**Passages on Paternalism:**

The paternalistic structure of the South had an effect on the way Southern women experienced life and why they felt slavery gave them more power within it. In the North women lived under the structure of a rigid patriarchy, where they were below men on all levels besides their domestic realm; in the South, however, women not only lived within a patriarchy but they were an intricate part of Southern paternalism. Paternalism allocated men as not only the heads of their families but also of their slaves. They became father figures to the community as a whole, treating the slave population as a benevolent father would. These father figures did not see themselves as ruthless masters, but caring overseers who had the interests of their slaves at heart.

Another common defense of slavery made by mistresses was that the treatment of slaves on the plantation was superior to that of freed blacks. “I have had the opportunity to mingle freely with slaveholders of different characters and dispositions, and while I regard slavery as such an enormous evil and am heartily glad that it has been abolished in this country, I am bound in candor to say that my observation, during all these years of my residence in Georgia and South Carolina, thoroughly convinced me that in the majority of cases slaves were more kindly treated and brought into more intimate and kindly relations to white families than they are now, though free.” Bostick pointed out that slavery benefited the black population by providing caring plantation families who held their interests at heart. In her letter, Bostick went on to describe how the recipient’s father proved her point. He provided an example of how Southern slave owners cared for their slaves on an equal level with that of their own family. Not every plantation was this way, but this image of the paternalistic slave master was a way for Southerners to defend their old way of life and it also demonstrated the ideals of the period. Southern women, before and after emancipation, clung to the image of the benevolent plantation in an attempt to prove the morality of slavery and uphold it as an institution.