

**19<sup>th</sup> Century British Women Telling Bible Stories:**  
**An Exploration of the Story of the Fall**

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## Abstract

This paper will explore how the story of Adam and Eve was written by 19<sup>th</sup> century British women in children's Bible story collections. Making use of approximately 20 children's Bible story collections published during this time, this paper will first contextualize children's Bible stories and women as authors in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain before discussing typical changes and interpretive decisions made to different parts of the story. A series of four case studies will discuss how specific publications both fit and differ from the norm discussed in the previous section. This project finds that women publishing the story of Adam and Eve interpreted and simplified it for a juvenile audience in ways that allowed them to teach children about the consequences of sin, encourage obedience, explain how evil came into the world, or as a preparatory device to explain the need for Jesus' salvation.

## 1. Introduction

“Yet when we explore Jewish and Christian writers from the first centuries to the common era, we find that they seldom talk directly about sexual behavior, and they seldom write treatises on such topics as marriage, divorce, and gender. Instead they often talk about Adam, Eve and the serpent—the story of creation—and when they do, they tell us what they think about sexual matters.”<sup>1</sup>

-Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*

Why is it that Adam and Eve have become the pillar for revealing one's stance on gender relations? It must have something to do with the power of creation. If men and women were created and fell equally, then it makes sense to extend this equality into the modern world. Throughout Christian history, the prevailing interpretation of the Fall has largely blamed Eve for eating of the forbidden fruit first, and as a result, has deemed her entire sex as lesser than men. Also found throughout Christian history are examples of women and men who have resisted this interpretation.<sup>2</sup> Interpretations of the Fall in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain are interesting because this century sees the establishment of Victorian values and the ideology of separate spheres which romanticised women's roles as mothers and teachers, while it also saw the rise of the suffragist movement which challenged women's roles as confined to the private sphere.

Ruth Bottigheimer in *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to Present*, argues that children's Bibles reflect social tensions within their cultural context. She asserts that:

Children's Bibles express value and standards that are not universal and eternal but particular and ephemeral. Bound by place and time, they adapt an ancient and inspired text to changing manners, morals, ideas, and concerns. For authors, buyers, and readers in nearly every age children's Bibles have seemed to be texts faithful to the Bible itself. But their author's common effort to use the bible to shape a meaningful present has produced Bible stories that mingle sacred text with secular values.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988), xviii.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the many men and women who have resisted traditional interpretations of Eve throughout Christian history include: Elisabeth Cady Stanton, Sarah Moore Grimké, Hannah Mather Crocker, Phyllis Triple and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

<sup>3</sup> Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 218.

This project builds on Bottigheimer's assertion that children's Bibles are bound to their historical context in the same way that the books of the Bible itself are. By looking at children's Bible stories written by women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is the aim of this project to see how standards of gender are reproduced, inherited and challenged in children's Bible story collections amidst the backdrop of 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. The central research question is: How were 19<sup>th</sup> century British women writing the story of Adam and Eve for children and were they reproducing, or challenging traditional gender roles in their interpretations of this story? Although women publishing this story interpreted it in a variety of ways, female authors in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain simplified this story for a juvenile audience in ways that allowed them to teach children about the consequences of sin, encourage obedience, explain how evil came into the world, or as a preparatory device to explain the need for Jesus' salvation.

This project makes use of approximately 20 children's Bible story collections published by British women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see first section of bibliography). Approximately 60 Bible storybooks were consulted in this process, many of which were "cut" because they did not fit either the geographic or time restrictions on this project, or because the publication lacked any information with which to determine its time and place of publication.<sup>4</sup> This is a relatively small sample from this period and genre but it is fairly representative. Most of these publications were intended for an audience of young children below the age of 10, while a select few were intended for slightly older groups of children in Sunday School classes. The publications vary from those that were bestsellers to small religious tracts that perhaps survived by chance. Some of the authors

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<sup>4</sup> Primary source research was conducted at the Douglas Library Special Collections at Queen's University, the Taylor Collection at the Toronto Public Library and from a personal collection of women's publications owned by Dr. Marion Taylor at Wycliffe College in Toronto. This was supplemented by the growing collection of publications which can now be found online through gateways such as archive.org, Google Books, or Project Gutenberg.

are well-known, and many of them are very hard to find information on. The women who wrote these publications were mostly Protestant and by far, Anglican. The findings in this paper will primarily reference publications from the 25 children's Bibles, but there are many similarities between these and the rest of the primary sources discussed.

This paper enlists textual analysis, historical criticism and the comparative method. Textual analysis is used to assess the strategies and interpretive licences taken in retelling the story of Adam and Eve. The comparative method helps to reveal if there are any noticeable differences between the ways that women told these stories for children. Lastly, the historical method grounds this study with knowledge of the historical context in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain for children's Bibles, women's and men's roles, the women's movement, trends in religious children's education and typical interpretations of the Fall at the time.

Regarding organization, the paper is split into three sections. The first discusses the contextual background in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain including the traditional interpretations of the Fall, norms within the genre of children's religious literature and women's roles in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. The second section discusses how the story of the Fall was typically told and what changes were made to make it appropriate for children by referencing those 20 or so Bible storybooks that were published by 19<sup>th</sup> century British women. The final section consists of a series of four case studies, introducing the author's and some of the more interesting versions of the story, proposing why they may have chosen to tell the story as they did.

## **2. Contextual Background**

This section reviews relevant information pertaining to 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain to better understand the children's Bible stories analysed in this paper. First, traditional interpretations of the Fall throughout Christian history and in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain provide a contrast for the more

unique interpretations of this story found in the case study texts. Second, women's roles in 19<sup>th</sup> century British society contextualize the authors of these texts and lastly, a brief history of published children's Bible stories and religious children's literature in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain will help to situate the case study texts within their historical literary context.

## 2.1 Traditional Interpretations of the Fall in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

For most of Christian history, the prevailing interpretation of the Fall has held that Eve bears the brunt of the blame for the Fall and was created as lesser than Adam, but where did this interpretation come from? Traditional interpretations hold that Eve (and thus all women) are subordinate to Adam (and thus all men) because she was created after Adam and out of his side, and her weaker nature caused her to sin first. Yet, many feminist theologians and interpreters of the story have argued that the text itself does not portray Eve as anything less than equal to Adam.<sup>5</sup> Here, I will point to three ways in which androcentric interpretations of the story permeated Christian history through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

First, androcentric interpretations rest on the story in some ways, but are reinforced by God's punishment of Eve in Genesis 3:16 which proclaims that "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."<sup>6</sup> Mieke Bal has argued that this is the only patriarchal line in the story, and that Genesis 2-3 maintains an otherwise neutral stance on Eve's status. By painting the entire story with the brush of this curse, Bal argues that androcentric interpreters of this story commit a retrospective fallacy. That is, they project Eve's character at the end of the story upon her earlier character and use it to justify her lesser status in creation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Scholarly examples include: Phyllis Trible, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Phyllis Bird, Mieke Bal, etc.

<sup>6</sup> This paper will use the Authorized King James Version as it was the version most commonly used in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. For a history of the King James Bible and the different versions, please see D. Norton, *A Textual History of The King James Bible* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Mieke Bal, "Sexuality, Sin and Sorrow: The Emergence of the Female Character (A Reading of Genesis 1-3)." *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1/2 (1985): 23.



Second, these androcentric interpretations become cemented into the Christian tradition by some of the Pauline texts which refer to Eve's Fall and creation as proof of her subjugation.<sup>8</sup> For example, 1 Timothy 2:11-15 states that,

<sup>11</sup>Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. <sup>12</sup>But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. <sup>13</sup>For Adam was first formed, then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. <sup>15</sup>Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

Third, the power of Augustine's idea of original sin cannot be understated as having a pervasive and negative impact on the Christian view of Eve. The doctrine of Original Sin, officially adopted by the Catholic Church in the Council of Trent in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, holds that human beings have been fundamentally corrupted through the Fall and are unable to help themselves out of their own sinful nature without God. Augustine saw Eve as a sort of sexual temptress for Adam, leading him down the path of sin when she chose to eat of the forbidden fruit. Thus, Augustine believed that original sin was connected to sexual desire and was passed to each generation through sex, like a disease. For Augustine, original sin's disease-like quality renders human's incapable of escaping their own sinful ways without the divine grace of God.

In addition, many of the Church Fathers believed that Eve's role and placement in the story was for procreation only. Augustine even claimed that "I cannot think of any reasons for woman's being made as man's helper, if we dismiss the reason for procreation."<sup>9</sup> Hence, traditional androcentric interpretations of the Fall hold that Eve is to be blamed for the Fall, and was created

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<sup>8</sup> Other Pauline texts which mention Eve include 1 Corinthians 11:7-9 and 2 Corinthians 11:3.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine, *On the Good Marriage*, quoted in Kristen E. Kvam, Linda S. Schearing and Valerie H. Ziegler (eds.), *Eve & Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 112.

as a lesser being. Even though there is no evidence of original sin in Genesis, this pessimistic understanding of human nature has been a large part of western Christian thought ever since.<sup>10</sup>

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British women's lesser position became embodied in the ideology of separate spheres which were justified by the story of the Fall. This is evident in Family Bibles from the period which include marginal notes, kerygmatic references and commentaries that describe Eve as the "weaker vessel, both in body and mind".<sup>11</sup> It is common to see marginal references to the above quoted Pauline texts beside Eve's creation (Genesis 2:20-25). Moreover, commentaries found in Family Bibles on the story reveal that Eve was not seen as equal to Adam:

"The woman was formed of a rib taken from Adam's side while he slept, by which we may learn, that the woman ought not to usurp authority over the man, nor yet to be treated by him as a slave: but used like a companion with moderation, respect and affection. God presents the woman to the man, from whom she receives an affectionate reception, and a name expressive not only of her subjugation but of her affinity; though differing in sex the same nature."<sup>12</sup>

Other Family Bible commentaries on this text reveal similar tendencies. The commentaries by Matthew Henry (1662-1714), were still published well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century and included comments such as: "it was the devil's subtlety to assault the weakest vessel with his temptation; though perfect her kind, yet we may suppose inferior to Adam in knowledge and- presence of mind."<sup>13</sup> The Rev. Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), is also quoted in commentaries for having said that "The woman was not taken from the head to rule, neither was she taken from the feet to be trodden upon; but from somewhere near the heart, where should always remain."<sup>14</sup> On the Fall itself,

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<sup>10</sup> James Denny, "Fall." In *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, (1932), 701.

<sup>11</sup> This happens in Family bible, 1107, n.p. and in *New Family Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, with notes, illustrations and practical improvements, selected from the exposition by the Rev. Matthew Henry*, by Rev. E. Bloomfield. (Bungay: Brightly and Childs, 1815), which calls Eve the "weaker vessel," n.p.

<sup>12</sup> Family Bible. (1107), 1800?, n.p.

<sup>13</sup> *New Family Bible*, n.p.

<sup>14</sup> William Patton (ed.). *Cottage Bible, and Family Expositor; Containing the Old and New Testaments, with Practical Expositions and Explanatory Notes by Thomas Williams*. (Hartford: Case, Tiffany and Company, 1854), n.p.

commentators often lament how much women “lost” in the Fall. For example, Thomas Williams stated that “[w]omen lost much by the Fall, and the sex have been reduced to great degradation and many hardships, especially in heathen countries; but the Gospel restores her to her proper rank, and equal interest with man in all the blessings of the Gospel.”<sup>15</sup>

All of these quotes show an uneasy tension in discussing women’s status. They often begin by degrading the entire sex, and then justify or negotiate this to an extent, leaving one with the impression that women are not completely subordinate to men, but certainly are not equal either. This contradictory wording conforms to the ideology of separate spheres which maintained that men worked and operated in the public sphere while women were relegated to the private sphere of home and family. Women, as the “weaker vessels,” were viewed as naturally maternal and thus, meant for the soft life of caring for children.<sup>16</sup> Women’s status in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain was one unequal to men, and the story of the Fall was used to both understand and promote women’s subordinate status. While this was the prevailing interpretation of the story at the time, it is interesting that this interpretation does not often find its way into children’s versions of the story.

## 2.2 Religious Literature and Women’s Roles in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain

The history of Bible stories for children dates to Peter Comestor’s *Historica Scholastica*, published in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Latin and used in educational settings by young adults.<sup>17</sup> The publication remained popular until the 16<sup>th</sup> century when Martin Luther published a short pamphlet entitled the *Passional* which told the story of Jesus’ life.<sup>18</sup> Luther called this a “Bible for the laity” and although it was not overly popular, it presented another model for late children’s Bible

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<sup>15</sup> Patton, *Cottage Bible*, n.p.

<sup>16</sup> Patton, *Cottage Bible*, n.p.

<sup>17</sup> Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 23.

stories.<sup>19</sup> Bottigheimer asserts that Luther “went to considerable lengths to explicate Genesis in a mode more egalitarian than had been habitual in previous centuries” and calls Eve in the *Passional* a “dear holy mother.”<sup>20</sup> While this may have briefly elevated Eve’s status, Genevan Calvinists returned to androcentric interpretations of the Fall when they began publishing children’s Bibles in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>21</sup>

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, children’s Bible stories were produced in a variety of forms. Children’s literature grew with the child as they graduated from learning the alphabet with a Bible abecedary, to hieroglyphic Bibles which replaced difficult-to-read words with pictures, to catechisms, hymns and storybooks like those studied here.<sup>22</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the most common type of religious publication was the religious tract. The religious tract became popular after the publication of the Cheap Repository Tracts in 1769 and retained its popularity for 70 years.<sup>23</sup> The genre was cheaply produced and affordable, making it perfect for Evangelical writers to create Sunday School texts and other religious reading materials for workmen, villagers and children of various social backgrounds.<sup>24</sup> Many of the children’s Bible stories studied here were published as religious tracts and made available to those of all classes. In discussing the history of Evangelical writing for children, Margaret Nancy Cutt describes the genre as “one of the most prolific and profitable forms of publishing, a very large proportion of its output being aimed at the young and written by women.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 199.

<sup>21</sup> Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 199.

<sup>22</sup> Marion Taylor, “Anglican Women and the Bible in Nineteenth Century Britain,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 75, no. 4 (December 2006): 531.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret Nancy Cutt, *Ministering Angels: A Study of Nineteenth Century Evangelical Writing for Children* (England: Five Owls Press, 1979), 11.

<sup>24</sup> Cutt, *Ministering Angels*, xi.

<sup>25</sup> Cutt, *Ministering Angels*, 11.

Religious tract literature was written in the years following the Napoleonic Wars, and Evangelical authors drew on religious ideas and fought the Enlightenment rationalism that inspired the French Revolution. In opposition to the rational moralists who believed that education should reflect the idea of reason as the source of goodness, Evangelical tract writers of which many of the authors here were members, believed that children's education should serve religious purposes. As Sarah Trimmer wrote in her *Essay Upon Christian Education*, "Even Geography, Writing and Arithmetic may be made, in some measure, subservient to religious instruction."<sup>26</sup> The genre of religious tracts was popular until 1840, when secular morals emerged instead of the overt religious lessons. Women writing religious literature often requested to have their work published as tracts, because it made it available to the poorer children who they tried to reach out to.

Women though, and especially those in the middle and upper classes, were held to certain ideals in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. The ideology of separate spheres held that women and men operated in different spheres of influence and natural ability. Men were assigned to the public sphere where they worked for pay and were involved in politics, while women were relegated to the private sphere where they raised children and were seen as delicate "angels of the house."<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the Cult of True Womanhood/Domesticity offered a fourfold ideal for women to have a good marriage: be pious, submissive and domestic/maternal.<sup>28</sup> The women who published children's Bible stories and religious literature were often from the upper and middle classes. In many cases, this can be proven with bibliographies of the authors, but in the cases where no information could be found, it is assumed since the authors knew how to write (and thus were educated) and had the connections and access to have something published. Women in the upper classes were held to the

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted by Nancy Cutt in *Ministering Angels*, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Kathryn Gleedle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 59.

<sup>28</sup> Linda Ambrose, "Women and the Public Order," *HIST 3166: History of Women in Canada*, Laurentian University, Sudbury ON, 1 Oct. 2013.

ideals of true womanhood or the ideology of separate spheres more strongly than their working-class counterparts who may not have had a choice to work. Thus, most of the authors here worked from within the constraints put on their sex in order to publish these texts.

One of the constraints placed on women, especially in the upper classes, was that it was deemed unacceptable to participate in paid labour, except in certain circumstances. An educated woman of the middle classes could become a governess or a schoolteacher and the lucky few of the upper classes became ladies in waiting to royalty.<sup>29</sup> Becoming a writer was a precarious position, as it put one's ideas out into the public sphere. Some women became novelists such as the well-known Brontë sisters, but religious literature, and especially children's religious literature was one of the safest ways to publish. The reason for this is because this genre largely operated within the acceptable realm of women's lives. The writing worked within the confines of motherly religious education and promoted a good moral upbringing. Even still, many female authors published under pseudonyms or under their husband's names, or claimed never to have taken pay for their work to lessen their public visibility. For example, the wealthy upper-class author Charlotte Maria Tucker published under the pseudonym A.L.O.E. (A Lady of England) and donated all the proceeds for her writing to charities.<sup>30</sup>

Kathryn Gleedle, a scholar on women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, acknowledges the difficulties in being a female writer, asserting that, "Even the most successful female writers had to pick their way through a complex maze of gendered assumptions."<sup>31</sup> This is most evident in the prefaces to women's publications in which they humbly introduce their work. It is not uncommon to read a preface in which the author asserts that it was not their intention to earn money, but they felt that

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<sup>29</sup> Gleedle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 54.

<sup>30</sup> Kimberley Reynolds, "Tucker, Charlotte Maria (1821-1893)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University press, 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Gleedle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 55.

they had to write for a variety of reasons. For example, Lucy Sarah Atkins Wilson, who anonymously published *Mamma's Bible Stories for her Little Boys and Girls* around 1860, cited in the preface that she chose to publish her collection of Bible stories because she could find none to suit her own child:

The difficulty in obtaining Bible Stories adapted to the capacities of very young children, induced the writer to attempt the following Collection for the use of her own little Boy... Should this Collection be made the means of leading one dear little child to desire a farther acquaintance with that Sacred Volume, whose blessed truths 'are able to make wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus,' the Mother of that little Boy for whose use it is more especially designed, will have cause to rejoice in her labours.<sup>32</sup>

This is fairly typical of a preface to a children's Bible story collection and shows how the author humbly introduces the story, navigating their way through the complexity of publishing as a woman. Another great example of this is in Lady Mayne's *Introduction to the Reading of the Holy Bible*, in which her preface almost apologizes for publishing her book. Mayne writes, "As I did not compile the following sheets with a view either to Fame or Profit, there is little occasion to apologize for them by a Preface."<sup>33</sup> Clearly, women's publishing was a tricky business, and we will see more about how some women became authors against the judgement of their families in the case studies, believing that educating young minds on Christian values was too important.

The authors of children's religious literature are a good example of how 19<sup>th</sup> century women achieved the ideals prescribed for them in some ways, but used their "natural" maternal instincts to create spaces for themselves in the public sphere.<sup>34</sup> Women also extended their maternal influence beyond the private sphere by starting schools for poor children, becoming

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<sup>32</sup> No author (Lucy Sarah Atkins Wilson), *Mamma's Bible Stories For Her Little Boys and Girls: A Series of Reading Lessons Taken from the Bible and Adapted to the Capacities of Very Young Children*, 11th ed. (London: Griffith and Farran, n.d. (1860)), v-vi.

<sup>33</sup> Lady Mayne, *An Introduction to the Reading of the Holy Bible* (London: R. Main in St. James Street, 1767), iii.

<sup>34</sup> Gleedle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 78.

involved in the abolitionist and temperance movements, and volunteering at workhouses and prisons. This type of maternal feminism is arguably the origin of the first wave women's movement which became stronger as the suffragist movement gained ground in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Early "proto-feminists"<sup>35</sup> of the 1830's sought to widen women's opportunities for paid employment, creating organizations like SPEW, the Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women.<sup>36</sup> While none of the women discussed in this paper appear to be actively involved in such organizations, their publishing and volunteer work shows them to be actively using their "maternal natures" to create spaces for themselves in the public sphere.<sup>37</sup> For example, Favell Lee Mortimer's writing extended from her work with children in schools which she had started on her father's estate. Thus, while the authors discussed here may not have been the radical feminists of their age, their volunteer work and publishing for children was the type of precedent from which the women's movement was born.

The early feminist movement is relevant to the study of gender in children's Bible stories as this project pays close attention to how female authors wrote about Adam and Eve and their equality in the story of the Fall. The aim of this project is to see if any of these women had resisted traditional interpretations of Eve, but it appears that those authors whose publications I have looked at were more concerned about helping children develop strong morals than to advance women's positions in society. This is largely because the type of woman who published children's religious literature was often someone from the upper or middle classes who fulfilled the ideals placed on her sex, and used her publications to extend a maternal influence upon the world, and not to

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<sup>35</sup> Feminism as we now understand it did not exist at that time, so this is merely a label to describe early women seeking to find equality with men through a variety of means.

<sup>36</sup> Clare Midgely uses this term to describe women of this timer period. Quoted by Gleedle in *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, 74.

<sup>37</sup> Gleedle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*. 53.



challenge her role. This is a generalisation, but there was also less freedom or room for resistance to gendered ideals in children's stories since they had to be simplified for children.

### 3. The Typical Story of the Fall

As David Shaw stated in an article on contemporary children's Bibles, "Assessing children's Bibles is not child's play."<sup>38</sup> The changes made to the story of Adam and Eve are important for two reasons: they reveal what the author thought was important about the story and impart those values onto their audience. This section discusses the typical ways that 19<sup>th</sup> century British authors chose to write about different parts of the Fall with some reference to American publications from the time as well. Following in the work of Ruth M. Bottigheimer, changes will be discussed in references to four categories.<sup>39</sup> Additions and omissions refer to things added or cut from the King James Version of the text. Transformations refer to how the order of the story is changed, and reformulations refer any completely new changes to the story.

#### 3.1 Placement of the Fall in Children's Bible Story Collections

Not all of the Bible story collections referenced include the story of the Fall and sometimes this was simply because the collection focussed explicitly on the New Testament. Two curious American publications cut the story out altogether. In one, the story of creation is included, but not the Fall, perhaps because it was not a happy enough story for young children.<sup>40</sup> Another example replaces the creation and Fall with the story of Jesus' birth, then continues with the Old Testament stories, beginning with Cain and Abel.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> David A. Shaw's "Telling the Story from the Bible?: How Bible Stories Work." *Themelios* 37, no. 2 (2012): 244.

<sup>39</sup> Analysing children's Bibles by looking at what has been transposed, added, omitted and reformulated was first used in: Ruth M. Bottigheimer, "An Alternative Eve in Johann Hübner's Children's Bible" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1991): 73-78 and was later used to evaluate contemporary children's Bibles in David A. Shaw's "Telling the Story from the Bible?: How Bible Stories Work," 211-48.

<sup>40</sup> Laurie Loring, *Bible Stories* (Boston: D. Lothrop, n.d.), n.p.

<sup>41</sup> The first story in the book is called "The Holy Child" and is followed by "Cain and Abel." From Faith Latimer, *Dear Old Stories Told Once More: Forty Bible Stories with Fine Illustrations* (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), Contents (n.p.).

Of the publications that include Old Testament stories, most include the story of the Fall as a separate and shorter story from the creation of the world. Many female authors embellish the creation story, using the creation of plants and animals as prompts for caregivers or teachers to ask children about what examples of animals or plants they can think of. In Mrs. Nathaniel Cohen's *Infant Bible Reader*, she prompts, "Ask the pupils for examples of beasts they have seen-horses, cows, donkey, dogs, cats ; and show pictures of some wild beasts."<sup>42</sup>

The story that I have called the Fall is often titled "Adam and Eve,"<sup>43</sup> "The Fall of Man,"<sup>44</sup> or simply, "The Fall."<sup>45</sup> In a few publications, the story is split up into smaller chapters. In *Three Hundred Bible Stories and Three Hundred Bible Pictures*, the story is divided into "The Creation of Woman," "The Fall," and "Adam and Eve Driven from Paradise."<sup>46</sup> The story of the Fall is often used to show how the first sin led to the growing nature of sin in society, and is normally followed by the story of Cain and Abel or Noah's Ark to illustrate this point. A great example of this is how Lillias Trotter foreshadows the telling of the flood in *Bible History Lessons for Junior Classes*, by starting the story of the Fall with "To-day we shall see the beginning of the great flood of sin."<sup>47</sup>

One of the most common interpretations and transformations in the story of the Fall is that most authors harmonize the Yahwist and Priestly accounts in Genesis. Many authors referred to Adam and Eve's creation on the sixth day, with the Fall taking place after the seventh day of rest. While this may seem odd to the biblical scholar today, it appears to have been widely accepted. In

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<sup>42</sup> Mrs. Nathaniel L. Cohen, *Infant Bible Reader* (London: The Jewish Religious Education Board, 1897), 6.

<sup>43</sup> Wilson, *Mamma's Bible Stories For Her Little Boys and Girls*, 1; and Cohen, *Infant Bible Reader*, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Lady Mayne, *An Introduction to the Reading of the Holy Bible*, 10; Favell Lee Mortimer, *Line Upon Line, Part 1* (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d. (1902?)), 14.

<sup>45</sup> L. Lillias, Trotter, *Bible History Lessons for Junior Classes* (London: Church of England Sunday School Institute, n.d.), 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Three Hundred Bible Stories and Three Hundred Bible Pictures: A Pictorial Sunday Book for the Young* (London: William P. Nimmo, 1874), 1-6.

<sup>47</sup> Trotter, *Bible History Lessons for Junior Classes*, 4.

Matthew Henry's commentaries in Family Bibles published well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he too believed that Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.2 Quoting from the King James Version

The authenticity of a simplified version of Bible stories was a concern for many authors in this genre. Sarah Trimmer in her *Abridgement of Scripture History* chose to quote the entire story from the King James Version of Genesis to avoid changing the story in any way.<sup>49</sup> The *Child's Bible* also announces that it avoids the use of "isolated fragments of the story" or "language dissimilar to the actual Bible" by quoting Bible stories in their entirety.<sup>50</sup> These two publications are anomalies though, and most authors narrate the story while choosing to leave the quotes by God, the serpent, Adam and Eve intact. Especially when giving dialogue to God's character, most authors did not tamper with the words and quoted them directly. Authors did this consciously, as Mary A. Lathbury stated in the introduction to *Bible Heroes: Stories from the Bible* that "in all quoted speech I have used the exact words of the authorized version of the Scriptures."<sup>51</sup> Mrs. G.E. Morton also asserts that her version of the stories are close to the original, stating that "I have endeavoured as much as possible to keep to the words of the original, only altering them where the alteration seemed necessary to convey the true meaning to the mind of a young child."<sup>52</sup> Clearly, the author's wanted to keep the story as true to the original as possible, and yet so many changes were often made.

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<sup>48</sup> *New Family Bible*, n.p. and *Christian's Universal Family Bible; or, Library of Divine Knowledge; containing the sacred texts...the whole forming a complete commentary of the Holy Bible...by the Rev. John Malham, Vicar of Helton, etc.* (London: Thomas Kelly, 1810), n.p.

<sup>49</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *An Abridgement of Scripture History; Consisting of Lessons Selected from the Old Testament, For the Use of Schools and Families* (London: J. G. F. & J. Rivington, n.d.), 7-10.

<sup>50</sup> *Child's Bible: being a consecutive arrangement of the narrative and other portions of Holy Scripture, in the words of the Authorized Version* (London: Cassell Peter and Galpin, 1868), n.p. and Sarah Trimmer, *An Abridgement of Scripture History*, 7-10.

<sup>51</sup> Mary A. Lathbury, *Bible Heroes: Stories from the Bible* (Boston: DeWolfe, Fiske & Co., n.d.), 71.

<sup>52</sup> Mrs. G. E. Morton, *From the Beginning or Stories from Genesis For the Young* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1893), vi.

### 3.3 The Creation of Adam and Eve

In most narratives, Adam and Eve are created separately, but in some publications, mostly for very young children, Adam and Eve are described as created at the same time. An example of this can be found in *Mamma's Bible Stories for the Little Boys and Girls*, in which the story takes place as a dialogue between "Little Daniel" and his mother. The author, Lucy Sarah Atkins Wilson, glosses over Adam and Eve's creation, answering Daniel's question about who the first people with a simple sentence introducing Adam and Eve as the first man and woman.<sup>53</sup> In Favell Lee Mortimer's *Scripture Facts*, Adam and Eve are also described as created out of dust in the same sentence.<sup>54</sup>

Typically, authors take the time to explain that Adam was created out of dust, and Eve out of Adam's rib or side. Some authors relate the story to their audience by describing the pair as the first parents.<sup>55</sup> In one American publication, Adam and Eve are described as the first family, accompanied by an image of them (Figure 1) with their children and the caption, "Eve oft-en [*sic*] told the chil-dren [*sic*] of their dear first home in the fair garden."<sup>56</sup> What makes this more interesting is that this same image is used in various other children's Bible stories, but normally accompanies the story of Cain and Abel. This version of the story leaves the audience with the impression that Adam and Eve had children before leaving the garden.

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<sup>53</sup> Wilson, *Mamma's Bible Stories For Her Little Boys and Girls*, 1-2.

<sup>54</sup> Favell Lee Mortimer, *Scripture Facts in Simple Language: or Hear a Little and There a Little*, (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Charlotte M. Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples designed for the 52 Sundays in the Year*, (Washington: W.E. Scull, 1898), 23.

<sup>56</sup> Sic. Harriet T. Comstock, *Bible Heroes Retold in Words of One Syllable*, (New York: A.L. Burt, 1900), 2.



Figure 1 Harriet T. Comstock's *Bible Hero's Retold In Words of One Syllable*.  
Photo by author, publication courtesy of the Douglas Library, Queen's University.

Some authors choose to dwell on Adam's creation. In the *Infant Bible Reader*, Mrs. Nathaniel L. Cohen suggests that the meaning of being made in God's image is that "God is good and God made Adam and Eve know the difference between being good and being wicked...When we try to be good, we are trying to be like God. Then we are in his image."<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, Mrs. G. E. Morton discusses what it means that God gave Adam a soul, explaining that a soul is invisible, but "is of much more value and importance than our bodies."<sup>58</sup>

Adam's creation often follows, or is followed by a description of the Garden of Eden. This is a place where many authors chose to embellish the story, describing how beautiful the garden was. In Sarah Trimmer's *Lessons; Containing a General Outline of the Old Testament*, she describes how Adam and Eve were placed in a "beautiful garden, called Eden, where there was every thing they could want to wish for to make them comfortable and happy".<sup>59</sup> Although different authors do this at different points in the story, most will move from a discussion of how

<sup>57</sup> Cohen, *Infant Bible Reader*, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Morton, *From the Beginning*, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *New & Comprehensive Lessons; Containing A General Outline of the Old Testament with Twenty-Four Engravings*, (London: J. Harris, 1813), 14.

beautiful the garden was to how happy Adam and Eve were in the garden. This normally sets up a foil for the later unhappiness and hardship Adam and Eve experience after they sin and are forced to leave the garden.

The order of the story changes from one version to the next. Some will discuss Adam and Eve's creation in one sentence, as *Mamma's Bible Stories* does above, and others will describe Adam and then Eve's creation, moving from one to the next quickly. Still others will describe how God created the animals, hoping to find a companion for Adam in them before creating Eve. The length of this section often depends on the length of the story and the intended age of the audience. In Lady Mayne's version of the story, Adam is created out of dust, God declares that he should not be alone, puts him to sleep, creates "Woman" out of his rib and gives her to Adam as his wife in one sentence.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, Favell Lee Mortimer chooses to describe this course of actions in a short paragraph, focussing mostly on Adam's creation and the meaning of his likeness to God. Morton gives a particularly long account of Adam and Eve's happiness that is about a page long. In this, she adds emotion to the story, discussing how much Adam loved Eve and "how full his heart must have been of love and gratitude to God, who was so kind to him, and who was always thinking of him, and making everything bright and happy for him!"<sup>61</sup> Typically, the creation of Adam and Eve is not the focus of the story as it is normally treated briefly with authors choosing to give more time to describing the Fall itself.

### 3.4 The First Sin

In Genesis, the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life are introduced before Adam and Eve are created in verse 2:8. It is only after Adam is created (and before Eve) that he is given the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge and evil. In children's versions of the story,

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<sup>60</sup> Lady Mayne, *An Introduction to the Reading of the Holy Bible*, 10.

<sup>61</sup> Morton, *From the Beginning*, 26.

this order is often changed. First, the tree of life is often omitted altogether, probably because it would be too confusing for young children to learn the difference between the two trees.<sup>62</sup> Second, the tree of knowledge and evil is normally mentioned after Adam and Eve have both been created.<sup>63</sup> It might have been irrelevant to the authors that Eve did not exist when the command was given, and this change might have been inherited or done to simplify the story.

Although Genesis simply calls the serpent a serpent, almost every children's version of this story, regardless of its place or date of publication, identifies the serpent as Satan. The commentaries in Family Bibles show that the serpent was commonly understood to be Satan at this time, and therefore this is not surprising.<sup>64</sup> Descriptions of the serpent range from those that are quite short, to lengthy ones. Charlotte Yonge, in *Aunt Charlotte's Bible History for Young Disciples*, calls the serpent a "bad spirit"<sup>65</sup> and Isabelle Trotter's describes him in *Bible History Lessons* as "[a]n angel, once sinned" who cunningly took the form of a snake since snakes appear to be harmless with their lack of claws.<sup>66</sup> Many authors also make additions to the text here, giving the serpent a motive for tempting Eve. In a small tract published as "How Sin Came", the serpent, identified as the Devil, is described as jealous of Eve's happiness and wanted to take her to a lake of fire.<sup>67</sup>

In most children's versions of the story, Eve is tempted with the same words used in the King James Version of the Bible by the serpent. The serpent asks why she will not eat of the fruit, and Eve answers that she is not allowed. Here, the stories begin to take different paths. In some

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<sup>62</sup> Some authors chose to include it, such as in Trimmer's *Lessons; Containing a General Outline of the Old Testament*, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Morton is one of the few who place the command not to eat from the tree before Eve's creation, as in Genesis. Morton, *From the Beginning*, 24-25.

<sup>64</sup> *New Family Bible*, n.p.

<sup>65</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Trotter, *Bible History Lessons for Junior Classes*, 4.

<sup>67</sup> "How Sin Came: Gen. III" in Issue 3 of *Tracts for Children*. n.d. (1823-1844?), 5.

conservative accounts of the story, Eve's transgressions are numbered as steps to her fall. In doing this, the authors incorporate traditional androcentric interpretations of the story into their children's versions. This happens in Isabella Trotter and Emily Dibdin's versions of the story.<sup>68</sup> Although each has slightly different interpretations of Eve's three steps to temptation, Dibdin states that Eve's first step towards sin was doubting God's goodness, her second step was admiring the fruit, and her third step was committing the first sin by eating it.<sup>69</sup> Lady Mayne also incorporates some traditional interpretation of the story, claiming that sin entered the world because Eve was "so foolish and so wicked as to be prevailed on by him [the serpent]."<sup>70</sup>

In other versions of the story, Eve's transgression is not emphasized. Instead, many the authors summarize the fall in one sentence. In Lucy Barton's account, Eve and then Adam eat of the fruit in a single sentence, and then Barton moves on to discussing the shame they felt after sinning. In *Mamma's Bible Stories*, Adam and Eve both eat of the fruit together in a sentence and are punished together, de-emphasizing Eve's role in the Fall. In Charlotte Mary Yonge's account Eve is tempted, eats and shares the fruit with Adam in three short sentences: "He [the bad spirit] told her a wicked lie- he told her that to eat the fruit would make her wise, and would not make her die. And eve listened, and did eat. And she gave Adam, and he also ate."<sup>71</sup>

### 3.7 The Punishment

In Genesis, Adam and Eve hide from God and clothe themselves after sinning. When asked why he ate from the tree, Adam blames Eve for giving him the fruit and Eve blames the serpent for tricking her. God hands out punishments for the serpent, Eve and Adam. The serpent is cursed

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<sup>68</sup> Emily Dibdin, *Outline Lessons on Women of the Bible*, (London: Church of England Sunday School Institute, n.d.), 1-2 and Trotter, *Bible History Lessons for Junior Classes*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Dibdin, *Outline Lessons on Women of the Bible*, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Lady Mayne, *An Introduction to the Reading of the Holy Bible*, 12.

<sup>71</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 28.



to the dwell on the ground and that God will put enmity between the serpent and woman. Eve is cursed to have pains in childbirth and for her husband to rule over her. Adam is cursed to till the ground for food and to return to dust upon his death. Adam then names Eve who has been known as “woman” until this time, God clothes them in animal skins and they are led from the garden forever.

In children’s versions of the story, a number of changes are made to this section of the story. Most authors ascribe emotions to the characters that are not present in the original, embellishing the biblical text.<sup>72</sup> God’s anger is the most common emotion added to the story, as well as Adam and Eve’s shame in sinning. The biblical text does mention that Adam and Eve were afraid, but God’s anger is an addition assumed by these authors.

A number of omissions are also made in this part of the story. Many versions omit any mention of Adam and Eve’s nakedness or clothing. Some briefly mention that Adam and Eve clothed themselves, but this is not central to the story.<sup>73</sup> Instead, many authors who cater to Victorian sensibilities describe Adam and Eve as hiding from God because they are ashamed of their sins. For example, in *Mamma’s Bible Stories*, Adam and Eve hide because “they knew that they had done wrong and were afraid lest God should find out.”<sup>74</sup> In Genesis, God clothes Adam and Eve before they are banished from the garden, and this too is often cut.<sup>75</sup>

Another omission from the story is the instance where Adam names Eve. Unlike in the biblical account of the story, Adam and Eve’s names are assumed throughout these stories and thus, it makes sense that Eve’s naming is cut. Yet another common omission is the curse on the

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<sup>72</sup> David Shaw first makes this observation in “Telling the Story from the Bible?: How Bible Stories Work,” 216.

<sup>73</sup> Not all versions omit this. For example, Morton, *From the Beginning*, 32; and Mortimer, *Scripture Facts in Simple Language*, 14 include mention of nakedness.

<sup>74</sup> Wilson, *Mamma’s Bible Stories For Her Little Boys and Girls*, 3.

<sup>75</sup> Trimmer does mention this in *An Abridgment of Scripture History*, 19.

serpent. The curse is mentioned in some narratives and given prominence in Mortimer's version of the story, but most authors omit both the serpent's curse as well as the individual curses for Adam and Eve.

There are a variety of ways in which the punishments are dealt in children's versions of the story. In many versions, Adam and Eve are simply banished from the garden without mention of their individual curses, but in some versions, individual curses and Eve's curse to be ruled by Adam are included. Especially in the publications for younger children, any trace of this curse is excluded from the story in favour of a punishment for both Adam and Eve. Thus, traditional interpretations of the story which blame Eve for the fall are not always present if the pair are blamed and banished from the garden equally. Here are a couple examples of how the punishment is described by different authors:

Lady Mayne, in *An Introduction to the Reading of the Holy Bible*

So he [God] directly turned them out of that fine Place, and sent them to wander about in a wile Country overgrown with Weeds and Briars, where they could get nothing to eat but what they dug and ploughed and laboured hard for. There they grew old, and fickly, and died.<sup>76</sup>

Sarah Lucy Atkins Wilson in *Mamma's Bible Stories*

D. [Daniel] Did He punish them, Mamma?

Mamma. "Yes; He sent them out of the garden, in which they might have been so very happy: and He put an angel at the gate of the garden, with a flaming sword in his hand, to keep them from ever going back again."<sup>77</sup>

Favell Lee Mortimer in *Peep a Day*

God was very angry with the serpent, and said he should be punished for ever and ever.

God said to Adam and Eve, "You shall die. I made your bodies of dust, and they will turn to dust again."

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<sup>76</sup> Lady Mayne, *An Introduction to the Reading of the Holy Bible*, 12-13.

<sup>77</sup> Wilson, *Mamma's Bible Stories For Her Little Boys and Girls*, 5-6

God would not let them stay in the sweet garden, but he sent an angel with a sword of fire-and he drove them out.’<sup>78</sup>

Mrs. G.E. Morton in *From the Beginning*

God was angry with them all, but he was angry most of all with the wicked serpent. He said to him, ‘Because you have done this, you are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; and you shall eat dust all your life.’

And to Eve God said, ‘Because you have done this you shall often be weak and ill. You shall have a great deal of sorrow, and Adam shall rule over you.’

And to Adam God said, ‘Because you have done this, and have eaten of the tree which I commanded you, You shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for your sake; you shall eat your bread in sorrow all the days of your life. And the ground shall bring forth thorns and thistles’ and you shall be obliged to work hard, and to be often very tired. And you shall both die at last; for you were made of dust, and you shall return to dust again.’<sup>79</sup>

Sarah Trimmer in *Lessons; Containing a General Outline of the Old Testament*

But God called them forth, and condemned them to the dust from whence they were taken, that is to die; and God turned them out of the garden of Eden.<sup>80</sup>

What is interesting about the above selection is the sheer variety of descriptions of this one event. Trimmer focusses on God clothing Adam and Eve where so many authors cut this out, while Morton expands on the story and includes most of the curses. Meanwhile, Mortimer, Wilson and Mayne omit the curses and simply expel Adam and Eve from the garden. There are a couple of reasons for these variations. First, versions of the story for very young children tend to be shorter and thus, omit the curses more often, whereas versions for older children are more likely to include the curses. Morton’s description was meant for fairly young children, but her account of the story is significantly longer than many of the others, thus she has more space to include the separate punishments for Adam and Eve. Second, the authors had different purposes for telling this story, and blaming Eve for the Fall was not a common reason for telling this story for children. I assume

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<sup>78</sup> Favell Lee Mortimer, *The Peep a Day or A Series of the Earliest Religious Instruction the Infant Mind is Capable of Receiving*, (New York: John S. Taylor & Co., 1845), 5-6.

Morton, *From the Beginning*, 31.

<sup>80</sup> Trimmer, *An Abridgment of Scripture History*, 19.

that this was considered to be theologically dense for young children, and thus, mention of her individual curse and her faults were not always important to different authors.

### 3.8 Purpose of the Story

The purpose of including the story of the Fall in children's Bible story collections appears to change from publication to publication, but there are some common goals. Some authors wrote the story in the moral tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and used it to teach children the consequences of sin, others used it to explain how sin came into the world, and still others used it to explain the importance of Jesus in the New Testament. Many versions have overlapping concerns in writing this story. Generally, the embellishments and additions to the story show how authors used the story to teach morals, and the way that the author concludes the story gives an indication of what their purpose in including it was.

For many of the authors included in this study, the story of Adam and Eve was a gateway to teach a variety of moral lessons. Lucy Sarah Atkins Wilson uses the story to teach children that those who love and obey God are happier than those who do not. She explains how Adam and Eve were punished for disobeying God and that God did not love them anymore. Little Daniel, concludes the story by stating that "I hope I shall always love God, Mamma" and she replies that "I hope you will, my dearest boy, and then I am quite sure that you will be happy." Wilson uses the story to teach a moral, that one should obey God and love him.

Similarly, Charlotte Maria Tucker uses the story to teach the danger of what she calls "little sins."<sup>81</sup> She asserts that these "little sins" become the parents of more sins and warns her audience against committing any sins. She also teaches that making "intellect of an idol" and praising reason

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<sup>81</sup> A.L.O.E. (Charlotte Maria Tucker), *House Beautiful or The Bible Museum*, (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1868), 9.

too much is like the sin Eve committed when she desired the fruit to make her wise. Here Tucker uses the story of the Fall to warn against the love of learning too much.

Emily Dibdin clearly lists the lessons one should learn from Adam and Eve's Fall at the end of her chapter on the story. She asserts that one should learn to a) avoid sinning, b) obey God, and c) know how loving God was to send Jesus.<sup>82</sup> Although the lessons themselves are slightly different, most teach in some way that sin is wrong and that there are consequences for it. Lucy Barton's *Bible Letters for Children* (Case Study 4.3 in this project), is also a great example of how the story can be used to teach moral lessons.

The story of Adam and Eve was often used as a preparatory device for talking about Jesus. It was common to see Jesus and Mary as the recapitulated versions of Adam and Eve during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and many authors set up their telling of the Fall in order to explain the necessity of Jesus' resurrection. Many authors point to this in their version of the Fall and even include Jesus in the story of Adam and Eve. In Morton's version of the story, she adds that God made a promise to Adam and Eve when they were expelled from the garden, stating that, "In spite of their disobedience, he tenderly loved them [Adam and Eve] still, and he planned a way by which all their sins might be pardoned, and they might enter heaven at last. What way was that? It was through the precious blood of Jesus."<sup>83</sup> Morton concludes the story with an additional two paragraphs about Jesus' sacrifice and how it pardons the sins of Adam, Eve and those of her audience. Concluding the story by alluding to Jesus, or including him in the story was very common. Overall, the purpose for including the story of Adam and Eve in Bible story collections was diverse.

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<sup>82</sup> Dibdin, *Outline Lessons on Women of the Bible*, 2.

<sup>83</sup> Morton, *From the Beginning*, 31-2.

### 3.9 Images in the Story of Adam and Eve

Of the selection of British publications used here, only a couple included images. Many of these publications existed at one time or another as religious tracts which were published as cheaply as possible, thus images may have been too expensive to reproduce. In addition, many of the children's Bible storybooks studied here use vocabulary too difficult to read for the intended audience, and thus were meant to be read-aloud. Interestingly, American publications more commonly included images, and specifically, a popular series of woodcuts that depict Adam and Eve re-appear in many American versions of the story.

The most common image included with the story of Adam and Eve (in both American and British storybooks) depicts Adam and Eve being banished from the garden of Eden.<sup>84</sup> It is possible that this was the most appropriate part of the story to depict as Adam and Eve are clothed at the end of the story. Most images show a bright light, meant to be God, in the corner and Adam and Eve are walking away from it, hand in hand. Adam and Eve appear upset, and in the images below, Adam is often covering his face in what appears to be shame. The serpent can be found in most images slithering on the ground, apparently leaving the garden as well.

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<sup>84</sup> For further reading on images in the story of the Fall, see Ruth Bottigheimer's "Publishing, Print, and Change in the Image of Eve and the Apple 1470-1570," *Archive for Reformation History* 86 (1995): 199-235.



Figure 2 Trimmer, *Lessons; Containing a General Outline of the Old Testament*, 18. Photo by author, publication courtesy of the Osbourne Collection at the Toronto Public Library.



Figure 3 Morton, *From the Beginning*, 33. Photo by author, publication courtesy of Dr. Marion Taylor.



Figure 4 Mortimer, *Scripture Facts*, 13. Photo by author, publication courtesy of Dr. Marion Taylor.



## 4. Case Studies

This section comprises of four descriptions of individual versions of the story of Adam and Eve by four different authors. Favell Lee Mortimer's account of the story shows some of the typical interpretive changes made by authors of this story lessen the severity of the Fall by shifting the blame from Adam and Eve in a couple different ways. Lucy Barton, in *Bible Letters for Children*, includes a version of the story which shows how authors in the moral tradition used Bible stories to teach a variety of lessons to their young audiences. Charlotte Maria Tucker's version of the story is included in a publication which discusses important objects in the Bible, and shows one of the unique ways that different authors retold this story again and again in different ways to make it interesting to audiences who had heard it already. Lastly, Charlotte Mary Yonge's version of the story shows how different authors embellished and reformulated the story to make it their own. These case studies offer a contrast to the typical version of the story described in the previous chapter and I reflect in each on how the author inherits, resists or challenges traditional interpretations of the story which blame Eve for the Fall.

### 4.1 Favell Lee Mortimer (1802-1878)

Favell Lee Mortimer was a bestselling children's author in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Born in 1802 to parents David and Favell Bourke Bevan, Mortimer grew up in a Quaker household and converted to Evangelicalism at the age of twenty-five at which time she began to assist in the running of parish schools on her father's estate. Mortimer married a preacher named Thomas Mortimer in 1841. They never had children and Mortimer was widowed in 1850. She spent the rest of her life caring for the schools on her father's estate and writing books for young children.



Mortimer is most famous for her first publication, *Peep a Day or A Series of the Earliest Religious Instruction the Infant Mind is Capable of Receiving*. First published in 1833,<sup>85</sup> her grandniece Rosalind Constable said that it “sold over a million copies in its original edition and was translated into thirty-eight languages” by the Religious Tract Society.<sup>86</sup> The book became so famous that it was largely plagiarized by the American Annie R. White in her 1896 publication, *Easy Steps for Little Feet from Genesis to Revelation*.<sup>87</sup> The book re-tells Bible stories for children with footnotes to corresponding Bible verses. Mortimer’s publishing success in *Peep a Day* was followed by other publications done in the same style: *Line Upon Line* (1837) and *Precept Upon Precept* (1843) as well as thirteen other publications for children. As an Evangelical writer in the moral tradition, Mortimer wrote in a conversational and educational tone which was popular for children’s material at the time. *Peep a Day* was chosen for a case study because it exemplifies a “typical” version of the story in many ways, while also making a variety of interpretive decisions which make it one of the more lighthearted dealings with Eve as a character. Here, Mortimer’s treatment of gender relations between Adam and Eve will be studied to show how many typical interpretive decisions can lend themselves to seeing Adam and Eve fairly equally, while also inheriting and reinforcing traditional gender norms for the time.

The story of the Fall is found in chapters ten and eleven of *Peep a Day* and takes place after three chapters on creating the world. In her version of the story, Mortimer makes some interpretive decisions which may lessen the consequences and severity of the Fall, making this

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<sup>85</sup> *Peep a Day* was republished in 1891 by bishop of Durham. This edition censored some of the gruesome images that Mortimer painted. More research should be done on how this publication changed and what these changes represent for women’s roles in society.

<sup>86</sup> Frederick Rankin Jr. MacFadden, “Favell Lee Mortimer.” *British Children’s Writers, 1800-1800*, Meena Khorana (ed.) Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 162. Gale, 1996.

<sup>87</sup> Mrs. Annie R. White, *Beautiful Story-Land of the Bible Written in Simple Language for Instruction, Entertainment and Religious Culture of the Home, School and Sunday-School*, (Philadelphia: John E. Potter & Co., n.d.).

story more lighthearted than some of its more conservative counterparts. Mortimer uses plural nouns when discussing Adam and Eve's Fall, blames the serpent for the Fall by making God most angry with him, and uses atonement theology by showing how Jesus undoes the consequences of the Fall.

First, Mortimer, like many other children's authors uses plural nouns like "they" and "Adam and Eve" replace specific phrases that refer to one or the other in parts of the story. For example, Mortimer changes the story so that God's command not to eat the fruit is given to both Adam and Eve. Mortimer also adds that "Adam and Eve liked to obey God, and they did not wish to eat of this fruit."<sup>88</sup> While Eve is tempted by the serpent alone, the story focusses on how both Adam and Eve "were grown naughty, and did not love God" as a consequence of the sin.<sup>89</sup> While Mortimer maintains that Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent, the curse is nevertheless given to Adam and Eve together. Both are actors in the story, but the consequences are delivered to the pair equally.

In the King James Version of the text, Eve's curse from God proclaims that "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). Adam's curse is much longer and includes cursing the ground so that Adam will have to work hard to bring forth food and that he will return to dust (Gen. 3:17-19). In Mortimer's version of the story, the curse is reduced to one line for both Adam and Eve, "You shall die. I made your bodies of dust, and they will turn to dust again."<sup>90</sup> Pluralizing the curses for Adam and Eve was fairly common in children's Bible stories and is important here because other authors chose to blame Eve for the Fall instead.

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<sup>88</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 59.

<sup>89</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 60.

<sup>90</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 61.

Another interesting interpretive decision that Mortimer makes is to emphasize the serpent's punishment and portray it as more serious than Adam and Eve's. Most authors only give the serpent a role in the story as tempting Eve, but Mortimer goes further by making him share the blame as well. In her version of the story, Mortimer identifies the serpent as the "wicked angel Satan" who made himself look like a serpent.<sup>91</sup> Satan "hated Adam and Eve" and "wished to make them naughty, that they might go to hell, and be burned in his fire. So he thought he would ask them to eat of that fruit."<sup>92</sup> After the Fall, Mortimer keeps to the traditional order and curses the serpent first, but adds that God is "very angry with the serpent, and said he should be punished "for ever and ever."<sup>93</sup> In contrast to other children's authors who sometimes omit the serpents curse, Mortimer emphasises the serpents curse over the one placed on Adam and Eve. While most authors mention that the serpent is cursed, Mortimer goes further by making him seem to be the root of the problem. The overall purpose of this may be to shift some of the blame off Adam and Eve for the Fall as this is a heavy topic for children.

Mortimer also chooses to use atonement theology in her version of the Fall. In *Peep A Day*, Mortimer adds that Jesus was happy with God's creation stating that, "Jesus Christ the Son of God was pleased; for he loved Adam and Eve."<sup>94</sup> In chapter following Adam and Eve's Fall, Mortimer claims that God "found a way to save" Adam and Eve by sending his son. Taking this one step further, Mortimer creates a conversation between Jesus and God at an unknown time in which God says to Jesus, "Adam and Eve, and all of their children must go to hell for their wickedness, unless you die instead of them."<sup>95</sup> In connecting the Jesus' story to the Fall, the consequences of the Fall

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<sup>91</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 59.

<sup>92</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 59.

<sup>93</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 60.

<sup>94</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 57.

<sup>95</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 63.

are lessened for both Adam and Eve in favour of looking forward to Jesus. This also makes the story more appropriate for children as Adam and Eve will not be sad forever. Mortimer's use of atonement theology and placement of Jesus into the story is not uncommon in children's Bible stories, but her bringing him into the story three separate times is unusual. Certainly, Jesus is not a part of the narrative in Genesis. Instead, it appears that Mortimer uses him to prepare her readers for the coming story of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Overall, in combining the gendered curses, shifting the blame to the serpent, and looking forward to Jesus, Mortimer's version of the Fall draws some of the attention away from the severe consequences of sin. However, many of the interpretive decisions Mortimer makes which lessen the consequences of the Fall on both Adam and Eve are also the result of her simplification of the story. In the preface to *Peep a Day*, Mortimer makes an analogy between teaching children about the Bible and a mother teaching their child about their father who is away. Mortimer states that the mother would "guard against producing confusion, by entering into complicated details; while she would love to dwell upon the most minute incidents that would arrest infantine attention."<sup>96</sup> Thus, Mortimer's interpretive decisions which appear to lessen the severity of the Fall are probably done to simplify the story.

In addition, Mortimer does not deny the consequences of the Fall for her audience but simply lessens them. In the preface to the book, Mortimer discusses how children should be taught about the Bible and exhorts that "Our minds are so much darkened by sin, that when we would ascertain our duty concerning spiritual things, we shall often find assistance by examining what we should do in an earthly matter of an analogous kind."<sup>97</sup> This does little to lessen the consequences of the Fall but instead focusses on what one should do to teach children in the Fallen

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<sup>96</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, ix.

<sup>97</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, viii.

state. The research question for this project is about whether female authors challenged or reinforced traditional beliefs about gender in their publications for children. Mortimer does not challenge 19<sup>th</sup> century gender ideals, but inherits and reinforces them. While she may not blame Eve explicitly for the Fall, she maintains the ideology of separate spheres by describing Eve as crying and emotional while Adam is “hot and tired” after the Fall.<sup>98</sup> She also conforms to the notion that women are the primary religious educators by directing her book towards mothers and teachers who wish to teach children about the Bible.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.2 Lucy Barton (1808-1898)

Lucy Barton was the daughter of middle-class Quaker parents Lucy Jesup and Bernard Barton. Lucy’s mother died giving birth to her after which her father became her caretaker and mentor. Bernard was a poet, bank clerk, and tutor who encouraged Lucy by writing introductions to her books. Bernard and Lucy co-authored *The Reliquary* in 1836, and Bernard wrote the introduction for *Bible Stories for Children* in 1831. Lucy Barton married Edward Fitzgerald after her father’s death, but their marriage ended within a year as the two



Figure 3 Engraving in Lucy Barton's *Bible Letters for Children*. Photo by author, publication courtesy of the Osbourne Collection at the Toronto Public Library.

were incompatible. She continued publishing after her father’s death, including *Natural History of the Holy Land, and Other Places Mentioned in the Bible* (1856) and *The Life of Christ: A Gospel History of the Use of Children* (1857).

<sup>98</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, 62.

<sup>99</sup> Mortimer, *The Peep a Day*, ix.

In *Bible Letters for Children* (1831), Barton writes letters to children to tell them stories from the Old Testament. After an introduction from her father, the first letter contains the story of the Fall and is called the “Creation of the World-Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.” This short letter has been chosen as a case study for two reasons. First, it shows how women used the story of Adam and Eve to teach moral lessons to children. Barton’s version of the story is quite short, only three pages long, and the storytelling itself might take up a third of this space. Barton spends the rest of the space advising children to confess their sins in prayer and avoid being prideful. Second, Barton both reproduces and subtly challenges traditional interpretations of the Fall in her account of the story.

Barton begins her story by summarizing the world’s creation in a single sentence, and includes her first moral interlude here. She describes the goodness of God as the “Maker” telling children that he loves them and sees everything they do. Barton takes this opportunity to remind her audience that since God loves children, they should confess their faults to him: “tell him you wants; confess to him your little faults; and ask him to pardon you, and to take you under his protection.”<sup>100</sup> This warning to confess sins serves as preparation for the story of Adam and Eve to come.

Barton then introduces Adam and Eve and the tree of knowledge and evil. She identifies the serpent as Satan and describes Eve’s temptation, her first sin and sharing the Adam quite quickly. When Adam and Eve hide from God, Adam responds to God using the same words from the King James Version of the text: “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat (Gen. 3:12). Here Barton adds a second moral lesson to the story. She adds an explanation for Adam’s response, saying that “in trying to screen himself from

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<sup>100</sup> Lucy Barton, *Bible Letters for Children* (London: John Souter, London School Library, 1831),2.

punishment, he laid the blame on Eve”.<sup>101</sup> This explanation does two things: it makes Adam appear guilty of additional sin by blaming Eve, and allows Barton to teach a lesson about making excuses for sin.

Like many other authors, Barton uses plural language to describe how both Adam and Eve are cursed, “Then was the Almighty much displeased with them, and turned them out of the garden into the wide world, where they were obliged to till the ground; that is, to work hard to get bread to eat.”<sup>102</sup> In her version, both Adam and Eve must till the ground, even though this is initially the punishment given to Adam. While this does appear to reduce the blame placed on Eve for the eating of the fruit, the next line in the story admits that Eve is traditionally blamed for the Fall. Barton states, “Now, perhaps, some of my young friends may think, how silly it was of Eve to take this fruit, and of Adam to be tempted by his wife.”<sup>103</sup> Barton challenges her audience to think of how they disobey their “earthly parents,” similar to the story in Genesis.<sup>104</sup> Barton asserts, “You think you would have done better: that had you been Eve, you would not have taken the fruit. But are there not many things in which you have been equally to blame?”<sup>105</sup> Barton acknowledges that Eve is often given the brunt of the blame for the Fall, but quickly diverts attention from this blame and asks her audience to think instead if they would have done any differently. In this way, Barton both acknowledges traditional interpretations of the story in which Eve is blamed, but also refutes this, arguing that “this idea proceeds from *pride*.”<sup>106</sup>

Lastly, Barton looks to Jesus to take attention away from the Fall and to teach another lesson. In the letter following the one on Adam and Eve, Barton discusses how Jesus atones for

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<sup>101</sup> Barton, *Bible Letters for Children*, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Barton, *Bible Letters for Children*, 5-6.

<sup>103</sup> Barton, *Bible Letters for Children*, 3-4.

<sup>104</sup> Barton, *Bible Letters for Children*, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Barton, *Bible Letters for Children*, 4.

<sup>106</sup> Barton, *Bible Letters for Children*, 4.

the sins of Adam and Eve by stating that “We are all naturally prone to do evil; thus we are partakers of Adam’s sin [Original Sin]: but our Heavenly Father so loved the world, that He promised Adam before he died, the He would send upon the earth his Son Christ Jesus.”<sup>107</sup> Barton connects the story of the Fall to Jesus and uses this connection to teach children that their sins will be pardoned.

Clearly, Barton used the story of Adam and Eve as a gateway to discuss simplified morals and theological ideas with children by narrating the story rather quickly, dwelling on the lessons that she imparts to her audience. Barton’s treatment of the story both reproduces traditional interpretations and challenges them. She adheres to the notion of Original Sin which is traditionally related to androcentric interpretations of the story, while simultaneously challenging her audience not to blame Eve for the Fall. In her own life, Barton adhered to some of the ideals placed on her sex, and this is evident in how she asked her father to write introductions to many of her books, including this one. In his preface to *Bible Letters for Children*, Bernard Barton claims that the Preliminary Verses and Postscript were written by him “in compliance with a wish, expressed by the author of this little volume, that it should be introduced to the public by her father.”<sup>108</sup> Perhaps Barton was uncomfortable publishing her work without her father’s public support, which aligns with notions of women’s role in the private sphere. In Barton’s version of the story, it is clear that Eve does not take any more of the blame than Adam for the Fall, thus showing that she did not entirely reproduce inherited androcentric interpretations of the text. Her purpose in telling the story is not to discuss Adam and Eve’s equality though, and Barton uses the story as a vehicle from which to teach moral lessons to children.

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<sup>107</sup> Barton, *Bible Letters for Children*, 5.

<sup>108</sup> Barton, *Bible Letters for Children*, v.



### 4.3 Charlotte Maria Tucker (1821-1893)

Charlotte Maria Tucker was the sixth of ten children to Jane Boswell and Henry St. George Tucker. Her father was the chairman of the East India Trading Company and this probably accounts for Charlotte Tucker's later publications on interest in India. Described by a biographer as "an energetic and effective organizer, a dutiful daughter, and a tireless campaigner," Tucker spent the early years of her life with her family, then took care of her mother and brother, converted to Evangelism at forty before finally going to India as a self-supporting missionary

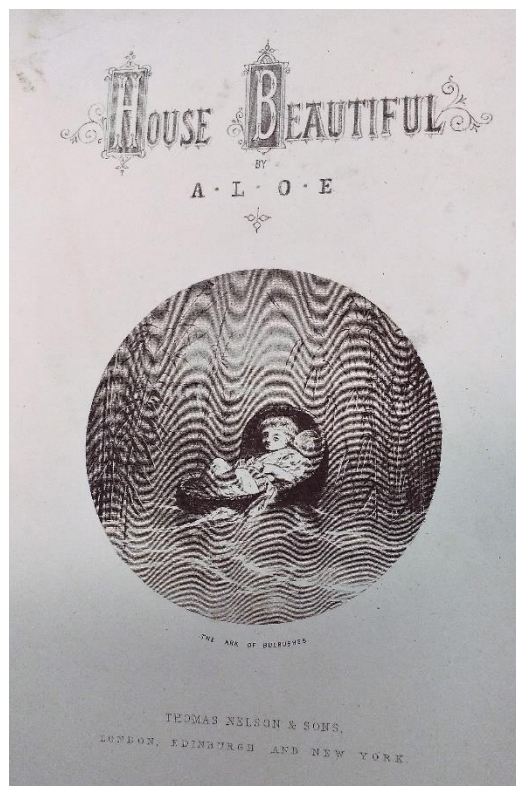


Figure 4 Title Page of Charlotte Maria Tucker's *House Beautiful*. Photo by author, publication courtesy of Dr. Marion Taylor.

at the age of fifty-four.<sup>109</sup> Although Tucker wrote plays and poems for her family growing up, her father saw "little need for them to socialize outside the family" and did not approve of women working.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, it was not until after her father passed away in 1851 that she published her first book, *The Claremont Tales*, in 1852.

Tucker was an evangelical writer in the moral tradition who wrote secular as well as religious tales that stressed the value of work and helping the poor.<sup>111</sup> Tucker was a prolific author, publishing at least 150 tracts and other children's literature under the pseudonym, A Lady Of England (A.L.O.E.). She preferred to have her materials printed as cheaply as possible in order to make them available to slum children and her books remained popular for forty years after her

<sup>109</sup> Reynolds, "Tucker, Charlotte Maria (1821-1893)."

<sup>110</sup> Erika Rothwell, "Charlotte Maris Tucker" In *British Children's Writers, 1800-1800*, Meena Khorana (ed.) Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 190. Gale, 1998.

<sup>111</sup> Cutt, *Ministering Angels*, 83.

death.<sup>112</sup> In 1867, Tucker published *House Beautiful* or *The Bible Museum* (Figure 2) in which she describes objects from the Bible so children could learn about the Christian faith. In her entry on the “Forbidden Fruit,” Tucker focusses on Eve’s temptation and compares it to how children are tempted in their own lives. Tucker’s version of the Fall is interesting because it shows some of the different ways that female authors told the story of the Fall. Where Tucker uses objects as her way to tell Bible stories, other authors wrote books about animals of the Bible, heroes of the Bible, and rhymes that sum up stories from the Bible. The creativity with which the authors of religious literature enticed young audiences to become interested or re-interested in familiar stories is quite impressive. Tucker’s *House Beautiful* is chosen as a case study because it shows the creative ways that women slipped Bible stories and morals into reading materials for children.

Unlike Mortimer and Barton, Tucker does not mention Adam in her telling of the story and focusses exclusively on Eve. She introduces the forbidden fruit as “more deadly than any weapon of war ever forged.”<sup>113</sup> Like Barton, Tucker asks her readers to place themselves in the situation, focussing on the moral lesson that everyone sins. She challenges her readers from judging Adam and Eve when she states, “what mortal dare say that had he been in the place of our first parents, the fair but fatal fruit would have hung untasted on the bough?...“Who amongst us, beholding Eve in her beauty plucking the fruit which tempted her eye, would not have been ready to have echoed the first life ever breathed on our planet, *thou shalt not surely die*.”<sup>114</sup> This sentence challenges the audience and she implies that it is only historical distance that makes it so easy to judge Eve so harshly.

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<sup>112</sup> Cutt, *Ministering Angels*, 94.

<sup>113</sup> A.L.O.E., *House Beautiful*, 9.

<sup>114</sup> A.L.O.E., *House Beautiful*, 10.

Tucker clearly demonstrates that all sin, regardless of gender, has consequences and her writing reveals a somewhat traditional interpretation of the Fall and the influence of Original Sin. Tucker claims that, “Sin stands not alone by itself: as the seed is contained in the fruit, so one transgression is the parent of many.”<sup>115</sup> Here Tucker asserts traditional beliefs about the Fall and in doing so, this text may lend itself to blaming Eve for sinning first.

Tucker does challenge her readers not to blame Eve for the Fall, but also reiterates some traditional understandings of the Fall. Tucker came from a wealthy family and her father believed strongly in the ideology of separate spheres, keeping his daughters from spending much time outside of the home and family. She also maintained the ideals for women during this time period. She spent her life caring for her family and doing charity work and donated her earnings to charity. She also dedicated herself to Evangelism and became a missionary in her later years. Interestingly, Tucker had to petition her parents for the permission to visit the workhouses that she volunteered with, showing that she did challenge gender norms.<sup>116</sup> Hailing from this background, Tucker’s interpretation of the story is fairly traditional, even if Eve is given more grace in her text than in androcentric interpretations.

#### 4.4 Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823-1901)

Charlotte Mary Yonge was born on August 11, 1823 near Winchester, Hampshire and died not far away in Elderfield on March 24, 1901. Her mother, Frances Mary Bergus, educated Yonge at home, bringing in a French and Spanish tutor to supplement her education. Her father, William Crawley Yonge, was a magistrate and had a lasting influence on Yonge. In addition to teaching her mathematics and classics, he believed that women’s talents should be used “only under the

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<sup>115</sup> A.L.O.E., *House Beautiful*, 10.

<sup>116</sup> Rothwell, “Charlotte Maris Tucker.”

guidance of a mature Christian male authority.”<sup>117</sup> In this way, the seven-year-old Charlotte Yonge was encouraged to begin teaching lessons at the local Sunday School that her father had started and continued with this for the rest of her life. According to her biographer, Elizabeth Jay, Yonge’s upbringing was “cloistered” and she “remained emotionally dependant upon his [her father’s] approval” throughout her life.<sup>118</sup>

As a writer, Yonge was a bestselling Tractarian novelist<sup>119</sup>, publishing over 200 works of fiction and non-fiction in her lifetime. Her first novel, *Chateau de Melville* was published in 1838, and Yonge published a monthly journal called *The Monthly Packet* starting in 1842 which she controlled until 1893. Like many of her characters, Yonge championed Christian morals and believed that women could work in feminine roles, but only under the guidance of religious morals and men. Thus, it is not surprising that Yonge, like many other women who published religious literature, frequently donated the proceeds of her writing to charity, often to help build new churches that her father was involved with.<sup>120</sup>

After her mother passed away in 1868, Yonge became an exterior sister to the Anglican Sisterhood in Wantage, Berkshire. Financial troubles loomed for herself and her brother Julian who was forced to sell the Otterbourne House in 1884 and Yonge took up writing full-time to continue her charity work and support herself. In 1901, she contracted a short illness and passed away. She was buried in the Otterbourne churchyard near where she grew up.

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<sup>117</sup> Elisabeth Jay, “Yonge, Charlotte Mary (1823-1901),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press, 2004), n.p.

<sup>118</sup> Jay, “Yonge, Charlotte Mary (1823-1901),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, n.p.

<sup>119</sup> A Tractarian novelist was someone who was allied with the Oxford movement in Anglicanism which was a 19<sup>th</sup> century movement to keep the Anglican Church close to its Catholic roots. For information on the Tractarian themes in Yonge’s work, please see Livia Armdal Woods, “‘What are they to do with their lives?’: Anglican Sisterhoods and Useful Angels in Three Novels by Charlotte Mary Yonge,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 37, no. 2 (2015): 147-163.

<sup>120</sup> Alethea Hayter, *Charlotte Yonge* (Plymouth, UK: Northcote House, 1996), 16.

While Yonge was primarily a novelist, she also wrote some books for children. In 1875, she published *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Bible History for Little Ones* which included first, second and third readings of different Bible stories including the Fall. That same year, she published a collection of children's Bible stories called *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*. In this publication, Yonge shows her moralistic way of writing for children, and includes some interesting additions to the story which stand out from the set of children's Bible stories discussed here. Specifically, Yonge chooses to add a section after Adam and Eve's creation and before the Fall about the sea and tides. She also chooses to call the serpent an evil spirit, refraining from identifying the serpent as Satan as so many children's authors did.

In the introduction to the book, "Aunt Charlotte" is described as going to visit her sister who had three children, Clara, William and "little Anna."<sup>121</sup> "Aunt Charlotte" told them stories from the Bible on Sunday which the children enjoyed so much that she published them in a book for other children to enjoy. The book is organized into 52 sections, one for each Sunday of the year. Inside each section is a collection of three stories which Yonge told her nieces and nephew after each meal of the day. On the first Sunday, Yonge tells her audience three Bible stories: how the world was made, the creation of the first man and woman, and lastly, about the seas and the tides. The second Sunday begins with Adam and Eve's Fall, and is followed by Noah building the Ark and the flood receding. The theme of the first Sunday appears to be creation and the second Sunday is the consequences of sin.

What is most interesting about Yonge's telling of the Fall is her placement of a section called "Seas and Tides" in between Adam and Eve's creation and their Fall on the second Sunday. Her telling of Adam and Eve's creation itself is fairly typical. Adam and Eve are described as the

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<sup>121</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 12.

first parents of the world, and Yonge spends most of the time delighting in how beautiful the garden was. Yonge also includes a comparison between how happy Adam and Eve were in the garden and how happy the audience will be when they enter Heaven. She claims that when we enter heaven and eat of the Tree of Life there, “we shall live forever, and be happier even than Adam and Eve were.”<sup>122</sup> Then comes the “Sea and the Tides” which seems like an abrupt change of course from her introduction to Adam and Eve and their happiness in the garden. She starts the section with William asking the question, “Aunt Charlotte, now will you read us some more and tell us about the wonderful things God did?”<sup>123</sup> Yonge proceeds to give a detailed account that spans three pages (the Fall is only given two) to describing how the water rises and Falls each day, concluding that, “God so wonderfully contrived this earth and sea that the waters should rise and go back.”<sup>124</sup> The purpose of this interlude from the story of Adam and Eve is unclear. Perhaps Yonge did not want to discuss sin on the first day of Bible stories or perhaps she enjoyed writing about all of the things God had made as is evidenced in her poetic language used to describe all of God’s creations in the first story. Perhaps she simply wanted to distance the two stories from each other, but it is certainly an odd choice to discuss the tides for three pages where the Fall only receives two and so does the world’s creation.

On the second Sunday, Yonge begins telling the story of the Fall. The purpose of telling this story for Yonge is to explain to children how sin came into the world “and the world grew wicked”.<sup>125</sup> Her introduction to the story is also fairly typical. Adam and Eve were happy in the garden and, like many other authors, Adam and Eve are both given the command not to eat of the fruit together. Unlike most other stories which then introduce the serpent as Satan, Yonge simply

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<sup>122</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte’s Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 23-24.

<sup>123</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte’s Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 24.

<sup>124</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte’s Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 26.

<sup>125</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte’s Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 25.

states that “a bad spirit came and took the shape of the serpent, and talked to Eve”, never identifying the spirit as Satan.<sup>126</sup> After Eve eats and gives the fruit to Adam, the “bad spirit” becomes their master instead of God. Language about Satan becoming the ruler of the earth after the Fall is not uncommon in stories of the Fall, but Yonge uses her follow-up questions for the story in a way that makes it appear that Eve is the only one who is ruled by the bad spirit. Her questions about this story read: “10. Whom did she make her master? 11. What was done to punish her? 12. What sad things did the bad spirit bring on her?” Language about masters is not uncommon in stories of the Fall, but here it is not the serpent that becomes the master, or Satan, but a bad spirit which is odd. Perhaps Yonge believed that Satan was too evil or a character to include in her story for children. Overall, Yonge is a great example of how authors embellished the story of Adam and Eve to make different parts interesting to their audiences.

Charlotte Mary Yonge held very traditional beliefs regarding women’s roles and her opinion of women is revealed in her book, *Womankind*. On the first page of the book, Yonge states that, “I have no hesitation in declaring my full belief in the inferiority of women, nor that she brought it upon herself.”<sup>127</sup> She goes on to discuss the role that Eve plays in gender relations,

I believe—as entirely as any other truth which has been from the beginning—that woman was created as a help meet to man. How far she was then on an equality with him, no one can pretend to guess; but when the test came, whether the two human beings would pay allegiance to God or to the Tempter, it was the woman who was the first to fail, and to draw her husband into the same transgression. Thence her punishment of physical weakness and subordination, mitigated by the promise that she should be the means of bringing the Redeemer to renovate the world, and break the domination of Satan.<sup>128</sup>

Clearly, Yonge believed that Eve was to blame for the Fall and this is clear from her telling of the story. Interestingly, this belief is not obvious in her children’s version of the story. When

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<sup>126</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte’s Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 25.

<sup>127</sup> Charlotte Mary Yonge, *Womanhood*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, (New York: MacMillan and Co., 1890), 1.

<sup>128</sup> Yonge, *Womanhood*, 1-2.

discussing Eve's temptation and sin, she makes many of the same changes as other authors. She discusses the Fall in plural terms which describe both Adam and Eve, does not mention the separate curses, adds Jesus to the story to lessen the severity of the Fall and otherwise does not make any remarks which reveal her opinion of Eve or women. For example, when discussing how Adam and Eve were banished from the garden, Yonge tells the story as many others do, stating, "Then God was angry with them, and put them out of the garden, and let them be weak and sickly, and die at last. It is a sad thing for them and for us."<sup>129</sup> It is only in her questions after the story where her opinions are shown. Instead of asking what was done to punish Adam and Eve for the Fall, Yonge asks, "What was done to punish her [Eve]?" and "What sad things did the bad spirit bring on her?"<sup>130</sup>

Yonge's version of the story thus shows how it can be hard in a children's story to reveal one's entire stance on gender relations as the author may only hint at their opinions. Yonge's version of Eve's temptation and Fall itself is quite typical, while her questions following the story do not follow the same pattern of pluralizing the Fall and the punishment and focus on Eve. Overall, it can be seen the Yonge's curious version of the story is interesting because it shows how different authors embellished the tale and that it can be difficult to learn one's entire stance on a topic from a children's story, even one as telling as the Fall.

## 5. Conclusion

The story of Adam and Eve in children's Bible storybooks reveal the presuppositions regarding gender that female authors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had. Coming from the upper and middle-classes Britain, these women typically adhered to the ideology of separate spheres and simplified the story of the Fall for a variety of purposes to teach children different moral lessons or educate

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<sup>129</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 28.

<sup>130</sup> Yonge, *Aunt Charlotte's Stories of Bible History for Young Disciples*, 28.



them about how to live a good Christian life. Rarely did they reinforce or challenge traditional interpretations of the story which blame Eve for the fall, but they often inherited these assumptions which creep into their versions of the story in minor ways. Overall, their intentions in writing this story had little to do with gender and a lot more to do with correct education and upbringing of young Christian children. What is surprising is the sheer variety of ways this story is changed from the original. Even when the authors attempt to stay true to the biblical version and state that in their preface, their own interpretations find their way into the story through every minor change. What becomes obvious is that every re-telling is in fact, an interpretation.

## Abbreviations

- OC Osbourne Collection of children's literature at the Lillian H. Smith Branch of the Toronto Public Library, Toronto, ON
- CLQ Children's Literature Collection at W.D. Jordan Rare Books and Special Collections, Douglas Library, Queen's University, Kingston, ON
- BCQ Bible Collection at W.D. Jordan Rare Books and Special Collections, Douglas Library, Queen's University, Kingston, ON
- MT Marion Taylor's personal collection of women's writings on the Bible at Wycliffe College, Toronto, ON

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