This collection of documents continues the Ashbrook Center’s extended series of document collections covering major periods, themes, and institutions in American history and government. It is the second volume in the religion in American history and politics series, one of the subsets within the overall Ashbrook collection. Given the centrality of religion in American history, these ideas and conflicts were also core elements of that broader history. This volume looks at one dimension of American religious history: the words and deeds of American religious women. It shows how at every stage of American history they were present, testifying and working, even as the importance of their work was often unacknowledged. Indeed, one of the most powerful themes of the collection is faithful perseverance in the face of opposition, and the power of such perseverance to move mountains.

Sarah A. Morgan Smith is a Fellow of the Ashbrook Center.
Women’s Voices

RELIGION IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND POLITICS
Women’s Voices

~ RELIGION IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND POLITICS ~

Selected and Introduced by
Sarah A. Morgan Smith

ASHBROOK PRESS
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Document 14, “Record of the Organization and Proceedings of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo,” used courtesy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.


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General Editor’s Introduction

This collection of documents continues the Ashbrook Center’s extended series of document collections covering major periods, themes, and institutions in American history and government. It is the second volume in the religion in American history and politics series, one of the subsets within the overall Ashbrook collection. The first volume in the religious series offered “core documents” illuminating some of the central ideas and conflicts in America’s religious history. Given the centrality of religion in American history, these ideas and conflicts were also core elements of that broader history. This volume looks at another “core” of American history, the words and deeds of American religious women. It shows how at every stage of American history they were present, testifying and working, even as the importance of their work was often unacknowledged. Indeed, one of the most powerful themes of the collection is faithful perseverance in the face of opposition, and the power of such perseverance to move mountains.

When the series of Ashbrook document collections is complete, it will be comprehensive, as well as authoritative, because it will present America’s story in the words of those who wrote it—America’s presidents, labor leaders, farmers, philosophers, industrialists, politicians, workers, explorers, religious leaders, judges, soldiers; its slaveholders and abolitionists; its expansionists and isolationists; its reformers and stand-patters; its strict and broad constructionists; its hard-eyed realists and visionary utopians—all united in their commitment to equality and liberty, yet all also divided often by their different understandings of these most fundamental American ideas. The documents are about all this—the still unfinished American experiment with self-government.

As this volume does, each of the volumes in the series will contain key documents on its period, theme, or institution, selected by an expert and reviewed by an editorial board. Each volume will have an introduction highlighting key documents and themes. In an appendix to each volume, there will also be a thematic table of contents, showing the connections between various documents. Another appendix will provide discussion questions for each document, as well questions that refer to other documents in the collection, tying them together as the thematic table of contents does. Each document will be checked against an authoritative original source and have an
introduction outlining its significance. Notes to each document will identify people, events, movements, or ideas that may be unfamiliar to non-specialist readers and will improve understanding of the document’s historical context.

In sum, our intent is that the documents and their supporting material provide reliable and unique access to the richness of the American story.

Sarah Morgan Smith, Fellow at the Ashbrook Center and Co-General Editor of the Ashbrook Center document collections with David Tucker, selected the documents and wrote the introductions, notes, and discussion questions. David Tucker edited the collection; it was copyedited by Joan Livingston. Ali Brosky, and Ellen Tucker provided editorial support. Sarah Morgan Smith oversaw production.

David Tucker, Senior Fellow  
Ashbrook Center
Introduction

While women have historically made up an overwhelming percentage of America’s religious practitioners, their roles in shaping the practice as well as the doctrines of American religious groups have too often been underappreciated and undertold. For the last several decades, scholars have been working to overcome this deficit, posing questions about the ways in which women understood their relationship to religious authorities, the reasons a woman might or might not act upon a felt call to religious leadership or preaching, and of course, the many ways in which religious women have been inspired by their beliefs to pursue justice and reform in their societies.

This volume is indebted to all of the work being done by scholars in those fields to help contextualize my understanding of what was happening around the various women represented here in their own day. Yet it is not primarily an effort to argue for or against one particular approach to understanding the deeply nuanced relationship between America’s women and their respective religious beliefs. Rather, it is an attempt to allow those women to speak for themselves so that when we speak of concepts like “antebellum evangelicalism,” “anti-Catholicism,” or even the Civil Rights Movement, we better understand them not as monolithic moments in time, but as moments of intense engagement between men and women of many different persuasions. This is, of necessity, a selective and not exhaustive collection: I have focused attention on documents written by women who were associated with the leadership of their respective religious organizations in some way. While I realize that the experiences of these women may have differed in significant ways from that of their less-vocal if not less-engaged or thoughtful sisters, I nevertheless think it is important to begin our publication of documents by religious women with texts by individuals who were most clearly situated in a way to shape the discourse of their time.

I am indebted to David and Ellen Tucker for their years of friendship and deep discussion of the place of religious believers of all kinds in the American tradition and to the Ashbrook Center, for supporting the work we do in the Religion in American History and Politics program.
Women’s Voices

RELIGION IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND POLITICS
Raised by early converts to Puritanism, Anne Dudley Bradstreet (1612–1672) and her husband, Simon, were among those on board the Arbella when it landed in Massachusetts in 1630. As her husband and her father labored to establish new institutions and laws for the godly commonwealth the Puritans aspired to create, she labored in the “little commonwealth” of home and family. With her husband often away from home for weeks at a time, Bradstreet ably managed their household’s physical and spiritual needs.

Bradstreet had received an excellent education in theology, history, and literature, and her interest in the world of letters continued throughout her life. In her free time, she wrote poetry. The majority of her works are deeply personal, reflecting on her religious experiences and her family relationships. Some, however, were written as cultural or political commentary. In the late 1640s, Bradstreet arranged to have a selection of her poems published anonymously (the volume was attributed simply to “a gentlewoman”) under the provocative title, The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung up in America. The “Dialogue Between Old England and New” was among the most prominently partisan of the works included in that volume, highlighting the religious and political history of England as keyed towards the Puritan (or Parliamentarian) cause, rather than that of the Crown.


New England.

Alas, dear mother, fairest queen and best,
With honor, wealth, and peace happy and blessed,
What ails you hang your head, and cross your arms,
And sit in the dust to sigh these sad alarms?
What deluge of new woes thus overwhelm
The glories of your ever-famous realm?
What means this wailing tone, this mournful guise?
Ah, tell your daughter; she may sympathize.

Old England.

Art ignorant indeed of these my woes,
Or must my forced tongue these griefs disclose,
And must myself dissect my tattered state,
Which amazed Christendom stands wondering at?
And you a child, a limb, and does not feel
My weakened fainting body now to reel?
This physic-purging potion I have taken
Will bring consumption or an ague quaking,
Unless some cordial you fetch from high,
Which present help may ease my malady.
If I decease, do think you shall survive?
Or by my wasting state do think to thrive?
Then weigh our case, if it be not justly sad.
Let me lament alone, while you are glad.

New England.

And thus, alas, your state you much deplore
In general terms, but will not say wherefore.
What medicine shall I seek to cure this woe,
If the wound’s so dangerous, I may not know?

Your humble child entreats you show your grief.
Though arms nor purse she has for your relief—
Such is her poverty,—yet shall be found
A supplicant for your help, as she is bound.

---

1 fever and chills
Old England.

I must confess some of those sores you name
My beauteous body at this present maim,
But foreign foe nor feigned friend I fear,
For they have work enough, you know, elsewhere.

... For wants, sure some I feel, but more I fear;
And for the pestilence, who knows how near?
Famine and plague, two sisters of the sword,
Destruction to a land does soon afford.
They’re for my punishments ordained on high,
Unless your tears prevent it speedily.
But yet I answer not what you demand
To show the grievance of my troubled land.
Before I tell the effect I’ll show the cause,
Which are my sins—the breach of sacred laws:
Idolatry, supplanter of a nation,
With foolish superstitious adoration,
Are liked and countenanced by men of might,
The gospel is trod down and has no right.
Church offices are sold and bought for gain
That pope had hope to find Rome here again.
For oaths and blasphemies did ever ear
From Beelzebub himself such language hear?
What scorning of the saints of the most high!
What injuries did daily on them lie!
What false reports, what nicknames did they take,
Not for their own, but for their Master’s sake!
And you, poor soul, were jeered among the rest;
Your flying for the truth I made a jest.
For Sabbath-breaking and for drunkenness
Did ever land profaneness more express?
From crying bloods yet cleansed am not I,
Martyrs and others dying causelessly.
How many princely heads on blocks lay down
...
New England.

To all you’ve said, sad mother, I assent.  
Your fearful sins great cause there is to lament.  
My guilty hands (in part) hold up with you,  
A sharer in your punishment’s my due.  
But all you say amounts to this effect,  
Not what you feel, but what you do expect.  
Pray, in plain terms, what is your present grief?  
Then let’s join heads and hands for your relief.

Old England.

Well, to the matter, then. There’s grown of late  
’Twixt king and peers a question of state:  
Which is the chief, the law, or else the king?  
One said, it’s he; the other, no such thing.  
It is said my better part in Parliament  
To ease my groaning land show their intent  
To crush the proud, and right to each man deal,  
To help the church, and stay the commonweal.  
So many obstacles comes in their way  
As puts me to a stand what I should say.  
Old customs, new prerogatives stood on.  
Had they not held law fast, all had been gone,  
Which by their prudence stood them in such stead  
They took high Strafford lower by the head,  
And to their Laud ² be it spoke they held in the tower  
All England’s metropolitan that hour.  
This done, an act they would have passed fain  
No prelate should his bishopric retain.  
Here tugged they hard indeed, for all men saw  
This must be done by Gospel, not by law.  
...  
But now I come to speak of my disaster.

² Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645) resented attempts by Puritans and others to reform the Anglican establishment and used his office to advocate laws intended to persecute religious dissenters whenever possible.
Contention’s grown ’twixt subjects and their master,
They worded it so long they fell to blows,
That thousands lay on heaps. Here bleed my woes.
I that no wars so many years have known
Am now destroyed and slaughtered by mine own.
But could the field alone this strife decide,
One battle, two, or three I might abide,
But these may be beginnings of more woe—
Who knows but this may be my overthrow!
Oh, pity me in this sad perturbation,
My plundered towns, my houses’ devastation,
My weeping virgins, and my young men slain,
My wealthy trading fallen, my dearth of grain.
The seed-time’s come, but ploughman has no hope
Because he knows not who shall inn³ his crop.
The poor they want their pay, their children bread,
Their woeful mothers’ tears unpitied.
If any pity in thy heart remain,
Or any child-like love you do retain,
For my relief do what there lies in you,
And recompense that good I’ve done to you.

New England.

Dear mother, cease complaints, and wipe your eyes,
Shake off your dust, cheer up, and now arise.
You are my mother, nurse, I once your flesh,
Your sunken bowels gladly would refresh.
Your griefs I pity, but soon hope to see
Out of your troubles much good fruit to be;
To see these latter days of hoped-for good
Though now beclouded all with tears and blood.
After dark popery the day did clear;
But now the sun in his brightness shall appear.
Blessed be the nobles of thy noble land
With ventured lives for truth’s defense that stand.
Blessed be your Commons, who for common good

³ archaic; “put up” or harvest
And your infringed laws have boldly stood.
Blessed be your counties, who did aid you still
With hearts and states to testify their will.
Blessed be your preachers, who do cheer you on.
Oh, cry the sword of God and Gideon!
And shall I not on them wish Meroz’ curse
That help you not with prayers, with alms, and purse?
And for myself, let miseries abound
If mindless of your state I ever be found.
These are the days the church’s foes to crush,
To root out popelings, head, tail, branch, and rush.
Let’s bring Baal’s vestments forth to make a fire,
Their mitres, surplices, and all their attire,
Copes, rochets, croziers, and such empty trash,
And let their names consume, but let the flash
Light Christendom, and all the world to see
We hate Rome’s whore, with all her trumpery.
...
Out of all mists such glorious days will bring
That dazzled eyes, beholding, much shall wonder
At that your settled peace, your wealth, and splendor,
Your church and weal established in such manner
That all shall joy that you displayed your banner,
...
Mary Dyer (1611–1660) and her husband, William Dyer, were supporters of Anne Hutchinson during her trial for heresy in Boston. When Hutchinson was banished in 1638, the Dyers went with her to establish a new colony in what became Rhode Island. In 1651, the Dyers returned to England to defend their land claims in the new colony; there, they became converts to the recently formed Society of Friends (commonly known as the Quakers).

There were many similarities between Hutchinson’s theology and that of George Fox (1624–1691), the founder of the Quakers. Both groups emphasized the primacy of individual conscience over tradition or the Bible. It is unsurprising, then, that the Dyers found the new sect congenial. Moreover, it seemed only fitting to Dyer that her first trip as an evangelist for the new sect would be to the site of her former disgrace, and so in 1657, she returned to Boston. She was immediately arrested (the colony had passed laws forbidding Quakerism as heretical), and spent most of that year and the next in various prisons. In 1658, the law against Quakers was emended such that the punishment was no longer imprisonment, but banishment upon pain of death, and Dyer was ordered to leave the colony immediately.

After learning that some other Quaker missionaries had been arrested, Dyer returned to Boston, where she too was imprisoned. Sentenced to death, she was released from the gallows after a last-minute reprieve. She returned to the colony again in 1660 and was executed. Edward Burrough, a Quaker apologist in England, published the detailed account of Dyer’s final days excerpted here in order to draw attention to the violent repression of religious freedom by Massachusetts.

The Copy of a Letter that Mary Dyer sent to the Rulers of Boston, after she had received the Sentence of Death

To the General Court now in Boston.

Whereas I am by many charged with the guiltiness of my own blood; if you mean in my coming to Boston, I am therein clear, and justified by the Lord, in whose will I came, who will require my blood of you be sure; [you] who have made a Law to take away the lives of the innocent servants of God, if they come among you, who are called by you, “Cursed Quakers”; although I say, and am a living witness for them and the Lord, that He hath blessed them, and sent them unto you: therefore be not found fighters against God, but let my counsel and request be accepted with you, To repeal all such Laws, that the truth and servants of the Lord may have free passage among you, and you kept from shedding innocent blood, which I know there are many among you would not do, if they knew it so to be: Nor can the enemy that stirs you up thus to destroy this holy seed, in any measure countervail the great damage that you will by thus doing procure: Therefore, seeing the Lord hath not hid it from me, it lies upon me, in love to your souls, thus to persuade you: I have no self-ends, the Lord knows, for if my life were freely granted by you, it would not avail me, nor could I expect it of you, so long as I should daily hear or see the sufferings of these people, my dear Brethren, and seed with whom my life is bound up, as I have done these two years; and now it is like to increase, even unto death, for no evil doing, but coming among you: Was ever the like laws heard of among a people that profess Christ come in the flesh? And have such no other weapons but such laws, to fight against spiritual wickedness withal, as you call it? Woe is me for you! Of whom take you counsel? Search with the Light of Christ in you, and it will show you of whom, as it hath done me and many more, who have been disobedient and deceived, as now you are; which Light as you come into, and obeying what is made manifest to you therein, you will not repent, that you were kept from shedding blood, though it were from a woman: It’s not

1 The General Court was the chief governmental body of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
2 those converted to Quakerism by Dyer and her fellow missionaries
3 The Light of Christ, also sometimes referred to as the “Inner Light” in Quakerism, refers to the inward dwelling of the divine within the soul of the believer; see John 8:12 and John 14:15-31 where Jesus speaks of his relationship with his followers as continuing in a direct and personal way even after his crucifixion.
mine own life I seek, (for I choose rather to suffer with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of Egypt) but the life of the seed, which I know the Lord hath blessed;⁴ and therefore seeks the enemy thus vehemently the life thereof to destroy, as in all ages he ever did. Oh, hearken not unto him I beseech you, for the seed’s sake, which is one in all, and is dear in the sight of God; which they that touch, touch the apple of his eye, and cannot escape his wrath, whereof I having felt, cannot but persuade all men that I have to do withal, especially you who name the name of Christ, to depart from such iniquity, as shedding blood even of the saints of the Most High. Therefore, let my request have as much acceptance with you (if you be Christians) as Esther had with Ahasuerus,⁵ (whose relation is short of that that’s between Christians) and my request is the same that hers was; and he said not, that he had made a law, and it would be dishonorable for him to revoke it, but when he understood that these people were so prized by her, and so nearly concerned her, (as in truth these are to me) as you may see what he did for her; therefore I leave these lines with you, appealing to the faithful and true witness of God, which is One in all consciences, before whom we must all appear; with whom I shall eternally rest, in everlasting joy and peace, whether you will hear or forbear: with Him is my reward, with whom to live is my joy, and to die is my gain, though I had not had your forty-eight hours warning,⁶ for the preparation to the death of Mary Dyer.

And know this also, that if through the enmity you shall declare yourselves worse than Ahasuerus, and confirm your law, though it were but by taking away the life of one of us, that the Lord will overthrow both your law and you, by his righteous judgments and plagues powered justly upon you, who now whilst you are warned thereof, and tenderly sought unto, may avoid the one by removing the other; If you neither hear nor obey the Lord nor his servants, yet will he send more of his servants among you, so that your end shall be frustrated, that think to restrain them, you call cursed Quakers, from coming among you by any thing you can do to them; yea verily, he has a seed here among you, for whom we have suffered all this while, and yet suffer; whom the Lord of the harvest will send forth

⁴See John 12:24
⁵Esther was the wife of Ahasuerus, a Persian King. Ahasuerus did not know that Esther was Jewish. Esther used her favor with the king to save the Jewish people.
⁶After the first time she was sentenced to death, Dyer’s son petitioned the Court for mercy; she was given a reprieve and ordered to leave the colony within forty-eight hours.
more laborers to gather (out of the mouths of the devourers of all sorts) into his fold, where he will lead them into fresh pastures, even the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake: Oh! let none of you put this good day far from you, which verily in the Light of the Lord I see approaching, even to many in and about Boston, which is the bitterest and darkest professing place, and so to continue so long as you have done, that ever I heard of; let the time past therefore suffice, for such a profession as brings forth such fruits as these laws are. In love and in the spirit of meekness I again beseech you, for I have no enmity to the persons of any; but you shall know, that God will not be mocked, but what you sow, that shall ye reap from him, that [He] will render to everyone according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil; Even so be it, says

Mary Dyer

A Copy of this was given to the General Court after Mary Dyer had received the Sentence of Death, about the 8th or 9th Month, 1659.

**A Further Account Concerning Mary Dyers’ Martyrdom**

Mary Dyer being freed, as aforesaid, returned to Rhode Island, and afterwards to Long-Island, and there was [for the] most part of the winter, over the Island, where she had good service for the Lord; and then came to Shelter-Island, (when she thought she might pass to Rhode Island) and being there, sometime she had movings from the Lord, to go to Boston, and there she came the 21 of the 3d Month, 1660. And the 30th day was their Governor chosen, and the 31 of the 3d Month, in the former part of the day, she was sent for to the General Court; the Governor said, “Are you the same Mary Dyer that was here before?” (speaking of one in Old-England that returned, and would have made them believe he was not the same man; with more words to that purpose, and said, “Have not you such evasions?”)

Mary Dyer: “I am the same Mary Dyer that was here the last General Court.”

The Governor said, “You will own yourself a Quaker, will you not?”

M. D. “I own myself to be so reproachfully called.”

The bloody-minded [jailer] having now opportunity to have his blood-thirsty will fulfilled, said, “She is a vagabond.”

The Governor said, “The sentence was passed upon her the last General Court, and now likewise; you must return to the prison from where you
came, and there remain until tomorrow at nine of the clock, then from thence you must go to the gallows, and there be hanged till you are dead.”

Mary Dyer said, “This is no more than that you said before.”

“Aye, aye,” the Governor said, “and now it is to be executed; therefore prepare yourself tomorrow at nine of the clock.” (Being the first day of the 4th Month, 1660.)

Mary Dyer answered and said, “I came in obedience to the Will of God the last General Court, desiring you to repeal your unrighteous laws of banishment upon pain of death; and that same is my work now, and earnest request, because you refused before to grant my request, although I told you, that if you refused to repeal them, the Lord will send others of his servants to witness against them.”

John Endicott asked her whether she was a prophet.

She said, “She spoke the words that the Lord spoke in her; and now the thing is come to pass.”

She beginning to speak of her call, J. Endicott said, “Away with her, away with her.”

So she was brought to the Prison-House, where she was before, close shut up, until the next day.

About the time fixed, the Marshal Michaelson came and called hastily for her; when he came into the room, she desired him to stay a little; and speaking mildly to him, she said, she should be ready presently; even like a sheep prepared for the slaughter. But he in the wolfish nature, said, he could not wait upon her, but she should now wait upon him. Margaret Smith, her companion, hearing him speak these words, with others, from the Cain-like Spirit, was moved to testify against their unjust laws and proceedings, being grieved to see both him, and many others, in such gross darkness and hard-heartedness.

Then he said, “You shall have your share of the same,” with other violent words. Then they brought her forth, and drums were beat before and behind her with a band of soul-diers through the town, and so to the place of execution, which is about a mile, the drums beating, that none might hear her speak all the way.

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7 We have not modernized the spelling of this word, as its use in Massachusetts Bay at the time period was often intentionally meant to convey a sense of the spiritual obligations incumbent upon Christians to defend themselves and the faith; the editor of this account, Burrough, had been in Massachusetts himself and it is possible he intended this spelling ironically.
The Words of Mary Dyer Upon the Ladder

Some said unto her, that if she would return, she might come down and save her life (Bonner and Gardiner-like). She answered and said, “Nay, I cannot, for in obedience to the will of the Lord God I came; and in his will I abide faithful to the death.”

Their Captain, John Webb, said she had been here before, and had the sentence of banishment upon pain of death; and had broken this law in coming again now, as well as formerly; and therefore she was guilty of her own blood.

To which M. Dyer said, “No, I came to keep blood-guiltiness from you, desiring you to repeal the unrighteous and unjust law of banishment upon pain of death; made against the innocent servants of the Lord: therefore my blood will be required at your hands, who willfully do it: but for those that do it in the simplicity of their hearts, I do desire the Lord to forgive them. I came to do the will of my Father, and in obedience to his will, I stand even to the death.”

John Wilson, their Priest of Boston said, “M. Dyer, O repent, O repent, and be not so deluded and carried away by the deceit of the devil.”

M. Dyer answered and said, “No, man, I am not now to repent.”

Some asked her whether she would have the elders to pray for her? She said, “I know never an elder here.”

They asked, whether she would have any of the people to pray for her? She said she desired the prayers of all the people of God. Some scoffingly said, “It may be she thinks there is none here, this is a mock.” M. Dyer looked about and said, “I know but few here.”

Then they spoke to her again, that one of the elders might pray for her. She replied, and said, “No, first a child, then a young man, then a strong man, before an elder of Christ Jesus.”

Some charged her with something that was not understood what it was. But her answer was, “It’s false, it’s false, I never spoke the words.”

Then one said, she should say, she had been in paradise. And she answered, “Yea, I have been in paradise several days.” And more she spoke of her eternal happiness, that’s out of mind. And so sweetly and cheerfully in the Lord she finished her testimony, and died a faithful martyr of Jesus Christ.

And still they are going on in acting their cruel Laws; for the same day, in

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8 Edmund Bonner (1500–1569) and Stephen Gardiner (1483–1555) were notorious for switching their religious allegiances from Catholic to Protestant and back again, according to the dictates of royal Court.
the former part of it, they sent for Joseph Nicholson, and his wife Jane Nichol-
son, and banished them on pain of death. Then sent for three more, and whilst
they were examining them, there came one to the Court, and told them,
“Now M. Dyer is cast off.” Then several of the Court spoke to this purpose,
and one scoffingly said, “She did hang as a flag for them to take example by.”
[But precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.] [in original]

But now the fruits of New-England professors are made manifest to the
world, who are so far degenerated from the Lord, that they set up the killing
of his saints, as an ensign, or a flag, that many may follow their cruelty. These
are the people that say, their churches are the purest churches in the world;
and that their magistrates, are godly magistrates, and godly ministers: A fair
show to the world. . . .
Mary Rowlandson (1637–1711) and her children were among the many English captives taken by native warriors during King Philip’s War (1675–76). Captured colonists were forced to march along with their captors as they moved from camp to camp, and often put to work as servants. Captives were frequently (although not always) ransomed back to their families or, failing that, to the English community at large; Rowlandson’s ransom was paid in part by her husband, but largely through the generosity of strangers.

In a narrative published after her redemption, Rowlandson recounts how she dealt with her three-month captivity (including the death of her six-year-old daughter, Sarah, and her separation from her older two children). Her title, The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, is especially apt for the last section of the work, as Rowlandson reflects upon her deliverance from captivity and her reunion with her family and neighbors. While much of the main body of the work is devoted to critical observations about her native captors, in the final section, Rowlandson focused on the ways in which her perseverance was made possible by her faith, and in the unexpected joys and comforts to be found in enduring suffering with the support of other believers.

Source: Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*... (1682). We have modernized spelling and capitalization.

The sovereignty and goodness of God, together with the faithfulness of his promises displayed, being a narrative of the captivity and restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, commended by her, to all that desire to know the Lord’s doings to, and dealings with her. Especially to her dear children and relations....

On the tenth of February 1675, came the Indians with great numbers upon Lancaster:¹ their first coming was about sunrising; hearing the noise of some

¹ in Massachusetts, where Rowlandson lived
guns, we looked out; several houses were burning, and the smoke ascending to heaven. . . . At length they came and beset our own house, and quickly it was the dolefullest day that ever mine eyes saw. . . . Some in our house were fighting for their lives, others wallowing in their blood, the house on fire over our heads, and the bloody heathen ready to knock us on the head, if we stirred out. . . . [T]he Indians laid hold of us, pulling me one way, and the children another, and said, “Come go along with us”; I told them they would kill me: they answered, if I were willing to go along with them, they would not hurt me. . . .

I had often before this said that if the Indians should come, I should choose rather to be killed by them than taken alive, but when it came to the trial my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous beasts, than that moment to end my days; and that I may the better declare what happened to me during that grievous captivity, I shall particularly speak of the several removes we had up and down the wilderness.

THE FIRST REMOVE

Now away we must go with those barbarous creatures, with our bodies wounded and bleeding, and our hearts no less than our bodies. . . . To add to the dolefulness of the former day, and the dismalness of the present night, my thoughts ran upon my losses and sad bereaved condition. All was gone, my husband gone (at least separated from me, he being in the Bay; 2 and to add to my grief, the Indians told me they would kill him as he came homeward), my children gone, my relations and friends gone, our house and home and all our comforts—within door and without—all was gone (except my life), and I knew not but the next moment that might go too. There remained nothing to me but one poor wounded babe, and it seemed at present worse than death that it was in such a pitiful condition, bespeaking compassion, and I had no refreshing for it, nor suitable things to revive it. . . .

[We exclude the remainder of Rowlandson’s account of her time among the natives as a captive, and take up her narrative again with her redemption by her husband and neighbors.]

2 that is, in Boston.
... In my travels an Indian came to me and told me, if I were willing, he and his squaw would run away, and go home along with me. I told him no: I was not willing to run away, but desired to wait God’s time, that I might go home quietly, and without fear. And now God hath granted me my desire. O the wonderful power of God that I have seen, and the experience that I have had. I have been in the midst of those roaring lions, and savage bears, that feared neither God, nor man, nor the devil, by night and day, alone and in company, sleeping all sorts together, and yet not one of them ever offered me the least abuse of unchastity to me, in word or action. Though some are ready to say I speak it for my own credit; but I speak it in the presence of God, and to His Glory. God’s power is as great now, and as sufficient to save, as when He preserved Daniel in the lion’s den; or the three children in the fiery furnace. I may well say as his Psalm 107.12 “Oh give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.” Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy, especially that I should come away in the midst of so many hundreds of enemies quietly and peaceably, and not a dog moving his tongue. So I took my leave of them, and in coming along my heart melted into tears, more than all the while I was with them, and I was almost swallowed up with the thoughts that ever I should go home again. About the sun going down, Mr. Hoar, and myself, and the two Indians came to Lancaster, and a solemn sight it was to me. There had I lived many comfortable years amongst my relations and neighbors, and now not one Christian to be seen, nor one house left standing. We went on to a farmhouse that was yet standing, where we lay all night, and a comfortable lodging we had, though nothing but straw to lie on. The Lord preserved us in safety that night, and raised us up again in the morning, and carried us along, that before noon, we came to Concord. Now was I full of joy, and yet not without sorrow; joy to see such a lovely sight, so many Christians together, and some of them my neighbors. There I met with my brother, and my brother-in-law, who asked me, if I knew where his wife was? Poor heart! he had helped to bury her, and knew it not. She being shot down by the house was partly burnt, so that those who were at Boston at the desolation of the town, and came back afterward, and buried the dead, did not know her. Yet I was not without sorrow, to think how many were looking and longing, and my own children amongst the rest, to enjoy that deliverance that I had now received, and I did not know whether ever I should see them again. Being recruited³

³replenished
with food and raiment we went to Boston that day, where I met with my dear husband, but the thoughts of our dear children, one being dead, and the other we could not tell where, abated our comfort each to other. I was not before so much hemmed in with the merciless and cruel heathen, but now as much with pitiful, tender-hearted and compassionate Christians. In that poor, and distressed, and beggarly condition I was received in; I was kindly entertained in several houses. So much love I received from several (some of whom I knew, and others I knew not) that I am not capable to declare it. But the Lord knows them all by name. The Lord reward them sevenfold into their bosoms of His spirituals, for their temporals. The twenty pounds, the price of my redemption, was raised by some Boston gentlemen, and Mrs. Usher, whose bounty and religious charity, I would not forget to make mention of. Then Mr. Thomas Shepard ⁴ of Charlestown received us into his house, where we continued eleven weeks; and a father and mother they were to us. And many more tender-hearted friends we met with in that place. We were now in the midst of love, yet not without much and frequent heaviness of heart for our poor children, and other relations, who were still in affliction. The week following, after my coming in, the governor and council sent forth to the Indians again; and that not without success; for they brought in my sister, and goodwife Kettle. Their not knowing where our children were was a sore trial to us still, and yet we were not without secret hopes that we should see them again. That which was dead lay heavier upon my spirit, than those which were alive and amongst the heathen: thinking how it suffered with its wounds, and I was no way able to relieve it; and how it was buried by the heathen in the wilderness from among all Christians. We were hurried up and down in our thoughts, sometime we should hear a report that they were gone this way, and sometimes that; and that they were come in, in this place or that. We kept inquiring and listening to hear concerning them, but no certain news as yet. About this time the council had ordered a day of public thanksgiving. Though I thought I had still cause of mourning, and being unsettled in our minds, we thought we would ride toward the eastward, to see if we could hear anything concerning our children. And as we were riding along (God is the wise disposer of all things) between Ipswich

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⁴ Given that she speaks of him as a father figure, it appears that Rowlandson is referring to Thomas Shepard II (1635–1677/78) rather than his son, Thomas Shepard III (1658–1685). Both father and son served as teaching elders (ministers) at the Congregational church of Charlestown.
and Rowley we met with Mr. William Hubbard, who told us that our son Joseph was come in to Major Waldron’s, and another with him, which was my sister’s son. I asked him how he knew it? He said the major himself told him so. So along we went till we came to Newbury; and their minister being absent, they desired my husband to preach the thanksgiving for them; but he was not willing to stay there that night, but would go over to Salisbury, to hear further, and come again in the morning, which he did, and preached there that day. At night, when he had done, one came and told him that his daughter was come in at Providence. Here was mercy on both hands. Now has God fulfilled that precious Scripture which was such a comfort to me in my distressed condition. When my heart was ready to sink into the earth (my children being gone, I could not tell whither) and my knees trembling under me, and I was walking through the valley of the shadow of death; then the Lord brought, and now has fulfilled that reviving word unto me: “Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.” Now we were between them, the one on the east, and the other on the west. Our son being nearest, we went to him first, to Portsmouth, where we met with him, and with the Major also, who told us he had done what he could, but could not redeem him under seven pounds, which the good people thereabouts were pleased to pay. The Lord reward the major, and all the rest, though unknown to me, for their labor of Love. My sister’s son was redeemed for four pounds, which the council gave order for the payment of. Having now received one of our children, we hastened toward the other. Going back through Newbury my husband preached there on the Sabbath day; for which they rewarded him many fold.

On Monday we came to Charlestown, where we heard that the governor of Rhode Island had sent over for our daughter, to take care of her, being now within his jurisdiction; which should not pass without our acknowledgments. But she being nearer Rehoboth than Rhode Island, Mr. Newman went over, and took care of her and brought her to his own house. And the goodness of God was admirable to us in our low estate, in that He raised up passionate friends on every side to us, when we had nothing to recompense any for their love. The Indians were now gone that way, that it was apprehended dangerous to go to her. But the carts which carried provision to the English army, being guarded, brought her with them to Dorchester, where we received her safe. Blessed be the Lord for it, for great is His power, and He can do whatsoever seems Him good. Her coming in was after this manner:
she was traveling one day with the Indians, with her basket at her back; the company of Indians were got before her, and gone out of sight, all except one squaw; she followed the squaw till night, and then both of them lay down, having nothing over them but the heavens and under them but the earth. Thus she traveled three days together, not knowing whither she was going; having nothing to eat or drink but water, and green hirtle-berries. At last they came into Providence, where she was kindly entertained by several of that town. The Indians often said that I should never have her under twenty pounds. But now the Lord hath brought her in upon free-cost, and given her to me the second time. The Lord make us a blessing indeed, each to others. Now have I seen that Scripture also fulfilled, “If any of thine be driven out to the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee. And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them which hate thee, which persecuted thee” (Deuteronomy 30.4-7). Thus hath the Lord brought me and mine out of that horrible pit, and hath set us in the midst of tender-hearted and compassionate Christians. It is the desire of my soul that we may walk worthy of the mercies received, and which we are receiving.

Our family being now gathered together (those of us that were living), the South Church in Boston hired a house for us. Then we removed from Mr. Shepard’s, those cordial friends, and went to Boston, where we continued about three-quarters of a year. Still the Lord went along with us, and provided graciously for us. I thought it somewhat strange to set up house-keeping with bare walls; but as Solomon says, “Money answers all things” and that we had through the benevolence of Christian friends, some in this town, and some in that, and others; and some from England; that in a little time we might look, and see the house furnished with love. The Lord hath been exceeding good to us in our low estate, in that when we had neither house nor home, nor other necessaries, the Lord so moved the hearts of these and those towards us, that we wanted neither food, nor raiment for ourselves or ours: “There is a Friend which sticketh closer than a Brother” (Proverbs 18.24). And how many such friends have we found, and now living amongst? And truly such a friend have we found him to be unto us, in whose house we lived, viz. Mr. James Whitcomb, a friend unto us near hand, and afar off.

I can remember the time when I used to sleep quietly without workings in my thoughts, whole nights together, but now it is other ways with me. When all are fast about me, and no eye open, but His who ever wakes, my thoughts are upon things past, upon the awful dispensation of the Lord towards us,
upon His wonderful power and might, in carrying of us through so many
difficulties, in returning us in safety, and suffering none to hurt us. I remem-
ber in the night season, how the other day I was in the midst of thousands of
enemies, and nothing but death before me. It is then hard work to persuade
myself, that ever I should be satisfied with bread again. But now we are fed
with the finest of the wheat, and, as I may say, with honey out of the rock.
Instead of the husk, we have the fatted calf. The thoughts of these things in
the particulars of them, and of the love and goodness of God towards us,
make it true of me, what David said of himself, “I watered my couch with
my tears” (Psalm 6.6). Oh! the wonderful power of God that mine eyes have
seen, affording matter enough for my thoughts to run in, that when others
are sleeping mine eyes are weeping.

I have seen the extreme vanity of this world: One hour I have been in
health, and wealthy, wanting nothing. But the next hour in sickness and
wounds, and death, having nothing but sorrow and affliction.

Before I knew what affliction meant, I was ready sometimes to wish for
it. When I lived in prosperity, having the comforts of the world about me,
my relations by me, my heart cheerful, and taking little care for anything,
and yet seeing many, whom I preferred before myself, under many trials and
afflictions, in sickness, weakness, poverty, losses, crosses, and cares of the
world, I should be sometimes jealous least I should have my portion in this
life, and that Scripture would come to my mind, “For whom the Lord loveth
he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12.6).
But now I see the Lord had His time to scourge and chasten me. The portion
of some is to have their afflictions by drops, now one drop and then another;
but the dregs of the cup, the wine of astonishment, like a sweeping rain that
leaves no food, did the Lord prepare to be my portion. Affliction I wanted,
and affliction I had, full measure (I thought), pressed down and running
over. Yet I see, when God calls a person to anything, and through never so
many difficulties, yet He is fully able to carry them through and make them
see, and say they have been gainers thereby. And I hope I can say in some
measure, as David did, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.” The
Lord hath showed me the vanity of these outward things. That they are the
vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit, that they are but a shadow, a blast,
a bubble, and things of no continuance. That we must rely on God Himself,
and our whole dependence must be upon Him. If trouble from smaller mat-
ters begin to arise in me, I have something at hand to check myself with, and
say, why am I troubled? It was but the other day that if I had had the world,
I would have given it for my freedom, or to have been a servant to a Chris-
tian. I have learned to look beyond present and smaller troubles, and to be
quieted under them. As Moses said, “Stand still and see the salvation of the
Lord” (Exodus 14.13).

Finis.
Phyllis Wheatley (1753–1784) was captured in Africa as a young child, and brought to Boston, Massachusetts. There, she was sold as a slave to John Wheatley who was immediately impressed by her intellect and encouraged Phyllis to learn to read English, so that she might study the Bible. “As to her WRITING, her own Curiosity led her to it,” he later recalled.

Wheatley’s pen soon became an instrument whereby she could work through the theological tangle of Christianity and slavery for herself and her readers. Although she did not expressly challenge the institution of slavery, her poems frequently allude to the equality of all men in the eyes of God, and thus, can be viewed as an attempt to undermine the racial construction of eighteenth century American society. Nevertheless, her published volume Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral carried endorsements secured from not only her own master, but several of “the most respectable characters in Boston.” These men attested to the quality of Wheatley’s writing and mind, while marveling that anyone “under the disadvantage of serving as a slave in a family in this town” could express herself with such eloquence.

In her religious sensibilities, Wheatley combined a largely individualistic Christian theology of salvation with a millennial conviction that America was to play a pivotal role in bringing not only spiritual but temporal liberty to the world. Her elegy for George Whitefield and her ode to George Washington, written early in the Revolution, are both truly works of praise to God as the author of liberty, and of thanksgiving for His work through these human agents.

Source: Phyllis Wheatley, Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral (London, 1773), 18, 22–24; The Pennsylvania Magazine: or, American Monthly Museum, 2 (April 1776), 193. We have modernized spelling and capitalization.
On being brought from Africa to America

’TWAS mercy brought me from my pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there’s a God, that there’s a Savior too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
“They’re color is a diabolic die.”
Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,¹
May be refined, and join the angelic train.

On the Death of the Rev. Mr. GEORGE WHITEFIELD² (c. 1770)

HAIL, happy saint, on your immortal throne,
Possessed of glory, life, and bliss unknown;
We hear no more the music of your tongue,
Your wonted auditories cease to throng.
Your sermons in unequalled accents flowed,
And every bosom with devotion glowed;
You did in strains of eloquence refined
Inflame the heart, and captivate the mind.
Unhappy we the setting sun deplore,
So glorious once, but ah! it shines no more.

Behold the prophet in his towering flight!
He leaves the earth for heaven’s unmeasured height,
And worlds unknown receive him from our sight.
There Whitefield wings with rapid course his way,
And sails to Zion through vast seas of day.

¹ Some Europeans in the medieval and early modern period argued that the black skin of Africans was a result of their descent from Cain, the elder son of Adam and Eve who murdered his brother Abel (see Genesis 4). Although God punished Cain by sending him away from his family, he also placed an unspecified “mark” upon him, so that no harm would come to him in his exile: this mark was sometimes interpreted to be the darkening of his skin.

² George Whitefield (1714–1770) was a famously theatrical evangelical minister who came over from England on several speaking tours of the colonies. Although Whitefield did not take a strong anti-slavery stance, he did frequently preach to mixed-race audiences.
Your prayers, great saint, and your incessant cries
Have pierced the bosom of your native skies.
Your moon has seen, and all the stars of light,
How he has wrestled with his God by night.
He prayed that grace in every heart might dwell,
He longed to see America excel;
He charged its youth that every grace divine
Should with full luster in their conduct shine;
That Savior, which his soul did first receive,
The greatest gift that even a God can give,
He freely offered to the numerous throng,
That on his lips with listening pleasure hung.

“Take him, you wretched, for your only good,
Take him you starving sinners, for your food;
You thirsty, come to this life-giving stream,
You preachers, take him for your joyful theme;
Take him my dear Americans,” he said,
“Be your complaints on his kind bosom laid:
Take him, you Africans, he longs for you,
Impartial Savior is his title due:
Washed in the fountain of redeeming blood,
You shall be sons, and kings, and priests to God.”

Great countess,* we Americans revere
Your name, and mingle in your grief sincere;
New England deeply feels, the orphans mourn,
Their more than father will no more return.

But, though arrested by the hand of death,
Whitefield no more exerts his laboring breath,
Yet let us view him in the eternal skies,
Let every heart to this bright vision rise;
While the tomb safe retains its sacred trust,
Till life divine re-animates his dust.

*The Countess of Huntingdon, to whom Mr. Whitefield was Chaplain.
[in original]
To His Excellency General Washington (26 October 1775)

Celestial choir! enthroned in realms of light,
Columbia’s scenes of glorious toils I write.
While freedom’s cause her anxious breast alarms,
She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.
See mother earth her offspring’s fate bemoan,
And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!
See the bright beams of heaven’s revolving light
Involved in sorrows and the veil of night!

The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,
Olive and laurel binds her golden hair:
Wherever shines this native of the skies,
Unnumbered charms and recent graces rise.

Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates
How pour her armies through a thousand gates:
As when Eolus heaven’s fair face deforms,
Enwrapped in tempest and a night of storms;
Astonished ocean feels the wild uproar,
The refluent surges beat the sounding shore;
Or thick as leaves in Autumn’s golden reign,
Such, and so many, moves the warrior’s train.
In bright array they seek the work of war,
Where high unfurled the ensign waves in air.
Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
Enough you know them in the fields of fight.
You, first in place and honors,—we demand
The grace and glory of your martial band.
Famed for thy valor, for your virtues more,
Hear every tongue your guardian aid implore!

One century scarce performed its destined round,
When Gallic powers Columbia’s fury found;

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3 Columbia is the name given to the female embodiment of America.
4 god of winds
And so may you, whoever dares disgrace
The land of freedom’s heaven-defended race!
Fixed are the eyes of nations on the scales,
For in their hopes Columbia’s arm prevails.
Anon Britannia droops the pensive head,
While round increase the rising hills of dead.
Ah! cruel blindness to Columbia’s state!
Lament your thirst of boundless power too late.

Proceed, great chief, with virtue on your side,
Your every action let the goddess guide.
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, Washington! be yours.
Sophia Wigington Hume (1702–1774) was raised among the elite of Charleston, South Carolina, but joined the Society of Friends (Quakers) after a health crisis that she was convinced was a judgment upon her love of fashion, frivolity, and luxury. Shortly after her conversion, she traveled to England, where she became an active member of the London meeting and received training as an exhorter. In 1747, Hume felt called to return to her native city of Charleston to preach a gospel message coupled with a call to personal reform and simplicity. Hume was apprehensive that her former friends and neighbors would accuse her of hypocrisy or forwardness in taking on such a public role; she hoped to forestall some such criticism by publishing her own testimony of conversion the pamphlet excerpted below.

Like many women in colonial America, Hume found evangelicalism offered a sense of self and a confidence to speak on serious issues in public that she had not previously experienced. Although Quakers adopted plain dress in an effort to suppress the individual sin of pride, as Hume notes in her essay, there were societal benefits to humility as well.

SOURCE: Sophia Wigington Hume, An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the Province of South-Carolina (Philadelphia: 1748). We have modernized spelling and capitalization.

My Friends and Neighbors,

After an absence of near six years from this province (my native country) and my arrival among you, I have beheld the faces of many of the inhabitants whom I have known, and been known to, some years: but the novelty of my religious sentiments, and meanness of my appearance, has, I find, rendered me despicable in your eyes; which has been obvious, when a few of us, called Quakers, have met to worship the Supreme Being in a manner agreeable to the best of our understanding and knowledge: And though some perhaps
may style our principles and tenets by the hard name of heresy, and our mode or manner of worship, ridiculous or absurd; nevertheless, we are humbly of opinion, they are neither unscriptural nor unchristian, having, as we think, the sanction and authority of our Lord himself, the example of primitive believers, and right reason, on our side.

But notwithstanding, as I have noted, that I have suffered your ridicule and reproach, as I am conscious it is for no other than obedience to the will of my heavenly master, whose I am, and whom I serve, I am willing to become more vile in your eyes; which, it is more than probable, I shall appear, when I expose the following lines to your observation and censure. I would not have you imagine that any consideration, less than his favor, could have prevailed with me to have appeared thus publicly in print, or otherwise; for could I, with any ease to my own mind, have evaded this, or been excused from returning to this place (as I apprehended it required of me by the Almighty) you had never beheld my face in the province, much less any performance of this sort in public. I am not insensible, that the reason I have offered for writing, as well as the subject itself, may probably be considered as the production of a distempered and enthusiastic brain; as it is possible, on such a novel and uncommon occasion, as a woman’s appearing on the behalf of God and religion, you may (as others have done in the like circumstances) be induced to consider such an one under some unaccountable delusion, or affected with religious madness; and more especially, as the things recommended to your consideration, are offered by a simple female of your own country: ...

... I shall premise one proposition, on which all I have to offer will greatly depend, viz. That all mankind have a measure and manifestation of the Light, Spirit, or Grace of God, given them to profit withal. This doctrine of the universal extent of the grace of God, the people called Quakers, hold in a peculiar manner, and are distinguished by, from some other dissenting sects, who generally limit God’s gifts of his Holy Spirit, or saving means, to what they call The Elect; and assert, that the rest of mankind are (as they term it) passed by, or denied the means of salvation, being predestinated from all eternity to destruction.

... But some have said to me, We grant that Christians ought to walk agreeable to the dictates of the spirit of Christ; but the Quakers make the guidance and direction of the Spirit necessary in trivial and indifferent matters; nay, sometimes they offer its dictates as a reason for many things accounted by us irrational and absurd.—I answer; With reference to our duty and obedience to the Almighty, I consider no action indifferent; everything of this nature must tend to some purpose, good or evil: And ’tis upon this consideration that
we extend the doctrine of the cross, self-denial and perfect obedience to
the precepts of Christ, farther than the generality of those who profess the
Christian name: And I take this occasion to say, my principal errand among
you is to recommend, as far as I am enabled, these Christian doctrines; since
our Lord himself positively declares, *That unless we take up a daily cross,* (to
our corrupt wills and affections) we *cannot be his disciples* . . .

. . . I have also considered, how backward the generality of people are to
receive advice, even when it has been offered by religious, pious and learned
men; and that the labors of such have had but little effect on the minds and
conduct of many called Christians; and reflecting on the greatness of my
inability, as well as the improbability of my being serviceable in God’s cause,
I have been induced to say, *Lord! who will believe my report, since so many have
labored (as I have thought) in vain? Shall I, a poor female, undertake for God?*

. . . And farther, though I am but dust and ashes, I thus presumed to excuse
myself; *Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast been
pleased to discover thy will to me.* But to an Almighty Power, who doth accord-
ing to his righteous will, both in the armies of heaven, and among the inhab-
itants of the earth, who shall say, *What dost thou?* And since he is pleased
to send by the hand of whom he will send, I no longer resisted his will, but
became obedient to his word and power, against which I had long reasoned,
and objected my unfitness; though the Apostle Paul informs us, *That as many
as have been baptized into CHRIST (or with his Baptism of fire and the Holy
Ghost, and have witnessed the chaffy1 nature in them consumed, and by this
means) have put on CHRIST (that then there is no distinction or difference
among Christians in a religious sense) there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there
is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female:* 2 For, says the Apostle,
*ye are all one in CHRIST JESUS.* Thus, he seems to allow our sex the same
Gospel privileges with the rest of mankind. And the royal prophet calls on
the female, as well as the male part of God’s rational creation, to celebrate
the praise of our common governor and benefactor. “Why then,” says one,
“should woman be denied her canticle of praise in the general chorus, since
out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, God will still ordain and perfect
praise?” And we may further observe, when the Tabernacle of the Lord was
erected in the wilderness, the women, we are told, who were willing hearted,

1 Chaff, the inedible portion of wheat, is separated from it during the threshing pro-
cess; similarly, Hume appears to imply that the sinful aspects of human nature will
be separated from the redeemed elements of the soul in the process of sanctification.
2 Galatians 3:28
brought their free-will offerings, and presented them towards the building, or at least embellishing of this moveable temple, which, ‘tis said, was a type of the true church militant, and the tabernacle which God has pitched, and not man. And if females were allowed to assist and contribute to the work of the Lord, under the law, why should any, or the least essay towards the repairing the breaches in God’s building, be rejected under the Gospel; since we do not offer or propose any new doctrine, nor endeavor to lay any other foundation than that which is already laid, viz, “The revelation of the spirit of JESUS CHRIST the righteous, in the soul of man, on which the church of CHRIST is founded and built....”

....And we may further observe, that the Spirit of CHRIST was not limited to his immediate disciples, to whom it was to be sent as a comforter and director; but he tells them, it should appear to the world of unbelievers in another administration or office, viz. That of a reprover for sin. For when CHRIST ascended up on high, he gave gifts to men, yea, even to the rebellious, Eph. 4:8. And the gifts of the Holy Ghost, Poole, in his Annotations,\(^3\) tells us, “Were not, as some imagine, confined to the Apostle’s days, but that Christians, in succeeding ages, received as large proportions of the divine influences and gifts of the Holy Spirit as formerly.” And that females did receive these gifts, as well as the men, and on proper occasions did exercise them, John Locke, in his paraphrase on Paul’s Epistles,\(^4\) assures us, by proof. He tells us, “That God, for order sake, had instituted in the world a proper subordination of the weaker sex to the stronger; yet (says he) this hindered not but that he might make use of the weaker sex to any function, whenever he thought fit, as well as he did the men.” He says much more to the same purpose; but I leave him to those who may have an opportunity and inclination to read him further on this subject; and return to illustrate, as well as I am able, the rule of my conduct in religious matters. I am sensible that it is my duty, first and principally, and above all other considerations, to love, adore, honor and obey, the Supreme Being; and next, I find it my duty to love my neighbor as myself; and to observe to act in the same just and upright manner in every circumstance, that I desire he should act in towards myself: Therefore, if, upon

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\(^3\) Matthew Poole (1624–1679) was a dissenting minister whose verse-by-verse commentary on the Bible, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible* (1683), went through multiple editions from its original publication through the end of the nineteenth century.

\(^4\) The manuscript of English philosopher John Locke’s (1632–1704) *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul* was published posthumously in 1707.
a scrutiny, or examination, I find my design or action directly or indirectly
tending to the dishonor of God, or in any shape injurious to my neighbor, I
am immediately instructed, by the inward monitor, or light of CHRIST in
my conscience, to decline it; and if I forbear the action, &c. I believe you will
grant I am right so far.

... I was naturally led, in some degree, to what is called Quakerism (though
it appeared to me in no other form nor name, than that of primitive Chris-
tianity) which, in my first thoughts of religion, I had no more intention of
embracing than I had of receiving Mahometism; knowing little more of the
Quakers, than that they were a plain people in their garb and speech. But it
has been remarked to me, that my mother was some time of this persuasion,
and no wonder that I should have a warm side for her opinion. I answered,
my father was a member of the Church of England, and educated me in that
way; and I well remember, I had a much warmer side for his opinion; not that
I knew what was the essential difference in their religious sentiments, or at
least that affected me, any farther than that one allowed me something more
liberty in dress; whereas the other would tell me plainness in apparel was
most agreeable to Christianity, and to the Divine Being, who hated pride in
his creatures. To be sure I thought this doctrine absurd, by the reflection I
remember I made at the time, That God, I believed, would not reject me, on the
score of wearing lace, or a fine and gay silk gown. I have thought since... that
the Almighty could not descend so low as to notice such trifles, or mark lit-
tle follies, if gaiety in apparel should be one; but no wonder that when I was
a child, I should reason as a child. I am sensible that silks, ribbons and lace,
are not anywhere in Scripture directly forbidden; but I learn from thence,
that pride, and all manner of superfluity, is. And if, by wearing this rich silk,
or adorning ourselves with the other superfluous ornaments, we feed and
nourish a proud, vain desire, it becomes by this circumstance as unlawful
as pride itself; and that they do so, I have greatly experienced: For though
religion stands not simply in clothes, yet true religion stands in that which
sets bounds and limits to the mind with respect to clothes, as well as other
things. And to strengthen this assertion, or rather to prove it, I shall offer
an instance of my own experience, viz. When it pleased the Lord to visit my
soul, and to appear to me in his glory, the view of which discovered to me my
own unworthiness, and caused me not, only to despise and abhor myself, but

5 Susanna Bayley Wigington was raised by a Quaker exhorter, Mary Fisher.
6 Henry Wigington, a prosperous landowner and political leader in Charleston,
was an Anglican.
my splendid apparel also: I had now no delight in dress and ornament, nor other things I had usually taken much pleasure in: true Christianity, which I began to be acquainted with, set a bound to my desires, and directed me to plainness, before I had any intention of joining the Society of the people called Quakers; and indeed all earthly and transitory objects were, and are, in my view and estimation, as loss, dross and dung, in comparison of the excellency, glory and beauty, I behold in God, and find in the enjoyment of his divine favor; and at times I am ready to cry out, O! how great is his Glory, and transcendently great his beauty!...

...I have told you already, that I have felt great trouble and anxiety of mind on your account; but though’ my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears; and could I, or anyone else, weep continually day and night for you, that you may rest in the day of trouble; yet another’s concern cannot do this great work for you, without your own hand in the business which relates to your soul’s happiness; since an inspired apostle assures you, you must, by divine assistance, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling:” For no man can redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for his soul. I may (as I do earnestly) desire your happiness, but I can’t procure it for you. I may wish you Heaven, but I can’t obtain it for you: Yet I earnestly pray, That the God and Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom....

...To Him, and to the Word of his Grace, I commit and commend you; assuring you, my dear Fellow-mortals, that my fervent desire and unfeigned prayer, unto the God of my Life, for you all, is, that you may be saved!

Sophia Hume

Charles-Town, in South-Carolina, the 30th, of the Tenth Month, 1747.
Esther Edwards Burr (1732–1758) grew up at the center of the First Great Awakening, a revival movement that swept through the colonies in the 1740s and 1750s, in the home and church of her father, the famous American theologian Jonathan Edwards. At twenty, after a very brief courtship, she married the Reverend Aaron Burr, a rising star among supporters of the Awakening, and one of the founders of the recently established College of New Jersey (Princeton).

As a young wife (and before long, mother) far from home in an intensely scrutinized social position, Burr found solace in writing letters to her childhood friend Sarah Prince. In these excerpts, we see Burr in the midst of a busy life still taking the time to cultivate her own spirituality. Her letters—which freely mingle intimate details about her own longings for a more experiential religion, chatty reflections on household events, and commentary on the political and theological troubles of the day—give a sense of the way Protestant evangelicals in the mid-eighteenth century viewed all areas of life through a Christocentric lens. They also hint at the fact that although women in evangelical circles were expected to apply their minds as well as their hearts to their faith, they were still often discouraged from engaging similarly with public policy questions.

Source: The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754–1757, Carol F. Karlsen and Laurie Crumpacker, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 57, 61, 64, 68–70, 72, 76–77, 81, 92, 94, 95, 97, 123, 136, 142, 177, 178, 182. We have modernized spelling and capitalization.

October 21, 1754

This afternoon I rode out to do some business, and to see the widow, the fatherless and the sick. There is something to be learned, go where one will, if we have but a heart to reflect and improve. I can't but be amazed that ever I was disposed to repine at the dispensations of Providence for when the
dispensation has been most grievous, how much more merciful has God been to me than others that are far better than I. Sometimes I am afraid I am to have my portion in this life, and what a miserable portion will that be. O my dear, let me beg my bread rather than a fullness on these terms!

**November 10, 1754 Sabbath A. M.**

Went to meeting. Heard a discourse from those words of Christ’s concerning John, “What went ye out for to a reed shaken of the wind?” which put us all upon inquiring what end we had in view when we came to the House of God and his ordinances etc. . . . [in original] I thought I felt some longings to meet Christ at his Table. I hope I felt a little more alive than I do commonly, but Oh my deadness! P. M. Stayed at home with Sally and Sue who is very poorly and has been so some time. There is duty at home as well as at the house of God.

**December 1, 1754 Sabbath**

You desire Mr. Burr’s and my thoughts about what Solomon’s good woman kept a candle a burning all night for, and query whether she did not set up to read, or rather seem to take it for granted that she did.

I have asked Mr. Burr for his thoughts, and he will not be serious about it but said in a jest that she kept a candle burning for the same reason that Mr. Pemberton did, but I intend to ask him again. . . . [in original] My thoughts are these—first her candle goes out not by night (viz) as soon as ’tis night. You know ’tis a common way of speaking, as for instance, such a person did not get up by day. We don’t mean that he lay in bed all day, but he did not get up as soon as the day broke—our people are coming—you shall have more of this subject the first opportunity I can get to write.

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1 Matthew 11:7; Luke 7:24
2 As the editors of Burr’s *Journal* note: “Sue, also called Sukey in the journal, was a young servant or slave in the Burr household. Readers should be aware that Esther also used the nicknames Sue and Sukey for her sister Susanna . . . and Sukey for Susannah Shippen. It is not always clear which of the three young women she was referring to.” *Journal*, 61.
3 Proverbs 31:18
December 12, 1754 Thursday

To return to my good woman which I had like to have forgot. By her candle’s not going out by night, or as soon as night, may she show her industry, that her business did not cease as soon as night came. She was not in a hurry to lay all aside and go to bed as lazy people do. . . . [in original] It could not be that she sat up till two, or three, o’ the clock or great part of the night as you seem to suppose, for ’tis said of her verse 15, “she ariseth also while it is yet night,” etc. . . . [in original] Now I query whether ’tis possible for her to arise so early (if she stay up so late as you suppose) and live under it, unless she was made of some other sort of matter than we be, which is not very likely, for Solomon speaks of her as one of US, and that makes him wonder so much, and admire her so greatly as to set her price far above rubies. I appeal to your own experience. You know you can’t get up early in the morn if you set up very late, don’t you, say? But if you have any objections to what I have said, pray let me know it in our next.

January 1, 1755

This day instead of being a play day is turned into a fast which reaches as far as the bounds of our Presbytery. Was at meeting this A. M. Heard a sermon from Hosea 9th and 12th verses, “Though they bring up their children, etc.” The discourse was very proper for the occasion. Oh my dear what reason have we to be humbled under the present threatenings of heaven which are very just and what troubles may we not expect at this day when iniquity abounds, and the love of even God’s own Children waxes cold. Indeed, my dear friend we have reason to expect such times as this land never saw. ’Tis very probably you and I may live to see persecution, and may be called to give up at the stake—Oh Lord, look in infinite mercy on us, and save this wicked land for the Ten Righteous’ sake! . . .

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4 See Genesis 18: 16-33 where Abraham pleads with the Lord to spare the corrupt city of Sodom; God eventually agrees to spare the city if he can find ten righteous men in it.
January 2, 1755

I am very glad to see people in any measure awake with a concern about the danger of being swallowed by our popish [Catholic] enemies. How much easier this is, than to awaken sleepy souls (in the greatest danger from their infinitely more terrible foe the Devil) to the least concern about it. What blessed times would it be if all were much engaged in conversation about the grand concerns of their never dying souls, as they are about their bodies and estates, when they imagine them in a little danger of being injured. . . .

January 17, 1755

I don’t know but I write the same thing over and over again, and again, for as soon as I have laid down my pen, I have perfectly forgot that I have been writing about and I dare not read it over, for it appears so silly that I can’t bear to send it out. . . . [in original] Our house is very gloomy, as ’tis always when Mr. Burr is gone. I am ready to imagine the sun does not give so much light as it did when my best self was at home, and I am in the glooms two, half dead, my head gone. Behead a person and they will soon die. . . .

February 16, 1755 Sabbath Eve

At meeting all day. Mr. Burr is still insisting on a reformation in families, and tells the people they must expect that this will be the burden of his sermon until he sees reformation beginning. He has been remarkably stirred up to be fervent in his preaching of late. Oh that the Lord would bless his labors! You my dear will join heartily in this petition.

February 23, 1755 Sabbath Eve

At meeting all day.

A. M. A very awakening sermon to young people.

P. M. A discourse to rouse old people to do their duty to their children and servants, in counseling, instructing, and restraining ’em—I can’t but hope some good will be speedily done in this place. Mr. Burr is in a very uncommon degree stirred up to sound the alarm of the Gospel.

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5 a reference to the French
March 2, 1755 Sabbath Eve

A. M. A discourse exhorting Christians to the great duty of admonishing one another in a kind friendly manner.

P.M. A discourse from those words, “Husbands love your wives, and let the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

You can guess what sort of sermon we had. It was really to the purpose.

March 8, 1755 Saturday P. M.

The sermon is come out of the press. I suppose it to be the only one we shall ever get in the press. You my friend shall have one of ’em as soon as an opportunity serves. ’Tis a little odd, there is no text, and not much method compared to your New England sermons, and for that reason may be rejected by those nice people that can’t swallow anything but text and doctrine first, second proposition, then inferences in just such an order. Mr. Burr says you must tell ’em that people this way are prejudiced against the Scriptures, and the discourse would not go down so well. If at the beginning stood a text of Scripture, they would perhaps be so frightened with that and the author’s being a Presbyterian that they would not dare to venture any farther.

June 14, 1755 Saturday Morn

...We have a very fine microscope, and telescope. Indeed we have two microscopes—and we make great discoveries tho’ not yet any new ones that I know of. The microscope magnifies a louse to be 8 feet long upon the wall—the telescope is very short, not above 14 inches, but we can see to read small print as small as in our common Bibles across the street, which is about 7 rod, and we can see Jupiter’s Moons—I want you here prodigiously to see and wonder with us.

July 19, 1755 Saturday Eve

...Oh the dreadful, awful news! General Braddock is killed and his army defeated—o my dear, what will, what must become of us! Oh our sins, our sins—they are grown up to the very heavens, and call aloud for Vengeance,

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6 This is a paraphrase of Ephesians 5:22-33.

7 Burr’s January 1, 1755 sermon
the Vengeance that the Lord has sent—’tis just, ’tis right—I haven’t a word to say against the ordering of God—for I know I have been guilty enough to procure this judgment of heaven—I really believe that our sins are much greater, and more aggravated than the sins of our enemies, and it would be infinitely just in the ever blessed God to deliver us into their hands and utterly reject us and cast us off forever as he has done many a time his professing people heretofore.

**August 8–9 1755 Friday and Saturday**

Too gloomy to write—the [situation?] of our public affairs are so melancholy that I am sunk at my heart, and go bowed down like a bullrush—I never was so sunk with anything in my life…. Oh! if a praying spirit was to be seen amongst Gods people things would look encouraging, and I should hope mercy was yet in store for this wicked land—you can’t conceive my dear friend what a tender mother undergoes for her children at such a day as this, to think of bringing up children to be dashed against the stones by our barbarous enemies—or which is worse, to be enslaved by them, and obliged to turn Papist—it seems to me sometimes if I had no child nor was likely to have any that I should not be much distressed, but I must leave the subject—’tis too dreadful to think of.

**December 14, 1755 Sabbath Eve**

I have been taking some pains with Sukey Shippen. She is a poor ignorant stupid girl in matters of religion, though not so ignorant as I feared I should have found her—she has an old aunt that lives in the house that has taken some pains with her—she says her aunt is a very good woman, and I believe she is by all I have heard—and I don’t know but they think she is good enough for all the house.

**December 20, 1755 Saturday**

I wish I could help troubling you with my troubles that can do neither you nor me any good, but I am perplexed about our public affairs. The men say (tho’ not Mr. Burr, he is not one of that sort) that women have no business to concern themselves about ’em but to trust to those that know better and be content to be destroyed because that they did all for the best—indeed, if I was
thoughts

convinced that our great men did act as they really thought was for the glory of God and the good of the country, it would go a great ways to make me easy.

January 13, 1756 Tuesday Eve

This eve Miss Sukey began with me about her soul’s concerns, and I find she has had a great many very serious thoughts since she has been here. She is full of her inquiries, what she must do to be good. She tells me she tries to pray from her heart but finds she can’t, and she seems to have some sense of sin—you can’t think how my heart is rejoiced—Oh that God would give us this one soul! I seem as if I could not be denied my request that God would perfect the good work that seems to be begun in her whiles in this house—oh how great a blessing upon us—I hope God has heard some of my poor prayers for her—and I hope for a heart to pray more earnestly for her than ever—what a comfort to see those under our care inclining to the ways of religion and true virtue.

January 14, 1756 Wednesday

A very stormy day. I find a great deal of pleasure in instructing this miss I have with me, for she seems to have both ears open whenever I say anything by way of instruction—she is a very judicious child for one of twelve years old—she grows quite womanly lately—I shall be very proud if I can make a clever girl of her, for she was really a baby when she came here—she grows very notable.
After joining a radical group known as the “Shaking Quakers” due to their practice of engaging in ecstatic dance during their worship services, Ann Lee (1736–1784) began to experience visions. In these, she saw that just as the majority of living things had both male and female elements, God also had both a masculine and a feminine nature. Lee began to believe that Jesus had come to earth as the embodiment of God’s masculine nature only and to teach that she was herself the embodiment of God’s feminine nature and the second coming of the second person of the Trinity, or Christ. To her followers, who eventually called themselves the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing, Lee also revealed that the millennium (or end of the world) was near, and would be hastened if men and women would commit themselves to live communal, celibate lives devoted to prayer and good works.

After an extended period of persecution in England, Lee moved with her most devoted followers to New York in 1774. Lee’s emphasis on personal holiness and on ecstatic spiritual experiences found a ready audience in the region and thousands of converts joined the group. The Shakers (as they became known) eventually spread throughout the Northeast and the Northwest Territory, forming communities dedicated to simplicity and brotherly love. As Shaker communities attempted to live out Lee’s motto, “Hands to work and hearts to God,” they provided an essential social service through their practice of adopting orphan children, educating them and providing training in trade skills that would allow them to succeed should they ever leave the religious community. Although the majority of American Christians considered their religious doctrines heterodox, they are emblematic of that strain of American Protestantism that emphasizes clean living and practical craftsmanship as pathways to human flourishing and spiritual fulfillment.

God, in His all wise providence, had laid the foundation of man’s redemption in Judea, among the Jews, who were called his chosen people. It was there the First Born in the New Creation, who was to be the Savior of the world, was first revealed. There he fulfilled his ministry in his earthly tabernacle, and drank the full cup of his sufferings on earth; and from thence he ascended to His Father, that the way might be prepared for his second coming, in the female part of his manhood, for the travel of souls in the regeneration. And when the time was fully come, according to the appointment of God, Christ was again revealed, not in Judea, to the Jews, nor in the person of a male: but in England, to a Gentile nation, and in the person of a female.

This extraordinary female, whom, her followers believe God had chosen, and in whom Christ did visibly make his second appearance, was Ann Lee. . . .

. . . At length, about the year 1770, after a scene of deep tribulation, and the most excessive sufferings and cries to God, she received a full revelation of the root and foundation of human depravity, and of the very transgression of the first man and woman in the garden of Eden. Then, she clearly saw whence and wherein all mankind were lost and separated from God, and the only possible way of recovery.

By the immediate revelation of God, she henceforth bore an open testimony against the lustful gratifications of the flesh, as the source and foundation of human corruption. Her testimony was delivered with such power of God and accompanied with the word of prophecy in such a marvelous and searching manner, that it entered into the very secrets of the heart; by which means the most hidden abominations were brought to light! She testified in the most plain and pointed manner, that no soul could follow Christ in the regeneration, while living in the works of natural generation, and wallowing in their lusts.

The light and power of God revealed in Ann, and through her revealed to those who received her testimony, had such sensible effect in giving them power over all sin, and filling them with visions, revelations, and gifts of God, that she was received and acknowledged as the first spiritual Mother in Christ, and the second heir of the Covenant of Life in the New Creation. Hence she received the title of Mother; and hence those who received and obeyed her testimony found a great increase in the power and gifts of God; while those who rejected it lost all their former light and power, and fell back into a state of darkness, and into the common course of the world. . . .

[The text gives a brief account of Lee’s persecution in England and subsequent move to America in 1774. It took several years for her followers to settle themselves in their new land.]
... [I]n the spring of the year 1780, God, in His providence, opened the way for that great and mighty work which they had long been waiting to see, and which, shortly after, filled the whole neighboring country with anxiety and alarm....

The gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost were evident among them. Shaking, trembling, speaking in unknown tongues, prophesying and singing melodious songs, were gifts with which they seemed continually to be filled; with many other signs and operations which showed the mighty power of God, and pointed out the particular sins and abominations which those who came to see them had committed. Even the very thoughts of the heart were plainly and particularly pointed out, insomuch that many feared and trembled in their presence, while others ran to get out of the way, lest their sins should be told them.

Many inquiries were made concerning their religion and doctrines....

To the married people Mother said, “You must forsake the marriage of the flesh, or you cannot be married to the Lamb, nor have any share in the resurrection of Christ; for those who are counted worthy to have part in the resurrection of Christ, neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like unto the angels.”...

Inquirers asked the Elders, “Are you perfect? Do you live without sin?” The Elders answered, “The power of God, revealed in this day, does enable souls to cease from sin; and we have received that power; we have actually left off committing sin, and we live in daily obedience to the will of God.”...

Joseph Meacham and Calvin Harlow were among the first who visited this little Church, for the purpose of searching out the truth of their religion. After much conversation, and many critical inquiries, in all of which they received plain and satisfactory answers, Joseph Meacham sent Calvin Harlow to Mother Ann with the following observation and query, namely: Saint Paul says, “Let your women keep silent in the Churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything let them ask their husbands, at home; for it is a shame to a woman to speak in the church. But you not only speak, but seem to be an Elder in your church. How do you reconcile this with the Apostle’s doctrine”?

Mother Ann answered, “The order of man in the natural creation is a figure of the order of God, for man in the spiritual creation. As the order of nature requires a man and a woman to produce offspring, so, where they both stand in their proper order, the man is the first, and the woman the second, in the government of the family. He is the father, and she the mother, and
all the children, both male and female, must be subject to their parents; and
the woman, being second, must be subject to her husband, who is the first;
but when the man is gone, the right of government belongs to the woman;
so is the family of Christ.”

This answer opened a vast field of contemplation to Joseph, and filled his
mind with great light and understanding concerning the spiritual work of
God. He clearly saw that the New Creation could not be perfect in its order,
without a father, and a mother. That, as the natural creation was the offspring
of a natural father and mother, so the spiritual creation must be the offspring
of a spiritual father and mother.

He saw Jesus Christ to be the Father of the Spiritual Creation, who was
now absent; and he saw Ann Lee to be the Mother of all who were now begotten
in the regeneration; and she, being present in the body, the power and
authority of Christ on earth, was committed to her; and to her appertained
the right of leading and governing all her spiritual children. . . .

Great pains were taken by Mother Ann and the Elders to instruct the
Believers in the care and management of temporal things. They were often
taught to be industrious, to put their hands to work, and their hearts to God,
to be neat and cleanly, and observe good economy; to use the things of this
world as not abusing them; to be prudent and saving, and let nothing be lost,
or wasted through carelessness, or neglect; to avoid equally, covetousness,
and prodigality; to be kind and charitable to the poor, and to keep clear of
debt.

These things were strictly enjoined upon the Believers from time to time,
as matters of importance, in order to secure a spiritual blessing. For it was
always held up as a doctrine of truth, and which was abundantly proved by
experience, that those who were unfaithful in temporal things, could not find
the blessing and protection of God in their spiritual travel; hence, a faithful
and wise improvement of their time and talents in the things of time was
essentially necessary in order to inherit the true riches.

On a particular occasion, Mother Ann spoke to Zeruah Clark as follows,
“Be faithful to keep the gospel; be neat and industrious; keep your family’s
clothes clean and decent; see that your house is kept clean, and your victuals
is prepared in good order, that when the Brethren come in from their hard
work they can bless you, and eat their food with thankfulness, without mur-
muring, and be able to worship God in the beauty of holiness. Watch, and be
careful, don’t speak harsh, nor cast reflections upon them; but let your words
be few, and seasoned with grace.”. . .

Mother’s industry, prudence and economy, were equal to her zeal and
charity; so that, in all things, she was a pattern of godliness, and showed herself to be a mother indeed, in every good word and work. As the Lord Jesus did set an example of righteousness to all men, and instructed all Believers to follow his footsteps, in order to find acceptance with God, so Mother Ann set an example of righteousness to all women, and instructed all her followers to take up the same cross, in order to find their relation to Christ.
I
sabella Graham (1742–1814) received a thorough education at a girls’ boarding school in her native Scotland where she also sat under the ministry of the Presbyterian John Witherspoon (later president of Princeton College and ardent supporter of American independence). She married a physician in the Royal Army and accompanied him to America, where he was deployed to help suppress the rebellion in the American colonies. Widowed, she returned to Scotland with her children and subsequently gained a reputation as both an educator and philanthropist, establishing herself as the head of a boarding school for young women and also as a leading proponent of education for poor children.

In 1785, the Reverend Witherspoon visited Graham in Edinburgh: he was so impressed by the results of her work that he urged her to return to America in order to help establish the educational trajectory for the future wives and mothers of the new nation. Graham agreed, and she moved to New York in the fall of 1789, opening a school to educate the daughters of the city’s elite to wide acclaim. Graham also continued her philanthropical efforts on the behalf of widows and orphans, helping to raise money from among her wealthy acquaintances, and in 1797, organizing several ladies of the city (including Elizabeth Seton, Document 11) to found the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children. In addition to serving as the administrative head of the organization, Graham also took it upon herself to teach the children until other arrangements could be made. As her address to the young ladies who took over the task of teaching the poor children of the city makes clear, Graham (like many of the Founding generation) understood there to be a strong link between the development of individual moral character and education. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Graham envisioned that such educational experiences might best be performed by women as an extension of their motherly duties and character, and encouraged them to take on a public role as teachers.

On Opening a School for Poor Children

Addressed to the Teachers who Volunteered Their Services

My dear young ladies,

Everything new becomes matter of speculation, and variety of opinion.

An association of Ladies for the relief of destitute widows and orphans was a new thing in this country. It was feeble in its origin; many treated it with ridicule; many raised against it the standard of opposition. The men could not allow our sex the steadiness and perseverance necessary to establish such an undertaking. But God put his seal upon it; and, under his fostering care, it has prospered beyond the most sanguine expectations of its projectors. Its fame is spread over the United States, and celebrated in foreign countries.

It has been a precedent to many cities, who have followed the laudable example. This fame is not more brilliant than just. The hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, shelter is provided for the outcasts, and medicine for the sick; and the soothing voice of sympathy cheers the disconsolate. Who are the authors of all these blessings? Your mothers, ladies, the benevolent members of this, so justly famed Society.

But, who are these children, that idly ramble through the streets, a prey to growing depravity and vicious example? They quarrel, they swear; and such, no doubt, will lie and steal. And that group of dear little creatures running about in the most imminent danger, apparently without protection: are they under the care of this so justly-famed Society? They are. They are clothed, their mothers’ fireside is made warm for them; but no culture is provided for their minds, nor protection from baneful example. These will, in time, follow that of the older ones, and grow up the slaves of idleness and vice, in the certain road to ruin.

Alas! alas! and is there no help, no preventive? Yes, there is! Behold the angelic band! Hail, ye virtuous daughters, worthy of your virtuous mothers! Come forward, and tread in their steps! Snatch their little innocents from the whirling vortex; bring them to a place of safety; teach them to know their Father, God; tell them of their Saviour’s love; lead them through the history of his life: mark to them the example he set, the precepts he recorded for their observance, and the promises for their comfort: and by teaching them to read, enable them to retrace all your instructions, when their eyes see you no more.

My dear young ladies, the sacrifice you have made to virtue, shall most assuredly meet its reward: but, like your mothers, you will experience much
painful banter. Let it pass—suffer it quietly. When your scheme begins to 
ripen, and the fruits appear, who shall be able to withhold their praise? Only 
be steadfast, draw not back, and justify the prophecies of many.

A great general, in ancient times, in search of glory, landed his troops on 
the hostile coast, and then burnt all his ships; thus it became necessary for 
them to conquer or die. You have, ladies, already embarked in this design; 
there is no remaining neuter now; your names and undertaking are in every 
mouth: you must press forward, and justify your cause; and justified it shall 
be, if you persevere; it cannot be otherwise. The benevolence you contem-
plate is as superior to that already in circulation, as the interest of the soul is 
to that of the body: and it is your own: the very scheme originated in a young 
mind in this company. The Society were contemplating mercenary agents, 
schools for pay; and one is already established.

But this labor of love who could have hoped for it? A Society of young 
ladies, in rank the first in the city, in the very bloom of life, and full of its pros-
pects, engaged in those pleasures and amusements, which generally engross 
the mind, and shut out every idea unconnected with self—coming forward 
and offering—what? Not their purses, that were trash: but their own personal 
services to instruct the ignorant, and become the saviors of many of their sex. 
It is indeed a new thing, and more strange, in this age of dissipation, than 
that institution from which it sprang. May this, too, become the darling of 
Providence! May God put his seal upon this also! May he bless and prosper 
you in this undertaking; bless you, and make you a blessing!
Jarena Lee (1783–c. 1864), a free African American woman from Philadelphia became the first women licensed to preach by the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in 1819 after she impressed Richard Allen, the denomination’s founder, with her extemporaneous speaking skills one Sunday morning when the scheduled male preacher was unable to address the congregation. Lee had actually spoken with Allen about her desire to preach the gospel over a decade earlier, but at that time, he had refused to sanction it due to her gender. With Allen’s support, Lee became a well-known itinerant preacher, speaking with great success to mixed-race congregations throughout the Mid-Atlantic, Old Northwest, and Northeast.

In this chapter taken from her autobiography, Lee recalls her initial call to preach along with Allen’s response and then questions the validity of his delayed recognition of her ministry. She presents herself both humbly and with great confidence as like unto the women and disciples who followed Jesus—poor, with little formal education, but inspired by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the life and resurrection message of Christ. That a black woman in antebellum America could publish such a statement of identity is striking.


Between four and five years after my sanctification,¹ on a certain time, an impressive silence fell upon me, and I stood as if someone was about to speak to me, yet I had no such thought in my heart.—But to my utter surprise there

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¹ In Christian theology, sanctification refers to the process by which the sinful nature of the believer is changed into the perfectly holy nature of Christ. This process has been variously understood to be immediate and total or as ongoing and incremental by various groups in Christian history. Lee believed she had experienced a complete regeneration of spirit at a discrete moment in her life; her confidence in her own
seemed to sound a voice which I thought I distinctly heard, and most cer-
tainly understood, which said to me, “Go preach the Gospel!” I immediately
replied aloud “No one will believe me.” Again, I listened, and again the same
voice seemed re-say—“Preach the Gospel; I will put words in your mouth,
and will turn your enemies to become your friends.”

At first, I supposed that Satan had spoken to me, for I had read that he
could transform himself into an angel of light for the purpose of deception.
Immediately I went into a secret place, and called upon the Lord to know
if he had called me to preach, and whether I was deceived or not; when
there appeared to my view the form and figure of a pulpit, with a Bible lying
thereon, the back of which was presented to me as plainly as if it had been
a literal fact.

In consequence of this, my mind became so exercised, that during the
night following, I took a text and preached in my sleep. I thought there stood
before me a great multitude, while I expounded to them the things of reli-
gion. So violent were my exertions and so loud were my exclamations, that I
awoke from the sound of my own voice, which also awoke the family of the
house where I resided. Two days after, I went to see the preacher in charge
of the African Society, who was the Rev. Richard Allen, the same before
named in these pages, to tell him that I felt it my duty to preach the gospel.
But as I drew near the street in which his house was, which was in the city of
Philadelphia, my courage began to fail me; so terrible did the cross appear,
it seemed that I should not be able to bear it. Previous to my setting out to
go to see him, so agitated was my mind, that my appetite for my daily food
failed me entirely. Several times on my way there, I turned back again; but
as often I felt my strength again renewed, and I soon found that the nearer I
approached to the house of the minister, the less was my fear. Accordingly,
as soon as I came to the door, my fears subsided, the cross was removed, all
things appeared pleasant—I was tranquil.

I now told him, that the Lord had revealed it to me, that I must preach
the gospel. He replied, by asking, in what sphere I wished to move in. I said,
among the Methodists. He then replied, that a Mrs. Cook, a Methodist lady,
had also some time before requested the same privilege; who, it was believed,
had done much good in the way of exhortation, and holding prayer meetings;
and who had been permitted to do so by the verbal license of the preacher in
charge at the time. But as to women preaching, he said that our Discipline

personal holiness is, in large part, what gave her the courage to challenge social
norms against women preaching.
knew nothing at all about it—that it did not call for women preachers. This I was glad to hear, because it removed the fear of the cross—but no sooner did this feeling cross my mind, than I found that a love of souls had in a measure departed from me; that holy energy which burned within me, as a fire, began to be smothered. This I soon perceived.

O how careful ought we to be, lest through our by-laws of church government and discipline, we bring into disrepute even the word of life. For as unseemly as it may appear now-a-days for a woman to preach, it should be remembered that nothing is impossible with God. And why should it be thought impossible, heterodox, or improper for a woman to preach I seeing the Saviour died for the woman as well as for the man.

If the man may preach, because the Saviour died for him, why not the woman seeing he died for her also. Is he not a whole Saviour, instead of a half one, as those who hold it wrong for a woman to preach, would seem to make it appear.

Did not Mary first preach the risen Saviour, and is not the doctrine of the resurrection the very climax of Christianity—hangs not all our hope on this, as argued by St. Paul? Then did not Mary, a woman, preach the gospel? for she preached the resurrection of the crucified Son of God.

But some will say that Mary did not expound the Scripture, therefore, she did not preach, in the proper sense of the term. To this I reply, it may be that the term preach in those primitive times, did not mean exactly what it is now made to mean; perhaps it was a great deal more simple then, than it is now—if it were not, the unlearned fishermen could not have preached the gospel at all, as they had no learning.

To this it may be replied, by those who are determined not to believe that it is right for a woman to preach, that the disciples, though they were fishermen and ignorant of letters too, were inspired so to do. To which I would reply, that though they were inspired, yet that inspiration did not save them from showing their ignorance of letters, and of man's wisdom: this the multitude soon found out, by listening to the remarks of the envious Jewish priests. If then, to preach the gospel, by the gift of heaven, comes by inspiration solely, is God straitened; must he take the man exclusively? May he not, did he not, and can he not inspire a female to preach the simple story of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, and accompany it too with power to the sinner's heart. As for me, I am fully persuaded that the Lord called me to labor according to what I have received, in his vineyard. If he has not, how could he consistently bear testimony in favor of my poor labors, in awakening and converting sinners?
In my wanderings up and down among men, preaching according to my ability, I have frequently found families who told me that they had not for several years been to a meeting, and yet, while listening to hear what God would say by his poor female instrument, have believed with trembling—tears rolling down their cheeks, the signs of contrition and repentance towards God. I firmly believe that I have sown seed, in the name of the Lord, which shall appear with its increase at the great day of accounts, when Christ shall come to make up his jewels. . . .
Letter to Rev. Simon Brute, S. S.

Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton

September 1816

Raised an Episcopalian, Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton (1774–1821) felt deeply the responsibility of Christians to care for those less fortunate than themselves. In 1797, she helped Isabella Graham (Document 8) found the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children in New York City. Seton remained involved with the organization until doctors recommended she and her husband take their family to Italy in 1803, in an effort to restore his poor health. Although William Seton died shortly after their arrival in the country, Elizabeth and the children remained in Italy for almost two years. During this time, Seton became deeply interested in Catholicism and upon her return to New York in 1805, she was baptized as a Catholic.

After her conversion, Seton found herself ostracized from many of her former intimates. After struggling to maintain her household in New York for several years, in 1809, she accepted an invitation from the French Sulpician order to move to Maryland and open a school for Catholic girls. This she did, at the same time establishing a religious community known as the “Sisters of Charity” to oversee Saint Joseph’s Academy and Free School. Seton served as the head of both the community and the school until her death in 1821. For her labors, Seton was canonized by Pope Paul VI on September 14, 1975.

In this letter to her spiritual adviser, the Reverend Simon Brute, about her desire to see her sister, Mary Bayley Post, convert to Catholicism, Seton reflects on the anti-Catholic prejudice she faced after her conversion.


...Your letter to Sister [was] admirable, if first the big stone of darkest ignorance and indifference was removed on the point of FIRST NECESSITY, that there is any true Church or false church, right FAITH or wrong Faith—but blessed Soul [neither] you nor anyone who has not been in that ignorance
and indifference can imagine the size and depth of it—and putting myself again a moment in the place of my sister (even with my great advantage of having been passionately attached to religion when a Protestant, which she is not) I imagine I read your letter and looking up with vacant surprise would say “what does the Man mean[?] [W]ould he say that all who believe in our Lord are not safe, or if even a poor Turk or savage does not believe is he to be blamed for it . . . [in original] they make God a merciful being indeed if he would condemn souls of his own creation for their parents bringing them in the world on one side of it or the other.”

My Brother [Wright] Post once asked me so simply, “Sister Seton, they say you go to the Catholic church, what is the difference[?]” . . . [in original] “it is the first church, my brother, the old church the Apostles begun,” answered the poor trembling Betsy Seton, dreading always to be pushed on a subject she could only feel, but never express to these cool reasoners—“Church of the Apostles,” said my Brother, “why is not every church from the apostles”—Sister Post interrupted, “well apostles or no apostles let me be anything in the world but a Roman Catholic, a Methodist, Quaker, anything—a Quaker indeed I should like extremely, they are so nice and orderly and their dress so becoming . . . [in original] but Catholics [are] dirty, filthy, red faced . . . [in original] the church a horrid place of spits and pushing ragged etc., etc.,”—(Alas—I found it all that indeed if that had been a part of the religion) and she said to me, whispering in mystery, “they say my Sister, there is a great picture of our Savior all naked.” . . . [in original] dearest G it is a fact that a most pious, better informed woman than my sister or poor Betsy Seton found me kneeling before my crucifixion, and shrunk back with horror seeing a naked picture—that very lady Mrs. Livingston (of the Nobility of America) quit- ted the Protestant church for Methodist meeting and I said to those who laughed at her, “why not if she likes the Methodists” for ever accustomed to look only to little exterior attractions as the dress and quiet of the Quakers, a sweet enthusiastic preaching among the Methodists, a soft melting music of low voices among Anabaptists, or any other such nonsense, the thought of a right faith or wrong faith, true church or false one never enters the mind of one among a hundred.

—Oh MY GOD—my heart trembles and faints before him here in his little Sacristy close to his tabernacle while I ask How am I here? I taken, they left—

I tell you a secret hidden almost from my own Soul it is so delicate that my hatred of opposition, troublesome enquires etc. brought me in the church more than conviction—how often I argued to my fearful uncertain heart at all events Catholics must be as safe as any other religion, they say none are
safe but themselves—*perhaps it is true*, if not, at all events I shall be safe with them as any other—it is the Way of Suffering and the Cross for me that is another point of security—... My God pity me—I was in the church many times before I dared look at the Sacred Host at the elevation, so daunted by their cry of idolatry—there dearest G—you read what I would have carried to the grave, only I wish you to know well [*as*] far as I can tell you the impossibility for a poor Protestant to see our meaning without being led step by step and the Veil lifted little by little....
Born into a prominent Jewish family in Philadelphia, Rebecca Gratz (1781–1869) came of age during a period in which most reform efforts were led by religiously motivated Christians. Troubled at the idea that poor Jews had to either forgo much-needed assistance or stoically endure the concerted missionary efforts of their benefactors, in 1819 Gratz organized the first independent Jewish women’s charitable society in America. The Female Hebrew Benevolent Society (FHBS) focused its efforts exclusively on Jewish families, supporting their religious traditions as well as their material needs.

In this organizational report from 1835, Gratz (who served as the recording secretary for the FHBS) suggests the cost to American Jews of living as a religious minority in a land of religious freedom is a certain type of spiritual impoverishment. She calls for a renewed emphasis on religious training as the necessary corrective. In 1838, shortly after this report was written, Gratz split the educational element of the FHBS into a new organization, the Hebrew Sunday School. The faculty of the Hebrew Sunday School in Philadelphia were all women and Gratz likewise urged Jewish women in the nation’s other major cities to devote themselves to similar efforts in order to counteract Reform Judaism, which was becoming popular among younger American Jews at the time.


Ladies,

The season has again arrived when we are amenable to renew our efforts for the relief of those who need aid from their fellow sojourners in this world of many wants and many sufferings—and while we feebly put forth a diminished strength to relieve the cravings of nature we would suggest the wish that our abilities might be directed to a more pressing need—the mental impoverishment of those who are rising to take their place among the
thousands of Israel scattered throughout the facilities of the earth. In a little while the remnant of those who first pled for the female poor of this congregation will have passed away and perhaps the sweetened memorial raised to their names will be recorded that they laid the corner stone to this just tuition. It is not too much to hope—too much to expect from the daughters of a noble race, that they will be foremost in the work of charity—provided their young hearts are impressed with its sacred duties. Let us then plead for the means of “training them in the way they should go”—we have a teacher desirous of opening his store of useful knowledge for the improvement of the rising generation—his opp[ortunity] of study in the original language of the scriptures gives him advantages few here [illegible] and then unto many of the difficulties complained of among us may be attributed.

The want of education shuts the door of advancement into private or public nations—which an Israelite might obtain in this country—and the consummation of our highest ambition may even be the wiping off of that stigma which rebellion and disobedience have—upon the nation—may be accomplished, when enlightened Jews mingle with the inhabitants of the land respecting their own laws and practicing the virtues required of the chosen people of God. Such as must prepare the way for that unto the gathering of the people be—we need look for no greater miracle than the changed heart that an enlightened faith—piety, self-respect and charity will engender to make our wilderness bloom—and a light shine on the on the mountains of Zion—but this is in advance of our present purpose—the grain must be sown before the harvest can be reaped and if we are only employed in the humblest occupation of preparing the soil for future seasons of prosperity—our labor will not be lost to that all seeing eye that searches out the smallest seed of good…. Let us then still thrive to … give freely of our own means.…. [W]e invite … every female of the congregation to take an interest in this society … aid will be gratefully received money or moneys worth that can be converted into use for the poor and [from] those who have nothing else to give, we ask good will. Good wishes and good words to cheer and cherish the spirit of clarity in which the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society greets and claims kindred with any daughter of Israel.
Born in freedom in Hartford, Connecticut, Maria Stewart (1803–1879) was among the first African American women to speak publicly on behalf of abolition. While she was outspoken in her commitment to the cause of African American liberty, she did not shy away from shining a light on the problems she saw within the black community, exhorting her brothers and sisters to focus on proving themselves worthy of participation in the republic by the quality of their personal characters. Attain that, Stewart argued, and there would be no grounds upon which white Americans could reasonably deny black cries for inclusion in the nation’s promise of human dignity and freedom.

This speech given to an audience of free blacks in Boston was published by William Lloyd Garrison in The Liberator. Public reception of the pamphlet was not what Stewart had hoped it would be: her attempt to speak as a female prophet, rebuking both black and white Americans resulted not in reformation, but in scorn and rejection from both groups. Dejected, she all-but abandoned her speaking and writing career; instead, she concentrated on doing what she could practically to improve the lot of African Americans in the United States, serving first as a schoolteacher and later as the head matron of the Freedman’s Hospital in Washington, D.C. Just before she died in 1879, Stewart agreed to have a selection of her writings reprinted, dedicating them “to the Church Militant in Washington, D.C.” The message of this sermon, on the failure of American Christians both black and white to live up to the fullness of the Gospel (and, moreover, the Declaration of Independence) was just as timely in the Reconstruction Era as it had been fifty years earlier.

Source: Meditations from the Pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart (Washington, D. C., 1879). We have modernized spelling and capitalization.
INTRODUCTION

This is the land of freedom. The press is at liberty. Every man has a right to express his opinion. Many think, because your skins are tinged with a sable hue, that you are an inferior race of beings; but God does not consider you as such. He hath formed and fashioned you in His own glorious image, and hath bestowed upon you reason and strong powers of intellect. He hath made you to have dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea. He has crowned you with glory and honor; has made you but a little lower than the angels; and, according to the Constitution of these United States, he has made all men free and equal. Then why should one worm say to another, “Keep you down there, while I sit up yonder; for I am better than you.” It is not the color of the skin that makes the man, but it is the principle formed within the soul.

Many will suffer for pleading the cause of oppressed Africa, and I shall glory in being one of her martyrs; for I am firmly persuaded that the God in whom I trust is able to protect me from the rage and malice of mine enemies, and from them that will rise up against me; and if there is no other way for me to escape, He is able to take me to himself, as He did the most noble, fearless, and undaunted David Walker.2

Never Will Virtue, Knowledge, and True Politeness Begin to Flow till the Pure Principles of Religion and Morality Are Put Into Force

My Respected Friends: I feel almost unable to address you; almost incompetent to perform the task; and at times I have felt ready to exclaim, O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears,3 that I might weep day and night for the transgressions of the daughters of my people. Truly, my heart’s desire and prayer is that Ethiopia4 might stretch forth her hands unto God. But we have a great work to do. Never; no, never will the chains of slavery and ignorance burst till we become united as one and cultivate among ourselves the pure principles of piety, morality, and virtue. I am

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1 Psalm 8:5
2 David Walker (1796–1830) was an African American abolitionist. His Appeal (1829) was considered a radical statement of the abolitionist position.
3 Jeremiah 9:1
4 Africa
sensible of my ignorance; but such knowledge as God has given me I impart to you. I am sensible of former prejudices; but it is high time for prejudices and animosities to cease from among us. I am sensible of exposing myself to calumny and reproach; but shall I, for fear of feeble man who shall die, hold my peace? Shall I, for fear of scoffs and frowns, refrain my tongue? Ah, no! I speak as one that must give an account at the awful bar of God; I speak as a dying mortal, to dying mortals. O you daughters of Africa, awake! awake! arise! no longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties. O you daughters of Africa! what have you done to immortalize your names beyond the grave? What examples have you set before the rising generation? What foundation have you laid for generations yet un-born? Where are our union and love? And where is our sympathy, that weeps at another’s woe and hides the faults we see? . . . Alas! O, God, forgive me if I speak amiss. The minds of our tender babes are tainted as soon as they are born; they go astray, as it were, from the womb. Where is the maiden who will blush at vulgarity? And where is the youth who has written upon his manly brow a thirst for knowledge; whose ambitious mind soars above trifles and longs for the time to come when he shall redress the wrongs of his father and plead the cause of his brethren? Did the daughters of our land possess a delicacy of manners, combined with gentleness and dignity? Did their pure minds hold vice in abhorrence and contempt; did they frown when their ears were polluted with its vile accents, would not their influence become powerful? Would not our brethren fall in love with their virtues? Their souls would become fired with a holy zeal for freedom’s cause. They would become ambitious to distinguish themselves; they would become proud to display their talents. Able advocates would arise in our defense. Knowledge would begin to flow, and the chains of slavery and ignorance would melt like wax before the flames. . . .

When I consider how little improvement has been made the last eight years; the apparent cold and indifferent state of the children of God; how few have been hopefully brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; that our young men and maidens are fainting and drooping, as it were, by the way side for the want of knowledge; when I see how few care to distinguish themselves either in religious or moral improvement, and when I see the greater part of our community following the vain bubbles of life with so much eagerness, which will only prove to them like the serpent’s sting upon the bed of death, I really think we are in as wretched and miserable a state as was the house of Israel in the days of Jeremiah. . . .
Prayer

O, Lord God, the watchmen of Zion have cried peace, peace, when there was no peace; they have been, as it were, blind leaders of the blind. Wherefore have you so long withheld from us the divine influences of thy Holy Spirit? Wherefore have you hardened our hearts and blinded our eyes? It is because we have honored you with our lips, when our hearts were far from you. We have polluted your Sabbaths, and even our most holy things have been solemn mockery to you. We have regarded iniquity in our hearts, therefore you will not hear. Return again unto us, O, Lord God, we beseech you, and pardon this, the iniquity of thy servants. Cause your face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved. O visit us with your salvation. Raise up sons and daughters unto Abraham, and grant that there might come a mighty shaking of dry bones among us, and a great ingathering of souls. Quicken your professing children. Grant that the young man may be constrained to believe that there is a reality in religion, and a beauty in the fear of the Lord. Have mercy on the benighted sons and daughters of Africa. Grant that we may soon become so distinguished for our moral and religious improvements, that the nations of the earth may take knowledge of us; and grant that our cries may come up before your throne like holy incense. Grant that every daughter of Africa may consecrate her sons to you from the birth. And do you, Lord, bestow upon them wise and understanding hearts. Clothe us with humility of soul, and give us a becoming dignity of manners; may we imitate the character of the meek and lowly Jesus; and do you grant that Ethiopia may soon stretch forth her hands unto you. And now, Lord, be pleased to grant that Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed; that the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ may be built up; that all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people might be brought to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus, and we at last meet around thy throne, and join in celebrating thy praises.

I have been taking a survey of the American people in my own mind, and I see them thriving in arts, and sciences, and in polite literature. Their highest aim is to excel in political, moral, and religious improvement. They early consecrate their children to God, and their youth indeed are blushing in artless innocence; they wipe the tears from the orphan’s eyes, and they cause the widow’s heart to sing for joy; and their poorest ones, who have the least wish to excel, they promote. And those that have but one talent, they encourage.

5 Numbers 6:25
But how very few are there among them that bestow one thought upon the benighted sons and daughters of Africa, who have enriched the soils of America with their tears and blood; few to promote their cause, none to encourage their talents. Under these circumstances, do not let our hearts be any longer discouraged; it is no use to murmur nor to repine, but let us promote ourselves and improve our own talents. . . .

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. 6 Why is it, my friends, that our minds have been blinded by ignorance to the present moment? ’Tis on account of sin. Why is it that our church is involved in so much difficulty? It is on account of sin. Why is it that God has cut down, upon our right hand and upon our left the most learned and intelligent of our men? Oh, shall I say it is on account of sin! . . . The arm of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear; but it is your iniquities that have separated you from me, says the Lord. 7 Return, O you backsliding children, and I will return unto you, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. 8

Oh, you mothers, what a responsibility rests on you! You have souls committed to your charge, and God will require a strict account of you. It is you that must create in the minds of your little girls and boys a thirst for knowledge, the love of virtue, the abhorrence of vice, and the cultivation of a pure heart. The seeds thus sown will grow with their growing years; and the love of virtue thus early formed in the soul will protect their inexperienced feet from many dangers. O, do not say, you cannot make anything of your children; but say, with the help and assistance of God, we will try. . . .

Perhaps you will say, that you cannot send them to high schools and academies. You can have them taught in the first rudiments of useful knowledge, and then you can have private teachers, who will instruct them in the higher branches: and their intelligence will become greater than ours, and their children will attain to higher advantages, and their children still higher; and then, though we are dead, our works shall live; though we are moldering, our names shall not be forgotten.

Finally, my heart’s desire and prayer to God is, that there might come a thorough reformation among us. Our minds have too long groveled in ignorance and sin. Come, let us incline our ears to wisdom, and apply our hearts

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6 Proverbs 14:34
7 Isaiah 59:1–2
8 Jeremiah 3:22
to understanding; promote her, and she shall exalt you; she shall bring you to honor when you do embrace her.

I am of a strong opinion, that the day on which we unite, heart and soul, and turn our attention to knowledge and improvement, that day the hissing and reproach among the nations of the earth against us will cease. And even those who now point at us with the finger of scorn, will aid and befriend us. It is of no use for us to sit with our hands folded, hanging our heads like bulrushes, lamenting our wretched condition; but let us make a mighty effort, and arise; and if no one will promote or respect us, let us promote and respect ourselves.

... Shall it any longer be said of the daughters of Africa, they have no ambition, they have no force? By no means. Let every female heart become united and let us raise a fund ourselves; and at the end of one year and a half, we might be able to lay the corner-stone for the building of a high school, that the higher branches of knowledge might be enjoyed by us; and God would raise us up, and enough to aid us in our laudable designs. Let each one strive to excel in good housewifery, knowing that prudence and economy are the road to wealth. Let us not say, we know this, or, we know that, and practice nothing; but let us practice what we do know.

How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles? Until union, knowledge, and love begin to flow among us. We have never had an opportunity of displaying our talents; therefore the world thinks we know nothing. And we have been possessed of by far too mean and cowardly a disposition, though I highly disapprove of an insolent or impertinent one. Do you ask the disposition I would have you possess? Possess the spirit of independence. The Americans do, and why should not you? Possess the spirit of men, bold and enterprising, fearless and undaunted. Sue for your rights and privileges. Know the reason that you cannot attain them. Weary them with your importunities. You can but die, if you make the attempt; and we shall certainly die if you do not. The Americans have practiced nothing but headwork these 200 years, and we have done their drudgery. And is it not high time for us to imitate their examples, and practice headwork too, and keep what we have got, and get what we can? We need never to think that anybody is going to feel interested for us, if we do not feel interested for ourselves. That day we, as a people, hearken unto the voice of the Lord our God, and walk in his ways

9 Proverbs 2:2
10 Proverbs 4:8
and ordinances, and become distinguished for our ease, elegance, and grace, combined with other virtues—that day the Lord will raise us up, and enough to aid and befriend us, and we shall begin to flourish.

... Oh, America, America, foul and indelible is your stain! Dark and dismal is the cloud that hangs over you for your cruel wrongs and injuries to the fallen sons of Africa. The blood of her murdered ones cries to heaven for vengeance against you. You art almost become drunken with the blood of her slain; you have enriched thyself through her toils and labors; and now you refuse to make even a small return. And you have caused the daughters of Africa to commit whoredoms and fornications; but upon you be their curse....

... We will not come out against you with swords and staves, as against a thief; but we will tell you that our souls are fired with the same love of liberty and independence with which your souls are fired. We will tell you that too much of your blood flows in our veins, and too much of your color in our skins, for us not to possess your spirits. We will tell you that it is our gold that clothes you in fine linen and purple, and causes you to fare sumptuously every day; and it is the blood of our fathers and the tears of our brethren that have enriched your soils. And we claim our rights. We will tell you that we are not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that can do no more; but we will tell you whom we do fear. We fear Him who is able, after he has killed, to destroy both soul and body in hell forever. Then, my brethren, sheath your swords, and calm your angry passions. Stand still, and know that the Lord he is God. Vengeance is his, and he will repay. It is a long lane that has no turn. America has risen to her meridian. When you begin to thrive, she will begin to fall. God has raised you up a Walker and a Garrison. Though Walker sleeps, yet he lives, and his name shall be held in everlasting remembrance. ... It is God alone that has inspired my heart to feel for Afric[a]’s woes. Then fret not yourself because of evil doers. Fret not yourself because of the men who bring wicked devices to pass, for they shall be cut down as the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Encourage the noble-hearted Garrison. Prove to the world that you are neither orangutans, nor a species of mere animals, but that you possess the same powers of intellect as those of the proud-boasting American.

I am sensible, my brethren and friends, that many of you have been

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11 a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 32:35
12 William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) was a leading abolitionist.
deprived of advantages, kept in utter ignorance, and that your minds are now darkened; and if any of you have attempted to aspire after high and noble enterprises, you have met with so much opposition that your souls have become discouraged. For this very cause a few of us have ventured to expose our lives in your behalf, to plead your cause against the great; and it will be of no use, unless you feel for yourselves and your little ones, and exhibit the spirits of men. O, then, turn your attention to knowledge and improvement; for knowledge is power. And God is able to fill you with wisdom and understanding, and to dispel your fears. Arm yourselves with the weapons of prayer. Put your trust in the living God. Persevere strictly in the paths of virtue. Let nothing be lacking on your part, and in God’s own time, and his time is certainly the best, he will surely deliver you with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm.

I have never taken one step, my friends, with a design to raise myself in your esteem or to gain applause. But what I have done has been done with an eye single to the glory of God, and to promote the good of souls. I have neither kindred nor friends. I stand alone in your midst, exposed to the fiery darts of the devil, and to the assaults of wicked men. But though all the powers of earth and hell were to combine against me, though all nature should sink into decay, still would I trust in the Lord, and joy in the God of salvation. For I am fully persuaded that he will bring me off conqueror; yea, more than conqueror, through him who has loved me and given himself for me.
Angelina Grimké (1805–1879) strikes a note of loving concern mingled with informed instruction and reproof in this letter to her slaveholding sisters in the faith. Grimké had been raised on a plantation in South Carolina and knew firsthand the evils of slavery for both the enslaved person and the enslaver. Although her parents were committed members of the Episcopal Church, Grimké refused to be confirmed in their denomination, insisting that she found too much to disagree with in the church’s statement of faith. For a time, she embraced Presbyterianism, but after her repeated attempts to convince her fellow congregants in the city of Charleston to voluntarily abandon slavery were ignored, Grimké became a Quaker. Shortly thereafter, she moved to Philadelphia, where she and her older sister, Sarah Grimké, took on a prominent role as speakers and authors for William Lloyd Garrison’s abolitionist group.

In her Appeal, Grimké makes an argument not only for why Christian women ought to be concerned about abolition in particular, but also for why such women might consider it their duty to take a broader interest in helping to shape the nation’s conversation on public policy questions related to morality of all kinds.


Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, “Think not within thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place: but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this.” And Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer: “and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to law, and if I perish, I perish.”

Esther IV. 13–16.
RESPECTED FRIENDS,

It is because I feel a deep and tender interest in your present and eternal welfare that I am willing thus publicly to address you. . . . I feel an interest in you, as branches of the same vine from whose root I daily draw the principle of spiritual vitality—Yes! Sisters in Christ I feel an interest in you, and often has the secret prayer arisen on your behalf, Lord “open thou their eyes that they may see wondrous things out of thy Law”—1 It is then, because I do feel and do pray for you, that I thus address you upon a subject about which of all others, perhaps you would rather not hear anything; but, “would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly, and indeed bear with me, for I am jealous over you with godly jealousy.”2 Be not afraid then to read my appeal; it is not written in the heat of passion or prejudice, but in that solemn calmness which is the result of conviction and duty. It is true, I am going to tell you unwelcome truths, but I mean to speak those truths in love, and remember Solomon says, “faithful are the wounds of a friend.”3 I do not believe the time has yet come when Christian women “will not endure sound doctrine,” even on the subject of Slavery, if it is spoken to them in tenderness and love, therefore I now address you.

. . . It will be, and that very soon, clearly perceived and fully acknowledged by all the virtuous and the candid, that in principle it is as sinful to hold a human being in bondage who has been born in Carolina, as one who has been born in Africa. All that sophistry of argument which has been employed to prove, that although it is sinful to send to Africa to procure men and women as slaves, who, have never been in slavery, that still, it is not sinful to keep those in bondage who have come down by inheritance, will be utterly overthrown. We must come back to the good old doctrine of our fore fathers who declared to the world, “this self-evident truth that all men are created equal, and that they have certain inalienable rights among which are, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” It is even a greater absurdity to suppose a man can be legally born a slave under our free Republican Government, than under the petty despotisms of barbarian Africa. If then, we have no right to enslave an African, surely we can have none to enslave an American; if a self-evident truth that all men everywhere and of every color are born equal, and have an inalienable right to liberty, then it is equally true that no man can be born

1 Psalm 119:18
2 2 Corinthians 11:1–2
3 Proverbs 27:6
a slave, and no man can ever rightfully be reduced to involuntary bondage and held as a slave, however fair may be the claim of his master or mistress through wills and title-deeds.

But after all, it may be said, our fathers were certainly mistaken, for the Bible sanctions Slavery, and that is the highest authority. Now the Bible is my ultimate appeal in all matters of faith and practice, and it is to this test I am anxious to bring the subject at issue between us. Let us then begin with Adam and examine the charter of privileges which was given to him. “Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”⁴… And after the flood when this charter of human rights was renewed, we find no additional power vested in man. “And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and every fowl of the air, and upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered.”⁵ In this charter, although the different kinds of irrational beings are so particularly enumerated, and supreme dominion over all of them is granted, yet man is never vested with this dominion over his fellow man; he was never told that any of the human species were put under his feet; it was only all things, and man, who was created in the image of his Maker, never can properly be termed a thing, though the laws of Slave States do call him “a chattel personal,” Man then, I assert never was put under the feet of man, by that first charter of human rights which was given by God, to the Fathers of the Antediluvian and Post-diluvian worlds, therefore this doctrine of equality is based on the Bible.

… There are however two other laws which I have not yet noticed. The one effectually prevented all involuntary servitude, and the other completely abolished Jewish servitude every fifty years. They were equally operative upon the Heathen and the Hebrew.

1. “Thou shall not deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best: thou shall not oppress him.” Deut. 23:15, 16.
2. “And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim Liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you.” Lev. 25:10.

⁴Genesis 1:28
⁵Genesis 9:2
Here, then, we see that by this first law, the door of freedom was opened wide to every servant who had any cause whatever for complaint; if he was unhappy with his master, all he had to do was to leave him, and no man had a right to deliver him back to him again, and not only so, but the absconded servant was to choose where lie should live, and no Jew was permitted to oppress him. . . . Is it so at the South? Is the poor runaway slave protected by law from the violence of that master whose oppression and cruelty has driven him from his plantation or his house? No! No! Even the free states of the North are compelled to deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped from his master into them. . . .

But by the second of these laws a still more astonishing fact is disclosed. If the first effectually prevented all involuntary servitude, the last absolutely forbade even voluntary servitude being perpetual. On the great Day of Atonement every fiftieth year the Jubilee trumpet was sounded throughout the land of Judea, and Liberty was proclaimed to all the inhabitants thereof. I will not say that the servants’ chains fell off and their manacles were burst, for there is no evidence that Jewish servants ever felt the weight of iron chains, and collars, and handcuffs; but I do say that even the man who had voluntarily sold himself and the heathen who had been sold to a Hebrew master, were set free, the one as well as the other. This law was evidently designed to prevent the oppression of the poor, and the possibility of such a thing as perpetual servitude existing among them.

Where, then, I would ask, is the warrant, the justification, or the palliation of American slavery from Hebrew servitude? How many of the southern slaves would now be in bondage according to the laws of Moses; Not one. . . . But perhaps you will be ready to query, why appeal to women on this subject? We do not make the laws which perpetuate slavery. No legislative power is vested in us; we can do nothing to overthrow the system, even if we wished to do so. To this I reply, I know you do not make the laws, but I also know that you are the wives and mothers, the sisters and daughters of those who do; and if you really suppose you can do nothing to overthrow slavery, you are greatly mistaken. You can do much in every way: four things I will name. 1st. You can read on this subject. 2d. You can pray over this subject. 3d. You can speak on this subject. 4th. You can act on this subject. I have not placed reading before praying because I regard it more important, but because, in order to pray aright, we must understand what we are praying for; it is only then we can “pray with the understanding, and the spirit also.”

1. Read then on the subject of slavery. Search the Scriptures daily, whether the things I have told you are true. Other books and papers might
be a great help to you in this investigation, but they are not necessary, and it
is hardly probable that your Committees of Vigilance will allow you to have
any other. The Bible then is the book I want you to read in the spirit of inquiry,
and the spirit of prayer. Even the enemies of abolitionists, acknowledge that
their doctrines are drawn from it. In the great mob in Boston, last autumn,
when the books and papers of the Anti-Slavery Society, were thrown out
of the windows of their office, one individual laid hold of the Bible and was
about tossing it out to the ground, when another reminded him that it was
the Bible be had in his hand. “O! ’tis all one,” he replied, and out went the
sacred volume, along with the rest. We thank him for the acknowledgment.
Yes, “it is all one,” for our books and papers are mostly commentaries on the
Bible, and the Declaration. Read the Bible then, it contains the words of Jesus,
and they are spirit and life. Judge for yourselves whether he sanctioned such
a system of oppression and crime.

2. Pray over this subject. When you have entered into your closets, and
shut to the doors, then pray to your father, who sees in secret, that he would
open your eyes to see whether slavery is sinful, and if it is, that he would
enable you to bear a faithful, open and unshrinking testimony against it, and
to do whatsoever your hands find to do, leaving the consequences entirely
to him, who still says to us whenever we try to reason away duty from the
fear of consequences, “What is that to thee, follow thou me.” Pray also for that
poor slave, that he may be kept patient and submissive under his hard lot,
until God is pleased to open the door of freedom to him without violence
or bloodshed. Pray too for the master that his heart may be softened, and
he made willing to acknowledge, as Joseph’s brethren did, “Verily we are
guilty concerning our brother,” before he will be compelled to add in con-
sequence of Divine judgment, “therefore is all this evil come upon us.” Pray
also for all your brethren and sisters who are laboring in the righteous cause
of emancipation in the Northern States, England and the world. There is
great encouragement for prayer in these words of our Lord. “Whatsoever ye
shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you”—Pray then without
ceasing, in the closet and the social circle.

3. Speak on this subject. It is through the tongue, the pen, and the press,
that truth is principally propagated. Speak then to your relatives, your
friends, your acquaintances on the subject of slavery; be not afraid if you
are conscientiously convinced it is sinful, to say so openly, but calmly, and to

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6 Genesis 42:21
7 John 16:23
let your sentiments be known. If you are served by the slaves of others, try to ameliorate their condition as much as possible; never aggravate their faults, and thus add fuel to the fire of anger already kindled, in a master and mistress’s bosom; remember their extreme ignorance, and consider them as your Heavenly Father does the less culpable on this account, even when they do wrong things. Discountenance all cruelty to them, all starvation, all corporal chastisement; these may brutalize and break their spirits, but will never bend them to willing, cheerful obedience. If possible, see that they are comfortably and seasonably fed, whether in the house or the field; it is unreasonable and cruel to expect slaves to wait for their breakfast until eleven o’clock, when they rise at five or six. Do all you can, to induce their owners to clothe them well, and to allow them many little indulgences which would contribute to their comfort. Above all, try to persuade your husband, father, brothers and sons, that slavery is a crime against God and man, and that it is a great sin to keep human beings in such abject ignorance; to deny them the privilege of learning to read and write. The Catholics are universally condemned, for denying the Bible to the common people, but, slaveholders must not blame them, for they are doing the very same thing, and for the very same reason, neither of these systems can bear the light which bursts from the pages of that Holy Book. And lastly, endeavor to inculcate submission on the part of the slaves, but whilst doing this be faithful in pleading the cause of the oppressed.

WILL YOU BEHOUD UNHEEDING,  
LIFE’S HOLIEST FEELINGS CRUSHED,  
WHERE WOMAN’S HEART IS BLEEDING,  
SHALL WOMAN’S VOICE BE HUSHED?  

4. Act on this subject. Some of you own slaves yourselves. If you believe slavery is sinful, set them at liberty, “undo the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free.” If they wish to remain with you, pay them wages, if not let them leave you. Should they remain teach them, and have them taught the common branches of an English education; they have minds and those minds ought to be improved. So precious a talent as intellect, never was given to be wrapt in a napkin and buried in the earth. It is the duty of all, as far as they

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8 from the antislavery hymn, “The Nation’s Guilt”  
9 Isaiah 58:6  
10 an allusion to Matthew 5:14–30
can, to improve their own menial faculties, because we are commanded to love God with all our minds, as well as with all our hearts, and we commit a great sin, if we forbid or prevent that cultivation of the mind in others, which would enable them to perform this duty. Teach your servants then to read &c, and encourage them to believe it is their duty to learn, if it were only that they might read the Bible.

But some of you will say, we can neither free our slaves nor teach them to read, for the laws of our state forbid it. Be not surprised when I say such wicked laws ought to be no barrier in the way of your duty, and I appeal to the Bible to prove this position. What was the conduct of Shiphrah and Puah, when the king of Egypt issued his cruel mandate, with regard to the Hebrew children? “They feared God, and did not as the King of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.” Did these women do right in disobeying that monarch? “Therefore (says the sacred text,) God dealt well with them, and made them houses.” What was the conduct of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image in the plain of Dura, and commanded all people, nations, and languages, to fall down and worship it? “Be it known, unto thee, (said these faithful Jews) O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the image which thou hast set up.” Did these men do right in disobeying the law of their sovereign? Let their miraculous deliverance from the burning fiery furnace, answer; What was the conduct of Daniel, when Darius made a firm decree that no one should ask a petition of any man or God for thirty days? Did the prophet cease to pray? No! “When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” Did Daniel do right thus to break the law of his king? Let his wonderful deliverance out of the mouths of the lions answer. Look, too, at the Apostles Peter and John. When the rulers of the Jews, “commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus,” what did they say? “Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” And what did they do “They spake the word of God with

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11 two Jewish midwives who did not kill the Jewish newborn as Pharaoh had commanded, Exodus 1:15–21
12 Daniel 3:16–18
13 Daniel 6:10
14 Acts 4:19
boldness, and with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus;”\(^{15}\) although this was the very doctrine, for the preaching of which, they had just been cast into prison, and further threatened. Did these men do right? I leave you to answer, who now enjoy the benefits of their labors and sufferings, in that Gospel they dared to preach when positively commanded not to teach any more in the name of Jesus....

I know that this doctrine of obeying God, rather than man, will be considered as dangerous, and heretical by many, but I am not afraid openly to avow it, because it is the doctrine of the Bible; but I would not be understood to advocate resistance to any law however oppressive, if, in obeying it, I was not obliged to commit sin. If for instance, there was a law, which imposed imprisonment or a fine upon me if I manumitted\(^{16}\) a slave, I would on no account resist that law, I would set the slave free, and then go to prison or pay the fine. If a law commands me to sin I will break it; if it calls me to suffer, I will let it take its course unresistingly. The doctrine of blind obedience and unqualified submission to any human power, whether civil or ecclesiastical, is the doctrine of despotism, and ought to have no place among Republicans and Christians.

...And what, I would ask in conclusion, have women done for the great and glorious cause of emancipation? Who wrote that pamphlet which moved the heart of Wilberforce\(^{17}\) to pray over the wrongs, and his tongue to plead the cause of the oppressed African? It was a woman, Elizabeth Heyrick. Who labored assiduously to keep the sufferings of the slave continually before the British public? They were women. And how did they do it? By their needles, paint brushes and pens, by speaking the truth, and petitioning Parliament for the abolition of slavery. And what was the effect of their labors? Read it in the emancipation bill of Great Britain. Read it, in the present state of her West India Colonies. Read it, in the impulse which has been given to the cause of freedom, in the United States of America. Have English women then done so much for the Negro, and shall American women do nothing? Oh no! Already are there sixty female Anti-Slavery Societies in operation. These are doing just what the English women did, telling the story of the colored man’s wrongs, praying for his deliverance, and presenting his kneeling image constantly before the public eye on bags and needle-books, card-racks, pen-wipers, pin-cushions, &c. Even the children of the north are inscribing

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\(^{15}\) Acts 4:33

\(^{16}\) free from slavery

\(^{17}\) a leading British abolitionist
on their handy work, “May the points of our needles prick the slaveholder’s conscience.” Some of the reports of these Societies exhibit not only considerable talent, but a deep sense of religious duty, and a determination to persevere through evil as well as good report, until every scourge, and every shackle, is buried under the feet of the manumitted slave.

The Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society of Boston was called last fall, to a severe trial of their faith and constancy. They were mobbed by “the gentlemen of property and standing,” in that city at their anniversary meeting, and their lives were jeopardized by an infuriated crowd; but their conduct on that occasion did credit to our sex, and affords a full assurance that they will never abandon the cause of the slave. The pamphlet, Right and Wrong in Boston, issued by them in which a particular account is given of that “mob of broad cloth in broad day,” does equal credit to the head and the heart of her who wrote it. I wish my Southern sisters could read it; they would then understand that the women of the North have engaged in this work from a sense of religious duty, and that nothing will ever induce them to take their hands from it until it is fully accomplished. They feel no hostility to you, no bitterness or wrath; they rather sympathize in your trials and difficulties; but they well know that the first thing to be done to help you, is to pour in the light of truth on your minds, to urge you to reflect on, and pray over the subject. This is all they can do for you, you must work out your own deliverance with fear and trembling, and with the direction and blessing of God, you can do it. Northern women may labor to produce a correct public opinion at the North, but if Southern women sit down in listless indifference and criminal idleness, public opinion cannot be rectified and purified at the South. It is manifest to every reflecting mind, that slavery must be abolished; the era in which we live, and the light which is overspreading the whole world on this subject, clearly show that the time cannot be distant when it will be done. Now there are only two ways in which it can be affected, by moral power or physical force, and it is for you to choose which of these you prefer. Slavery always has, and always will produce insurrections wherever it exists, because it is a violation of the natural order of things, and no human power can much longer perpetuate it. . . .

. . . My object has been to arouse you, as the wives and mothers, the daughters and sisters, of the South, to a sense of your duty as women, and as Christian women, on that great subject, which has already shaken our country, from the St. Lawrence and the lakes, to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Mississippi to the shores of the Atlantic; and will continue mightily to shake it, until the polluted temple of slavery fall and crumble into ruin. . . .
... Can you not, my friends, understand the signs of the times;\(^\text{18}\) do you not see the sword of retributive justice hanging over the South or are you still slumbering at your posts?—Are there no Shiphrahs, no Puahs among you, who wilt dare in Christian firmness and Christian meekness, to refuse to obey the wicked laws which require woman to enslave, to degrade and to brutalize woman? Are there no Miriams, who would rejoice to lead out the captive daughters of the Southern States to liberty and light?\(^\text{19}\) Are there no Huldahs there who will dare to speak the truth concerning the sins of the people and those judgments,\(^\text{20}\) which it requires no prophet’s eye to see, must follow if repentance is not speedily sought? Is there no Esther among you, who will plead for the poor devoted slave?\(^\text{21}\) Read the history of this Persian queen, it is full of instruction; she at first refused to plead for the Jews; but, hear the words of Mordecai, “Think not within thyself, that thou shalt escape in the king’s house more than all the Jews, for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shalt there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place: but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed.”\(^\text{22}\) Listen, too, to her magnanimous reply to this powerful appeal; “I will go in unto the king, which is not according to law, and if I perish, I perish.” Yes! if there were but one Esther at the South, she might save her country from ruin; but let the Christian women there arise, as the Christian women of Great Britain did, in the majesty of moral power, and that salvation is certain. Let them embody themselves in societies, and send petitions up to their different legislatures, entreating their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons, to abolish the institution of slavery; no longer to subject woman to the scourge and the chain, to mental darkness and moral degradation; no longer to tear husbands from their wives, and children from their parents; no longer to make men, women, and children, work without wages; no longer to make their lives bitter in hard bondage; no longer to reduce American citizens to the abject condition of slaves, of “chattels personal;” no longer to barter the image of God in human shambles for corruptible things such as silver and gold.

The women of the South can overthrow this horrible system of oppression and cruelty, licentiousness and wrong. Such appeals to your legislatures would

\(^{18}\) Matthew 16:13
\(^{19}\) According to Micah 6:4, Miriam joined with Moses and Aaron to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.
\(^{20}\) Huldah was an Old Testament prophetess.
\(^{21}\) Esther, a secret Jewess and wife of a Persian King, helped save the Jews in Persia.
\(^{22}\) Esther 4:14
be irresistible, for there is something in the heart of man which will bend under moral suasion. There is a swift witness for truth in his bosom, which will respond to truth when it is uttered with calmness and dignity. If you could obtain but six signatures to such a petition in only one state, I would say, send up that petition, and be not in the least discouraged by the scoffs, and jeers of the heartless, or the resolution of the house to lay it on the table. It will be a great thing if the subject can be introduced into your legislatures in any way, even by women, and they will be the most likely to introduce it there in the best possible manner, as a matter of morals and religion, not of expediency or politics. You may petition, too, the different ecclesiastical bodies of the slave states. Slavery must be attacked with the whole power of truth and the sword of the spirit. You must take it up on Christian ground, and fight against it with Christian weapons, whilst your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. And you are now loudly called upon by the cries of the widow and the orphan, to arise and gird yourselves for this great moral conflict, with the whole armor of righteousness upon the right hand and on the left.  

There is every encouragement for you to labor and pray, my friends, because the abolition of slavery as well as its existence, has been the theme of prophecy. “Ethiopia (says the Psalmist) shall stretch forth her hands unto God.”  

And is she not now doing so? Are not the Christian negroes of the south lifting their hands in prayer for deliverance, just as the Israelites did when their redemption was drawing nigh? Are they not sighing and crying by reason of the hard bondage? And think you, that He, of whom it was said, “and God heard their groaning, and their cry came up unto him by reason of the hard bondage,” think you that his ear is heavy that he cannot now hear the cries of his suffering children? Or that He who raised up a Moses, an Aaron, and a Miriam, to bring them up out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage, cannot now, with a high hand and a stretched-out arm, rid the poor negroes out of the hands of their masters? Surely you believe that his aim is not shortened that he cannot save. And would not such a work of mercy redound to his glory? But another string of the harp of prophecy vibrates to the song of deliverance: “But they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts hath spoken it.” The slave never can do this as long

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23 This passage alludes to Ephesians 6: 11–17.
24 Psalm 68:31
25 Exodus 2:23
26 Micah 4:4
as he is a slave; whilst he is a “chattel personal” he can own no property; but the time is to come when every man is to sit under his own vine and his own fig-tree, and no domineering driver, or irresponsible master, or irascible mistress, shall make him afraid of the chain or the whip. Hear, too, the sweet tones of another string: “Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

Slavery is an insurmountable barrier to the increase of knowledge in every community where it exists; slavery, then, must be abolished before this prediction can be fulfilled.

Slavery, then, must be overthrown before the prophecies can be accomplished, but how are they to be fulfilled? Will the wheels of the millennial car be rolled onward by miraculous power? No! God designs to confer this holy privilege upon man; it is through his instrumentality that the great and glorious work of reforming the world is to be done. And see you not how the mighty engine of moral power is dragging in its rear the Bible and peace societies, anti-slavery and temperance, sabbath schools, moral reform, and missions?

...Sisters in Christ, I have done. As a Southerner, I have felt it was my duty to address you. I have endeavored to set before you the exceeding sinfulness of slavery, and to point you to the example of those noble women who have been raised up in the church to effect great revolutions, and to suffer for the truth’s sake. I have appealed to your sympathies as women, to your sense of duty as Christian women... I have sowed the seeds of truth, but I well know, that even if an Apollos were to follow in my steps to water them, “God only can give the increase.” To Him then who is able to prosper the work of his servant’s hand, I commend this Appeal in fervent prayer, that as he hath “chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty,” so He may cause His blessing, to descend and carry conviction to the hearts of many Lydias through these speaking pages. Farewell—Count me not your “enemy because I have told you the truth,” but believe me in unfeigned affection,

Your sympathizing Friend,
Angelina Grimké

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27 Daniel 12:4
28 1 Corinthians 3:6–7
29 1 Corinthians 1:27
30 Grimke refers to the conversion of Lydia in Acts 16:14.
31 Galatians 4:16
Record of the Organization and Proceedings of The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo
1842–1843

Shortly after the Mormon community settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, Joseph Smith, the religion’s founder, approved the organization of what became known as the Female Relief Society for “the relief of the poor, the destitute, the widow and the orphan, and for the exercise of all benevolent purposes.” The Relief Society kept careful records of their meetings; we reproduce the minutes from two separate gatherings here. Our first selection, the minutes from March 17, 1842, offers a glimpse not only of the formation of the group, but also on the relationship between Joseph Smith and his wife, Emma, which is remarked upon in Document 17. The second describes the various activities undertaken by members of the society to help alleviate the financial strain put on the poorest members of the community by their obligation to contribute to the construction of the temple. Both excerpts are illustrative of the ways in which early Mormonism emphasized traditional nineteenth century feminine roles as not only divinely sanctioned but essential to the continued existence of their church.

The Relief Society continues to exist and to perform the same functions within the Mormon community today.


Nauvoo Lodge Room, March 17, 1842.

Present—President Joseph Smith, John Taylor, Willard Richards, Emma Smith and others.

Elder John Taylor was called to the chair by Pres. Smith, and Elder W. Richards appointed secretary.
Meeting commenced by singing “The spirit of God like a fire is burning” &c.—Prayer by Elder Taylor.

... The meeting was addressed by Pres. Smith, to illustrate the object of the society—that the Society of Sisters might provoke the brethren to good works in looking to the wants of the poor—searching after objects of charity, and in administering to their wants—to assist; by correcting the morals and strengthening the virtues of the female community, and save the Elders the trouble of rebuking; that they may give their time to other duties &c. in their public teaching.

Pres. Smith further remarked that an organization to show them how to go to work would be sufficient. He proposed that the sisters elect a presiding officer to preside over them, and let that presiding officer choose two counselors to assist in the duties of her office—that he would ordain them to preside over the society—and let them preside just as the presidency, preside over the church; and if they need his instruction—ask him, he will give it from time to time.

Let this presidency serve as a constitution—all their decisions be considered law; and acted upon as such.

If any officers are wanted to carry out the designs of the Institution, let them be appointed and set apart, as deacons, teachers &c. are among us.

The minutes of your meetings will be precedents for you to act upon—your constitution and law.

He then suggested the propriety of electing a presidency to continue in office during good behavior, or so long as they shall continue to fill the office with dignity &c. like the first precidency of the church.—

Motioned by Sister Whitney and seconded by Sister Packard that Mrs. Emma Smith be chosen President—passed unanimously—

Mov’d by Pres. Smith, that Mrs. Smith proceed to choose her counselors, that they may be ordained to preside over this society, in taking care of the poor—administering to their wants, and attending to the various affairs of this Institution.

The presidentess elect, then made choice of Mrs. Sarah M. Cleveland and Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Whitney for counselors—

President Smith read the Revelation to Emma Smith, from the book of Doctrine and Covenants; and stated that she was ordained at the time, the Revelation was given, to expound the scriptures to all; and to teach the female part of community; and that not she alone, but others, may attain to the same blessings.—

The 2d Epistle of John, 1st verse, was then read to show that respect was
then had to the same thing; and that why she was called an elect lady is because, elected to preside.

Elder Taylor was then appointed to ordain the counselors—he laid his hands on the head of Mrs. Cleveland and ordained her to be a counselor to the elect lady, even Mrs. Emma Smith, to counsel, and assist her in all things pertaining to her office &c.

Elder T. then laid his hands on the head of Mrs. Whitney and ordained her to be a counselor to Mrs. Smith, the Pres. of the Institutio—–with all the privileges pertaining to the office &c.

He then laid his hands on the head of Mrs. Smith and blessed her, and confirmed upon her all the blessings which have been conferred on her, that she might be a mother in Israel and look to the wants of the needy, and be a pattern of virtue; and possess all the qualifications necessary for her to stand and preside and dignify her office, to teach the females those principles requisite for their future usefulness.

Pres. Smith then resumed his remarks and gave instruction how to govern themselves in their meetings. . . .

Pres. Smith proceeded to give counsel—do not injure the character of any one—if members of the society shall conduct improperly, deal with them, and keep all your doings within your own bosoms, and hold all characters sacred—

It was then proposed that Elder Taylor vacate the chair.

Pres. Emma Smith and her counselors took the chair, and Elder Taylor moved—seconded by Pres. J. Smith that we go into an investigation respecting what this society shall be called—which was carried unanimously

Pres. Smith continued instructions to the chair to suggest to the members anything the chair might wish, and which it might not be proper for the chair to put, or move &c.

Moved by Counselor Cleveland, and seconded by Counselor Whitney, that this society be called The Nauvoo Female Relief Society.

Elder Taylor offered an amendment, that it be called The Nauvoo Female Benevolent Society which would give a more definite and extended idea of the institution—that relief be struck out and benevolent inserted.

Pres. Smith offered instruction on votes—

The motion was seconded by Counselor Cleveland and unanimously carried, on the amendment by Elder Taylor.

The president then suggested that she would like an argument with Elder Taylor on the words relief and benevolence.

Pres. J. Smith moved that the vote for amendment, be rescinded, which was carried—
Motion for adjournment by Elder Richards and objected by Pres. J.
Smith.—

Pres. J. Smith—Benevolent is a popular term—and the term relief is not
known among popular societies—relief is more extended in its signification
than benevolent and might extend to the liberation of the culprit—and might
be wrongly construed by our enemies to say that the society was to relieve
criminals from punishment &c. &c—to relieve a murderer, which would not
be a benevolent act—

Pres. Emma Smith, said the popularity of the word benevolent is one great
objection—no person can think of the word as associated with public Insti-
tutions, without thinking of the Washingtonian Benevolent Society which
was one of the most corrupt Institutions of the day—do not wish to have it
called after other societies in the world—

Pres. J. Smith arose to state that he had no objection to the word relief—
that on question they ought to deliberate candidly and investigate all subjects.

Counselor Cleveland arose to remark concerning the question before the
house, that we should not regard the idle speech of our enemies—we design
to act in the name of the Lord—to relieve the wants of the distressed, and do
all the good we can.—

Eliza R. Snow arose and said that she felt to concur with the president,
with regard to the word benevolent, that many societies with which it had
been associated, were corrupt,—that the popular Institutions of the day
should not be our guide—that as daughters of Zion, we should set an example
for all the world, rather than confine ourselves to the course which had been
heretofore pursued—one objection to the word relief is, that the idea associ-
ated with it is that of some great calamity—that we intend appropriating on
some extraordinary occasions instead of meeting the common occurrences—

Pres. Emma Smith remarked—we are going to do something extraordinary—
when a boat is stuck on the rapids with a multitude of Mormons on board we
shall consider that a loud call for relief—we expect extraordinary occasions
and pressing calls—

Elder Taylor arose and said—I shall have to concede the point—your argu-
ments are so potent I cannot stand before them—I shall have to give way—

Pres. J. S. said I also shall have to concede the point, all I shall have to give
to the poor, I shall give to this Society—

Counselor Whitney moved, that this society be called The Nauvoo
Female Relief Society—seconded by Counselor Cleveland—

E. R. Snow offered an amendment by way of transposition of words,
instead of The Nauvoo Female Relief Society, it shall be called The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo—seconded by Pres. J. Smith and carried—

The previous question was then put—Shall this society be called The Female Relief Society of Nauvoo?—carried unanimously.—

Pres. J. Smith—I now declare this society organized with president and counselors &c. according to parliamentary usages—and all who shall here-after be admitted into this society must be free from censure and received by vote—

Pres. J. Smith offered $5.00 in gold piece to commence the funds of the institution.

Pres. Emma Smith requested that the gentlemen withdraw before they proceed to the choice of secretary and treasurer, as was moved by Pres. J. Smith—

Willard Richards. Secretary

The gentlemen withdrew when it was motioned and seconded and unanimously passed that Eliza R. Snow be appointed secretary, and Phebe M. Wheeler, assistant secretary—

Motioned, seconded and carried unanimously that Elvira A. Coles be appointed treasurer—

Pres. E. Smith then arose and proceeded to make appropriate remarks on the object of the society—its duties to others also its relative duties to each other viz. to seek out and relieve the distressed—that each member should be ambitious to do good—that the members should deal frankly with each other—to watch over the morals—and be very careful of the character and reputation—of the members of the Institution &c.

P. A. Hawkes—Question—What shall we reply to interrogatories relative to the object of this society?

Pres. E. Smith replied—for charitable purposes....

[We omit the records from the remainder of the meetings in 1842.]

June 16th 1843.

Meeting convened according to previous instructions of Prest. Emma Smith, who not being present, Councilor [Elizabeth Ann] Whitney presided.

Meeting opened by singing “Let Zion in her beauty rise” &c—Prayer by Mrs. Chase.

Councilor Whitney rose and addressed the meeting by saying that she felt alone in consequence of the absence of the president, from whom she
had received instructions that we might not only relieve the wants of the poor but also cast in our mites to assist the brethren in building the Lord’s House—said she had felt a deep interest on the subject since last sabbath hearing Pres. Smith’s remarks—wished the sisters to express their feelings—our Pres., Mrs. Smith said we might speak to the Temple Com., and whatever they wished and we could, we might do—Coun. W. then presented the case of Mrs. Mills whom several of the sisters in company with mother Smith, visited in the morning.

Sec. E. A. [Elvira Annie Cowles] Holmes, then rose—said she was not altogether prepared to give a full and correct statement of the receipts and expenditures of the society but would make a statement so soon as she could see Mrs. Smith and adjust some unsettled accounts—suffice it to say about 500 dollars have been received and nearly 400 expended during the first year of the society—much good had been ... done and the hearts of many made to rejoice.

The sisters expressed their feelings one by one a unanimous sentiment seemed to pervade the hearts of all present, to wit, a desire to assist in forwarding the Temple and in aiding the cause of Zion.¹

Sis. Jones said she would be willing to go about and solicit material, if counseled so to do—she also offered to board one to work on the Temple.

Mrs. Durfee said if the heads of the Society wished, she is willing to go abroad with a wagon and collect wool, etc., for the purpose of forwarding the work.

Mrs. Smith suggested that merchant’s wives donate material that others may be employed.

Miss [Phebe M.] Wheeler—said she is willing to give any portion, or all of her time—

Mrs. Granger willing to do anything, knit, sew, or wait on the sick, as might be most useful.

Miss [Hannah] Ells said she had felt willing to go out and solicit donations &c.

Mrs. Angell said she was willing to repair old clothes if necessary when new material cannot be obtained.

¹ Construction on a uniquely designed worship center at Nauvoo had been going on for several years by this point; Mormon men were expected to contribute a large percentage of their working hours to the effort, even to the detriment of their families. Relief Society members hoped to step in and fill the need.
Mrs. Smith proposed getting wool and furnish old ladies with yarn to knit socks to supply the workmen on the Temple next winter.

Sis. [Polly Knight] Stringham offered to make men’s clothes and take work on the Temple.

Sis. [Mary] Felshaw proposes to give some soap.

Coun. Whitney arose and corroborated the testimony of Sis Chase respecting the glorious manifestation in behalf of Sis. Mills.

Mrs. Chase then spoke in a very animated strain, by way of encouragement to the sisters, saying the angels are rejoicing over you &c. . . .

Sis. [Philinda] Stanley proposed giving every tenth pound of flax, also one qt. milk per day.

Miss [Louisa] Beman will make clothes.

Sis. Smith proposed getting muslin &c. from merchants not belonging to the church, who were friendly—proposed calling on Mr. Orr.

Coun. Whitney then addressed the Society on the subject of Mothers’ discharging their duties towards their daughters, in teaching them to be sober as cultivate a realizing sense of the necessity of conducting with propriety in the Lord’s House,—exhorted to instruct them in love &c.

Sis. Geen [Esther Gheen] offered to donate thread of her own spinning—requested prayers for a paralytic daughter—

Prayer by Mrs. Smith—Meeting adjourned. . . .
From a young age, Quaker Lucretia Mott (1793–1880) was raised in a household where she was encouraged to think for herself and to follow the leadings of her Inner Light. Mott’s conscience led her to become an outspoken abolitionist and advocate of the “free produce” movement, an attempt by northern consumers to boycott all goods grown by slave labor. Mott was recognized as a Quaker minister in 1821; she not only spoke regularly at her home meeting, but traveled to other gatherings of the Society of Friends.

This sermon, preached at the Cherry Street Meeting in Philadelphia, is typical of Mott’s work in that it links the orthodox Christian view of the Bible as the Word of God (that is, as the full and final revelation of the divine will) and the traditional doctrines and ceremonies derived from that belief with cultural stagnation, oppression, and violence. In contrast with such “superstition,” she urges her auditors to embrace the Hicksite Quaker notion of the “word” of God as ongoing revelation of truth within the individual soul by the Spirit of the divine, or the Inner Light. Doing so, she argues, is the only way humanity will be able to achieve either equality or liberty for all.


What are the abuses and what the proper uses of the Bible . . . ? This question is of some importance for us to seek to answer aright less we should fall into the popular error that prevails upon this subject. Mingling as we do in religious Society generally, adopting some of its forms, and some of its theories, we have need to be upon our guard lest we fall into the superstition and error and before we are aware, become bigoted in our opinions and denunciatory in our conduct. We know well that in Christendom generally it is assumed that the Bible is the word of god, while we from the earliest date of our religious Society have declared and believe we have been sustained by
Scripture testimony in the view that the word of God is a quickening spirit. … A portion of this blessed, this divine and all-pervading spirit of which there is an acknowledgment to a greater or less extent everywhere is found wherever man is found, darkened to be sure and clouded by very many circumstances. This divine and holy spirit which is a quickening spirit and has ever been believed to be by this Society the word of God and the only word of God; that it has been through the operation and inspiring power of this word that the testimony to the truth has been borne in various ages of the world; that this testimony, wherever it be found either in scriptures or out of them, is but a corroboration of the word and not the word itself; and that word of God, which is quick and powerful which shows the thoughts and intent of the heart, that engrafted word which is able to save the soul, we find spoken in the scriptures, but we nowhere find the scriptures called the word of God by themselves…. The great error in Christendom is that the Bible is called the word, that it is taken as a whole, as a volume of plenary inspiration and in this way, it has proved one of the strongest pillars to uphold ecclesiastical power and hireling priesthood. What has been the power of this book? Is it not uniformly taken among all the professors to establish their peculiar creeds, their dogmas of faith and their forms of worship, be they ever so superstitious? Is not the Bible sought from beginning to end for its isolated passages wherewith to prove the most absurd dogmas that ever were palmed off upon a credulous people; dogmas doing violence to the divine gift of reason with which man is so beautifully endowed; doing violence to all his feelings, his sense of justice and mercy with which the Most High has seen fit to clothe him? The Bible has been taken to make man from his very birth a corrupt sinful creature, and to make his salvation depend upon the sacrifice of Jesus in order that he should be saved. When his understanding has been imposed on by a Trinity and atonement in the manner that it has, well may we say that the abuse of the Bible has been a means of strengthening priest craft, and to give sanction to sectarian ordinances and establishments…. But also, my friends, has there not been an unworthy resort to this volume to prove the rightfulness of war, and slavery, and of crushing woman’s powers, the assumption of authority over her, and indeed, of all the evils under which the earth, humanity has groaned from age to age? You know as well as I do, how prone the sectarian has been to flee to the Bible to find authority for war, and indeed, in the very existence of war, and there is a disposition because of the undue veneration of these records, to regard our God even now as a God of battles. We do not duly discriminate between that comparatively dark age, when they set up their shouts of victory for their successes
in their wards whether aggressive or defensive, and the present. There is not sufficient allowance for the state that they were in at that time. Because of the veneration paid to the Bible, we find, even down to the present time, the overruling providence of God is claimed as giving countenance to the most barbarous and horrid wars, that are even in this day, cursing and disgracing the nations of the earth. Slavery: you know how ready the apologists for slavery and these apologists, to the shame of the church be it spoken, have been abundantly found in the pulpit, have screened themselves behind their imagined patriarchal institution and what sanction has been given to this greatest of all oppressions, this most wicked system which the English language furnishes no words where with rightly to depict the enormity of its cruelty. . . . We may rejoice that truth has been stronger than all these, that thus the great efforts that have been made in our day for peace, for human freedom, for temperance, for moral purity, for the removal of all oppressions and monopolies that are afflicting mankind, have been to a considerable extent successful notwithstanding such obstacles as a popular priesthood, a popular clergy, and a popular belief and the use of the Bible, have placed in the way of these great reformatory efforts.

This divine word which we believe to be our sufficient teacher, draws us away from a dependence upon books, or everything that is outward, and leads us onward and upward in the work of progress, towards perfection. Were we to come to the light we should have less needs of the ordinances, for it would lead us away from the customs of the religious world. . . .

. . . [W]e see the religious world gone on satisfying itself with its mysteries, with its mere theories of religion. These they regard as useful but which are really anything but true religion. We see them going on satisfied with their forms and devotions, taking comparatively little interest in the great subject of truth and humanity.

But are those all or the only uses that are made of the Bible . . . the expounding of these dogmas and the enforcing of useless forms? Are there not also other uses of these, has there not been another reading of the Scriptures? The proper use of them, I can verily believe has been understood and is increasingly understood by very many. . . . The Scriptures are valuable because they bring together the testimonies of so many ages of the world, but are there not equal testimonies born to the truth that are not bound in this volume? Certainly there are, and we do err not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God when we limit the Scriptures, when we limit the truth or indeed when we set so high a value on these Scriptures as to suffer our veneration to lead us to receive truth more from this source than from any other.
There is one source which is higher than this, and when we come to it, we are drawn away, to some extent from all external dependences and from all outward authorities.

... Let us then my friends cherish a religion which shall be rational and which shall be reasonable in its observance and in its requirements. Let us keep hold of the faith that is in accordance with reason and with the intelligent dictates of the pure spirit of God. ... [W]e must trust in the growing light and intelligence which is spreading over the human family and which is marking those who are desirous to obtain the right, who are hungering and thirsting after greater righteousness. That in this growing intelligence, these evils which still cling to sect, will be removed, and one great means of removing these, is the diffusion of knowledge among both male and female. The usurpations of the Church and clergy, by which woman has been so debased, so crushed, her powers of mind, her very being brought low, and a low estimate set upon these, are coming to be seen in their true light, but woman must avail herself of the increasing means of intelligence, education and knowledge, she must rise also in a higher sphere of spiritual existence, and suffer her moral nature to be developed, her mind to be made right in the sight of God and then will the time speedily come when the influence of the clergy shall be taken off of woman, when the monopoly of the pulpit shall no more oppress her, when marriage shall not be a means of rendering her noble nature subsidiary to man, when there shall be no assumed authority on the one part nor admitted inferiority or subjection on the other. One of the abuses of the Bible, for apostolic opinion has been taken, and no doubt false opinion, for there have been abundant quotations and some mistranslations in order to make the Apostle say what the priests declare he did say, has been to bind silence upon woman in the Churches, fasten upon her that kind of degrading obedience in the marriage relation which has led to countless evils in Society and indeed has enervated and produced for us a feeble race. Oh, my friends these subjects are subjects of religious interest and of vast importance. I would that there were successors coming forth in this great field of reform. The Almighty is calling upon both man and woman to open their mouths and judge righteously, to plead the cause of the poor and the needy and many there are thus emphatically called to lift-up the voice and declare the truth of God and these will give evidence of the divinity of their mission, just as Jesus did. The spirit of the highest is upon me, the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel.1 ...

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1 Isaiah 61:1 (also quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:18)
Born Isabel Baumfree, Sojourner Truth (1797–1883) escaped from slavery in New York State in 1826, roughly a year before she would have been freed under the state’s recently adopted emancipation law. She found refuge in the home of the Van Wagener’s, a white family who offered to reimburse her master for the year of her lost labor; he accepted, and Baumfree remained with the family until 1827 when she became legally free. During this period, she experienced a religious awakening that led her from the legalistic beliefs of her childhood to a fervent and personal relationship with God. The timing of this episode was prophetic, for it happened on the very day that Baumfree had determined to return herself to slavery out of loneliness.

Baumfree’s religious fervor did not abate after this episode; in 1843, she had another vision, in which she heard the Lord commanding her to travel the nation as an itinerant gospel speaker and adopted the name Sojourner Truth. Her testimony on these occasions was so powerful that Olive Gilbert asked her to work with him to publish it and make it more accessible to those unable to hear her speak in person.


... She had no trouble now; her every prayer had been answered in every minute particular. She had been delivered from her persecutors and temptations, her youngest child had been given her, and the others she knew she had no means of sustaining if she had them with her, and was content to leave them behind. Their father, who was much older than Isabel, and who preferred serving his time out in slavery, to the trouble and dangers of the course she pursued, remained with and could keep an eye on them—though it is comparatively little that they can do for each other while they remain in slavery....

The slaves in this country have ever been allowed to celebrate the principal, if not some of the lesser festivals observed by the Catholics and Church
of England;—many of them not being required to do the least service for several days, and at Christmas they have almost universally an entire week to themselves, except, perhaps, the attending to a few duties, which are absolutely required for the comfort of the families they belong to. If much service is desired, they are hired to do it, and paid for it as if they were free. The more sober portion of them spend these holidays in earning a little money. Most of them visit and attend parties and balls, and not a few of them spend it in the lowest dissipation. This respite from toil is granted them by all religionists, of whatever persuasion, and probably originated from the fact that many of the first slaveholders were members of the Church of England.

Frederick Douglass, who has devoted his great heart and noble talents entirely to the furtherance of the cause of his down-trodden race, has said

From what I know of the effect of their holidays upon the slave, I believe them to be among the most effective means, in the hands of the slaveholder, in keeping down the spirit of insurrection. Were the slaveholders at once to abandon this practice, I have not the slightest doubt it would lead to an immediate insurrection among the slaves. These holidays serve as conductors, or safety-valves, to carry off the rebellious spirit of enslaved humanity. But for these, the slave would be forced up to the wildest desperation; and woe betide the slaveholder, the day he ventures to remove or hinder the operation of those conductors! I warn him that, in such an event, a spirit will go forth in their midst, more to be dreaded than the most appalling earthquake.

When Isabella had been at Mr. Van Wagener’s a few months, she saw in prospect one of the festivals approaching. She knows it by none but the Dutch name, Pinkster, as she calls it—but I think it must have been Whitsuntide, in English. She says she “looked back into Egypt,” and everything looked “so pleasant there,” as she saw retrospectively all her former companions enjoying their freedom for at least a little space, as well as their wonted convivialities, and in her heart she longed to be with them. With this picture before her mind’s eye, she contrasted the quiet, peaceful life she was living with the excellent people of Wahkendall, and it seemed so dull and void of incident, that the very contrast served but to heighten her desire to return, that, at least, she might enjoy with them, once more, the coming festivities. These feelings had occupied a secret corner of her breast for some time, when,

1 Frederick Douglass (c. 1818–1895) was a self-emancipated slave who became an outspoken leader in the abolitionist movement.
2 Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave in The Portable Frederick Douglass (New York: Penguin Press, 2016), 65.
one morning, she told Mrs. Van Wagener that her old master Dumont would come that day, and that she should go home with him on his return. They expressed some surprise, and asked her where she obtained her information. She replied, that no one had told her, but she felt that he would come.

It seemed to have been one of those “events that cast their shadows before;” for, before night, Mr. Dumont made his appearance. She informed him of her intention to accompany him home. He answered, with a smile, “I shall not take you back again; you ran away from me.” Thinking his manner contradicted his words, she did not feel repulsed, but made herself and child ready; and when her former master had seated himself in the open dearborn, she walked towards it, intending to place herself and child in the rear, and go with him. But, ere she reached the vehicle, she says that God revealed himself to her, with all the suddenness of a flash of lightning, showing her, “in the twinkling of an eye, that he was all over”—that he pervaded the universe—“and that there was no place where God was not.” She became instantly conscious of her great sin in forgetting her almighty Friend and “ever-present help in time of trouble.” All her unfulfilled promises arose before her, like a vexed sea whose waves run mountains high; and her soul, which seemed but one mass of lies, shrunk back aghast from the “awful look” of him whom she had formerly talked to, as if he had been a being like herself; and she would now fain have hid herself in the bowels of the earth, to have escaped his dread presence. But she plainly saw there was no place, not even in hell, where he was not; and where could she flee? . . .

A dire dread of annihilation now seized her, and she waited to see if, by “another look,” she was to be stricken from existence,—swallowed up, even as the fire licks up the oil with which it comes in contact.

When at last the second look came not, and her attention was once more called to outward things, she observed her master had left, and exclaiming aloud, “Oh, God, I did not know you were so big,” walked into the house, and made an effort to resume her work. But the workings of the inward man were too absorbing to admit of much attention to her avocations. She desired to talk to God, but her vileness utterly forbade it, and she was not able to prefer a petition. “What!” said she, “shall I lie again to God? I have told him nothing but lies; and shall I speak again, and tell another lie to God?” She could not; and now she began to wish for someone to speak to God for her. Then a space seemed opening between her and God, and she felt that if someone, who was worthy in the sight of heaven, would but plead for her in their own

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3 a type of wagon
name, and not let God know it came from her, who was so unworthy, God might grant it. At length a friend appeared to stand between herself and an insulted Deity; and she felt as sensibly refreshed as when, on a hot day, an umbrella had been interposed between her scorching head and a burning sun. But who was this friend? became the next inquiry....

“Who are you?” she exclaimed, as the vision brightened into a form distinct, beaming with the beauty of holiness, and radiant with love. She then said, audibly addressing the mysterious visitant—“I know you, and I don’t know you.” Meaning, “You seem perfectly familiar; I feel that you not only love me, but that you always have loved me—yet I know you not—I cannot call you by name.” When she said, “I know you,” the subject of the vision remained distinct and quiet. When she said, “I don’t know you,” it moved restlessly about, like agitated waters. So while she repeated, without intermission, “I know you, I know you,” that the vision might remain—”Who are you?” was the cry of her heart, and her whole soul was in one deep prayer that this heavenly personage might be revealed to her, and remain with her. At length, after bending both soul and body with the intensity of this desire, till breath and strength seemed failing, and she could maintain her position no longer, an answer came to her, saying distinctly, “It is Jesus.”

“Yes,” she responded, “it is Jesus.”

Previous to these exercises of mind, she heard Jesus mentioned in reading or speaking, but had received from what she heard no impression that he was any other than an eminent man, like a Washington or a Lafayette. Now he appeared to her delighted mental vision as so mild, so good, and so every way lovely, and he loved her so much! And, how strange that he had always loved her, and she had never known it! And how great a blessing he conferred, in that he should stand between her and God! And God was no longer a terror and a dread to her.

She stopped not to argue the point, even in her own mind, whether he had reconciled her to God, or God to herself, (though she thinks the former now,) being but too happy that God was no longer to her as a consuming fire, and Jesus was “altogether lovely.” Her heart was now full of joy and gladness, as it had been of terror, and at one time of despair. In the light of her great happiness, the world was clad in new beauty, the very air sparkled as with diamonds, and was redolent of heaven....
Born in the Mormon community of Nauvoo, Illinois, Ann Eliza Young (1844–1919) was among the first generation of children raised in polygamy and, as a young adult, became the nineteenth wife of the religious community’s second leader, Brigham Young. After a brief but deeply unhappy period as a plural wife, Young determined to leave Utah and expose what she saw as the hypocritical, anti-woman and anti-child doctrines of the Mormon faith. She toured the nation speaking publicly about her experiences and was quickly induced to publish them as well.

In the introduction to her autobiography, Young wrote that her purpose in writing was neither self-aggrandizement nor simple revenge but rather to show the pitiable condition of [Mormon] women, held in a system of bondage that is more cruel than African slavery ever was, since it claims to hold body and soul alike; to arouse compassion for its children and youth, born and growing up in an atmosphere of social impurity; and, above all, to awaken an interest in the hearts of the American people that shall at length deepen into indignation.

Young was successful; her account confirmed many Mormon practices that had been previously only suspected and roused the American public and Congress to put additional pressures on the church leadership to abandon its teaching on plural marriage.

Source: Ann Eliza Young, Chapter 3 in Wife No. 19 (1875).

AFTER the Revelation on Celestial Marriage was publicly announced, in 1852, it was stated that Joseph Smith first produced it in 1843; but there were, no doubt, hints of this new doctrine at a much earlier date. It is generally
believed, and in fact well known by many of the old Nauvoo Mormons, that he had it in contemplation at a much earlier date; certain indiscretions rendering it necessary that he should find an excuse of some kind for acts that were scarcely consistent with his position as “Vicegerent upon earth,” and set himself right, not only with his followers, but with Mrs. Emma Smith, his wife, who objected very decidedly to some of his prophetic eccentricities. . . .

The first public announcement Joseph Smith made of his belief in the plurality of wives was at Nauvoo, in 1840. In a sermon one Sunday he declared that it was perfectly right in the sight of the Lord for a man to have as many wives as he pleased, if he could evade the laws of the land. Said he:

“People of polygamous nations will be converted to the church, and will desire to gather with the Saints to Zion; and what will they do with their wives? We must have polygamy among us as an established institution, and then they can bring all their wives with them.”

He referred to the Bible to sustain his position, and grew very eloquent on the subject. He seemed determined not only to maintain the doctrine to his own satisfaction, but to convince his people of its truth and its desirability.

As may readily be imagined, it caused the greatest excitement and indignation in the church; and many threatened to abandon the faith. The women most especially were aroused, and they declared they never would accept a doctrine so hateful. It was the first open rebellion against any of the Prophet’s teachings by his most devoted followers, and he was wise enough to see his mistake, and to rectify it. Evidently, as he said to certain followers, it was “too soon for the Lord to reveal Himself upon this subject.”

The following Sabbath he arose and said he wished to retract what he had said the Sabbath before; he was at that time only trying the Saints, to see what they could bear.

The Revelation at first was made known only to a few of Joseph’s most intimate friends, and they were solemnly bound to keep its existence a secret; but in some way it became known very generally that there was such a Revelation, although it was not given to the world until 1852. It is on this ground that Smith’s sons endeavor to palm the Revelation on to Brigham, and deny that their father ever intended to have polygamy become a church institution.1 The elder Mormons, who were at Nauvoo, among whom are my parents, know better than this, however, and also know the exact time when the

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1 Emma Smith and her sons refused to travel to Utah with the rest of the Mormons; they remained in Nauvoo and established a separate branch of the Latter Day Saints (now known as the Community of Christ) which did not practice polygamy.
“Revelation” was first talked of. If Smith was not a polygamist, his sons must allow that he was a libertine, or an advocate of free-love principles. It makes little difference which; the results are the same.

The wife of the Prophet took no more kindly to this new doctrine of Celestial Marriage than did the rest of the Mormon women, and no woman of them all allowed her objections to become so widely known as Mrs. Smith. She knew her husband’s nature too well to believe in the Divine origin of the system, and she fought it persistently during his lifetime.

At one time he had eleven young ladies living in his family as adopted daughters, to whom he had been sealed without the knowledge of his wife. She had for some time supposed that his object in having them there was purely a charitable one. To be sure, some of them had parents living; yet there was some plausible reason always given for having them under his roof, which none of the Saints dared to question, although many of them, especially those who were growing disaffected, were dissatisfied with his reasons, and suspicious of his motives. Very little was said about it openly, until his wife saw something which aroused her suspicions, and she remonstrated with Joseph for having the girls there; but with no effect. The girls should remain on that point he was decided.

Unlike many of the Mormon women, Mrs. Smith was not one to accept a cross of this kind submissively. She by no means bowed her head, broke her heart, and silenced her lips, and allowed her husband to pursue his licentious course without opposition. When Joseph would not send away the girls, she said very quietly, but with a determination which showed she was making no idle threat, “Either those girls leave this house to-night, or I do.”

“Very well,” replied her husband, in a passion at having his authority questioned; “you may go, then, for I intend them to stay.”

Without another word she left the house. No sooner had she gone than he began to consider the consequences of her departure directly it should be known, and she would keep neither it nor the cause which provoked her to the step a secret. The publicity of the affair was more than he dared meet. He was not yet ready to encounter the storm it would raise. Great as was his influence over his people, he did not dare risk his popularity by such a bold movement as this. Consequently he followed his wife, and prevailed upon her to return, by promising to dismiss the girls, which he did the next morning. This was her second triumph over his practice of the divine ordinance.

Emma Smith was, as may be supposed from the above-narrated incidents, an energetic, strong-minded woman, possessing a great influence over Joseph, whose superior she was, both mentally and socially, when he married
her. She was fond and proud of her husband during the first years of his success; but when there was any disagreement between them, she generally got the better of him, being less passionate in temper, and more quietly decided in manner. She forced her husband to respect her and her opinions, although he was notoriously unfaithful to her during all their married life. . . .

It had always been a practice of Joseph, whenever he met with any difficulty, to receive a “Revelation,” which immediately put everything straight. On the present occasion he was equal to the emergency and received that celebrated “Revelation” which then and since has constituted the sole authority in the Mormon Church for the practice of polygamy. It was at first only communicated to a chosen few, and it was not until long after polygamy had been practiced more or less openly in Utah that Brigham Young delivered it to the world in 1852. It was then published in the *Seer* and also in the *Millennial Star* under the title of

**Celestial Marriage**

*A Revelation on the Patriarchal Order of Matrimony, or Plurality of Wives*

*Given to Joseph Smith, the Seer, in Nauvoo, July 12th, 1843*

Of all the extraordinary “revelations” given by Joseph Smith during his eventful career, this is, perhaps, the most remarkable. . . . The Book of Mormon, the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and countless “revelations” had denounced polygamy, and stated how offensive the conduct of some of the patriarchs in this respect had been to “the Lord.” Yet here Joseph is made to ask that same “Lord” how he “justified” the very principle that Joseph had all along proclaimed that “the Lord” held to be “an abomination”! The Prophet’s sons of course point to this fact, and say that it was impossible for their father to be guilty of such an unparalleled contradiction.

. . . “The Lord,” however, whom Joseph served, seems to have been as inconsistent in this as in many other matters. But in case of difficulty, Joseph was specially commissioned “to restore all things.” Celestial Marriage was more exactly defined; and that the whole concern should run more smoothly, the keys of the kingdom on earth and in heaven were handed over to the Prophet.

. . . After all this preamble,—the keys committed to Joseph, the relation

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2 The *Seer* and the *Millennial Star* were publications of the Mormon Church.
of husbands and wives under the new dispensation defined, “Celestial Marriage” instituted, and a great many other matters discussed, we come to what was, no doubt, prominent in the Prophet’s mind all the while he was dictating the Revelation to Elder Clayton,—namely, how to manage “the Elect Lady,” Mrs. Emma Smith. Accordingly, she is made the subject of a special address. She is told to “receive all that have been given to my servant Joseph.” She is forbidden to leave the Prophet, as she had threatened to do if he carried out his “celestial” system, and certain other very useful hints are given for her guidance if she would remain in peace. One particular passage is said to refer to a matrimonial scene in which a threat was held out that the life of the Elect Lady should be terminated by poison. She is here commanded to “stay herself, and partake not” of that which Joseph had offered her. It is, however, only right to add that the Mormon exponents of the Revelation say that this passage refers to an offer which Joseph had made to sacrifice his own personal feelings, and to accede to a divorce between Emma and himself. In these few lines more is disclosed of the Prophet’s domestic life and difficulties than he probably was aware of. I give these paragraphs in full, that the reader may judge for himself.

20th. “Verily I say unto you, a commandment I give unto mine handmaid Emma Smith, your wife, whom I have given unto you, that she stay herself, and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her; for I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham; and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice; and let mine handmaid Emma Smith receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure, shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God; for I am the Lord thy God, and ye shall obey my voice; and I give unto my servant Joseph, that he shall be made ruler over many things, for he hath been faithful over a few things, and from henceforth I will strengthen him.”

21st. “And I command mine handmaid Emma Smith to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment, she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my law; but if she will not abide this commandment, then shall my servant Joseph do all things for her, even as he has said; and I will bless him and multiply him, and give unto him an hundred fold in this world, of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives
and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds. And again, verily I say let mine handmaid forgive my servant Joseph his trespasses, and then shall she be forgiven her trespasses, wherein she has trespassed against me; and I, the Lord thy God, will bless her, and multiply her, and make her heart to rejoice.”

... When Joseph released all other wives from their marriage contracts, of course Emma was also released. It is said she thought of making another choice, and would have done so, but the Revelation came in time to prevent it. Joseph offered to make the sacrifice, but the Lord told Emma to “abide and cleave to my servant Joseph,” who had been cunning enough to insert these clauses in his “Revelation,” so as to hold her more closely. It is said that she was shown the first copy of it, and burned it; if so, there must have been another in existence, for the one that Brigham Young gave in 1852 as Joseph’s revelation was identical with that given a few of the chosen Saints in 1843.

I have entered somewhat more into detail regarding the early history of Mormonism than I intended in the beginning; but I have considered it necessary to do so, in order to show to my readers more fully the doctrines I have been taught from my infancy, and to give them some idea of the Mormon stand-point...
Born to parents who had only recently purchased their freedom in Schenectady, New York, Julia A. J. Foote (1823–1900) grew up in the shadow of slavery and, from a young age, was keenly aware of its lingering impact upon American Christianity. Although the church she attended as a young child with her parents admitted both black and white members, the seating was segregated, as was the communion service (with whites being served first). In her autobiography, A Brand Plucked from the Fire, Foote recalls being dismayed by the hypocrisy of this practice; likewise, she writes at great length of the spiritual costs to African American Christians of living in a society so steeped in racial prejudice that its black members were denied even a basic education. Although she professed faith in Christ at a relatively young age and relished the experience of corporate worship, Foote was troubled by her inability to read the Bible for herself. Even after she became literate (at around age nine or ten), Foote longed for additional education:

I believed that, if I were educated, God could make me understand what I needed; for, in spite of what others said, it would come to me, now and then, that I needed something more than what I had, but what that something was I could not tell. . . .

Later, when the family moved to Albany, they joined an African Methodist Episcopal congregation where, around the age of fourteen, Foote had her first encounter with advocates of the emerging theology of “immediate sanctification.” Sometimes also known as Christian perfectionism, or simply, Holiness, this is the belief that believers can experience a second encounter with the Holy Spirit in which they are cleansed from even the temptation to sin in this world; its proponents believe that this second baptism enables believers to live in full obedience to the law of God and thus, place a great deal of emphasis on personal piety and moralism (Document 25). This is a departure from the orthodox Christian understanding of sanctification (that is, being made more Christ-like in character and ability to resist sin) as an ongoing work in the soul of the believer, not to
be completed until death. Foote became convinced of the truth of this teaching, and in her autobiography, recounts her own experience of sanctification and her subsequent call to spread the Holiness message to others.


...[T]here came to our church an old man and his wife, who, when speaking in meeting, told of the trouble they once had had in trying to overcome their temper, subdue their pride, etc. But they took all to Jesus, believing his blood could wash them clean and sanctify them wholly to himself; and, oh! the peace, the sweet peace, they had enjoyed ever since. Their words thrilled me through and through. I at once understood what I needed. Though I had read in my Bible many things they told me, I had never understood what I read. I needed a Philip to teach me.¹

I told my parents, my minister, and lay leader that I wanted to be sanctified. They told me sanctification was for the aged and persons about to die, and not for one like me. All they said did me no good. I had wandered in the wilderness a long time, and now that I could see a ray of the light for which I had so long sought, I could not rest day nor night until I was free....

FINALLY, I did something I never had done before: I deliberately disobeyed my mother. I visited these old saints, weeping as though my heart would break. When I grew calm, I told them all my troubles, and asked them what I must do to get rid of them. They told me that sanctification was for the young believer, as well as the old. These words were a portion in due season. After talking a long time, and they had prayed with me, I returned home, though not yet satisfied.

I remained in this condition more than a week, going many times to my secret place of prayer, which was behind the chimney in the garret of our house. None but those who have passed up this way know how wretched every moment of my life was. I thought I must die. But truly, God does make

¹ According to Acts 8:26-40, Philip the Apostle was sent by the Spirit of the Lord to a specific track of road outside of Jerusalem where he encountered an Ethiopian official. When Philip met the man, he saw that he was reading the Old Testament prophet Isaiah and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The official replied that he did not, and invited Philip to teach him. This has traditionally been credited as the founding of the Ethiopian Christian Church. Foote’s reference to it was thus doubly poignant, a hint, perhaps, that she saw her own epiphany as inaugurating a similarly new branch of Christianity.
his little ones ministering angels sending them forth on missions of love and mercy. So he sent that dear old mother in Israel to me one fine morning in May. At the sight of her my heart seemed to melt within me, so unexpected, and yet so much desired was her visit. Oh, bless the Lord for sanctified men and women!

There was no one at home except the younger children, so our coming together was uninterrupted. She read and explained many passages of Scripture to me, such as, John 17; 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 1 Cor. 6:9-12; Heb. 2:11; and many others—carefully marking them in my Bible. All this had been as a sealed book to me until now. Glory to Jesus! the seals were broken and light began to shine upon the blessed Word of God as I had never seen it before.

The second day after that pilgrim’s visit, while waiting on the Lord, my large desire was granted, through faith in my precious Savior. The glory of God seemed almost to prostrate me to the floor. There was, indeed, a weight of glory resting upon me…. [M]y constant prayer, was answered, that I might be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that being rooted and grounded in love, I might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and heighth, and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and be filled with all the fullness of God…. 

I continued day by day, month after month, to walk in the light as He is in the light, having fellowship with the Trinity and those aged saints. The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed me from all sin, and enabled me to rejoice in persecution.

[Within a few years of her sanctification experience, Foote married a young man from her congregation and the couple moved to Boston where they joined an African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. During this time, Foote continued to study the Bible and to pray. Her account of her call to preach is quite dramatic and focused on her vision of the bodily experience of being baptized by Jesus, clothed in “a clean white robe” by the Father, and finally fed a fruit “which had a taste like nothing I had ever tasted before” by the Holy Spirit.]

… Then God the Father said to me: “You are now prepared and must go where I have commanded you.” I replied, “If I go, they will not believe me.” Christ then appeared to write something with a golden pen and golden ink, upon golden paper. Then he rolled it up, and said to me: “Put this in your bosom, and, wherever you go, show it, and they will know that I have sent you to proclaim salvation to all.” He then put it into my bosom, and they all went with me to a bright, shining gate, singing and shouting. Here they embraced me, and I found myself once more on earth.

When I came to myself, I found that several friends had been with me all
night, and my husband had called a physician, but he had not been able to
do anything for me. He ordered those around me to keep very quiet, or to
go home. He returned in the morning, when I told him, in part, my story. He
seemed amazed, but made no answer, and left me.

Several friends were in, during the day. While talking to them, I would,
without thinking, put my hand into my bosom, to show them my letter of
authority. But I soon found, as my friends told me, it was in my heart, and was
to be shown in my life, instead of in my hand. Among others, my minister,
Jehiel C. Beman, came to see me. He looked very coldly upon me and said: “I
guess you will find out your mistake before you are many months older.” He
was a scholar, and a fine speaker; and the sneering, indifferent way in which
he addressed me, said most plainly: “You don’t know anything.” I replied:
“My gifts are very small, I know, but I can no longer be shaken by what you
or anyone else may think or say.”

FROM this time the opposition to my life-work commenced, instigated
by the minister, Mr. Beman. Many in the church were anxious to have me
preach in the hall, where our meetings were held at that time, and were not a
little astonished at the minister’s cool treatment of me. At length two of the
trustees got some of the elder sisters to call on the minister and ask him to
let me preach. His answer was: “No; she can’t preach her holiness stuff here,
and I am astonished that you should ask it of me.” The sisters said he seemed
to be in quite a rage, although he said he was not angry.

There being no meeting of the society on Monday evening, a brother in
the church opened his house to me, that I might preach, which displeased
Mr. Beman very much. He appointed a committee to wait upon the brother
and sister who had opened their doors to me, to tell them they must not
allow any more meetings of that kind, and that they must abide by the rules
of the church, making them believe they would be excommunicated if they
disobeyed him. I happened to be present at this interview, and the committee
remonstrated with me for the course I had taken. I told them my business
was with the Lord, and wherever I found a door opened I intended to go in
and work for my Master.

There was another meeting appointed at the same place, which I, of
course, attended; after which the meetings were stopped for that time. . . .

I then held meetings in my own house; whereat the minister told the
members that if they attended them he would deal with them, for they were
breaking the rules of the church. When he found that I continued the meet-
ings, and that the Lord was blessing my feeble efforts, he sent a committee
of two to ask me if I considered myself a member of his church. I told them
I did, and should continue to do so until I had done something worthy of dismemberment.

At this, Mr. Beman sent another committee with a note, asking me to meet him with the committee, which I did. He asked me a number of questions, nearly all of which I have forgotten. One, however, I do remember: he asked if I was willing to comply with the rules of the discipline. To this I answered: “Not if the discipline prohibits me from doing what God has bidden me to do; I fear God more than man.” Similar questions were asked and answered in the same manner. The committee said what they wished to say, and then told me I could go home. When I reached the door, I turned and said: “I now shake off the dust of my feet² as a witness against you. See to it that this meeting does not rise in judgment against you.”

The next evening, one of the committee came to me and told me that I was no longer a member of the church, because I had violated the rules of the discipline by preaching. When this action became known, the people wondered how anyone could be excommunicated for trying to do good. . . . At that time, I thought it my duty as well as privilege to address a letter to the Conference, which I took to them in person, stating all the facts. At the same time, I told them it was not in the power of Mr. Beman, or anyone else, to truthfully bring anything against my moral or religious character that my only offence was in trying to preach the Gospel of Christ and that I cherished no ill feelings toward Mr. Beman or anyone else, but that I desired the Conference to give the case an impartial hearing, and then give me a written statement expressive of their opinion. I also said I considered myself a member of the Conference, and should do so until they said I was not, and gave me their reasons, that I might let the world know what my offence had been.

My letter was slightingly noticed, and then thrown under the table. Why should they notice it? It was only the grievance of a woman, and there was no justice meted out to women in those days. Even ministers of Christ did not feel that women had any rights which they were bound to respect.³

Thirty years ago there could scarcely a person be found, in the churches, to sympathize with anyone who talked of Holiness. But, in my simplicity, I

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² Matthew 10:14
³ A close paraphrase of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney’s words in the Dred Scott Decision (1857); Taney wrote that African-Americans “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”
did think that a body of Christian ministers would understand my case and judge righteously. I was, however, disappointed.

We are sometimes told that if a woman pretends to a Divine call, and thereon grounds the right to plead the cause of a crucified Redeemer in public, she will be believed when she shows credentials from heaven; that is, when she works a miracle. If it be necessary to prove one’s right to preach the Gospel, I ask of my brethren to show me their credentials, or I cannot believe in the propriety of their ministry. But the Bible puts an end to this strife when it says: “There is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus.” Philip had four daughters that prophesied or preached. Paul called Priscilla, as well as Aquila, his “helper,” or, as in the Greek, his “fellow-laborer.” Rom. 15:3; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:5; 1 Thess. 3:2. The same word, which, in our common translation, is now rendered a “servant of the church,” in speaking of Phebe (Rom. 19:1), is rendered “minister” when applied to Tychicus. Eph. 6:21. When Paul said, “Help those women who labor with me in the Gospel,” he certainly meant that they did more than to pour out tea.

In the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians Paul gives directions, to men and women, how they should appear when they prophesy or pray in public assemblies; and he defines prophesying to be speaking to edification, exhortation and comfort. I may further remark that the conduct of holy women is recorded in Scripture as an example to others of their sex. And in the early ages of Christianity many women were happy and glorious in martyrdom. How nobly, how heroically, too, in later ages, have women suffered persecution and death for the name of the Lord Jesus.

In looking over these facts, I could see no miracle wrought for those women more than in myself. Though opposed, I went forth laboring for God, and he owned and blessed my labors, and has done so wherever I have been until this day.
Document 19

“The People’s God: Its Effect on Health and Christianity”

Mary Baker Eddy

June 1883

As a child and young adult, Mary Baker Eddy (1821–1910) experienced repeated poor health bordering on invalidism. Although she tried many different kinds of remedies ranging from traditional medicine to alternative treatments such as the water cure, she claimed never to have experienced true relief until she became convinced of the sole efficacy of faith healing in the mid-1860s. Eddy devoted several years to developing her new understanding of what she referred to as the “primitive Christian” understanding of the connection between mind and body. By 1875, she was ready to share her findings with others, publishing Science and Health, a veritable handbook for those who wished to practice the principles of what she was already calling “Christian Science” for themselves. When mainstream Protestant denominations dismissed her system and specifically, her Biblical interpretation as heterodox, she established the Church of Christ, Scientist in 1879.

Ironically, as the essay below makes clear, Eddy ultimately came to believe in a sort of neo-Platonism, teaching her followers that not only was the material world (including their bodies and any physical ailments) corrupt, but that it was ultimately an illusion that impeded their ability to experience the true reality of the spirit. Indeed, Eddy refers to a too-serious regard of the material world as a type of idolatry; logically, then, she viewed sickness as the manifestation of sin. She therefore urged her followers to reject modern, secular medical treatments and instead, to focus their energies on purifying their souls. The rejection of modern medical wisdom raised public health concerns; legislatures around the country responded by passing bills meant to limit the practice of Christian Science healers. In this excerpt, Eddy rejects such laws not on the grounds that they violated the right to the free exercise of religion, a position taken by later Christian Scientists in opposing vaccination laws, for example, but rather on the more sweeping charge that they are “human rights” violations.

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Ephesians 4:5

The improved theory and practice of religion and of medicine are mainly due to the people’s improved views of the Supreme Being. As the finite and personal sense of Deity, based on material conceptions of spiritual being, yield their grosser elements, we shall learn what God is, and what God does for man....

...Proportionately as the people’s belief of God, in every age, has dematerialized and impersonalized has their Deity become good; no longer a personal tyrant or a molten image, but the divine and spiritual model of eternal Life, Truth, and Love,—Life without beginning or ending, Truth without a lapse or error, and Love universal, infinite and eternal. This more perfect Deity, held constantly before the people’s mind, must have a benign and elevating influence upon the character of nations as well as individuals, and will lift man ultimately to the understanding that our ideals form our characters, and “as a man thinketh so is he.” The crudest ideals of speculative theology have made monsters of men; and the ideals of Materia medica\(^1\) have made helpless invalids and cripples. The eternal roasting amidst noxious vapours,—the election of the minority to be saved and the majority to be eternally punished; the wrath of God to be appeased by the sacrifice and torture of his favorite Son; are some of the false beliefs that have produced sin, sickness and death; and then would say, these are natural, and that Christianity and Christ-healing are preter-natural; yea, that make a mysterious God and a natural devil. It requires more than another flood to efface the dire effects of such false systems.

Let us rejoice that the bow of Omnipotence already spans the moral heavens with light, and the more spiritual idea of Good and Truth meets the old material thought like a promise upon the cloud, while it inscribes on the thoughts of men at this period a more metaphysical religion in Christian Science. ...Idolatry sprang from the belief that God is a form more than an infinite and divine Mind; sin, sickness and death originated in the belief that spirit materialized into a body, infinity became finity, or man, and the Eternal entered the temporal....

The glorious godhead is Life, Truth and Love, and these three terms for one divine Principle, are the three in one that can be understood, and that find no reflection in sinning, sick and dying mortals.... Systems of religion and of medicine grown out of such false ideals of the Supreme Being cannot

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\(^1\) a traditional term used for the knowledge of the healing properties of a medicine
heal the sick and cast out devils, error. Eschewing a materialistic and idolatrous theory and practice of medicine and religion, the apostle devoutly recommends the more spiritual Christianity—One Lord, one faith, one baptism. The prophets and apostles whose lives are the embodiment of a living faith, have not “taken away our Lord, that we know not where they have laid him;” they have resurrected a deathless life of love; and into the cold materialisms of dogma and doctrine we look in vain for their more spiritual ideal, the risen Christ, whose materia medica and theology were one.

Believing that man is the victim of his Maker, we naturally fear God more than we love him; whereas “perfect love casteth out fear;” but when we learn God aright we love him, because He is found altogether lovely. Thus it is that a more spiritual and true ideal of Deity improves the race physically and spiritually. God is no longer a mystery to the Christian Scientist, but a divine Principle understood in part, because the grand realities of Life and Truth are found destroying sin, sickness and death, and it should no longer be deemed treason to understand God, when the Scriptures enjoin us, “To acquaint now thyself with God and be at peace;” we should understand something of that great good for which we are to leave all else.

To remove those objects of sense called sickness and disease, we must appeal to mind to improve its subjects and objects of thought, and give to the body those better delineations. Scientific discovery and the inspiration of Truth have taught me that the health and character of man become more or less perfect as his mind-models are more or less spiritual. Because God is spirit our thoughts must spiritualize to approach Him, and our methods grow more spiritual to accord with our thoughts. Religion and medicine must dematerialize to present the right idea of truth, then will this idea cast out error and heal the sick. If changeableness that repenteth itself,—partiality that elects some to be saved and others to be lost, or that answers the prayer of one and not of another,—if incompetency that cannot heal the sick, or lack of love that will not,—if unmercifulness, that for the sins of a few tried years punishes man eternally, are our conceptions of Deity, we shall bring out these qualities of character in our own lives and extend their influence to others.

We possess our own body and make it harmonious or discordant according to the images that thought reflects upon it. The emancipation of our bodies from sickness will follow the mind’s freedom from sin. The rights of man were vindicated but in a single instance when African slavery was abolished on this continent, yet that hour was a prophesy of the full liberty of the sons of God as found in Christian Science. The defenders of the rights of the colored man were scarcely done with their battles before a new abolitionist
struck the keynote of higher claims, in which it was found that the feeblest
mind, enlightened and spiritualized, can free its body from disease as well as
sin, and this victory is achieved not with bayonet and blood, not by inhuman
warfare, but divine peace.

Above the platform of human rights let us build another staging for diviner
claims, even the supremacy of soul over sense, wherein man co-operates with
and is made subject to his Maker. The lame, the blind, the sick, the sensual,
are slaves, and their fetters are gnawing away life and hope, and their chains
are clasped by the false teachings, false theories, false fears, that enforce new
forms of oppression, and are the modern Pharaohs that hold the children
of Israel still in bondage. Mortals, alias, mortal minds, make the laws that
govern their bodies, as directly as men pass legislative acts and enact penal
codes; while the body, obedient to the legislation of mind but ignorant of the
law of belief, calls its own enactments “laws of matter.” The legislators who
greatly responsible for all the woes of mankind are those leaders of public
thought, who are mistaken in their methods of humanity.

The learned quacks of this period “bind heavy burdens that they them-
selves will not touch with one of their fingers.” Scientific guessing conspires
unwittingly against the liberty and lives of men. Should we but hearken to the
higher law of God, we should think for one moment of these divine statutes
of God; “let them have dominion over all the earth.” “And if they drink any
deadly thing it shall not hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick, and they
shall recover.” The only law of sickness or death is a law of mortal belief, an
infringement on the merciful and just government of God. When this great
fact is understood, the spurious imaginary laws of matter,—when matter is
not a lawgiver,—will be disputed and trampled under the feet of Truth. Deal
then with this fabulous law, as with an inhuman state law; repeal it in mind
and acknowledge only God in all thy ways, “Who forgiveth all thine iniqu-
ities, and healeth all thy diseases.” Few there be who know what a power
mind is to heal when imbued with the spiritual truth that lifts man above
the demands of matter. . . .
In the nineteenth century, in order to provide more consistent religious instruction in areas of the country where the supply of ordained ministers was limited, some denominations adopted a policy of “licensing” devout and well-spoken individuals to preach. Licensure, as opposed to ordination, was not restricted to men; licensed preachers were unable to perform the sacraments, but could teach, exhort, and comfort the faithful under their care through the public exposition of Scripture.

Although her intellectual talents were not fully recognized until she was in her mid-twenties, by the time she turned thirty, Anna Howard Shaw (1847–1919) was licensed to preach by the Methodist Episcopal Church. As an itinerant speaker in the upper Midwest, she quickly gained some notoriety for the depth and forcefulness of her preaching. After completing her undergraduate training at Albion College in Michigan, Shaw went east to Boston University where she studied both theology and medicine, earning degrees in both fields (1880, and 1886, respectively). Although she was refused ordination in the Methodist Episcopal Church because of her gender, Shaw was ordained by the Methodist Protestant Church in 1880, and used her public ministry to further a variety of reform causes including temperance and woman’s suffrage.

In this sermon, preached at the first meeting of the International Council of Women in 1888, Shaw interprets Psalm 68 as a type of “heavenly vision” that must be obeyed. She argues first, that the Psalm should be understood as a prophecy that the spiritual and social deliverance of the world will be led by women; and second, that the time has come for women of all nations to work together to that end.

“Whereupon, O, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.” Acts 26:19

... The Psalmist caught the vision of the events in the midst of which you and I are living today. And though he wrought the vision into the wonderful prophecy of the 68th Psalm, yet so new and strange were the thoughts to men, that for thousands of years they failed to catch its spirit and understand its power.

The vision which appeared to David¹ was a world lost in sin. He heard its cry for deliverance, he saw its uplifted hands. Everywhere the eyes of good men were turned toward the skies for help. For ages had they striven against the forces of evil—they had sought by every device to turn back the flood-tide of base passion and avarice, but to no purpose. It seemed as if all men were engulfed in one common ruin. Patient, sphinxlike, sat woman, limited by sin, limited by social custom, limited by false theories, limited by bigotry and by creeds, listening to the tramp of the weary millions as they passed on through the centuries, patiently toiling and waiting, humbly bearing the pain and weariness which fell to her lot.

Century after century came forth the divine life only to pass into the great eternity—and still she toiled and still she waited. At last, in the mute agony of despair, she lifted her eyes above the earth to heaven and away from the jarring strife which surrounded her, and that which dawned upon her gaze was so full of wonder that her soul burst its prison-house of bondage as she beheld the vision of true womanhood. She knew then it was not the purpose of the Divine that she should crouch beneath the bonds of custom and ignorance. She learned that she was created not from the side of man, but rather by the side of man.² The world had suffered because she had not kept her divinely-appointed place. Then she remembered the words of prophecy, that salvation was to come to the race not through the man, but through the descendant of the woman.³ Recognizing her mission at last, she cried out: “Speak now, Lord, for thy servant heareth thee.” And the answer came: “The

¹ King David, the most celebrated leader of the biblical Israel
² This is an allusion to the account of the creation of the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) in Genesis 2. According to Genesis 2:21-22, while Adam slept, God took one of his ribs and fashioned it into Eve.
³ See Genesis 3:15 where God curses the serpent, saying “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel.” In the majority of Christian traditions, this passage has been interpreted to refer to Christ’s victory over death and sin.
Lord giveth the Word, and the woman that publish the tidings are a great host.”

Today the vision is a reality. From every land the voice of woman is heard proclaiming the word which is given her, and the wondering world, which for a moment stopped its busy wheel of life that it might smite and jeer her, has learned at last that wherever the intuitions of the human mind are called into special exercise, wherever the art of persuasive eloquence is demanded, wherever heroic conduct is based upon duty rather than impulse, wherever her efforts in opening the sacred doors for the benefit of truth can avail—in one and all these respects woman greatly excels man. Now the wisest and best people everywhere feel that if woman enters upon her tasks wielding her own effective armor, if her inspirations are pure and holy, the Spirit Omnipotent, whose influence has held sway in all movements and reforms, whose voice has called into its service the great workmen of every age, shall, in these last days, fall especially upon woman. If she venture to obey, what is man that he should attempt to abrogate her sacred and divine mission? In the presence of what woman has already accomplished, who shall say that a true woman—noble in her humility, strong in her gentleness, rising above all selfishness, gathering up her varied gifts and accomplishments to consecrate them to God and humanity—who shall say that such a one is not in a position to do that for which the world will no longer rank her other than among the first in the work of human redemption? Then, influenced by lofty motives, stimulated by the wail of humanity and the glory of God, woman may go forth and enter into any field of usefulness which opens up before her.

In the Scripture [Acts 26:19] from which the text is taken we recognize a universal law which has been the experience of every one of us. Paul is telling the story of a vision he saw, which became the inspiration of his life, the turning point where his whole existence was changed, when, in obedience to that vision, he put himself in relation with the power to which he belonged, and recognizing in that One which appeared to him on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus his Divine Master, he also recognized that the purpose of his life could be fulfilled only when, in obedience to that Master, he caught and assimilated to himself the nature of Him, whose servant he was.

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4 Psalm 68:11
5 See the account of the conversion of Paul (then known as Saul) on the road to Damascus in Acts 9.
Every reformer the world has ever seen has had a similar experience. Every truth which has been taught to humanity has passed through a like channel. Not one of God’s children has ever gone forth to the world who has not first had revealed to him his mission, in a vision.

To this Jew [Paul], bound by the prejudices of past generations, weighed down by the bigotry of human creeds, educated in the schools of an effete philosophy, struggling through the darkness and gloom which surrounded him, when as a persecutor he sought to annihilate the disciples of a new faith, there came this vision into his life; there dawned the electric light of a great truth, which found beneath the hatred and pride and passion which filled his life and heart, the divine germ that is implanted in the soul of each one of God’s children…. [in original]

Then came crowding through his mind new queries: “Can it be that my fathers were wrong, and that their philosophy and religion do not contain all there is of truth? Can it be that outside of all we have known, there lies a great unexplored universe to which the mind of man can yet attain?” And filled with the divine purpose, he opened his heart to receive the new truth that came to him from the vision which God revealed to his soul.

All down through the centuries God has been revealing in visions the great truths which have lifted the race, step by step, until today womanhood, in this sunset hour of the nineteenth century, is gathered here from the East and the West, the North and the South, women of every land, of every race, of all religious beliefs. But diverse and varied as are our races, our theories, our religions, yet we come together here with one harmonious purpose—that of lifting humanity into a higher, purer, truer life.

To one has come the vision of political freedom. She saw how the avarice and ambition of one class with power made them forget the rights of another. She saw how the unjust laws embittered both—those who made them and those upon whom the injustice rested. She recognized the great principles of universal equality, seeing that all alike must be free; that humanity everywhere must be lifted out of subjection into the free and full air of divine liberty.

To another was revealed the vision of social freedom. She saw that sin which crushed the lives of one class, rested lightly on the lives of the other. She saw its blighting effect on both, and she lifted up her voice and demanded that there be recognized no sex in sin.

Another has come hither, who, gazing about her, saw men brutalized by the rum fiend, the very life of nation threatened, and the power of the liquor traffic, with its hand on the helm of the Ship of State, guiding it with sails full
spread straight upon the rocks of destruction. Then, looking away from earth, 
she beheld a vision of what the race and our nation might become, with all 
its possibility of wealth and power, if freed from this burden, and forth upon 
her mission of deliverance she sped her way.

Another beheld a vision of what it is to be learned, to explore the great 
fields of knowledge which the Infinite has spread before the world. And this 
vision has driven her out from the seclusion of her own quiet life that she 
might give this great truth to womanhood everywhere.... [in original]

And so we come, each bearing her torch of living truth, casting over the 
world the light of the vision that has dawned upon her soul.

But there is still another vision which reaches above earth, beyond time—a 
vision which has dawned upon many, that they are here not to do their own 
work, but the will of Him who sent them. And the woman who sees the still 
higher truth, recognizes the great power to which she belongs and what her 
life may become when, in submission to that Master, she takes upon herself 
the nature of Him whom she serves.

We will notice in the second place the purpose of all these visions which 
have come to us. Paul was not permitted to dwell on the vision of truth which 
came to him. God had a purpose in its manifestation, and that purpose was 
revealed when He said to the wonder-stricken servant, “Arise; for I have 
appeared unto thee for this purpose, not that thou behold the truth for thy-
self, but to make thee a minister and a witness both of that which thou has 
already seen and of other truths which I shall reveal unto thee. Go unto the 
Gentiles. Give them the truth which thou shalt receive that their eyes may be 
opened, and that they may be turned from darkness to light; that they, too, 
may receive a like inheritance with thyself....” [in original]

This, then, is God’s lesson to you and to me. He opens before our eyes 
the vision of a great truth and for a moment He permits our wondering gaze 
to rest upon it; then He bids us go forth. Jacob of old saw the vision of God’s 
messengers ascending and descending, but none of them standing still.6

Herein, then, lies the secret of the success of the reformer. First the vision, 
then the purpose of the vision. “I was not disobedient unto the heavenly 
vision.” This is the manly and noble confession of one of the world’s greatest 
reformers, and in it we catch a glimpse of the secrets of the success of his 
divinely-appointed mission. The difference between the Saul of Tarsus and 
Paul the Prisoner of the Lord was measured by his obedience. This, too, is a 
universal law, true of the life of every reformer, who, having had revealed to

6 Genesis 28:10-19
him a vision of the great truth, has in obedience to that vision carried it to humanity. Though at first he holds the truth to himself, and longs to be lifted up by its power, he soon learns that there is a giving forth of that which one possesses which enriches the giver, and that the more he gives of his vision to men the richer it becomes, the brighter it grows, until it illuminates all his pathway. . . . [in original]

Yet Paul’s life was not an idle dream; it was a constant struggle against the very people whom he tried to save; his greatest foes were those to whom he was sent. He had learned the lesson all reformers must sooner or later learn, that the world never welcomes its deliverers save with the dungeon, the fagot or the cross. No man or woman has ever sought to lead his fellows to a higher and better mode of life without learning the power of the world’s ingratitude; and though at times popularity may follow in the wake of a reformer, yet the reformer knows popularity is not love. The world will support you when you have compelled it to do so by manifestations of power, but it will shrink from you as power and greatness are no longer [at] your side. This is the penalty paid by good people who sacrifice themselves for others. They must live without sympathy; their feelings will be misunderstood; their efforts will be comprehended. Like Paul, they will be betrayed by friends; like Christ in the agony of Gethsemane, they must bear their struggles alone.

Our reverence for the reformers of the past is posterity’s judgment of them. But to them, what is that now? They have passed into the shadows where neither our voice of praise or of blame disturbs their repose. This is the hardest lesson the reformer has to learn. When, with soul aglow with the light of a great truth, she, in obedience to the vision, turns to take it to the needy one, instead of finding a world ready to rise up and receive her, she finds it wrapped in the swaddling clothes of error, eagerly seeking to win others to its conditions of slavery. She longs to make humanity free; she listens to their conflicting creeds, and yearns to save them from the misery they endure. She knows that there is no form of slavery more bitter or arrogant than error, that truth alone can make man free, and she longs to bring the heart of the world and the heart of truth together, that the truth may exercise its transforming power over the life of the world. The greatest test of the reformer’s courage comes when, with a warm, earnest longing for humanity, she breaks for it the bread of truth and the world turns from this life-giving power and asks instead of bread a stone.

It is just here that so many of God’s workmen fail, and themselves need to turn back to the vision as it appeared to them, and to gather fresh courage and new inspiration for the future. This, my sisters, we all must do if we
would succeed. The reformer may be inconsistent, she may be stern or even impatient, but if the world feels that she is in earnest she cannot fail. Let the truth which she desires to teach first take possession of herself. Every woman who today goes out into the world with a truth, who has not herself become possessed of that truth, had far better stay at home.

Who would have dreamed, when at that great anti-slavery meeting in London, some years ago, the arrogance and pride of men excluded the women whom God had moved to lift up their voices on behalf of the baby that was sold by the pound—who would have dreamed that that very exclusion would be the keynote of woman’s freedom? That out of the prejudice of that hour God should be able to flash upon the crushed hearts of those excluded the grand vision which we see manifested here today? That out of a longing for the liberty of a portion of the race, God should be able to show to women the still larger vision of the freedom of all humankind?

Grand as is this vision which meets us here, it is but the dawning of a new day; and as the first beams of morning light give promise of the radiance which shall envelop the earth when the sun shall have arisen in all its splendor, so there comes to us a prophecy of that glorious day when the vision which we are now beholding, which is beaming in the soul of one, shall enter the hearts and transfigure the lives of all.

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7 Shaw refers perhaps to the World Anti-Slavery Convention (1840) at which the role of the women delegates became a contentious issue.
The Shakers’ Mode of Worship
Near Lebanon, New York, c. 1830

Although the United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing took their colloquial name of “Shakers” from their early practice of ecstatic individualized dance, by the antebellum period their dances were carefully choreographed corporate events. Dances took on two main forms: line dances (as seen in this woodprint) and circle dances. In line dances, the male and female halves of the congregation mirrored each other’s movements to symbolize the dual-nature of Christ as taught by Ann Lee. In circle dances, men and women created circles of varying sizes around the room, sometimes facing one another in concentric patterns and sometimes segregated by gender but paralleling one another’s steps on opposite sides of the room. In all such dances, the participants were meant to experience the order as well as the rapture of their communal religious endeavor.
The frontispiece to Phyllis Wheatley’s *Poems* is a portrait of the poet showing her, a pen in her hand and a book at her elbow, as she gazes slightly upward—perhaps waiting for divine inspiration.
“Representative Women of Deseret”

C. 1883

Augusta Joyce Crocheron created this poster to counter negative stereotypes of Mormon women, showing the world that they were just as cultured and refined as other American women. A year later, she published a book with the same name that celebrated Mormon women’s accomplishments.
“Mother” Jones and Her Army of Striking Textile Workers

Philadelphia, 1903


[Original caption] The textile workers of Philadelphia say they intend to show the people of the country their condition by marching through all the important cities.

Although the majority of figures in this image are adults, note the children in the foreground; as a labor organizer, “Mother” Jones attempted to utilize the nation’s religious heritage to fight for social justice for the “least” and the vulnerable in society, most especially children.
This poster showing a monumental Red Cross nurse cradling a wounded soldier on a stretcher emulates traditional Madonna-and-child poses found in Christian art from the medieval period onward. Associating the act of nursing with the symbolic feminine perfection of Mary, the mother of Jesus, the artist suggests that through such service women may express and fulfill their femininity.
Because women were barred from ordination by so many religious organizations until the late twentieth century, many women (including Mary Dyer, Jarena Lee, and Anna Howard Shaw, to name just a few represented in this volume) took up the practice of itinerant exhortation and preaching. Aimee Semple McPherson thus stood in a long line of female religious speakers when she took to the highways and byways of America in the 1910s. She did, however, innovate in that she traveled with a party of other ministry workers, each carefully chosen for their performance gifts, as seen in this image of McPherson and her musical entourage.
First Public Appearance of Women of the K.K.K.
Triangle Studio, Richmond Hill, NY, c. 1924


America's religious women were not immune from the prejudices that plagued the broader society. In the image, a row of women in black dresses with their faces obscured behind kerchiefs are being initiated into the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).
Although Phyllis Schlafly was herself a Catholic, her arguments against the ERA appealed to religious women who held conservative beliefs about gender roles from a wide variety of backgrounds, ranging from fundamentalist Protestants, to Mormons, and even Orthodox Jews. Schlafly’s ability to turn moral outrage into political activism was critical to the rise of the Religious Right in American politics.
“The ‘Do Everything’ Policy”
Frances Willard
March 1893

Frances Willard (1839–1898) never married; instead, she devoted her life to teaching and promoting the rights of American women. Liberally educated and independently wealthy, Willard helped found the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1874 and served as its president from 1879 until her death. A Methodist in the pietistic tradition, Willard believed true believers were marked by the purity of the lives in word and deed, not their performance of particular rites or adherence to specific creeds. Like others within the Holiness Movement (Document 18) she saw personal purity as the prerequisite to the cultural and spiritual sanctification that would mark the “new heavens and the new earth” spoken of in the Bible. As president of the WCTU she adopted the motto “do everything” to summarize the mission of the WCTU: in addition to promoting individual abstinence from alcohol and prohibition laws, under her leadership, the organization embraced a wide-ranging policy agenda including dress reform, married women’s property laws, labor issues, and suffrage.

The WCTU was a founding member of the National Council for Women (1888), the International Council of Women (1893), and the United Nations Non-Governmental Organizations (1945). It remains loyal to Willard’s “do everything” policy and advocates for the rights of women and the protection of home and family life around the globe.


Beloved Comrades of the White Ribbon Army:¹

When we began the delicate, difficult, and dangerous operation of dissecting out the alcohol nerve from the body politic, we did not realize the

¹ The WCTU adopted white ribbons as an organizational symbol because of the color’s traditional association with purity.
intricacy of the undertaking nor the distances that must be traversed by the
scalpel of investigation and research. In about seventy days from now, twenty
years will have elapsed since the call of battle sounded its bugle note among
the homes and hearts of Hillsboro’, Ohio. We have all been refreshing our
knowledge of those days by reading the “Crusade Sketches” of its heroic
leader, Mrs. Eliza J. Thompson, “the mother of us all,” and we know that
but one thought, sentiment and purpose animated those saintly “Praying
Bands” whose name will never die out from human history. “Brothers, we
beg you not to drink and not to sell!” This was the one wailing note of these
moral Paganinis,² playing on one string. It caught the universal ear and set
the key of that mighty orchestra, organized with so much toil and hardship,
in which the tender and exalted strain of the Crusade violin still soars aloft,
but up borne now by the clanging cornets of science, the deep trombones
of legislation, and the thunderous drums of politics and parties. The “Do
Everything Policy” was not of our choosing but is an evolution as inevitable
as any traced by the naturalist or described by the historian. Woman’s genius
for details, and her patient steadfastness in following the enemies of those
she loves “through every lane of life,” have led her to antagonize the alcohol
habit and the liquor traffic just where they are, wherever that may be. If she
does this, since they are everywhere, her policy will be “Do Everything.”

A one-sided movement makes one-sided advocates. Virtues, like hounds,
hunt in packs. Total abstinence is not the crucial virtue in life that excuses
financial crookedness, defamation of character, or habits of impurity. The
fact that one’s father was, and one’s self is, a bright and shining light in the
total abstinence galaxy, does not give one a vantage ground for high-handed
behavior toward those who have not been trained to the special virtue that
forms the central idea of the Temperance Movement. We have known per-
sons who, because they had “never touched a drop of liquor,” set themselves
up as if they belonged to a royal line, but whose tongues were as biting as
alcohol itself, and whose narrowness had no competitor save a straight line.
An all-round movement can only be carried forward by all-round advocates;
a scientific age requires the study of every subject in its correlations. It was
once supposed that light, heat, and electricity were wholly separate entities;
it is now believed and practically proved that they are but different modes

²Niccolo Paganini (1782–1840) was an Italian violin virtuoso whose use of
then-unorthodox fingering and bowing techniques dramatically changed the way
in which instrument was played and the types of music composed for it.
of motion. Standing in the valley we look up and think we see an isolated
mountain; climbing to its top we see that it is but one member of a range of
mountains many of them of well-nigh equal altitude.

Some bright women who have opposed the “Do-Everything Policy” used
as their favorite illustration a flowing river, and expatiated on the ruin that
would follow if that river (which represents their do-one-thing policy) were
diverted into many channels, but it should be remembered that the most
useful of all rivers is the Nile, and that the agricultural economy of Egypt
consists in the effort to spread its waters upon as many fields as possible. It
is not for the river’s sake that it flows through the country but for the sake of
the fertility it can bring upon adjoining fields, and this is pre-eminently true
of the Temperance Reform.

Joseph Cook, that devoted friend of every good cause has wisely said:—“If
England were at war with Russia, and the latter were to have several allies, it
would obviously be necessary for England to attack the allies as well as the
principal enemy.”3 Not to do this would be foolishness, and might be suicide.
In the conflict with the liquor traffic, the policy of the WCTU is to attack not
only the chief foe, but also its notorious and open allies. This is the course
dictated not only by common sense, but by absolute necessity. If the home
is to be protected, not only must the dram-shop be made an outlaw, but its
allies, the gambling hells, the houses of unreportable infamy, the ignorance
of the general population as to alcoholics and other narcotics, the timidity of
trade, the venality of portions of the press, and especially the subserviency
of political parties to the liquor traffic, must be assailed as confederates of
the chief enemy of the home…. [in original] It is certain that the broad and
progressive policy of the WCTU in the United States makes the whiskey
rings and time-serving politicians greatly dread its influence. They honor the
Union by frequent and bitter attacks. It is a recognized power in international
affairs. If its policy were made narrow and non-partisan, its influence would
immensely wane in practical matters of great importance…. “Instead of the
National W.C.T.U. having lost the confidence of the churches by its broad
policy, I believe, after much travel and years of observation, that it never had
more of that confidence than at the present hour. At a recent Congressional
Hearing, in Washington, I heard a distinguished Presbyterian Professor of
Theology, Rev. Dr. Herrick Johnson, of Chicago, call the WCTU ‘the most

3 Sir Joseph Cook (1860–1947) was a devout Methodist and leading member of the
Australasian Labor Party in the 1890s.
powerful, the most beneficent, and the most successful organization ever formed by women.’ Similar testimony abounds in all the most enlightened circles of the land.”

Let us not be disconcerted, but stand bravely by that blessed trinity\(^4\) of movements, Prohibition, Woman’s Liberation and Labor’s uplift.

Everything is not in the Temperance Reform, but the Temperance Reform should be in everything.

There is no better motto for the “Do-Everything-Policy,” than this which we are saying by our deeds: “Make a chain, for the land is full of bloody crimes and the city of violence.”

If we can remember this simple rule, it will do much to unravel the mystery of the much controverted “Do-Everything-Policy,” viz: that every question of practical philanthropy or reform has its temperance aspect, and with that we are to deal.

Methods that were once the only ones available may become, with the passage of years, less useful because less available. . . .

The Temperance cause started out well nigh alone, but mighty forces have joined us in the long march. We are now in the midst of the Waterloo battle, and in the providence of God the Temperance army will not have to fight that out all by itself. For Science has come up with its glittering contingent, political economy deploys its legions, the woman question brings an Amazonian army upon the field, and the stout ranks of labor stretch away far as the eye can reach. As in the old Waterloo against Napoleon, so now against the Napoleon of the liquor traffic, no force is adequate except the “allied forces.”

\(^4\)By invoking the Christian doctrine of the “trinity” (the idea that although God has only one nature, He exists simultaneously in the three distinct persons of Father, Son, and Spirit), Willard underscores the ways in which these three distinct reform movements were interconnected in her thinking.
Born into a prominent Quaker family near Philadelphia, Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911) converted to Methodism after learning about the doctrine of sanctification and the Holiness movement within the denomination (Documents 18 and 21). In her autobiography, she describes the experience of attending her first “camp meeting” or outdoor revival gathering. Such meetings were largely intended to strengthen the faith of existing Christian believers by allowing them to focus on their spirituality apart from the “distractions” of ordinary life.

Smith’s account captures the flavor of “religious summer camp” expressed by others who attended such meetings from the late nineteenth through late twentieth centuries in America. Holiness movement adherents were sometimes criticized by fundamentalists for their hyper-emotionalism and inclination towards a doctrine of universal salvation but the two movements shared a tendency to withdraw from the larger society into an insular Christian community as the broader American culture became more secular and scientific. Note, however, that while Smith emphasizes the emotional high of her experience, she also cautions the reader against mistaking the intense emotions of such a “mountaintop moment” for genuine sanctification.


As may be imagined, we took every possible opportunity of learning all we could of the new truths we had discovered; and I must confess that, although we found, as I have said, that the Friends [Quakers] did actually teach it, yet it was among the Methodists we received the clearest light. The Methodists were very definite about it. They taught definitely that there were two experiences in the Christian life, the first being justification, and the second sanctification, and they urged Christians not to be satisfied with justification (i.e.,
forgiveness) merely, but also to seek sanctification or the “second blessing,” as they called it, as well. . . .

It was not, however, every Methodist who took this ground, as many thought it was too extreme. Those who did were called “Holiness Methodists,” and it was from them we received the most help. They held “Holiness Meetings” for the express purpose of considering the subject, and it was our delight to attend these Meetings whenever we could. Especially did we enjoy their “Holiness Camp Meetings,” which were held in the summer time in lonely forests or at seaside places. They were called “Meetings for the promotion of holiness,” and were really great open air Conferences of Christians of all denominations, from all parts of the country, who were interested in the subject, and who would assemble at these Camp Meetings, living in tents under the trees, and spending a week or ten days in waiting upon God, and conferring together on the deep things of the Kingdom.

No words can express the wonderful power, and solemnity, and yet overwhelming joyfulness, of these meetings. We were there living in tents, entirely separated from all our usual occupations and cares, with nothing to do but to give ourselves up to the spiritual influences around us, and to open our hearts to what we believed to be the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Such a company of earnest Christians, all set on coming into a closer communion with God, could not fail to create a spiritual atmosphere of great intensity; and the thrilling experiences of spiritual joy that were told in every meeting, with the songs of praise resounding through the forest, and the happy faces of every one we met, were all something so out of the ordinary and so entrancing, that it often seemed almost as if we were on the very threshold of Heaven. I cannot help pitying every Christian who has known nothing of such seasons of pure delight. They were a sort of culmination of the grand spiritual romance which my religion has always been to me, and I count them among the most entrancing times of my life. To this day the sight of a camp chair, or of a tent under the trees, always brings back to me something of the old sense of supreme happiness that used to fill every hour of those delicious Camp Meetings....

I shall never forget the first time I was present at one of these Camp Meetings, and the first Prayer Meeting I attended. It was an early morning meeting in a tent. I knew nothing of Methodist Meetings, having never attended any except those little ones at Millville, and had no conception of the emotional atmosphere into which I had come. I found when I got into the meeting that I had forgotten my handkerchief, but having never in my life shed any tears in a meeting, I was not troubled. But in this meeting the fountains of my
being seemed to be broken up, and floods of delicious tears poured from my eyes. I was reduced to great straits and was obliged surreptitiously to lift up my dress and use my white under-skirt to dry my tears. I have never since been to any meeting without at least two hand-kerchiefs safely tucked away in my pocket, although I believe I have never since been so over-whelmed with emotion as at that time. It was my first introduction to the entrancing joys of spiritual emotion, and I reveled in it. . . .

... I learned in time therefore not to seek emotions, but to seek only for convictions, and I found to my surprise and delight that my convictions brought me a far more stable and permanent joy than many of my more emotional friends seemed to experience. In the time of stress, with many of them, their emotions flagged, and even often vanished, and they had hard fights to prevent utter failure and despair, and some of them have been thankful at last to struggle back to the stable ground of conviction, which in their emotional days had seemed so barren and comfortless.

All this however took me many years in learning. But meanwhile the joy and power of the glorious secret we had discovered grew every year more and more practical; and more and more my soul learned to rest in absolute confidence on the keeping and saving power of the Lord. I must repeat what I have said elsewhere, that not for a moment do I mean that temptation ceased its attacks, or that we had reached what is sometimes called “sinless perfection.” Temptations continued to arise, and sometimes failures befell. But we had discovered a “way to escape,” and had learned that this way was the way of faith. We had found out that Christ was a Deliverer, not only from the future punishment for sin, but from the present power of sin, and we realized that we need no longer be the “slaves of sin.” And just so far as we laid hold by faith of this deliverance, just so far were we delivered. We had not picked up holiness and put it into our pockets as a permanent and inalienable possession; but we had discovered the “high way” of holiness, and had learned the secret of walking therein. . . .
After losing her husband and all four of their children to a yellow fever epidemic at the age of thirty, Mary Harris Jones (1837–1930), became an urban reformer and a prominent labor activist. Known affectionately as “Mother” Jones, she never remarried but worked tirelessly to improve the living and working conditions of the urban laboring class, first with the Catholic Knights of Labor, and then later with other organizations as the need arose.

She was especially concerned about the plight of child laborers and in 1903 organized a march of several hundred children from Philadelphia to President Theodore Roosevelt’s home on Long Island to protest the federal government’s refusal to intervene in the issue. In her autobiography, she wrote that she hoped that in seeing the obvious contrast between the health of the children who worked in the mills and that of his own sons and daughters would move President Roosevelt to intervene on their behalf out of fatherly concern.

During the march, Jones attempted repeatedly to contact President Roosevelt to make her case. He rebuffed her efforts, and Jones turned to the press. In the North American newspaper article where she is interviewed below, note how Jones refers to her cause as a “crusade” and links the issue of childhood morality to adult citizenship. The newspaper also published her letter to Roosevelt in the article.


From a Staff Correspondent

New York, July 30

In accordance with the instructions of Benjamin F. Barnes, assistant secretary to the President, “Mother” Jones wrote and sent her third letter to President Roosevelt this afternoon. Although Secretary Barnes said yesterday that the letter would reach the President’s hands and perhaps obtain the desired interview, the “Mother” does not build her hopes too high.
“Their policy of putting us back from time to time, while it shows weakness, indicates to me that they will have nothing to do with us,” said “Mother” Jones. “President Roosevelt seems to be afraid of offending the capitalistic class by granting our request, and at the same time does not wish to offend others by giving us an honest refusal.”

“It looks as though they were seeking to find something in my letters upon which they could be justified in refusing an audience. For instance, if we asked him to interfere or even given advice in some labor difference he might justly turn us down on the ground that it was the place of the law to attend to such matters. Such is not our intention, and I have been careful to eliminate anything which might be interpreted to suit their double dealing.

“I do not believe that this course is in accord with the wishes of the President. It has been engineered by subordinates who seek to curry favor by saving him chimerical annoyance.”

“Mother” Jones Writes Again

“Mother” Jones to-day wrote to the President as follows:

New York, July 30, 1903

The Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, President, USA

Your Excellency—

Twice before have I written to you in requesting an audience that I might lay my mission before you and have your advice on a matter which bears upon the welfare of the whole nation. I speak for the emancipation from mills and factories of the hundreds of thousands of young children who are yielding up their lives for the commercial supremacy of the nation. Failing to receive a reply to either of the letters, I yesterday, sent to Oyster Bay, taking with me three of these children that they might plead with you personally.

Secretary Barnes informed us that before we might hope for an interview, we must first lay the whole matter before you in a letter. He assured me of its delivery to you personally, and also that it would receive your attention.

I have espoused the cause of the laboring class in general and of suffering childhood in particular. For what affects the child must ultimately affect the adult. It was for them that our march of principle was begun. We sought to bring the attention of the public upon these little ones, so that ultimately sentiment would be aroused and the children freed from the workshops and sent to school. I know of no question of today that demands graver attention from those who have at heart the perpetuation of this Republic.

The child of today is the man or woman of tomorrow: the one the citizen
and the other the mother of still future citizens. I ask Mr. President, what kind of citizen will be the child who toils twelve hours a day in an unsanitary atmosphere stunted mentally and physically, and surrounded with immoral influence? Denied education, he cannot assume the true duties of citizenship, and enfeebled physically and mentally, he falls a ready victim to the perverting influences which the present economic conditions have created.

I grant you, Mr. President, that there are State laws which should regulate these matters, but results have proven that they are inadequate. In my little band are three boys, the oldest 11 years old, who have worked in mills a year or more without interference from the authorities. All efforts to bring about reform have failed.

I have been moved to this crusade, Mr. President, because of actual experience in the mills. I have seen little children without the first rudiments of education and no prospect of acquiring any. I have seen other children with hands, finders, and other parts of their tiny bodies mutilated because of their childish ignorance of machinery. I feel that no nation can be truly great while such conditions exist without attempted remedy.

It is to be hoped that our crusade will stir up a general sentiment on behalf of enslaved childhood, and secure the enforcement of the present laws.

But that is not sufficient.

As this is not alone a question of the separate States, but of the whole Republic, we come to you as the chief representative of the nation.

I believe that Federal laws should be passed governing this evil and including a penalty for the violation. Surely, Mr. President, if this is practicable—and I believe you will agree that it is—you can advise me of the necessary steps to pursue.

I have with me three boys who have walked a hundred miles, serving as living proof of what I say. You can see and talk with them, Mr. President, if you are interested. If you decide to see these children, I will bring them before you at any time you may set. Secretary Barnes has assured me of an early reply and this should be sent care of the Ashland Hotel, New York City.

Very truly yours,

Mother Jones

Will Visit Other Towns

“Mother” Jones will stay in New York until an answer is received to the letter. Instead of taking the road back to Philadelphia as was intended, the “army” will make its headquarters here, and visit towns where meetings are to be held. . . .
As a young woman, Ellen Gould White (1827–1915) was among the followers of preacher William Miller, a Baptist minister who believed he had discovered that the Second Coming (or Advent) of Christ would occur in 1844. When Miller’s prediction of Jesus’ return was left unrealized (a non-event known as the “Great Disappointment”), many of his followers abandoned the movement. Others (including White) adopted the belief that what Miller had calculated was not the date of Christ’s return to Earth, but rather, the beginning of His judgment of the world—a judgment that had to precede his actual return. This doctrine, known as “investigative judgment,” is unique to the Seventh Day Adventists: according to them, from 1844 until the moment of his actual return, Christ has been investigating the lives of those who claim to be saved by his death on the Cross, in order to determine if they are worthy of eternal life.

White’s writings on this and other issues, as well as her dynamic personal leadership proved a key element in transforming the remnant of Miller’s followers (now known as Adventists) into a cohesive organization. Along with her husband and several other men, she co-founded the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863. (The designation “Seventh-day” refers to the group’s belief that Christians should continue to worship on Saturday, the day traditionally understood to be the “seventh” in the Creation account in Genesis 1 and reserved for devotional activities in the Ten Commandments.) As a result of her understanding of the “investigative judgment” with its emphasis on the “worthiness” of believers for salvation, White adopted a Christian perfectionist stance that stressed not only personal piety but also physical health and hygiene. In this excerpt from her book The Ministry of Healing, she urges abstinence from all stimulants, including spices, on the grounds that they unnaturally advance the decay of the body by conditioning it to a state of excitement that it was never intended to endure on an extended basis.

Although the Seventh Day Adventists were far from the only religious group to decry the personal and social costs of intoxication (see Documents 19 and 21), White’s rhetoric on the subject is particularly illustrative of the utilization of scientific language and learning for the advancement of religious ideas.
Stimulants and Narcotics

Under the head of stimulants and narcotics is classed a great variety of articles that, altogether used as food or drink, irritate the stomach, poison the blood, and excite the nerves. Their use is a positive evil. Men seek the excitement of stimulants, because, for the time, the results are agreeable. But there is always a reaction. The use of unnatural stimulants always tends to excess, and it is an active agent in promoting physical degeneration and decay.

Condiments

In this fast age, the less exciting the food, the better. Condiments are injurious in their nature. Mustard, pepper, spices, pickles, and other things of a like character, irritate the stomach and make the blood feverish and impure. The inflamed condition of the drunkard’s stomach is often pictured as illustrating the effect of alcoholic liquors. A similarly inflamed condition is produced by the use of irritating condiments. Soon ordinary food does not satisfy the appetite. The system feels a want, a craving, for something more stimulating.

Tea and Coffee

Tea acts as a stimulant and, to a certain extent, produces intoxication. The action of coffee and many other popular drinks is similar. The first effect is exhilarating. The nerves of the stomach are excited; these convey irritation to the brain, and this in turn is aroused to impart increased action to the heart and short-lived energy to the entire system. Fatigue is forgotten; the strength seems to be increased. The intellect is aroused, the imagination becomes more vivid.

Because of these results, many suppose that their tea or coffee is doing them great good. But this is a mistake. Tea and coffee do not nourish the system. Their effect is produced before there has been time for digestion and assimilation, and what seems to be strength is only nervous excitement. When the influence of the stimulant is gone, the unnatural force abates, and the result is a corresponding degree of languor and debility.

The continued use of these nerve irritants is followed by headache,
wakefulness, palpitation of the heart, indigestion, trembling, and many other evils; for they wear away the life forces. Tired nerves need rest and quiet instead of stimulation and overwork. Nature needs time to recuperate her exhausted energies. When her forces are goaded on by the use of stimulants, more will be accomplished for a time; but, as the system becomes debilitated by their constant use, it gradually becomes more difficult to rouse the energies to the desired point. The demand for stimulants becomes more difficult to control, until the will is overborne and there seems to be no power to deny the unnatural craving. Stronger and still stronger stimulants are called for, until exhausted nature can no longer respond.

The Tobacco Habit

Tobacco is a slow, insidious, but most malignant poison. In whatever form it is used, it tells upon the constitution; it is all the more dangerous because its effects are slow and at first hardly perceptible. It excites and then paralyzes the nerves. It weakens and clouds the brain. Often it affects the nerves in a more powerful manner than does intoxicating drink. It is more subtle, and its effects are difficult to eradicate from the system. Its use excites a thirst for strong drink and in many cases lays the foundation for the liquor habit.

The use of tobacco is inconvenient, expensive, uncleanly, defiling to the user, and offensive to others. Its devotees are encountered everywhere. You rarely pass through a crowd but some smoker puffs his poisoned breath in your face. It is unpleasant and unhealthful to remain in a railway car or in a room where the atmosphere is laden with the fumes of liquor and tobacco. Though men persist in using these poisons themselves, what right have they to defile the air that others must breathe?

Among children and youth the use of tobacco is working untold harm. The unhealthful practices of past generations affect the children and youth of today. Mental inability, physical weakness, disordered nerves, and unnatural cravings are transmitted as a legacy from parents to children. And the same practices, continued by the children, are increasing and perpetuating the evil results. To this cause in no small degree is owing the physical, mental, and moral deterioration which is becoming such a cause of alarm. . . .

I appeal to those who profess to believe and obey the word of God: Can you as Christians indulge a habit that is paralyzing your intellect and robbing you of power rightly to estimate eternal realities? Can you consent daily to rob God of service which is His due, and to rob your fellow men, both of service you might render and of the power of example?
Have you considered your responsibility as God’s stewards, for the means in your hands? How much of the Lord’s money do you spend for tobacco? Reckon up what you have thus spent during your lifetime. How does the amount consumed by this defiling lust compare with what you have given for the relief of the poor and the spread of the gospel?

**Intoxicating Drinks**

...No argument is needed to show the evil effects of intoxicants on the drunkard. The bleared, besotted wrecks of humanity—souls for whom Christ died, and over whom angels weep—are everywhere. They are a blot on our boasted civilization. They are the shame and curse and peril of every land.

And who can picture the wretchedness, the agony, the despair, that are hidden in the drunkard’s home? Think of the wife, often delicately reared, sensitive, cultured, and refined, linked to one whom drink transforms into a sot or a demon. Think of the children, robbed of home comforts, education, and training, living in terror of him who should be their pride and protection, thrust into the world, bearing the brand of shame, often with the hereditary curse of the drunkard’s thirst.

Think of the frightful accidents that are every day occurring through the influence of drink. Some official on a railway train neglects to heed a signal or misinterprets an order. On goes the train; there is a collision, and many lives are lost. Or a steamer is run aground, and passengers and crew find a watery grave. When the matter is investigated, it is found that someone at an important post was under the influence of drink. To what extent can one indulge the liquor habit and be safely trusted with the lives of human beings? He can be trusted only as he totally abstains.

**The Milder Intoxicants**

Persons who have inherited an appetite for unnatural stimulants should by no means have wine, beer, or cider in their sight, or within their reach; for this keeps the temptation constantly before them. Regarding sweet cider as harmless, many have no scruples in purchasing it freely. But it remains sweet for a short time only; then fermentation begins. The sharp taste which it then acquires makes it all the more acceptable to many palates, and the user is loath to admit that it has become hard, or fermented.

There is danger to health in the use of even sweet cider as ordinarily
produced. If people could see what the microscope reveals in regard to the cider they buy, few would be willing to drink it. Often those who manufacture cider for the market are not careful as to the condition of the fruit used, and the juice of wormy and decayed apples is expressed. Those who would not think of using the poisonous, rotten apples in any other way, will drink the cider made from them, and call it a luxury; but the microscope shows that even when fresh from the press, this pleasant beverage is wholly unfit for use.

Intoxication is just as really produced by wine, beer, and cider as by stronger drinks. The use of these drinks awakens the taste for those that are stronger, and thus the liquor habit is established. Moderate drinking is the school in which men are educated for the drunkard’s career. Yet so insidious is the work of these milder stimulants that the highway to drunkenness is entered before the victim suspects his danger.

Some who are never considered really drunk are always under the influence of mild intoxicants. They are feverish, unstable in mind, unbalanced. Imagining themselves secure, they go on and on, until every barrier is broken down, every principle sacrificed. The strongest resolutions are undermined, the highest considerations are not sufficient to keep the debased appetite under the control of reason.…

Responsibility of Parents

Often intemperance begins in the home. By the use of rich, unhealthful food the digestive organs are weakened, and a desire is created for food that is still more stimulating. Thus the appetite is educated to crave continually something stronger. The demand for stimulants becomes more frequent and more difficult to resist. The system becomes more or less filled with poison, and the more debilitated it becomes, the greater is the desire for these things. One step in the wrong direction prepares the way for another. Many who would not be guilty of placing on their table wine or liquor of any kind will load their table with food which creates such a thirst for strong drink that to resist the temptation is almost impossible. Wrong habits of eating and drinking destroy the health and prepare the way for drunkenness.

There would soon be little necessity for temperance crusades if in the youth who form and fashion society, right principles in regard to temperance could be implanted. Let parents begin a crusade against intemperance at their own firesides, in the principles they teach their children to follow from infancy, and they may hope for success.
There is work for mothers in helping their children to form correct habits and pure tastes. Educate the appetite; teach the children to abhor stimulants. Bring your children up to have moral stamina to resist the evil that surrounds them. Teach them that they are not to be swayed by others, that they are not to yield to strong influences, but to influence others for good. . . .
By 1911, Jane Addams (1860–1935) had been running Hull House, one of America’s leading social settlements, for twenty years. At Hull House (and other neighborhood-based centers like it around the country), a volunteer staff of educated reform-minded women literally “settled” themselves among the nation’s poor and immigrant communities. By taking up residence among those whom they hoped to help, settlement workers challenged prevailing class notions, treating the people to whom they offered social services not merely as clients or charity recipients but as neighbors and even friends.

Addams’ own religious views are somewhat enigmatic: although she was baptized and received membership in a Presbyterian congregation as an adult, she wrote rarely about Christianity as such, more often about “religion” in the generic sense. It is clear, however, that Addams considered religion—understood as the attempt to connect the individual human soul to some spiritual element in the universe external to it—to have the potential to elevate humanity above the cares and strife of the material realm. She argued that religious instruction, to be effective, must be connected to the practicalities of life, particularly life in modern, industrialized, urban areas with their attendant social problems.

Here, Addams calls for the church—for religious educators, in particular—to increase their efforts to save the poor and downtrodden, not only spiritually, but in physical and practical ways that will allow them to live with dignity as contributing members of society. In making this argument, Addams responded not only to the problems created by industrialization, but also to those created by the influential ideas of modernism (see Documents 30 and 34).

The religious educator is handicapped by the fact that much of the final curricula which he uses is left over from the days when education was carefully designed for men who had withdrawn from the world, and that of necessity, it does not avail with the youth who is fretting with impatience to throw himself into the stream of life and to become a part of its fast flowing current.

This divergence between the unreality of religious education and the demands of stirring religious experiences never became more apparent than it did in England and America during the last decade of the past century. The religious educator lost hundreds of young men and women who by training and temperament should have gone into the ministry or the missionary field, simply because his statements appeared to them as magnificent pieces of self-assertion totally unrelated to the world.

This failure to make religious teaching appear valid was due to many causes; the times were ripe for such divergence, and there are several reasons why life at this moment should have seemed more real outside of that which we call the religious world, than it did within it. In the first place, modern economists had taught that man was abjectly dependent upon the material world about him, and had demonstrated as never before the iron clamp which industry imposes upon life; they had moreover gravely asserted that man’s very freedom, morality and progress may be overwhelmed by the material conditions which surround him.

Secondly, the situation was further complicated by the fact that at this very same time the doctrine of evolution, having made clear man’s intimate connection with the entire external world, was establishing itself in ethics and social philosophy. Students of the social order in the spirit of the scientist became content merely to collect data and to arrange it in orderly sequence. The social field still contains hundreds of them devotedly considering the reactions of economic forces upon human life, who have for the most part disregarded all theological considerations as they have long since lightly renounced the theological explanations of a final cause.

Thirdly, during these decades hundreds of young people were drawn into the congested quarters of the modern city by sheer humanitarianism, by the impulse at least to know the worst. In their reaction against materialism they would warm their affections and renew their beliefs in those places where humanity appeared most pitiable and infirm, somewhat in the spirit of Carlyle who impatiently bade his contemporaries to worship and admire the hero if

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1 Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), a Scottish writer, argued in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London, 1841), that great men make history.
they could no longer worship and admire the saint. It is as if various types of young people ardently desiring reality above all else had said to the religious teachers, “we wish to know truth for ourselves, we care not how logical your theological tenets may be unless we can make them valid.”

It was therefore inevitable that these lines of development should shift the center of the difficulties in religious education to the most crowded industrial districts where materialism holds undisputed sway.

**The Failure of the Church**

And yet, it was during these same decades that the churches, as if appalled by the industrial situation, failed to hold their own in these very districts. The church apparently felt no lure in the hideously uncouth factories in which men sometimes worked twelve hours a day for seven days in the week until they were utterly brutalized by fatigue; nor in the insanitary tenements so crowded that the mere decencies of life were often impossible; nor in the raw towns of newly arrived immigrants where the standard of life was pushed below that of their European poverty unmitigated by either natural beauty or social resources.

And yet it was into these very regions that the young people whom the church lost were most often attracted, and it was no unworthy lure which drew them into the thick of that industrial misery into which the church had not only failed to precede them, but for so long a time had failed to follow them.

Did the religious educator at the present moment but enter into this industrial inferno he would find many ardent young people, possibly not his own pupils, but those who would gladly unite with him in asserting the reality of spiritual forces, could he but share their experiences, and reach conclusions by a method they could comprehend. Among these young people he would find those who might have brought enthusiasm and ability to his own profession had it but seemed to them valid and dealing with realities. His experience would indeed be similar to that of Dante when he hesitated to enter the Inferno dreading above all else his loneliness there, although when he boldly proceeded step by step he found it peopled with old friends and comrades, speaking the beautiful language of Florence and cherishing the same great hopes as his own.²

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²This is a strikingly creative interpretation of Dante’s hesitation to enter the Inferno. Addams cites a fear Dante himself does not directly express, and in attributing “hopes” to the damned she would seem to ignore Dante’s understanding of
This adventurous educator would find traces of a new religious expression, although with marked scientific and humanitarian aspects as befitting its period. Even as the humanism which grew out of the Renaissance was a reaction against grotesque Ecclesiasticism he would discover in the beginning of this humanitarianism a reaction against Materialism arising in the very midst of it.

He would find the economists groping their way from the 19th century darkness which considered the nation as an agglomeration of selfish men each moved by self-interest, forgetful of the women and children, to a conception of a state maintained to develop and nurture the highest type of human life, and testing its success by the care afforded to the most defenseless women and children within its borders. One of these economists whom we used to call ‘hard headed’ has actually made out a program to protect wage-earners from what he calls the five great misfortunes to which they are exposed: industrial accidents, preventable illness, premature death, unemployment, and neglected old age.

... The religious educator venturing into the industrial inferno would be much startled by the discovery of the anomaly that the most enthusiastic believers in economic determinism are at the present moment giving us the most inspiring demonstration of religious enthusiasm: that the socialist party is drawing to itself thousands of ardent young people simply because it holds up an ideal and demands sacrifices on its behalf. It is as if the socialists had picked up the banner inscribed with the promises of a future life, which had slipped from the hands of the ecclesiastic, as if they had changed the promise of salvation from individual to social, had substituted the word earth for heaven and had then raised the banner aloft once more. To the crowd of young people who follow this banner is happening that which always happens to those who are held together in a mutual purpose; certain readjustments take place as they realize that their own future is dependent upon the consummation of their ideal, and as they demand that the whole world unite in a common effort for its realization. There are thirty millions of these socialists in the world with a definite political program in every civilized nation. The religious teacher may well long to claim this enthusiastic host for his own, and to turn these myriad idealists into a living church.

The religious educator as he proceeded would also find those humbler

hell—although it is true that Dante’s guide, Virgil, hints at the possible redemption of those who through no fault of their own never learned about Christ. See, for example, *Inferno*, Canto IV, lines 15–60.
investigators of social conditions living either singly or in groups in the thick of untoward industrial conditions. At moments these find their own carefully collected data gathered into statistical tables and monographs almost as discouraging and overwhelming in its bulk as in the dreary conditions it discloses. They are beginning to mutter darkly concerning degeneracy and to assert that evolutionary processes are not always upward or ethnogenic, as they prefer to say.

. . . Such investigators feel that their efforts should be supplemented by the religious teachers through a vigorous appeal to the public conscience and to the higher affections. They claim that as social development is an essentially continuing process, it is the business of morality to share its growth, not only to modify its harshness and brutality, but to actually direct it; and they also are thus again brought close to the religious purpose.

Would not these beginnings of a new religious expression among the economists, the investigators, and the humanitarians point to a moment in which the religious teacher might avail himself of a great opportunity? Could he but make the old formulas express the scruples, the painful sense of difference between rich and poor which haunt these dwellers in industrial quarters day by day; could he but transmute the comradeship of mutual suffering into a religious communion he would find them ready to walk in the old paths.

After all, the business of religion is not only to comfort and conserve, but to prophecy and fortify men for coming social changes. He who in a moment of transition boldly formulates his hidden scruples, does so not only for himself but for many others, and finds himself surrounded by a multitude of followers. . . . Again and again during its history, the church has been obliged to leave the temples and the schools in order to cast in its lots with the poor, and to minister without ceremony or ritual, directly to the needs of the sinner and the outcast.

A Religious Mission

Is it not possible that such a moment has come now, that the religious teacher must go forth into the midst of modern materialism if only effectually to insist upon the eternal antithesis between the material and the spiritual, and to prove that religious enthusiasm is all-enduring when founded upon the realities of life?

A noted English publicist once told me that twenty-five years ago at every public meeting in the industrial quarters of London, whatever the subject of discussion, some working men always arose and in fiery terms agitated
the disestablishment of the English Church, but that during the last decade such a speech was seldom heard owing entirely to the efforts of certain High-Church clergymen who had gone to live throughout the industrial districts of London, and had thus identified themselves with all the leading movements of social reform until the working men had become convinced that the church wanted the thing that they wanted, and that they and the clergymen were working towards a common goal.

Thus to convince thousands of young people of the validity and reality of religion, the church must go out to meet them—both willing to take their point of view, and to understand social methods. Could the religious teacher unite in the deed with the social reformers, could he formulate for many others a course of action which would relieve their consciences in regard to social maladjustments, he would discover that he had become part of a new fellowship, while at the same time his teaching was attaining a new sense of reality.

No one in considering this subject could for a moment ignore the great social awakening at present going forward in the churches. The federal organization of thirty-four Protestant Denominations with its social department; the YMCA with its well-directed social work in a dozen departments; the church committees to improve the conditions of labor, and the departments of sociology in all the theological seminaries would all indicate a new emphasis which the church is placing upon social welfare. Perhaps after all the difference is not so profound. A story is told of a country clergyman who was not a great scholar, but who had much experience with church choirs. A parishioner in all seriousness asked him one day what was the difference between the cherubim and the seraphim; the poor clergyman hesitated a moment, and somewhat confusedly replied that he believed that there had once between a difference, but that now all was amicably adjusted.

Could the differences between progressive churchmen and the social reformer be amicably adjusted, I venture to predict that we should find ourselves united in a new religious fellowship and living in the sense of a religious revival.
In the early 1900s, some American Christians claimed they began to experience a dramatic revival marked by behaviors akin to those described in the Acts 2:1-13 when the Holy Spirit descended upon the first believers at Pentecost. A powerful public speaker, Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944) helped to popularize the so-called Pentecostal movement in early twentieth century America, traveling around the country hosting revival meetings in churches, tents, and auditoriums from 1915 through the early 1920s in what she called the “Gospel auto” (see Image E).

In this essay, published in her first memoir This is That, McPherson addresses the common objection to Pentecostal meetings as disorderly; she argues that each of the “manifestations of the spirit” commonly experienced at her revival meetings (dancing, shouting, shaking, falling prostrate, as well as speaking in and interpreting tongues) are biblical and ongoing evidences of God’s power in His church.

Shortly after This is That was published, McPherson settled in Los Angeles where she built an enormous circular church known as the Angelus Temple. With a seating capacity of over 5,000, Angelus Temple was the largest auditorium of its time and has sometimes been called the first “megachurch” in America. Although the cornerstone of the building declares that it was “Dedicated unto the cause of inter-denominational and worldwide evangelism,” McPherson’s theological distinctiveness eventually caused sufficient conflict with non-Charismatic Protestants that the Temple became instead the headquarters for a new denomination, the Foursquare Church.

Source: Aimee Semple McPherson, This is That: Personal Experiences, Sermons, and Writings (Bridal Call Publishing House, Los Angeles: 1919).
Dancing, Shouting, Shaking, Falling Prostrate under the Power, Speaking in Tongues, Interpretation

The power was falling everywhere in the tent, sinners being saved, believers baptized in the Holy Spirit (with Bible evidence, speaking in tongues), sick bodies had been healed, many were leaping, dancing and praising God, the slain of the Lord were many; my heart felt full to the bursting with joy at the sight, and with uplifted hands I was walking up and down the aisles amongst the audience, praising my wonderful Redeemer for the way in which He was working.

Suddenly I felt a restraining, kid-gloved hand laid upon my arm, and a dignified, silk-gowned lady drew me down beside her. Her husband, a fine, dignified type of man, was seated beside her. They had snow-white hair, both of them, and every well-tailored line of their faultless apparel bespoke refinement and culture. This dear lady seemed so sweet, and I was so filled with joy, that I remember I could hardly resist throwing my arms around her and kissing her and shouting “Glory to Jesus.” Her troubled, agitated look checked this impulse, however, and as she began to talk to me in her rapid way, her breast was rising and falling, with her quick breathing and (I was going to say, “indignation,” but hardly think that would be the word to apply to such a sweet and proper personage.)

As she spoke, she alternately gazed through her lorgnette, a small pair of glasses on a handle or string, which hung on a slender thread of gold from her gown, and pointed with it to some manifestations (for the saints were dancing, shouting, and praising God), or tapped it lightly upon her book for emphasis:

“Of course, I believe in the power of God,” she said, “but O, the noise, these awful manifestations! What is the good of them, anyway? Did not Paul say that all things are to be done decently and in order? Now, take, for instance, that dancing and shaking, it seems like confusion, and is not at all necessary. And that falling on the floor and lying for an hour. Do you think that looks dignified or proper?” she demanded. “As for this leaping and shouting, why can not these people praise God in a quiet, orderly way in their heart and give expression to their worship soberly in a quiet hymn of thanksgiving? You know the world would think far more of them,” she added, “and stop criticizing and persecuting if only they would put down these awful manifestations. Oh! Oh! I am so disturbed. Do tell me, what about these manifestations?”

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1 a small pair of glasses on a handle or string
Just a moment, and we will take these things up one by one, but first let me say that when the power of the Holy Spirit is upon a person or an assembly, you can no more stifle the manifestations without quenching the power of the Spirit than you can shut off all air from a fire without extinguishing it, or turn off the water faucet without stopping the flow of water, or turn off the electric light switch without putting out the lights, or cut the telephone wire without breaking the connection. . . .

What About Those Manifestations?

Truly, we have something worth shouting over. Joy always manifests itself. The shouts at ball games, races, political celebrations, etc., are accepted as a usual and expected thing. The day would be considered tame and with something radically wrong and missing without it. Remember how the announcement of peace was met right here in our own country, how they tied down the horns and the whistles, how every conceivable noise-making device was brought forth to swell the sound of jubilee. Now we have heard the proclamation of everlasting peace, from the King who has won the greatest battle ever fought. How can we keep from shouting? There are so many shouting for the devil with none to hinder, that we thank God for those who shout for Jesus.

When shouting is in the Spirit it comes from such depth and rings so true and genuine that none can mistake it. The devil will try to imitate the shout in the camp of the Hebrews, but there will be a hollow, forced sound that does not ring true. There are many who do not like the noise of the shouting, but we advise all such to let Jesus fill them with the same power and glory, to put a shout in their soul, for this is by far the quietest world they will ever live in. In heaven John heard the shouting and praising of the multitude as they cried, “Holy, holy, holy, salvation and honor and dominion belongeth unto Him, till the voice and shouting of the people was as the sound of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder.” 2 Surely those who dislike shouting would dislike heaven, or must learn to join the song. O, how can you look upon such a wonderful Saviour without shouting His praise? And as for those who are cast into hell, “there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.” 3 That will surely be a noisy place, and I would much rather hear the noise of shouts and rejoicing than weeping. Wouldn’t you? . . .

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2 McPherson is paraphrasing Revelation 19:1, 6.
Being Prostrated Under the Power

“What about this being slain, prostrated, lying under the power?” You do not think it looks at all dignified or proper, you say. I wonder whether Peter looked dignified or proper when he lay in the trance on his housetop and saw the vision of the sheet let down, etc. (Acts 10:9 to 16), or John, on the isle of Patmos, when he lay at His (Jesus’) feet as one dead,4 or Daniel, as he lay in a vision,5 or Saul, when he fell from his horse in the dust of the road as Jesus revealed Himself to him.6 It was as though Jesus, when He conquered, got both of Saul’s shoulders to the ground, and he surrendered there and then. ‘Twas not at all dignified. . . .

We might go on to mention Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others who fell prostrate before Him. We might mention the prostrations in the early Methodist church, the Salvation Army, the Welsh Revival, and today, throughout the world, wherever God is pouring out His Spirit, and when I get to heaven I expect to see angels and men before Him prostrate fall as they “bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.” . . .

Genuine and Counterfeit

Are manifestations of the Spirit scriptural? Y-E-S. Are ALL manifestations scriptural? N-O. How can we tell the difference? It is easy to discern, in the Spirit, between the real and the counterfeit. There is a different shine on the face, a different ring in the voice, a majesty and holiness. There will be that which edifies and builds up (but just here remember that your conception of edifying manifestations and that of God may vary. Had you seen the hundred and twenty reeling and staggering like drunken men—Acts 2:13, 15—you might not have thought it edifying, yet God was in it, and Peter said they were filled with the Spirit, and three thousand souls were added to the church that day).

But do we claim that all manifestations are in the Spirit? you ask. We answer, No, for the devil has tried to imitate manifestations as he has everything else. There are also some manifestations in the flesh by those who are anxious for God to manifest Himself and use them, who run before the Lord.

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4 Revelation 1:17
5 Daniel 8:27
6 Acts 9
But What Shall We Do in Our Assembly When We Find Manifestations That Are Not of God?

Shall we quench the Holy Spirit for fear of that which is not of the Spirit? Not at all. Do as Aaron did when the enemy sought to counterfeit; you remember, he threw down his rod and it became a serpent. Straightway the magicians threw down their rods and immediately they became serpents. Did Moses and Aaron begin to wail and regret that they had obeyed God, thus giving the enemy an opportunity to manifest himself? Why, no, their God was bigger than the devil. Their serpent opened up his mouth and swallowed up all the other serpents until they were out of sight completely. So will the true Holy Spirit, if we let Him have His way, swallow up and spoil every trick and tactic of the enemy. If you let Him have His way YOU will have no need to fight in this battle, HE will do it all, and get greater glory to Himself than as though there had been no struggle. The counterfeit makes the genuine to shine the brighter. When the Ark is in the midst all earthly goods must fall and be broken before it. Hallelujah!
“Personal Reactions During the War”
Jane Addams
1922

For Jane Addams (1860–1935), commitment to the peace movement was the natural outgrowth of her religiously informed philosophy of social reform (see Document 25) and reflected her understanding of the primary role of women as the nurturers and sustainers of humanity. Unlike many of her compatriots in the movement, Addams never publicly changed her position, despite the costs to her reputation. Yet as she details in this introspective essay written after World War I, she was not immune to the pressures of public opinion, nor to the self-doubt that she implies any humble thinker must have when they find their ideas relegated to the fringes of society. Addams’ commentary on the internal tension between holding fast to one’s own position and the desire to acknowledge and respect the will of one’s fellow citizens is particularly insightful on the challenges to all members of democratic societies who hold faith-inspired convictions at odds with the majority views of their times (see Document 34).


After the United States had entered the war there began to appear great divergence among the many types of pacifists, from the extreme left, composed of non-resistants, through the middle-of-the-road groups, to the extreme right, who could barely be distinguished from mild militarists. There were those people, also, who although they felt keenly both the horror and the futility of war, yet hoped for certain beneficent results from the opportunities afforded by the administration of war; they were much pleased when the government took over the management of the railroads, insisting that governmental ownership had thus been pushed forward by decades; they were also sure that the War Labor Policies Board, the Coal Commission and similar war institutions would make an enormous difference in the development of the country, in short, that militarism might be used as an instrument for advanced social
ends. Such justifications had their lure and one found old pacifist friends on all the war boards and even in the war department itself. Certainly we were all eager to accept whatever progressive social changes came from the quick reorganization demanded by war, and doubtless prohibition was one of these, as the granting of woman suffrage in the majority of the belligerent nations, was another. But some of us had suspected that social advance depends as much upon the process through which it is secured as upon the result itself; if railroads are nationalized solely in order to secure rapid transit of ammunition and men to points of departure for Europe, when that governmental need no longer exists what more natural than that the railroads should no longer be managed by the government?

My temperament and habit had always kept me rather in the middle of the road; in politics as well as in social reform I had been for “the best possible.” But now I was pushed far toward the left on the subject of the war and I became gradually convinced that in order to make the position of the pacifist clear it was perhaps necessary that at least a small number of us should be forced into an unequivocal position. If I sometimes regretted having gone to the Woman’s Congress at The Hague in 1915, or having written a book on Newer Ideals of Peace in 1911 which had made my position so conspicuously clear, certainly far oftener I was devoutly grateful that I had used such unmistakable means of expression before the time came when any spoken or written word in the interests of Peace was forbidden.

It was on my return from The Hague Congress in July, 1915,¹ that I had my first experience of the determination on the part of the press to make pacifist activity or propaganda so absurd that it would be absolutely without influence and its authors so discredited that nothing they might say or do would be regarded as worthy of attention. I had been accustomed to newspaper men for many years and had come to regard them as a good-natured fraternity, sometimes ignorant of the subject on which they asked an interview, but usually quite ready to report faithfully albeit somewhat sensationally. Hull-House had several times been the subject of sustained and inspired newspaper attacks, one, the indirect result of an exposure of the inefficient sanitary service in the Chicago Health Department had lasted for many months; I had of course known what it was to serve unpopular causes and throughout a period of campaigning for the Progressive Party I had naturally encountered the “opposition press” in various parts of the

¹ The Woman’s International Congress, held at The Hague, also known as the Women’s Peace Conference, sought ways to end World War I.
country, but this concerted and deliberate attempt at misrepresentation on
the part of newspapers of all shades of opinion was quite new in my expe-
rience. After the United States entered the war, the press throughout the
country systematically undertook to mis-represent and malign pacifists as
a recognized part of propaganda and as a patriotic duty. We came to regard
this misrepresentation as part of the war technique and in fact an inevitable
consequence of war itself, but we were slow in the very beginning to recog-
nize the situation, and I found my first experience which came long before
the United States entered the war rather overwhelming.

Upon our return from the Woman's International Congress at The Hague
in 1915, our local organization in New York City with others, notably a group
of enthusiastic college men, had arranged a large public meeting in Carnegie
Hall. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw\(^2\) presided and the United States delegates made
a public report of our impressions in "war stricken Europe" and of the moral
resources in the various countries we visited that might possibly be brought
to bear against a continuation of the war. We had been much impressed with
the fact that it was an old man's war, that the various forms of doubt and
opposition to war had no method of public expression and that many of the
soldiers themselves were far from enthusiastic in regard to actual fighting
as a method of settling international difficulties. War was to many of them
much more anachronistic than to the elderly statesmen who were primarily
responsible for the soldiers' presence in the trenches.

It was the latter statement which was my undoing, for in illustration of it
I said that in practically every country we had visited, we had heard a certain
type of young soldier say that it had been difficult for him to make the bayo-
net charge (enter into actual hand to hand fighting) unless he had been stim-
ulated; that the English soldiers had been given rum before such a charge,
the Germans ether and that the French were said to use absinthe. To those
who heard the address it was quite clear that it was not because the young
men flinched at the risk of death but because they had to be inflamed to do
the brutal work of the bayonet, such as disembowelling, and were obliged to
overcome all the inhibitions of civilization.

Dr. Hamilton and I had notes for each of these statements with the dates
and names of the men who had made them, and it did not occur to me that
the information was new or startling. I was, however, reported to have said
that no soldier could go into a bayonet charge until he was made half drunk,

\(^2\)Dr. Anna Howard Shaw (1847–1919) was a leading advocate for woman's rights; see Document 20.
and this in turn was immediately commented upon, notably in a scathing letter written to the New York Times by Richard Harding Davis, as a most choice specimen of a woman’s sentimental nonsense. Mr. Davis himself had recently returned from Europe and at once became the defender of the heroic soldiers who were being traduced and belittled. He lent the weight of his name and his very able pen to the cause, but it really needed neither, for the misstatement was repeated, usually with scathing comment, from one end of the country to the other.

I was conscious, of course, that the story had struck athwart the popular and long-cherished conception of the nobility and heroism of the soldier as such, and it seemed to me at the time that there was no possibility of making any explanation, at least until the sensation should have somewhat subsided. I might have repeated my more sober statements with the explanation that whomsoever the pacifist held responsible for war, it was certainly not the young soldiers themselves who were, in a sense, its most touching victims, “the heroic youth of the world whom a common ideal tragically pitted against each other.” Youth’s response to the appeal made to their self-sacrifice, to their patriotism, to their sense of duty, to their high-hearted hopes for the future, could only stir one’s admiration, and we should have been dull indeed had we failed to be moved by this most moving spectacle in the world. That they had so responded to the higher appeals only confirms Ruskin’s statement that “we admire the soldier not because he goes forth to slay but to be slain.” The fact that many of them were obliged to make a great effort to bear themselves gallantly in the final tests of “war’s brutalities” had nothing whatever to do with their courage and sense of devotion. All this, of course, we had realized during our months in Europe.

After the meeting in Carnegie Hall and after an interview with President Wilson in Washington, I returned to Chicago to a public meeting arranged in the Auditorium; I was met at the train by a committee of aldermen appointed as a result of a resolution in the City Council. There was an indefinite feeling that the meeting at The Hague might turn out to be of significance, and that in such an event its chairman should have been honored by her fellow citizens. But the bayonet story had preceded me and every one was filled with great uneasiness. To be sure, a few war correspondents had come to my rescue—writing of the overpowering smell of ether preceding certain German attacks; the fact that English soldiers knew when a bayonet charge

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3 Richard Harding Davis (1864–1916) was a journalist, war correspondent, and supporter of Theodore Roosevelt.
was about to be ordered because rations of rum were distributed along the trenches. Some people began to suspect that the story, exaggerated and grotesque as it had become, indicated not cowardice but merely an added sensitiveness which the modern soldier was obliged to overcome. Among the many letters on the subject which filled my mail for weeks, the bitter and abusive were from civilians or from the old men to whom war experiences had become a reminiscence, the larger number and the most understanding ones came from soldiers in active service.

Only once did I try a public explanation. After an address in Chautauqua, New York, in which I had not mentioned bayonets, I tried to remake my original statement to a young man of the associated press only to find it once more so garbled that I gave up in despair, quite unmoved by the young man’s letter of apology which followed hard upon the published report of his interview.

I will confess that the mass psychology of the situation interested me even then and continued to do so until I fell ill with a serious attack of pleuro-pneumonia, which was the beginning of three years of semi-invalidism. During weeks of feverish discomfort I experienced a bald sense of social opprobrium and wide-spread misunderstanding which brought me very near to self-pity, perhaps the lowest pit into which human nature can sink. Indeed the pacifist in war time, with his precious cause in the keeping of those who control the sources of publicity and consider it a patriotic duty to make all types of peace propaganda obnoxious, constantly faces two dangers. Strangely enough he finds it possible to travel from the mire of self-pity straight to the barren hills of self-righteousness and to hate himself equally in both places.

From the very beginning of the great war, as the members of our group gradually became defined from the rest of the community, each one felt increasingly the sense of isolation which rapidly developed after the United States entered the war into that destroying effect of “aloneness,” if I may so describe the opposite of mass consciousness. We never ceased to miss the unquestioning comradeship experienced by our fellow citizens during the war, nor to feel curiously outside the enchantment given to any human emotion when it is shared by millions of others. The force of the majority was so overwhelming that it seemed not only impossible to hold one’s own against it, but at moments absolutely unnatural, and one secretly yearned to participate in “the folly of all mankind.” Our modern democratic teaching has brought us to regard popular impulses as possessing in their general tendency a valuable capacity for evolutionary development. In the hours of doubt and self-distrust the question again and again arises, has the individual or a very small group, the right to stand out against millions of his fellow
countrymen? Is there not a great value in mass judgment and in instinctive mass enthusiasm, and even if one were right a thousand times over in conviction, was he not absolutely wrong in abstaining from this communion with his fellows? The misunderstanding on the part of old friends and associates and the charge of lack of patriotism was far easier to bear than those dark periods of faint-heartedness. We gradually ceased to state our position as we became convinced that it served no practical purpose and, worse than that, often found that the immediate result was provocative.

We could not, however, lose the conviction that as all other forms of growth begin with a variation from the mass, so the moral changes in human affairs may also begin with a differing group or individual, sometimes with the one who at best is designated as a crank and a freak and in sterner moments is imprisoned as an atheist or a traitor. Just when the differing individual becomes the centro-egotist, the insane man, who must be thrown out by society for its own protection, it is impossible to state. The pacifist was constantly brought sharply up against a genuine human trait with its biological basis, a trait founded upon the instinct to dislike, to distrust and finally to destroy the individual who differs from the mass in time of danger. Regarding this trait as the basis of self-preservation it becomes perfectly natural for the mass to call such an individual a traitor and to insist that if he is not for the nation he is against it. To this an estimated nine million people can bear witness who have been burned as witches and heretics, not by mobs, for of the people who have been “lynched” no record has been kept, but by order of ecclesiastical and civil courts.

There were moments when the pacifist yielded to the suggestion that keeping himself out of war, refusing to take part in its enthusiasms, was but pure quietism, an acute failure to adjust himself to the moral world. Certainly nothing was clearer than that the individual will was helpless and irrelevant. We were constantly told by our friends that to stand aside from the war mood of the country was to surrender all possibility of future influence, that we were committing intellectual suicide, and would never again be trusted as responsible people or judicious advisers. Who were we to differ with able statesmen, with men of sensitive conscience who also absolutely abhorred war, but were convinced that this war for the preservation of democracy would make all future wars impossible, that the priceless values of civilization which were at stake could at this moment be saved only by war? But these very dogmatic statements spurred one to alarm. Was not war in the interest of democracy for the salvation of civilization a contradiction of terms, whoever said it or however often it was repeated?
Then, too, we were always afraid of fanaticism, of preferring a consistency of theory to the conscientious recognition of the social situation, of a failure to meet life in the temper of a practical person. Every student of our time had become more or less a disciple of pragmatism and its great teachers in the United States had come out for the war and defended their positions with skill and philosophic acumen. There were moments when one longed desperately for reconciliation with one’s friends and fellow citizens; in the words of Amiel, “Not to remain at variance with existence but to reach that understanding of life which enables us at least to obtain forgiveness.”

Solitude has always had its demons, harder to withstand than the snares of the world, and the unnatural desert into which the pacifist was summarily cast out seemed to be peopled with them. We sorely missed the contagion of mental activity, for we are all much more dependent upon our social environment and daily newspaper than perhaps any of us realize. We also doubtless encountered, although subconsciously, the temptations described by John Stuart Mill: “In respect to the persons and affairs of their own day, men insensibly adopt the modes of feeling and judgment in which they can hope for sympathy from the company they keep.”

The consciousness of spiritual alienation was lost only in moments of comradeship with the like-minded, which may explain the tendency of the pacifist in war time to seek his intellectual kin, his spiritual friends, wherever they might be found in his own country or abroad.

It was inevitable that in many respects the peace cause should suffer in public opinion from the efforts of groups of people who, early in the war, were convinced that the country as a whole was for peace and who tried again and again to discover a method for arousing and formulating the sentiment against war. I was ill and out of Chicago when the People’s Council held a national convention there, which was protected by the city police but threatened with dispersion by the state troops, who, however, arrived from the capital several hours after the meeting had adjourned. The incident was most sensational and no one was more surprised than many of the members of the People’s Council who thus early in the war had supposed that they were conducting a perfectly legitimate convention. The incident gave tremendous “copy” in a city needing rationalizing rather than sensationalizing.

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4 Henri-Frédéric Amiel (1821–1881) was a Swiss moral philosopher.
5 John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was a British philosopher and political economist.
6 The People’s Council of America for Democracy and the Terms of Peace was a pacifist organization established in 1917.
at that moment. There is no doubt that the shock and terror of the “anarchist riots” occurring in Chicago years ago have left their traces upon the nervous system of the city somewhat as a nervous shock experienced in youth will long afterwards determine the action of a mature man under widely different circumstances.

On the whole, the New York groups were much more active and throughout the war were allowed much more freedom both of assembly and press, although later a severe reaction followed expressed through the Lusk Committee and other agencies. Certainly neither city approximated the freedom of London and nothing surprised me more in 1915 and again in 1919 than the freedom of speech permitted there.

We also read with a curious eagerness the steadily increasing number of books published from time to time during the war, which brought a renewal of one’s faith or at least a touch of comfort. These books broke through that twisting and suppressing of awkward truths, which was encouraged and at times even ordered by the censorship. Such manipulation of news and motives was doubtless necessary in the interest of war propaganda if the people were to be kept in a fighting mood. Perhaps the most vivid books came from France, early from Romain Rolland, later from Barbusse, although it was interesting to see how many people took the latter’s burning indictment of war merely as a further incitement against the enemy. On the scientific side were the frequent writings of David Starr Jordan and the remarkable book of Nicolai on “The Biology of War.” The latter enabled one, at least in one’s own mind, to refute the pseudo-scientific statement that war was valuable in securing the survival of the fittest. Nicolai insisted that primitive man must necessarily have been a peaceful and social animal and that he developed his intelligence through the use of the tool, not through the use of the weapon; it was the primeval community which made the evolution of man possible, and cooperation among men is older and more primitive than mass combat which is an outgrowth of the much later property instinct. No other species

7 Probably a reference to the Haymarket Riot (1886). During a labor rally in support of the eight-hour day, someone threw dynamite at police, who opened fire on the crowd. Eight people, referred to as anarchists, were tried, and four were executed.
8 The Joint Legislative Committee to Investigate Seditious Activities established by the New York state legislature in 1919.
9 Romain Rolland (1866–1944) and Henri Barbusse (1873–1935) were French authors.
10 David Starr Jordan (1851–1931) was an American scientist, educator and peace activist. He was the founding president of Stanford University.
11 Georg Friedrich Nicolai (1874–1964) was a German physiologist.
save ants, who also possess property, fights in masses against other masses of its own kind. War is in fact not a natural process and not a struggle for existence in the evolutionary sense. He illustrated the evolutionary survival of the fittest by two tigers inhabiting the same jungle or feeding ground, the one who has the greater skill and strength as a hunter survives and the other starves, but the strong one does not go out to kill the weak one, as the war propagandist implied; or by two varieties of mice living in the same field or barn; in the biological struggle, the variety which grows a thicker coat survives the winter while the other variety freezes to extinction, but if one variety of mice should go forth to kill the other, it would be absolutely abnormal and quite outside the evolutionary survival which is based on the adjustment of the organism to its environment. George Nasmyth’s book on Darwinism and the Social Order was another clear statement of the mental confusion responsible for the insistence that even a biological progress is secured through war. Mr. Brailsford wrote constantly on the economic results of the war and we got much comfort from John Hobson’s “Toward International Government,” which gave an authoritative account of the enormous amount of human activity actually carried on through international organizations of all sorts, many of them under governmental control. Lowes Dickinson’s books, especially the spirited challenge in “The Choice Before Us,” left his readers with the distinct impression that “war is not inevitable but proceeds from definite and removable causes.” From every such book the pacifist was forced to the conclusion that none save those interested in the realization of an idea are in a position to bring it about and that if one found himself the unhappy possessor of an unpopular conviction, there was nothing for it but to think as clearly as he was able and be in a position to serve his country as soon as it was possible for him to do so.

But with or without the help of good books a hideous sensitiveness remained, for the pacifist, like the rest of the world, has developed a high degree of suggestibility, sharing that consciousness of the feelings, the opinions and the customs of his own social group which is said to be an

12 George W. Nasmyth (1882–1920), Social Progress and the Darwinian Theory; a Study of Force as a Factor in Human Relations (1916).
14 John A Hobson (1858–1940) was a British economist, author, and critic of imperialism.
15 Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862–1932) was a British philosopher.
inheritance from an almost pre-human past. An instinct which once enabled the man-pack to survive when it was a question of keeping together or of perishing off the face of the earth, is perhaps not underdeveloped in any of us. There is a distinct physical as well as moral strain when this instinct is steadily suppressed or at least ignored. The large number of deaths among the older pacifists in all the warring nations can probably be traced in some measure to the peculiar strain which such maladjustment implies. More than the normal amount of nervous energy must be consumed in holding one’s own in a hostile world. These older men, Keir Hardie\textsuperscript{16} and Lord Courtney\textsuperscript{17} in England, Jenkin Lloyd Jones,\textsuperscript{18} Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden\textsuperscript{19} in the United States, Lammasch\textsuperscript{20} and Fried\textsuperscript{21} in Austria, had been honored by their fellow citizens because of marked ability to interpret and understand them. Suddenly to find every public utterance willfully misconstrued, every attempt at normal relationship repudiated, must react in a baffled suppression which is health-destroying even if we do not accept the mechanistic explanation of the human system. Certainly by the end of the war we were able to understand, although our group certainly did not endorse the statement of Cobden,\textsuperscript{22} one of the most convinced of all internationalists: “I made up my mind during the Crimean War that if ever I lived in the time of another great war of a similar kind between England and another power, I would not as a public man open my mouth on the subject, so convinced am I that appeals to reason, conscience or interest have no force whatever on parties engaged in war, and that exhaustion on one or both sides can alone bring a contest of physical force to an end.”

On the other hand there were many times when we stubbornly asked ourselves, what after all, has maintained the human race on this old globe despite all the calamities of nature and all the tragic failings of mankind, if

\textsuperscript{16} Keir Hardie (1856–1915) was a Scottish socialist, reformer, and politician. He tried to organize a pacifist strike at the beginning of World War I.

\textsuperscript{17} Leonard Courtney (1832–1918) was a British academic, politician and reformer, who opposed the use of force.

\textsuperscript{18} Jenkin Lloyd Jones (1843–1918) was a Unitarian minister who espoused pacifism during World War I.

\textsuperscript{19} Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) and Washington Gladden (1836–1918) were proponents of the social gospel.

\textsuperscript{20} Heinrich Lammasch (1853–1920) was an Austrian jurist who joined the international peace movement at the outbreak of World War I.

\textsuperscript{21} Unidentified

\textsuperscript{22} Richard Cobden (1804–1865) was a British manufacturer and statesman.
not faith in new possibilities, and courage to advocate them. Doubtless many

times these new possibilities were declared by a man who, quite unconscious

doctrine, the ineffectual solace

of the self-righteous which was imputed to us. No one knew better than we

how feeble and futile we were against the impregnable weight of public opin-

ion, the appalling imperviousness, the coagulation of motives, the universal

confusion of a world at war. There was scant solace to be found in this type of

statement: “The worth of every conviction consists precisely in the steadfast-

ness with which it is held,” perhaps because we suffered from the fact that we

were no longer living in a period of dogma and were therefore in no position

to announce our sense of security. We were well aware that the modern lib-

eral having come to conceive truth of a kind which must vindicate itself in

practice, finds it hard to hold even a sincere and mature opinion which from

the very nature of things can have no justification in works. The pacifist in

war time is literally starved of any gratification of that natural desire to have

his own decisions justified by his fellows.

That, perhaps, was the crux of the situation. We slowly became aware that

our affirmation was regarded as pure dogma. We were thrust into the position

of the doctrinaire, and although, had we been permitted, we might have cited

both historic and scientific tests of our so-called doctrine of Peace, for the

moment any sanction even by way of illustration was impossible.

It therefore came about that ability to hold out against mass suggestion,

to honestly differ from the convictions and enthusiasms of one’s best friends

did in moments of crisis come to depend upon the categorical belief that a

man's primary allegiance is to his vision of the truth and that he is under

obligation to affirm it.

23 Apparently a quotation of the German Philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–

1900). See The Freeman, vol. 3 (1921), 118.
Raised by religiously indifferent parents, Dorothy Day (1897–1980) had a seeker’s heart that led her to the Episcopal Church as a teenager and then to a flirtation with political radicalism and the bohemian lifestyle in her 20s. After finding herself unexpectedly pregnant in 1925, Day became interested in Catholicism; she and her baby were both baptized in 1927, over the objections of her paramour and the baby’s father, Forster Batterham, an anarchist activist. After Day and Batterham separated, she supported herself as a journalist, taking assignments primarily for Catholic news outlets. This work eventually brought her into contact with Peter Maurin and in 1933, the two co-founded The Catholic Worker. The magazine was intended to make Catholic writing and thought on social justice accessible to a broader audience; in time, it would grow to become much more than a publication—it would serve as the center of gravity for an entire left-wing Catholic movement.

In this statement, Day outlines the theological grounding of her “houses of hospitality” program. Like other “social settlements” (Document 25) these were actual homes in urban communities; unlike most other settlements, the Houses of Hospitality were intensely religious, helping to either deepen the faith of the often-primarily Catholic demographic of their locales, or to convert those who might otherwise feel that God was silent in the midst of their poverty. In 2018, there are over 245 self-proclaimed Catholic Worker communities (most centered around Houses of Hospitality) in cities around the world.


During this last month news comes in that our fellow workers in Rochester, Pittsburgh, and Chicago want to start Houses of Hospitality. Already over in England, the staff of The English Catholic Worker have opened a House.
We know the difficulties of the undertaking so it is in place to reiterate some of the principles by which we began our work.

We emphasize again the necessity of smallness. The idea, of course, would be that each Christian, conscious of his duty in the lay apostolate, should take in one of the homeless as an honored guest, remembering Christ’s words, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me.”

The poor are more conscious of this obligation than those who are comfortably off. We know of any number of cases where families already overburdened and crowded, have taken in orphaned children, homeless aged, poor who were not members of their families but who were akin to them because they were fellow sufferers in this disordered world.

So first of all let us say that those of our readers who are interested in Houses of Hospitality might first of all try to take some one into their homes.

Several of the women workers of our group here in New York who have jobs have moved down to Mott street now and taken little slum apartments and are offering a room and bed and board to our overflow. They are exemplifying perfectly the idea of hospitality.

But if family complications make this impossible, then let our friends keep in mind the small beginnings. I might almost say that it is impossible to do this work unless they themselves are ready to live there with their fellow guests, who soon cease to become guests and become fellow workers. It is necessary, because those who have the ideal in mind, who have the will to make the beginnings, must be the ones who are on hand to guide the work. Otherwise it is just another charity organization, and the homeless might as well go to the missions or municipal lodging houses or breadlines which throughout the depression have become well organized almost as a permanent part of our civilization. And that we certainly do not want to perpetuate.

Cyril Echele, out in St. Louis, is beginning in the right way. Read his letter in this issue of the paper. He is starting with a store and with whatever means come to hand. Clothes, some food, some furniture comes in. He is getting along with what he has, and the work will grow.

We began with a store, went on to an apartment rented in the neighborhood, from thence we moved to a twelve-room house, and now we have twenty-four rooms here in Mott street.

It is not enough to feed and shelter those who come. The work of indoctrination must go on. There must be time for conversations, and what better

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1 Matthew 25:40
place than over the supper table? There must be meetings, discussion groups, the distribution of literature. There must be some one always on hand to do whatever comes up, whether that emergency is to go out on a picket line, attend a Communist meeting for the purpose of distributing literature, care for the sick or settle disputes. And there are always arguments and differences of opinion in work of this kind, and it is good that it should be so because it makes for clarification of thought, as Peter says, and cultivates the art of human contacts.

We call attention again to the fact that the Communists have set themselves to do four things, according to the reports of the last meeting of the Third International:² to build up anti-war and anti-fascist groups in the colleges; to organize the industrial workers; to start a farm-labor party and to organize the unemployed.

Houses of Hospitality will bring workers and scholars together. They will provide a place for industrial workers to discuss Christian principles of organization as set forth in the encyclicals.³ They will emphasize personal action, personal responsibility as opposed to political action and state responsibility. They will care for the unemployed and teach principles of cooperation and mutual aid. They will be a half-way house towards farming communes and homesteads.

We have a big program but we warn our fellow workers to keep in mind small beginnings. The smaller the group, the more work is done.

And let us remember, “Unless the Lord build the House, they labor in vain that build it.”⁴

² the international association of communist parties, led by the Soviet Union
³ a letter sent by the pope to all bishops of the Roman Catholic Church and intended to offer authoritative teaching regarding a specific church doctrine
⁴ Psalm 127:1
SOCIAL ACTIVIST DOROTHY DAY (1897–1980) REMAINED A COMMITTED PACIFIST THROUGHOUT HER LIFE, OPPOSING BOTH WORLD WARS. ALTHOUGH AT FIRST HER MOTIVATION FOR REJECTING VIOLENCE WAS POLITICAL, AFTER HER CONVERSION TO CATHOLICISM IN 1929, SHE FOUND ADDITIONAL RELIGIOUS REASONS TO SUPPORT HER ANTI-WAR STANCE. IN THIS ESSAY, PUBLISHED THE MONTH AFTER JAPANESE BOMBERS ATTACKED THE AMERICAN NAVAL BASE AT PEARL HARBOR—AN ACT THAT PRECIPITATED UNITED STATES ENTRY INTO THE GLOBAL CONFLICT—DAY REAFFIRMS HER COMMITMENT TO PACIFISM. MORE IMPORTANTLY, IN THE FACE OF A WAR OFTEN PORTRAYED AS ONE AGAINST NOT A PARTICULAR ENEMY, BUT RATHER AGAINST FORCES OPPOSED TO HUMAN LIBERTY AND FLOURISHING, SHE ARGUES THAT PACIFISM REMAINED THE ONLY TRUE PATH TO SUCH ENDS.


SOURCE: DOROTHY DAY, “OUR COUNTRY PASSES FROM UNDECLARED WAR TO DECLARED WAR; WE CONTINUE OUR CHRISTIAN PACIFIST STAND,” THE CATHOLIC WORKER, JANUARY 1942, 1, 4. COURTESY OF “THE CATHOLIC WORKER MOVEMENT” WEBSITE AT WWW.CATHOLICWORKER.ORG.

DEAR FELLOW WORKERS IN CHRIST:

LORD GOD, MERCIFUL GOD, OUR FATHER, SHALL WE KEEP SILENT, OR SHALL WE SPEAK? AND IF WE SPEAK, WHAT SHALL WE SAY?

I AM SITTING HERE IN THE CHURCH ON MOTT STREET WRITING THIS IN YOUR PRESENCE. OUT ON THE STREETS IT IS QUIET, BUT YOU ARE THERE TOO, IN THE CHINESE, IN
the Italians, these neighbors we love. We love them because they are our brothers, as Christ is our Brother and God our Father.

But we have forgotten so much. We have all forgotten. And how can we know unless you tell us. “For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” 1 How then are they to call upon Him in whom they have not believed? But how are they to believe Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear, if no one preaches? And how are men to preach unless they be sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace.” 2

Seventy-five thousand Catholic Workers go out every month. What shall we print? We can print still what the Holy Father is saying, when he speaks of total war, of mitigating the horrors of war, when he speaks of cities of refuge, of feeding Europe…. 

We will print the words of Christ who is with us always, even to the end of the world. “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, who makes His sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and unjust.” 3

We are at war, a declared war, with Japan, Germany and Italy. But still we can repeat Christ’s words, each day, holding them close in our hearts, each month printing them in the paper. In times past, Europe has been a battlefield. But let us remember St. Francis, 4 who spoke of peace and we will remind our readers of him, too, so they will not forget.

In The Catholic Worker we will quote our Pope, our saints, our priests. We will go on printing the articles which remind us today that we are all “called to be saints,” that we are other Christs, reminding us of the priesthood of the laity.

We are still pacifists. Our manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount, which means that we will try to be peacemakers. Speaking for many of our conscientious objectors, we will not participate in armed warfare or in making munitions, or by buying government bonds to prosecute the war, or in urging others to these efforts.

But neither will we be carping in our criticism. We love our country and

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1 Romans 10:13  
2 Romans 10:15  
3 Matthew 5:44  
4 St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), known for his gentleness
we love our President. We have been the only country in the world where
men of all nations have taken refuge from oppression. We recognize that
while in the order of intention we have tried to stand for peace, for love of
our brother, in the order of execution we have failed as Americans in living
up to our principles.

We will try daily, hourly, to pray for an end to the war, such an end,
to quote Father Orchard,5 “as would manifest to all the world, that it was
brought about by divine action, rather than by military might or diplomatic
negotiation, which men and nations would then only attribute to their power
or sagacity.”

“Despite all calls to prayer,” Father Orchard concludes, “there is at present
all too little indication anywhere that the tragedy of humanity and the des-
perate need of the world have moved the faithful, still less stirred the thought-
less masses, to turn to prayer as the only hope for mankind this dreadful hour.

“We shall never pray until we feel more deeply, and we shall never feel
deeply enough until we envisage what is actually happening in the world, and
understand what is possible in the will of God; and that means until suffi-
cient numbers realize that we have brought things to a pass which is beyond
human power to help or save.

“Those who do feel and see, however inadequately, should not hesitate to
begin to pray, or fail to persevere, however dark the prospects remain.” Let
them urge others to do likewise; and then, first small groups, and then the
Church as a whole, and at last the world, may turn and cry for forgiveness,
mercy and deliverance for all.

“Then we may be sure God will answer, and effectually; for the Lord’s
hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor His ear heavy that it cannot
hear.” Let us add, that unless we combine this prayer with almsgiving, in
giving to the least of God’s children, and fasting in order that we may help
feed the hungry, and penance in recognition of our share in the guilt, our
prayer may become empty words.

Our works of mercy may take us into the midst of war. As editor of The
Catholic Worker, I would urge our friends and associates to care for the sick
and the wounded, to the growing of food for the hungry, to the continuance
of all our works of mercy in our houses and on our farms. We understand,
of course, that there is and that there will be great differences of opinion
even among our own groups as to how much collaboration we can have with

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5 Father Bernard Orchard, O. S. B. (1910–2006), was an English monk, headmaster,
and scholar of Biblical criticism.
the government in times like these. There are differences more profound and there will be many continuing to work with us from necessity, or from choice, who do not agree with us as to our position on war, conscientious objection, etc. But we beg that there will be mutual charity and forbearance among us all.

This letter, sent to all our Houses of Hospitality and to all our farms, and being printed in the January issue of the paper, is to state our position in this most difficult time.

Because of our refusal to assist in the prosecution of war and our insistence that our collaboration be one for peace, we may find ourselves in difficulties. But we trust in the generosity and understanding of our government and our friends, to permit us to continue, to use our paper to “preach Christ crucified.”

May the Blessed Mary, Mother of love, of faith, of knowledge and of hope, pray for us.
Fiction writer and essayist Flannery O’Connor (1925–1964) took the post-war American literary scene by storm with her engrossing tales of lives lived in the shadow of and in search of the divine. For O’Connor—a “cradle Catholic”—the spiritually significant almost always appeared cloaked in layers of ritual and tradition, and she worried about the cultural cost of a society no longer able to see beyond the dirt and dust of the immanent to the glory of the transcendent beyond. In her fiction, the wonder and mystery of the transcendent break into ordinary life with perhaps surprising regularity and yet, unpredictability.

O’Connor was diagnosed with lupus in 1952 and spent the last twelve years of her life largely in seclusion on her parents’ Georgia farm. Yet she still maintained a robust public speaking schedule, attempting to explain—as she does in the essay excerpted here—the larger redemptive purpose behind her writing.


…I’m talking tonight about “The Catholic Novelist in the Protestant South.”

I have experienced his situation, and I think his situation has particular lessons both for Catholics anywhere who write or read fiction and for those Southerners who feel that the quality of future Southern literature will not hold up unless the best traditions of the South have reinforcement from some stable source of truth. . . . There are certain conditions necessary for the emergence of Catholic literature which are found nowhere else in this country in such abundance as in the South. . . .

The things we see, hear, smell and touch affect us long before we believe anything at all. The South impresses its image on the Southern writer from the moment he is able to distinguish one sound from another. . . . The
Southern writer’s greatest tie with the South is through his ear, which is usually sharp but not too versatile outside his own idiom. . . . A distinctive idiom is a powerful instrument for keeping fiction social. When one Southern character speaks, regardless of his station in life, an echo of all Southern life is heard. This helps to keep Southern fiction from being a fiction of purely private experience.

Unless the novelist has gone entirely out of his mind, his aim is still communication and communication suggests, at least to some of us, talking inside a community of which one is a part. One of the reasons Southern fiction thrives is that today a significant number of our best writers are able to do this. They are not alienated from their society. They are not lonely, suffering artists gasping for purer air. . . . The isolated imagination is easily corrupted by theory. Alienation was once a diagnosis, but in much of the fiction of our time it has become an ideal. The modern hero is the outsider. His experience is rootless. He can go anywhere. He belongs nowhere. Being alien to nothing, he ends up alienated from any kind of community based on common tastes and interests. The borders of his country are the sides of his skull. . . .

. . . [A]s far as the creation of a body of fiction is concerned, the social is superior to the purely personal. Somewhere is better than anywhere. . . . The discovery of having his senses respond to particular sounds and a particular idiom, is for the Southern writer the beginning of a recognition that first puts his work in real human perspective for him. He discovers that the imagination is not free, but bound. The energy of the South is so strong in him that it is a force which has to be encountered and engaged, and it is when this is a true engagement that its meaning will lead outward to universal human interest.

The Catholic novel that fails is usually one in which this kind of engagement is absent. . . . The Catholic novel that fails is one in which there is no genuine sense of place and in which feeling is by that much diminished. Its action occurs in an abstracted setting. It could be anywhere or nowhere. This reduces its dimensions drastically and cuts down on those tensions that keep it from being facile and slick. . . . But there are reasons other than merely literary ones why the South is good ground for Catholic fiction. The writer whose themes are religious particularly needs a region where these themes find a response in the life of the people, and this condition is met in the South as nowhere else. A secular society understands the religious mind less and less. It becomes more and more difficult in America to make belief believable, which is what the novelist has to do. It takes less and less belief acted upon to make one appear a fanatic. When you create a character who believes vigorously in Christ, you have to explain his aberration. Here the
Southern writer has the greatest possible advantage; he lives in the Bible Belt, where such people, though not as numerous as they used to be, are taken for granted….

It has been suggested, apparently with a straight face, that the Biblical flavor of the South is a hindrance to the Catholic writer because Catholic readers are not accustomed to seeing religion biblically. It is true that if your readers are not well acquainted with the Bible, you don’t have the instrument to plumb meaning—and specifically Christian meaning—that you would have if the Biblical background conditioned everyone’s response to life. Some of the writer’s instruments have, unfortunately, to be shared with his reader. But the fact that Catholics are not accustomed to seeing religion Biblically is a deficiency on the part of Catholics, and, if the Catholic writer tries to accommodate himself to such deficiency, our literature will always be going downhill and ourselves behind it. This is, after all, a correctable deficiency, not invincible ignorance. Nothing, I think, will insure the future of Catholic literature in this country so much as the Biblical revival. Unfortunately, that revival is still the pursuit of the educated, and it is the good which the poor and the ignorant hold in common that is most valuable to the fiction writer. When the poor hold sacred history in common, they have concrete ties to the universal and the holy which allow the meaning of their every action to be heightened and seen under the aspect of eternity. To be great story-tellers, we need something to measure ourselves against, and this is what we conspicuously lack in this age. Men judge themselves now by what they find themselves doing. The Catholic has the teachings of the Church to serve him in this regard. But for the writing of fiction something more is necessary. For the purposes of fiction, these guides have to exist in the form of stories which affect our image and our judgment of ourselves. Abstractions, formulas, laws, will not do here. We have to have stories. It takes a story to make a story. It takes a story of mythic dimensions; one which belongs to everybody; one in which everybody is able to recognize the hand of God and imagine its descent upon himself. In the Protestant South the Scriptures fill this role. The ancient Hebrew genius for making the absolute concrete has conditioned the Southerner’s way of looking at things….

… The Catholic novelist in the South is forced to follow the spirit into strange places and to recognize it in many forms not totally congenial to him. His interests and sympathies may very well go, as I find my own do, directly to those aspects of Southern life where the religious feeling is most intense and where its outward forms are farthest from the Catholic and most revealing of a need that only the Church can fill. The Catholic novelist in the
South will see many distorted images of Christ, but he will certainly feel that a distorted image of Christ is better than no image at all. I think he will feel a good deal more kinship with backwoods prophets and shouting fundamentalists than he will with those politer elements for whom the supernatural is an embarrassment and for whom religion has become a department of sociology or culture or personality development.

A few years ago a preacher in Tennessee attracted considerable attention when he sacrificed a live lamb chained to a cross at his Lenten revival service. It is possible that this was simple showmanship, but I doubt it. I presume that this was as close to the Mass as that man could come. The Catholic writer may at first feel that the kind of religious enthusiasm that has influenced Southern life has run hand in hand with extreme individualism for so long that there is nothing left of it that he can recognize. But when he penetrates to the human aspiration beneath it, he sees not only what has been lost to the life he observes, but more the terrible loss to us in the Church of human faith and passion. The result of these underground religious affinities will be a strange and, to many, perverse fiction—one which serves no felt need, which gives us no picture of Catholic life or the religious experiences that are usual with us. But I believe it will be Catholic fiction. There is one Holy Spirit, and He is no respecter of persons. These people in the invisible Church make discoveries that have meaning for us who are better protected from the vicissitudes of our own natures and who are often too dead to the world to make any discoveries at all. These people in the invisible Church may be grotesque, but their grotesque-ness has a significance and a value which the Catholic should be in a better position than the others to assess.

... The word “grotesque” should not necessarily be used as a pejorative term... [O]ur present grotesque heroes... seem to carry an invisible burden and to fix us with eyes that remind us that we all bear some heavy responsibility whose nature we have forgotten. They are prophetic figures. In the novelist’s case, prophecy is a matter of seeing near things with their extensions of meaning and thus of seeing far things close up. The prophet is a realist of distances, distances in the qualitative sense, and it is this kind of realism that you find in the modern instances of the grotesque. But to the eye of the general reader, these prophet-heroes are freaks. The public invariably approaches them from the standpoint of abnormal psychology.

Whenever I am asked why Southern writers particularly have this penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one. To be able to recognize a freak, you have to have some conception of the whole man. And in the south, the general conception of man is still, in the
main, theological. Of course, the South is changing so rapidly that almost anything you say about Southern belief can be denied in the next breath with equal propriety. But approaching the subject from the standpoint of the writer, I think it is safe to say that while the South is hardly Christ-centered, it is most certainly Christ-haunted. It is interesting that as belief in the divinity of Christ decreases, there seems to be a preoccupation with Christ-figures in our fiction. What is pushed to the pack of the mind makes its way forward somehow. Ghosts can be very fierce and instructive. They can cast strange shadows, particularly in our literature, for it is the business of the artist to reveal what haunts us. . . .

The South is struggling mightily to retain her identity against great odds and without knowing always, I believe, quite in what her identity lies. An identity is not made from what passes, from slavery or from segregation, but from those qualities that endure because they are related to truth. It is not made from the mean average or the typical but often from the hidden and most extreme. I think that Catholic novelists in the future will be able to reinforce the vital strength of Southern literature, for they will know that what has given the South her identity are those beliefs and qualities which she has absorbed from the Scriptures and from her own history of defeat and violation: a distrust of the abstract, a sense of human dependence on the grace of God, and a knowledge that evil is not simply a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be endured. It is to be hoped that Catholics will look deeper into Southern literature and the subject of the grotesque and learn to see there more than what appears on the surface. . . .

Not long ago I received a letter from an old lady in California who informed me that when the tired reader comes home at night, he wishes to read something that will “lift up his heart.” And it seems that her heart had not been lifted up by anything of mine she had read. I wrote her back that if her heart had been in the right place, it would have been lifted up. You may say that the serious writer doesn’t have to bother about the tired reader, but he does, because they are all tired. One old lady who wants her heart lifted up wouldn’t be so bad, but you multiply her 250,000 times and what you get is a book club.

The writer, without softening his vision, is obliged to capture or conjure readers. And this means any kind of reader. . . . There is something in us as story-tellers, and as listeners to stories, that demands the redemptive act, that demands that what falls at least be offered the chance of restoration. The reader of today looks for this motion, and rightly so, but he has forgotten the cost of it. His sense of evil is deluded or lacking altogether, and so
he has forgotten the price of restoration. He has forgotten the cost of truth, even in fiction.

I don’t believe that you can impose orthodoxy on fiction. I do believe that you can deepen your own orthodoxy by reading if you are not afraid of strange visions. Our sense of what is contained in our faith is deepened less by abstractions than by an encounter with mystery in what is human and often perverse. We Catholics are much given to the instant answer. Fiction doesn’t have any. Saint Gregory wrote that every time the sacred text describes a fact, it reveals a mystery. And this is what the fiction writer, on his lower level, attempts to do also.

The danger for the writer who is spurred by the religious view of the world is that he will consider this two operations instead of one. He will lift up the old lady’s heart without cost to himself or to her. He will forget that the devil is still at his task of winning souls and that grace cuts with the sword Christ said he came to bring. He will try to enshrine the mystery without the fact, and there will follow further set of separations which are inimical to art. Judgment will be separated from vision; nature from grace; and reason from the imagination. These are separations which are very apparent today in American life and in American writing. I believe they are less true of the South, in spite of her well-publicized sins, than of any other section of the country, and in this I believe that the South is the place where a Catholic literature can thrive. The Catholic novelist in the South will bolster the South’s best traditions, for they are the same as his own. And the South will perhaps lead him to be less timid as a novelist, more respectful of the concrete, more trustful of the blind imagination.

The poet is traditionally a blind man. But the Christian poet, and the story-teller as well, is like the blind man Christ touched, who looked then and saw men as if they were trees—but walking. Christ touched him again, and he saw clearly. We will not see clearly until Christ touches us in death, but this first touch is the beginning of vision, and it is an invitation to deeper and stranger visions that we shall have to accept if we want to realize a Catholic literature.
Fannie Lou Hamer (1917–1977) registered to vote in Indianola, Mississippi in August 1962, after attending a public meeting held by the civil rights activist group the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee; she promptly lost her job, her home, and became the target of violent white supremacists, who followed her to a friend’s house and shot several rounds through the front windows. Infuriated rather than frightened, Hamer immediately began to work for the SNCC, traveling around the South speaking on civil rights issues and helping African Americans register to vote.

Hamer’s rhetorical skills were deeply rooted in her faith, and when speaking on political subjects, she tended to adopt the tone of an exhorter or a Jeremiah, calling for courage, perseverance, repentance, and reform. She gained national attention after an abbreviated version of the speech below was televised as part of the 1964 Democratic National Convention; she willingly used the additional publicity to draw attention to the ways African Americans had been persistently demeaned and oppressed and to urge Americans of all backgrounds to work to end racial injustice. Like many in the Civil Rights Movement, Hamer—a Baptist—believed that her faith required her not only to seek justice for the oppressed, but to love the oppressors. Thus, although her speech unflinchingly condemns both whites and blacks for participating in the institutionalized racial violence endemic to Southern life in the period, it also offers elements of grace and hope for a future in which men and women of all colors will be able to share in the blessings of both spiritual and temporal freedom.

Source: Fannie Lou Hamer, "We’re On Our Way," Speech before a mass meeting held at the Negro Baptist School in Indianola, Mississippi (September 1964) in Maegan Parker Brooks and Davis W. Houck, ed., The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 47–56.
Thank you very much. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am very glad to be here for the first time in Indianola, Mississippi, to speak in a mass meeting. . . . It’s good to see people waking up to the fact—something that you should’ve been awakened years ago.

. . . Every church door in the state of Mississippi should be open for these meetings; but preachers have preached for years what he didn’t believe himself. And if he’s willing to trust God, if he’s willing to trust God, he won’t mind opening the church door. Because the first words of Jesus’s public ministry was: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim and bring relief to the captive.” And you know we are living in a captivated society today. And we know the things we doing is right. The thirty-seventh of Psalms said, “Fret not thyselves because of evildoers, neither be thy envious against the workers of iniquity for they shall be cut down like the green grass and wither away as the green herb. Delight thyselves in the Lord and verily thou shalt be filled.” And we are determined to be filled in Mississippi today.

Some of the white people will tell us, “Well, I just don’t believe in integration.” But he been integrating at night a long time! If he hadn’t been, it wouldn’t be as many light-skinned Negroes as it is in here. The seventeenth chapter of Acts and the twenty-sixth verse said: “Has made of one blood all nations.” So whether you black as a skillet or white as a sheet, we are made from the same blood and we are on our way! . . .

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” Sin is beginning to reproach America today and we want what is rightfully ours. And it’s no need of running and no need of saying, “Honey, I’m not going to get in the mess,” because if you were born in America with a black face, you were born in the mess.

Do you think, do you think anybody that would stand out in the dark to shoot me and to shoot other people, would you call that a brave person? It’s a shame before God that people will let hate not only destroy us, but it will destroy them. Because a house divided against itself cannot stand and today America is divided against itself because they don’t want us to have even the

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1 Luke 4:18
2 Proverbs 14:34
3 Matthew 12:25. Abraham Lincoln used the image of a house divided against itself in 1858, in a speech following his nomination as the Republican candidate for Senator from Illinois.
ballot here in Mississippi. If we had been treated right all these years, they wouldn’t be afraid for us to get the ballot.

And I can tell you now how this happened. After I had been working for eight or ten months, I attended a voter educational workshop in Charleston, South Carolina. On the ninth of June in 1963, we was returning from the workshop. We arrived in Winona, Mississippi, about eleven o’clock. Four of the people got off of the bus to use the restaurant; two of the people got off of the bus to use the washroom. At this time, I was still on the bus. And I saw the four people rush out and I got off of the bus. And I said, “What’s wrong?”

And Miss Ponder, Southwide supervisor for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference said, “It was the chief of police and a state highway patrolman ordered us to come out.” And I said, “This is Mississippi for you.”

She said, “Well, I think I’ll get the tag number and we can file it in our report.” And I got back in the bus. One of the girls that had used the washroom got back on the bus and that left five on our outside. When I looked through the window, they was getting those people in the car. And I stepped off of the bus again. And somebody screamed from that car and said, “Get that one there,” and a man said, “You are under arrest.” When he opened the door, and as I started to get in, he kicked me and I was carried to the county jail.

When I got to the county jail, with the two white fellows that drove me to jail, they was calling me all kinds of names. And they was asking me questions and as I would try to answer they would cut me off. And as we got to the county jail there, when we walked into the booking room, one of the policemen [sic] walked over to one of the young men and jumped up with all of his weight on one of the Negro’s feet. And then they began to place us in cells. I was placed in a cell with Miss Euvester Simpson from Itta Bena, Mississippi. And during that time they left some in the booking room. And I began to hear screams. And I began to hear howls. And I began to hear somebody say, “Can’t you say ‘yes, sir’ nigger?”

And I could hear Miss Ponder’s voice said, “Yes, I can say ‘yes, sir.’” “So, well, say it.”

She said, “I don’t know you well enough.” And I would hear when she would hit the floor again. And during the time they was beating Miss Ponder, I heard her when she began to pray. And she asked God to have mercy on those people because they didn’t know what they was doing. I don’t know how long this lasted. But after a while, Miss Ponder passed my cell. She didn’t recognize me when she passed my cell. One of her eyes looked like blood,
and her mouth was swollen, and she was holding up by propping against the back of the brick cell.

And then three men came to my cell: a state highway patrolman, and a police, and a plain-dressed man. The state highway patrolman said, “Where you from?”

I said, “Ruleville, Mississippi.”

He said, “I’m going to check.” And it wasn’t too long before he was back. And he used a curse word and he said, “You are from Ruleville, all right.” He said, “We is going to make you wish you was dead.”

I was led out of that cell and to another cell where they had two Negro prisoners. Three white men in that room and two Negroes. The state highway patrolman ordered the first Negro to take the blackjack; it was a long leather blackjack and it was loaded with something heavy. And they ordered me to lay down on my face on a bunk bed. And the first Negro beat me. He had to beat me until the state highway patrolman give him orders to quit. Because he had already told him, said, “If you don’t beat her,” said, “you know what I’ll do to you.” And he beat me I don’t know how long. And after a while, he was exhausted and I was too. And it was a horrible experience.

And the state highway patrolman told the second Negro to take the blackjack. And I asked at this time, I said, “How can you treat a human being like this?”

The second prisoner said: “Move your hand, lady. I don’t want to hit you in your hand.” But I was holding my hand behind on the left side to shield some of the licks, because I suffered from polio when I was six years old and this kind of beating, I know I couldn’t take it. So I held my hands behind me, and after the second Negro began to beat me, the state highway patrolman ordered the first Negro that had beat me to set on my feet to keep me from working my feet. And I was screaming, and I couldn’t help but scream, and one of the white men began to beat me in my head and told me to “stop screaming.” And the only way that I could stop screaming was to take my hand and hug it around the tip to muffle out the sound. My dress worked up from this hard blackjack and I pulled my dress down, taking my hands behind and pulled my dress down. And one of the city policemen walked over and pulled my dress as high as he could.

Five mens in this room while I was one Negro woman, being beaten, and at no time did I attempt to do anything but scream and call on God. I don’t know how long this lasted, but after a while I must have passed out. And when I did raise my head up, the state highway patrolman said, “Get up from
there, fatso.” But I couldn’t get up. I don’t know how long, but I kept trying, and you know God is always able. And after a while I did get up, and I went back to my cell.

That Tuesday when they had our trial, the same policemen that had participated in the beatings was on the jury seat, people. And I was charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. And I want to say tonight, we can no longer ignore the fact, America is not the land of the free and the home of the brave. When just because people want to register and vote and be treated like human beings, Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman⁴ is dead today. A house divided against itself cannot stand;⁵ America is divided against itself and without their considering us human beings, one day America will crumble. Because God is not pleased. God is not pleased at all the murdering, and all of the brutality, and all the killings for no reason at all. God is not pleased at the Negro children in the state of Mississippi suffering from malnutrition. God is not pleased because we have to go raggedy each day. God is not pleased because we have to go to the field and work from ten to eleven hours for three lousy dollars…. 

“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”⁶ The beatitude[s] of the Bible, the fifth chapter of Matthew said: “Blessed are they that moan, for they shall be comforted.”⁷ We have moaned a long time in Mississippi. And he [Jesus] said, “The meek shall inherit the earth.”⁸ And there’s no race in America that’s no meeker than the Negro. We’re the only race in America that has had babies sold from our breast, which was slavery time. And had mothers sold from their babes. And we’re the only race in America that had one man had to march through a mob crew just to go to school, which was James H. Meredith.⁹ We don’t have anything to be ashamed of.

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⁴James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were working in Mississippi in June 1964 to register Blacks as voters when they were abducted and murdered.
⁵Matthew 12:25. Abraham Lincoln used this Biblical image in his “House Divided” speech, June 16, 1858, after his nomination as the Republican candidate for Senator from Illinois. The speech became the keynote of Lincoln’s campaign against Stephen A. Douglas.
⁶Proverbs 14: 34
⁷Matthew 5:4
⁸Matthew 5:5
⁹James Howard Meredith (1933--) became the first African American student admitted to the (formerly) segregated University of Mississippi in 1962, after a lengthy legal battle.
All we have to do is trust God and launch out into the deep. You can pray until you faint, but if you don’t get up and try to do something, God is not going to put it in your lap.

It’s very plain today, some of the things that you have read in the Bible. When this man looked out and saw the number and said, “These are they from every nation.” Can’t you see these things coming to pass today? When you see all of these students coming here to help America to be a real democracy and make democracy a reality in the state of Mississippi. Can’t you see the fulfilling of God’s word?

He said, “A city that’s set on a hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine that men would see your good works and glorify the father, which is in Heaven.” He said, “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and shall persecute you and shall set almighty evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets which were before you.” That’s why I tell you tonight that you have a responsibility and if you plan to walk in Christ’s footsteps and keep his commandments you are willing to launch out into the deep and go to the courthouse—not come here tonight to see what I look like, but to do something about the system here.

We are not fighting against these people because we hate them, but we are fighting these people because we love them and we’re the only thing that can save them now. We are fighting to save these people from their hate and from all the things that would be so bad against them. We want them to see the right way. Every night of my life that I lay down before I go to sleep, I pray for these people that despitefully use me. And Christ said, “The meek shall inherit the earth.” And He said before one-tenth—one jot—of his word would fail, heaven and earth would pass away. But His word would stand forever. And I believe tonight, that one day in Mississippi—if I have to die for this—we shall overcome.

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10 a paraphrase of Revelation 7:9
11 Hamer refers to college students who in the summer of 1964 came to the South to register blacks as voters.
12 Matthew 5:14-16
13 Matthew 5:11-12
14 Matthew 5:5
15 Matthew 24:35; Luke 21:33
16 “We Shall Overcome” was a spiritual associated with the Civil Rights Movement. The phrase “we shall overcome” was widely used by those in the civil rights movement.
We want people, we want people over us that’s concerned about the people because we are human beings. Regardless of how they have abused us for all these years, we always cared what was going on. We have prayed and we have hoped for God to bring about a change. And now the time have come for people to stand up. And there’s something real, real peculiar but still it’s great: there used to be a time when you would hit a Negro—a white man would hit a Negro—the others would go and hide. But there’s a new day now, when you hit a Negro, you likely to see a thousand there. Because God care. God care and we care. And we can no longer ignore the fact that we can’t sit down and wait for things to change because as long as they can keep their feet on our neck, they will always do it. But it’s time for us to stand up and be women and men. Because actually, I’m tired of being called “Aunty.” I wondered in life what actually time would they allow for me to be a woman? Because until I was thirty-six I was a girl: “Girl this.” And now I’m forty-six and it’s “Aunty.” But I want you to know tonight: I don’t have one white niece or nephew. And if you don’t want to call me Mrs. Hamer, just call me plain “Fannie” because I’m not your aunt.…

We want ours and we want ours now. I question sometime, actually, has any of these people that hate so—which is the white—read anything about the Constitution? Eighteen hundred and seventy, the Fifteenth Amendment was added on to the Constitution of the United States that gave every man a chance to vote for what he think to be the right way. And now this is ’64 and they still trying to keep us away from the ballot. But we are determined today, we are determined that one day we’ll have the power of the ballot. And the sooner you go to the courthouse, the sooner we’ll have it. It’s one thing, it’s one thing I don’t want you to say tonight after I finish—and it won’t be long—I don’t want to hear you say, “Honey, I’m behind you.” Well, move, I don’t want you back there. Because you could be two hundred miles behind. I want you to say, “I’m with you.” And we’ll go up this freedom road together.

Before I leave you, I would like to quote from an old hymn my mother used to sing: “Should earth against my soul engage, and fiery darts be hurled, when I can smile at Satan’s rage and face this frowning world.”¹⁷ Thank you.

¹⁷ The line comes from the Isaac Watts’ hymn commonly known as “When I Can Read My Title Clear,” (1707). Watts originally published the lyrics of the hymn without a title, but under the header “The Hopes of Heaven our Support under Trials on Earth.”
In May 1985, Amy Eilberg (1954–) was the first woman ordained as a Conservative rabbi by the Jewish Theological Seminary. Shortly after her ordination, she was interviewed by the Jewish feminist publication Lilith. In the sections of the interview excerpted here, Eilberg addresses her own ambivalence about the costs associated with feminist progress in Judaism, even as she celebrates her journey towards the rabbinate. In particular, she worries over the loss of tradition and continuity within the liturgy when religious language is changed to accommodate both sexes, while at the same time recognizing that some women’s horizons may be symbolically limited by language that is less than inclusive. At the same time that she tentatively embraces linguistic gender neutrality, however, Eilberg suggests that there may be ways in which the uniqueness of men and women need to be better explored and represented within the Jewish community. Her interview thus reflects the tension many devout women have felt as they have struggled to balance their embrace of the expanded roles available to them in the secular world with their desires to maintain their allegiance to what are often theologically conservative traditions.


LILITH: As of June, 109 women have been ordained as Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis. What do you think is the reason for the excitement—in the press and generally—about your ordination as the first woman Conservative rabbi? Is it due to the Conservative movement’s being viewed differently?

EILBERG: Someone said to me recently that when the Episcopalian Church decided to ordain women, that engendered a degree of excitement that in some way surpassed the earlier decisions of the more liberal churches. There’s
a set of expectations that in the more right-wing religious bodies there still is religious inequality for women. So when women are allowed to move forward there, that is very significant—it affects everyone. There’s hope for all of us, and there’s hope for all of our aspirations. The degree of media and community attention also conveys the sense that there’s work left to be done. If feminism were a closed issue, if we were an egalitarian society, then this kind of event would not engender such excitement. People’s excitement seems to be directly related to their own sense of denied aspirations or frustrations along the way, so that another woman’s achievement gives women hope in their own struggles.

LILITH: What has happened in the community in the past 12, 13 years to cause the momentous event of your ordination to take place?

EILBERG: I think it was a gradual process of the community’s opening its eyes to the fact that while there is still work to be done, women are substantial partners in the society in which we live. The Jewish feminist movement placed the issue on the agenda of the Jewish community and raised the question, “do you really want Jewish society to lag so far behind the general society in which we live?” We as a community gradually came to the conclusion that, if anything, we were proud that our Jewishness represents a progressive, ethical outlook.…

I was at a meeting of a group of people who have a traditional egalitarian minyan (quorum of worshippers). One of the feminists in the group suggested a couple of minor changes in reference to God-language. I expected some of the men to oppose her suggestion on grounds that it is against halacha (Jewish law). The responses that were voiced, though, were: “We cannot make those kinds of changes ever, because God in the Jewish religion is male, and the language is accurate in reflecting that.” Now that’s the sort of thinking we have to struggle against.

LILITH: How do you feel about changing sexist God-language?

EILBERG: I am in deep conflict about it at this point. I have a very strong commitment both halachically and emotionally to the traditional liturgy. I have been praying the words of this traditional liturgy literally every day for the past 15 years and somewhat less regularly for more years than I have memory of. Traditional Judaism is a very important part of my life. My connection to the traditional liturgy—which represents in many ways the chain of tradition between me and my Jewish forebears—is very strong. I have great allegiance to the halachic system, as well. I approach the question of liturgical
change with great trepidation and great care. There would be a sense of loss for me—loss of that sense of continuity and that sense of allegiance—if I were to begin to change the language with which I pray.

On the other hand, I am beginning to feel very strongly that God-language is very much both a reflection of and a prescription for the kind of society that is to be lived on earth. Thus, the fact that all our God-language and imagery is male convinces us every time we speak that language that it is the natural order of things that males be in control.

So in the same breath in which I come to a congregation to announce that the broader significance of my ordination as a rabbi is an invitation to all the women in the community to consider themselves equal partners in Judaism, I must raise the very obvious question that as women open the siddur (prayer book), they will see a message that at some level contradicts that invitation to equality. . . .

[Eilberg was asked several additional questions about her spiritual journey towards ordination in which she discussed her childhood and high school faith experience.]

**LILITH:** What happened after high school?

**EILBERG:** In 1972, I went to Brandeis. The community was tremendously supportive of women’s equality and women’s aspirations. It was the dawn of Jewish feminism . . . .

In the spring of my freshman year (1973), the first National Jewish Women’s Conference was held. My life was changed by that conference, which I did not even attend. When a friend told me that Rachel Adler had davened¹ there with tallit (prayer shawl) and tefillin (phylacteries), this represented an answer to a question I had been asking.

I had come to Brandeis with a fairly strong traditionalist inclination, but also some feminist or at least egalitarian consciousness. But I did have the sense that the call for equality in the traditionalist Jewish community—by which I included the Conservative movement—would have to take into account the issue of obligation. For me, the blanket call for equality wasn’t the whole story. Obligation, however you conceptualize it—from a personally commanding God or a sense of commandedness by God, or in a Kaplanian²

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¹ recited the prescribed liturgical prayers
² Rabbi Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881–1983) was the co-founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, a modern and naturalistic branch of the religion characterized by its evolutionary attitude towards tradition.
sense of one’s obligation to the community—was a concept that had to be factored into the discourse. . . . I was very much struck by the connection between the halachic exemption of women from a whole set of mitzvot and women’s exclusion from certain roles in the community.

After learning about Adler’s action, I decided that I would take on the obligations of tallit and tefillin; these being only an example of that series of mitzvot from which women are exempt. I said to myself—and the community—that I rejected the notion that I was exempt and therefore excluded from a certain set of central activities simply by being a woman, and that by my repudiation of the exemption status I had made myself into the type of women that the halacha would have to see as an equal. It was at that point that I began to feel comfortable leading services, reading the Torah. I had a male friend teach me to put on tefillin, read, lead services. I began to teach other women to be shlichot tzibur (prayer leaders). Two years later I began to think of the rabbinate . . . .

[Eilberg was asked several questions about her views on women’s issues under Jewish law and on the creation of new liturgies specifically related to women’s life events and roles.]

LILITH: Isn’t there a danger in celebrating and marking women’s particular special experiences? It borders on the idea that there is a separate men’s sphere and a separate women’s sphere, which is something that the Orthodox (and right-wing) are always saying. . . . [in original]

EILBERG: In a sense, all of the new feminist talk about women’s special gifts, women’s unique psychological portrait, and women’s particular form of experience comes very close to what in another time would simply have been called sexism, or the limitation of women. There was a time when talk about women’s differentness was dangerous, the sense that if we feminists began to talk about women having a particular connection to nurturance and caring, we were afraid that men would come back with, “well, if your such experts in nurturance, why don’t you stay home and have children.”

But it seems to me that now that we feel, more or less, that our equality is assured, we do have the liberty to raise those issues again. To remember what, in fact, we have always known . . . [in original] human society has always known . . . [in original] that there are some gender differences. . . . [in original] We can rediscover those differences and take a new look at them.

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3 commandments from the first five books of the Bible, the Torah
Throughout the '70s and until a year or two ago, my feminism was primarily of the civil libertarian variety—that is, the struggle for equal access to everything. Anything less than full equality is to me unacceptable in feminist or egalitarian terms. Now I am at the point—and the community is substantially at the point—at which equality is assured. I am feeling free in a way I wasn’t before to explore issues relating to women’s different contribution [to Judaism].
Men, Women, and Biblical Equality

Elisabeth Elliott Gren
1990

Elisabeth Elliott Gren (1926–2015) spent over a decade as a translator and Christian missionary in Ecuador during the 1950s–1960s. Gren’s writing career began in 1958 when she published a biography of her recently deceased first husband, Jim Elliott (1927–1956). The book included glimpses of their life together from their dating days at Wheaton College until just before his ill-fated attempt to engage with an isolated people in Ecuador. (Elliott was killed by members of the tribe he was attempting to evangelize. Gren later carried on her husband’s missionary work with the tribe.) While her intent was to focus on the need for all Christians to live their lives more selflessly and in submission to the will of God, Elliot’s dramatic narrative of her life as a faithful Christian wife under the most extreme circumstances quickly gave her authority to speak for the conservative side of the debate over gender roles. In this short piece, Elliott reflects on nearly thirty years of discussion and debate on the subject of gender roles in American Protestant Evangelicalism, and reiterates her commitment to what she describes as “Biblical Womanhood.”


Men, Women, and Biblical Equality

A few months ago a double-page advertisement with the above heading appeared in Christian magazines, containing a statement drawn up by seven Christian leaders, and signed by (if I counted directly) 164 others. It appeared to be a direct rebuttal to The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (MWBE)1 which was formed several years ago.

In the section on Creation, the MWBE advertisement states: “The word

1 Organized in 1987, the MWBE sets forth the teachings of the Bible about the complementary differences between men and women.
‘helper’ (*ezer*), used to designate woman in Genesis 2:18, refers to God in most instances of Old Testament usage (e.g. Sam. 7:12; Ps 121:1,2). Consequently the word conveys no implication whatsoever of female subordination or inferiority.” That makes sense. The English word would convey no such implication either. But let’s not overlook texts which do clearly convey subordination (not to be confused or equated with inferiority of worth). While we know that the Lord is our Helper, and human helpers are often superiors (parents, teachers, coaches, public servants who hold political office), we also take for granted that a helper may be a subordinate (an assistant, a flunky, a go-fer, a servant). The Lord of the Universe Himself was willing to accept the status of a slave. The position in no way diminished His worth, much less did it cancel His lordship, but He did not consider equality something worth grasping (see Philippians 2:6).

It’s the idea behind the expression “biblical equality” that gags me. For years we’ve been told that biological sexual differences mean nothing beyond reproduction. Isn’t this anti-Christian? We look not only at the reality of physical things but beyond the visible to the invisible meaning. Research and logic have been twisted to support the idea of an “androgyne,” a wonderful new blending of masculine and feminine traits into a supposedly new human type. Unfortunately this concept has taken strong hold of theology, with vastly destructive results. It’s a hoax, of course, for the design (our respective human forms) is the vehicle of deep theological mysteries—the relationship between Christ and His bride. The Genesis account shows clearly who was made first, and what God’s purpose was in creating Eve.

She was meant to be a helper. So far as I can see, this is not in the least demeaning—for her or for any of us who follow the Master. It is a privilege and a vocation. Much resentment has arisen in women’s minds because of the suggestion (strong in the advertisement and in nearly all feminist literature) that one’s position defines one’s worth, a grossly secular view. Ought not Jesus’ position (born in a cattle shed, raised in poverty, rejected by those to whom He came, then acting the part of the household slave when He washed the disciples’ feet, and, at last, forsaken by His nearest friends, bound and imprisoned and flogged and finally nailed to a cross) prove to us beyond any least doubt that there is no such equation? Was His worth impaired by these humiliations? He told His followers that whoever is chief is meant to be the servant of all. Why should we who have the high and holy calling of being His servants, ever protest for equality in the sacred realms of marriage, home,

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2 the church; see Ephesians 5:22-33
and church? These are not political arenas, for here a much higher law than the civil one is in operation, the law of love.

Most of what MWBE’s advertisement says I think most Christians would accept. It is what they have chosen not to say that disturbs me deeply. The section on Community deals with the Holy Spirit’s coming on both men and women; both have spiritual gifts. True enough, but were there not certain restrictions (for both men and women) placed on the use of these gifts? Is there no such thing as church order which manifests a heavenly hierarchy?

Why no mention of this? Hierarchy—that graduated splendor in which cherubim, seraphim, archangels, angels, saints, apostle, prophets, and martyrs have their divinely appointed places—is treated, in fact, as a bad word. Is not Christian marriage a mysterious representation of the ineffable love between Christ and His Bride? Must we insist on “mutual submission,” as does MBWE?

Years ago I heard Letha Scanzoni lead a seminar on “Egalitarian Marriage,” in which she used Ephesians 5:21 (“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ”) as her proof text, omitting the following verses which spell out the specifics of that subjection (wives to husbands, children to parents, slaves to masters). During the discussion period I asked whether she saw any difference at all between a wife’s submission to her husband and his submission to his wife. The answer was no. “May I then reverse the nouns in the verses which follow?” Yes. So I began to read, “Husbands, be subject to your wives as to the church, for the wife is the head of the husband as the church is the head of Christ.” She stopped me. “Oh, you can’t carry the analogy that far.”

Well? Can we drain the analogy of its mystery? Can we infer nothing but mutual submission? May the Lord give to us, men and women alike, His sublime indifference to secular categories, and His perfect willingness to be subject to the Father—a subordination which did not end with His earthly life, as 1 Corinthians 15:28, 29 (JBP) so clearly shows: “When everything created has been obedient to God, then shall the Son acknowledge himself subject to God the Father, who gave the Son power over all things. Thus, in the end, shall God be wholly and absolutely God.” Yes, we are to “fit in with each other,” as Phillips translates Ephesians 5:21. We are to sacrifice, give in, forbear, forgive. But is that all? Is there no special command to us wives? There is. “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22).

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3 Letha Scanzoni (1935–) writes about religion and social issues.
Why is this verse in the Bible? Why does the MWBE omit it? Well, they think it’s dangerous. Anything the Bible teaches can be dangerous, of course, if misconstrued, misunderstood, misapplied. It’s not our business to edit the Scriptures because they are often disobeyed. It is our business to obey, and to speak out for that obedience, no matter how we may be reproached for so doing and no matter how difficult we women (none of us was born submissive!) find it to be.

The word to husbands is far more difficult. They are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. This kind of love is radically sacrificial and radically cuts across a man’s nature (they were not born with any great desire to lay down their lives). Both husband and wife must be submissive and obedient to the will of God—he in loving, she in accepting his appointed headship. Jesus found His very meat in submission. It is the route to fulfilment and joy. To aim at a mere fifty-fifty accommodation of each other is a half-hearted way of pretending to obey. It is not the love of Christ and the church. It does not demand that kind of sacrifice.

Men have disobeyed by misusing their authority, and women have disobeyed by refusing it. We are not therefore at liberty to drain the word headship of its obviously hierarchical meaning. Let’s be careful not to overlook the all-important as: “Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church” (Eph. 5:22, 23). In what sense is Christ head of the church? It’s a physical metaphor Paul is using. Is not the human head of the human body the part from which all other parts take orders? Yes, I’ve read pages and pages of arguments about that Greek word kephale. Some would insist that it means only source and carries no thought of authority. But I insist that metaphors are metaphors and they mean more, not less, than the mere words could mean in another context. One wonders if these humorless, nearsighted, nit-picking, theological pedants have ever read a book in their lives! . . .

No wonder churchgoers are bored and men don’t know how to court women anymore and marriages are dissolving. God’s arrangement of things (so much more fascinating than “equality”) has been discarded. A concern for fairness doesn’t fit in at all with the concept of sacrifice. It is in suffering and sacrifice, willed and accepted because of a deep and disciplined love, that the still, small Voice is heard: Lose your life for Me and find it! It is in losing ourselves that the ego is transcended and real happiness discovered.

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5 Kephale is the Greek word for head.
6 1 Kings 19:12
One can’t help trying to picture what this “biblical equality” looks like at the breakfast table, in the bedroom, or when it’s pouring rain and two separate but equal spouse have to decide whose turn it is to race through the parking lot and bring the car to the door of the restaurant. It has never occurred to Lars to allow a discussion about this. He is my protector (and, of course, my helper here), which means he’s the one who gets wet! …

As Mrs. Bush⁷ said in her commencement address last spring to the women of Wellesley, feminists must not indulge in self, but must “believe in something larger than yourself.” In a rebuke to the ill-humored feminist leadership … she told them that, first and foremost, “life really must have joy.”

Something larger than yourself. That’s what we need, isn’t it? A much grander vision of things than politics can ever provide, busy (as it must of necessity be) about terribly banal things like rights and equality. God forbid that we Christians should introduce politics into marriage or the church. A glad surrender to the divine order is like a dance—one leads, one follows, each by his or her obedience freeing the other to do what God assigns. There is harmony then, true liberation, and peace. I know. I’ve tried it both ways (my way more often than I like to remember), and only God’s way works.

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⁷ Barbara Bush (1925–2018), wife of then President George H. W. Bush.
A Pulitzer Prize Prize-winning novelist, accomplished essayist, and self-described political liberal, Marilynne Robinson (1943–) is also a woman of intense personal faith. Yet as she reveals here, the latter revelation tends to surprise—even shock—people who find out, so much so that they feel compelled to not only question the validity of her having such convictions, but to belittle them as somehow unworthy of her. Robinson sees this common response as indicative of a larger problem: the innate oppressiveness of majority opinion. In her view, even when majorities do not legally prohibit dissenting perspectives, their smug certitude coerces conformity by playing on the fears dissenters naturally have of being marginalized and mocked. It requires a certain kind of moral or intellectual courage to withstand these “petty” yet invidious attacks—yet it is precisely this moral courage that Robinson suggests is needed not only for the good of the person of faith, but for the good of society as a whole.


Courage seems to me to be dependent on cultural definition. By this I do not mean only that it is a word that blesses different behaviors in different cultures, though that is clearly true. I mean also, and more importantly, that courage is rarely expressed except where there is sufficient consensus to support it. Theologians used to write about a prevenient grace, which enables the soul to accept grace itself. Perhaps there must also be a prevenient courage to nerve one to be brave. It is we human beings who give one another permission to show courage, or, more typically, withhold such permission. We also internalize prohibitions, enforcing them on ourselves—prohibitions against, for example, expressing an honest doubt, or entertaining one. This ought not to be true in a civilization like ours, historically committed to valuing individual conscience and free expression. But it is.
Physical courage is remarkably widespread in this population. There seem always to be firefighters to deal with the most appalling conflagrations and doctors to deal with the most novel and alarming illnesses. It is by no means to undervalue courage of this kind to say it is perhaps expedited by being universally recognized as courage. Those who act on it can recognize the impulse and act confidently, even at the greatest risk to themselves.

Moral and intellectual courage are not in nearly so flourishing a state, even though the risks they entail—financial or professional disadvantage, ridicule, ostracism—are comparatively minor. I propose that these forms of courage suffer from the disadvantage of requiring new definitions continually, which must be generated out of individual perception and judgment. They threaten or violate loyalty, group identity, the sense of comme il faut. They are, intrinsically, outside the range of consensus.

Social comity is no doubt dependent on a degree of like-mindedness in a population. It does sometimes help when we are in general agreement about basic things.... But it should never be forgotten how much repression and violence consensus can support, or how many crimes it has justified.

It is true that in most times and places physical courage and moral and intellectual courage have tended to merge, since dungeons, galleys, and stakes have been extensively employed in discouraging divergent viewpoints. For this reason our own society, which employs only mild disincentives against them and in theory positively admires them, offers a valuable opportunity for the study of what I will call the conservation of consensus, that is, the effective enforcement of consensus in those many instances where neither reason nor data endorse it, where there are no legal constraints supporting it, and where there are no penalties for challenging it that persons of even moderate brio would consider deterrents.

Let us say that the sort of courage I wish to consider can be defined as loyalty to truth. I am not entering into any epistemological thicket here. The kind of truth that interests me is of the type sometimes represented in the statement “the house is on fire.” It is consensus that conceals from us what is objectively true. And it is consensus that creates and supports “truths” that are in fact culturally relative. And, interestingly, it is consensus that is preserved when the objective truth is disallowed on the grounds that “truth” is merely the shared understanding of a specific group or culture.

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1 A French expression for propriety; literally, the sense that everything is being done “as it should be.”

2 vigor
Here is an instance: for some time, the word “bashing” has been used to derail criticism of many kinds, by treating as partisan or tendentious statements that are straightforwardly true or false. To say that the disparity between rich and poor in this country exceeds any previously known in American history... is to say something falsifiable—that is, for practical purposes, verifiable, and, in any case, arguable. But such statements are now routinely called “Bush bashing.” In other words, something that is objectively true or false is dismissed as the slur of a hostile subgroup. Perfectly sensible people flinch at the thought that they might sound a trifle Jacobin, and they are shamed out of saying what they believe to be true in the plainest sense of the word “true.” Nor is it the critics alone who lose their bearings when these strategies are employed. Those who identify with the group toward whom criticisms are directed—in this case, the present administration—can hear irrational attack where they might otherwise hear a challenge to their values or to their theories and methods.

So, the exchanges that political life entirely depends on, in which people attempt in good conscience to establish practical truth and then candidly assign value to it, simply do not take place. This is a failure of courage on both sides....

...To be intimidated in this way is a failure of courage, and to abandon democracy from an excess of self-doubt and good manners is no different, in its effect, than to abandon it out of arrogance or greed.

I am myself a liberal. By that I mean I believe society exists to nurture and liberate the human spirit, and that large-mindedness and openhandedness are the means by which these things are to be accomplished. I am not ideological. By that I mean I believe opportunities of every kind should be seized upon to advance the well-being of people, especially in assuring them decent wages, free time, privacy, education, and health care, concerns essential to their full enfranchisement.

I am very critical of liberalism, not in principle but as a movement. This distinction seems never to be made, and it is not at all subtle. As a principle, liberalism is essential to the sanity and humanity of this civilization. As a movement, it is virtually defunct. Those who have espoused it have failed it, in a way and to a degree that has allowed the very word to become a term of opprobrium. Some authoritative consensus turned against it, and, obedient to that consensus, its allies have abandoned the cause, if not gone over to the other side, into the embrace of illiberalism....

...The banishment of the word “liberal” was simultaneous with the collapse of liberalism itself.... What is at stake? Our hope for a good community.
Liberalism saw to the well-being of the vulnerable. Now that it has ebbed, the ranks of the vulnerable continuously swell. . . . Trivial failures of courage may seem minor enough in any particular instance, and yet they change history and society. They also change culture.

To illustrate this point, I will make a shocking statement: I am a Christian. This ought not to startle anyone. It is likely to be at least demographically true of an American of European ancestry. I have a strong attachment to the Scriptures, and to the theology, music, and art Christianity has inspired. My most inward thoughts and ponderings are formed by the narratives and traditions of Christianity. I expect them to engage me on my deathbed.

Over the years many a good soul has let me know by one means or another that this living out of the religious/ethical/aesthetic/intellectual tradition that is so essentially compelling to me is not, shall we say, cool. There are little jokes about being born again. There are little lectures about religion as a cheap cure for existential anxiety. Now, I do feel fairly confident that I know what religion is. I have spent decades informing myself about it, an advantage I can claim over any of my would-be rescuers. I am a mainline Protestant, a.k.a. a liberal Protestant, as these same people know. I do not by any means wear my religion on my sleeve. I am extremely reluctant to talk about it at all, chiefly because my belief does not readily reduce itself to simple statement.

Nevertheless, I experience these little coercions. Am I the last one to get the news that this religion that has so profoundly influenced world civilization over centuries has been ceded to the clods and obscurantists? Don’t I know that J. S. Bach and Martin Luther King have been entirely eclipsed by Jerry Falwell? The question has been put to me very directly: Am I not afraid to be associated with religious people? These nudges would have their coercive effect precisely because those who want to put me right know that I am not a fundamentalist. That is, I am to avoid association with religion completely or else be embarrassed by punitive association with beliefs I do not hold. What sense does that make? What good does it serve? I suspect it demonstrates the existence of a human herding instinct. After all, “egregious” means at root “outside the flock.” There are always a great many people who are confident that they recognize deviation from group mores, and so they police the boundaries and round up the strays.

This is only one instance of a very pervasive phenomenon, a pressure toward concessions no one has a right to ask. These are concessions courage would refuse if it were once acknowledged that a minor and insidious fear is the prod that coaxes us toward conforming our lives, and even our thoughts, to norms that are effective markers of group identity precisely
because they are shibboleths, a contemporary equivalent of using the correct fork. . . . The example of coercion I have offered, the standing invitation to sacrifice one’s metaphysics to one’s sense of *comme il faut*, has had the effect of marginalizing the liberal churches and elevating fundamentalism to the status of essential Christianity. The consequences of handing over the whole of Christianity to one momentarily influential fringe is clearly borne out in the silencing of social criticism and the collapse of social reform, both traditionally championed by American mainline churches, as no one seems any longer to remember. . . .

Cultures commonly employ the methods of cults, making their members subject and dependent. And nations at intervals march lockstep to enormity and disaster. A successful autocracy rests on the universal failure of individual courage. In a democracy, abdications of conscience are never trivial. They demoralize politics, debilitate candor, and disrupt thought.
The daughter of an African American Methodist minister, Amina Wadud (1952–) converted to Islam during her college years. She went on to become a scholar of the Qur’an, writing her dissertation on feminist readings of the text. Wadud has since combined academic scholarship and activism in her faith, attempting to open new opportunities for Muslim women to participate in the public exercise of their faith. In 1989, she helped to found Sisters in Islam, an organization dedicated to the cause of gender equality and justice in Islam. In 2005, Wadud addressed a mixed-gender audience at a Friday prayer service in New York City; the service was held at a building belonging to an Episcopal church after several mosques refused to host the event. Although Wadud has received death threats for her efforts to bring about an Islamic reformation, she has remained faithful to her beliefs and continues to speak and write on the subject.


This chapter proposes an important corollary between the idea of citizenship, in the context of a civil society of the modern nation-state, and the idea of moral agent (khilafah) in the context of Islamic theology as built upon in its primary sources. In the context of the nation-state, Muslim women have been working toward reforms to establish full and equal citizenship for Muslim women, despite the absence of historical precedent in the Islamic tradition. The benefit of this essay is that it demonstrates how modern Muslim civil societies can mediate between the Islamic tradition and secular constructions of rights and reforms. It offers a profaith legitimation for reforms based on textual authentication in the context of the Muslim women’s movements. . . .

The message of the Qur’an is paramount. In Qur’anic cosmology the purpose for human creation is explained, “Verily I will create a khalifah on the
earth.” (38:26). A khalifah is a trustee, a vice-regent, or an agent. All human-kind is assigned as trustees of God on the earth. Although challenged to live in surrender (in islam) with all of the Creation, the human khalifah, is assigned and empowered to act fully and freely as an independent agent accountable for all choice in actions. A tension holds together the distinctive dual nature of the moral being: free, yet morally responsible for all choices and accountable for the consequence of the actions taken. . . . [A]gency is a characteristic of every human, irrespective of race, class, age, nationality or gender. . . .

. . . [T]he Qur’an would make clear its mandate to eradicate discrimination against woman. . . . [T]here are more explicit passages in the Qu’ran that are directed toward social reforms specifically addressing the well-being of women, as individuals, members of the family, and members of society than there are passages on any other social justice issue. . . .

Faith and Ethics: A Reconciliation

. . . I propose an ethical and theological basis for a just social order in the context of the modern Muslim nation-state, especially as relates to gender. To begin with, I agree with the necessity of moving Muslim political and legal systems toward establishing social relationships on the basis of a contractual relationship, because it supports the ontology of the creation of the human being as agent or trustee for Allah on the earth. The Qur’anic ideal points toward a cooperation between Allah, Creator of all the worlds, and humankind, creatures entrusted with each other and the earth. This is a three-pronged contract: God to human, human to God, and human to human. The moral agent, as conceived here, rests in the tension between the covenant (amanah) and service (ibadah).

Agency does not denote free rein and self-aggrandizement but empowerment and responsibility, operationa1ized in reciprocal terms with others, in the context of one’s circumstance, in order to arrive at truth, justice, honor, and human dignity. We are responsible for the choices we make at every juncture, and we will be held accountable via the ultimate judgment for all of our choices, such that hopefully we are morally inclined toward the choices that facilitate the completion of our trust. Ultimately, that trust is binding between self, God, and other. Only with all three aspects of this formula can the proper balance be sustained. Just as the agent-servant paradigm in the Qur’an with regard to the Ultimate and the human being sets up the understanding of both unlimited choice in human free will, so also does it set up
the expectations of using that will freely toward right service, not as a limit but as a moral choice.

We are given a certain capacity through agency, which we are meant to understand as a gift to be utilized in the service of Allah; therefore, it is actually a matter of moral maturity or responsibility. ... As a reminder and affirmation, nothing in the Qur’an or sunnah restricts agency for reasons of gender. For while agency is not limited to state or national legislation alone but reflects a transcendental order affecting the quality of the entire being, nothing relieves the agent—not even state sanctions—from the responsibility of completing the duty of justice. This juxtaposition between faith and civil order was so eloquently addressed by Martin Luther King, Jr. in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” in which he articulated his nonviolent acts of civil disobedience as part of his belief in a just God. Furthermore, Malcom X shifted the articulation of his struggles for the complete human dignity of African Americans away from civil rights discourse into the global arena of human rights discourse. He fought to reclaim the loss of human rights that resulted from the systemization of racism in America. In other words, as a moral duty to God, one must act in society and within or against existing political structures and codes toward freedom, truth, justice, and dignity.

Progressive Muslim women and men are articulating such an overarching claim against the eradication of full human agency, as stressed by the Qur’an against historical patriarchal discourse and text that reduced women to subject through an epistemology of inferior status and incapacity. The paradigmatic formula for this articulation is at the core of Islam’s self-identification and rests on that three-pronged relationship: Allah to human, human to Allah, and human to human. . . .

Although there is no hint anywhere in the primary sources that the responsibility to establish what is good, and to forbid what is evil, has been restricted from any mature person for reasons of race, class, or gender, the development of Islamic ethical theories, shari’ah, and other disciplines all engaged in the process of intentional or unintentional reinscription of gender disparities . . . . Social and political agency was restricted to the male person in these theories.

... Although one of the primary characteristics of moral agency is freedom, in Islamic intellectual developments, discussions of moral theory are explicitly allowed to the free male. The female is made subservient to another system, called “family,” and her role and function as agent is restricted by the terms of her participation in the family.

... Power is another term that bears significantly on the understanding
of moral agency in the form of capacity—although with notable concern regarding the differences between *power to* and *power over*. *Power to* is the condition of human capacity and, as understood in the Islamic legacy of moral agency, imparts power or capacity to human beings within a unique covenant between the individual and the divine. However, in the early Islamic discourse over ethical theory and civil society, human empowerment is always directed toward independent male power and most often to power as exercised over others. Females are relegated to a status of subjects to male agency, with “power or capacity being a prerogative of man [sic] as a free agent.” Women as individuals in such moral theory are not considered full agents but are incorporated into explicit consideration of family and as extensions of men’s agency.

Despite the regulation of these historical interpretations and the codification of these developments about the citizen, the *sunnah* reinforces the Qur’anic thesis of the primacy of righteousness or piety (*taqwa*) over outward attitude or appearance. The Prophet stated, “Allah will not look at your bodies or forms, but at your hearts.” The focus is moved away from gender as a feature of disparity. . . .

Although the *ahadith* of the Prophet did “not give us a definition of what the good and the evil referred to really are, we can clearly infer from it the express identification of goodness with conformity to the dictates of Islam or the Koran [sic].” In the Qur’an, “who ever does good, whether male or female and is a believer” shall be rewarded (3:195). Such an emphasis challenges the gender disparity that developed in the Islamic intellectual legacy and ethical theory.

. . . If agency is not subject to civil society, as discussed earlier, and civil society is insufficient for achieving the moral order, then it behooves women as agents, with the support of men who also respect their full moral responsibility as agents, to take inspiration from the spirit and ethos of the Qur’an and the *sunnah*, in order to pragmatically construct a civil society truly reflecting the moral order of Islam. Resisting the unfair treatment of women in the context of Muslim societies is part of the moral duty of every Muslim woman and man and represents one aspect in completion of moral agency. In fact, moral agency defines the role women and men should play in society. Since a society, even an Islamic one, has the potential to represent or repress the moral order as ordained by the Qur’an, whenever civil circumstances fall short, then the means for facilitating the successful reforms of that social order toward the moral ideal involves the full participation of its citizens. Here citizens are agents, acting on the society, and not mere subjects acted
upon by an unjust rule. This was a missing element in the development of shari‘ah where the law referred to women as subjects to be acted upon and not as actors deciding how to utilize our own agency.

Whenever society defines the role of a woman in any way short of the completion of her agency, then it is the duty of all moral agents to resist and reform that society. In the context of civil society, she can avail herself of the means of that society as a citizen in order to fulfill her role as agent. There is a reciprocal relationship then between citizenship and agency . . . .

Finally, and yet foremost, moral agency, as a matter of faith, is neither contained nor enhanced by any existing or previously construed social systems. Although moral agency may have been the goal, it requires continual effort to sustain such a moral imperative to maintain social justice as it pertains to women and men. The ways in which traditional Muslim societies and Islamic law have denied women’s full agency is incongruent with the achievement of a just social order as sought after in the Qur’an and by the Prophet. In other words, irrespective of our citizenship status, as a matter of faith we are obligated to implement the equality inherent in the tawhidic paradigm, fundamental to our religious system. It is a moral imperative incumbent upon all agents in Islam. Ultimately, I use this as the basis for justifying alternative interpretation of shari‘ah’s primary source, the Qur’an, the sacred text of Islam. That the Qur’an has been exclusively interpreted by men for over fourteen centuries and we have no record of women’s perspectives on the text until the latter part of the twentieth century indicates a tremendous gap in our intellectual legacy, the filling of which has begun in earnest as part of progressive Islamic reform . . . .
APPENDIX A

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African American Religion

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APPENDIX B

Discussion Questions

For each of the documents in this collection, we suggest below in section A questions relevant for that document alone and in Section B questions that require comparison between documents.


A. What does Bradstreet’s poem suggest about the relationship between religion and politics in Old England? How does New England propose to handle that relationship? What does it suggest to you that Bradstreet—a woman—wrote this poem?

B. How are the concerns about social change in this poem similar to or different from those in Fannie Lou Hamer’s speech (Document 31)?

2. Mary Dyer, Letter to the General Court and Testimony, 1659–1660

A. Although several of the women in this collection experienced persecution for their religious beliefs, Dyer is the only one who died for them. What reasoning does she offer for her own commitment? What critique does she offer of her persecutors?

B. How might Amina Wadud (Document 35) evaluate Dyer’s argument in light of her own statements on the relationship between citizenship and faith?

3. Mary Rowlandson, The Sovereignty and Goodness of God, 1682

A. Explain how Rowlandson saw or experienced the “goodness” of God in her captivity and its aftermath? What does this suggest about her faith?

B. In what ways is Rowlandson’s understanding of and relationship with God similar to or different from the relationship described by someone like
4. **Phyllis Wheatley, Selected Poems, 1770–1775**

A. How would you characterize Wheatley’s understanding of America’s role in God’s plan for the world?

B. How does Wheatley’s response to George Whitefield’s death add to the account of the Great Awakening we see in someone like Esther Edwards Burr (Document 6)?

5. **Sophia Wigington Hume, An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the Province of South–Carolina, 1748**

A. To what, exactly, is Hume exhorting South Carolinians, and why? What makes her case compelling (or not)?

B. How is Hume’s call for a reformation of manners among Southerners related to Angelina Grimké’s (Document 13) later call for Southern women to embrace the cause of abolition?

6. **Esther Edwards Burr, Thoughts, 1754–1756**

A. What do Burr’s journal entries tell us about the various role expectations placed on evangelical women in the Great Awakening? How might those roles or expectations been liberating or confining?

B. How does the evangelicalism of someone like Burr compare to that of someone like Elisabeth Elliott Gren (Document 34)? Where are there areas of continuity and discontinuity among these women?

7. **Mother Ann Lee, Testimonies, c. 1780**

A. In what ways does Lee both exemplify and confound the gender expectations of her time? How might we analyze Lee’s teaching on the dual-nature of Christ as both masculine and feminine as it relates to her own role as a religious leader and her plans for the community of Shakers?

B. Although no other woman in this collection claimed to be the embodiment of the Christ-figure, several others did help to found new religious
groups. What similarities, if any, do you see between Lee and other female founders like Mary Baker Eddy (Document 19) or Ellen G. White (Document 24)?

8. Isabella Graham, “On Opening a School for Poor Children,” c. 1806
   A. Explain and evaluate Graham’s argument for focusing on education as the foundation of her social ministry.
   B. How are Graham’s efforts and those of Rebecca Gratz (Document 11) similar or different? What do such efforts say about the place of religious education and the inculcation of virtue in American culture?

   A. How does Lee justify her rejection of tradition in following her call to preach? What are the potential dangers of such a position? Does Lee address them?
   B. Explain how Lee might respond to someone like Elizabeth Seton (Document 10) with her insistence on one true church?

    A. What does Seton’s letter tell us about anti-Catholic sentiment in the ante-bellum United States? What possible argument does she offer to counter act such prejudice?
    B. Are there any similarities between the anti-Catholic prejudice described by Seton and the prejudice experienced by someone like Fannie Lou Hamer (Document 31)?

    A. What are the cultural benefits of religious education, according to Gratz? How will it help secure a place for the Jewish people in America?
B. Is the type of community life described by Dorothy Day (Document 28) equivalent to the type of education Gratz has in mind here?

12. Maria Stewart, “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality: The Sure Foundation on Which We Must Build,” October 1831

A. What are the potential criticisms of Stewart’s argument, and does she have a sufficient response to any of them?

B. In what ways does Stewart’s argument align with or depart from Rebecca Gratz’s argument (Document 11)? Why might disadvantaged groups in America rely on education as a path to social improvement?

13. Angelina Grimké, Appeal to Christian Women of the South, 1836

A. Coming from the south herself, Grimké understood the role of southern women quite well. How and why does she pitch her Appeal to capitalize on societal expectations for women? Does this strengthen or weaken her argument?

B. Compare Grimké’s program for reform to that of Frances Willard (Document 21): how are they similar or different? Which one seems more likely to succeed, and why?


A. What is the significance of the discussion over the word “relief” vs. “benevolent” in the Society’s name? How does this shed light on the Relief Society’s mission?

B. Should religious efforts aimed at the care of the poor be restricted to those of one’s own religious background (see Document 11, for example) or not?

A. What does Mott mean by the “abuse” of the Bible? What does she suggest instead as the appropriate “use” of the Bible?

B. Would Mott appreciate the attempt taken by Amy Eilberg (Document 32), for example, to combine a feminist interpretation of the Bible with a respect for religious tradition? Why or why not?


A. How does Truth compare the titular Christianity (focused on holidays) used to keep slaves loyal to their masters to the Christianity she experienced during her conversion?

B. Bearing Truth’s remarks about the connection between genuine Christianity and freedom in mind, evaluate Flannery O’Connor’s essay (Document 30) on the effect of social tyranny upon religious conviction.


A. How does Young portray polygamy and celestial marriage as oppressive and unjust towards women and children? Why does she present this as a matter of public concern, rather than a matter of religious freedom?

B. In what ways are the arguments Young recounts as used to oppress Mormon women similar to or different from the arguments used by white Americans to oppress black Americans (see Document 31, for example).


A. What does Foote mean by sanctification? How does she believe that her experience of it has prepared her for a preaching ministry?

B. How do Foote’s arguments to support her right to preach compare to those by Jarena Lee (Document 9) and Anna Howard Shaw (Document 20)? Do these women share the same understanding of scripture?

A. Explain Eddy’s argument for Christian Science; what are the social repercussions of a religious system that denies the existence of the material world as something other than a manifestation of sin?

B. How is Eddy’s sense of “tyranny” similar to or different from that of Marilynne Robinson (Document 34)? Does society ever have a right to subject religious believers to coercion?


A. What are the specific “visions” Shaw suggests women will offer to the world? Are these uniquely feminine, and if so, how? If they are not, why does Shaw believe women will be the ones to fulfill this prophecy?

B. Would Shaw understand the work of women like Jane Addams, Dorothy Day and Fannie Lou Hamer (Documents 25, 27–29, 31) as fulfilling the “heavenly vision” of which she spoke? Why or why not?


A. What rationale does Willard offer for her “do everything” policy? What are the potential costs and benefits of such an approach?

B. How do Willard’s arguments for temperance relate to those of Ellen G. White (Document 24)? Is one more or less likely to win public support?


A. Smith describes camp meetings as events where the religious community could withdraw from the wider world; what are the potential benefits and harms of such withdrawal, both for the religious and for the broader society?

B. What do you think Smith means in drawing a distinction between “emotions” and “convictions”? Although she describes her experience at the camp meeting as profoundly emotional, Smith cautions against excessive emotion. How do you think she would respond to someone like Aimee Semple McPherson (Document 26)?
23. Mary Harris Jones, “Mother Jones Writes Plea to Roosevelt,” July 30, 1903

A. When Mother Jones refers to the children in the factories as “enslaved,” what does she mean? How is this a spiritual crisis?

B. How does Jones’ plea for federal intervention into child labor in the states square with Jane Addams’ plea for greater activism by religious educators (Document 25)?


A. Explain White’s religious objections to chemical stimulants; what appears to be her primary concern in raising these issues?

B. White’s arguments for temperance are couched in scientific terms; how might we compare this to the “Christian Science” advocated by Mary Baker Eddy (Document 19)?


A. What are the primary challenges facing religious educators in the modern world, according to Adams? How does she foresee these being overcome?

B. If we consider the novel a type of education, how might we evaluate Flannery O’Connor’s claims for Catholic novelists (Document 30) in light of Jane Addams’ argument here?


A. Does McPherson adequately answer the question posed by her hypothetical inquisitor? Why or why not?

B. Is the religious manifestation McPherson describes something different from the grotesque described by Flannery O’Connor (Document 30)? If it is, explain how, if it is not, explain the similarities between them.
27. Jane Addams, “Personal Reactions During the War,” 1922
A. What explanation does Addams offer for maintaining her pacifist stance in the face of a national crisis?
B. How does Marilynne Robinson’s concept of the tyranny of petty coercion (Document 34) help us to understand Addams’ experience during and after the war?

A. What is the core purpose of a house of hospitality, according to Day? Is its primary mission to the individual in need, or to the community as a whole?
B. As a reform movement, are Houses of Hospitality more similar to Holiness Camp Meetings (Document 22) or the Relief Society (Document 14)?

29. Dorothy Day, “We Continue Our Christian Pacifist Stand,” January 1942
A. Which of the petitions in Day’s prayer do you think would be most effective in bringing about social and political change, and why?
B. Explain the differences between Day’s experience as a pacifist and that of Jane Addams (Documents 25 and 27): are these differences primarily a matter of the time and context, or are they reflective of deeper religious differences between the two thinkers?

A. What does O’Connor mean by the grotesque and how does it relate to Catholicism as she understands it?
B. To what extent are all religious persons “Catholics in the Protestant South” in modern America? (Consider Document 34)

A. When Hamer says to her audience that they are “on the way” to somewhere, what does she have in mind and how does religion figure into either the destination or the journey?
B. Compare the martyrdom of Hamer with that of Mary Dyer (Document 2).

32. Amy Eilberg, “Exploring the Link Between Womanhood and the Rabbinate,” 1985

A. What is a feminist rabbinate, according to Eilberg? How does she address the problem of tradition?

B. How are the arguments raised by Christian women for their right to preach the gospel different from or similar to those raised by Eilberg as a Jew?


A. What does Gren mean by “biblical equality”?

B. How does Gren’s vision of biblical marriage compare to that we saw in Esther Edwards Burr (Document 6)?


A. What does Robinson mean when she describes “the tyranny of petty coercion” and how does it specifically impact people of faith?

B. What are the appropriate means people of faith might take to resist such coercion? Consider Documents 4, 11, 13, 18, 27, and 29 for example.


A. What are the potential perils of using civic goals to define religious doctrine, as Wadud appears to be doing here? What are the potential benefits?

B. What type of citizenship does Wadud have in mind in this essay—religious or civil? How do the two intersect and inform one another? Compare her vision of citizenship with that of someone like Esther Edwards Burr (Document 6) or Frances Willard (Document 21)? How might we unify these varying understandings in a way that respects both pluralism and the political principles that define America?
APPENDIX C

Suggestions For Further Reading


Reeder, Jennifer and Kate Holbrook. *At the Pulpit: 185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women*. Salt Lake City: Church Historians Press, 2017. (Also available online with additional texts not included in the print edition: https://www.churchhistorianspress.org/at-the-pulpit)


This collection of documents continues the Ashbrook Center’s extended series of document collections covering major periods, themes, and institutions in American history and government. It is the second volume in the religion in American history and politics series, one of the subsets within the overall Ashbrook collection. Given the centrality of religion in American history, these ideas and conflicts were also core elements of that broader history. This volume looks at one dimension of American religious history: the words and deeds of American religious women. It shows how at every stage of American history they were present, testifying and working, even as the importance of their work was often unacknowledged. Indeed, one of the most powerful themes of the collection is faithful perseverance in the face of opposition, and the power of such perseverance to move mountains.

Sarah A. Morgan Smith is a Fellow of the Ashbrook Center.