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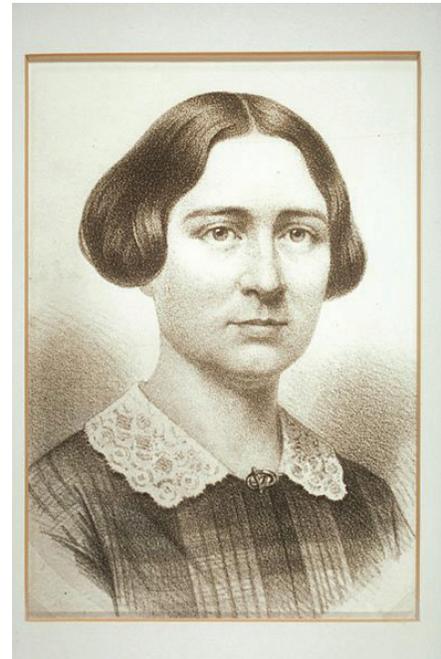
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New Insights about Antoinette Brown Blackwell

The United Church of Christ honors the life of Antoinette Brown Blackwell (1825-1921). In 1853 she was the first woman ordained to Christian ministry in a mainstream Protestant denomination in the United States.

Blackwell did not study science, but she became a popular author, publishing Studies in General Science (1869)—and ten other books in the physical and social sciences. She was impressed by the expanding world of science and by much of Charles Darwin's Origin of the Species (1859).

In her second book, The Sexes Throughout Nature (1875), she argued strongly for the equality of the sexes—making distinctions between equality and sameness and insisting, for example, that male and female lions each had attributes that strengthened the species. Darwin made lists of men and women in almost any field, but he always argued that males were superior. Blackwell objected, collecting her own data and using Darwin's research, she compared male and female strengths and deficits, declaring that males and females of the same species were true equivalents. Blackwell thought that Darwin's opinions were socially repugnant and scientifically in error, because *"Men see clearly and think sharply when their sympathies are keenly enlisted, but not otherwise"*



Blackwell knew that people would think her brash to take on great men of science, but she felt she had no alternative. *"Only a woman can approach the subject from a feminine standpoint; and there are none but beginners among us in this class of investigations. However great the disadvantages. . . , these will never be lessened by waiting."*

Blackwell was a pioneer ordained woman minister, a relentless advocate for women's rights, and a skilled science writer challenging masculine assumptions.

Read more about "The Woman Who Challenged Darwin's Sexism" in Smithsonian Magazine, November 2017. Copies of her book, The Sexes Throughout Nature are online.

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