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## Differing Perspectives Of Women'S Rights: John Todd And Gail Hamilton

The root of the great error of our day is, that woman is to be made independent and self supporting... —Rev. John Todd 1867 View of Women's Rights

The rights of women, as described by Rev. John Todd, are placed in a proverbial box that limits the scope, understanding and ability of women in general. His statements seem to place blame of women for their supposed shortcomings and inabilities when compared to men under the guise of godliness. He blatantly calls women out in a manner that almost belittles them while hiding behind the cloth (being that he is a Doctor of Divinity). His perspective and place from which he speaks is protected in a manner of speaking and validated by his title. Yet his message comes across as chauvinistic, uninformed and, incomplete as seen when compared to the responses by Gail Hamilton. Ultimately it is a comparison of the sexes by the sexes during a time when assumptions were rampant. Rev, Todd immediately establishes his baseline context with a reference to God and what women can and cannot do accordingly. He states in response to the question of women being independent of men by simply saying "you can't" (Todd, 1867). He then refers to the physical, and legal ramifications of occupying the same space as men. His ensuing statement refers to the hedging in of women by law and control that they cannot overcome.

Early in the argument it is seen that Todd believes that his word is divine, just, and without recourse. The reverend attacks directly the mental ability of women. Although he often uses the term "delicate", it does not exist in a frame of thought that is positive. His use of the term delicate seems to lean toward the assumption of weakness that requires protection of sorts by that 3 of the supposed stronger men. He speaks from a perspective of global communication and the assumption that he can speak for the entirety of the humankind. He plays directly into the notion that women are poor in spirit, thought, physical ability and do not have the built-in rights to make decisions on their own. The assertion in his argument is that God has placed the responsibility of men to provide wages and thus need to be the only ones who continue education and hold positions such as architect, educators, or anything other than "what her physical organization will possibly bear". His stance is both presumptive and uniformed with regard to the abilities of women. The Sphere, Suffrage and Wages Todd States of the woman and her sphere of considration: "It is her privilege and her right. She ought to be exempt from the hard drudgery of the earth...". This sphere that he speaks of is such that detaches women from everything external to the household. His short-sighted view of women removes them from the right to politics, higher education, the right to vote and the ability to earn a fair wage. He

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again refers to the Godliness of the position of the women in an attempt to validate his views. He notes that voting is a civil matter and as such not meant for women to endure. His method of approach, mainly because of his position allows him to speak freely and in a manner that protects him from disagreement or so he assumed. Hamilton Responds. Gail Hamilton takes the statements of Rev. Todd and addresses them with one main question: "What of it?". She directly challenges the points of contention with the reverend through comparisons, direct questions and the perspective of one of the poor women of 4 whom he speaks.

Mary Abigail Dodge (Hamilton's real name) states that she, in direct contrast to Rev Todd, judges "what I have seen in female schools, that it can be done". The "it" that she refers to is precisely what the good reverend contends that women cannot do from higher education to politics to possessing the right to vote and have a say in who forms and enforces law. The essayist succinctly states that " Wives and mothers in their recognized "sphere" are called on to perform many services no more agreeable to woman's "refined, " and far more exhaustive to her "delicate organization, " than blacking boots". Hamilton contends that the woman place is powerful and and just as viable as that of men. The perverseness of the clergyman's statements evoked a response of strength and beauty as explained by Hamilton. Her responses were based on two things that Todd did know willingly grant women...experience and knowledge. Both of which, according to Hamilton women possess as well as favor with Christ just as men.

## Conclusion

Given that the context of both responses are from the viewpoint of the 1800's one would tend to see (not necessarily understand) the perspective that Rev, Todd is coming from. His chauvinistic, and dismissive mentality is such that it draws ire from a modern view. Mrs. Hamilton challenges his position using his own words as fuel for her disapproval. It can be said that she returns the favor by pointing out the fallacy in his words and turning them back in on him. Ultimately it is a stance that shaped the world during that time and Rev. Todd please negative light and thus a damper on progress that would take years to undo.

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