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Erika Larsen

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# Radical Words Then and Now

The Historical and Contemporary Impact of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible*

Erika Larsen

First published in 1895, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* was a product of Stanton's dissatisfaction with the way women were oppressed in society; Stanton blamed religion—particularly the Bible—for this inequality. Stanton was a prominent suffragist in the early fight for women's rights, and although fellow suffragists often felt her views were quite radical in her time, modern feminist scholars see her behavior as warranted given her heavily gender-restrictive society. *The Woman's Bible* was a collaborative effort of intellectual women and sympathetic men, spearheaded by Stanton, to retranslate misleading passages of the Bible, provide commentary to clarify and insert a historical perspective on womanhood as presented in the Bible, and emphasize woman's undervalued role in scriptural history. Stanton's dissatisfaction with religion was not unfounded. While Christianity—and by extension the Christian usage of the Bible—is not intrinsically or doctrinally sexist, many individuals throughout history have used the Bible to justify unequal and unfair treatment of women.

Largely because of corrupt translations and misogynistic interpretations of the Bible, women have been viewed as subservient to men. The inability for a word-to-word translation in language has necessitated multiple

translations and retranslations of the Bible, beginning with the English translation from the Latin Vulgate in 1384 (“History of the English Bible”). This imperfect translation leaves room for intentional or unintentional misogynistic ideas because translators did not prioritize equality towards women when considering word choice. For this reason, Elizabeth Cady Stanton saw the need to specifically identify areas in the Bible that treated women unfairly as a result of translator bias, and retranslate (with accompanying commentary) in order to depict women in a more positive light. Stanton understood that the public opinion towards women could not shift unless the religious opinion towards women also began to shift. While Elizabeth Cady Stanton may have been a bit drastic with her reinterpretation of the Bible, her publication of *The Woman’s Bible* is an attempt at righting age-old wrongs and using the Bible as a tool for progress—one that fosters equality and emancipation. This is certainly not the first time the Bible has been used for good, but it was a monumental step forward in gender equality because of the religiously influenced cultural traditions of the nineteenth century world in which Stanton lived.

In the years leading up to Stanton’s creation of *The Woman’s Bible*, American Protestantism—the dominant sect of Christianity at the time—underwent a revitalization. Award-winning professor of history and gender studies Ellen DuBois provides context for Stanton’s work in this religious backdrop when she explains that in Stanton’s time, Christianity came to represent a more active form of social charity in order to eliminate tyranny and injustice; however, that pointed effort to uplift the less fortunate did not extend to helping the dependent class of women who were required to rely on the unreliable goodwill of men, a point that feminists worked hard to remedy (166). In addition to being influenced by Protestantism, Stanton had several affiliations with offshoot religious and philosophical movements that largely dealt with the need to revise and reinterpret the Bible to be more inclusive of women. As DuBois points out, “General developments in Biblical criticism, the publication in 1881 of a new revised version of the Bible, and the growing tendency of Biblical scholars to treat the Bible historically rather than metaphysically no doubt inspired her” (165). These factors combined with Stanton’s diverse mixture of religious and philosophical studies prompted Stanton to seek understanding of the origins of Christian oppression of women. While Stanton did not identify as a devoutly religious woman herself, she did not intend to tear down religion; rather, she wanted

to use religion as a tool to build women up, recognizing that the same sacred text that was used as evidence for subjugation could also be used to liberate. Stanton took on the project in order to encourage readers to think critically about the Bible and “respect the right of individual opinion” (DuBois 165). The combination of Protestant Christianity with the emerging philosophies of seeking self-expression and looking to historical and critical contexts laid the groundwork for *The Woman's Bible*.

While progressive in its day because of its unique perspective of showing that religion could empower women, the publication of *The Woman's Bible* alienated many seekers of woman's emancipation, particularly key members of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), an organization that Stanton headed before becoming involved in the publication of *The Woman's Bible*. These women felt that the woman's suffrage movement should avoid using religious material or criticizing the Bible because of the potentially controversial effects. In fact, almost all of the women in NAWSA refused to participate in creating the new Bible, including Stanton's close friend and fellow suffragist Susan B. Anthony, who feared that the project would “divert attention from the fight for suffrage” by focusing too much on religion (DuBois 165). The clear opposition Stanton faced, even by her own close friends and co-laborers in the suffrage movement, is evidence that by going forward with the publication of *The Woman's Bible*, Stanton essentially alienated herself and her work from NAWSA. Lisa S. Strange explains that scholars contemporary with Stanton, and even some scholars today, assert that the whole project was a failure that backfired, only serving to divert attention from the overarching agenda of women's liberation and political reform (16–7). Even Stanton's children “expunged all references to *The Woman's Bible* from the 1922 edition of her autobiography” in order to prevent their mother's reputation from being tarnished (Strange 16). Because of the dissatisfaction with the publication and criticism received from all sides, many suffragists and scholars agree that *The Woman's Bible* was an impediment to the movement for suffrage.

But in hindsight, observers can see that when the injustices of the past are considered, Stanton saw the popular translations of the Bible in her day as the real roadblock to woman's emancipation; therefore, her desire to reinterpret the Bible can also be seen as a calculated maneuver to turn a tool traditionally used for oppression into a tool of liberation. Stanton sought to reimagine the Bible by putting together a committee of women who were well

versed in biblical scholarship, women who were knowledgeable of Greek and Hebrew, and women who could comment on the English versions of the Bible (Mace 9). Unfortunately, this project was not executed as planned because many women who were asked to participate did not want to be involved. While Stanton's intent was to subvert tradition by reinterpreting the ultimate representation of heavily gendered Christian culture—the Bible—in order to clarify the inherent right that women have to be treated and viewed as equals, the reality of *The Woman's Bible* was too far from expected outcomes for it to have immediate effect on the suffrage movement. While the radical publication of *The Woman's Bible* may have been a barrier to the suffrage movement at the time, the lasting effects of Stanton's actions in publishing *The Woman's Bible* leave an indelible impression on the annals of history. Stanton's successful reimagining of the Bible turned a tool of oppression into a window of liberation, ultimately opening closed minds to the potential for equality that the Bible depicts, by encouraging future feminist scholars to translate and interpret the Bible through a feminist lens.

Stanton's far-reaching effect on modern feminist criticism had its roots in the criticism of her own day. In order to understand how Stanton's reinterpretation of the Bible was a response to the forces around her, it is important to examine the popular religious philosophy of Higher Criticism operating within Protestantism at the time. Presbyterian minister George P. Hays explored the history of Presbyterianism in America in a book published just three years prior to *The Woman's Bible*. According to Hays, Higher Criticism is a rational theological approach to studying the Bible in which one looks to the historical and literary interpretations of the Bible in order to interpret the meaning of scripture; although the movement traces its roots to the mid-1700s, German theologian Johann Gottfried Eichhorn popularized it in the late 1800s (387). Higher Criticism is described as "bearing upon the doctrine of inspiration [and] is at present one of the leading questions before the mind of the Church" (Hays 386). The passage defines Higher Criticism as describing the study of the Bible as literature, particularly investigating the historical accuracies of the Bible and reinterpreting biblical truths through a historic and literary lens (Hays 386). In the late nineteenth century, this popular, emerging field of study would have been widely discussed, particularly in the circles in which Stanton moved.

Stanton was certainly influenced by Higher Criticism, and her resulting publication of *The Woman's Bible* reflects that influence; Stanton infused the desire to understand the Bible in a historical and literary context with

her desire to understand woman's place in the Bible. While Stanton explains that she did not set out to write strictly following Higher Criticism ("Part 2" 8), there is no doubt that that field of study influenced her. For example, scholars in Higher Criticism distinguished between different writers of scripture, suggesting that there are differences between authors labeled the Elohist and the Jehovist, among others (Hays 387). Likewise, in her description of the two creation narratives, Stanton discusses the Elohist and Jehovist (Jehovistic) accounts in Genesis, terms she clearly borrowed from Higher Criticism. Stanton compares the two accounts and concludes that it isn't possible for both stories to be true, finally stating her preference for the Elohist narrative ("Part 1" 18). While Higher critics sought to discern the identities of these authors, Stanton contented herself with the distinction that there are clearly different voices narrating within the same books of scripture. The overlap between Stanton's efforts to interpret the Bible and the analyses of Higher Criticism is evidence that Stanton's ideologies about reimagining the Bible stemmed from the inspiration of her environment. In other words, Stanton was not alone in the desire to reinterpret the Bible. Stanton achieved her goal of portraying women in a positive light by exploring more of a literary and historical explanation to biblical passages, rather than relying on metaphysical or spiritual revelation.

As part of her historic and literary retelling of the Bible, Stanton attempted to use translation and informed commentary to bring to light the stories of women whose achievements are often overlooked in the Bible. One example of a woman that Stanton celebrated in *The Woman's Bible* is Deborah from the book of Judges. Stanton sets up Deborah as an individual that women can look to as a strong female example. Of Deborah, Stanton says: "Indeed, Deborah seems to have had too much independence of character, wisdom and self-reliance to have ever filled the role of the Jewish idea of a wife" ("Part 2" 18). In other words, Deborah is a progressive example of a woman moving outside of her designated role in society to fulfill God's plan. This example, noted by Stanton, embodies the fight for female equality and independence, particularly because Deborah was someone who was regularly consulted on matters of government and religion. Stanton points out the injustice inherent in the historical accounts as recorded in the Bible by explaining that Deborah's name is not on the list of judges in Israel because "men have always been slow to confer on women the honors which they deserve" ("Part 2" 19). Thus, in *The Woman's Bible*,

Stanton attempts to elevate the status of lesser-known biblical characters like Deborah, while simultaneously calling out observed societal flaws (like man's hesitance to credit women with non-motherhood-related positive qualities) that add to woman's subjugation.

In addition to showing biblical women in a positive light, Stanton points out and discredits passages in the Bible that appear troublesome in their treatment of women. This isn't to attack the foundation of Christianity, but to shift the understanding of Christian examples and doctrines to include a more inclusive historical perspective that diminishes man's ability to misuse biblical examples as evidence for woman's subservience to men. For example, in his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul talks about a woman's need to cover her head so that she might show reverence before God ("Part 2" 157). Stanton's commentary discusses the historical context of this mandate, showing that it dealt with local customs of the time, not with eternal truth. She also notes the significance that this verse has had on generations of women who have been required to cover their heads, including female servants in Europe who were still required to wear caps to that date ("Part 2" 157). Stanton then goes on to encourage women to "rebel against a custom based on the supposition of their heaven-ordained subjection" ("Part 2" 158). While Stanton does not directly challenge the Bible's authenticity, her invitation to rebel against a tradition that encourages a hierarchy between men and women encourages readers to stop taking the Bible as the direct word of God, instead beginning to critically read the text in order to find out which pieces are doctrine and which are less inspired. Thus, while some of Stanton's work in *The Woman's Bible* was intended to uplift and inspire women—as with her work in celebrating Deborah—other portions of her commentary were intended to deconstruct, analyze, and question supposed truths in the Bible that had remained unquestioned for centuries. Stanton's approach focused on breaking down the logic of Paul's argument, and encouraged women to see how it was no longer applicable to them. To this end, Stanton advocated for critical understanding and a seeking for personal inspiration rather than blind acceptance and obedience to tradition.

While Stanton did not challenge the authenticity of Paul's revelations, another contributor to *The Woman's Bible* commentary on 1 Corinthians, Louisa Southworth, directly challenged both the inspired nature and the authorship of Paul's revelations ("Part 2" 158–9). Southworth explains that Paul likely got his revelations from "an absurd old myth" that warned

women to keep their heads covered in protection against angels who would steal them away (“Part 2” 158-9). By looking to myth as part of the historical context—an approach influenced by Higher Criticism—Southworth was able to unearth the beginnings of part of the oppressive hierarchical structure of the nineteenth century. Stanton and her collaborators realized that to understand and change the subjugation of women, they needed to go to the source of the issue—the Bible—and discredit the origins of oppressive societal traditions. While the Bible was not the source of all oppression, it was a major contributing factor to shaping nineteenth-century culture, and so by rewriting the origins of contemporary Christianity, the tradition of oppression would be rewritten as well. Thus, Stanton’s work not only celebrated women, but also sought to liberate them by challenging the origins of subjugation. Clearly, this could have been offensive to many religious individuals who felt the Bible was the direct word of God. For this reason, Stanton’s work was divisive amongst those in the suffrage movement. Not all suffragists agreed that the correct road to equality was to discredit the Bible; however, many of Stanton’s contemporaries and successors agree that reinterpreting the Bible is a crucial step to moving beyond oppression.

While the commentary in *The Woman’s Bible* attests to Stanton’s attempts to reimagine the Bible, the work of several of her contemporaries show that Stanton was not alone in the opinion that women needed to be represented more fairly in biblical criticism. Notably, the public speaker and abolitionist Sarah Grimké received criticism for identifying the priesthood—namely, the religious authority figures in organized Protestant Christianity—as one of the sources of moral corruption, leading Grimké to encourage women to rely on their own interpretations of the Bible (DuBois 57). In fact, in her *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes* Grimké challenged the assertion that pastors are better suited to religious interpretation than women, stating: “Now this is assuming that pastors are better qualified to give instruction than woman. This I utterly deny. I have suffered too keenly from the teaching of man, to lead any one to him for instruction” (19). She continues by explaining that the invitation from Jesus Christ is for all to come unto him to learn of him. DuBois explains that Grimké’s radical teachings encouraged women to step outside of their home sphere, something that would have scandalized societal contemporaries as much as hearing a woman speak in a public forum—another social crime for which Grimké was guilty (56). Despite harsh criticism, Grimké continued to teach that by looking to instances in the



Bible like the Sermon on the Mount, readers can clearly see that “whatever is *right* for man to do, is *right* for woman” and that men and women were created equal by God (16, emphasis in original). Clearly, Stanton was not the only person insisting on religious reform; Grimké spent years publicly advocating for the equality of the sexes in religion. Grimké’s *Letters*, published approximately sixty years prior to Stanton’s *Bible*, was a clear precursor to Stanton’s biblical criticism, just as Stanton’s work is a precursor to further feminist Bible study. Grimké’s radicalism stands as striking evidence that other women contemporary with Stanton were pushing against the expectations of the day in order to reinterpret woman’s role in religion.

Another of Stanton’s contemporaries and collaborators, Matilda Joslyn Gage, joined Stanton in the opinion that the fields of law and religion should be linked; they believed that religion was and is essential to facilitate a lasting cultural change, and only cultural change can segue into legal action. According to scholar Kathi Kern, Gage and Stanton agreed on many things, and despite her dislike of Christianity, Gage was part of Stanton’s revising committee for *The Woman’s Bible* (140). While many of Stanton’s assertions in *The Woman’s Bible* would have been quite radical for her time, Gage’s opinions and recorded teachings support the idea that this radical ideology was not unique to Stanton. In fact, Gage’s involvement in Stanton’s life is further evidence that there were those around Stanton who saw the need for *The Woman’s Bible*. One of the radical notions shared by the two women was that there must be both a Heavenly Mother and Father if Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. While it was certainly not a doctrine then sermonized about in Christianity, there was some discussion about a feminine Deity in the circles in which Elizabeth Cady Stanton moved. In fact, at the week-long conference for the International Council of Women in Spring of 1888, there was a religious symposium in which Gage gave a speech informing women that by celebrating a masculine Deity and ignoring a Divine Motherhood, they were holding back the emancipation movement and that there could not be a revolution in law until there was a matching revolution in religion (Kern 118–9). Both Gage and Stanton linked the fields of law and religion together because equality in one would necessitate equality in the other.

While there were certainly women who aligned their views with Stanton, others saw Stanton’s work as infringing on the quest for suffrage because of the radical assertions that womanhood was divine because of the possibility for a female divinity, not because of the elevated position of motherhood.

Certainly, the publishing of these seemingly radical beliefs acted as a barrier to woman's suffrage at the time. Women, especially suffragists, who were opposed to Stanton's project included women like Ednah Dow Cheney, who said, "That woman is handicapped by peculiarities of physical structure seems evident . . . but it is only by making her limitations her powers . . . that the balance can be restored" (DuBois 166). By limitations, Cheney meant woman's reproductive role in motherhood, which she argued could be reformulated as her crowning glory. Stanton agreed with some of the elements to this argument; however, she disagreed that women needed to take on a vulnerable role in order to gain suffrage, instead believing that women should fight for independence in order to be seen as equal to man (DuBois 167). These sentiments are reflected in the text of *The Woman's Bible*, which fights to assert that women are the total equals to men, not vulnerable dependents who should be given rights on the basis of the weakness of motherhood. Because Stanton's viewpoints were fundamentally different from the way suffragists were accustomed to discussing matters of equality, she did not receive support from NAWSA and the leaders of woman's suffrage, which made her work seem to contrast with the things those women were fighting to achieve. In this way, *The Woman's Bible* was a roadblock because it did not support the attempts at persuasion that most suffragists pushed for, specifically equality on the grounds of the divinity of motherhood and the need for women to be protected.

While Stanton's interpretations of the Bible were radically different than accepted Christianity in her time, later Bible critics and feminist scholars would use Stanton's publication as a standard for feminist Bible scholarship. Thus, although Stanton's work may have slowed the fight for suffrage by being divisive and creating some disharmony amongst suffragists, by looking to the broader history of feminist criticism, it is clear that *The Woman's Bible* paved the way for advancements in the manner women are seen in relation to biblical criticism. In order to see the far-reaching effects of Stanton's work, it is important to examine some of the modern advances to feminist biblical criticism that have been made possible because of the contribution of *The Woman's Bible* to the feminist canon of biblical interpretation.

Because *The Woman's Bible* did not receive much critical acclaim in its time, it was largely set aside throughout the first half of the twentieth century. However, in 1974 female publishers reprinted *The Woman's Bible* for mass circulation in order to highlight its historical significance and its lasting contributions to feminism, as described by professor of religious studies

and American history Emily R. Mace (11). These second-wave feminists saw in Stanton's work the transcendent ideals that could be applied to their own search for woman's equality to man. One of the feminist groups that republished *The Woman's Bible* met in 1973 specifically to discuss why this work was relevant to feminist scholars almost one hundred years later. Mace explains, "Answers to these questions centered on the similarities between Stanton's feminist concerns and their own, and on the committee's ability, as women in possession of the tools of biblical and religious scholarship, to further the work Stanton had started" (12). As a result of this meeting, feminist scholars began to use modern tools to continue Stanton's work and reinterpret the Bible to include the voices and viewpoints of women (Mace 12). Stanton's vision for a group of women with the knowledge and ability to apply historical and literary interpretations on the text of the Bible was finally being realized. Clearly, second-wave feminists took inspiration from Stanton's efforts to inject a female voice into Bible criticism, and they used her work to advance the field of feminist Bible criticism. While the label "feminist Bible criticism" encapsulates a variety of beliefs and ultimate goals, all who identify themselves by this term have "claimed the right to reinterpret the scriptures from a woman's perspective" (Strange 18). That was Stanton's purpose in creating *The Woman's Bible*, and that purpose remains the driving force of current feminist Bible critics. Stanton's work served as a precursor to fights for religious equality to come. In this way, what may have appeared to be an impediment to suffrage at the time of its publication would later prove to be a key text in the expanding view of women as equals, especially in a religious context.

Religious experts and biblical scholars have long debated the implications of Eve's creation; Stanton understood Eve as the pinnacle of womanhood, and thus her contribution to the scholarly discourse on Eve is particularly significant to the overarching message of *The Woman's Bible*. W. E. Phipps, professor of religion and philosophy, presents an interesting argument in which he evaluates the evidence that Eve's creation from Adam's rib may suggest either her necessary submission to man or her equality beside him. Phipps explains that Eve's creation can be viewed as an afterthought—she was created because no other thing on the earth could satisfy man (268). However, just as easily, Eve's creation can be described as a culmination. Evidence of Eve's superiority to man includes her ability to be decisive and progressive while Adam requires her promptings in order to take action (269).

While this more modern understanding of Eve has begun to take root amidst contemporary scholars, for much of the history of the world—and particularly the era in which Stanton was living—Eve has been regarded as a sinful creature, and her daughters have therefore received “justified” treatment as lesser humans. Stanton warned against the teachings of the Bible in this regard, believing that the story of Adam’s rib reinforced woman’s subjugation to man by teaching that woman was made after, of, and for man, placing Eve as inferior and subject to man (Phipps 267-8). In her commentary on the book of Genesis, Stanton points out that even if we accept woman’s secondary creation to man as evidence of her subservience, we would have to accept that “the historical fact is reversed in our day” and Stanton asks whether, since “the man is now of the woman, shall his place be one of subjection?” (“Part 1” 20). This clever logic reaffirms Stanton’s opinion that man and woman were “created alike in the image of God—The Heavenly Mother and Father” and that one cannot look to the creation narrative as evidence of an intended hierarchy between man and woman (“Part 1” 21). What appeared to be a radical opinion by Stanton at the time would later become a respected interpretation of the Bible. Accordingly, Stanton’s work was not fully appreciated in her time, but in contemporary scholarship it is.

Stanton’s clear contribution to the modern conception of Eve has contributed to Eve’s pivotal nature in biblical scholarship. By taking into account the developments that continue to be made by Higher Criticism, and thereby considering the historical contexts of the Bible rather than the purely metaphysical applications of scripture, current Bible scholars look to Stanton’s observations of Eve’s equality with Adam. According to feminist Bible critic Rebecca Styler, it is important to isolate and examine female characters in the Bible independent of the biblical narrative in order to see them as significant apart from their male counterparts (72). Styler suggests that Stanton’s way of looking to the Bible logically and critically is a crucial element to contemporary Bible scholarship, as are Stanton’s interpretation of the different creation narratives and her separation of Eve and other female characters in the Bible in order to understand how they function independent of male influence. In this way, Stanton’s work in composing *The Woman’s Bible* helped to begin and perpetuate a now expanding field of critical scholarship of the Bible. While Stanton may not have lived to see the cultural equality of men and women in her day, the

expanding possibilities of rewriting traditionally hierarchical relationships between men and women in scripture holds the promise that changes in religion can influence needed changes in culture.

Nineteenth-century female writers, like Stanton, felt that it was especially important to push against John Milton's interpretation of Eve in *Paradise Lost*—an interpretation that places Eve as entirely subordinate to Adam and that shaped the treatment of women for centuries (Styler 73). According to Styler, women were encouraged to take after Milton's Eve by being wholly absorbed in the identity of their husbands; a fate which nineteenth-century female writers sought to rewrite. Contemporary feminist scholars are still seeking to overthrow the supposed scriptural authority of Milton's work with its misogynistic overtones that have influenced the canon since the seventeenth century (73–4). Elizabeth Cady Stanton was one of these nineteenth-century female writers that Styler credits for rewriting Eve in order to provide a more equality-based standard for feminine behavior. In this way, *The Woman's Bible* served as an early catalyst that sought to change the tide of public opinion of Eve. While it was not wholly successful in its day, the efforts of Stanton and others have had lasting effects, because feminist scholars today are still looking to the pattern of dissent established by Stanton to reinterpret female biblical characters in a way that more fairly represents them and comments on the nature of womanhood.

Another branch of contemporary feminist Bible criticism influenced by Stanton comes from the Jewish perspective of the Hebrew Bible. While many blamed Judaism for woman's status, Jewish historian Setzer points out that Stanton disagreed and "avoid[ed] the common dodge that women fared better in the New Testament than the Old. In her autobiography, Stanton protests at the twisting of her ideas to cast blame on Judaism" (Setzer 75). Stanton's work doesn't fault Judaism for woman's portrayal in the Bible, and consequently her work is used by several contemporary Jewish scholars who assert that by reinterpreting the Hebrew Bible through a Jewish lens, the status of women can be restored to its intended place as equal to men. Using *The Woman's Bible* as a guide one of these contemporary Jewish scholars, Amnon Shapira, reinterprets the Hebrew Bible in order to show how "the Jewish religion, as portrayed in the Bible, contains the elements which form the theological and historical base of equality" (7). By using Stanton's feminist framework to interpret the Hebrew Bible, the Bible becomes a "manifesto of 'equality'" that demonstrates the sometimes superiority

of woman over man (Shapira 10). While Stanton's project focused on rewriting the Christian interpretations of the Bible, modern scholars are using her work as a template to apply the needed retranslations to Jewish interpretations of the Bible as well.

These efforts attempt to put Judaism back into its intended historical context, which, according to Shapira and Setzer, places men and women as equals. In fact, by looking back to Hebrew language and culture, the seeming inequities between man and woman can be rectified. Setzer looks to Hebrew translations in order to clarify significant meanings. For example, "Eve" comes from the Hebrew word "Chava," which translates to "Life," making her role as the mother of all living a significantly elevated position (Setzer 74). Adam's naming of Eve, when interpreted with this understanding, does not represent a hierarchy between man and woman, but a celebration of the potential woman has to create—an attribute which makes Eve even closer to God in power than Adam.

In addition to her impact on feminist Bible criticism, Stanton is also situated in the long line of scholars who have seen the need for further translations of the Bible in order to illuminate its intended message by translating the original languages with greater accuracy. Since Stanton's publication of *The Woman's Bible*, subsequent versions of the English Bible include the American Standard Version, the New American Standard Bible, The New International Version, and The New King James Version ("History of the English Bible"). In addition to these further translations of the Bible, the tradition of interpreting and finding personal application in the Bible, particularly for women, has expanded over time to include more books and criticism than can be cited in this paper. Notably, the position of women in the more recent translations of the Bible seems to improve as scholars attempt to recreate the intended diction and meaning of God's word. For example, as previously described, Stanton pointed out the important distinction that God created man and woman at the same time, evidence of woman's equality to man ("Part 1" 15). Likewise, in comparison to the King James Version of the Bible, which refers to both man and woman by the descriptor "man," today's New International Version of the Bible replaces "man" with "mankind," stating:

Then God said, "Let us make *mankind* in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created *mankind* in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (NIV, Gen. 1.26-7; emphasis added)

While the King James Version is typically interpreted to include both women and men within the generic term “man,” the NIV makes it clear within the context of more contemporary usage that God created both man and woman in his image. Substituting “man” with the more inclusive term “mankind” accomplishes this. It should be noted that both the KJV and the NIV make use of the plural “us,” “our,” and “them” to refer to a plurality of Deity and mankind, respectively. However, the NIV replaces “him” with “them” in one instance, solidifying the interpretation that God is referring to the creation of Adam and Eve as occurring at the same time, rather than as occurring in sequence. It also solidifies the notion that Adam and Eve have joint stewardship over the earth, and neither of them has dominance over the other. Stanton’s work, therefore, is reinforced even today by contemporary biblical translations, vindicating her work and the idea that it was only perceived as radical because of her cultural and social position—and because most of her contemporaries were reluctant to challenge tradition.

The translation of the NIV is evidence that there is a continued interest in translating scripture precisely, particularly to choose the words that most closely encapsulate the translated meaning intended by the authors of scripture. The NIV attempts to make clear this meaning by translating directly from Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Clearly, there remains a demand for scriptural interpretations that strive to represent truth in its intended form. The work of Stanton continues today, demonstrating that her efforts at translating the Bible to create space for woman’s voice are merely a piece of the larger human desire to have the clearest possible meaning from the Bible. In this way, Stanton’s work stands as an example to those who would come after her and attempt to subsequently retranslate the Bible.

The advances made by scholars in the fields of feminist Bible criticism and further translations of the Bible attest to the far-reaching effect that Stanton’s work has had on scholars. Critics are using Stanton’s work not only as foundational material, but also as a template for further study of woman’s place in history and in contemporary life. Stanton’s work is vindicated by the continued contemporary use and emphasis of the importance of *The Woman’s Bible* to understanding woman’s place. While Stanton did not see how her crowning publication made an impact on feminist biblical criticism, the lasting importance of *The Woman’s Bible* now stands alongside her monumental advancements in the early suffrage movement as she radically organized women in the United States to begin what would become a battle

for equal rights that continues today: “Just as Seneca Falls inaugurated a decades-long public debate over the question of suffrage, Stanton’s *Bible* put religion on the feminist agenda. Now, more than a century after the publication of her *Woman’s Bible*, Stanton appears prophetic” (Strange 32).

While her work was rejected in its time for being too radical, radical change is exactly what her time necessitated. Stanton probably never imagined the revolution in feminist Bible theory that began in the second wave of feminism, but she would be pleased that its origins really link back to Stanton herself. While at the time of its publication it was believed that the final piece of Stanton’s literary output was a tool of hate against organized religion—and it undeniably was a topic for which Stanton would be highly criticized for the remainder of her life—*The Woman’s Bible* has withstood the test of time. Her work’s fitting place in history as an example of a significant translation of the Bible and a pillar in feminist Bible criticism justifies Stanton’s radical words.



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