

# Religious Deviance and Psychological Medicine in the Second Great Awakening: The Asylum Narratives of Elizabeth T. Stone (b. 1811)

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In 1842, after her release from McLean Asylum in Boston, Elizabeth T. Stone (b. 1811) published an exposé detailing her experience as a patient confined for religious insanity.<sup>1</sup> Documenting a prison-like environment in which patients endured the hostility of attendants, the humiliation of invasive physical examinations, and the ravages of seizure-inducing drugs, the book warned the public of the threat that asylums posed. This was merely the first of four books Stone would write about the “Bastiles” [sic] of New England over the next two decades.<sup>2</sup> Her fourth book, published in 1861, was the most politically charged and philosophically ambitious of the series. Entitled *The American Godhead*, it adduced a trinity of powers in American society—“[t]he ordained ministry, legal or law power, and the medical faculty”—which worked in concert to undermine natural liberties. Religious freedoms in particular were the principal punitive target of this “Devil’s

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1. Elizabeth T. Stone, *A Sketch of the Life of Elizabeth T. Stone* (Boston: printed by the author, 1842).
2. Elizabeth T. Stone, *Exposing the Modern Secret Way of Persecuting Christians in Order to Hush the Voice of Truth* (Boston: printed by the author, 1859), 17.

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Godhead.”<sup>3</sup> And so Stone, as a woman who had been confined chiefly for her religious behaviors, had been one of its banner victims.

One might be tempted to dismiss Stone’s critique of American society as the paranoid effusion of a traumatized mind. Yet, beneath the tidy certainties of her political philosophy, we discern important insights about the nature of religious life and its perils in nineteenth-century Massachusetts. Her writings point to a fraught political and social atmosphere—a society that had only recently undergone religious disestablishment, and whose institutions faced upward pressures to implement a greater degree of social stability.<sup>4</sup> The interpretation of insane asylums as institutions that supported the development of a bourgeois social order is now well established and finds general agreement in this article.<sup>5</sup> Our interest, however, is not in reiterating old arguments, but in exploring the nuanced tensions between the religious self and society in nineteenth-century Massachusetts—tensions that are uniquely exhibited in Elizabeth Stone’s narratives.

This article analyzes Stone’s writings with a view to highlighting the distinct challenges to the free exercise of religion that certain people faced in antebellum America. Our article draws upon various archival sources—including Stone’s own works, the annual reports of asylums, medical publications, and religious periodicals—many of which, to our knowledge, have not been examined in depth. For historians and scholars of church and state, we hope that this article makes a modest contribution to their respective fields, shedding light upon a largely unknown figure while further illuminating the societal challenges that she and others faced.

We structure the present article as follows. First, we sketch Stone’s journey to the asylum, emphasizing the gradual formation of her “mad” spiritual identity as well as the complex set of social, theological, and therapeutic reasons for which she was institutionalized. Next, we explore ideological and social considerations which led evangelical leaders to support the confinement of deviant members of their own flocks. From there, we investigate

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3. Elizabeth T. Stone, *The American Godhead: or, the Constitution of the United States Cast Down by Northern Slavery, or by the Power of Insane Hospitals* (Boston: printed by the author, 1861), 3.

4. Relatedly, see David Sehat’s discussion of a “moral establishment” in David Sehat, *The Myth of American Religious Freedom*, updated ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 54–55.

5. See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971); David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Andrew T. Scull, *Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 1979).

Stone's experience as a patient at McLean, highlighting the ways in which asylum medicine imposed upon patients a particular notion of how the religious self should relate to American society. We then conclude by considering Stone's legacy as it pertains to long-standing debates about religious liberty.

## Religious Deviance and the Family

As was typical among nineteenth-century American asylum patients, it was Elizabeth Stone's own family members who took the decision to confine her; and she claimed that they had done so "because she differed with them in their religious sentiments."<sup>6</sup> Yet the evidence of her own accounts indicates that their reasons for doing so were more complex than a mere bias against her religious stance. There was a range of both social and religious ways in which her identity was a source of family embarrassment. Moreover, there is good reason to believe that her family members had sincere concerns about her health, for which the asylum seemed to them a suitable solution.

Nevertheless, the common thread across these issues was Stone's religious identity, the spiritual outlook that had been shaped over many years through her engagement with various communities associated with the Second Great Awakening. Indeed, in a broad sense, the institutionalization of religious deviants such as Stone resulted when religious tensions in the wider society penetrated individual homes. We elaborate upon this claim by tracing Stone's portrayal of her religious formation, and then by investigating the reasons for which Stone's family confined her.

### *Stone's Religious Formation*

In her autobiographical writings, Elizabeth Stone recounted an unpleasant childhood. She was born in Westford, Massachusetts in 1811 to an intemperate mechanic named Samuel Stone, and a sickly and neglectful mother. As their seventh child (and the youngest of three daughters), Elizabeth was the particular victim of her parents' abuse. She was ridiculed by her mother for her sensitive disposition, and "disowned" by her father "as his lawful child."<sup>7</sup> It was therefore a matter of self-preservation when she

6. Elizabeth T. Stone, *Remarks by Elizabeth T. Stone, upon the Statements Made by H. B. Skinner* (Boston: printed by the author, 1843), 7 ; also see Stone, *Sketch*, 18 and Stone, *Exposing*, 4.

7. Stone, *Sketch*, 3.

chose to leave home at the age of fifteen to work in the textile factories in the nearby industrial town of Lowell.

Through eight years of employment as a weaver, Stone saved enough money to enroll at a female seminary in New Hampton, New Hampshire in May 1834. It was there that she experienced an evangelical conversion. In her writings, she recounted from this point feeling a distinct calling to become a missionary in distant lands; yet financial necessity forced her to withdraw from her studies in the fall of her second year. She spent the bulk of the next five years in the factories of Lowell, resolved to save what she would need to eventually embrace her evangelistic calling.

Throughout this time, her engagement with evangelical communities continued and, between 1837 and 1840, she became a Millerite. A Baptist preacher based in Vermont, William Miller (1782–1849) had attracted thousands of followers with his predictions that Christ's second coming would occur in 1843 or 1844. Many of these so-called Millerites were institutionalized in the late 1830s and early 1840s for the excesses to which their apocalyptic hopes drove them.<sup>8</sup> Stone's conviction that she should "run as to obtain the prize in six years" likewise induced a spiritual fervency which undoubtedly sped her own journey to the asylum.<sup>9</sup> Yet her spiritual identity was further shaped by two other strands of evangelical revivalism that were sweeping across New England in this period.

In the spring of 1840, Stone embraced the teachings of the Christian Connection—a group born of revivalist activity in Kentucky at the turn of the nineteenth century, and generically denominated for its central tenet that believers of all stripes should set aside their sectarian differences to unite as mere "Christians" around evangelical essentials.<sup>10</sup> Stone's adoption of this belief was critical to the crisis that led to her confinement. In June 1840, she met with Lemuel Porter, the minister of the Baptist church where she had been a member, to inform him that although she planned to continue attending his church, "the Lord had shown me that articles of faith [i.e., the distinguishing doctrines of the Baptist denomination] were a sin by the Bible," and she had therefore disavowed them.<sup>11</sup> Stone was excommunicated

8. Ronald L. Numbers and Janet S. Numbers, "Millerism and Madness: A Study of 'Religious Insanity' in Nineteenth-Century America," in *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 289–320.

9. Stone, *Sketch*, 39.

10. See Barton W. Stone, *History of the Christian Church in the West* (1827; Lexington, KY: College of the Bible, 1956), 39.

11. Stone, *Sketch*, 12.

two weeks later. Nevertheless, she quickly found meaningful fellowship at the local church of the Christian Connection, and later that month, she attended a meeting “on the union of christians [sic]” in Groton.<sup>12</sup> There she encountered a third and final strand of evangelical revivalist thought that consolidated her “mad” spiritual identity.

At this meeting, Stone believed that she had “received the baptism of the Holy Ghost,” and hence, complete sanctification.<sup>13</sup> The notion that Christians could attain sinless perfection as a second work of grace was famously endorsed by the eighteenth-century English revivalist John Wesley (1703–91), and was linked by Wesley’s follower, John William Fletcher (1729–85), to the baptism “with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire” invoked by John the Baptist in the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>14</sup> In New England, the doctrine was picked up by the Methodist minister Timothy Merritt (1775–1845), and it gave rise to the Holiness movement under Phoebe Palmer’s (1807–74) leadership in New York in the mid-1830s.<sup>15</sup> Stone herself viewed her spiritual baptism as a two-stage event. First, she had been baptized “with fire” by being excommunicated from the Baptist church in Lowell. Then, at the revival meeting in Groton (1840), she had been baptized by the Holy Ghost and thus had been perfected.<sup>16</sup>

### *Reasons for Confinement*

These experiences produced growing tensions between Stone and her family members and the wider religious communities of which she was a part. But how, precisely, did they relate to her eventual confinement? Taken together, her own accounts equivocate on this question.

Stone’s third book, *Exposing the Modern Secret Way* (1859), delineates a clear and unambiguous chain of events that led to her confinement. Two of her siblings, Nancy and James, mortified by their sister’s excommunication from the Baptist church (of which Nancy herself was a member) and outraged by her

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Matthew 3:11 (KJV) (original emphasis); see E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 270.

15. Holifield, *Theology in America*, 271; Randall J. Stephens, “The Holiness/Pentecostal/Charismatic Extension of the Wesleyan Tradition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 266.

16. Stone, *Sketch*, 12.

involvement with the Christian Connection, confined her for three days to her residence (beginning Sunday, November 22) and summoned Stephen, their elder and wealthier brother, from Boston. Stephen arrived that Wednesday. He procured a letter from a local doctor, Wheelock Graves, testifying to his sister's supposed derangement, and then invited his three siblings to accompany him back to Boston to celebrate Thanksgiving together. They arrived in Boston that evening, and after Thanksgiving dinner the next day, Stephen asked his sister to "take a ride with him." The destination, of course, was McLean, where—on the strength of Stephen's testimony and Dr. Graves's note—she would spend the next sixteen months.<sup>17</sup>

These details are generally consistent with the account in her first two books. In each, she attributed her siblings' decision to confine her to their religious prejudices.<sup>18</sup> Yet the longer autobiographical survey in her first book evinces a more complex set of circumstances surrounding her incarceration.

A particularly important theme that emerges is a growing socioeconomic divide within the Stone family, which placed Elizabeth—as a "lowly" factory girl—at greater risk of confinement. The two brothers she held most responsible, Ebenezer Whitten Stone (1802–79) and Stephen S. Stone, had risen from the family's modest origins to become prominent citizens in the Boston area. With a distinguished military career, Ebenezer published two books on military law and tactics and, in 1851, was appointed Adjutant General of Massachusetts.<sup>19</sup> In the civil arena, he held positions as a representative to the Massachusetts General Court and as a councilman in Roxbury.<sup>20</sup> Details about Stephen's life are less clear, but Elizabeth makes frequent mention of his business dealings and claims that he kept the Commercial Coffee House in Boston.<sup>21</sup> It was this brother in particular whose class prejudices are most emphasized in Elizabeth's first narrative. She thus recounts

17. Stone, *Exposing*, 3–7.

18. Stone, *Sketch*, 18; Stone, *Remarks*, 7.

19. Ebenezer W. Stone, *Digest of the Militia Laws of Massachusetts: and Extracts Relating to the Militia from the United States and State Constitutions and the Laws of the United States* (Boston: Dutton & Wentworth, State Printers, 1851) and *Compend of Instructions in Military Tactics, and the Manual of Percussion Arms, with Extracts from the U.S. Army Regulations* (Boston: William White, Printer to the State, 1857); also see Stone, *American Godhead*, 37.

20. See Archive from the Stone/Sparhawk Families of Massachusetts. Cowan's, last modified June 22, 2018, <https://www.cowanuctions.com/lot/archive-from-the-stonesparhawk-families-of-massachusetts-3209145>.

21. Stone, *Remarks*, 6. Nineteenth-century records, however, do not list Stephen Stone as a proprietor. See David M. Balfour, "The Taverns of Boston in Ye Olden Time," *The Bay State Monthly: A Massachusetts Magazine* 2, no. 2 (1884): 113.

that Stephen had used a pseudonym when posting items to her; and, during Elizabeth's visits to his home in Boston, Sophia (Stephen's wife) had "requested me not to let any one know that I worked in a factory."<sup>22</sup>

Stone's first book thus indicates a growing class divide between Stone and her elder brothers which compounded their differences. Her religious deviance—culminating with the shame of her excommunication from the Baptist church in Lowell—merely exacerbated already-existing social tensions within the family, and increased the degree of embarrassment her identity posed to her upwardly-mobile brothers. If these longer-term tensions were the fuel for her eventual confinement at McLean, the fire itself needed a spark. Hence, we observe a second reason behind her family's decision—namely, a sincere therapeutic concern on the part of her siblings.

From her first account, it is apparent that Stone had descended into some kind of psychosomatic crisis in the weeks preceding the three-day confinement in her Lowell residence. The causes of this crisis are themselves complex. For one, she recounted in her first book feeling a growing tension between her worldly occupation and her spiritual calling. She wanted to abandon her employment at the factory to "labor entirely for the Lord," but economic practicalities prevented this ("what should I do for a home?").<sup>23</sup> Moreover, she felt the burden of providing financial support to her youngest brother, James, who had been ill and at risk of destitution. This duty itself was, for Stone, evangelistically motivated: "I thought," Stone wrote, "... if I helped him in temporal things he would hear me in spiritual."<sup>24</sup> Yet it came at a high cost. Whether due to a spiritual scruple about the "worldly" orientation of her work or sheer physical exhaustion, she felt unable to continue working.

Her own characterization of the issue emphasizes its spiritual dimensions. She recounts that at the onset of the crisis, she sought counsel from her spiritual kinspeople—first from Elder Timothy Cole, the Millerite leader of the local church of the Christian Connection, and then from "a very pious lady" at her residence, to whom she confessed her fears that she would be subjected to divine judgment for having "disobeyed the spirit."<sup>25</sup>

22. Stone, *Sketch*, 18.

23. *Ibid.*, 13.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Cole's Millerite beliefs are noted in James Springer White, *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-Day Adventist Publishing Association, 1875), 123–24. The nature of Stone's confessed "disobedience" is unclear, but the context suggests some

The first account continues from there with her three-day confinement at home; yet her immobility appears to have been a self-imposed state, precipitated by some sort of ailment, and not a punishment enforced by her siblings, as her third book claims. And so, on Sunday—the first day of her supposed “house arrest”—Elizabeth’s brother James urged her to return home to Westford. She refused on the basis that, in her “weak state,” she would buckle under the “opposition” her parents had shown since her religious conversion.<sup>26</sup> The next morning, her sister Nancy became angry when she refused to go to work. Stone confessed to having felt increasingly weak over the ensuing hours. She desired the care and companionship of her co-religionists, and not of worldly physicians.

In this respect, at least, there is some indication of an atmosphere of surveillance as well as a bias against Stone’s religious identity. James and Nancy, she claims, refused to admit visitors associated with the Christian Connection into her room, and even turned away a religiously-sympathetic physician when he called—favoring, instead, the infamous Dr. Wheelock Graves, who blamed Stone’s condition on her Millerite convictions.<sup>27</sup> Undoubtedly, these anecdotes suggest that her siblings placed much of the blame for her condition on her religious practices; yet the underlying rationale for their interventions appears to have been a therapeutic, rather than a punitive, one. Moreover, Stone’s own acknowledgments of a growing “weakness” over these three days, and of an acute experience of spiritual anxiety which had preceded it, are suggestive of a psychosomatic crisis to which her siblings responded as they saw fit.

Hence, in Stone’s autobiographical writings, we are faced with ambiguities about the nature of her own mental state before her confinement at McLean, and, correspondingly, about the reasons for which her siblings confined her. This was almost certainly not a case of pure religious discrimination; on the other hand, it is clear that the prejudices of Stone’s siblings against her religious beliefs were not irrelevant to their assessment of her mental condition. Rather, we see that Stone’s religious outlook was part and parcel—indeed, the core feature—of an identity that was in various ways a source of tension within her family, and which was deeply implicated in the psychosomatic crisis that precipitated her confinement.

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failure on her part to follow an inner prompting of the Holy Spirit. See Stone, *Sketch*, 13.

26. Stone, *Sketch*, 13.

27. *Ibid.*, 14–15.

## “Clerical Power” and the Asylum Movement

The religious communities of early-nineteenth-century New England were affected by the same social and religious tensions as were New England families such as the Stones. Reflecting in her fourth book upon her “betrayal” by two Millerite ministers who supported her confinement, Stone advanced a theory that echoed the accusations against her siblings in her first three books: churches, she claimed, participated in a conspiracy of societal “powers”—including medical and legal institutions—which together undermined freedom of religious expression in America.

Our assessment of this claim renders a complex judgment. The historical record scarcely provides proof of a satanic cabal of American institutions that aimed to eradicate specific forms of Christianity. Yet there is a clear sense in which religious communities (including evangelical groups) and medical institutions (asylums in particular) were aligned in their responses to the social pressures created (or at least exacerbated) by religious revivalism and sectarianism. As was the case for families, New England churches looked to the asylum both as a means of resolving pressures within the community and as an institution that conferred therapeutic benefits to those it housed.

In this section, we consider these clerical and medical interrelationships, and the reasons for which Stone’s own spiritual identity made her, from the perspective of evangelical leaders, a suitable candidate for asylum confinement. We begin by briefly sketching Stone’s (presumptive) betrayal by Millerite ministers. We then consider various intellectual currents that informed evangelical perceptions of “deviant” religious behaviors. Finally, we use Stone’s transgressive identity, especially her status as a *female* deviant, to explore the growing concerns around status and respectability which led evangelical ministers to marginalize certain members of their communities.

### *Clerical Betrayals*

Stone’s first clerical betrayal, as she characterized it, came at the hands of Elder Timothy Cole, whom we encountered above. In her first book, Stone claimed that Cole had provided her siblings with a second note, alongside Dr. Graves’s, recommending her confinement.<sup>28</sup> The second betrayal was committed by a Methodist minister, Henry Burchstead Skinner, who was one of several visiting chaplains at McLean. Skinner had publicly rebutted the claims in

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28. *Ibid.*, 30.

her first book about the abuses experienced by patients at the asylum.<sup>29</sup>

Stone was especially aggrieved at Skinner because of the fervency of his Millerite convictions. Indeed, he had been zealous enough for the Adventist message to carry it to Canada as a missionary in 1842, and to publish a book in the same year offering “a voice of comfort to the saints, and of warning to [God’s] enemies” about the apocalyptic events that were soon to unfold.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Skinner took the side of McLean Asylum against his co-religionist in what became a vicious public dispute, the details of which Stone documented in her second book (1843). The conflict culminated in a mediatory meeting at the home of Dr. Sprague on Monday June 19, 1843, which ended when Skinner, finding that the room was against him, suddenly announced that he had “a higher work than to attend to a *gal’s story*” and stormed out.<sup>31</sup>

These anecdotes contrast strikingly with the stories of John Wesley and George Whitefield (1714–70) rescuing their zealous eighteenth-century followers from English madhouses.<sup>32</sup> Why did these nineteenth-century evangelical leaders do the opposite in Stone’s case? A satisfying answer to this question requires investigation of the intellectual and social contexts of evangelical leaders themselves, on the one hand, and of Stone’s “transgressive” spiritual identity, on the other. We turn first to the former.

### *Evangelical Support for Confinement*

The notion that a religious deviant such as Stone belonged in an asylum relied, ultimately, upon a distinction between true religion as an authentic form of piety and pathology as a corruption of authentic religious experience. Confinement and medical intervention were deemed appropriate, even among evangelicals, when malady masqueraded as piety. This position was firmly established in many nineteenth-century evangelical minds. Yet its roots extend to seventeenth-century debates about “enthusiasm,” which

29. Stone, *Remarks*, 18–20.

30. Henry Burchstead Skinner, *A Synopsis of the Views of Those Who Look for the Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in 1843* (Ashburnham, MA: published by Alvan Ward, 1842), iv; also see J. I. Little, “Millennial Invasion: Millerism in the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada,” in *Anglo-American Millennialism, from Milton to the Millerites*, ed. Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 185–86.

31. Stone, *Remarks*, 24 (original emphasis).

32. Michael MacDonald, “Religion, Social Change and Psychological Healing in England, 1600–1800,” in *The Church and Healing*, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 124.

are worth surveying briefly here for their importance to subsequent intellectual and medical developments. During the English Civil War (1642–1651), radical groups such as the Ranters and the Diggers, and even Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) himself, challenged the established political order through claims to divine inspiration. To combat these perceived threats, writers such as Méric Casaubon (1599–1671) attributed these claims to “enthusiasm”—that is, to a false belief, rooted in a mental or physical disease, that one was a conduit of divine power.<sup>33</sup> This strategy of medicalizing radical religious speech became a predominant method of countering political threat.

But the eighteenth century saw the term deployed somewhat differently. Enthusiasm was now associated especially with the revivalism of the First Great Awakening and, in particular, with the shrieking, convulsions, and related phenomena that manifested under evangelical preaching. Yet rather than to deny that enthusiasm was a problem, evangelical leaders incorporated anti-enthusiastic premises into their apologetic arguments. The New England pastor and theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703–58) admitted that many of the psychological and psychical phenomena that people experienced under evangelical preaching could be explained in strictly naturalistic terms, and he correspondingly restricted evidence of genuine spiritual experience to the moral and affective spheres.<sup>34</sup> His paradigm thus safeguarded “true” evangelical religion against the charge that it bred enthusiasm.<sup>35</sup>

By the Second Great Awakening, medical perceptions of deviant religious experience were taken for granted by many New Englanders, and the political threat of enthusiasm had been considerably reduced. Nevertheless, the multiple waves of revivalism that swept across the American South and Northeast presented ongoing challenges to the young republic and its fragile sociopolitical organization. Not least among these was the rapid proliferation of new denominations and sects which were driven by conflicting theological visions of American society.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, as a subsection of American religious culture, evangelicals themselves were far

33. J. G. A. Pocock, “Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60, no. 1/2 (1997): 7–28.

34. Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, *Religious Affections*, ed. Paul Ramsey (1746; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

35. Yet, as Ann Taves has aptly observed, it tacitly appropriated the naturalistic critique. Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 40–41.

36. Catherine A. Brekus, *Female Preaching in America: Strangers & Pilgrims, 1740–1845* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 121–25.

from united, and their critics were quick to blame the problem on revivalist “enthusiasm.”<sup>37</sup>

These criticisms exerted considerable influence on the minds of nineteenth-century evangelicals. Like their eighteenth-century predecessors, they were willing to appropriate anti-enthusiastic premises to promote the legitimacy and respectability of the new sects they oversaw—a social agenda among nineteenth-century evangelicals that Richard Bushman has linked to the broader development of a more “refined” American middle class in this period.<sup>38</sup> Their incentive to control deviance in Stone’s context is further clarified as we consider Massachusetts’s religious dynamics. Most notably, religious disestablishment had been achieved in Massachusetts during Stone’s lifetime through two amendments—the first removing its Christian oath of office (1820), and the second dismantling all mechanisms designed to fund local ministers through taxpayer money (1833).<sup>39</sup> For the Baptist reformer John Leland (1754–1841), these developments marked an emancipation from the religious bigotry afforded by local establishment. Yet disestablishment also had serious drawbacks. Chief among them, thought Leland, were the transgressive and “enthusiastic” forms of religious identity that had been given an opening.<sup>40</sup>

### “A gal’s story”

Elizabeth Stone’s religious identity epitomized the kind of religious eccentricity about which Leland worried. In acting upon the immediate promptings of the Holy Spirit, she transgressed both religious and social boundaries. We have already discussed, for instance, her disavowal of Baptist doctrine, and the public scandal of her consequent excommunication. Behaviors of this sort put pressure upon the revivalist communities that seemed to be responsible for them; and indeed, it may well have been this scandal that influenced Timothy Cole’s decision to support her institutionalization.

37. For example, see the German church historian Philip Schaff’s (1819–93) criticism of America’s “sect plague,” in Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church*, trans. John Nevin (Chambersburg, PA: “Publication Office” of the German Reformed Church, 1845), 120; quoted in Thomas Albert Howard, *God and the Atlantic: America, Europe, and the Religious Divide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 142.

38. See Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992); see also Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart, *New Directions in American Religious History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 192.

39. Sehat, *Myth*, 55.

40. *Ibid.*, 27.

Stone's behaviors were all the more transgressive—and her freedom to indulge in them all the more tenuous—in light of her femininity. Many of the new sects that emerged during the Second Great Awakening, including the Christian Connection and the Millerite movement, had permitted female preaching and exhortation. As Catherine Brekus has observed, in the 1830s and 1840s, all of these groups reversed this practice in their aim to increase their “power and public acceptance.”<sup>41</sup> Yet the Millerite movement was the last to do so—and not until after Stone's conflict with Skinner.<sup>42</sup> This conflict itself is suggestive of the ways in which Stone's Millerite identity was constrained by her femininity, even during the movement's “golden age” of female participation. As Brekus notes, female exhortation had been permitted by evangelical revivalists for a range of practical and ideological reasons, none of which had been underpinned by a radical egalitarianism.<sup>43</sup> Millerite women were referred to as “lecturers,” rather than as preachers, and certainly they were not ordained.<sup>44</sup> Stone's own gendered constraints as a Millerite are indicated in Skinner's parting remark about “a *gal's story*,” which implied that his testimony about McLean had greater credibility than Stone's simply by virtue of his maleness.

Evidence external to Stone's writings further reveals her general disregard for the social and doctrinal boundaries of Millerite practice. Soon after her conflict with Skinner, Stone and another woman were chastised in the Millerite periodical, *The Advent Herald*, for having disrupted the meetings of a group of Millerite women with their “pretensions to the possession of superior light to that derived from the word of God.”<sup>45</sup> For the Millerites, prophetic discourse emphasized the interpretation and exposition of the canonical prophecies of the Bible, rather than the articulation of new prophecies under divine inspiration.<sup>46</sup> Stone's conduct at these meetings was beyond the pale of Millerite orthodoxy. Her public censure evinces another way in which excesses were policed, and Millerite “respectability” negotiated.

Stone herself drew the connection between her marginalization by evangelical ministers and their own preoccupation with “worldly” status. In her second book, for instance, she wrote that the Christian church had taken a public stand against her since

41. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 332.

42. *Ibid.*, 309, 332, 339.

43. *Ibid.*, 320–21.

44. *Ibid.*, 318–19, 325.

45. *The Advent Herald* 7, no. 24 (July 17, 1844) (original emphases). This anecdote is mentioned in Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 319.

46. Brekus, *Strangers & Pilgrims*, 324.

her release from McLean “for fear of a little reproach being brought upon them.”<sup>47</sup> The theme of reproach recurs frequently throughout Stone’s writings, referring to the duty of the individual Christian to bear the “reproach” of the world (i.e., disapproval, humiliation, and rejection) for the cause of Christ. Stone had borne such censure in her excommunication and especially in her confinement. Timothy Cole, by contrast, had (from Stone’s perspective) chosen worldly status, and so too had the Millerite preacher, Skinner, for whom the “honor of being chaplain” at McLean had trumped his spiritual duty to support an embattled co-religionist.<sup>48</sup>

Whereas Stone emphasizes the personal motivations of these individual ministers, our analysis has emphasized more broadly the reputational concerns of the new evangelical churches that emerged during the Second Great Awakening. In Massachusetts, in particular, pressures upon these churches to cultivate a respectable image increased during Stone’s lifetime amid criticisms about enthusiasm. In managing the deviance of individuals whose religious identities flouted bourgeois notions of respectability and thus tainted the reputations of individual communities, evangelical leaders relied upon the long-established binary between “true” religion and pathology. The latter category provided all the justification needed to confine one of their own in a medical institution.

## Reforming the Christian Spirit at McLean Asylum

As insane asylums grew in number and public acceptance in America in the first half of the nineteenth century, families and religious communities increasingly looked to them as a means of resolving internal tensions caused by the embarrassing, deviant, or simply worrying behaviors of individuals such as Stone. But exactly how did these institutions aim to remedy such people? More specifically, how did Stone view their methods of treatment?

To answer these questions, we investigate Stone’s characterization of her own treatment as it contrasts with the perspectives and aims of the physicians and attendants who treated her. As we shall see, Stone’s critique of asylum therapy was multifaceted, comprising both gendered and—especially—theological aspects. Her central contention was that asylum treatment had “killed the spirit of Christ within me,” and she attributed the problem principally to the *non*-evangelical identity of McLean’s chief physician,

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47. Stone, *Remarks*, 17.

48. *Ibid.*, 21, 23.

Dr. Luther Bell (1806–62).<sup>49</sup> Yet our analysis of asylum annual reports suggests that Stone's treatment would likely have been the same even had Bell been an evangelical. Her treatment at McLean, then, was not religiously persecutory in a direct way. Rather, the harm to her spiritual identity was a result of the disjunction between her own values—formed within the revivalist contexts of the Second Great Awakening—and the bourgeois values at the core of early-nineteenth-century asylum therapy.

### *Therapy and Identity at McLean*

Stone's critique of McLean encompassed her identity as both a woman and a Christian—characteristics which, for her, were interconnected. Female community had been the bedrock of Stone's spiritual life since her conversion at the female seminary in New Hampshire. In the weeks preceding her confinement, it was from her *female* co-religionists that she had hoped to receive *spiritual* care; and, after her release, it was within a community of women that she found spiritual and moral support.<sup>50</sup> Stone contrasted this feminine ideal of spiritual care with the “maleness” of the medical form of treatment in asylums—a contrast which is further reinforced by her commentary on the scandal of female collaboration with the asylum regime. Thus, she had felt particularly scandalized by her sister-in-law Sophia's involvement in her brothers' plot to institutionalize her: “I could not believe that a female could be accessory to such a crime.”<sup>51</sup> And within the asylum, she had been struck by the “masculine” appearance of one of the female attendants, as well as by the assistant physician John Fox's scandalous “conduct among the females” of the institution.<sup>52</sup>

This gendered representation of psychiatric practice has much in common with the challenges to traditional male scientific authority reflected in the writings of the women asylum patients that the literary scholar Mary Elene Wood has analyzed.<sup>53</sup> Yet the overall thrust of Stone's books is less about the perils that the asylum represented for women than about its unique threat to the religiously faithful. Her books in this sense do not represent asylum therapy as having “feminized” madness (as in Elaine

49. On the first claim, see Stone, *Remarks*, 7; also see Stone, *Sketch*, 18 and Stone, *Exposing*, 4; the second is found in Stone, *Sketch*, 24, 40.

50. Stone, *American Godhead*, 15–20, 34–36.

51. Stone, *Sketch*, 23.

52. Stone, *Sketch*, 20; Stone, *Remarks*, 12.

53. Mary Elene Wood, *The Writing on the Wall: Women's Autobiography and the Asylum* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 48.

Showalter's paradigm), but as having Christianized it.<sup>54</sup> "Holiness," Stone repeatedly asserted, had been rendered "disease" by these men of science, and their treatments had correspondingly caused her "to lose all idea of holiness."<sup>55</sup> Her writings were thus aimed at the entire community of true Christians, not just women.<sup>56</sup>

Stone's central concern, then, was to depict McLean above all as a place of *religious* persecution—and she pinned this characterization principally to the religious identity of the chief physician, Luther Bell. In their first conversation, Stone had asked Bell "if he had a change of heart" (i.e., an evangelical conversion experience), to which he initially equivocated before finally admitting that "he had not what the world called a change."<sup>57</sup> This purported response is consistent with what we know about Bell's religious life from other sources, such as the short biography written by his friend, the Unitarian minister George Ellis (1814–94). Ellis characterized Bell as a "devout," yet "free-minded" man who accepted "the essentials of Christian piety," but who was "confounded by ... the doctrinal standards and the recognized tests of sectarianism." Ellis further published an extract from Bell's private writings which exhibits this combination of sincerity, non-partisanship, and doubt: "For myself, I can only say, in my inability to reach, after many and prayerful hours, days, months, and years, any full, clear, satisfactory views as to what manner of Christian I am ... 'Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.'"<sup>58</sup>

This was worlds apart from Stone's evangelical identity. And, for Stone, it was Bell's unsympathetic religious perspective that led him to pathologize her spiritual identity. Bell thus insisted that Stone "relate my christian [*sic*] experience." When she told him "what God had done for me to that time" and described her "bondage of soul" (i.e., her inward submission to the guidance of the Holy Spirit), he responded that he could "give me something [medicines] to relieve that bondage of soul."<sup>59</sup> This therapeutic claim is chilling in light of the steady refrain of her four books: "the medicine they gave me ... racked and tortured and killed the

54. Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830–1980* (New York: Virago, 1985).

55. Stone, *Sketch*, 27, 23.

56. *Ibid.*, 3.

57. *Ibid.*, 19.

58. George E. Ellis, *Memoir of Luther V. Bell, M.D., LL.D.* (Boston: printed by John Wilson and Son, 1863), 49.

59. Stone, *Sketch*, 19; Stone's "bondage of soul" refers to St. Paul's "compulsion" by the Holy Spirit in Acts 20:22–24.

spirit of Christ within me.”<sup>60</sup> For Stone, Bell’s intention to quell her religious zeal with drugs was a direct implication of his non-evangelical identity.

Nevertheless, despite Stone’s own conviction on this matter, her experience at McLean may well have been the same had Bell been an evangelical. The basic distinction between true religion and pathology, after all, was taken for granted by physicians of all religious stripes. By implication, supposed religious monomaniacs were subjected to similar interventions, irrespective of the particular religious affiliation of the physician. A revealing example of this is provided by the superintendent of the Connecticut Retreat for the Insane, John Butler (1803–90). In an 1846 annual report for his asylum, Butler—who was sympathetic to evangelicalism and may have been an evangelical himself—affirmed the legitimacy of “true religious anxiety” (i.e., the emotional disturbances that marked the evangelical *ordo salutis*).<sup>61</sup> Yet his own concern as a physician was with cases of “undue religious anxiety,” where the patient falsely believed—despite the evidence of their own spiritual character—that they were condemned to eternal hellfire. Referring to one of his melancholic patients, Butler concluded that since her good character was “beyond a reasonable doubt,” her spiritual self-perception must be a symptom of an underlying *physical* disorder. He administered medicines to reverse “the functional disease of [her] liver and stomach,” and deployed “moral” strategies, “diverting [her] mind to other subjects of thought.” The patient purportedly recovered, but not without a crucial shift in her self-identity: from hopeless sinner to medical patient.<sup>62</sup>

Stone’s own condition was equally susceptible to pathologization, even under the diagnostic gaze of a religious sympathizer. As we have seen, evangelicals had an established pattern for distinguishing between true religion and its naturalistically derived imitations. This theological paradigm could accommodate the full range of early-nineteenth-century diagnostic categories related to “Religious Monomania,” from “Demonomania” (in which the patient assumes they are possessed or afflicted by devils) to

60. Stone, *Sketch*, 24.

61. On Butler’s religious sensibilities, see Teresa L. Hill, “Religion, Madness, and the Asylum: A Study of Medicine and Culture in New England, 1820–1840” (PhD diss., Brown University, 1991), 177–80.

62. John S. Butler, “The Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Physician and Superintendent of the Retreat for the Insane, for the year ending March 31, 1846,” *The Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Officers of the Retreat for the Insane, at Hartford, Conn.* (Hartford: printed by Case, Tiffany and Burnham, 1846), 21–22.

"Theomania" (in which the patient assumes they are divinely inspired, if not God incarnate).<sup>63</sup> Any such condition—including Stone's transgressive "bondage of soul"—could have been viewed as a form of derangement even by an evangelical physician.

In this respect, anyway, asylum treatment was religiously non-sectarian. The specific religious stance of the physician could well be irrelevant to the nature of the treatment a presumed "enthusiast" received. This nonsectarian character is further suggested by Stone's indictment of two Methodist attendants at McLean who were members of Henry Burchstead Skinner's church in Boston: Mary Brigham and Relief Barber. Despite being evangelicals, both women had refused to engage with Stone in her "pathological" religious obsessions. Barber dismissed Stone's utterances as "silly fancies," and Brigham simply "made me no reply."<sup>64</sup>

The reticence of these two attendants is one of several examples of the use of moral treatment in Stone's writings. As an approach to therapy which emphasized social and psychological (as opposed to pharmacological and mechanical) interventions, moral treatment dominated American psychological medicine in the first half of the nineteenth century. From the therapeutic standpoint, these measures aimed to recondition the patient for a normal life outside the asylum.<sup>65</sup> Yet, as Foucault and others have observed, the "normal" behaviors that it aimed to produce were those characterized by bourgeois values.<sup>66</sup> Such values were incommensurable with those that had shaped Elizabeth Stone since her evangelical conversion; and it is in the disjunction between these two value systems that we can understand McLean to have been a place of persecution for her.

Two features of the moral treatment regimen at McLean are particularly illuminating: the asylum entertainments and the daily religious services. Regarding the former, Bell wrote in an 1837 annual report that "[t]he usual means of amusing and interesting patients in similar Asylums, such as cards, chess, bowling,

63. Note the Scottish asylum physician Alexander Morison's (1779–1866) discussion of such "disorders" in his *Cases of Mental Disease with Practical Observations on the Medical Treatment* (London: Longman & Co. and S. Highley and Edinburgh: MacLachlan & Stewart, 1828), 69–77.

64. Stone, *Sketch*, 21–22. The first quotation is attributed to the "supervisor," who is identified as Miss Barber in Stone, *Remarks*, 11.

65. Roy Porter, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (London: The Athlone Press, 1987), 222–28.

66. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 241–278; see also Andrew T. Scull, "Moral Treatment Reconsidered: Some Sociological Comments on an Episode in the History of British Psychiatry," *Psychological Medicine* 9, no. 3 (1979): 428.

reading, writing, newspapers, music, &c. are constantly in use."<sup>67</sup> Such entertainments were meant to adapt patients to normal social intercourse and distract them from their monomaniacal fixations. Yet Stone viewed worldly entertainments such as "cards, . . . chequers, dice, &c." as anathema.<sup>68</sup> Their centrality to asylum life could only be intended "to bring me back into a state of feelings to engage in all the corruption of this world again."<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the entertainments, there was the issue of the daily religious services. Each evening, Bell himself convened a service for the patients and attendants, which, according to his annual report for 1839 (the year before Stone was admitted), "consist[ed] in reading a portion of the sacred writings, some proper religious reflections, [and] a prayer with the singing of two psalms or hymns."<sup>70</sup> Echoing the medical wisdom of his profession, Bell praised these services as "a means of calling into action the self-respect and self-control of the alienated mind." Since they were "regarded as a privilege not readily to be forfeited," the threat of prohibiting attendance was a means of generating good behavior throughout the day.<sup>71</sup>

Religious observance within the asylum was thus emphatically a tool of therapy rather than an end in itself. Its effect was to produce, if only temporarily, "the perfect silence and decorum of deportment" that was indicative of a sane mind.<sup>72</sup> The therapeutic telos of Bell's services, however, was not lost on Stone: "the principle object [of these services] seems to be to see each other, rather than the proper worship of God."<sup>73</sup> Their aim, in other words, was to cultivate a form of piety that was aligned with the social norms and modes of communal life that were likewise implicit within the asylum entertainments. For Stone, the "worldly" orientation of these services was as much an affront to her religious identity as was the "unqualified language" that assaulted her ears when her fellow inmates played cards.<sup>74</sup>

67. Luther V. Bell, "Twentieth Annual Report of the Physician and Superintendent of the McLean Asylum for the Insane, to the Trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital," *Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital, for the Year 1837* (Boston: Press of James Loring, 1838), 23.

68. Stone, *Remarks*, 10.

69. *Ibid.*, 18.

70. Luther V. Bell, "Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Physician and Superintendent of the McLean Asylum for the Insane, to the Trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital," *Annual Report to the Board of Trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital, for the Year 1839* (Boston: John H. Eastburn, Printer, 1840), 24.

71. Bell, "Twentieth Annual Report," 23–24.

72. *Ibid.*, 23.

73. Stone, *Remarks*, 15.

74. Stone, *Sketch*, 24.

### *Challenging the Binary*

Implicit within McLean's therapeutic agenda was a particular vision of how the religious self should relate to a society characterized by religious sectarianism and revivalist fervor. It is thus not unreasonable to characterize the asylum as a kind of spiritual "Bastille" for a person such as Stone whose worldview and self-understanding conflicted with this vision.

Yet in seeking to explain her spiritual death, Stone emphasized the medical aspects of her treatment—in particular, the drugs she had been forced to take—more than the moral treatment methods described above. The physician's drugs, she claimed, had caused violent convulsions and a permanent flattening of affect. Although we lack evidence concerning the precise nature of the medicines used at McLean, we do know of cases in which Bell experimented with different drugs.<sup>75</sup> And, in any case, Stone herself insisted that drugs were administered to patients twice per day, and that the purpose of these "nauseous [sic] medicines" was the same as that of the asylum entertainments: "to bring the mind to the [worldly] level of their [the physicians'] own."<sup>76</sup>

In theorizing about the precise way in which these drugs had affected her spiritual self, Stone implicitly challenged the binary conceptualization of "true" religion and pathology which, as we have seen, provided the rationale for the confinement of religious deviants. The asylum medicines, Stone claimed, had caused damage to "the back part of my head"—the location of the part of the brain responsible for the "faculties of affection."<sup>77</sup> Her capacity for piety had thus been destroyed; she no longer loved God, and "had lost all idea of holiness."<sup>78</sup> The implications were eternal. She had lost her salvation and was now destined for hell.<sup>79</sup>

This self-diagnosis exhibits a striking convergence of anatomical and theological concepts. Her reference to the "faculties of affection" at the rear of her skull was a concept drawn from phrenology—the anatomical theory which linked human psychological traits to physical locations of the brain, and which correlated "domestic properties," such as philoprogenitiveness and amateness, with the back part of the head.<sup>80</sup> Stone seems to have

75. S. B. Sutton, *Crossroads in Psychiatry: A History of McLean Hospital* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1986), 72.

76. Stone, *Remarks*, 11; Stone, *Exposing*, 14.

77. Stone, *Sketch*, 39.

78. *Ibid.*, 31.

79. Stone, *Sketch*, 41; Stone, *Remarks*, 4–5.

80. See Orson S. Fowler and Lorenzo N. Fowler, *Phrenology Proved, Illustrated, and Applied, Accompanied by a Chart* (New York: printed by W. H. Colyer, 1837),

acquired these ideas from the phrenologists, mesmerists, and clairvoyants whom she consulted after her release from McLean.<sup>81</sup>

Yet, for Stone, this diagnosis was simultaneously spiritual. Damage to that specific part of her brain had destroyed the religious affections which, according to Jonathan Edwards's influential paradigm, were the distinguishing marks of Christian election. Without love of God ("a love to divine things," in Edwards's own words, "for the beauty and sweetness of their moral excellency"), she must be one of the damned.<sup>82</sup>

Such creative synthesis—grounded, as it was, in Stone's own experience as an asylum patient—expressed the inextricably spiritual nature of psychological medicine. No aspect of asylum treatment, from its social dimensions to its pharmacological interventions, could be viewed in isolation from the individual's relationship to their Creator. Any institution that ignored or violated this connection, Stone implied, did so at the eternal peril of the patient. Nowhere was this point expressed more profoundly than in the comparison Stone drew between her experiences at McLean and the sufferings of Christ on the cross. As with Stone, Jesus's words and actions had been "medicalized" as symptoms of madness.<sup>83</sup> And, like Stone, Christ had been "given, by ecclesiastical and civil power, into the hands of the medical faculty to be experimented upon." The setting of Christ's crucifixion was thus particularly significant: As the Son had been alienated from the Father at "Golgotha, or the place of the skull," she too was alienated from God through damage to her skull in one of Massachusetts's "Golgotha palaces."<sup>84</sup>

## Stone's Legacy in Law

Our analysis of Stone's life and writings has focused on two parts of the diabolical trinity about which she wrote in *The American Godhead*—the "ordained ministry" and the "medical faculty." We have argued that Stone's diagnosis as a religious lunatic and her confinement at McLean point, if not to a nefarious cabal of medical and clerical authorities, then to a fraught social and religious environment within which families and religious communities

46; Orson S. Fowler, *Fowler's Practical Phrenology: Giving A Concise Elementary View of Phrenology* (Philadelphia: O. S. Fowler and New York: L. N. Fowler, Clinton Hall, 1840), 54.

81. Stone, *Sketch*, 39–42.

82. Edwards, *Religious Affections*, WJEO, 240; Stone, *Sketch*, 33.

83. See Mark 3:21.

84. Stone, *American Godhead*, 28–29.

looked to insane asylums for help. In particular, such institutions served as means of relieving internal tensions that arose from the sectarian and “enthusiastic” character of early-nineteenth-century American religious life. Moreover, they provided evangelical ministers with a means of safeguarding the reputations of their own communities. In addition to these historical observations, we have also illustrated how Stone herself offers rich perspectives on the social, religious, and medical currents of her time. Her writings on asylum medicine, for example, express a potent critique of models of caregiving which ignore the complexities of human interiority.

To conclude this article, we address Stone’s treatment of the third “person” of the “Devil’s Godhead.” What role did the “legal or law power” play in Stone’s experience? A brief look at Stone’s reflections on this matter will help us appreciate her legacy in wider cultural debates about lunacy law and freedom of religious expression.

Stone’s thinking on the constitutional, or broadly political, aspects of religious freedom showed significant development after the sixteen-year interval between her second (1843) and third (1859) books. In her third, she located the persecution of nineteenth-century American Christians within a broader historical framework, arguing that asylums violated the central principles of the young republic—principles that her mother’s fourth great-grandfather, John Stodder (d. 1661), had “bequeath[ed]” to his descendants when he had fled from England to Massachusetts as a religious dissenter.<sup>85</sup> In her fourth book, written at the time of the onset of the American Civil War (1861), she used the issue of slavery as a metaphor for the treatment of alleged lunatics in the American North. A second civil war, she suggested, might be required to liberate *them*.<sup>86</sup>

This political turn in Stone’s writing was influenced not only by the nation’s civil conflict, but also by biographical developments. Stone had recently engaged in a legal dispute involving a friend, E. A. Andrews, whose husband had threatened her with asylum confinement because of her association with Stone. Confronting the threat directly, the women consulted the Governor of Massachusetts, Nathaniel P. Banks (1816–94), who read to them a section of the state’s Revised Statutes (1860) stipulating that a public trial,

85. Stone, *Exposing*, 21. See Francis Russell Stoddard, Jr., *The Stoddard Family: Being an Account of Some of the Descendants of John Stodder of Hingham, Massachusetts Colony* (New York: The Trow Press, 1912), 13–30.

86. See Stone, *American Godhead*, 32–3. See also Stone, *Exposing*, 21, 31.

with a jury of six men, was required to confine an alleged lunatic.<sup>87</sup> This measure assured the women that Andrews's husband could not confine her without due process, as would have been possible in some other states in this period.<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless, for Stone, these assurances fell short of the unqualified protection of religious liberty guaranteed by the US Constitution. State laws requiring jury trials mattered little when families, like her own, could simply circumvent the legal process with subterfuge. (In Stone's own case, she had been deceived by her brother Stephen into voluntarily admitting herself at McLean.)<sup>89</sup> Once the individual had been confined, their legal options were scarce. Stone was only released when one of her brothers who had had no involvement with her confinement visited her and perceived the injustice of her situation.<sup>90</sup> Until that point, she had been a prisoner—a victim of religious persecution in a country that had been a religious refuge for her ancestors.

Stone's victimization by the "legal power" was thus just as subtle and indirect as was her victimization by the clerical and medical powers. Certainly, she had not been targeted by lunacy laws aiming to round up and imprison holy fools. Rather, the sins of Massachusetts's legal system were those of omission. The law had failed to protect Stone from the repressive actions of her family members, and from the trauma of asylum confinement and treatment. Similarly, her siblings had failed to care for her as their sister, and Millerite ministers had failed to care for her as their co-religionist.

Yet, despite her incarceration, Stone has not been subjected to permanent silence. By writing narratives, she thrust herself into the public debates of her time about freedom of religious expression, lunacy law, and the ethics of asylum confinement. It was at a camp meeting that Henry Burchstead Skinner stumbled upon her first book, and the fact that he took the trouble to dispute its

87. *The General Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: Revised by Commissioners Appointed Under a Resolve of February 16, 1855, Amended by the Legislature, and Passed December 28, 1859* (Boston: William White, Printer to the State, 1860), 408.

88. For example, see the *General Laws of the State of Illinois, Passed by the Seventeenth General Assembly, at the Session Commencing January 6, 1851* (Springfield, IL, 1851), 98. For Andrews's account of this episode, see Stone, *American Godhead*, 15–20.

89. According to Stone, her brother had claimed that McLean was "a young ladies' boarding place" superintended by "a pious man." It was not until the morning after her first night that she understood that McLean was an insane asylum. Stone, *Sketch*, 19–23; quotations on p. 19.

90. Stone, *Sketch*, 32.

claims shows that her writing was not without impact.<sup>91</sup> Stone was one of many female asylum patients in this period to engage in this literary form of advocacy. Personal narratives, as Trina Larson has observed, bore the rhetorical advantage of engendering empathy among their readers and could motivate those who were in positions of direct influence to take political action.<sup>92</sup> Stone's writings were thus part of a groundswell of critique that helped stimulate the reforms in lunacy law in her own time and that anticipated the anti-psychiatry movement of the mid-twentieth century. While Stone's contributions to these developments have been overshadowed by the activism of more prominent figures, such as Elizabeth Packard (1816–97), her own words—as exemplified in the closing lines of *The American Godhead*—retain a reforming (and hopeful) spirit even today.

I am happy now, and shall be then,  
When all my battles have an end,  
And I in the chariot of his love,  
Am carried to mansions above.<sup>93</sup>

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91. Stone, *Remarks*, 18.

92. Trina Larson, "National Encounters and Institutional States of Exception: The US Insane Asylum and the First-Person Reform Writing of Mad Women, 1844–1897" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2012), 94–118.

93. Stone, *American Godhead*, 38.