciliatory Southerners treated the South.<sup>59</sup>

Chloe Whittle used the sense of importance and mission that she had gained from her intense engagement with the war

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<sup>57</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced Aug. 23, 1866," 22 Aug. 1866.

<sup>58</sup>Conway Davies Whittle to Conway Whittle, no date, CW Papers, Box XII, Folder 3.

<sup>59</sup>Woodward and Muhlenfeld, Private Mary Chesnut, p. 246, 253.

to assert herself on behalf of her family. While her father was in South Carolina to retrieve Gay and her children after Horace Sams died, Chloe wrote two letters to a United States Army captain in an unsuccessful attempt to get back the confiscated plantation that had belonged to Horace's father. Five years later, she brought up the issue again with her father. Chloe's persistence was girded by her religious convictions:

There may be no hope of the recovery of it--but does that justify the failure of the attempt? Grace says she is not the woman to combat Yankee cunning successfully. With her two little fatherless children she might make out a strong case for the restitution of the property they have filched. 'Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet, because this woman troubleth me, I will avenge her of her adversary, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'<sup>60</sup>

Whittle quoted a passage from the Gospel of Luke that depicted perseverance as holy. She diverged from the scripture and replaced "widow" with "woman," thereby applying the verse to herself as well as Grace.

Chloe exalted the ideal of female sacrifice embodied by widows like her sister. In 1866, she wrote a poem on the Baltimore Fair, which had been organized by that city's Ladies' Southern Relief Association for the benefit of Southern soldiers. In two stanzas, Chloe celebrated women's

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<sup>60</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara, commenced July, 1869," 8 March 1870. Quoting from Luke 18.4-5, Chloe related part of a parable presented by Jesus to the disciples. The sentence she cites is the reflection of an unjust judge who decided to respond to a widow's appeals. Jesus told the disciples that God would speedily avenge the faithful.

strength and sacrifice:

See that beautiful girl in her  
     deep mourning stand,  
 Her lover went forth for his  
     dear native land  
 To contend for her rights he  
     fought well and he died,  
 And she thinks of him now  
     as she stands thus aside;  
 Yet she serves at the  
     Baltimore Fair.

Touch gently that dress--'twas a  
     widow that gave  
 The tears dimmed her eyes as  
     she thought of a grave  
 'Neath the Maryland heights, yet  
     she stitched away fast,  
 And strove to drive back all  
     sad thoughts of the past  
 For the sake of the  
     Baltimore Fair.<sup>61</sup>

Although not overtly religious, Whittle's sentimental poem depicts women who willingly serve others despite their own hardship. Both of the women portrayed have lost their male companions, yet they give their time and effort to support surviving veterans. Charles Reagan Wilson has written, "The religion of the Lost Cause was a cult of the dead, which dealt with essential religious concerns."<sup>62</sup> For Chloe, and perhaps for other women, the "Lost Cause" had another layer of meaning. It was also a cult of the living, of the female survivors of the war and their continuing sacrifices.

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<sup>61</sup>Chloe Tylor [sic] Whittle, "The Baltimore Fair of 1866," unidentified publication, 18 April 1903, Whittle-Greene Papers, Box VII, Folder 1.

<sup>62</sup>Wilson, "The Religion of the Lost Cause," 238.

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In 1870, on her twenty-seventh birthday, Chloe Whittle outlined a litany of the personal problems through which God had sustained her:

I have suffered intensely in my life, whatever I am I am not shallow and I do not believe, so far as I can judge, that many are able to feel, to enjoy, and to suffer as I am. My mother's ill health, her death, my orphaned girlhood; the war, and its bitter, bitter end; Johnnie Smith's death in his beautiful young Christian manhood; Grace's confinements, (for I was not uneasy about Mary) our bright Horace's death; and the fearful, humiliating deprivation of reason have been blows under which I have reeled and staggered, and staggered and reeled and yet have stood up under, by the grace of God when I did not believe (oh! ye of little faith! wherefor did you doubt?) that I could have suffered so and by it been made strong.<sup>63</sup>

Three years after the end of the Civil War, Whittle entered the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, where she was a patient for seven months, from August 1868 to March 1869. The hospital, administered by Dr. Thomas Kirkbride, was one of the premier private mental institutions in the country.

If Whittle kept a diary during her stay at the hospital, it is not in the collection of her papers.<sup>64</sup> In a letter to her father, written on Christmas Day in 1868, she referred to

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<sup>63</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara commenced July 1869," 25 Sept. 1870. Johnnie Smith was a young man whom Chloe admired; he died early in the war. The references to her sisters possibly refer to their pregnancies. Chloe quoted Jesus speaking to Peter as they walked on water: "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?" (Mt. 14.31).

<sup>64</sup>There is no volume for the fourteen-month period from May 1, 1868 to July 30, 1869.

her condition only obliquely when she mentioned the hospital's painting of "Christ healing the sick." She described the holiday atmosphere at the hospital and portrayed Kirkbride as an indulgent caretaker.

Kirkbride viewed insanity as a curable disease. He led his patients through a program of moral treatment, which was designed to appeal to their rational nature and enhance their feeling of self-control. Activities included gymnastics classes and lectures. Historian Nancy Tomes has compared the therapeutic process advocated by Kirkbride to a religious conversion. Patients were to experience fundamental personal change after undergoing intense self-examination and self-criticism. Kirkbride, who had more success with women than with men, saw half of his patients recover.<sup>65</sup>

The reason for Whittle's admittance and the particulars of her treatment remain unknown. She referred infrequently, and then only briefly, to her hospitalization after she returned home. In her moving entry of September 25, 1870, she described "a bitterness of [the] soul" as her "constant feeling eighteen months ago," the time of her release from the hospital. In March 1871, she wrote: "How weak, oh! how weak when passion usurped first religion, and then reason. I have been thinking today that I well deserved the fearful visitation that has blighted my whole life, for the impious

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<sup>65</sup>Nancy Tomes, A Generous Confidence: Thomas Story Kirkbride and the Art of Asylum-Keeping, 1840-1883 (N.Y.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), 5-6, 234, 221-22, 366.



idolatry which preceded it."<sup>66</sup>

Whittle's use of the word "passion" suggests that her disability might have been triggered by her relationship with a man named Wiley Grandy. In her journal that covers the period from August 1866 to April 1868, she mentioned him frequently as a friend and possible suitor. She had reservations about him because he was rumored to have misled several women into believing that he would marry them. After 1869, Chloe recorded instances in which she avoided Grandy on the street; on one occasion, she described "his handsome, clear eyes, and shallow double heart."<sup>67</sup>

Whittle described her disability as a period in which she had faltered first spiritually and then rationally. She further defined it as an experience that she had endured only with God's assistance. She portrayed her pain positively; by it, she had been "made strong." From the few insights that her diaries provide, it appears that Whittle used evangelical Christianity to understand her sickness. There is evidence as well that she looked to the church as a vehicle through which to re-enter society after her recovery. At the beginning of 1870, she twice recorded that she had been welcomed back to the Sunday School teaching corps. She thanked the superintendent for allowing her to return.

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<sup>66</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., Oct. 1st, 1870," 12 March 1871.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, 9 June 1871.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Social Life and Courtship

"Rules laid down for her guidance by him who seeth not as man seeth but looketh to the heart"

Chloe Whittle developed her identity within the context of both intimate and formal social interaction. Gender routinely informed the verbal exchange within her social circle. One of her male acquaintances described her as "one of the few young ladies who could support a conversation above trifles, etc."<sup>1</sup> In 1874, she had this dialogue with two of her fellow Sunday School teachers:

Mr. Gordon said it was a pity I was not a boy. I told him as he added 'for you would have made a nice boy,' that it was a great compliment. Mr. Taylor said very kindly women have their place in the world as well as men.<sup>2</sup>

Chloe responded appreciatively when she was compared favorably with a male, despite the fact that Gordon had applied the term "boy" to her thirty-year-old self. She tacitly accepted the precept of male superiority because she was aligned with it. Not surprisingly, she rejected the corollary of female inferiority when she was included in derogatory stereotyping

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<sup>1</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced Aug. 23, 1866," 6 Feb. 1867.

<sup>2</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun January 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 1 Jan. 1874.

of women.

It is appropriate that Whittle and her friends had the above conversation while waiting for their Sunday School students to arrive. Churches provided an opportunity to socialize and a gateway to status in the community. According to Barbara Welter, during the antebellum period, the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches had increasingly been associated with the wealthy segment of society. Many women knew that membership conferred an elevated social standing.<sup>3</sup>

Chloe Whittle's religious beliefs influenced how she viewed gender roles and social behavior. For her, the Bible was a "book of human nature and common sense as well as revelation and wonder."<sup>4</sup> In 1870, she expressed a desire to pray earnestly to God. She could not make the attempt, however, because she had been acting "as unamiable as I could be, as a lady, to the children, particularly Fannie."<sup>5</sup> In Chloe's eyes, unladylike behavior interfered with closeness to God.

She believed that God had established standards for women to follow in public. In 1873, after attending a concert at which one of the young female performers had appeared with her neck and arms bare, Chloe upheld models for women that were

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<sup>3</sup>Welter, Dimity Convictions, 87.

<sup>4</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 2 Oct. 1873.

<sup>5</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., Oct. 1st, 1870," 28 Dec. 1870.

set forth in the Bible:

"A garden inclosed a fountain sealed" was the wise Solomon[']s description of a perfect woman. "Clothed with shamefacedness, and sobriety" was the inspired direction of St. Paul--it is in a measure causing her to forsake the "guide of her youth" to cause a future woman to be educated on principles not only alien from, but so directly opposed to the rules laid down for her guidance by him who seeth not as man seeth but looketh to the heart.<sup>6</sup>

Whittle's reference to "man" may have been generic, but she also may have been referring to male standards of behavior. Playing by God's rules, whether set down in sensual or legalistic terms, was an alternative to following the dictates of a male-defined world.

Of course, as the above passage demonstrates, the Bible's female standards were usually promulgated by men. Yet Chloe claimed these men as her representatives. In her opinion, she followed the Bible more closely than many of the men (and women) she knew. She criticized her male acquaintances for being too attached to the temporal. When her friends Herbert Worthington and John Greene had a disagreement, for example, she rejected their explanation: "We talked of manliness & I

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<sup>6</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 26 June 1873.

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed" (Song. 4.12).

"In like manner, also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (1Tim. 2.9).

"To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger who flattereth with her words; Who forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God" (Prov. 2.16-17).

ridiculed the world's poor standard."<sup>7</sup>

God provided an alternative model for everyday life, and Chloe promoted this in her social relations. When her father claimed that he did not know "what to do" with her because she associated with so many "worthless" people (possibly a reference to the fact that many of her male friends were unemployed), she responded with amusement to her father's failure to understand that these men were part of God's plan for her: "The idea of anyone's 'doing' about such important matters--if viewed seriously. The line of the hymn, 'Doing is a deadly thing' I should apply to such a case."<sup>8</sup> Religious belief provided Chloe with a way to deflect her father's criticism. It also prompted her to accept the status quo.

Although she sometimes expressed frustration with the formalities of nineteenth-century society, Chloe usually followed such dictates closely. Indeed, because of her religious beliefs, she maintained standards for herself that were more conservative than contemporary mores. Her refusal to dance is the most prominent example, but she also shunned cardplaying, which had "a low, grog-drinking look" to it, and going to the theater (opera was acceptable).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun September 25, 1874," 16 May 1875.

<sup>8</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun January 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 2 May 1874.

<sup>9</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 28 Aug. 1873.

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In her analysis of nineteenth-century female culture among the white middle- and upper-classes, historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg describes a world characterized by strong emotional bonds and reliable support networks. She illuminates the empowering aspects of this female microcosm. "Women, who had little status or power in the larger world of male concerns, possessed status and power in the lives and worlds of other women," writes Smith-Rosenberg. Family lay at the heart of a woman's female world. Mothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, and nieces composed the essential elements.<sup>10</sup> Historians Suzanne Lebsock, Carl Degler, and Marilyn Ferris-Motz have also stressed the importance of sisterhood in the lives of privileged nineteenth-century American women.<sup>11</sup>

Chloe Whittle certainly felt an affinity with female friends, relatives, and acquaintances. She looked to this community for role models and chose women who exemplified piety and intelligence. Among these were Mary Dickson, "a true, and an earnest Christian," and Lou Fisher, who thought

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<sup>10</sup>Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," Signs 1 (1975-76): 317-319, 321.

<sup>11</sup>See Lebsock and Rice, "A Share of Honour": Virginia Women 1600-1945, 83; Carl Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press), 149; Marilyn Ferris-Motz, True Sisterhood: Michigan Women and Their Kin, 1820-1920 (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), 128.

for herself "as few women care to do."<sup>12</sup> Chloe praised Varina Davis, wife of the former president of the Confederacy, for her wit and intelligence:

I was charmed with Mrs. Davis. She is the most brilliant woman I ever saw, not in appearance, on the contrary she is large, stout, plain & even coarse looking, but converses delightfully. She is truly witty, one of the few persons whose wit ever pleased me.<sup>13</sup>

In 1870, Chloe explicitly stated that she planned to translate admiration into emulation. She described Juliet Gilmer, the sister of her friend Lucy:

She is not pretty but very agreeable. She is what I would like to become if I remain single all my life, energetic, and independent while perfectly feminine. I shall watch her very closely, for she is in just what I dread passing through--that uncertain stage in a woman's life when she is nearly old not young. I am nearly in that stage myself & I want to see how to behave gracefully.<sup>14</sup>

The harmoniousness of nineteenth-century female culture can be exaggerated. Whittle held her friends up to the strict standards of behavior that she followed, and the women did not always measure up. In 1865, for example, she disagreed strongly with her friend Eliza Sharp over whether women should dance the round dance. Also, through her female companions, Whittle associated hardship with womanhood. She wrote of her

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<sup>12</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 6 Apr. 1868; 30 Apr. 1868.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 21 October 1866.

<sup>14</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., Oct. 1, 1870," 29 Nov. 1870.

friend Ginnie Langley's sister, Emily: "Emily has quieted and toned down much with added years. Oh! what a fearful trial most women's lives are."<sup>15</sup> On her niece Fannie's birthday in 1873, Chloe wondered if the "poor little creature" would ever echo Job's words: "A woman's lot is full of woe." Although there was also "sweet sunlight" in a woman's life, "a sword pierces her through her tenderest feelings many a time."<sup>16</sup> Whittle felt a bond with her female friends and relatives in part because they experienced a common struggle against adversity. This sense of shared misery was potentially empowering, but not necessarily so. A degree of negativism infused Whittle's conception of womanhood.

According to Smith-Rosenberg, during the nineteenth century emotional intimacy between young men and women was discouraged in favor of restrained relations dictated by learned etiquette.<sup>17</sup> Within the bounds of formal social interaction, Whittle attempted to forge close relationships with her male relatives and friends. In 1868, she listed friends of both sexes in her diary, and then wrote: "All these I firmly believe would warmly defend me were a word said

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 9 June 1871.

<sup>16</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873," 16 July 1873. She was perhaps referring to this verse: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14.1).

<sup>17</sup>Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World of Love and Ritual," 318.



against me in their presence."<sup>18</sup> Both men and women could fulfill the role of friend when it was defined as a supporter. On a more intimate level, Chloe enjoyed the company of her cousin William Whittle, a former Confederate Navy captain, before he married in 1870. And, although her association with Wiley Grandy ended bitterly, Chloe had tried to lay the basis for friendship with him by asking him to promise that he would be frank with her.

In the letters and diaries that Smith-Rosenberg analyzed, women portrayed men as "an other or out group."<sup>19</sup> Whittle viewed men as "other," but not always as an "out" group. She hoped to enter more fully into the "male world" because she recognized that it was potentially useful to her. She articulated this desire in terms that exalted men and discredited women:

Today I have felt, as I did last Sunday, very much depressed and for the same reason--that I am no favorite with gentlemen. This seems very contemptible in me & arises no doubt in part from a woman's vain love of admiration, but I succeed in persuading myself (though the argument might be too weak to convince anybody else) that it comes much more from a wish first to become acquainted with the character & habits of thought & feeling of gentlemen so I may make use of the knowledge as a writer & secondly for the intellectual stimulus which the better judgment & stronger sense of

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<sup>18</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 9 Feb. 1868.

<sup>19</sup>Smith-Rosenberg, "Female World of Love and Ritual," 325.

manhood give to their conversation.<sup>20</sup>

Chloe concluded the entry by praying that she would be granted closer relations with men so that she could truly write romance, as long as such interaction would not weaken her character or take her away from God. Regardless of her reason for seeking male attention, Chloe depicted the "male world" as an attractive environment.

Like her female friends, Whittle's male acquaintances were subject to her standards. Chloe praised Grandy for "his devotion to womanhood, his reverence for the weaker sex, his humble opinion of himself, his kindness of manner and judgment."<sup>21</sup> Later in their friendship, she indicated that she was disappointed that he did not share her emotional response to a sermon they had heard together. She evaluated him according to qualities considered feminine in the normative gender definitions of the period.

Just as Whittle hoped that her female friends would refrain from dancing, she preferred the men she knew to abstain from alcohol. She worried about her cousin Wright Whittle, who enjoyed drinking wine. Chloe described him as "a shining pearl (the devil) would fain trample under his swinish

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<sup>20</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle, Aug. 23, 1866," 10 Nov. 1867; Earlier that year, Whittle had taken a piece she had written on "Principle V. Love" to her friend Harriet Rowland "for her inspection and criticism," 2 Feb. 1867.

<sup>21</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 30 Jan. 1868.

feet" through the vice of alcohol.<sup>22</sup> On New Year's Day in 1872, she expressed her pleasure that several Norfolk men had decided to forgo drinking for the day.

Whittle resented society's willingness to ignore male infidelity. In 1875, she described a conversation she had held with her friend Herbert Worthington:

In some way we came to speak of the world's estimate of a gentleman which I maintained was a sham. They could be false but no one must say they are false. All on the outside might and must be fair while underneath the vilest passions were reeking, seething, and foaming. Mr. Worthington turned and looked at me. I dare say it was too strong an expression for a lady to use.<sup>23</sup>

Yet Chloe did not always reject the hypocrisy of society's double standard. Women should not dance the round dance, but what about men? At the Springs, she met a man who told her that he enjoyed dancing the round dance with women but would never be seriously interested in a woman who engaged in such activity. Chloe recorded that she agreed with his assessment. Sisterhood had its limitations. The presence of women who danced the round dance enabled Chloe to see herself as superior to them.

Whittle believed that the role of the "lady" enabled her to remain chaste. When explaining to a male companion why she did not dance, she said, ". . . I can never go halfway in

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<sup>22</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., October 1st, 1870," 12 Feb. 1871.

<sup>23</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30th, 1875," 14 July 1875.

anything . . . it may be a woman's mode to put a drop of bitterness in the cup, but it is a safe one.'"<sup>24</sup> Although she had attended dancing school as a girl, Whittle refused any form of dancing because she did not want to find herself in a vulnerable situation. The increasing popularity of dancing after the Civil War places her decision in bold relief. At the Springs during the 1869 season, one observer described dancing as the guests' greatest interest and chief activity: "One word tells what people do here. Dance."<sup>25</sup>

For Chloe, modesty guided relations with the opposite sex. She could "never get over the repugnance to speaking to gentlemen first."<sup>26</sup> Her friend Ginnie Langley advised Whittle to overcome her "stiffness and reserve" around men, yet Whittle's very reserve was an important part of her identity.<sup>27</sup>

Chloe's strict standards sometimes placed her in a bind, however. Her convictions, albeit conservative, represented strength of feeling and, sometimes, independent action. In 1866, for example, she refused to supervise Sunday School children in the church gallery because she found it "very

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<sup>24</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 1 March 1867.

<sup>25</sup>Renier, Springs of Virginia, 219.

<sup>26</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va. October 1st, 1870," 12 Nov. 1870.

<sup>27</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 23 Jan. 1868.

unsuitable for the young ladies to be up in the gallery in the midst of the gentlemen acting as constables."<sup>28</sup> When another parishioner approvingly interpreted her decision as an act of defiance against the Reverend Mr. Barton, Whittle wrote: "Nothing was farther from my intentions, & I regret exceedingly it should be regarded as done in this spirit."<sup>29</sup> She had challenged authority, but she did not want to be perceived as having done so.

For Whittle, etiquette was associated with social status and regional identity, as well as religion. When she visited Richmond in 1870, Chloe enjoyed the company of a man named Dr. Lee; upon her departure, he asked her to let him know in advance the next time she traveled to Richmond. She responded: "I told him he wd [sic] be likely to know through Lucy Gilmer for I certainly neither could nor would send him word of it."<sup>30</sup> Whittle's tone suggests that she did not lament this social convention but gained control from it. In her view, following such strictures affirmed her place in elite society.

On a train ride from Baltimore to Philadelphia in 1869, she stated this explicitly. A young Northern man who had been

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid, 27 Nov. 1866.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, 8 Dec. 1866. The Reverend O.S. Barton was the minister at Christ Church in Norfolk. Chloe disagreed with his high church sympathies, and she described him as autocratic.

<sup>30</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara commenced July 1869," 21 Aug. 1870.

bragging about his gambling exploits to Conway Whittle expressed a desire to get to know Chloe. Her reaction:

He must have been unable to see straight,  
and have very peculiar ideas of a Virginian's  
notions of propriety to think such confessions  
likely to lead to an introduction to a  
Virginia lady.<sup>31</sup>

By remaining a "Virginia lady," Chloe made certain that she would evade the Southern stereotype of the Northern woman. When Jefferson Davis questioned her in front of a crowd of people during his visit to Norfolk in 1867, she recoiled and later wrote: "It would take a Yankee-female-stump-orator to be willing to make herself conspicuous before so many people."<sup>32</sup> In such situations, Chloe embraced the dominant prescription for women in her region of the country. A gentle and graceful woman, the "Southern lady" was supposed to be quiet and innocent, as well as self-denying and pious.<sup>33</sup> Whittle selectively enfolded the Southern lady ideal into her identity.

Chloe both promoted and resented stereotypes of women. One of the most prominent in her writings was the idea that a woman's feelings outweighed her reason. Although well aware of her own intelligence, Chloe applied this conventional belief to herself and to her female companions. When her

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 30 July 1869.

<sup>32</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced Aug. 23, 1866," 14 May, 1867.

<sup>33</sup>Scott, The Southern Lady, 4.

cousin Isabel Armstrong broke off her engagement, Chloe wrote, "'Not to know her own mind' is certainly a feminine state." She told Isabel's fiance that he should not expect a woman to behave in a logical manner.<sup>34</sup> Yet when men espoused this stereotype, Chloe bristled. The Reverend Mr. Barton explained why he did not consult her about a misunderstanding: "That he had allowed some time to elapse, knowing that ladies were given to change."<sup>35</sup> With a stroke of her pen, Chloe indicated that she did not want to be regarded as fickle simply because she was a woman. She expressed similar disgust at being associated with the cliché of the frivolous female. A male acquaintance at the Springs discussed the subject of dancing with her. He said that women usually preferred the diversion more than men did. "I asked why. He said after all it was a rather foolish thing! So ladies like it I suppose! After a little chat I said Good night and left him."<sup>36</sup> As an intelligent woman with strict principles and firm beliefs, Whittle privately resisted having her identity submerged by the traditional notion that women were superficial.

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In 1873, Chloe recorded that, finally, a man had written

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<sup>34</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun January 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 6 Feb. 1874.

<sup>35</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced Aug. 23, 1866," 12 Jan 1867.

<sup>36</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 16 Aug. 1873.

some lines of poetry for her. Her friend Herbert Worthington had enclosed the poem in the pages of a book that he had borrowed from her. The pair's literary connection ran deep. Whittle and Worthington had become acquainted reading Henry VIII and Richard III at the small Shakespearian Club organized by Chloe and Isabel Armstrong.

Reading figured prominently in Whittle's social interaction. She shared books with family, friends, and relatives. Before her marriage, Chloe and her family read aloud together in the evenings and on Sunday afternoons. They enjoyed histories, devotional texts, biographies, dramas, missionary tracts, poems, and novels.

Scholars of the book have traditionally asserted that reading became more private and less intense during the late nineteenth century. Historian Barbara Sicherman has recently challenged this interpretation. In a case study of the "self-consciously literary" Hamilton family of Fort Wayne, Indiana, she contends that reading remained both communal and passionate during the postbellum period.<sup>37</sup>

In her research on the Hamilton women, Sicherman found that they often related scenarios and characters in books to their daily lives. Chloe Whittle did too. Sicherman describes such imaginative engagement with books as an

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<sup>37</sup>Barbara Sicherman, "Sense and Sensibility: A Case Study of Women's Reading in Late-Victorian America," in Cathy N. Davidson, ed., Reading in America: Literature and Social History (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1989), 206.



empowering experience for women: "Reading provided space--physical, temporal, and psychological--that permitted women to exempt themselves from traditional gender expectations, whether imposed by formal society or family obligation." This encouraged women to create new identities and ultimately to try out new behavior.<sup>38</sup>

Sicherman asserts that literature was replacing religion as "a source of cultural authority and models of selfhood."<sup>39</sup> For Whittle, religion remained the touchstone for self-definition, in part through its presentation in literary form. In 1868, however, she did choose a non-religious literary role model as she struggled with the tension between temporal happiness and spiritual duty. Prompted by a sermon about "the soul's hunger after God," Whittle expressed "hunger after the world's pleasures":

The quiet monotony of my life--"where today's as the day that is gone," is extremely irksome to me. I remember in Charlotte Bronte's Villette she says of a character that in a thunder-storm she "lived" more intensely. I can understand the feeling perfectly. Any convulsion moral--mental--or physical my very soul revels in.<sup>40</sup>

For Whittle, religion and literature were never as disparate as Sicherman suggests that they became during the nineteenth

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid, 202.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, 214.

<sup>40</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866, Norfolk, Va.," 15 March 1868. In 1875, Chloe quoted the same verse and rejected it. CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30, 1875," 23 Jan. 1875.

century. In the above expression of unhappiness, Chloe's "soul" sought the same excitement desired by Charlotte Bronte's fictional character.

Whittle viewed all books as guides for a productive and moral life, and she read countless works specifically designed to be just that. Many of these books were about women. In 1870, she enjoyed reading Mary, the Handmaid of the Lord and Stepping Heavenward. The latter was a popular account of a woman's spiritual growth and corresponding domestic happiness. Chloe found the book full of "the choice fragrance of the gospel, the aroma of a saintly heart breathing unto God," and she recommended it to her friend Eliza Sharp.

With Gay and her father, Chloe read numerous female-centered works. In 1870, the three enjoyed Above Rubies, "a very interesting book of Sketches of exalted female character."<sup>41</sup> Featured were writer Lady Anne Lindsay and a woman who had saved her husband from execution, Lady Nithsdale. The family found Little Women amusing, but Chloe declared the morals objectionable and termed the novel "decidedly Yankeeish."<sup>42</sup> In 1872, father and daughters read Our Girls, "spicily written" with "some good hints" but

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<sup>41</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara, commenced July, 1869," 6 March 1870.

<sup>42</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va, Oct. 1, 1870," 16 March 1871; 26 March 1871.

characterized by "commonplaceness."<sup>43</sup> Longfellow's Evangeline provided a more appealing message: "Sorrow, and silence are strong, and patient endurance is godlike."<sup>44</sup>

With morality as her standard, Chloe approved of Harriet Beecher Stowe's controversial article "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," written in 1869. In the essay, Stowe attempted to redeem Lady Byron's character in response to a disparaging portrayal by Lord Byron's mistress. "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life" drew a negative public reaction because it included the first written disclosure of Lord Byron's incestuous relationship with his half-sister. "I do not think her so culpable for writing it as many profess to consider her," Chloe wrote after reading "Mrs. Beecher Stowe's defense of the character and conduct of Lady Byron that has caused so much comment in England and America."<sup>45</sup> Chloe appreciated a moral crusade for female redemption. Elizabeth Cady Stanton defended Stowe's article in an essay four days after Chloe did so in her diary.<sup>46</sup>

Whittle described male literary parallels less frequently

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<sup>43</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 5 Dec. 1872.

<sup>44</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 5 June 1873.

<sup>45</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara commenced July 1869," 5 Sept. 1869.

<sup>46</sup>Stanton's "The Moral of the Byron Case" appeared in The Independent on Sept. 9, 1869. See Elizabeth Ammons, Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe (Boston: GK Hall & Co., 1980), 174-6.

than she did female. In 1872, she read Lectures on Art by John Ruskin and was disheartened. Ruskin wrote that artistic accomplishment was achieved not by hard-working men but by "great men" with innate talent:

Now I applied this to my music & it greatly discouraged me. I never sing a particularly good note but by a particularly great effort. Mr. Fitz says that by repeated effort it will become nature. Ruskin says no heart-burning can make a small man do great things. This has not a little discouraged me, fearing I was among the "small men" or smaller women.<sup>47</sup>

Chloe applied a standard articulated in terms of men to herself, and she came to an unfavorable conclusion based on her acceptance of the traditional notion that women were inherently inferior to men. She identified more positively with a biography of Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell's "dark sorrows and melancholies" were depicted as indications of his "sympathy." Black smoke, the author concluded, could become fire representing the "brilliancy of Heaven."<sup>48</sup> Chloe appreciated the suggestion that anguish, whether male or female, could have redeeming spiritual value.

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While literature invigorated Whittle's social circle, the subject of marriage hovered around it. Chloe believed that marriage should be based upon love. She subscribed to the

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<sup>47</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 26 April 1872.

<sup>48</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 27 Sept. 1873.

conception of a perfect marriage set forth by the Reverend Mr. Barton, who described love as the essential marital underpinning. In doing so, he promoted an ideal espoused by many women since the early nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup>

The ideology of domesticity portrayed marriage as an institution in which a wife agreed to submit to her husband's will in return for his support.<sup>50</sup> Chloe certainly understood marriage in terms of power. After Ginnie Langley told her about a disagreement, in which the husband prevailed, between a newly married Norfolk couple, Chloe wrote: "A great point for the young husband to gain."<sup>51</sup> She told one of her male acquaintances that "every husband had in a measure to educate his wife."<sup>52</sup> In her opinion, a husband should establish his authority while allowing his wife to maintain her dignity.

A husband must be his wife's protector but not her ruler, Whittle believed. Wives should retain their property and self-respect. When Chloe's cousin Agnes Armstrong suddenly married her fiance because he claimed that he was dying of sunstroke, Chloe expressed concern that Agnes had not had time

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<sup>49</sup>Degler, At Odds, 18-9.

<sup>50</sup>Barbara Epstein, The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in the Nineteenth Century (Middletown, Ct.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1981), 86.

<sup>51</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 18 April 1868.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 30 Jan. 1868.

to arrange for her property to be settled on herself.<sup>53</sup> In 1871, Whittle disapproved of Lucy Gilmer's willingness to acquiesce in her fiance's wishes:

She said that she had preferred such & such arrangements but 'Mr. Meade had decided otherwise' & she 'dare say it was best'--almost everybody afterwards remarked on the submissiveness of it.<sup>54</sup>

Several days after the wedding, Chloe again expressed distaste for Gilmer's excessive subservience.

Whittle understood marriage to signify the potential loss of a woman's individual identity. After observing a wedding party in Richmond, she described the bride as a "bondswoman" and marriage as "an awful change, more awful than to die." When her cousin Lucy Whittle married, Chloe noted that Lucy had been "merged into Mrs. John Upshaw."<sup>55</sup> For Chloe, the independence that women relinquished was tangible. She described Lucy Gilmer before her wedding: "She looked like some vestal priestess to be offered as a pure sacrifice on the alter of the gods. I could not help an involuntary

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<sup>53</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara, commenced July, 1869," 29 July 1870. Virginia gave married women the legal right to own property in their own names in 1877, when it became the last state to do so. Agnes lived in Washington, D.C. Lebsack and Rice, "A Share of Honour": Virginia Women 1600-1945, 113.

<sup>54</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., June 26, 1871," 27 June 1871.

<sup>55</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 19 June 1873; 19 Nov. 1873.

shudder."<sup>56</sup> Gilmer's fiance was not a confirmed Christian, which may have influenced Whittle's choice of metaphor. Yet elsewhere she also referred to marriage as a physical watershed for women. She speculated that a "beautiful" woman whom she saw at the Springs was single for she appeared "too sweet for somebody to have carried her off the field."<sup>57</sup> After her friend Lou Fisher married, Chloe wrote that she looked "less beautiful, more of a woman."<sup>58</sup>

When Whittle formulated her ideal of marriage, she focused on cerebral concerns. In 1866, after her Aunt Fannie tried to interest her in a Northern man, she wrote:

The worldly possession that I prize above all others is my freedom from cares that would prevent my spending my time in intellectual pursuits. Life could scarcely be presented to me in a more hateful form than as the wife of a man of business, who is so engrossed in moneymaking as to have neither time nor inclination for literary employments--amusements, if anybody prefers the term.

Whittle went on to express disgust at the stereotypical Yankee way of life, but her desire for an intellectual companion in

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<sup>56</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., June 26, 1871," 28 June 1871.

<sup>57</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 24 Aug. 1867.

<sup>58</sup>CTW, ""Private Journal of a Trip to Niagara, commenced July, 1869," 24 July 1870; 17 Aug. 1870.

a husband had little to do with sectionalism.<sup>59</sup> She later returned to this theme during her courtship with John Greene. If she decided to marry, Whittle wanted a husband who would share her priorities, and in this sense she was not unlike the Northern middle-class young people studied by historian Ellen Rothman. Rothman's research on couples who courted during the period from 1830 to 1880 revealed that they viewed sympathy and shared interests as the essential elements of marriage.<sup>60</sup>

A few weeks before her twenty-ninth birthday, Whittle wrote: "Both my sisters advise my marrying."<sup>61</sup> Coincidentally, within two months, Whittle's distant relative John Greene had proposed to her. On Thanksgiving Day, 1872, Chloe recorded that her father had received "a formal request for my unworthy self." Conway Whittle, concerned about Greene's ability to support a wife, offered to "purchase" him for his daughter. She responded:

I was really touched, but hastened to tell him my heart was not and I did not wish to change my name or state. I almost wonder that it is so. I think possibly if I was younger I might feel more romantic. Life seems very long when contemplated in such companionship. I should like a protector,

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<sup>59</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced August 23, 1866," 1 Oct. 1866. Like Chloe, Mary Chesnut derided 'Yankee thrift' in the aftermath of the Civil War. "I prefer my plain Carolina farming gentry to the monied gentry of Yankeedom," she wrote on May 15, 1865. Muhlenfeld and Woodward, Private Mary Chesnut, 242.

<sup>60</sup>Ellen Rothman, Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America (N.Y.: Basic Books, Inc., 1984), 107.

<sup>61</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 8 Sept. 1872.



when my indulgent father goes to his reward, but I do not think it can be right to marry for one May God enable me to honour Him alone.<sup>62</sup>

A year later, she wondered why women were so attracted to marriage "while the world is teeming with interesting subjects and books."<sup>63</sup> In the early 1870s, Chloe did not believe that marriage would further either her spiritual growth or her intellectual aspirations. She viewed single life as an option.

A woman's decision to remain single received literary sanction in postbellum society. By the late decades of the century, prescriptive literature had resurrected a positive image of the unmarried woman. The lowly spinster depicted during the antebellum period had been replaced by the virtuous woman devoted to God, her parents, and her siblings. Women's magazines in particular sought to elevate society's conception of the unmarried woman.<sup>64</sup>

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John Newport Greene and his younger brother Joseph arrived in Norfolk from Ireland in 1872. The Greene and Whittle families in Ireland had married on two occasions earlier in the century. One of these matches was between John and Joseph's uncle, the Reverend William Greene, and Frances

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 28 Nov. 1872.

<sup>63</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 2 Dec. 1873.

<sup>64</sup>Welter, Dimity Convictions, 209.

Whittle, called Cousin Fannie by Chloe and probably a cousin of her father's. Later in 1872, the Reverend Mr. Greene and his wife settled in Staunton, Virginia, with their family.

When he first came to Virginia, John Greene cultivated fruit trees on a farm in Princess Anne, eight miles outside of the city of Norfolk. By 1874, he had sold the farm, and he spent the next few years without steady employment. In 1875, the Norfolk Virginian tried to put the locally sluggish economy into perspective by citing the nationwide economic depression: "The fact is that business is prostrate all over the country."<sup>65</sup> Greene supported himself with income from his father's estate. He also borrowed money from Conway Whittle after payments by the farm's new owner fell behind.

Chloe initially found the Greene brothers rather uninteresting; she described them as "phlegmatic."<sup>66</sup> Eventually, John became more animated. One April evening in 1872, Whittle wrote: "Old Mr. Greene was more beauish than usual, told me that some violets I had given him he expected to have till his dying day--I told him I hoped they would not be very fresh then."<sup>67</sup> Greene later showed her that he had pressed the flowers in a book. Soon he was bringing her ferns to plant, asking for her photograph (which she refused to give

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<sup>65</sup>"Nothing Doing," Norfolk Virginian, 20 Aug. 1875, p.1.

<sup>66</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., June 26, 1871," 31 Jan. 1872.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, 20 April 1872.

him for a few years), taking her on horseback rides, joining her for chess and croquet matches, and accompanying her to opera performances and Democratic rallies. She listed him in her diary as a friend; her female friends told her that she and Greene were considered engaged.

Whittle found Greene handsome. "His long red beard & tall slender figure reminded me of the cavaliers of whom Father had been reading," she wrote on Valentine's Day in 1873.<sup>68</sup> She also admired his commitment to hard work and described him as "a restless spirit that has never found half enough to do to satisfy him."<sup>69</sup>

Educated in Germany, Greene had similar cultural interests to Whittle's, including a love for music. Yet when he first courted her, Chloe did not find him a suitable intellectual companion. She described him as a "queer genius" and often expressed exasperation with his conversation. In 1873, she told Herbert Worthington that she believed Greene to be intellectually shallow and thus "a totally uncongenial person to me." At the time, she preferred Worthington, with whom she talked about "the French Revolution (!) of Plato (!!)" of Frederick the Great & such kindred subjects far removed from the frivolities of young man or womanhood."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Conway had been reading Holmby House. CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle commenced June 1st, 1872, Norfolk, Va.," 15 Feb. 1873.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid, 7 Nov. 1872.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid 15 Feb. 1873.

Whittle resented Greene's proprietary manner toward her. One evening before he proposed, she wrote: "Most gentlemen like to monopolize a lady but I never saw one who in a quiet, unobtrusive sort of way succeeded in doing it more efficiently."<sup>71</sup> When Greene believed that Worthington had insulted Chloe by speaking to her authoritatively, he declared that he was going to demand an explanation from Worthington, even if it meant engaging in a duel. Whittle told him that he had no right to do so on her behalf. After a game of "Quotations" with friends, she wrote of Greene: "On someone's calling for the card 'Beware the fury of a patient man' he turned & gave me such a look from his blue eyes that I fairly quaked." She did not want Greene to control her:

Anything but to become his wife I could stand, but that is a torture to think of. Just to think of myself in his power makes me quail. I like to have him about the house, he is very kind & obliging, very observant which is always a compliment, he is manly, & to a certain extent gentlemanly, I see his good points very clearly but I can never submit to him as a husband.<sup>72</sup>

Chloe disliked the possibility that Greene would exercise sexual authority over her.

In addition, Whittle harbored doubts about Greene's spiritual state. He attended church regularly, often accompanying her, but she was not convinced of his faithfulness. "If I believed Mr. Greene was a devoted

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid, 28 Aug. 1872.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid, 6 Jan. 1873.

Christian I would be glad & thankful if I loved him," she responded to friends and kin who encouraged her to accept his proposal.<sup>73</sup> A month later, after Greene again contemplated engaging in a duel, Whittle wrote:

Mr. Greene exclaimed angrily at the idea of allowing a man to insult him unpunished. I told him if he professed to be a Christian I did not see how he could act differently. Of course, he remained of the same mind still.<sup>74</sup>

In early 1873, Whittle asked her father to tell Greene that the courtship had to end, although he could continue to visit as a friend. Conway Whittle told his daughter that she should consider Greene's proposal more carefully, since he had some positive qualities, including good looks. She replied that she had given the offer considerable thought and had reached her conclusion. Conway delivered the message. Nonetheless, Greene continued his pursuit, and Chloe remained relatively unimpressed: "He says when he has set his heart on a thing he hates to fail! So do most people."<sup>75</sup>

It would be three more years before Whittle accepted Greene's long-standing proposal. As the courtship progressed, the couple engaged in a contest of wills. In his analysis of an antebellum epistolary courtship within the planter class, Steven Stowe suggests that courtship was an arena in which couples expended some of their intimacy and developed an ideal

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid, 5 Dec. 1872.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid, 4 Jan. 1873.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, 2 Apr. 1873.

of settled marriage as their goal.<sup>76</sup> Whittle and Greene played out their mutual antagonism and proceeded slowly toward a more loving, and tranquil, relationship.

According to Greene, Whittle lectured him in ways that no one in Ireland ever had, not even his mother. He asked her to please refrain from "requiring" him to do things and to "'set him an example of yielding.'" Although by 1875 Whittle asserted that Greene had more influence over her than anyone else, she added "that is not saying much to be sure."<sup>77</sup>

She most resented his attempts to monopolize her time at social gatherings. In Whittle's opinion, Greene neither demonstrated "that unfailing deference that a more chivalric nature would accord a woman" nor placed "men and women on an equality."<sup>78</sup> For Chloe these attitudes signified the strength of Greene's "manhood," which alternately repelled and attracted her. In August 1875, she wrote:

I think sometimes if I were to marry him his rule would be absolute, and my identity sunk utterly. I believe I like him all the better for it, and I think most women would, but still I find it awkward and never know what I ought to do.

She went on to reason that if she married Greene, she would have to defer to his jealous nature and give up socializing

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<sup>76</sup>Steven Stowe, "'The Thing, Not its Vision': A Woman's Courtship and her Sphere in the Southern Planter Class," Feminist Studies 9, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 128.

<sup>77</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun September 25, 1874," 24 Feb. 1875; 12 Jan. 1875; 24 Feb. 1875.

<sup>78</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun Jan. 1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 26 Feb. 1874; 10 June 1874.

with intelligent men. There were possible benefits to this, she decided, including "peace in perfect obscurity" and the sight of Greene's happiness at having "his own special treasure." Yet she did not want to have to make "'a living sacrifice.'"<sup>79</sup>

Chloe's willingness even to consider marrying Greene resulted from her increasing sympathy for the constancy of his affection. She began to describe his love in religious terms. When she listened to a sermon on "Jesus Christ, the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever," she thought of Greene, who was sitting behind her. Later she wrote, "It came to me too that his love was akin (so the Holy Spirit teaches) to the love Christ bears his Church." This thought imbued his affection with a "new and sanctified meaning."<sup>80</sup> Six months later, Whittle compared Greene's love to David's description of Saul's son Jonathan: "Truly his love passeth the love of woman."<sup>81</sup>

In the Bible, Whittle found guidance for how she should

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<sup>79</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30, 1875," 5 Aug. 1875. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12.1).

<sup>80</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30, 1875," 19 Dec. 1875.

<sup>81</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., 1876," 2 June 1876. "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me. Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1.26).

respond to Greene's affection. Although she wrote that she could forgo marriage without much difficulty, she believed that she would be wrong to leave Greene with "hope deferred," for "truly the good Book says, it 'maketh the heart sick.'"<sup>82</sup> Whittle encouraged Greene to demonstrate his love for God by serving the Church. Early in 1876, he agreed to join her in teaching at a new Mission School in Norfolk.

Whittle also tied Greene more closely to her literary world. She began to refer to him as "Douglas, tender and true," an allusion to a popular nineteenth-century poem by the prolific English writer Dinah Maria Mulock Craik.<sup>83</sup> Greene rose in Whittle's estimation at the expense of her literary companion Herbert Worthington: "I often think Mr. Greene makes poetry & Mr. Worthington writes it."<sup>84</sup>

In addition, she began to quote literary sources that portrayed male perseverance and strength as ultimately victorious. In 1874, she wrote, "Sometimes I think of Petrucio's boast 'Tis I am he am born to tame you Kate,' and I wonder if such love, so strong, so unchangeable, apparently,

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<sup>82</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., 1876," 20 Apr. 1876. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Prov. 13.12).

<sup>83</sup>"Douglas, Douglas, Tender and True," one of Craik's best-known poems, was anthologized. Reference Guide to English Literature, 2nd. Edition, Vol. 2 (Chicago: St. James Press, 1991).

<sup>84</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun April 1873, Norfolk, Va.," 1 Nov. 1873.



can have been put in his heart to receive no answer."<sup>85</sup> Although Chloe portrayed Greene as a romanticized Petrucio, she nonetheless depicted him as a character who succeeded in convincing a woman to marry him. When she read the novel Frank Warrington, Whittle copied this "'over-true'" sentiment into her diary:

"There is an unconquerable force in the real passion of a strong-willed man: let a woman once consent to listen to it, and indifferent or loving, sooner or later she will yield to its demands."<sup>86</sup>

With reference to literature, Whittle began to construct marriage to Greene as inevitable. She was soon depicting the institution of marriage more positively in her diary.

In 1875, Whittle reflected on her parents' marriage and declared that she would try to forge a closer union than they had. She wrote that the husband's position of authority within marriage was ordained by God:

Two clever, grown people cannot think alike so God has settled this question of unity "Let the wife s[e]e that she reverence her husband." "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man." His will must be law.<sup>87</sup>

For Chloe, the teachings of Paul had practical utility in a

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<sup>85</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun Jan.1, 1874, Norfolk, Va.," 1 May 1874; William Shakespeare, The Taming of the Shrew, Act 2, Scene 1, line 265.

<sup>86</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., 1876," 24 May 1876.

<sup>87</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30, 1875," 22 July 1875. Eph. 5.33; 1 Tim. 2.12.

world of human limitations. No two people could ever be truly compatible, so God had provided an appropriate means toward achieving harmony: male jurisdiction in marital disputes.

In February 1876, John Greene received a letter from his uncle in Ireland, who asked Greene to take over the management of his sheep farm beginning that summer. Greene asked Chloe to accompany him, but she refused. Unconvinced of Greene's managerial abilities, she suggested that he go over alone for a year to try out his luck. Then, a month before he was supposed to leave, she changed her mind:

I grew so miserable at the idea of parting with Mr. Greene & his going away almost if not quite, broken heart, that I was like to have broken my own in sympathy. . . . I determined to alter my previous decision and go with him. God grant it be for the best. God forbid I should be a millstone around his neck & he a drag on my soul, impeding each other on the way to heaven. O! God Almighty suffer it not to be so.<sup>88</sup>

Chloe Tyler Whittle and John Newport Greene were married in St. Paul's Episcopal Church on August 28, 1876. They sailed for Ireland two days later.

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<sup>88</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle of Norfolk, Va., 1876," 29 July 1876.

## CONCLUSION

In 1875, Chloe Tyler Whittle's cousin Isabel Armstrong asked her whether she would give up everything for religion. "I said I did not consider that at all the question that I thought religion should be intermingled with everything," Chloe responded.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the period from 1865 to 1876, Whittle's religion was the defining characteristic of her identity.

As a member of a prosperous family, Whittle had the time to attend church frequently, to read widely, and to write regularly in a journal. In her writings, she projected an evangelical world view that incorporated scriptural passages, remembrances of sermons, and literary excerpts. She selected elements that informed her conception of herself and the society in which she lived. She described her efforts to exert influence on others by drawing on the sense of mission that she gained from her religious belief.

Although Whittle's diaries emphasize the insular nature of her life, they also reflect her connections to the world around her. Norfolk provided social interaction, a choice of churches to attend, and access to transportation for travel.

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<sup>1</sup>CTW, "Private Journal of Chloe Tyler Whittle begun June 30, 1875," 30 May 1875.

Living in a city enhanced the communal aspects of religious activity for Chloe.

Whittle sought above all to be a Christian woman. The roles of daughter, sister, and friend were incorporated under this aspiration. She eventually adopted the role of wife as well, but only after she had constructed it in religious terms. To Chloe, John Greene's unfailing love became holy and her acceptance of it a sacred calling.

Whittle posited herself as both a soldier of the Cross and an instrument of God. There were "masculine" and "feminine" aspects to her Christianity. She chose male biblical role models, comparing herself to Jesus, Moses, and John the Baptist. She upheld the teachings of Paul. She elevated the images of the virtuous female and the self-sacrificing Civil War widow.

During the period from 1865 to 1876, Whittle experienced two crises. She viewed the defeat of the Confederacy as a personal setback because she had understood the Civil War as a religious crusade. Relying on her faith, she encouraged others to do the same. Whittle's response to her mental disability is less clear. The incident reinforced her belief that her religious consciousness and rational nature were closely connected.

In her diaries, Whittle merged aspects of nineteenth-century life that are traditionally presented as dichotomous. Religion and rationality is one example. While there was an

emotional core to her spirituality, there was also a practical aspect to her religiosity. She wanted to be useful, and she recognized that religion provided one way to make a tangible contribution valued by society. In addition, she depicted religion and intelligence as compatible. She educated herself on Episcopal church doctrine and practice. Although she often seems to have simply absorbed the sermons that she heard, she sometimes debated the ideas presented by her ministers.

Whittle also fused religion and literature; often the reading material that she chose did this for her. She did not directly elevate one cultural form over the other, but used the former to evaluate the latter when not reading religious works. In her diaries, she interchanged religious and literary images as models for everyday life.

The attempt to be both a human and a saint was a challenge that invited disappointment. Chloe Tyler Whittle did not resolve the tension between secularization and religion, but she engaged it fully. She would have appreciated this sentimental response to the oft-heard question, "What did she do?" She lived.

## EPILOGUE

After spending a year living in Ireland and traveling throughout Europe, Chloe and John Greene decided to return to Norfolk. Conway Whittle bought them a farm, which they named Glen Conway. In the autumn of 1879, Chloe returned to her father's house on Boush Street to prepare for the birth of her first child. Urith Newport Greene was born on October 27. When Conway Whittle died less than two years later, the Greens purchased a second residence next door to the Whittle home, where Grace Sams and her two children still lived.

The Greens were married for more than twenty-five years. After John Greene died in 1902, Chloe honored him by erecting a tablet in his memory at St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The memorial still hangs in the church today, near the pew that Whittle Greene rented until her own death in 1925.

Through her will, Chloe continued to evangelize. She requested that three hundred dollars be given each year from her estate to the Diocesan Society of the Diocese of Southern Virginia, during the lifetime of her daughter. Chloe urged Urith "as a religious duty to give, at least one tenth of her income to the spread of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

When Urith Newport Greene died on March 6, 1949, she bequeathed a sizeable amount of her estimated \$270,000.00 estate to the Protestant Episcopal Church. Greene, who did not have any children, left the Whittle home on Boush Street to the "Boys Home, Inc.," which administered a boys' school in Covington, Virginia. She gave the Whittle Greene home to St. Paul's, but not as a dwelling. Without explanation, Urith requested that her executor sell the house for demolition and forward the proceeds to the church's endowment fund. Urith's contributions to religious organizations included bequests to the Diocesan Society and the Board of Missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Girls Friendly Society at St. Paul's, and the Episcopal Church Home for elderly women.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Last Will and Testament of Mrs. Chloe Tyler Greene of the City of Norfolk, Va.," 4 October 1909, Circuit Court, Will Book Number 6, Norfolk, Va., 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>"Last Will and Testament of Urith Newport Greene," 21 February 1948, Corporation Court, Will Book Number 26, City of Norfolk, Norfolk, Va., 46-55; "Old St. Paul's Church and Boys Home Left Bulk of Estate of Miss Greene," Norfolk Virginian-Pilot, 19 March 1949, 1, 13.

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