

WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND WRONGS:
NINETEENTH CENTURY CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSES
TO SARAH AND ANGELINA GRIMKE

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During the last days of May in 1837, Sarah and Angelina Grimké arrived in the city of Boston to begin a series of Abolition Lectures in Eastern Massachusetts.¹ Even though they had grown up in the heart of the southern aristocracy, the sisters were moved to become part of the Quaker church, and get involved in the anti-slavery movement. In the late 1820's, they had left their home in South Carolina and settled in Philadelphia where they joined the Female anti-slavery society.² Through communication with leading abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, the Grimkés were encouraged to devote themselves full-time to the cause. At first their participation was limited to applying their considerable literary skills to writing letters and brief pamphlets,³ but eventually, they were persuaded to move to New York where they began to lecture and lead discussion groups of other women.

During this stay in New York, the Grimké's talents for persuasive speech became well known. As their fame grew, so did their alienation from the orthodoxy of Quaker faith. Although many of the Friends were active in the Abolition movement, the sisters had long been aggravated by instances of race prejudice and segregation in Northern Quaker meetings. They had also grown tired of the constant criticism and restriction of their actions and words which the Friends hierarchy imposed.⁴ Eventually, their negative feelings led to a virtual severing of their Quaker ties, and a total alliance with the American Anti-Slavery Society which was headquartered in New York City.

In mid-May of 1837, the sisters concluded their New York oratory careers by participating in the first Anti-Slavery

Convention of American Women. At this meeting, both sisters delivered impassioned speeches on both their Abolitionist convictions, and the importance of womens involvement in the fight for emancipation. The Grimké's enthusiasm for public speaking on the subject led to heated debates among the women attending. Some delegates maintained that it was improper for women to become directly involved in this kind of political discussion, but the Grimké's held fast to their conviction that white women who were prevented from expressing their opinion were not much better off than black slaves.

The denial of our duty to act in this case is a denial of our right to act; and if we have no right to act, then may we well be termed 'the white slaves of the North,' for like our brethren in⁵ bonds, we must seal our lips in silence and despair.

This radical call for freedom of speech for women, was coupled with continuing demands for an end to racial prejudice among Abolitionists in the North. Sarah Grimké also engaged in a very frank discussion of the plight of black women who were abused by slaveholders. This combination of issues made the sisters' message a very potent one. That it might even be called explosive was demonstrated when they left New York to begin a speaking tour in New England.

II

The situation of women in the Massachusetts Congregational Church had always been a controversial issue. From the beginning, there was a sense that women were equal partners in the "Holy Experiment", the migration from the oppression of Anglican England to the religious freedom of the colonies.

However, once the struggle of faith and will to establish a new community gave way to an organized and structured church, the import of this religious freedom for women was in doubt. The classic example of a woman stifled by the fledgling authority was Anne Hutchinson who in the 1630's established a movement on the basis of her own "inner light" which ran at odds with the teaching of "God's Word" by the Puritan preachers.⁶ She was eventually tried for violating the biblical injunction against women speaking in public. Hutchinson based her defense on the claim that she was speaking under the influence of the Spirit--exercising her gift of prophesy--, and on Paul's "rule of the new creature" found in Gal 3:28.⁷ This argument did not convince the judges, and she was exiled from the colony.

When the Grimké's came to Massachusetts, two hundred years later, opinion had changed very little in regard to woman's role in society. An 1832 sermon by Reverend Joseph Richardson provides a telling summary.

They [women] are not to mingle in the fierce contests of strife and war and confusion. The delicacy of their nature forbids them. Even in aid of the holy causes of religion, in which they have an interest as high as have the other sex, their influence will be most salutary and efficient in their appropriate sphere.

It is possible that Richardson's remarks are written in response to the public lecturing of another female who scandalized American church and society--Fanny Wright. A few years earlier, this woman had created a major stir when she traveled about offering talks on "free thought, a system of public education for all children, equal rights for women and a ten-hour day for the workingman."⁹ In spite of (or perhaps because of) large

crowds that attended her speeches, she was condemned by the clergy and much of the media.

Her fame and misapplied talents attracted crowded audiences.... The dogmas inculcated by this fallen and degraded fair one, if acted upon by the community would produce the destruction of religion, morals, law and equity,¹⁰ and result in savage anarchy and confusion.

Regardless of whether Richardson was referring to Fanny Wright in his comments, his words do reveal an attitude of hostility toward women who speak in public. This hostility was soon to be felt by the Grimke's as they began their New England Lecture series.

The sisters spent their first several days in Boston visiting with local heads of the Abolition movement. After several smaller gatherings, Angelina began their formal lecturing with an address to over 400 women at the Female Anti-Slavery Society.¹¹ The response to their speaking was overwhelming, and crowds began to grow. The sisters spoke of a different attitude in the Boston area: "in New York we were allowed to sit and do nothing--here invitations to labor press in from all sides."¹² From all accounts, the Grimkes made the most of the invitations which were given to them.

Late in June, they began a tour of Essex, Middlesex, and Worcester counties; including a meeting at Lynn where they attracted their "first large mixed audience."¹³ At Salem, they spoke several times with good success, and at Amesbury they made a good showing in debates against two men who challenged them on the question "does the Bible sanction American slavery?"¹⁴ The sisters encountered a crowd of 1500 people

in the mill town of Lowell, and they continued to be amazed at the response to their message.

It is wonderful how the way has been opened for us to address mixed audiences, for most sects here are greatly opposed to public speaking for women, but curiosity and real interest in the antislavery cause...induce the attendance at our meetings.... Our compass of voice has astonished us, for we can fill a house containing 1000¹⁵ present with ease. We feel that the Lord is with us.

In this quote Angelina offers three possible explanations for the huge number of people that attended their lectures. In the first place, the curiosity factor was indeed great. Two renowned women speaking in public, complete with southern accents, must have been a great drawing card. On the other hand, these were not the first women Abolitionists to speak in the area since the Massachusetts "Female Anti-Slavery Society had accustomed reformers to seeing women participating in public meetings."¹⁶ The second possible reason, "real interest in the antislavery cause," is also realistic, although there were many fine abolitionist speakers in the area at the time. The most interesting answer which Angelina provides is the thought that "the Lord is with us." In the tradition of Ann Hutchinson and others, the Grimké's were certain that their message of freedom for all Americans was given and supported by God. Other people in Massachusetts were not so convinced.

III

Given the attention that Sarah and Angelina received from the public, it is not surprising that they were perceived

negatively by certain segments of the society. Two Newspaper blurbs show how derogatory this perception could be:

why are all the old hens abolitionists? Because not being able to obtain husbands they think they may stand some chance for a negro, if they can only make amalgamation fashionable.

The Misses Grimké have made speeches, wrote pamphlets, exhibited themselves in public, etc. for a long time, but they have not found husbands yet. We suspect that they would prefer white children to black under certain circumstances, after all.

Response from the clergy may have lacked this sensational tone, but it was no less adamant in rejecting the Grimke's right to give public lectures.

After the Grimké's had been in Massachusetts for only three weeks, ministers of the Congregational General Association held their annual meeting in the town of Brookfield. On June 27, 1837 they adjourned their meeting and issued a Pastoral letter to the Congregational Churches under their care. This letter was intended to be a direct response to what was seen as improprieties in the Abolition movement, especially to the Grimké's. The first section of the letter stated that no issue for debate should be forced upon any pastor or church. The second spoke against the practice of "encouraging lecturers or preachers on certain topics of reform to present to present their subjects within the parochial limits of settled pastors without their consent."¹⁸ This injunction was obviously directed toward itinerent Abolitionist lecturers, and those who supported them, but it was the third section that addressed the activities of the Grimké sisters.

We invite your attention to the dangers which at present seem to threaten the female character with

wide spread and permanent injury.

The appropriate duties and influence of women, are clearly stated in the New Testament. Those duties and that influence are unobtrusive and private, but the sources of mighty power. When the mild, dependent, softening influence of woman upon the sternness of man's opinions is fully exercised, society feels the effects of it in a thousand forms. The power of woman is in her dependence, flowing from the consciousness of that weakness which God has given her for her protection and which keeps her in those departments of life that form the character of individuals and of the nation. There are social influences which females use in promoting piety and the great objects of christian benevolence, which we cannot too highly commend. We appreciate the unostentatious prayers and efforts of woman, in advancing the cause of religion at home and abroad:--in Sabbath schools, in leading religious inquirers to their pastor for instruction, and in all such associated effort as becomes the modesty of her sex; and earnestly hope that she may abound more and more in these labours of piety and love. But when she assumes the place and tone of a man as a public reformer, our care and protection of her seem unnecessary, we put ourselves in self defence against her, she yields the power which God has given her for protection, and her character becomes unnatural. If the vine, whose strength and beauty is to lean upon the trellis work and half conceal its clusters, thinks to assume the independence and the overshadowing nature of the elm, it will not only cease to bear fruit, but fall in shame and dishonour into the dust.

We cannot, therefore, but regret the mistaken conduct of those who encourage females to bear and obtrusive and ostentatious part in measures of reform, and countenance any of that sex who so far forget themselves as to itinerate in the character of public lecturers and teachers.

We especially deplore the intimate acquaintance and promiscuous conversation of females with regard to things "which ought not to be named;" by which that modesty and delicacy which is the charm of domestic life, and which constitute the true influence of women in society are consumed, and the way opened, as we apprehend, for degeneracy and ruin. We say these things, not to discourage proper influences against sin, but to secure such reformation as we believe is scriptural and will be permanent.

As a doctrine for the oppression of womankind, this document is lacking very little. It begins with biblical proof for the position that a woman's only influence in the world should be

"mild, dependant, and softening." It is not said where this proof is taken from, but the description certainly fits well with the ideal roll of women in a male dominated church society. The Pastoral letter creates a tone of opposition between the sexes ("we put ourselves in self defence against her") which is certainly not part of the biblical scheme of things. The writers are definitely afraid of losing their control over women in the society ("but when she assumes the place and tone of a man as public reformer our care and protection of her seem unnecessary"). The image of woman as the delicate vine opposed to man as the mighty elm tree gives a very poetic picture of the vast separation of the sexes in 19th century America. The Grimké's believed that God was calling them to deliver their message of emancipation, but the clergy of the Massachusetts Congregational General Association did not hear the message, rather they condemned the sisters for misusing the power which God had given them, and having "unnatural character."

There were other negative responses from within the ranks of Congregationalism. A sermon by Reverend Parsons Cooke--"Female Preaching: Unlawful and Inexpedient"--was preached in Lynn, and published sometime in August of 1837. Cooke allows that women are allowed to write pamphlets and articles in favor of social reform, but that public speaking is beyond the woman's "sphere."

To a well balanced mind there is something revolting in the spectacle of a woman fitted by nature for great usefulness in her proper sphere, intruding upon the theatres of masculine ambition, trampling under foot the commands of God, and the decencies of her sex, under a mistaken zeal for God, and appealing to the curiosity of the public, and to the love for

the gratification, which many find in seeing a woman disgrace herself, for the sake of drawing after her listening crowds, and being intoxicated by their applauses.

Rev. Cooke calls the sister's zeal "mistaken," and explains the success of their preaching by "the curiosity of the public." He claims that no amount of talent displayed in female preaching can annul a divine prohibition, and make it desirable in the sight of God or man for a woman to undertake to edify a mixed assembly. It is certainly not desirable in the sight of man (or specifically males) at that time, but is it up to anyone to say what is desirable in the sight of God?

Another sermon from 1838, also tries to summarize the "biblical" teachings on women:

Thus if language has any definitive meaning, the Bible seems clearly to teach that men should always set at the helm, to lead public sentiment and control public movements; while woman was to move in another but not less important or honorable sphere, where she was to put forth the peculiar and powerful influences of her personal virtues and acquirements.²¹

Quotes like this one lead to the question: why were the clergy so concerned about the success of the sisters preaching? There are many answers to that question including the fact that the Anti-Slavery cause was not universally popular in the North.²² It is also beyond a doubt that the clergy who turned to the Scriptures actually found enough evidence to support their sexist opinions.²³ It appears to be evident, however, that there was a certain amount of self interest involved in the clergy's attempt to silence the Grimké's and other women. There must have been at least a smattering of jealousy felt when these women came to town and began to pack

people into the meeting houses. After all a local preacher could only put up with so much competition in his town. One final sermon quote supports this last explanation:

urge them over the line which scripture has drawn, convince them it is their duty or their privilege to teach and pray in meetings composed of both sexes, and what Bible proof or right have you to prevent their taking full possession of the christian ministry.²⁴

Negative response to the Grimké's mission also came from within the Abolitionist camp. On August 18th, the Boston Recorder published an "Appeal of the Abolitionists of Andover Theological Seminary," including a paragraph which "discountenanced and condemned as improper and unwise" the "Public lectures of Females."²⁵ The article explicitly states that the Abolitionists are not doubting the principles or influence of the Grimké's (not mentioned by name) work, but that they could not "sufficiently regret that its influence is not confined to a sphere of labor which would advance rather than prejudice so greatly the cause of emancipation."

It is not surprising that once the clergy denounced the work that other Abolitionists began to get nervous about the impact of the sisters tour. In spite of the fact that they were filling meeting houses, supporters of the movement worried about the long term effect of their speaking in public. This worry was exacerbated when the sisters began to reply to the charges which the Congregational clergy and others had made. In separate series of articles Angelina and Sarah wrote forcefully about the need for women to be allowed to speak freely on issues of public concern.²⁶ Suddenly the atmosphere which had been

so accepting to begin with became hostile, at least at the official clerical level. Even Theodore Weld, the Grimké's long time supporter would infuriate them with requests to tone down their response to the Pastoral Letter and other challenges to their rights as women.²⁷

Not everyone had a negative reaction to these women speaking in public. William Lloyd Garrison published supportive reports of their work in the Liberator, and a radical Congregational minister from Connecticut, Henry Clarke Wright, used the same forum to publicize the lectures which he helped to arrange for the Grimkés.²⁸ Some very creative response came from two area Abolitionists. The Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, wrote a piece mocking the pastoral letter, as did Maria Weston Chapman, a leading Boston Anti-Slavery advocate. Both poems are appended to this paper, but Mrs. Chapman's sarcasm deserves quotation in part.

Our patriot fathers, of eloquent fame,
 Waged war against tangible forms;
 Aye, their foes were men--and if ours were the same,
We might speedily quiet their storms;
 But, Ah! their descendants enjoy not such bliss--
 The assumptions of Britain were nothing to this.

Could we but array all our force in the field,
 We'd teach these usurpers of power
 That their bodily safety demands they should yield,
 And in the presence of manhood should cower;
 But, alas! for our tethered and impotent state,
 Chained₂₉ by the notions of knighthood--we can but
 debate.

It should be noted that Whittier balanced off his refutation of the Pastoral Letter with an appeal to the sisters to redirect their concern for the Woman's Rights Issue. "The Massachusetts Congregational Association can do you no harm if you do not

allow its splenetic and idle manifesto to divert your attention from the great and holy purpose of your souls."³⁰

In spite of discouragement on several fronts, the Grimké sisters refused to be diverted from their chosen task.

We have given great offense on account of our womanhood, which seems to be as objectionable as our abolitionism. The whole land seems aroused to discussion on the province of woman, and I am glad of it. We are willing to bear the brunt of the storm, if we can only be the means of making a break in that wall of public opinion which lies right in the way of woman's rights, true dignity, honor and usefulness.³¹

The sisters continued their Massachusetts tour until October when ill health forced both of them into semi-retirement. But even in a short time, they had made a distinctive mark on the thought and society of the area. As Abolitionists and pioneering advocates of women's rights, Sarah and Angelina Grimké helped to raise the collective consciousness of Boston and all New England.

IV

In many ways, the struggle for recognition of women's rights was a secondary issue for the Grimké's. It was almost forced upon them by the Pastoral Letter, and other measures taken in response to their lecturing. The fact that it became such an issue raises several questions for the modern churchperson who studies the situation.

In the first place, at a time when more and more women are devoting themselves to careers in Christian ministry, people in

the church, and especially male ministers must be open to the message that women have to offer. Ours is a time in which the church is in need of all qualified leaders, and it is a shame if certain people are excluded because of gender or race. The longstanding biases against women and non whites are slowly beginning to be dissolved in certain segments of our society, churches must be leaders and not laggards in this effort to provide what Angelina Grimké called "woman's rights, true dignity honor and usefulness."

Secondly, Congregationalists need to look at this incident and learn a lesson about their polity. There is an inherent right for any Congregationalist, clergy or not, to speak her or his mind on a given social issue. However, when a group of clergy sees fit to issue a statement like the Pastoral Letter, offering a blanket condemnation of a person's or persons' actions, the right of any Congregationalist to think freely is in jeopardy. John Greenleaf Whittier was correct when he drew parallels between the Pastoral Letter, and a Papal Bull.

A "Pastoral Letter," grave and dull--
 Alas! in hoof and horns and features,
 How different is your Brookfield bull,
 From him who bellows from St. Peter's!

Whatever the motivation behind the Pastoral Letter and similar documents, it cannot be justified in a church where individual conscience is held in high esteem.

The Congregational responses to the Grimkés, discussed in this paper are not a chapter of our history to be proud of, but rather to learn from. They highlight a 19th century attitude towards women which has no place in the Congregational Church of

the 20th century.

ENDNOTES

1. Full accounts of the lives of the Grimké sisters can be found in Gerda Lerner, The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Pioneers for Woman's rights and Abolition (New York: Schocken, 1971); Catherine H. Birney, Sarah and Angelina Grimké: The First American Women Advocates of Abolition and Woman's Rights (Boston: Lee & Sheppard, 1885; Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1969); Keith E. Melder, "Forerunners of Freedom: The Grimké Sisters in Massachusetts, Essex Institute Historical Collections 103 (1967).
2. It was Sarah who first left the Episcopal Church and joined the Society of Friends. Angelina preceded her sister in becoming involved in the Female Anti-Slavery Society. Melder, "Grimké Sisters," 224.
3. Angelina's first pamphlet, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South," was completed in 1836. Melder, "Grimké Sisters," 224.
4. Lerner (Grimké Sisters, 132-45) gives a good description of the Grimké's gradual separation from the Friends, including an occasion in 1836 when an elder interrupted Angelina while she was speaking at meeting (142).
5. Angelina Grimké An Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States: Issued by an Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women & Held by Adjournment from the 9th to the 12th of May, 1837 (1st ed.; New York, W. S. Dorr, 1837). Cited in Lerner, Grimké Sisters, 162.
6. Gaius Glenn Atkins and Frederick L. Fagley, A History of American Congregationalism (Boston; Pilgrim, 1942) 89. See also Mary Maples Dunn "Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period," American Quarterly 30 (1978) 585-87.
7. Dunn, "Saints and Sisters," 586.
8. Sermon on April 22, 1832 (Hingham MA; Jesidiah Farmer, 1833) 10-11.
9. Lerner, Grimké Sisters, 94.
10. From the Allegeny Democrat cited in Ibid., 95. Eight years after Wright had returned to England, Reverend Parsons Cooke decried her influence in a sermon ("Female Preaching: Unlawful and Inexpedient" [Lynn, MA: James R. Newhall, 1837] 17). A new book on Fanny Wright has just been released by Harvard University Press; Celia Morris Eckhardt, Fanny Wright: Rebel in America.
11. Lerner, Grimké Sisters, 165.
12. Angelina Grimké to Jane Smith, May 29, 1837, MS, Weld-Grimké Papers, Clements Library. Cited in Melder, Grimké Sisters, 228.

13. Melder, Grimké Sisters, 230.
14. Ibid., 231.
15. Angelina Grimké to Jane Smith, June 26, 1837, Weld MSS. Cited in Lerner Grimké Sisters, 169.
16. Ibid., 166. Melder (Grimké Sisters, 228-29) spends a good deal of time discussing why the Grimké mission succeeded. He calls it a "perfect conjunction of persons and place" (228).
17. The Boston Morning Post, August 15, 1837 and August 25, 1837; first citation reprinted from the New Hampshire Patriot. Cited in Lerner, Grimké Sisters, 146, 205.
18. Minutes and Records of the General Association of Massachusetts, (1837) 20. Reprinted in the Boston Recorder, XXII (July 14, 1837) 109-110.
19. Ibid.
20. Cooke, "Female Preaching," 21. Cooke specifically mentions the infamous Fanny Wright in this context (see n. 10). Although he does not name the Grimkés, it is clear that the timing and topic of his message must have been directed toward them.
21. Rev. Hubbard Winslow, "The Appropriate Sphere of Woman" (Boston: T. M. Carter, 1838) 17.
22. Lerner (Grimké Sisters, 170-71) reports that "New England churches had been strong supporters of the old Colonization Society," and that as early as 1834, the Congregationalist ministers in Boston had voted to refuse to read notices of abolitionist meetings from the pulpit.
23. For a recent modern evaluation of the New Testament evidence see Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her (New York: Crossroads, 1983).
24. Rev. H. B. Chapin, "Women forbidden to speak in the Church," (Northampton: John Metcalf, 1837).
25. Boston Recorder, XXII (August 18, 1837).
26. Angelina Girmké, Letters to Catherine E. Beecher, in Reply to an Essay on Slavery and Abolitionism, Addressed to A. E. Grimke (Boston, 1838), (first published as a serial in the Liberator in August of 1837). Sarah Grimké, "Province of Woman: The Pastoral Letter," reprinted from the New England Spectator in the Liberator (October 6, 1837); and "Social Intercourses of the Sexes," ibid., (January 12, 1838). Selections of all of these can be found in Aileen S. Kraditor, ed., Up From the Pedestal: Selected Writings in the History of American Feminism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968) 53-66.

27. Weld wrote a serious letter suggesting that the sisters leave the "lesser work"--of Women's Rights-- to others and concentrate on their Anti-Slavery message (Weld MSS, August 15, 1837). The sisters response were angered by his advice and the ensuing argument led to a temporary split between Weld and the Grimkés.

28. Wright is a fascinating character who was one of the most free thinking Abolitionists. His autobiography (Human Life: My Individual Experience as a Child, a Youth, and a Man [Boston: Bela Marsh, 1849]) does not cover this period, but his extensive diary is available in the archives of Houghton and Boston Public Libraries. See Melder, Grimké Sisters, 227-28 and notes.

29. Both poems were included in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, ed., History of Woman Suffrage (6 vols.; New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881-1922) 80-86.

30. Letter to Sarah and Angelina Grimké (August 14, 1837); Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké: 1822-1844 (2 vols.; New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1934) 1. 423-24.

31. Angelina Grimké, cited in Lerner, Grimké Sisters, 183.

Mrs. CHAPMAN'S POEM.

"THE TIMES THAT TRY MEN'S SOULS."

Confusion has seized us, and all things go wrong,
The women have leaped from "their spheres,"
And, instead of fixed stars, shoot as comets along,
And are setting the world by the ears!
In courses erratic they're wheeling through space,
In brainless confusion and meaningless chase.

In vain do our knowing ones try to compute
Their return to the orbit designed;
They're glanced at a moment, then onward they shoot,
And are neither "to hold nor to bind;"
So freely they move in their chosen ellipse,
The "Lords of Creation" do fear an eclipse.

They've taken a notion to speak for themselves,
And are wielding the tongue and the pen;
They've mounted the rostrum; the termagant elves,
And—oh horrid!—are talking to men!
With faces unblanched in our presence they come
To harangue us, they say, in behalf of the dumb.

They insist on their right to petition and pray,
That St. Paul, in Corinthians, has given them rules
For appearing in public; despite what those say
Whom we've trained to instruct them in schools;
But vain such instructions, if women may scan
And quote texts of Scripture to favor their plan.

Our grandmothers' learning consisted of yore
In spreading their generous boards;
In twisting the distaff, or mopping the floor,
And obeying the will of their lords.
Now, misses may reason, and think, and debate,
Till unquestioned submission is quite out of date.

Our clergy have preached on the sin and the shame
Of woman, when out of "her sphere,"
And labored *divinely* to ruin her fame,
And shorten this horrid career;
But for spiritual guidance no longer they look
To Fulson, or Winslow, or learned Parson Cook.

Our wise men have tried to exorcise in vain
The turbulent spirits abroad;
As well might we deal with the fetterless main,
Or conquer ethereal essence with sword;
Like the devils of Milton, they rise from each blow,
With spirit unbroken, insulting the foe.

Our patriot fathers, of eloquent fame,
Waged war against tangible forms;
Aye, *their* foes were men—and if ours were the same,
We might speedily quiet their storms;
But, ah! their descendants enjoy not such bliss—
The assumptions of Britain were nothing to this.

Could we but array all our force in the field,
We'd teach these usurpers of power
That their bodily safety demands they should yield,
And in the presence of manhood should cower;
But, alas! for our tethered and impotent state,
Chained by notions of knighthood—we can but debate.

Oh! shade of the prophet Mahomet, arise!
Place woman again in "her sphere,"
And teach that her soul was not born for the skies,
But to flutter a brief moment here.
This doctrine of Jesus, as preached up by Paul,
If embraced in its spirit, will ruin us all.

—Lords of Creation.

THE PASTORAL LETTER.

So, this is all—the utmost reach
Of priestly power the mind to fetter?
When hymns think—when women preach—
A war of words—a "Pastoral Letter!"
Now, shame upon ye, parish Popes!
Was it thus with those, your predecessors,
Who sated with racks, and fire, and ropes
Their loving-kindness to transgressors?

A "Pastoral Letter," grave and dull—
Alas! in hoof and horns and features,
How different is your Brookfield bull,
From him who bellows from St. Peter's!
Your pastoral rights and powers from him,
Think ye, can words alone preserve them?
Your wiser fathers, taught the arm
And sword of temporal power to serve them.

Oh, glorious days—when Church and State
Were wedded by your spiritual fathers!
And on submissive shoulders sat
Yours Wilsons and your Cotton Mathers.
No vile "itinerant" then could mar
The beauty of your tranquil Zion,
But at his peril of the scar
Of hangman's whip and branding-iron.

Then, wholesome laws relieved the Church
Of heretic and mischief-maker,
And priest and bailiff joined in search,
By turns, of Papist, witch, and Quaker!
The stocks were at each church's door,
The gallows stood on Boston Common,
A Papist's ears the pillory bore—
The gallows-ropes, a Quaker woman!

Your fathers dent not as ye deal
With "non-professing" frantic teachers;
They bored the tongue with red-hot steel,
And flayed the backs of "female preachers."
Old Newbury, had her fields a tongue,
And Salem's streets could tell their story,
Of fainting woman dragged along,
Gashed by the whip, accursed and gory!

And will ye ask me, why this taunt
Of memories sacred from the scorner?
And why with reckless hand I plant
A nettle on the graves ye honor?
Not to reproach New England's dead
This record from the past I summon,
Of manhood to the scaffold led,
And suffering and heroic woman.

No—for yourselves alone, I turn
The pages of intolerance over,
That, in their spirit, dark and stern,
Ye haply may your own discover!
For, if ye claim the "pastoral right,"
To silence freedom's voice of warning,
And from your precincts shut the light
Of Freedom's day around ye dawning;

If when an earthquake voice of power,
And signs in earth and heaven, are showing
That forth, in the appointed hour,
The Spirit of the Lord is going!
And, with that Spirit, Freedom's light
On kindred, tongue, and people breaking,
Whose stumbling millions, at the sight,
In glory and in strength are waking!

When for the sighing of the poor,
And for the needy, God hath risen,
And chains are breaking, and a door
Is opening for the souls in prison!
If then ye would, with puny hands,
Arrest the very work of Heaven,
And bind anew the evil bands
Which God's right arm of power hath riven,—

What marvel that, in many a mind,
Those darker deeds of bigot madness
Are closely with your own combined,
Yet "less in anger than in sadness"?
What marvel, if the people learn
To claim the right of free opinion?
What marvel, if at times they spurn
The ancient yoke of your dominion!

A glorious remnant! linger yet.
Whose lips are wet at Freedom's fountains,
The coming of whose welcome feet
Is beautiful upon our mountains!
Men, who the gospel tidings bring
Of Liberty and Love forever,
Whose joy is an abiding spring,
Whose peace is as a gentle river!

But ye, who seem the thrilling tale
Of Carolina's high-souled daughters,
Which echoes here the mournful wail
Of sorrow from Edisto's waters,
Close while ye may the public ear—
With malice vex, with slander wound them—
The pure and good shall through to hear.
And tried and manly hearts surround them.

Oh, ever may the power which led
Their way to such a fiery trial,
And strengthened womanhood to tread
The wine-press of such self-denial,
Be round them in an evil land.
With wisdom and with strength from Heaven,
With Miriam's voice, and Judith's hand,
And Deborah's song, for triumph given!

And what are ye who strive with God
Against the ark of His salvation,
Moved by the breath of prayer abroad,
With blessings for a dying nation?
What, but the stubble and the hay
To perish, even as flax consuming,
With all that bars His glorious way,
Before the brightness of His coming?

And thou, sad Angel, who so long
Hast waited for the glorious token,
That Earth from all her bonds of wrong
To liberty and light has broken—
Angel of Freedom! soon to thee
The sounding trumpet shall be given,
And over Earth's full jubilee
Shall deeper joy be felt in Heaven!