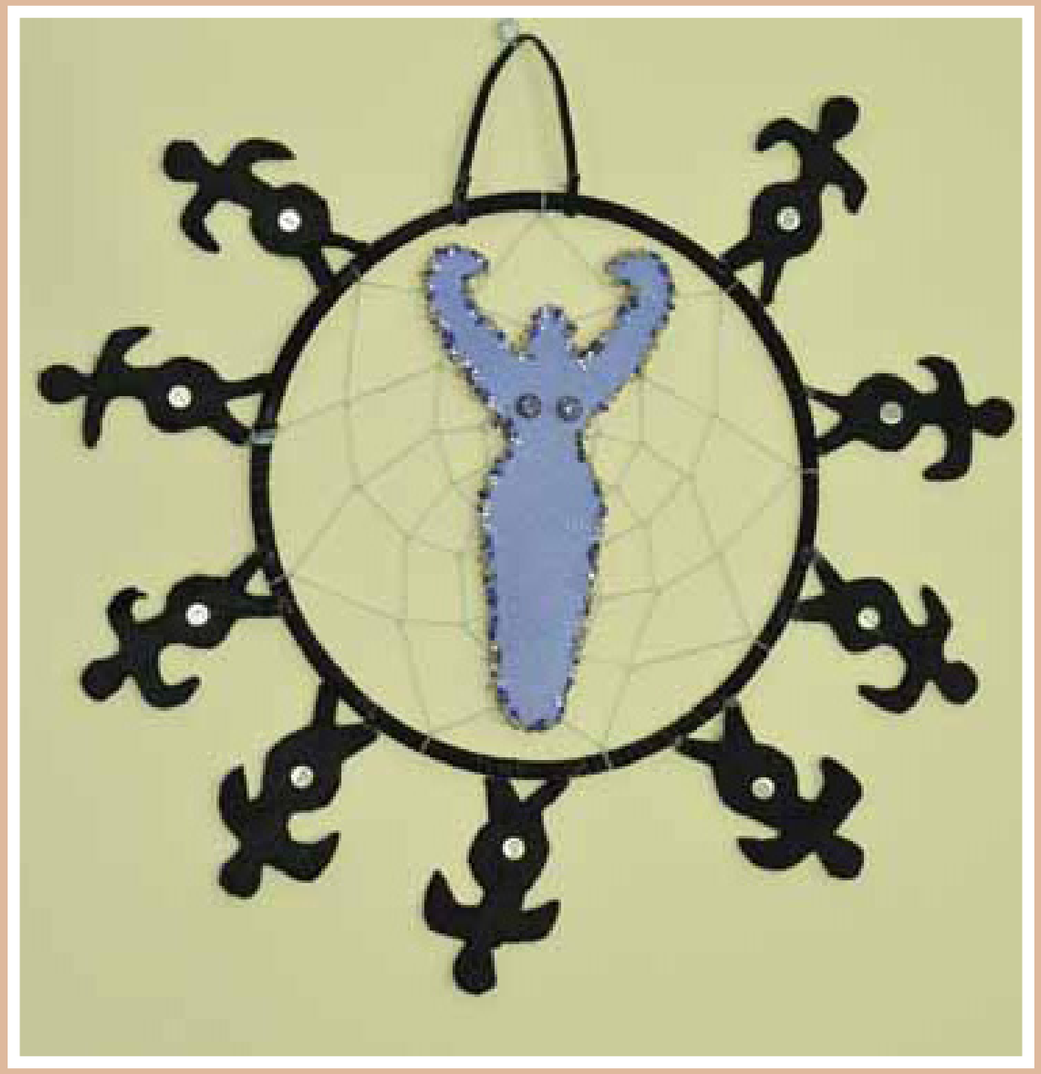


Invocation

Saint Clare of Assisi

CLARE OF ASSISI

St. Clare was born in Assisi on July 16,1194, the eldest daughter of Favorino Scifi, Count of Sasso-Rosso and his wife Ortolana. Ortolana was a very devout woman who had undertaken many pilgrimages. Later in her life, Ortolana entered Clare's monastery, together with Agnes, Clare's sister.

As a child, Clare was devoted to prayer. When she turned 12 her parents wanted her to marry a wealthy man, but she preferred to wait until she was 18. However, at the age of 18 she heard Francis's preaching which would subsequently change her life. Francis told her that God chose her. Soon after, on Palm Sunday, when people went to collect palm branches, she stayed home. That night she ran away to follow Francis. Francis cut her hair and dressed her in a black tunic and a thick black veil. Clare was placed in the convent of the Benedictine nuns near Bastia from where her father made several unsuccessful attempts to abduct her, still wanting her to get married. Clare, joined by her sister Agnes, soon moved in a place close to the church of San Damiano, which Francis had rebuilt. Other women joined them and San Damiano became known for its radical austere lifestyle. The women were at first known as the "Poor Ladies".

San Damiano became the centre of Clare's new religious order, which was known in her lifetime as the "Order of San Damiano". San Damiano was long thought to be the first house of this order, however, recent scholarship strongly suggests that San Damiano actually joined an existing network of women's religious houses organized by Hugolino (who later became Pope Gregory IX). Hugolino wanted San Damiano as part of the order he founded because of the prestige of Clare's monastery. San Damiano emerged as the most important house in the order, and Clare became its undisputed leader. By 1263, just ten years after Clare's death, the order had become known as the Order of Saint Clare.

Unlike the Franciscan friars, whose members moved around the country to preach, Saint Clare's sisters lived in enclosure, since an itinerant life was hardly conceivable at the time for women.

Francis himself directed the order for a short period of time. Then in 1216, Clare accepted the role of abbess of San Damiano. As abbess, Clare had more authority to lead the order than when she was the prioress, who had to follow the orders of a priest heading the community. Clare defended her order from the attempts of prelates to impose a rule on them that more closely resembled the Rule of Saint Benedict than Francis' stricter vows. Clare sought to imitate Francis' virtues and way of life so much so that she was sometimes called another Francis. She also played a significant role in encouraging and aiding Francis, whom she saw as a spiritual father figure, and she took care of him during his illnesses at the end of his life, until his death in 1226.

After Francis's death, Clare continued to promote the growth of her order, writing letters to abbesses in other parts of Europe and thwarting every attempt by each successive pope to impose a rule on her order, which watered down the radical commitment to corporate poverty, she had originally embraced. She did this despite the fact that she endured a long period of poor health until her death.

Clare's Franciscan theology of joyous poverty in imitation of Christ is evident in the rule she wrote for her community and in her four letters to Agnes of Prague.

On August 9, 1253, the papal bull *Solet annuere* of Pope Innocent IV confirmed that Clare's rule would serve as the governing rule for Clare's Order of Poor Ladies. Two days later, on August 11, Clare died at the age of 59. Her remains were interred at the chapel of *San Giorgio* while a church to hold her remains was being constructed.

Amanda Smith

AMANDA BERRY SMITH

Amanda Berry Smith was born a slave on January 23, 1837 in Long Green, Maryland. Her father was Samuel Berry Smith and her mother Mariam. Her father was a well-trusted man as demonstrate by the fact his master's widow placed him in charge of her farm. After his duties for the day were done, he was allowed to go out and earn extra money for himself and his family.

Many nights he would go forego sleep because he was busy making brooms and husk mats to sell at the Baltimore market. He was devoted to buying his freedom and his family's. And he succeeded.

Growing up, Amanda had the advantage of learning to read and write. Her father made it a regular practice on Sunday mornings to read to his family from the Bible. Her mother helped her to learn to read before she was eight. At age eight she started school. The school only held summer sessions and after only six weeks of attending, it was forced to close. Five years later, at the age of 13, Amanda was given another opportunity to attend school. However, the school was five miles from her home. She and her siblings would only be taught if the teachers had the time after they gave the white children their lessons. The Smith siblings felt that it was not worth traveling in the cold to receive lessons when they were frequently not available. After two weeks of attending school, they dropped out and were taught at home by their parents and often learned on their own.

With only having three and a half months of formal schooling, Amanda went to work near York, Pennsylvania, as the servant of a widow with five children. While there, she attended a revival service at the Methodist Episcopal Church

She worked hard as a cook and a washerwoman to provide for herself and her daughter after her husband was killed in the American Civil War. Prayer became a way of life for her. She trusted God for shoes, for the money to buy her sister's freedom and for food for her family. She became well known for her beautiful voice and inspired teaching.

Opportunities to evangelize in the South and West opened up for her. Wherever she traveled, she wore a plain poke bonnet and a brown or black Quaker wrapper, and she carried her own carpetbag suitcase. Being a preacher and traveling as much as Amanda did, she thought out her appearance thoroughly. The appearances of women in the nineteenth century were fraught with danger. The line between being overly sexual or appearing presumptuously dressed above one's station was a fine one. African American women struggled with receiving the respect they deserved even if they dressed the part and acted as a lady. This was due to the stereotypes bred in slavery of wanton Jezebels and pious Mammies. African American women in the nineteenth century took the way they dressed very seriously and so did others. The stereotypes of being a Jezebel or Mammie were

only a few of the stereotypes African American had to deal with.

In 1876, Amanda was invited to speak and sing in England travelling on a first class cabin provided by her friends. The captain invited her to conduct a religious service on board and she was so modest that the other passengers praised her highly. This resulted in her staying in England and Scotland for a year and a half. She next traveled to and ministered in India. She then spent eight years in Africa working with churches and evangelizing. While in Africa she suffered from repeated attacks of "African Fever" but persisted in her work. As a strong proponent of the Temperance Movement both in Africa and in the United States, she was invited by noted temperance advocate Rev. Dr. Theodore Ledyard Cuyler to preach at his Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn New York. This church was then the largest church in its denomination.

Upon her return from Africa, Amanda funded The Amanda Smith Orphanage and Industrial Home for Abandoned and Destitute Colored Children. It was an institution for the poor and friendless colored children in a suburban neighborhood in Chicago. . The institution provided a home for children to become self-reliant. Amanda traveled to many states to raise money for the orphanage. Support for this institution depended on interracial cooperation for fund-raising and an advisory board. To raise funds for the initial costs, Smith enlisted Methodist interracial cooperation across the country.

However, she soon met devastating with obstacles. The orphanage had financial problems. A fire destroyed the building, conflict between broke out between Smith and the staff, there were complaints from neighbors, and the orphanage failed inspections by the orphan home investigators.

Although the orphanage closed, Smith still dreamed of re-opening it. Towards that goal she continued to visit other nations and became known as "God's Image Carved in Ebony."

The orphanage did re-open for a short time. However, Smith's health began to fail and she had to retire to Sebring, Florida in 1912. She died on February 12, 1915. Two years following her death, another fire broke out in the home killing two girls. The building was closed for good.

FAITH

Rebecca Cox Jackson

Rebecca Cox Jackson

Rebecca Cox was born on February 15, 1795 in Hornstown, Pennsylvania into a free family. She married Samuel S. Jackson and worked as a seamstress until she had a religious awakening during a thunderstorm in 1830.

She got divorced after her husband failed to teach her to read and write, and later realized she was able to do both anyway. Whilst travelling from church to church, she came upon and decided to join the Shakers in Watervliet, New York.

She then returned to Philadelphia to live with Rebecca Perot for six years before returning Watervliet. Here she became active in the Shakers. Here her own life came to an end after she became she Eldress of her own family of Shakers in Philadelphia. In 1859 she had founded the first black Shaker community in Philadelphia. She was known for her faithfulness in turning to God in prayer for answers and direction.

Her autobiography, *Gifts of Power,* although written between 1830 and 1864, was only published in 1981.

Hildegard of Bingen

Hildegard of Bingen

Hildegard's exact date of birth is uncertain. She was born around the year 1098 to Mechtild of Merxheim-Nahet and Hildebert of Bermersheim, a family of the free lower nobility in the service of the Count Meginhard of Sponheim. In her *Vita*, Hildegard states that from a very young age she had experienced visions.

Perhaps due to Hildegard's visions, or as a method of political positioning, Hildegard's parents offered her as an oblate to the church. Her *Vita* says she was enclosed with an older nun, Jutta, at the age of eight.

Hildegard and Jutta were enclosed at Disibodenberg in the Palatinate Forest in what is now Germany. Jutta was also a visionary and thus attracted many followers who came to visit her at the enclosure. Hildegard tells us that Jutta taught her to read and write. Hildegard and Jutta most likely prayed, meditated, read scriptures such as the psalter, and did handwork during the hours of the Divine Office. This might have been a time when Hildegard learned how to play the ten-stringed psaltery. Volmar, a frequent visitor, may have taught Hildegard simple psalm notation.

Upon Jutta's death in 1136, Hildegard was unanimously elected as "magistra" of the community by her fellow nuns. Abbot Kuno of Disibodenberg asked Hildegard to be Prioress, which would be under his authority. Hildegard, however, wanted more independence for herself and her nuns and asked Abbot Kuno to allow them to move to Rupertsberg. When the abbot declined her request, Hildegard went over his head and received the approval of Archbishop Henry I of Mainz. Abbot Kuno did not relent until Hildegard was stricken by an illness that kept her paralyzed and unable to move from her bed, an event that she attributed to God's unhappiness at her not following his orders to move her nuns to Rupertsberg. After Kuhno relented, Hildegard and about twenty nuns moved to the St. Rupertsberg monastery in 1150. In 1165 Hildegard founded a second monastery for her nuns at Eibingen.

Hildegard says that she first saw "The Shade of the Living Light" at the age of three, and by the age of five she began to understand that she was experiencing visions. She used the term 'visio' to this feature of her experience, and recognized that it was a gift that she could not explain to others. Hildegard explained that she saw all things in the light of God through the five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Hildegard was hesitant to share her visions, confiding only to Jutta, who in turn told Volmar, Hildegard's tutor and, later, secretary. Throughout her life, she continued to have many visions, and in 1141, Hildegard received a vision she believed to be an instruction from God, to "write down that which you see and hear." Still hesitant to record her visions, Hildegard became physically ill. The illustrations recorded in the book of Scivias were visions that Hildegard experienced, causing her great suffering and tribulations.

Hildegard's *Vita* was begun by Godfrey of Disibodenberg under Hildegard's

supervision. It was about 1148 at the synod in Trier that Pope Eugenus heard about Hildegard's writings. It was from this that she received Papal approval to document her visions as revelations from the Holy Spirit giving her instant credence.

On 17 September 1179, when Hildegard died, her sisters claimed they saw two streams of light appear in the skies and cross over the room where she was dying.

Hildegard's works include three great volumes of visionary theology; a variety of musical compositions; one of the largest bodies of letters (nearly 400) to survive from the Middle Ages, addressed to correspondents ranging from Popes to Emperors, and including records of many of the sermons she preached in the 1160s and 1170's; two volumes of material on natural medicine and cures; and an invented language called the *Lingua ignota*.

Hildegard's most significant works were her three volumes of visionary theology: *Scivias* ("Know the Ways", composed 1142-1151), *Liber Vitae Meritorum* ("Book of Life's Merits" or "Book of the Rewards of Life", composed 1158-1163); and *Liber Divinorum Operum* ("Book of Divine Works", also known as *De operatione Dei*, "On God's Activity", composed 1163/4-1172 or 1174). In these volumes, Hildegard first describes each vision and then interprets their theological contents in the words of the "voice of the Living Light."

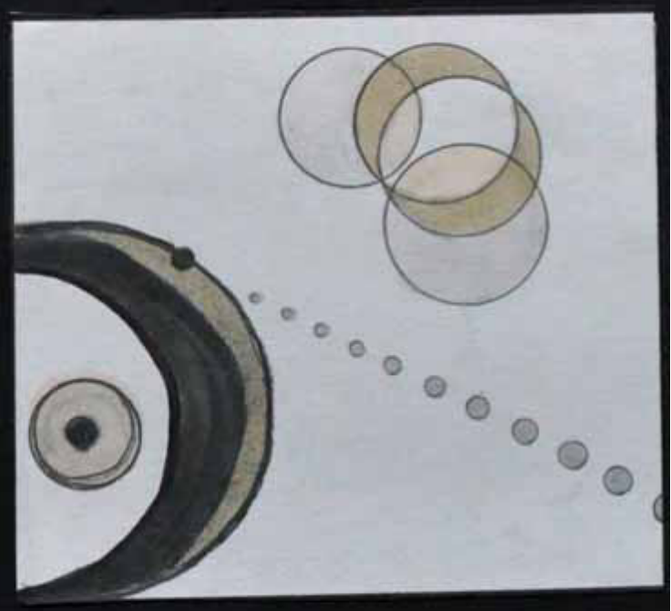
Hildegard also wrote *Physica*, a text on the natural sciences, as well as *Causae et Curae*. Hildegard of Bingen was well known for her healing powers involving practical application of tinctures, herbs, and precious stones. In both texts Hildegard describes the natural world around her, including the cosmos, animals, plants, stones, and minerals.

She was particularly interested in the healing properties of plants, animals, and stones, though she also questions God's effect on man's health. One example of her healing powers was curing the blind with the use of Rhine water.

The correspondence she kept with the outside world, both spiritual and social, transgressed the cloister as a space of female confinement and served to document Hildegard's grand style and strict formatting of medieval letter writing.

Contributing to Christian European rhetorical traditions, Hildegard "authorized herself as a theologian" through alternative rhetorical arts. Hildegard was creative in her interpretation of theology. She also stated that "woman may be made from man, but no man can be made without a woman."

Due to church limitation on public, discursive rhetoric, the medieval rhetorical arts included preaching, letter writing, poetry, and the encyclopedic tradition. Hildegard's participation in these arts speaks to her significance as a female rhetorician, transcending bans on women's social participation and interpretation of scripture. The acceptance of public preaching by a woman, even a well-connected abbess and acknowledged prophet does not fit the stereotype



of this time. Her preaching was not limited to the monasteries; she preached publicly in 1160 in Germany. She conducted four preaching tours throughout Germany, speaking to both clergy and laity in chapter houses and in public, mainly denouncing clerical corruption and calling for reform.

Many abbots and abbesses asked her for prayers and opinions on various matters. She traveled widely during her four preaching tours. Hildegard also influenced several monastic women, exchanging letters with Elisabeth of Schönau, a nearby visionary.

Emily Dickinson

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, on December 10, 1830.Edward Dickinson married Emily Norcross on May 6, 1828. They had three children.

Dickinson's education was "ambitiously classical for a Victorian girl". In September, 1840, Dickinson and her sister Lavinia started together at Amherst Academy. Dickinson spent seven years at the Academy, taking classes in English and classical literature, Latin, botany, geology, history, "mental philosophy," and arithmetic.

Dickinson was troubled from a young age by death. When Sophia Holland, her second cousin and a close friend, grew ill from typhus and died in April 1844, Emily was traumatized. She became so melancholic that her parents sent her to stay with family in Boston. She soon returned to Amherst Academy where she met people who would become lifelong friends and correspondents, such as Abiah Root, Abby Wood, Jane Humphrey, and Susan Huntington Gilbert (who later married Emily's brother Austin).

In 1845, a religious revival took place in Amherst, resulting in 46 confessions of faith among Dickinson's peers. Dickinson wrote to a friend the following year: "I never enjoyed such perfect peace and happiness as the short time in which I felt I had found my savior." She went on to say that it was her "greatest pleasure to commune alone with the great God & to feel that he would listen to my prayers."

Emily became friendly with Leonard Humphrey, its popular new young principal. After finishing her final term on August 10, 1847, Dickinson began attending Holyoke Female Seminary in South Hadley. She was at the seminary for only ten months before her brother Edward came on March 25, to bring her home.

When she was eighteen, Dickinson's family befriended a young attorney, Benjamin Franklin Newton. Although their relationship was probably not romantic, Newton was a formative influence and would become the second in a series of older men (after Humphrey) that Dickinson referred to, variously, as her tutor, preceptor or master.

Newton likely introduced her to the writings of William Wordsworth, and his gift to her of Ralph Waldo Emerson's book of collected poems had a liberating effect.Newton recognized her as a poet. When he was dying he wrote to her, expressing the wish he would live to see the greatness he foresaw.

Dickinson was familiar not only with the Bible but also with contemporary popular literature. A friend lent her Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. When Dickinson acquired her first and only dog, a Newfoundland, she named him "Carlo" after the character St. John Rivers' dog.

In 1850 Leonard Humphrey, died suddenly at age 25.Two years after his death, she revealed to her friend Abiah Root the extent of her depression:

"To fill a Gap
Insert the thing that caused it—
Block it up
With other—and 'twill yawn the more—
You cannot solder an Abyss
With Air."

In other words when we look to the concrete to satisfy the needs of our soul, we are attempting solder an abyss with air; thus we become trapped in a

During the 1850s, Emily's strongest relationship was with Susan Gilbert. Emily wrote her over three hundred letters, more than to any other correspondent, over the course of their friendship. Sue friend, muse, and adviser whose editorial suggestions Dickinson sometimes followed. Sue married Austin in 1856 after a four-year courtship, though their marriage was not a happy one.

Until 1855, Dickinson had not strayed far from Amherst. That spring, accompanied by her mother and sister, she took one of her longest trips. In Philadelphia, she met Charles Wadsworth, a famous minister of the Arch Street Presbyterian Church, with whom she forged a strong friendship, which lasted until his death in 1882. Despite seeing him only twice after 1855 (he moved to San Francisco in 1862), she variously referred to him as "my Philadelphia", "my Clergyman", and "my dearest earthly friend",

From the mid-1850s, Emily's mother became bedridden with various chronic illnesses until her death in 1882. As her mother continued to decline, Dickinson's domestic responsibilities weighed more heavily upon her and she confined herself within the Homestead. During this Emily found the life with her books and nature so congenial, continued to live it.

In the summer of 1858 began what would become her lasting legacy. Reviewing poems she had written, she made clean copies of her work and assembled them together in manuscripts. These manuscripts eventually held nearly eight hundred poems. No one was aware of the existence of these books until after her death.

The first half of the 1860s, after she had largely withdrawn from social life, proved to be Dickinson's most productive writing period.

In April 1862, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a literary critic, radical abolitionist, and ex-minister, wrote a lead piece for *The Atlantic Monthly* entitled, "Letter to a Young Contributor". Higginson's essay urged aspiring writers to "charge your style with life" and contained practical advice for those wishing to break into print. Dickinson's decision to contact Higginson suggests that by 1862 she was contemplating publication and that it may have become increasingly

difficult to write poetry without an audience. Seeking literary guidance that no one close to her could provide, Dickinson sent him a letter.

This largely theatrical letter was unsigned, but she had included her name on a card and enclosed it in an envelope, along with four of her poems. He praised her work but suggested that she delay publishing until she had written longer, being unaware that she had already appeared in print. She assured him that publishing was as foreign to her "as Firmament to Fin", but also proposed, "If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her"

Higginson's advice and his interest in her work certainly provided great moral support. They corresponded until her death, but her reluctance to enter into a cooperative exchange left Higginson nonplussed. He did not press her to publish.

In direct opposition to the immense productivity that she displayed in the early 1860s, Dickinson wrote fewer poems in 1866. Beset with personal loss as well as loss of domestic help, Dickinson may have been too overcome to keep up her previous level of writing. Carlo died during this time. It was not until 1869 that her family brought in a permanent household servant to replace the old one.

Around this time, Dickinson did not leave the Homestead unless it was absolutely necessary and as early as 1867, she began to talk to visitors from the other side of a door rather than speaking to them face to face. She was rarely seen, and when she was, she was usually clothed in white.

Austin and his family began to protect Emily's privacy, deciding that she was not to be a subject of discussion with outsiders. Despite her physical seclusion, however, Dickinson was socially active and expressive through what makes up two-thirds of her surviving notes and letters. When visitors came to either the Homestead or the Evergreens, she would often leave or send over small gifts of poems or flowers. Dickinson also had a good rapport with the children in her life.

When Higginson urged her to come to Boston in 1868 so they could meet, she declined. He came to Amherst in 1870. Later he referred to her, in the most detailed and vivid physical account of her on record, as "a little plain woman with two smooth bands of reddish hair ... in a very plain & exquisitely clean white pique & a blue net worsted shawl."

Scholar Judith Farr notes that Dickinson, during her lifetime, "was known more widely as a gardener, perhaps, than as a poet". Dickinson. The Homestead garden was well known and admired locally in its time. It has not survived, but a clear impression can be formed from the letters and recollections of friends and family.

On June 16, 1874, while in Boston, Edward Dickinson died. When the funeral was held in the Homestead's entrance hall, Emily stayed in her room with the door cracked open. Lamenting her mother's increasing physical as well as mental

demands, Emily wrote "Home is so far from Home".

Otis Phillips Lord, an elderly judge on the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court from Salem, in 1872 or 1873 became an acquaintance of Dickinson's. After the death of Lord's wife in 1877, his friendship with Dickinson probably became a late-life romance. In Phillips Dickinson found a kindred soul. Dickinson wrote, "While others go to Church, I go to mine, for are you not my Church, and have we not a Hymn that no one knows but us?" They wrote to each other religiously every Sunday and a surviving fragment of a letter written by her states "Tuesday is a deeply depressed Day".

Charles Wadsworth also had died after a long illness.

Although she continued to write in her last years, Dickinson stopped editing and organizing her poems. She also exacted a promise from her sister Lavinia to burn her papers.

The 1880s were a difficult time for the remaining Dickinson's. Irreconcilably alienated from his wife, Austin fell in love in 1882 with Mabel Loomis Todd, an Amherst College faculty wife. Dickinson's mother died on November 14, 1882. The next year, Austin and Sue's third and youngest child, Gilbert—Emily's favorite—died of typhoid fever.

As death succeeded death, Dickinson found her world upended. In the fall of 1884, she wrote that "The Dyings have been too deep for me, and before I could raise my Heart from one, another has come." That summer fainted. She remained unconscious late into the night. She was confined to her bed for a few months, but managed to send a final burst of letters in the spring.

On May 15, 1886, Emily Dickinson died at the age of 55.

Despite Dickinson's prolific writing, fewer than a dozen of her poems were published during her lifetime. After her younger sister Lavinia discovered the collection of nearly eighteen hundred poems, Dickinson's first volume was published four years after her death. Until the 1955 publication of Dickinson's *Complete Poems* by Thomas H. Johnson, her poems were considerably edited and altered.

After Dickinson's death, Lavinia Dickinson burned most of the poet's correspondence. Dickinson had left no instructions about the forty notebooks and loose sheets gathered in a locked chest. Lavinia recognized the poems' worth and became obsessed with seeing them published. She turned first to her brother's wife and then to Mabel Loomis Todd, her brother's mistress, for assistance. A feud ensued, with the manuscripts divided between the Todd and Dickinson houses, preventing complete publication of Dickinson's poetry for more than half a century.

Throughout her life, Dickinson wrote poems reflecting a preoccupation with the teachings of Jesus. She stresses the Gospels' contemporary pertinence and recreates them, often with "wit and American colloquial language".

Academic Suzanne Juhasz considers that Dickinson saw the mind and spirit as tangible visitable places and that for much of her life she lived within them.

In the 1930s, as critic Roland Hagenbüchle pointed out, her "Her gift for words and the cultural predicament of her time drove her to poetry...and came at the right time..."

Emily Dickinson is now considered a powerful and persistent figure in American culture. She has become acknowledged as an innovative, pre-modernist poet. Twentieth-century critic Harold Bloom has placed her alongside Walt Whitman, Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, and T. S. Eliot, as a major American poet, and among the thirty greatest Western Writers of all time.

The Grimke Sisters

THE GRIMKE SISTERS

Sarah Moore Grimké (1792–1873) and Angelina Emily Grimké (1805–1879), known as the Grimké sisters, were 19th-century Southern American Quakers, educators and writers who were early advocates of abolitionism and women's rights. Angelina Grimké married abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld in 1838, and changed her name to Angelina Grimké Weld.

The Grimke sisters were born in Charleston, South Carolina. Sarah Moore Grimke was born on November 26, 1792 and Angelina Emily Grimke was born on February 20, 1805. They traveled throughout the North, lecturing about their first hand experiences with slavery on their family's plantation. Among the first American women to act publicly in social reform movements, they received abuse and ridicule for their abolitionist activity. They both realized that women would have to create a safe space in the public arena to be effective reformers. They became early activists in the women's rights movement.

Judge John Faucheraud Grimké, the father of the Grimké sisters, was a strong advocate of slavery and of the subordination of women. A wealthy planter who held hundreds of slaves, Grimké fathered 14 children with his wife. He served as chief judge of the Supreme Court of South Carolina.

Sarah was the eighth child and Angelina was the youngest. Sarah said that at age five, after she saw a slave being whipped, she tried to board a steamer to a place where there was no slavery.

She secretly taught her personal slave to read and write, but when her parents discovered the young tutor at work, he became furious and nearly had the young slave girl whipped.

Sarah's early experiences with education shaped her future as an abolitionist and feminist. Throughout her childhood, she was keenly aware of the inferiority of her own education when compared to her brothers' classical one, and despite the fact that everyone around her recognized her remarkable intelligence and abilities as an orator, she was prevented from obtaining a substantive education or pursuing her dream of becoming an attorney, due to these dreams being considered "unwomanly."

Sarah wanted to become a lawyer and follow in her father's footsteps. She studied constantly until her parents learned she intended to go to college with her brother Thomas. Subsequently, they forbade her to study her father's books or any language.

When her brother Thomas went off to law school at Yale, Sarah remained at home. Thomas continued teaching Sarah during his visits back home from Yale with new ideas about the dangers of Enlightenment and the importance of religion. These ideas, combined with her earlier secret studies of the law, gave her some of the basis for her later work as an activist. Not only did the denial of education seem unfair, Sarah was further perplexed that while her parents and others

encouraged slaves to be baptized and to attend worship services, these believers were not viewed as true brothers and sisters in faith.

From her youth, Sarah determined that religion should take a more proactive role in improving the lives of those who suffered most; this was one of the key reasons she later joined the Quaker community where she became an outspoken advocate for education and suffrage for African-Americans and women.

After her parents ended her studies, Sarah begged them to allow her to become Angelina's godmother. She became part mother and part sister to her much younger sibling, and the two sisters had a close relationship all their lives.

Sarah's mother Mary was a dedicated homemaker and a leader in the Charleston's Ladies Benevolent Society. Mary was also an active Episcopalian. Even though she had many responsibilities, Mary found time to read and comment on her readings to her son Thomas. She did not give Sarah her attention because "she couldn't be bothered with child's concerns."

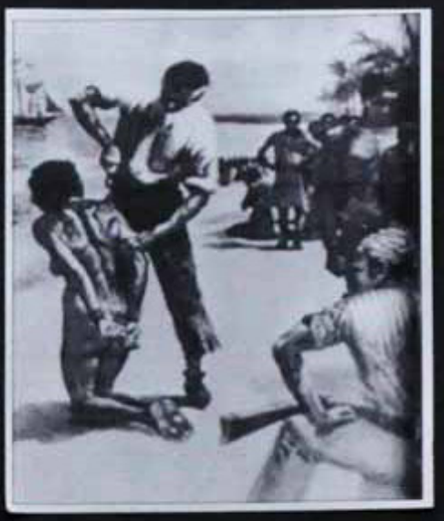
Perhaps because Sarah felt so confined, she expressed a sense of connection with the slaves to such an extent that her parents were unsettled. From the time she was twelve years old, Sarah spent her Sunday afternoons teaching Bible classes to the young slaves on the plantation, and she found it an extremely frustrating experience. While she wanted to teach them to read the scripture for themselves, and they had a longing for such learning, she was refused. Her parents claimed that literacy would only make the slaves unhappy and rebellious. They suggested that mental exertion would make them unfit for physical labor. Teaching slaves to read had been against the law in South Carolina since 1740.

From her youth, Sarah determined that religion should take a more proactive role in improving the lives of those who suffered most; this was one of the key reasons she later joined the Quaker community where she became an outspoken advocate for education and suffrage for African-Americans and women.

Angelina, like her sister Sarah, was offended by slavery from an early age. At age 5, she begged a sea captain to help a slave escape, after she saw the slave shipped. Angelina was able to attend a seminary for girls. There, she fainted one day when she saw a slave boy her own age opening a window, and noticed he could barely walk and his legs and back were covered with bleeding wounds from a whipping. Sarah tried to console and comfort her, but the experience marked Angelina.

At age 13, Angelina refused confirmation in the Anglican Church of her family because of the church's support for slavery.

It was also in that year that Sarah accompanied their father to Philadelphia and then to New Jersey for his health. Their father died there. As a result of her



father's death, Sarah became more self-assured, independent, and morally responsible. Sarah stayed in Philadelphia a few more months after her father died. She met Israel Morris, who introduced her to Quakerism, specifically the writings of John Woolman.

She went back home and decided to go back to Philadelphia to become a Quaker minister, leaving her Episcopalian upbringing behind. She joined the Quakers, drawn by their anti-slavery stance and by their inclusion of women in leadership roles. Sarah briefly returned home to South Carolina, and then moved to Philadelphia.

It fell on Angelina, in Sarah's absence and after her father's death, to manage the plantation and care for her mother. Angelina tried to persuade her mother to set at least the household slaves free, but her mother would not.

In 1827, Sarah returned for a longer visit. She was dressed in Quaker simple clothing. Angelina decided she would become a Quaker, remain in Charleston, and persuade her fellow Southerners to oppose slavery.

Within two years, Angelina gave up hope of having an effect while remaining at home. The influence Sarah had on Angelina may have come from the relationship they had since they were young. For years, Angelina called her sister Sarah "mother."

In 1829, she moved to join her sister in Philadelphia, and she and Sarah set out to educate themselves. Angelina was accepted at Catherine Beecher's school for girls, but their Quaker meeting refused to give permission for her to attend. The Quakers also discouraged Sarah from becoming a preacher.

Angelina became engaged, but her fiancé died in an epidemic. Sarah also received an offer of marriage but refused it, thinking she might lose the freedom she valued. They received word about that time that their brother Thomas had died. He had been a hero to the sisters. He was involved in working for emancipating slaves by sending volunteers back to Africa.

In 1835 Angelina wrote a letter to the editor of William Lloyd Garrison's paper, *The Liberator*, which he published without her knowledge. Immediately both sisters were rebuked by the Quaker community and sought out by the abolitionist movement. The sisters had to choose: recant and become members in good standing in the Quaker community or actively work to oppose slavery. They chose the latter course.

Alice Rossi says that this choice "seemed to free both sisters for a rapidly escalating awareness of the many restrictions upon their lives. Their physical and intellectual energies were soon fully expanded, as though they and their ideas had been suddenly released after a long period of germination."

Quakers rebuked Sarah again in 1836 when she tried to discuss abolition in a meeting.

Abolitionist Theodore Weld trained them to be abolition speakers. The

SUFFRAGETTES

Grimke sisters were the first female public speakers in the United States. They started with speaking to "parlor meetings" which consisted of women only for this was considered proper. Interested men frequently sneaked into the meetings. The audiences got larger and larger and the Grimké sisters began to speak in front of a mixed audience of both men and women.

The Grimké sisters challenged social grounds on two different levels. The sisters spoke for the antislavery movement, at the time there was widespread disapproval of this; the press criticized many male public speakers on this issue. The public speaking of the Grimké sisters was also criticized because they were women. A group of ministers composed a letter citing the Bible in reprimanding the sisters for stepping out of the "woman's proper sphere," which was characterized by silence and subordination.

In response, Sarah Grimke wrote, "Men and women were CREATED EQUAL.... Whatever is right for a man to do, is right for woman....I seek no favors for my sex. I surrender not our claim to equality. All I ask of our brethren is, that they will take their feet from off our necks and permit us to stand upright on that ground which God destined us to occupy."

They came to understand that women were oppressed and that, without power, women could not address or right the wrongs of society. Such an understanding made these women into ardent feminists.

Angelina Grimké wrote her first tract, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South in 1836," to encourage southern women to join the abolitionist movement for the sake of white womanhood as well as black slaves. She addressed Southern women in sisterly, reasoning tones. She began with an effort to demonstrate that slavery was contrary to the Declaration of Independence and to the teachings of Christ. She discussed the damage both to slaves and to society. She advocated teaching slaves to read, and freeing any slaves her readers might own. Although legal codes of slave-holding states restricted or prohibited both of these, she urged her readers to ignore wrongful laws and do what was right.

"Consequences, my friends, belong no more to you than they did to the apostles. Duty is ours and events are God's."

The sisters created more controversy when Sarah published "Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States in 1836 and Angelina republished an "Appeal to the Women of the Nominally Free States" in 1837. In 1837 they went on a tour of Congregationalist churches in the northeast. In addition to denouncing slavery, an acceptable practice in radical circles, the sisters denounced race prejudice. Further, they argued that white women had a natural bond with female, black slaves. These last two ideas were extreme even for radical abolitionists. Their public speaking for the abolitionist cause continued to draw criticism, each attack making the Grimké sisters more determined. By 1838, thousands of people flocked to hear their Boston lecture series.

WOMEN AND MEN ARE EQUAL!

Angelina married fellow abolitionist Theodore Weld on May 14,1938. The marriage ceremony included friends and fellow activists both white and black. Six former slaves of the Grimké family attended. Weld was a Presbyterian, the ceremony was not a Quaker one, Garrison read the vows, and Theodore renounced all legal power that laws at the time gave him over Angelina's property. They left "obey" out of the vows. Because the wedding was not a Quaker wedding and her husband not a Quaker, Angelina was expelled from the Quaker meeting. Sarah was also expelled, for attending the wedding

In 1839 the sisters edited *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*, a collection of newspaper stories from southern papers written by southern newspaper editors.

Until 1854, Theodore was often away from home, either on the lecture circuit or in Washington. After that, financial pressures forced him to take up a more lucrative profession. The Welds eventually had and raised three children.

They, along with Sarah opened and operated a school in their home. Later they operated a boarding school at Raritan Bay Union, a utopian community. At the school, they taught the children of other noted abolitionists, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

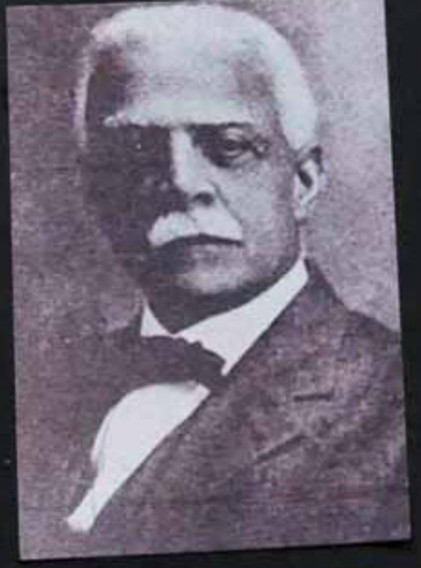
Although Weld was said to have been supportive of Grimké's desire to remain politically active after their marriage, Grimké eventually retreated to a life of domesticity due to failing health. Sarah lived with the couple, and the sisters continued to correspond and visit with their friends in the abolitionist and emerging women's rights movements.

In the years after the Civil War, they raised funds to pay for the education of their two mixed-race nephews, the sons of their brother Henry W. Grimké (1801-1852). The sisters paid for Archibald Henry Grimké and Rev. Francis James Grimké to attend Harvard Law School and Princeton Theological Seminary, respectively. Archibald became a lawyer and later an ambassador to Haiti and Francis became a Presbyterian minister. Both became leading civil rights activists. Archibald's daughter, Angelina Weld Grimke, became a poet and author.

After the Civil War ended, the Grimke-Weld household moved to Hyde Park, Massachusetts, where they spent their last years. Angelina and Sarah were active in the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association in the 1870s.

Devoutly religious, these Quaker converts' works are predominantly religious in nature with strong biblical arguments. Indeed, both their abolitionist sentiments and their feminism sprang from deeply held religious convictions. The sisters neatly summarized the abolitionist arguments, which would eventually lead to the Civil War. Sarah's work addressed, 150 years early, many issues that are familiar to the modern feminist

When Sarah was nearly 80, to test the 15th Amendment, the sisters attempted to vote.



Sarah died in Boston in on December 23, 1873. Angelina suffered strokes shortly after Sarah's death, and was paralyzed. Angelina Grimké Weld died in Boston on October 20 in 1879. Theodore Weld died in 1885.

Sue Monk Kidd

SUE MONK KIDD

Sue Monk-Kidd was born on August 12,1948,in Sylvester, Georgia. She grew up under the spell of stories, listening to tales related by her father and filling notebooks with her own writings. By the age of sixteen, Kidd decided to give up her writing and look ahead toward a more traditional career.

She graduated from Texas Christian University with a B.S. in nursing in 1970. She worked throughout her life as a Registered Nurse and college-nursing instructor at Medical College of Georgia.

She was influenced by the writings of Thomas Merton and in her 20s and began explore her own inner life.

While in her 30's, in response an inner restlessness, Kidd enrolled in writing classes at Emory University and Anderson college, now Anderson University with the intention of creating fiction. She also studied at Sewanee, Bread Loaf, and other writer's conferences.

However, she soon became involved with relating her personal experiences in articles and essays.

She got her start in writing when a personal essay she wrote for a writing class was published in *Guideposts* and reprinted in *Reader's Digest*. She went on to become a Contributing Editor at *Guideposts* for several years.

Her first books, *God's Joyful Surprise* (Harper San Francisco, 1988) and *When the Heart Waits* (Harper San Francisco, 1990), were spiritual memoirs describing her experiences in contemplative Christianity.

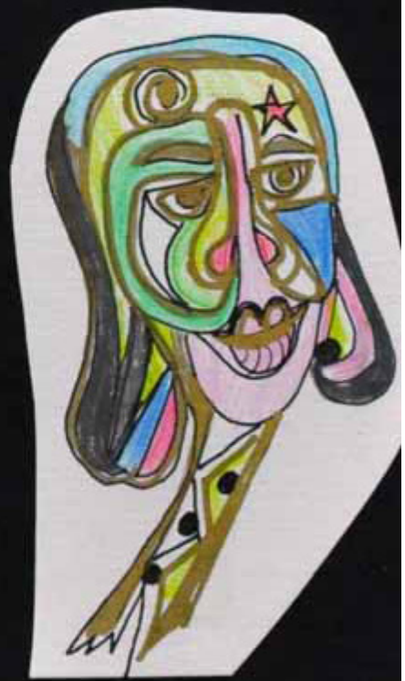
Her third book, *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, (Harper, San Francisco, 1990) was profoundly influenced by her attraction to feminist theology.

At the age of 42, despite her highly successful writing career in the nonfiction genre, Kidd began to consider fiction. She studied fiction writing, wrote and published short stories, and taught a creative writing course at a local college. In 1997, Kidd began writing her first novel, *The Secret Life of Bees*. This novel is set in the Ameican civil rights movement in South Carolina in 1964, and is based on Kidd's first short story published earlier in 1994. *The Secret Life of Bees* (Viking 2002) has earned rave reviews by authors, professional publications, and readers.

The American Place Theater produced an adaptation of the book on stage in New York. It's also has been adapted into a movie by Fox Searchlight, starring Dakota Fanning, Queen Latifah, Jennifer Hudson, Alicia Keys and Sophie Okonedo.

Her second novel, *The Mermaid Chair*, was published in 2005. It won the 2005 Quill Award for General Fiction. It was made into a 2006 Lifetime movie of the same name.

In 2006, Guideposts Books released *Firstlight*, a collection of Kidd's early writings, in hardcover. Penguin Books released it in paperback in 2007.



After traveling with her daughter, Ann Kidd Taylor, to sacred sites in Greece, Turkey, and France, Kidd and Taylor co-authored a memoir, *Traveling with Pomegranates: A Mother-Daughter Story*. Published by Viking in 2009, it appeared on numerous bestseller lists, including the *New York Times* list and has been published in several languages.

The Invention of Wings, a novel was released in January, 2014. It's an historical novel about the brutality of slavery, and is based on life of Sarah Grimké, 19th-century abolitionist and women's rights pioneer.

The novel debuted at No. 1 on New York Times best-seller list and was later selected for Oprah's Book Club 2.0.

In the April 2014, Kidd appeared in an interview with Oprah on OWN's *Super Soul Sunday* episode.

Kidd is married to Sanford "Sandy" Kidd, and the couple have two children, Bob and Ann. She lived in Charleston and Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina, before moving to her current residence in Florida with her husband "Sandy."

Kidd serves on the board of advisors for Poets & Writers, Inc.

Bibliography:

- *God's Joyful Surprise*, 1988
- *When the Heart Waits*, 1990
- *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, 1996
- *The Secret Life of Bees* , 2002
- *The Mermaid Chair*, 2005
- *Firstlight: The Early Inspirational Writings of Sue Monk Kidd*, 2006
- *Traveling with Pomegranates: A Mother-Daughter Story* (with Ann Kidd Taylor). Viking, 2009
- *The Invention of Wings*, 2014.

Awards:

- Katherine Anne Porter Second Prize in Fiction by the Nimrod/Hardman Awards, 1993
- Citation in *100 Distinguished Stories* by *Best American Short Stories 1994* for *The Secret Life of Bees*
- Isak Dineson Creative Non-Fiction Award, 1994
- Bread Loaf Scholar in Fiction, Bread Loaf Writers Conference, Middlebury, VT, 1995
- Winner of the Poets & Writers Exchange Program in Fiction for South Carolina, 1996
- Nominated for the Orange Prize in England for *The Secret Life of Bees*, 2002
- Winner of the Southeastern Booksellers Association Book of the Year Award for *The Secret Life of Bees*, 2003

- Winner of the 2005 Quill Award for General Fiction for *The Mermaid Chair*. The novel was long listed for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award and translated into 24 languages.

Sojourner Truth

SOJOURNER TRUTH

Sojourner Truth was one of the ten or twelve children born to James and Elizabeth Baumfree around 1797. James Baumfree was an African captured from the Gold Coast in modern-day Ghana. Elizabeth Baumfree, also known as Mau-Mau Bett or Betsy to children who knew her,was the daughter of enslaved Africans from the Coast of Guinea. Colonel Hardenbergh bought James and Elizabeth Baumfree from slave traders and kept their family at his estate called by the Dutch name Swartekill, in the town of Esopus, New York. Charles Hardenbergh inherited his father's estate and slaves.

When Charles Hardenbergh died in 1806, nine-year-old Truth (known as Belle, was sold at an auction with a flock of sheep for $100 to John Neely, near Kingston, New York. Until that time, Truth spoke only Dutch. She later described Neely as cruel and harsh, relating how he beat her daily and once even with a bundle of rods. Neely sold her in 1808, for $105, to Martinus Schryver of Port Ewen, a tavern keeper, who owned her for eighteen months. Schryver sold her in 1810 to John Dumont of West Park, New York. Although this fourth owner was kindly disposed toward her, his wife found numerous ways to harass Truth and make her life more difficult.

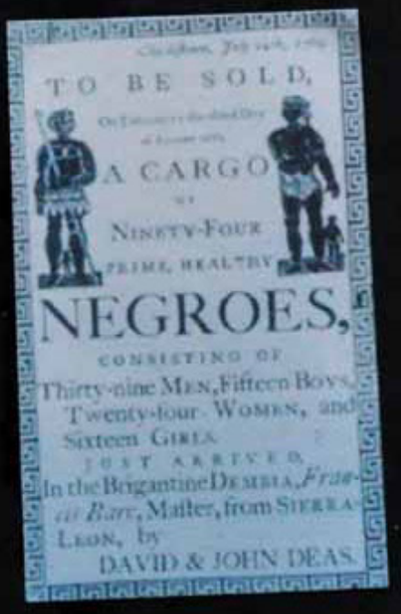
Around 1815, Truth met and fell in love with a slave named Robert from a neighboring farm. Robert's owner (Catlin) forbade their relationship; he did not want his slave to have children with a slave he did not own, because he would not own the children. One day Robert snuck over to see Truth. When his owners found him Robert was savagely beaten and Truth never saw him again, learning later he died from those injuries. Dumont eventually forced Truth to marry an older slave named Thomas. She bore four children: Diana (1815), fathered by Robert; and Thomas who died shortly after birth; Peter (1821); Elizabeth (1825); and Sophia (ca. 1826), fathered by Thomas.

The state of New York began, in 1799, to legislate the abolition of slavery, although the process of emancipating New York slaves was not complete until July 4, 1827. Dumont had promised to grant Truth her freedom a year before the state emancipation, "if she would do well and be faithful." However, he changed his mind, claiming a hand injury had made her less productive. She was infuriated but continued working, spinning 100 pounds of wool, to satisfy her sense of obligation to him.

Late in 1826, Truth escaped to freedom with her infant daughter, Sophia. She had to leave her other children behind because they were not legally freed in the emancipation order until they'd served as bound servants past age twenty.

She later said: "I did not run off, for I thought that wicked, but I walked off, believing that to be all right."

She found her way to the home of Isaac and Maria Van Wagenen, who took them in. Isaac offered to buy her services for the remainder of the year, which



Dumont accepted for $20. She lived there until the New York State Emancipation Act was approved a year later.

Truth learned that her son Peter, then five years old, had been sold illegally by Dumont to an owner in Alabama. With the help of the Van Wagenens, she took the issue to court and, after months of legal proceedings, got back her son, who had been abused by his new owner.

Truth became one of the first black women to go to court against a white man and win the case.

Truth had a life-changing religious experience during her stay with the Van Wagenens, and became a devout Christian. In 1829 she moved with her son Peter to New York City, where she worked as a housekeeper for Elijah Pierson. In 1832, she met Robert Matthews, also known as Prophet Matthias, and went to work for him keeping house. In a bizarre twist of fate, Elijah Pierson died, and Robert Matthews and Truth were accused of stealing from and poisoning him. Both were acquitted and Robert Matthews moved west.

In 1839, Truth's son Peter took a job on a whaling ship called the *Zone of Nantucket*. From 1840 to 1841, she received three letters from him, though in his third letter he told her he had sent five. Peter said he also never received any of her letters. When the ship returned to port in 1842, Peter was not on board and Truth never heard from him again.

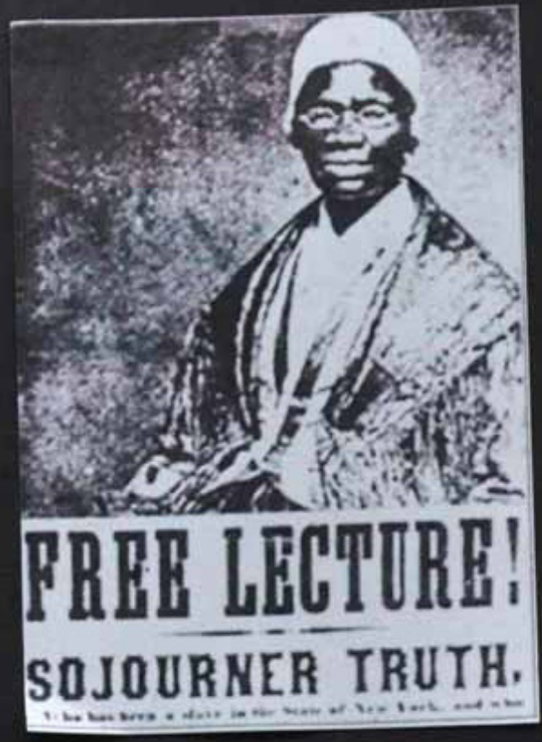
On June 1, 1843, Truth changed her name to *Sojourner Truth* and told her friends: "The Spirit calls me, and I must go." She became a Methodist, and left to make her way traveling and preaching about the abolition of slavery. In 1844, she joined the Northampton Association of Education and Industry. Founded by abolitionists, the organization supported women's rights and religious tolerance as well as pacifism. There were 210 members and they lived on 500 acres, raising livestock, running a sawmill, a gristmill, and a silk factory.

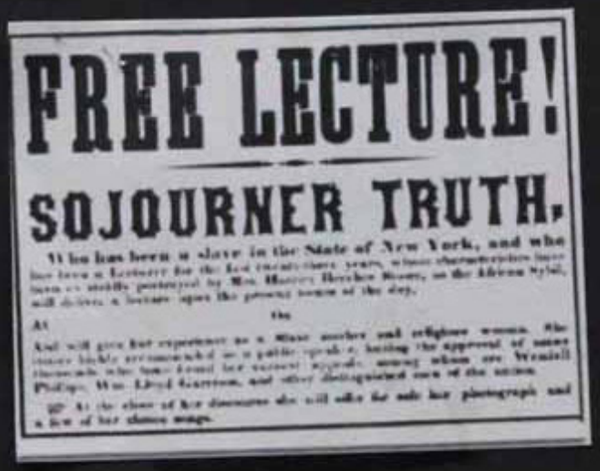
In 1846, the group disbanded, unable to support itself. In 1847, she went to work as a housekeeper for George Benson, the brother-in-law of William Lloyd Garrison.

Truth started dictating her memoirs to her friend Olive Gilbert, and in 1850 William Lloyd Garrison privately published her book, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave*.

That same year, she purchased a home in Northampton for $300, and spoke at the first National Women's Rights Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts.

In 1851, Truth left Northampton to join George Thompson, an abolitionist and speaker. In May, she attended the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio where she delivered her famous extemporaneous speech on women's rights, later known, as "Ain't I a Woman". Hannah Tracy and Frances Dana Barker Gage organized the con[illegible] and were present when Truth spoke. Different versions





of Truth's words have been recorded. Marius Robinson, a newspaper owner and editor in the audience, published the first account. She reported no instance of the question "Ain't I a Woman?"

Twelve years later in May 1863, Gage published a very different version. In it, Truth's speech pattern had characteristics of Southern slaves, and the speech included sentences and phrases that Robinson didn't report. Gage's version of the speech became the historic standard, and is known, as "Ain't I a Woman" because that question was repeated four times. In contrast to Robinson's report, Gage's 1863 version included Truth saying her 13 children were sold away from her into slavery. Truth is widely believed to have had five children, with one sold away, and was never known to boast of more children.

In contemporary reports, Truth was warmly received by the convention-goers, the majority of whom were long-standing abolitionists, friendly to progressive ideas of race and civil rights.

Over the next 10 years, Truth spoke before dozens, perhaps hundreds, of audiences. From 1851 to 1853, Truth worked with Marius Robinson, the editor of the Ohio *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, and traveled around that state speaking. In 1853, she spoke at a suffragist "mob convention" at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City. In 1856, she traveled to Battle Creek, Michigan, to speak to a group called the Friends of Human Progress. In 1858, someone interrupted a speech and accused her of being a man; Truth opened her blouse and revealed her breasts.

On September 7, 1853, at a convention, young men greeted her with "a perfect storm," hissing and groaning. In response, Truth said, "You may hiss as much as you please, but women will get their rights anyway. You can't stop us, neither".

Sojourner, like other public speakers, often adapted her speeches to how the audience was responding to her. In her speech, Sojourner speaks out for women's rights. She incorporates religious references in her speech, particularly the story of Esther. She then goes on to say that, just as women in scripture, women today are fighting for their rights. Moreover, Sojourner scolds the crowd for all their hissing and rude behavior, reminding them that God says to "Honor thy father and thy mother."

On May 9–10, 1867, her speech was addressed to the American Equal Rights Association, and divided into three sessions. Sojourner was received with loud cheers now that she had a better reputation established. For the first part of her speech, she spoke mainly about the rights of black women. Sojourner argued that because the push for equal rights had led to black men winning new rights, now was the best time to give black women the rights they deserve too. Throughout her speech she kept stressing that "we should keep things going while things are stirring" and fears that once the fight for colored rights settles down, it will take a long time to warm people back up to the idea of colored women's having

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down, these women together ought to be able to turn it right again.

-Sojourner Truth

equal rights.

In the second session Sojourner utilized a story from the Bible to help strengthen her argument for equal rights for women. She ended by saying, "man is so selfish that he has got women's rights and his own too, and yet he won't give women their rights. He keeps them all to himself."

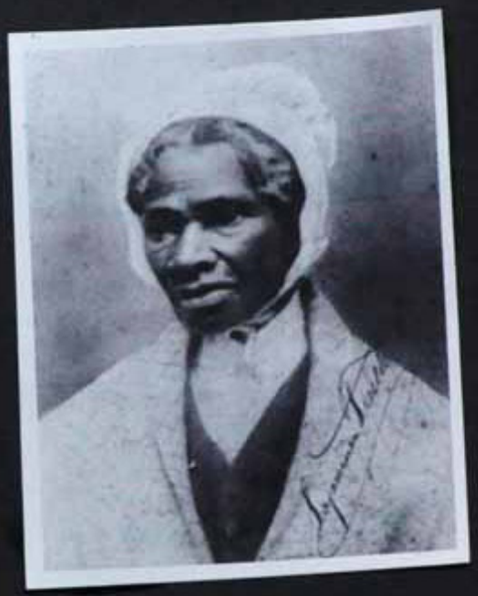
For the final session Sojourner told her audience that she owned her own house, as did other women, and must therefore pay taxes. Yet, they were still unable to vote because they were women. Black women who were slaves were made to do hard manual work, such as building roads. Sojourner argued that if these women could do that work, then they should be allowed to vote because voting is easier than building roads.

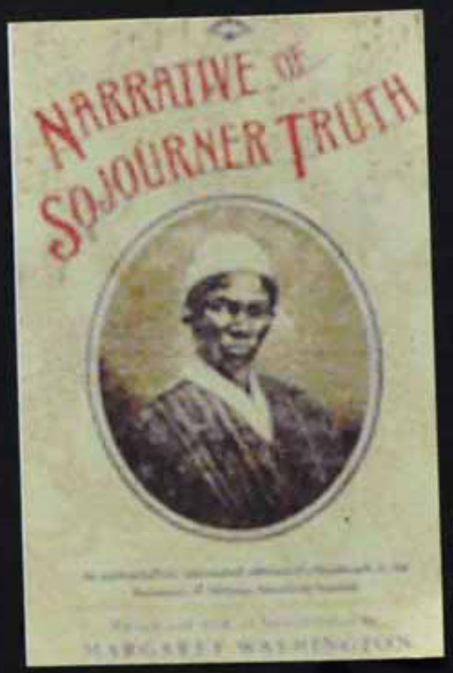
On the Eighth Anniversary of Negro Freedom on New Year's Day, 1871, she began by talking about her own life. She told how her mother had her pray to God that she may have good masters and mistresses. She goes on to say her masters were not good to her. She was whipped for not understanding English. She questioned why God hadn't made her masters be good to her. Sojourner admitted she had hated white people, but once she met her final master, Jesus, she was filled with love for everyone. Once slaves were emancipated, she tells the crowd she knew her prayers had been answered. Sojourner then mentioned that some freed slaves were living on government aid. Sojourner announced that wasn't any better for those colored people than it is for the members of her audience. She then proposed that black people be given their own land. Because a portion of the South's population contained rebels that were unhappy with the abolishment of slavery, that region of the United States was not well suited for colored people. She goes on to suggest that colored people be given land out west to build homes and prosper on.

1843 was a turning point for Truth. She changed her religion and adopted her chosen name. She became a Millerite Adventist in 1843, attending several Adventist camp meetings and set out preaching. However, she left the Millerites for a time after Jesus did not appear in 1844. Later in 1846 she re-associated with former members of the Millerite Movement who had joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Truth sold her home in Northampton in 1857 and bought a house in Harmonia, Michigan, just west of Battle Creek. According to the 1860 census, her household in Harmonia included her daughter, Elizabeth Banks (age 35), and her grandsons James Caldwell (age 16) and Sammy Banks (age 8).

Truth helped recruit black troops during the Civil War for the Union Army. James Caldwell, her grandson, enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Regiment. In 1864,The National Freedman's Relief Association in Washington, D.C. employed Truth, where she worked diligently to improve conditions for African-Americans. In 1865, while working at the Freedman's Hospital in Washington, Truth rode in the





streetcars to help force their desegregation.

In 1867, Truth moved from Harmonia to Battle Creek. In 1868, she traveled to western New York and continued traveling all over the East Coast. At a speaking engagement in Florence, Massachusetts, she had just returned from a very tiring trip when Truth was called upon to speak. She stood up and said, "Children, I have come here like the rest of you, to hear what I have to say."

In 1872, she returned to Battle Creek and tried to vote in the presidential election, but was turned away at the polling place.

Sojourner Truth died on November 26, 1883, at her home in Battle Creek, Michigan. More than 3,000 people crowded into the Battle Creek Tabernacle to pay their last respects.

Some honors by year:

- 1981-Inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in New York.
- 1983-Inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame.
- 1986-U.S. Postal Service issued a commemorative postage stamp honoring Sojourner Truth.
- 2009-The first black woman honored with a bust in the US Capitol.

Margaret Starbird

MARGARET STARBIRD

Margaret Starbird was born June 18,1942. Her father was Army Major General Charles F. Leonard Jr. who won a Silver Medal in the modern pentathlon at the 1936 Olympic games held in Germany. Her family was Catholic and she was very devout in that tradition.

Margaret was introduced to the book, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, and found it so offensive; she set out to disprove it.

The more she researched the sources herself, the less she could discount. She traveled to Europe for original research. The whole process became very unnerving to her. As a devout Catholic, she felt she had been misled by the very institution she had placed so much faith in her entire life.

The process led to a crisis of faith for her and one that she personally resolved by deciding a good deal of the material in the book, Holy Blood, Holy Grail was genuine and could not be denied. She came to believe that notion that Jesus was unmarried was stranger that the notion that he was.

As a result, she turned her extensive research into the authoring of seven books. She now argues for the existence of a secret Christian tradition that held Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, calling it the "Grail heresy."

In her 1993 book *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalen and the Holy Grail*, Margaret Starbird developed the hypothesis that Saint Sarah was the daughter of Jesus and Mary Magdalen. She believes this was the source of the legend associated with the cult at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. She has also claimed that the name "Sarah" meant "Princess" in Hebrew, thus making her the forgotten child of the "*sang réal*", the blood royal of the King of the Jews. Her works contain many references to ancient *alphanumeric codes* known as Hebrew Gematria and Greek Isopsephy. She also exposes secrets encoded in classical art. Starbird believes that the patriarchal Roman Catholic Church suppressed the veneration and devotion of the sacred feminine, leading to an unbalanced spirituality in mainstream Christianity. The suppression of the sacred feminine and resulting imbalance in modern religion has been discussed and shown by many others besides Starbird.

Also, one need only look at the history of the Catholic Church and the many atrocities it has performed against women, since inception, to understand there is some underlying truth in Starbird's claims.

Margaret Starbird has outlined her conviction that "Christianity at its inception included the celebration of the *Hieros gamos* ("holy wedding") of opposites, a model incarnate in the archetypal bridegroom and his bride – Jesus the Christ and the woman called "the Magdalen". This model of unity, tragically lost in the cradle of Christianity, is patterned on the fundamental blueprint for life on our planet, and manifested in the leadership role played by certain women in the community of Jesus' first followers."

Starbird claims this sacred partnership was the same as that which existed in other regions of the Near East that predated Christianity, comparable to the cults of Inanna and Dummuzi, Ishtar and Tammuz - being part of a fertility cult that brought well being to its people. This marriage honored "the cosmic dance of masculine and feminine energies and the eternal cycles manifested by the Life Force", with Mary Magdalene designated the "Queen of Heaven".

Starbird does not believe that Mary Magdalen originated from the town of Magdala, saying it was originally named *Taricheae* in biblical times before its destruction in AD 67, and when rebuilt after the death of Mary Magdalen was renamed "Magdala".

Margaret Starbird holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from the University of Maryland, where she majored in Medieval Studies, Comparative Literature and German Language. From 1988, Starbird took classes at Vanderbilt Divinity School, later teaching religious education and Scripture in Catholic parishes.

Married in 1968 to retired Army Colonel Ed Starbird, she is the mother of Stanford basketball star Kate Starbird.

Although Starbird's works have very little mention of a continuing sacred bloodline of descendants of Jesus and Mary Magdalen which is also a significant portion of the premises behind such books as *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, she did state in *The Woman With the Alabaster Jar* that "there is evidence to suggest that the royal bloodline of Jesus and Mary Magdalen eventually flowed in the veins of the Merovingian monarchs of France."

Starbird's theories have been criticized for being based on medieval lore and art, rather than on historical treatment of the Bible.

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- *The Goddess in the Gospels: Reclaiming the Sacred Feminine* (Bear & Co, 1998). ISBN 1-879181-55-X
- *The Tarot Trumps and the Holy Grail: Great Secrets of the Middle Ages* (Bear & Co, 2000). ISBN 0-9678428-0-8
- *Magdalene's Lost Legacy: Symbolic Numbers and the Sacred Union in Christianity* (Bear & Co, 2003). ISBN 1-59143-012-7
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Co-authored with Joan Norton

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By Marcia Fountain-Blacklidge