

# Sarah Grimké

1792–1873

Sarah Moore Grimké was the sixth of nine children born to wealthy parents in Charleston, South Carolina. Her father, John Grimké, was a Revolutionary War veteran, a judge, owner of numerous plantations and slaves, and one of the most important political leaders in the region. Grimké and her sisters were educated by tutors and at finishing schools for well-to-do girls in Charleston. Art, music, and needlework were emphasized, rather than mathematics, science, history, or languages. Grimké's brothers studied these latter subjects, with tutors or at schools for boys. However, Grimké was especially close to her older brother Thomas, and he taught her some of what he had learned. She wanted to be a lawyer, and her father is supposed to have said that if she had been male, she would have made a good one.<sup>1</sup> He allowed her to participate in the debates he staged for his sons to practice forensic oratory, but he refused permission for her to study Latin with Thomas. Thomas's departure in 1805 for Yale, where his sister could not go, was a sad time for her. Her parents' last child, Angelina Emily, was born the following year, and thirteen-year-old Sarah asked to be made her godmother. Devotion to Angelina became a major focal point of Sarah Grimké's life.

From a young age, Grimké appears to have questioned the slave system in which she was immersed. As a young woman, she became deeply religious, and was torn between the round of social events and decorative activities with which she was supposed to amuse herself, and the spiritual crises brought on by ardent preaching and by her growing revulsion toward slavery. Grimké became interested in the Society of Friends when she accompanied her dying father on a trip to Philadelphia to seek medical aid from a specialist who happened to be a Quaker. After Judge Grimké's death in 1819, Grimké returned to Charleston but became increasingly withdrawn from the leisurely life of upper-class white women there and oppressed in spirit by the pervasive cruelty of slavery. Soon she returned to Philadelphia, and in 1823 formally joined the Society of Friends. Grimké became very close to Israel Morris, a Quaker widower who had instructed her in the faith, but ultimately decided not to accept his offer of marriage. In 1829, Angelina Grimké joined her sister in Philadelphia, where they were able to live comfortably on their inherited income, and shortly thereafter Angelina too joined the Society of Friends. The Grimkés found racism among the Philadelphia Quakers; for example, there was a separate bench at the meetinghouse for black members—on which Sarah and Angelina sat in protest. But many Quakers also were working against slavery, including Lucretia Mott, whose home was a way station on the Underground Railroad that helped slaves escape to freedom.

The Grimké sisters were impressed by Mott's activism, and gradually they became involved in abolitionist work themselves, with Angelina, the more outspoken

<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Ann Bartlett, *Liberty, Equality, Sorority: The Origins and Interpretation of American Feminist Thought: Frances Wright, Sarah Grimké, Margaret Fuller* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1994), p. 57.

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of the two, taking the lead. In 1836, Angelina Grimké published *An Appeal to the Christian Women of the Southern States*, urging them to oppose slavery on moral grounds. This pamphlet created a sensation, and she was soon in great demand as an abolitionist speaker. The American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS) recruited the sisters to act as its agents—the first women to do so—who would speak around the country on behalf of the cause. They attended a training session for AASS agents in New York City led by Theodore Weld, and then, in 1837, accepted an invitation from the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society to speak in Massachusetts, a tour that turned out to have historic consequences.

As feminist historian Gerda Lerner characterizes the sisters' relationship, Angelina was the doer, the activist, and Sarah was the thinker, the theorist. When the sisters addressed groups together, Sarah usually began by carefully laying out evidence of slavery's evils and biblical justifications for opposing it, and then Angelina would take the floor to passionately denounce the institution based on her eyewitness experience of its horrors, exhorting the audience to act before this moral evil brought Divine vengeance on the nation. It was still unusual and highly improper for women to speak in public, and initially the Grimké sisters accepted invitations to speak only before women's groups. The AASS intended them to address the separate female sections that most antislavery organizations maintained. Angelina Grimké, however, became an orator of such power that when the sisters toured in Massachusetts, men began to sit in on the women's meetings just to hear her.

The sisters were not the first women of established social position in America—the first "respectable" women—to address audiences of men and women together, what were then called "promiscuous gatherings." Even in Massachusetts, they had been preceded by Maria W. Stewart (p. 1031), who addressed mixed audiences in the early 1830s. But Stewart, though middle-class, was African American, and her speeches had not attracted much attention outside the Boston African American community. In contrast, the Grimké sisters were respectable, refined "southern ladies," and as speech communication scholar Kristin S. Vonnegut has pointed out, this very high social position made their public appearance all the more unseemly to conservatives.<sup>2</sup>

Opposition to the Grimké sisters' activities soon emerged. Their Massachusetts speaking engagements were increasingly attended by male hecklers who threatened violence, and the sisters encountered unexpected difficulties engaging halls in which to speak. Moreover, they were formally chastised in print by Catharine Beecher, a prominent educator who objected not only to their position for immediate abolition but also to their "unwomanliness" in defending it in public. Further, the General Association of Congregational Churches in Massachusetts issued a pastoral letter that stopped just short of naming names in condemning both radical abolitionism and women who took social-activist roles, especially when they alluded to the sexual exploitation of female slaves, an evil that the Grimké sisters had wit-

<sup>2</sup>Kristin S. Vonnegut, "Sarah M. Grimké," in *Women Speakers in the United States, 1800–1925: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), p. 220.

nessed in their own family and that they did not scruple to expose. The ministers suggested that women who took on such activist roles called their own chastity into question; one of them is said to have remarked that he expected the Grimké sisters soon to appear on the speaker's platform nude.<sup>3</sup>

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While Angelina Grimké rebutted Beecher's attack on the sisters' abolitionist position, Sarah Grimké responded to the ministers' attack on their right to speak. Her *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman*, three of which are included here, were published serially in 1837 in a Massachusetts newspaper, *The Spectator*, and immediately reprinted in *The Liberator*, the newspaper published by radical abolitionist leader William Lloyd Garrison, whom the sisters had met in Boston. The letters appeared in book form in 1838. They are addressed to Mary Parker, president of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, which supported the sisters' Massachusetts speaking tour. At Parker's suggestion, Grimké raised a number of feminist issues—ironically, Parker ultimately rejected Grimké's feminism as too anticlerical and detrimental to the cause of abolition (the Boston society dissolved in conflict over these issues in 1840). The emergence of feminism in Sarah Grimké's work created an uproar elsewhere in the abolition movement as well, as political scientist Aileen Kraditor has shown. Also in 1840, the American Anti-Slavery Society split into two separate groups over this issue, one admitting women to full membership and the other remaining a male-dominated organization with a women's auxiliary. By 1848, women's growing awareness of their need for activism on their own behalf resulted in the first American women's rights convention, in Seneca Falls, New York.

In 1838, Angelina Grimké delivered two powerful addresses against slavery, one before the Massachusetts state legislature and one in Philadelphia at the dedication of Pennsylvania Hall, which was burned to the ground by an angry mob shortly after she spoke. At this time, she married fellow abolitionist Theodore Weld, who urged both sisters to abandon their public role because he felt it hurt the abolitionist cause, even though he believed in their right to speak. They took his advice. The Welds and Sarah Grimké moved to rural New Jersey, where Grimké helped her sister care for the three children born over the next five years. Always plagued by financial struggles, the Welds and Grimké opened a school in 1851 and thereafter supported themselves by teaching, first in New Jersey and subsequently in Massachusetts. Later in life they sought out and assisted their brother's children by one of his slaves, adopting the boys and helping to pay for their education.

Both Sarah and Angelina continued to write for progressive causes, and Angelina resumed some public speaking in the 1860s. The sisters also engaged in feminist demonstrations, such as leading a march to the ballot box in 1870, in a raging blizzard, when Sarah was seventy-eight years old. She died three years later and was eulogized at her funeral by her abolitionist comrade in arms, William Lloyd Garrison.

<sup>3</sup>Gerda Lerner, *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), pp. 148–49.

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Sarah Grimké was overshadowed, both in life and in later scholarship, by her sister Angelina, who was clearly the more popular speaker of the two. Recent work, however, has helped to establish Sarah Grimké's position as the first important American feminist theorist. She was strongly influenced by her Quaker faith, which taught that every individual, male or female, possessed a spiritual "inner light" to guide his or her actions. No social restrictions could be tolerated that prevented women from acting on the dictates of this moral compass: Women must be free to act as responsible moral agents. Lerner has argued that Grimké was among the first feminist thinkers to see that women were so restricted because men benefited from exploiting them in their inferior position, an insight gained from an analogy with slavery. Grimké was also a pioneer in her realization that this exploitation included physical abuse, marital rape, and forced pregnancy, which she denounces in her writings on marriage. Grimké projects a vision of women united as a group by the "bonds of womanhood" and needing to help each other break these fetters.

Like earlier Quaker leader Margaret Fell (see p. 748), whose work, Vonnegut believes, Grimké knew, Grimké contends that religious justifications for the subordination of women spring from male-biased interpretations of the Bible. She asserts her right to interpret key texts differently, guided by her faith and her innate rationality. Although Grimké advocates better education for women, equal education does not appear to be a major tenet of her thought, perhaps because she believed that the mental and spiritual powers needed to guide life are largely innate.

Also like Fell, Grimké justifies women's speaking on moral grounds: Women must act if they are following a moral imperative. Perhaps her most significant contribution to rhetorical theory is her insistence that women can speak to "promiscuous" or gender-mixed audiences. As speech communication scholar Susan Zeske has shown, the traditional argument against women speaking in public was based on the assumption that they were irrational and, if so, could persuade only by seductively employing their sexuality; hence the connection between public speaking and unchastity. American women abolitionists were criticized more heavily than other women reformers for committing this sin because, argues Zeske, abolition was the most radical political cause of the day and the area in which women's attempts to garner power for themselves by speaking had the most potential to affect, or even overturn, the social order. Grimké resolutely combats the idea that women persuade via sexuality. She denounces men's insistence on seeing women always as sexual beings and argues that women's eloquence arises not from sex but from spiritual and mental powers that they share equally with men and that they must be allowed to exercise.

Sarah and Angelina Grimké inspired the work of women activists later in the century; an example is Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who met and admired the sisters when she was a young woman. Moreover, feminists in the twentieth century have further developed an alternate women's rhetoric to which Sarah Grimké contributed. They have defended not only women's right to speak but also their right to use language in unique ways to express a perspective on social issues that has been muted by the male-dominated political hierarchy.

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## Selected Bibliography

Sarah Moore Grimké's *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman* exists in a facsimile of the 1838 edition, published by Source Book Press (1970); the text printed here is taken from this edition. Elizabeth Ann Bartlett has edited a volume of these letters and other essays of Sarah Grimké (*Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and Other Essays*, 1988); her introduction sets Grimké's feminism in the intellectual context of her times. Gerda Lerner has edited a collection of letters and unpublished essays, *The Feminist Thought of Sarah Grimké* (1998), with two of her own earlier essays on the Grimké sisters and an introduction that evaluates her 1967 biography of them (see below), emphasizes Sarah Grimké's spirituality, and elevates her status as an important feminist thinker.

The standard biography of Sarah and Angelina Grimké is *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina*, by Gerda Lerner (1967, 1998). Elizabeth Ann Bartlett discusses the intellectual influences on Sarah Grimké and the impact of her thought in *Liberty, Equality, Sorority: The Origins and Interpretation of American Feminist Thought: Frances Wright, Sarah Grimké, Margaret Fuller* (1994). Margaret Hope Bacon's *Mothers of Feminism* (1986) discusses the contributions of Quaker women to social activism from Margaret Fell to the Grimké sisters and on to the present day.

Among more rhetorically focused studies, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell discusses the Grimké sisters and places them in the context of nineteenth-century American women's rhetoric in *Man Cannot Speak for Her: Volume I: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (1989); volume II, subtitled *Key Texts of the Early Feminists* (1989), includes an address by Angelina Grimké. In "Sarah M. Grimké" (in *Women Public Speakers in the United States, 1800-1920: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, 1993), Kristin S. Vonnegut analyzes Sarah Grimké's rhetorical strategies in detail. The issue of speaking before gender-mixed audiences is thoroughly explored in Susan Zaeske's "The 'Promiscuous Audience': Controversy and the Emergence of the Early Women's Rights Movement" (*Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 [1995]: 191-207). Angelina Grimké's adoption of a prophetic stance in her rhetorical performance is discussed in Phyllis Japp, "Esther or Isaiah?: The Abolitionist Rhetoric of Angelina Grimké" (*Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 [1985]: 335-48).

Aileen Kraditor's *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism* (1967) discusses the contributions of the Grimké sisters to abolitionism and the effect of feminism on the movement. In *Strained Sisterhood* (1993), Deborah Gold Hansen looks specifically at how the feminist issues raised by Sarah Grimké affected the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. On the contributions of abolition to nineteenth-century feminism, see Jean Fagan Yellin's *Women and Sisters* (1989), which discusses Angelina Grimké; Ellen Dubois's "Women's Rights and Abolition: The Nature of the Connection" (in *Antislavery Reconsidered*, ed. Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, 1979), which emphasizes how women used political know-how garnered in the abolition movement to shape the women's movement; and Blanche G. Hersh's *The Slavery of Self* (1978), which treats the abolitionist movement as a crucible of feminism and traces the feminist movement to the end of the nineteenth century. Nancy A. Hardesty's *Women Called to Witness* (1984) discusses the relationship between feminism and evangelical Protestantism in nineteenth-century America. For general histories of American feminism, see Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle* (1959, 1975) and William O'Neill's *Every-one Was Brave* (1969).

# Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman

Addressed to Mary S. Parker,  
President of the Boston  
Female Anti-Slavery Society

## LETTER III

*The Pastoral Letter of the General Association  
of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts.*

Haverhill, 7th Mo. 1837.

Dear Friend,—When I last addressed thee, I had not seen the Pastoral Letter of the General Association. It has since fallen into my hands, and I must digress from my intention of exhibiting the condition of women in different parts of the world, in order to make some remarks on this extraordinary document. I am persuaded that when the minds of men and women become emancipated from the thralldom of superstition and “traditions of men,” the sentiments contained in the Pastoral Letter will be recurred to with as much astonishment as the opinions of Cotton Mather and other distinguished men of his day, on the subject of witchcraft; nor will it be deemed less wonderful, that a body of divines should gravely assemble and endeavor to prove that woman has no right to “open her mouth for the dumb,” than it now is that judges should have sat on the trials of witches, and solemnly condemned nineteen persons and one dog to death for witchcraft.

But to the letter. It says, “We invite your attention to the dangers which at present seem to threaten the FEMALE CHARACTER with widespread and permanent injury.” I rejoice that they have called the attention of my sex to this subject, because I believe if woman investigates it, she will soon discover that danger is impending, though from a totally different source from that which the Association apprehends,—danger from those who, having long held the reins of usurped authority, are unwilling to permit us to fill that sphere which God created us to move in, and who have entered into league to crush the

immortal mind of woman. I rejoice, because I am persuaded that the rights of woman, like the rights of slaves, need only be examined to be understood and asserted, even by some of those, who are now endeavoring to smother the irrepressible desire for mental and spiritual freedom which glows in the breast of many, who hardly dare to speak their sentiments.

“The appropriate duties and influence of women are clearly stated in the New Testament. Those duties are unobtrusive and private, but the sources of *mighty power*. When the mild, *dependent*, softening influence of women upon the sternness of man’s opinions is fully exercised, society feels the effects of it in a thousand ways.” No one can desire more earnestly than I do, that woman may move exactly in the sphere which her Creator has assigned her; and I believe her having been displaced from that sphere has introduced confusion into the world. It is, therefore, of vast importance to herself and to all the rational creation, that she should ascertain what are her duties and her privileges as a responsible and immortal being. The New Testament has been referred to, and I am willing to abide by its decisions, but must enter my protest against the false translation of some passages by the MEN who did that work, and against the perverted interpretation by the MEN who undertook to write commentaries thereon. I am inclined to think, when we are admitted to the honor of studying Greek and Hebrew, we shall produce some various readings of the Bible a little different from those we now have.

The Lord Jesus defines the duties of his followers in his Sermon on the Mount. He lays down grand principles by which they should be governed, without any reference to sex or condition—“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men,

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that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." I follow him through all his precepts, and find him giving the same directions to women as to men, never even referring to the distinction now so strenuously insisted upon between masculine and feminine virtues: this is one of the anti-christian "traditions of men" which are taught instead of the "commandments of God." Men and women were CREATED EQUAL; they are both moral and accountable beings, and whatever is *right* for man to do, is *right* for woman.

But the influence of woman, says the Association, so to be private and unobtrusive; her light is not to shine before man like that of her brethren; but she is passively to let the lords of the creation, as they call themselves, put the bushel over it, lest peradventure it might appear that the world has been benefitted by the rays of *her* candle. So that her quenched light, according to their judgment, will be of more use than if it were set on the candlestick. "Her influence is the source of mighty power." This has ever been the flattering language of man since he laid aside the whip as a means to keep woman in subjection. He spares her body; but the war he has waged against her mind, her heart, and her soul, has been no less destructive to her as a moral being. How monstrous, how anti-christian, is the doctrine that woman is to be dependent on man! Where, in all the sacred Scriptures, is this taught? Alas! she has too well learned the lesson which MAN had labored to teach her. She has surrendered her dearest RIGHTS, and been satisfied with the privileges which man has assumed to grant her; she has been amused with the show of power, whilst man has absorbed all the reality into himself. He has adorned the creature whom God gave him as a companion, with baubles and gewgaws, turned her attention to personal attractions, offered incense to her vanity, and made her the instrument of his selfish gratification, a plaything to please his eye and amuse his hours of leisure. "Rule by obedience and by submission sway," or in other words, study to be a hypocrite, pretend to submit, but gain your point, has been the code of household morality which woman has been taught. The poet has sung, in sickly strains, the loveliness of woman's dependence

upon man, and now we find it re-echoed by those who profess to teach the religion of the Bible. God says, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?" Man says, depend upon me. God says, "HE will teach us of his ways." Man says, believe it not, I am to be your teacher. This doctrine of dependence upon man is utterly at variance with the doctrine of the Bible. In that book I find nothing like the softness of woman, nor the sternness of man: both are equally commanded to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, love, meekness, gentleness, &c.

But we are told "the power of woman is in her dependence, flowing from a consciousness of that weakness which God has given her for her protection." If physical weakness is alluded to, I cheerfully concede the superiority; if brute force is what my brethren are claiming, I am willing to let them have all the honor they desire; but if they mean to intimate, that mental or moral weakness belongs to woman, more than to man, I utterly disclaim the charge. Our powers of mind have been crushed, as far as man could do it, our sense of morality has been impaired by his interpretation of our duties; but no where does God say that he made any distinction between us, as moral and intelligent beings.

"We appreciate," say the Association, "the *un-ostentatious* prayers and efforts of woman in advancing the cause of religion at home and abroad, in leading religious inquirers to THE PASTOR for instruction." Several points here demand attention. If public prayers and public efforts are necessarily ostentatious, then "Anna the prophetess, (or preacher,) who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day," "and spake of Christ to all them that looked for redemption in Israel," was ostentatious in her efforts. Then, the apostle Paul encourages women to be ostentatious in their efforts to spread the gospel, when he gives them directions how they should appear, when engaged in praying, or preaching in the public assemblies. Then, the whole association of Congregational ministers are ostentatious, in the efforts they are making in preaching and praying to convert souls.

But woman may be permitted to lead religious

inquirers to the PASTORS for instruction. Now this is assuming that all pastors are better qualified to give instruction than woman. This I utterly deny. I have suffered too keenly from the teaching of man, to lead any one to him for instruction. The Lord Jesus says,—“Come unto me and learn of me.” He points his followers to no man; and when woman is made the favored instrument of rousing a sinner to his lost and helpless condition, she has no right to substitute any teacher for Christ; all she has to do is, to turn the contrite inquirer to the “Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.” More souls have probably been lost by going down to Egypt for help, and by trusting in man in the early stages of religious experience, than by any other error. Instead of the petition being offered to God,—“Lead me in thy truth, and TEACH me, for thou art the God of my salvation,”—instead of relying on the precious promises—“What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall HE TEACH in the way that he shall choose”—“I will instruct thee and TEACH thee in the way which thou shalt go—I will guide thee with mine eye”—the young convert is directed to go to man as if he were in the place of God, and his instructions essential to an advancement in the path of righteousness. That woman can have but a poor conception of the privilege of being taught of God, what he alone can teach, who would turn the “religious inquirer aside” from the fountain of living waters, where he might slake his thirst for spiritual instruction, to those broken cisterns which can hold no water, and therefore cannot satisfy the panting spirit. The business of men and women, who are ORDAINED OF GOD to preach the “unsearchable riches of Christ” to a lost and perishing world is to lead souls to Christ, and not to Pastors for instruction.

The General Association say, that “when woman assumes the place and tone of man as a public reformer, our care and protection of her seem unnecessary; we put ourselves in self-defence against her, and her character becomes unnatural.” Here again the unscriptural notion is held up, that there is a distinction between the duties of men and women as moral beings; that what is virtue in man, is vice in woman; and

women who dare to obey the command of Jehovah, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression,” are threatened with having the protection of the brethren withdrawn. If this is all they do, we shall not even know the time when our chastisement is inflicted; our trust is in the Lord Jehovah, and in him is everlasting strength. The motto of woman, when she is engaged in the great work of public reformation should be,—“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” She must feel, if she feels rightly, that she is fulfilling one of the important duties laid upon her as an accountable being, and that her character, instead of being “unnatural,” is in exact accordance with the will of Him to whom, and to no other, she is responsible for the talents and the gifts confided to her. As to the pretty simile, introduced into the “Pastoral Letter,” “If the vine whose strength and beauty is to lean upon the trellis work, and half conceal its clusters, thinks to assume the independence and the overshadowing nature of the elm,” &c. I shall only remark that it might well suit the poet’s fancy, who sings of sparkling eyes and coral lips, and knights in armor clad; but it seems to me utterly inconsistent with the dignity of a Christian body, to endeavor to draw such an anti-scriptural distinction between men and women. Ah! how many of my sex feel in the dominion, thus unrighteously exercised over them, under the gentle appellation of *protection*, that what they have leaned upon has proved a broken reed at best, and oft a spear. *amen!*

Thine in the bonds of womanhood,  
SARAH M. GRIMKÉ.

#### LETTER IV

##### *Social Intercourse of the Sexes.*

*Andover, 7th Mo. 27th, 1837.*

My Dear Friend,—Before I proceed with the account of that oppression which woman has suffered in every age and country from her *protector*, man, permit me to offer for your consideration, some views relative to the social intercourse of the sexes. Nearly the whole of this intercourse



is, in my apprehension, derogatory to man and woman, as moral and intellectual beings. We approach each other, and mingle with each other, under the constant pressure of a feeling that we are of different sexes; and, instead of regarding each other only in the light of immortal creatures, the mind is fettered by the idea which is early and industriously infused into it, that we must never forget the distinction between male and female. Hence our intercourse, instead of being elevated and refined, is generally calculated to excite and keep alive the lowest propensities of our nature. Nothing, I believe, has tended more to destroy the true dignity of woman, than the fact that she is approached by man in the character of a female. The idea that she is sought as an intelligent and heaven-born creature, whose society will cheer, refine, and elevate her companion, and that she will receive the same blessings she confers, is rarely held up to her view. On the contrary, man almost always addresses himself to the weakness of woman. By flattery, by an appeal to her passions, he seeks access to her heart; and when he has gained her affections, he uses her as the instrument of his pleasure—the minister of his temporal comfort. He furnishes himself with a housekeeper, whose chief business is in the kitchen, or the nursery. And whilst he goes abroad and enjoys the means of improvement afforded by collision of intellect with cultivated minds, his wife is condemned to draw nearly all her instruction from books, if she has time to peruse them; and if not, from her meditations, whilst engaged in those domestic duties, which are necessary for the comfort of her lord and master.

Surely no one who contemplates, with the eye of a Christian philosopher, the design of God in the creation of woman, can believe that she is now fulfilling that design. The literal translation of the word “help-meet” is a helper like unto himself; it is so rendered in the Septuagint, and manifestly signifies a companion. Now I believe it will be impossible for women to fill the station assigned her by God, until her brethren mingle with her as an equal, as a moral being; and lose, in the dignity of her immortal nature, and in the fact of her bearing like himself the image and superscription of her God, the idea of her being a

female. The apostle<sup>1</sup> beautifully remarks, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither *male* nor *female*; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Until our intercourse is purified by the forgetfulness of sex,—until we rise above the present low and sordid views which entwine themselves around our social and domestic interchange of sentiment and feelings, we never can derive that benefit from each other’s society which it is the design of our Creator that we should. Man has inflicted an unspeakable injury upon woman, by holding up to her view her animal nature, and placing in the background her moral and intellectual being. Woman has inflicted an injury upon herself by submitting to be thus regarded; and she is now called upon to rise from the station where *man*, not God, has placed her, and claim those sacred and inalienable rights, as a moral and responsible being, with which her Creator has invested her.

What but these views, so derogatory to the character of woman, could have called forth the remark contained in the Pastoral Letter? “We especially deplore the intimate acquaintance and promiscuous conversation of *females* with regard to things “which ought not to be named,” by which that modesty and delicacy, which is the charm of domestic life, and which constitutes the true influence of woman, is consumed.” How wonderful that the conceptions of man relative to woman are so low, that he cannot perceive that she may converse on any subject connected with the improvement of her species, without swerving in the least from that modesty which is one of her greatest virtues! Is it designed to insinuate that woman should possess a greater degree of modesty than man? This idea I utterly reprobate. Or is it supposed that woman cannot go into scenes of misery, the necessary result of those very things, which the Pastoral Letter says ought not to be named, for the purpose of moral reform, without becoming contaminated by those with whom she thus mingles?

<sup>1</sup>The apostle is Paul, the most frequently cited authority against women’s speaking, but here Grimké cites a line of his used frequently (e g., by Margaret Fell) to justify women’s speaking. [Ed.]

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This is a false position; and I presume has grown out of the never-forgotten distinction of male and female. The woman who goes forth, clad in the panoply of God, to stem the tide of iniquity and misery, which she beholds rolling through our land, goes not forth to her labor of love as a female. She goes as the dignified messenger of Jehovah, and all she does and says must be done and said irrespective of sex. She is in duty bound to communicate with all, who are able and willing to aid her in saving her fellow creatures, both men and women, from that destruction which awaits them.

So far from woman losing any thing of the purity of her mind, by visiting the wretched victims of vice in their miserable abodes, by talking with them, or of them, she becomes more and more elevated and refined in her feelings and views. While laboring to cleanse the minds of others from the malaria of moral pollution, her own heart becomes purified, and her soul rises to nearer communion with her God. Such a woman is infinitely better qualified to fulfil the duties of a wife and a mother, than the woman whose *false delicacy* leads her to shun her fallen sister and brother, and shrink from *naming those sins* which she knows exist, but which she is too fastidious to labor by deed and by word to exterminate. Such a woman feels, when she enters upon the marriage relation, that God designed that relation not to debase her to a level with the animal creation, but to increase the happiness and dignity of his creatures. Such a woman comes to the important task of training her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, with a soul filled with the greatness of the beings committed to her charge. She sees in her children, creatures bearing the images of God; and she approaches them with reverence, and treats them at all times as moral and accountable beings. Her own mind being purified and elevated, she instils into her children that genuine religion which induces them to keep the commandments of God. Instead of ministering with ceaseless care to their sensual appetites, she teaches them to be temperate in all things. She can converse with her children on any subject relating to their duty to God, can point their attention to those vices which degrade and brutify human nature, without in the least de-

filing her own mind or theirs. She views herself, and teaches her children to regard themselves as moral beings; and in all their intercourse with their fellow men, to lose the animal nature of man and woman, in the recognition of that immortal mind wherewith Jehovah has blessed and enriched them.

Thine in the bonds of womanhood,  
SARAH M. GRIMKÉ.

## LETTER XIV

### *Ministry of Women.*

*Brookline, 9th Mo. 1837.*

My Dear Sister,—According to the principle which I have laid down, that man and woman were created equal, and endowed by their beneficent Creator with the same intellectual powers and the same moral responsibilities, and that consequently whatever is *morally* right for a man to do, is *morally* right for a woman to do, it follows as a necessary corollary, that if it is the duty of man to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, it is the duty also of woman.

I am aware, that I have the prejudices of education and custom to combat, both in my own and the other sex, as well as “the traditions of men,” which are taught for the commandments of God. I feel that I have no sectarian views to advance; for although among the Quakers, Methodists, and Christians, women are permitted to preach the glad tidings of peace and salvation, yet I know of no religious body, who entertain the Scripture doctrine of the perfect equality of man and woman, which is the fundamental principle of my argument in favor of the ministry of women. I wish simply to throw my views before thee. If they are based on the immutable foundation of truth, they cannot be overthrown by unkind insinuations, bitter sarcasms, unchristian imputations, or contemptuous ridicule. These are weapons which are unworthy of a good cause. If I am mistaken, as truth only can prevail, my supposed errors will soon vanish before her beams; but I am persuaded that woman is not filling the high and holy station which God allotted to her, and that in consequence of her having been driven from her “appropriate sphere,” both herself

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and her brethren have suffered an infinity of evils.

Before I proceed to prove, that woman is bound to preach the gospel, I will examine the ministry under the Old Testament dispensation. Those who were called to this office were known under various names. Enoch, who prophesied, is designated as walking with God. Noah is called a preacher of righteousness. They were denominated men of God, seers, prophets, but they all had the same great work to perform, viz. to turn sinners from the error of their ways. This ministry existed previous to the institution of the Jewish priesthood, and continued after its abolition. *It has nothing to do with the priesthood.* It was rarely, as far as the Bible informs us, exercised by those of the tribe of Levi, and was common to all the people, women as well as men. It differed essentially from the priesthood, because there was no compensation received for calling the people to repentance. Such a thing as paying a prophet for preaching the truth of God is not even mentioned. They were called of Jehovah to go forth in his name, one from his plough, another from gathering of sycamore fruit, &c. &c. Let us for a moment imagine Jeremiah, when God says to him, "Gird up thy loins, and arise and speak unto the people all that I command thee," replying to Jehovah, "I will preach repentance to the people, if they will give me gold, but if they will not pay me for the truth, then let them perish in their sins." Now, this is virtually the language of the ministers of the present day; and I believe the secret of the exclusion of women from the ministerial office is, that that office has been converted into one of emolument, of honor, and power. Any attentive observer cannot fail to perceive, that as far as possible, all such offices are reserved by men for themselves.

The common error that Christian ministers are the successors of the priests, is founded in mistake. In the particular directions given to Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons to the office of the priesthood, their duties are clearly defined: see Ex. 28th, 29th, and 30th chap. There is no commission to Aaron to preach to the people; his business was to offer sacrifice. Now why were sacrifices instituted? They were types of that one great sacrifice, which in the fulness of time was

offered up through the eternal Spirit without spot to God. Christ assumed the office of priest; he "offered himself," and by so doing, abolished forever the order of the priesthood, as well as the sacrifices which the priests were ordained to offer.<sup>2</sup>

But it may be inquired, whether the priests were not to teach the people. As far as I can discover from the Bible, they were simply commanded to read the law to the people. There was no other copy that we know of, until the time of the kings, who were to write out a copy for their own use. As it was deposited in the ark, the priests were required, "When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, women, and children, that they may hear," Deut. 31: 9-33. See also Lev. 10: 11, Deut. 33: 10, 2d Chr. 17: 7-9, and numerous other passages. When God is enumerating the means he has used to call his people to repentance, he never, as far as I can discover, speaks of sending his priests to warn them; but in various passages we find language similar to this: "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants, the PROPHETS, daily rising up early and sending them. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck; they did worse than their fathers." Jer. 7: 25, 26. See also, 25: 4, 2 Chr. 36: 15, and parallel passages. God says, Is. 9: 15, 16. "The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail; for the leaders of this people cause them to err." The distinction between priests and prophets is evident from their being mentioned as two classes. "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means," Jer. 5: 31. See also, Ch. 2: 8, 8: 1-10, and many others.

That women were called to the prophetic office, I believe is universally admitted. Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah were prophetesses. The

<sup>2</sup>I cannot enter fully into this part of my subject. It is, however, one of great importance and I recommend those who wish to examine it, to read "The Book of the Priesthood," by an English Dissenter, and Beverly's "View of the Present State of the Visible Church of Christ." They are both masterly productions. [Au.]

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judgments of the Lord are denounced by Ezekiel on false prophetesses, as well as false prophets. And if Christian ministers are, as I apprehend, successors of the prophets, and not of the priests, then of course, women are now called to that office as well as men, because God has no where withdrawn from them the privilege of doing what is the great business of preachers, viz. to point the penitent sinner to the Redeemer. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

It is often triumphantly inquired, why, if men and women are on an equality, are not women as conspicuous in the Bible as men? I do not intend to assign a reason, but I think one may readily be found in the fact, that from the days of Eve to the present time, the aim of man has been to crush her. He has accomplished this work in various ways; sometimes by brute force, sometimes by making her subservient to his worst passions, sometimes by treating her as a doll, and while he excluded from her mind the light of knowledge, decked her person with gewgaws and frippery which he scorned for himself, thus endeavoring to render her like unto a painted sepulchre.

It is truly marvellous that any woman can rise above the pressure of circumstances which combine to crush her. Nothing can strengthen her to do this in the character of a preacher of righteousness, but a call from Jehovah himself. And when the voice of God penetrates the deep recesses of her heart, and commands her to go and cry in the ears of the people, she is ready to exclaim, "Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a woman." I have known women in different religious societies, who have felt like the prophet. "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing." But they have not dared to open their lips, and have endured all the intensity of suffering, produced by disobedience to God, rather than encounter heartless ridicule and injurious suspicions. I rejoice that we have been the oppressed, rather than the oppressors. God thus prepared his people for deliverance from outward bondage; and I hope our sorrows have prepared us to fulfil our high and holy duties, whether public or private, with humility and meekness; and that suffering has imparted fortitude to endure

trials, which assuredly await us in the attempt to sunder those chains with which man has bound us, galling to the spirit, though unseen by the eye.

Surely there is nothing either astonishing or novel in the gifts of the Spirit being bestowed on woman: nothing astonishing, because there is no respect of persons with God; the soul of the woman in his sight is as the soul of the man, and both are alike capable of the influence of the Holy Spirit. Nothing novel, because, as has been already shown, in the sacred records there are found examples of women, as well as of men, exercising the gift of prophecy.

We attach to the word prophecy, the exclusive meaning of foretelling future events, but this is certainly a mistake; for the apostle Paul defines it to be "speaking to edification, exhortation, and comfort." And there appears no possible reason, why women should not do this as well as men. At the time that the Bible was translated into English, the meaning of the word prophecy, was delivering a message from God, whether it was to predict future events, or to warn the people of the consequences of sin. Governor Winthrop, of Massachusetts, mentions in a letter, that the minister being absent, he went to ——— to prophecy to the people.

Before I proceed to prove that women, under the Christian dispensation, were anointed of the Holy Ghost to preach, or prophecy, I will mention Anna, the (last) prophetess under the Jewish dispensation. "She departed not from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day." And coming into the temple, while Simeon was yet speaking to Mary, with the infant Savior in his arms, "spake of Christ to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Blackwall, a learned English critic, in his work entitled, "Sacred Classics," says, in reference to this passage, Luke 2: 37—"According to the original reading, the sense will be, that the devout Anna, who attended in the temple, both night and day, spoke of the Messiah to all the inhabitants of that city, who constantly worshipped there, and who prepared themselves for the worthy reception of that divine person, whom they expected at this time. And 'tis certain, that other devout Jews, not inhabitants of Jerusalem, frequently repaired to the temple-worship, and

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might, at this remarkable time, and several others, hear this admirable woman discourse upon the blessed advent of the Redeemer. A various reading has Israel instead of Jerusalem, which expresses that religious Jews, from distant places, came thither to divine offices, and would with high pleasure hear the discourses of this great prophetess, so famed for her extraordinary piety and valuable talents, upon the most important and desired subject."

I shall now examine the testimony of the Bible on this point, after the ascension of our Lord, beginning with the glorious effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. I presume it will not be denied, that women, as well as men, were at that time filled with the Holy Ghost, because it is expressly stated, that women were among those who continued in prayer and supplication, waiting for the fulfilment of the promise, that they should be endued with power from on high. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were ALL with one accord in one place. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Peter says, in reference to this miracle, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days, said God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy—and on my servants and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." There is not the least intimation that this was a spasmodic influence which was soon to cease. The men and women are classed together; and if the power to preach the gospel was a supernatural and short-lived impulse in women, then it was equally so in men. But we are told, those were the days of miracles. I grant it; but the men, equally with the women, were the subjects of this marvellous fulfilment of prophecy, and of course, if women have lost the gift of prophesying, so have men. We are also gravely told, that if a woman pretends to inspiration, and thereupon grounds the right to plead the cause of a crucified Redeemer in public, she will be believed when she shows credentials from heaven, i.e., when

she works a miracle. I reply, if this be necessary to prove her right to preach the gospel, then I demand of my brethren to show me their credentials; else I cannot receive their ministry, by their own showing. John Newton has justly said, that no power but that which created a world, can make a minister of the gospel; and man may task his ingenuity to the utmost, to prove that this power is not exercised on women as well as men. He cannot do it until he has first disclaimed that simple, but all comprehensive truth, "in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female."

Women then, according to the Bible, were, under the New Testament dispensation, as well as the Old, the recipients of the gift of prophecy. That this is no sectarian view may be proved by the following extracts. The first I shall offer is from Stratton's "Book of the Priesthood."

While they were assembled in the upper room to wait for the blessing, in number about one hundred and twenty, they received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit's grace; they became the channels through which its more ordinary, but not less saving streams flowed to three thousand persons in one day. The whole company of assembled disciples, male and female, young and old, were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. They all contributed in producing that impression upon the assembled multitude, which Peter was instrumental in advancing to its decisive results.

Scott, in his commentary on this passage, says—

At the same time, there appeared the form of tongues divided at the tip and resembling fire; one of which rested on each of the whole company. . . . They sat on every one present, as the original determines. At the time of these extraordinary appearances, the whole company were abundantly replenished with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, so that they began to speak with other tongues.

Henry in his notes confirms this:

It seems evident to me that not the twelve apostles only, but all the one hundred and twenty disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost alike at this time—all the seventy disciples, who were apostolical men and employed in the same work, and all the rest too that were to preach the gospel,

for it is said expressly, Eph. 4: 8-12: "When Christ ascended up on high, (which refers to this) he gave gifts unto men." The all here must refer to the all that were together.

I need hardly remark that man is a generic term, including both sexes.

Let us now examine whether women actually exercised the office of minister, under the gospel dispensation. Philip had four daughters, who prophesied or preached. Paul calls Priscilla, as well as Aquila, his helpers; or, as in the Greek, his fellow laborers<sup>3</sup> in Christ Jesus. Divers other passages might be adduced to prove that women continued to be preachers, and that *many* of them filled this dignified station.

We learn also from ecclesiastical history, that female ministers suffered martyrdom in the early ages of the Christian church. In ancient councils, mention is made of deaconesses; and in an edition of the New Testament, printed in 1574, a woman is spoken of as minister of a church. The same word, which, in our common translation, is now rendered a servant of the church, in speaking of Phebe, Rom. 16: 1, is rendered minister, Eph. 6: 21, when applied to Tychicus. A minister, with whom I had lately the pleasure of conversing, remarked, "My rule is to expound scripture by scripture, and I cannot deny the ministry of women, because the apostle says, 'help those women who labored with me IN THE GOSPEL.' He certainly meant something more than pouring out tea for him."

In the 11th Ch. of 1 Cor., Paul gives directions to women and men how they should appear when they prophesy, or pray in public assemblies. It is evident that the design of the apostle, in this and the three succeeding chapters, is to rectify certain abuses which had crept into the Christian church. He therefore admonishes women to pray with their heads covered, because, according to the fashion of that day, it was considered immodest and immoral to do otherwise. He says, "that were all one as if she were shaven;" and shaving the head was a disgraceful punishment that was inflicted on women of bad character.

<sup>3</sup>Rom. 16:3, compare Gr. text of v. 21, 2. Cor. 8: 23; Phil. 2: 25; 1 Thes. 3:2. [Au.]

"These things," says Scott, "the apostle stated as decent and proper, but if any of the Corinthian teachers inclined to excite contention about them, he would only add, v. 16, that he and his brethren knew of no such custom as prevailed among them, nor was there any such in the churches of God which had been planted by the other apostles."

John Locke, whilst engaged in writing his notes on the Epistles of St. Paul, was at a meeting where two women preached. After hearing them, he became convinced of their commission to publish the gospel, and thereupon altered his notes on the 11th Ch. 1 Cor. in favor of women's preaching. He says—

This about women seeming as difficult a passage as most in St. Paul's Epistles, I crave leave to premise some few considerations. It is plain that this covering the head in women is restrained to some peculiar actions which they performed in the assembly, expressed by the words praying, prophesying, which, whatever they signify, must have the same meaning applied to women in the 5th verse, that they have when applied to men in the 4th, &c. The next thing to be considered is, what is here to be understood by praying and prophesying. And that seems to me the performing of some public action in the assembly, by some one person which was for that time peculiar to that person, and whilst it lasted, the rest of the assembly silently assisted. As to prophesying, the apostle in express words tells us, Ch. 14: 3, 12, that it was speaking to the assembly. The same is evident as to praying, that the apostle means by it publicly with an audible voice, ch. 14: 19.

In a letter to these two women, Rebecca Collier and Rachel Bracken, which accompanied a little testimony of his regard, he says,

I admire no converse like that of Christian freedom; and I fear no bondage like that of pride and prejudice. I now see that acquaintance by sight cannot reach the height of enjoyment, which acquaintance by knowledge arrives unto. Outward hearing may misguide us, but internal knowledge cannot err. Women, indeed, had the honor of first publishing the resurrection of the God of love—why not again the resurrection of the spirit of love? And let all the disciples of Christ rejoice therein, as doth your partner, John Locke.

See "The Friend," a periodical published in Philadelphia.

Adam Clarke's comment on 1 Cor. 11: 5, is similar to Locke's:

Whatever be the meaning of praying and prophesying in respect to the man, they have precisely the same meaning in respect to the woman. So that some women at least, as well as some men, might speak to others to edification and exhortation and comfort. And this kind of prophesying, or teaching, was predicted by Joel 2: 28, and referred to by Peter; and had there not been such gifts bestowed on women, the prophesy could not have had its fulfilment.

In the autobiography of Adam Clarke, there is an interesting account of his hearing Mary Sewall and another female minister preach, and he acknowledges that such was the power accompanying their ministry, that though he had been prejudiced against women's preaching, he could not but confess that these women were anointed for the office.

But there are certain passages in the Epistles of St. Paul, which seem to be of doubtful interpretation; at which we cannot much marvel, seeing that his brother Peter says, there are some things in them hard to be understood. Most commentators, having their minds preoccupied with the prejudices of education, afford little aid; they rather tend to darken the text by the multitude of words. One of these passages occurs in 1 Cor. 14. I have already remarked, that this chapter, with several of the preceding, was evidently designed to correct abuses which had crept into the assemblies of Christians in Corinth. Hence we find that the men were commanded to be silent, as well as the women, when they were guilty of any thing which deserved reprehension. The apostle says, "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church." The men were doubtless in the practice of speaking in unknown tongues, when there was no interpreter present; and Paul reproves them, because this kind of preaching conveyed no instruction to the people. Again he says, "If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." We may infer from this, that two men sometimes attempted to speak at the same time, and the apostle rebukes them,

and adds, "Ye may ALL prophesy one by one, for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." He then proceeds to notice the disorderly conduct of the women, who were guilty of other improprieties. They were probably in the habit of asking questions, on any points of doctrine which they wished more thoroughly explained. This custom was common among the men in the Jewish synagogues, after the pattern of which, the meetings of the early Christians were in all probability conducted. And the Christian women, presuming on the liberty which they enjoyed under the new religion, interrupted the assembly, by asking questions. The apostle disapproved of this, because it disturbed the solemnity of the meeting: he therefore admonishes the women to keep silence in the churches. That the apostle did not allude to preaching is manifest, because he tells them, "If they will *learn* any thing, let them ask their husbands at home." Now a person endowed with a gift in the ministry, does not ask questions in the public exercise of that gift, for the purpose of gaining information: she is instructing others. Moreover, the apostle, in closing his remarks on this subject, says, "Wherefore, brethren, (a generic term, applying equally to men and women,) covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order."

Clarke, on the passage, "Let women keep silence in the churches," says:

This was a Jewish ordinance. Women were not permitted to teach in the assemblies, or even to ask questions. The rabbins taught that a woman should know nothing but the use of her distaff; and the saying of Rabbi Eliezer is worthy of remark and execration: "Let the words of the law be burned, rather than that they should be delivered by women."

Are there not many of our Christian brethren, whose hostility to the ministry of women is as bitter as was that of Rabbi Eliezer, and who would rather let souls perish, than that the truths of the gospel should be delivered by women?

"This," says Clarke, "was their condition till the time of the gospel, when, according to the

she knows how to raise the stakes here

prediction of Joel, the Spirit of God was to be poured out on the women as well as the men, that they might prophesy, that is, teach. And that they did prophesy, or teach, is evident from what the apostle says, ch. 11: 5, where he lays down rules to regulate this part of their conduct while ministering in the church. But does not what the apostle says here, let your women keep silence in the churches, contradict that statement, and show that the words in ch. 11, should be understood in another sense? for here it is expressly said, that they should keep silence in the churches, for it was not permitted to a woman to speak. Both places seem perfectly consistent. It is evident from the context, that the apostle refers here to asking questions, and what we call dictating in the assemblies."

The other passage on which the opinion, that women are not called to the ministry, is founded, is 1 Tim. 2d ch. The apostle speaks of the duty of prayer and supplication, mentions his own ordination as a preacher, and then adds, "I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel," &c. I shall here premise, that as the punctuation and division into chapters and verses is no part of the original arrangement, they cannot determine the sense of a passage. Indeed, every attentive reader of the Bible must observe, that the injudicious separation of sentences often destroys their meaning and their beauty. Joseph John Gurney, whose skill as a biblical critic is well known in England, commenting on this passage, says,

It is worded in a manner somewhat obscure; but appears to be best construed according to the opinion of various commentators [See Pool's Synopsis] as conveying an injunction, that women as well as men should pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting. 1 Tim. 2: 8, 9. "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, &c.; likewise also the women in a modest dress." (Compare 1 Cor. 11: 5.) "I would have them adorn themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety."

I have no doubt this is the true meaning of the text, and that the translators would never have thought of altering it had they not been under the influence of educational prejudice. The apostle proceeds to exhort the women, who thus publicly made intercession to God, not to adorn them-

selves with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. The word in this verse translated "professing," would be more properly rendered preaching godliness, or enjoining piety to the gods, or conducting public worship. After describing the duty of female ministers about their apparel, the apostle proceeds to correct some improprieties which probably prevailed in the Ephesian church, similar to those which he had reproved among the Corinthian converts. He says, "Let the women LEARN in silence with all subjection; but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence," or quietness. Here again it is evident that the women, of whom he was speaking, were admonished to learn in silence, which could not refer to their public ministrations to others. The verb to teach, verse 12, is one of very general import, and may in this place more properly be rendered dictate. It is highly probable that women who had long been in bondage, when set free by Christianity from the restraints imposed upon them by Jewish traditions and heathen customs, ran into an extreme in their public assemblies, and interrupted the religious services by frequent interrogations, which they could have had answered as satisfactorily at home.

On a candid examination and comparison of the passages which I have endeavored to explain, viz., 1 Cor. chaps 11 and 14, and 1 Tim. 2, 8-12. I think we must be compelled to adopt one of two conclusions; either that the apostle grossly contradicts himself on a subject of great practical importance, and that the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel was a shameful infringement of decency and order; or that the directions given to women, not to speak, or to teach in the congregations, had reference to some local and peculiar customs, which were then common in religious assemblies, and which the apostle thought inconsistent with the purpose for which they were met together. No one, I suppose, will hesitate which of these two conclusions to adopt. The subject is one of vital importance. That it may claim the calm and prayerful attention of Christians, is the desire of

Thine in the bonds of womanhood,  
SARAH M. GRIMKÉ.