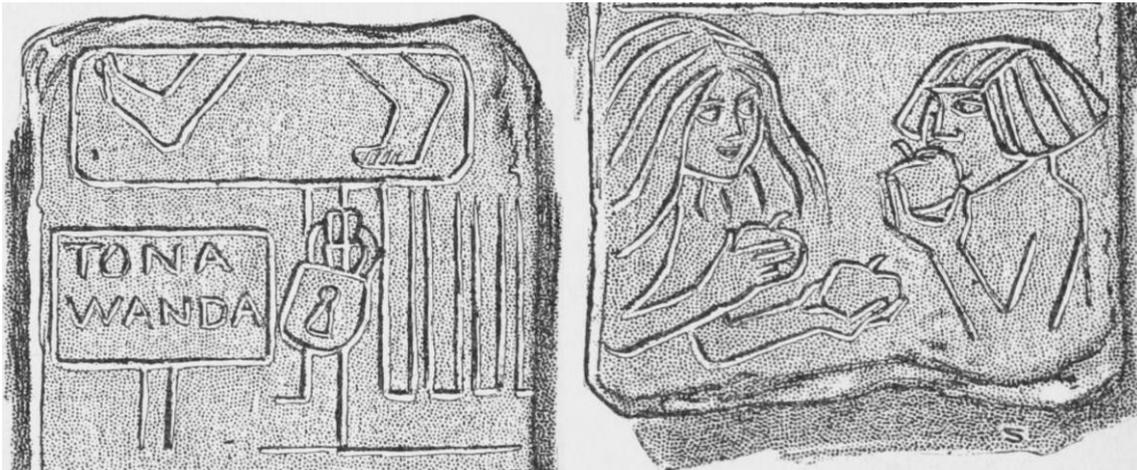




“Wheresoever She Was There Was Eden”— Introduction to the *Diaries of Adam and Eve* by Mark Twain

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Credit: Illustration by F. Strothmann, in: MARK TWAIN, *Extracts from Adam's Diary*. Translated from the Original MS. by Mark Twain, New York 1904, p. 44.

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The Author

Samuel Clemens, also known as Mark Twain, was born in Florida, Missouri in 1835. Four years later, he and his family moved to the river town of Hannibal in the same state.¹ There he was sent to Sunday school and received a strict Presbyterian-Calvinist religious formation.² As a result, he had great familiarity with Holy Scripture. Using the literary device of exaggeration, he would later claim that already by the age of two weeks, he was familiar enough with the biblical figure of the Prophet Samuel to be able to object to having received the name of someone whom God had to call a

¹ Cf. STEPHEN RAILTON, *Mark Twain. A Short Introduction*, Blackwell, Malden MA 2004, 1.

² Cf. STANLEY BRODWIN, “Mark Twain’s Theology: The Gods of a Brevet Presbyterian,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*, edited by FORREST G. ROBINSON, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, 233.



couple of times before he responded.³ Though he knew the Sacred Text, he cannot be said to have become an enthusiast. By reporting miraculous events as historical occurrences, the Bible makes claims that to Clemens' mind were evidently false so that it would be irrational to give them any credence.⁴ In his judgment, Holy Scripture had a corrosive influence on people.⁵

Clemens completed nine years of schooling. As his father had died when he was only twelve years old, from early on he had to contribute to the family's economic upkeep. From 1848-1853 he worked at two different local papers in Hannibal, acting in various capacities from paper carrier to sub-editor and even reporter.⁶ Here he was introduced to the world of writing. At this time, his dream, however, was to become a Mississippi steamboat pilot. He began his training in 1857 and obtained his license two years later.⁷ Samuel Clemens' pen name, Mark Twain, derives from this context. "Twain" is Old English for "two." The sailors of the Mississippi would mark the leadline with which they measured the River's depth, putting a tag every six feet, which, in the imperial system of measurement, make one fathom. Two fathoms, about 3,6 meters, were sufficient for a riverboat to navigate. "Mark twain" thus literally means "mark two"—the second mark on the measuring cord—and was commonly shouted or even sung by steamship sailors to indicate safe water.⁸

In 1861 the American Civil War broke out. Navigating the Mississippi became impossible, and Clemens briefly joined a volunteer unit of the Confederate Army, but abandoned warfare still the same year and moved to Nevada where he joined his brother and took to mining.⁹ Having barely missed out on making a fortune with the silver mines, he found employment as a reporter and writer at various newspapers in Nevada and California for the next couple of years.¹⁰ In this period, he began using his pen name Mark

³ Cf. ALLISON ENSOR, *Mark Twain and the Bible*, University of Kentucky Press, Lexington 1969, 1.

⁴ Cf. ENSOR, *Mark Twain and the Bible*, 80: "The Bible is not true. It claims to be telling the truth, and its partisans maintain that it cannot err, yet to his eye it was filled with lies. Twain regarded the fall, the flood, and many of the events of the life of Christ as falsehoods."

⁵ Cf. ENSOR, *Mark Twain and the Bible*, 82: "A far more serious charge leveled by Twain against the Bible was that it had a pernicious influence on mankind. Not only had its texts condoned slavery (the curse of Canaan, Genesis 9:25) and the execution of witches (Exodus 22:18), but they had also supported unthinkable cruelties committed in the name of Christianity. Indeed, in his more reckless moments, Twain accused the Bible of having drenched the planet in blood."

⁶ Cf. PHILIP S. FONER, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, International Publishers, New York, NY 1966, 13.

⁷ Cf. RAILTON, *Mark Twain. A Short Introduction*, 2.

⁸ Cf. RAILTON, *Mark Twain. A Short Introduction*, 96.

⁹ Cf. FORREST G. ROBINSON, ed., "Chronology of Twain's Life," *The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, xvii.

¹⁰ Cf. ROBINSON, "Chronology," xvii.



Twain. In 1865 he published his first successful short story *Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog*. A year later he started working as a correspondent for various Californian newspapers, first in Hawaii, then in New York, and finally in Europe and the Holy Land.¹¹ In 1868 he moved to Washington D.C., continuing as a correspondent but also serving as secretary to a Senator from Nevada.

In 1869 Clemens began courting Olivia Langdon, whom he married in 1870. As she was a liberal yet devout Christian, during the period of courtship and into the first period of their marriage, he tried emulating her faith, taking on forms of Christian piety, such as saying grace at table and observing a daily Scripture reading. However, he did not manage to acquire a taste for the faith. The Bible contradicted his reason, and he began feeling like a hypocrite. While giving his wife free rein in continuing her religious observance, he formally excused himself, explaining that he could no longer go on this way. In the end, it was Clemens who influenced his wife more than she influenced him. After about nine years into their marriage, she confided to her adopted sister that she no longer believed in a personal God.¹²

In fact, a couple of years before meeting Langdon, Clemens had joined the Freemasons, becoming affiliated with the Polar Star Lodge Number 79 of St. Louis.¹³ His religious belief at the time corresponded very well with the deism commonly held by freemasonry: the faith in a God that is some higher, but impersonal force, who made the universe like a watchmaker fabricates a clock. Without the need for Providence, God's creation continues moving according to pre-established laws even as the divine watchmaker withdraws from it. Carolina Pernigo does well in characterizing Twain's religious path as ambiguous and oscillating.¹⁴ Indeed, according to her, Twain's attitude toward religion never reached the point of being definitive, and his affirmations about it were often contradictory, standing in a tension that was never resolved.¹⁵

¹¹ Cf. ROBINSON, "Chronology," xvii.

¹² Cf. FONER, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, 130-131.

¹³ Cf. FONER, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, 130.

¹⁴ Cf. Carolina Pernigo, "L'ironia funzionale di Mark Twain: rileggere e contestualizzare *The Private Life of Adam and Eve*," *Between* 6 (2016), 2: "Il percorso religioso dello scrittore è ambiguo e oscillatorio: da una prima fase di adesione all'ortodossia calvinista familiare si passò a una riflessione deistica sulle orme di *The Age of Reason* di Thomas Paine; a un ritorno di intensa fede cristiano-evangelica durante il fidanzamento con Olivia Langdon fece seguito un periodo di scetticismo e di critica intensa al messaggio biblico."

¹⁵ Cf. PERNIGO, "L'ironia funzionale," 2: "Clemens si dedicò piuttosto a una continua revisione della propria posizione e di asserzioni spesso contraddittorie."



In 1870 Twain's son Langdon was born, who died in 1872, the same year of the birth of his daughter Susy.¹⁶ Two years later, Twain's and Olivia's daughter Clara was born, and in 1880 their youngest daughter, Jean. Of all these women, Clara alone was to survive Twain. Susy died at the age of 24 of spinal meningitis, left alone in the United States when the rest of the family was in Europe. Olivia died in 1904 and his daughter Jean in 1909. About four months after his youngest daughter died, he himself passed away on April 21, 1910.¹⁷

Mark Twain is remembered as humorist, satirist, and quite in general as one of the greatest American authors of his generation and beyond. Among the works by which he achieved worldwide fame are his 1876 *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and his 1884 *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. He would also write countless commissioned pieces for newspapers and journals. His publications earned him a fortune, although some poor investment choices strained his finances.¹⁸ Fascinated with modern technology, he put all his money into the project of developing a new kind of typesetting machine that ended up as a complete failure. In 1891, while still solvent, he moved with his family to Europe to ease on the living expenses. They would spend the following nine years abroad, mostly in London and Vienna. In 1894 he had to file for bankruptcy.¹⁹ To recover from this financial calamity, in 1895 he took his wife and daughter Clara along on a one-year worldwide lecture tour, visiting India, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. His fame was sufficient to attract large crowds for his speaking engagements, which generated considerable revenue, as did his books *Joan of Arc* and *Following the Equator*, an account of his travels. Finally returning to the United States in 1900, he was able to pay back all his creditors to the last penny.

Particularly during the last ten years of his life, he received many public recognitions, such as an honorary Doctor of Letters degree by Yale University in 1901, and the same kind of title by Oxford University in 1907.²⁰ These were also the years in which he became an outspoken social critic, raising his voice against imperialism, gaining the public reputation of being the "sturdy foe of oppression and injustice."²¹

¹⁶ Cf. ROBINSON, "Chronology," xviii.

¹⁷ Cf. FONER, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, 36-37.

¹⁸ For the following, see FONER, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, 31-34.

¹⁹ Cf. FONER, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, 31-32.

²⁰ Cf. FONER, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, 34-35.

²¹ Cf. FONER, *Mark Twain: Social Critic*, 34.



The Context

The two stories collected here, *Extracts from Adam's Diary* (=Extracts) and *Eve's Diary*, were written in 1893 and 1905 respectively. Although there are more than ten years apart in their composition, Twain thought it very fitting to publish them together on account of their evident connections.²² This happened for the first time in 1906 in the collection of short stories entitled *The \$30,000 Bequest*.²³

Extracts was at first rejected by the publisher to whom Twain had proposed the text. When a little later he was asked to contribute to a volume meant to promote the Niagara Falls, he was able to think of a way to adjust the text to fit the new occasion. He simply moved the Garden of Eden to Niagara Falls.²⁴ The editors of the promotional book were happy to include the work, which, on this first publication, was entitled “The First Authentic Mention of Niagara Falls. Extracts from Adam's Diary. Translated from the Original Ms. By Mark Twain.”²⁵ In 1904 a separate edition of *Extracts* was published,²⁶ this time enriched “with photographic reproductions of the original Diary carved on stone.”²⁷ The illustrations were produced by Frederick Strothmann, a renowned caricaturist of his days, and were as humorous as the text itself.

In 1905 Twain began drafting *Eve's Diary*, which is similar in style to his *Extracts*, that is, humorous and light. And yet, there is also a somber note to it. *Eve's Diary* was written just one year after Olivia's passing away, and it is best understood as Twain's homage to his deceased wife. As Twain's official biographer Paine puts it: “In spite of its amusing aspects, [*Eve's Diary*] is full of tenderness, and in the most reverential sense conveys his love—his adoration—for the one he had laid away. Adam's single comment at the end, ‘Wheresoever she was, there was Eden,’ was his own comment,

²² Cf. ENSOR, *Mark Twain and the Bible*, 49: “Although written more than ten years later, *Eve's Diary* has a close affinity in subject and tone with the diary of Adam. Twain himself hoped the two would appear together to help the reader see the connections between them. As he put it, Eve was using Adam's diary as her unwitting text.”

²³ MARK TWAIN, *The \$30 000 Bequest and Other Stories*, Harper and Brothers, New York 1906.

²⁴ Cf. EVERETT EMERSON, *Mark Twain, A Literary Life*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2000, 202.

²⁵ Cf. MARK TWAIN, “The First Authentic Mention of Niagara Falls. Extracts from Adam's Diary. Translated from the Original Ms. By Mark Twain,” *The Niagara Book. A Complete Souvenir of Niagara Falls*, edited by W.D. HOWELLS, MARK TWAIN, NATHANIEL S. SHALER et al., Underhill and Nichols, Buffalo 1893, 93-109.

²⁶ MARK TWAIN, *Extracts from Adam's Diary. Translated from the Original MS. By Mark Twain*, illustrated by F. Strothmann, Harper and Brothers, New York 1904.

²⁷ GARY SCHARNHORST, ed., *Mark Twain: The Complete Interviews*, University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa 2006, 494.



and perhaps the most beautiful line he ever wrote.”²⁸ It was first published in the same year in the Christmas issue of *Harper’s Magazine*.²⁹ In 1906 it was released as a volume by itself.³⁰ Here, just as with *Extracts*, illustrations were included, this time produced by Lester Ralph. Each of them fills an entire page opposite the text. In contrast to the drawings contained in *Extracts*, these are not humorous but elegant, though at least one local library banned the book on account of Adam and Eve not wearing any clothes.

While one can read *Eve’s Diary* just by itself, some details only appear in their full light if read together with Twain’s earlier *Extracts*. Thus in *Eve’s Diary* humanity’s first mother describes her deep concern about Adam’s “going over the Falls”³¹—which mirrors Adam’s annoyance, voiced in *Extracts*, that Eve was incomprehensively worried and would not want him to go over the Niagara Falls, neither using a barrel, nor a tub, nor swimming in a fig-leaf suit.³² *Eve’s Diary* thus presupposes that the story is set at the Niagara Falls, but it never explicitly says so.

To achieve this mirroring effect, which adds to the text’s humorous note, even in cases where readers do not have *Extracts* at hand, Clemens worked a brief diary entry by Adam directly into the 1906 edition of *Eve’s Diary*. This part is not actually reproduced from *Extracts*, but would seem to be taken from his attempt at rewriting Adam’s story, undertaken in 1905 but not seen through to publication.³³

The Humor

Twain presupposes the familiarity of his readers with the story that he retells. The discrepancy between his account and the biblical one is among the intended elements of humor. And yet, Twain never wrote simply to entertain. His use of humor served him to “preach,” to convey a message:

Humor must not professedly teach and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever. By forever, I mean thirty years. [...] I have always preached. That is the reason that I have lasted thirty years. If

²⁸ ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE, *A Short Life of Mark Twain*, Garden City Publishing, Garden City, New York 1920, 278.

²⁹ For this and the following details about the publication cf. R. KENT RASMUSSEN, *Critical Companion to Mark Twain. A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*, New York, Infobase Publishing, 2007, 118.

³⁰ MARK TWAIN, *Eve’s Diary. Translated from the Original MS. By Mark Twain*, illustrated by Lester Ralph, Harper and Brothers, New York 1906.

³¹ MARK TWAIN, “Eve’s Diary. Translated from the Original,” in MARK TWAIN, *The \$30 000 Bequest and Other Stories*, Harper and Brothers, New York 1906, 372.

³² Cf. MARK TWAIN, “Extracts from Adam’s Diary,” in TWAIN, *The \$30 000 Bequest*, 345.

³³ Cf. ENSOR, *Mark Twain and the Bible*, 48-49 and RASMUSSEN, *Critical Companion*, 118.



the humor came of its own accord and uninvited I have allowed it a place in my sermon, but I was not writing the sermon for the sake of the humor. I should have written the sermon just the same, whether any humor applied for admission or not.³⁴

In what follows, we will examine the major discrepancies between Twain's account of humanity's origin and the one given by the Bible, attempting to understand the meaning of Twain's "sermon."

The Naming

There is first of all the fact that the naming of the animals is done by Eve. This is also one aspect where it is most profitable to read the two diaries together. On Eve's account, she is happy to be able to help Adam in a task for which he obviously lacks the intellectual skills.³⁵ In order to prevent him from having to embarrass himself by proposing absurd names for the animals—as he had already done by calling their property the "Garden of Eden," while its most proper name would palpably have to be "Niagara Falls Park"³⁶—she makes sure to be so fast in her duty that he does not even stand a chance.³⁷ As told from her perspective in her diary, Eve's naming of the animals is thus an act of charitable benevolence toward Adam. From Adam's perspective, as told in his diary, Eve's assertiveness is an act of aggression, an unwelcome intrusion. "She has littered the whole estate with execrable names and offensive signs:

THIS WAY TO THE WHIRLPOOL

THIS WAY TO GOAT ISLAND

CAVE OF THE WINDS THIS WAY."³⁸

³⁴ MILTON MELTZER, *Mark Twain Himself: A Pictorial Biography*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia 2002, 151.

³⁵ Cf. TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 364-365: "During the last day or two I have taken all the work of naming things off his hands, and this has been a great relief to him, for he has no gift in that line, and is evidently very grateful. He can't think of a rational name to save him, but I do not let him see that I am aware of his defect."

³⁶ Cf. TWAIN, "Extracts from Adam's Diary," 343: "I had a very good name for the estate, and it was musical and pretty—GARDEN OF EDEN. ... The new creature says it is all woods and rocks and scenery, and therefore has no resemblance to a garden. Says it *looks* like a park, and does not look like anything *but* a park. Consequently, without consulting me, it has been new-named—NIAGARA FALLS PARK."

³⁷ Cf. TWAIN, "Extracts from Adam's Diary," 342: "Been examining the great waterfall. It is the finest thing on the estate, I think. The new creature calls it Niagara Falls—why, I am sure I do not know. Says it *looks* like Niagara Falls. That is not a reason, it is mere waywardness and imbecility. I get no chance to name anything myself. The new creature names everything that comes along, before I can get in a protest."

³⁸ TWAIN, "Extracts from Adam's Diary," 344.



At the same time, he does not care enough to pick a fight and prefers to escape rather than to seek confrontation.³⁹

From the original biblical perspective, the naming of the animals was an aspect of the task, entrusted by God to human beings, to dominate and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28).⁴⁰ The word has creative power. God created by speaking things into existence (Gen 1). And while the human activity of naming does not call things into being from nothing, it is nonetheless in some ways a continuation of God's creative work through God's steward set over the Garden.⁴¹ It would thus appear that on the biblical account of language, words and names have a constitutive function. Names separate and differentiate, thus giving definitive form to the beings thus named. Eve, in contrast, is convinced that each being has a name that is its proper one. According to her, one can immediately know that a dodo, for instance, needs to be called a dodo just by looking at it.⁴² Eve's theory of language, therefore, seems to be some kind of linguistic naturalism as proposed by Cratylus in Plato's dialogue of the same name, for whom "things have names by nature," and for whom "not every man is an artificer of names, but he only who looks to the name which each thing by nature has."⁴³ Words and names designate things, but they have no part in constituting them.⁴⁴

What is the likely message Twain wants to convey with his humorous incongruity between the biblical account, in which Adam names the animals, and the *Diaries* in which Eve does so? There are elements here of a nascent feminism, proposed by a male author, husband to an emancipated wife of feminist convictions. Counteracting the stereotype prevailing at his time of women as being passive, Twain depicts Eve as taking the initiative. At the same time, her initiative is presented as being of a particularly female type that is healthier and, in many ways, preferable to the male manner of doing things. For one, when Adam does the naming, the beings named are not asked what they say about themselves. For him, the dodo no more looks

³⁹ Cf. TWAIN, "Extracts from Adam's Diary," 345.

⁴⁰ Cf. VERN POYTHRESS, *In the Beginning Was the Word Language—A God-Centered Approach*, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill, 30: "In Hebrew culture, naming was not equally everyone's privilege. The power to name belonged to the one who had authority to do it. God's naming of created things in Genesis 1 expressed his authority and sovereignty over those things. Likewise, Adam's naming the animals went together with the fact that he had been given dominion over them (Gen. 1:28)."

⁴¹ Cf. PIERCE TAYLOR HIBBS, *The Speaking Trinity and His Worded World: Why Language Is at the Center of Everything*, Wipf and Stock, Oregon 2018, 90: "Adam's naming of the animals in Genesis 2:19-20 is a creaturely representation of God's authoritative speech."

⁴² Cf. TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 365.

⁴³ PLATO, *Cratylus*, 390d-390e.

⁴⁴ For the distinction between "designative" and "constitutive" function of language, cf. CHARLES TAYLOR, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*, Belknap Press, Cambridge, MA 2016.



like a dodo than he himself does.⁴⁵ Eve, on the other hand, before giving a name, seeks to enter into dialogue with reality. She does not want to *impose* a name—which is also always a destiny—but wants to ask being what it says about itself. Second, in naming, Adam would seem to enjoy having this power just for its own sake—hence the grudge at Eve’s intrusion. Eve, in contrast, while indeed giving names and thus inevitably exercising dominion, does so not for dominion’s sake, but for love of the other.⁴⁶

The Experiment

A further curious and, in many ways, unorthodox element is the fact that Eve calls herself and Adam “experiments.”⁴⁷ In this way, by implication, the Creator God, who is not so much as mentioned in Adam’s diary, is presented somewhat like a modern scientist in Eve’s text, which explicitly makes use of the word “God” only twice. God is a modern scientist of sorts, and his creative activity must be understood in a way that is analogous to the experimenting done by the great inventors of Twain’s age, such as Nicola Tesla, who privileged his friend Twain with access to his laboratory,⁴⁸ or Thomas Edison, who in 1909 shot a film of Twain at the writer’s residence.⁴⁹ Creation is the work of a demiurge, a Tesla or Edison writ large, who conducts a grand experiment of the same kind as Twain’s inventor friends were wont to do, just on a much larger scale. Adam and Eve stand at the center of this experiment; they are its essence. Eve, the experiment, is curious, inquisitive, formulates hypotheses, tests them, accounts for their failure, even plays with fire and gets part of the estate burned.⁵⁰ Adam, on the other hand, at least in *Eve’s Diary*, is more relaxed and more inclined toward letting things be.

One can see in these descriptions another feminist preoccupation. Twain tries to counteract the prejudice prevailing at his time of women being little intelligent and having little aptitude for the sciences. Eve’s is a scientific mindset, and while some of her hypotheses are humorously off the

⁴⁵ Cf. TWAIN, “Extracts from Adam’s Diary,” 342.

⁴⁶ Cf. TWAIN, “Eve’s Diary,” 365: “Whenever a new creature comes along I name it before he has time to expose himself by an awkward silence. In this way I have saved him many embarrassments.”

⁴⁷ Cf. TWAIN, “Eve’s Diary,” 357: “For I feel like an experiment, I feel exactly like an experiment; it would be impossible for a person to feel more like an experiment than I do, and so I am coming to feel convinced that that is what I *am*—an experiment; just an experiment, and nothing more.”

⁴⁸ Cf. for instance, MARGARET CHENEY, *Tesla. Man Out Of Time*, Barnes and Nobles, New York, 1981.

⁴⁹ Cf. LOUIS J. BUDD, “Mark Twain as an American Icon,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mark Twain*, edited by Forrest G. Robinson, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, 19.

⁵⁰ Cf. TWAIN, “Eve’s Diary,” 369-370.



mark,⁵¹ the fact is that she has just been starting. Her method of acquiring knowledge is no different from that of a Galileo Galilei, Leonardo Da Vinci, Thomas Edison, or Nikola Tesla.

Her scientific mentality, however, knows limits. In *Extracts*, Adam is ignorant of the secrets of sexual reproduction. As he chances to be absent when Cain and Abel are born, to him, their appearance is a mind-boggling event. It is not clear to him where they came from and what they are. In his view, these are two strange creatures that Eve just happened to catch. Now, he, too, has a scientific mindset—more so in *Extracts* than in *Eve's Diary*—and forms hypotheses about the species to which they could possibly belong, conjecturing at first that they may be fish, later moving on to kangaroos and then to bears. Only much later he understands that they are boys.⁵² In contrast to Eve, Adam is slow. Just like Eve, Adam is curious, forms hypotheses, and tries to test them through experiments. Testing the fish-hypothesis on Cain would have definitely led to Cain's demise, and Eve vigorously prevents Adam from drowning their son in the name of science.⁵³ Where scientific rationality crosses purposes with a human, relational, and interpersonal rationality, Eve, experiment though she is, sides with the latter.

The Fall

Eve's Diary does not so much as describe the first sin. The story abruptly moves to a section "After the Fall" without taking any interest in the Fall's nature. *Extracts* gives a more detailed account, presenting our first parents' sin as a trifle. Adam is out and about, trying to keep a healthy distance from the new creature who talks too much and disturbs his peace. Suddenly the animals begin devouring each other, and the tigers eat Adam's horse. He himself can barely escape from the big cats turned wild. He knows Eve has done it: she has eaten from the forbidden tree.⁵⁴ Soon enough, she

⁵¹ Cf. TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 377: "By experiment I know that wood swims, and dry leaves, and feathers, and plenty of other things; therefore by all that cumulative evidence you know that a rock will swim; but you have to put up with simply knowing it, for there isn't any way to prove it—up to now."

⁵² Cf. TWAIN, "Extracts from Adam's Diary," 356: "*Ten years later.*—They are *boys*; we found out long time ago. It was their coming in that small immature shape that puzzled us; we were not used to it. There are some girls now. Abel is a good boy, but if Cain had stayed a bear it would have improved him."

⁵³ Cf. TWAIN, "Extracts," 350: "The difference in size warrants the conclusion that it is a different and new kind of animal—a fish, perhaps, though when I put it in the water to see, it sank, and she plunged in and snatched it out before there was opportunity for the experiment to determine the matter. I still think it is a fish, but she is indifferent about what it is, and will not let me have it to try."

⁵⁴ Cf. TWAIN, "Extracts of Adam's Diary," 348: "I knew what it meant—Eve had eaten that fruit, and death was come into the world. ... The tigers ate my horse, paying no attention when I ordered them to desist, and they would have eaten me if I had stayed—which I didn't, but went away in much haste...."



comes along and offers him some of the apples she had taken. Though it was against his principles, he takes from them, as he is very hungry, and “principles have no real force except when one is well fed.”⁵⁵ It is important to note, however, that here, quite contrary to the original Genesis account, the damage is already done when Eve eats of the tree and not only at the moment when Adam consents. This may be another feminist element to Twain’s story, not allowing Adam to carry the weight of the responsibility, but ascribing it to Eve as someone whose choices matter.

And yet, ten days after the events, Eve still gives an entirely different interpretation of what had happened, which places all the blame on Adam. Twain leaves the reader wondering whether Eve simply invented a fantastic story to lay the blame on Adam or whether this was truly the extent of the crime. According to Eve’s rendering, “the Serpent assured her that the forbidden fruit was not apples but chestnuts.”⁵⁶ Adam objects that he hadn’t eaten any chestnuts lately, when Eve, linguist she is, points out to him that the word “chestnut” can also refer to “an aged and moldy joke,” asking him if he had made any of these at the time of the disaster.⁵⁷ Adam, wondering how, given his young age, any of his jokes could be old and worn-out, nonetheless confesses that just before the natural turmoil, he had entertained what he had considered quite a witty thought. The waters of the Falls drop downward. It’s a spectacle. And then he ruminated whether it wouldn’t be even more wonderful if the waters tumbled upward. “I was just about to kill myself with laughing at it when all nature broke loose in war and death and I had to flee for my life.”⁵⁸ Was this the first sin? Or was it Eve’s taking the fruit, for hunger and curiosity, for love of Adam,⁵⁹ and for empathy with the tigers and the buzzards, who, without death in the world, would be denied the diet proper to their species?⁶⁰ In either case, the first sin, on Twain’s reading, was a mere trifle. A childish prank at most, not even worth mentioning in the second account that he gives of the story, that is, in *Eve’s Diary*.

⁵⁵ TWAIN, “Extracts of Adam’s Diary,” 348.

⁵⁶ TWAIN, “Extracts of Adam’s Diary,” 348.

⁵⁷ TWAIN, “Extracts of Adam’s Diary,” 348.

⁵⁸ TWAIN, “Extracts of Adam’s Diary,” 349.

⁵⁹ Cf. TWAIN, “Eve’s Diary,” 366: “I tried to get him some of those apples, but I cannot learn to throw straight. I failed, but I think the good intention pleased him. They are forbidden, and he says I shall come to harm; but so I come to harm through pleasing him, why shall I care for that harm?”

⁶⁰ Cf. TWAIN, “Extracts of Adam’s Diary,” 347: “She says the snake advises her to try the fruit of the tree, and says the result will be a great and fine and noble education. I told her there would be another result, too—it would introduce death into the world. That was a mistake—it had been better to keep the remark to myself; it only gave her an idea—she could save the sick buzzard, and furnish fresh meat to the despondent lions and tigers.”



This indeed seems to be Twain's reading of the book of Genesis and the cause for his ambivalent attitude toward God and religion: God's judgment was unjust. Adam's and Eve's little prank could not have deserved expulsion from paradise and even death. What is only implied in *Extracts* and *Eve's Diary* is made explicit in *Eve Speaks*, another of Twain's "Edenic" writings, published only in 1923, many years after his death, in which he has Eve relate the following considerations:

They drove us from the Garden with their swords of flame, the fierce cherubim. And what had we done? We meant no harm. We were ignorant, and did as any other children might do. We could not know it was wrong to disobey the command, for the words were strange to us and we did not understand them. We did not know right from wrong—how should we know? We could not, without the Moral Sense; it was not possible. If we had been given the Moral Sense first—ah, that would have been fairer, that would have been kinder; then we should be to blame if we disobeyed.⁶¹

The bitter tears that Eve cries at the death of Abel in *Eve Speaks*⁶² are also those of Twain's wife and ultimately his own, contending with God for bringing death upon humanity for no real fault of our first parents and for continuing to punish their descendants for a sin that was someone else's.

Evidently, the biblical text allows for a completely different reading than the one given by Twain. The first sin can be understood as the direct rejection of God, as a profound mistrust that hurts and would break any interpersonal relationship. God's subsequent dealings with Adam and Eve, even the forms of punishment he inflicts, can be seen as expressions of the tender mercies of God, who continues to seek a humanity that has run away from him (Gen 3:9: "Adam, where are you?") and who promises a Savior at the very moment of handling what had happened (cf. Gen 3:15). Now Twain was no theologian or exegete, nor familiar with the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. On his own, personal reading of Genesis 3, Adam and Eve were simply naïve, and what happened after their sin was not a natural consequence of their deed but an arbitrary punishment that in no way fit their crime.

The Difference

⁶¹ MARK TWAIN, "Eve Speaks," in MARK TWAIN, *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain*, edited by CHARLES NEIDER, Doubleday, Garden City, NY 1963, 622.

⁶² Cf. TWAIN, "Eve Speaks," 624: "We cannot wake him! With my arms clinging about him I have looked into his eyes, through the veil of my tears, and begged for one little word, and he will not answer. Oh, is it that long sleep—is it death? And will he wake no more?"



As much as Twain seeks to portray Eve as an emancipated woman who contradicts many of the prejudices widely held against women at his time, he has no hesitations about ascribing to her a strong sense of feminine identity. The sexual difference between Adam and Eve is clearly spelled out. While one can perceive Twain's affectionate humor in serving the common stereotype of women talking a lot⁶³ and men not saying one word more than necessary,⁶⁴ his further descriptions of Eve's character is clearly *not* meant to be humorous or satirical, but a homage, certainly to his late wife in particular, but also to all women quite in general. She is the one to introduce the word "we" into her discourse with Adam, who, in turn, finds it quite hard to make sense of that word.⁶⁵ She is the one who empathizes with all living creatures, making friends not only with tigers but even with a brontosaurus.⁶⁶ She is the one who loves and ultimately teaches Adam to love as well.

As Eve herself wonders about the love she bears for Adam, sexual difference plays an important, yes, even the central role. "He loves me as well as he can"—which is her very kind and gentle way of acquiescing to the fact that this love is not particularly generous—"I love him with all the strength of my passionate nature, and this, I think is proper to my youth and sex."⁶⁷ She concludes her page-and-a-half-long reflection on why she loves Adam with the insight that "yes, I think I love him merely because he is *mine* and is *masculine*. There is no other reason, I suppose."⁶⁸ Twain thus depicts Eve as Adam's superior when it comes to loving and entering into relationships. And to his mind, the reason for love is sexual difference.

A feminist critique may, of course, object to Twain's depiction of Eve. Inasmuch as she does everything she does for love, there may be a sense in which it is indeed true to say that "all of Eve's potentials are used for Adam's sake."⁶⁹ And here a suspicion may arise. Is Eve not trying "to gain respect from Adam," and does this not mean that "she considers Adam as superior"?⁷⁰ Does Twain not present women here as needing "approval from

⁶³ Cf. TWAIN, "Extracts of Adam's Diary," 344: "Good deal of fog this morning. I do not go out in the fog myself. This new creature does. It goes out in all weathers, and stumps right in with its muddy feet. And talks. It used to be so pleasant and quiet here."

⁶⁴ Cf. TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 366.

⁶⁵ Cf. TWAIN, "Extracts of Adam's Diary," 342: "Cloudy today, wind in the east; think we shall have rain. ... *We*? Where did I get that word?—I remember now—the new creature uses it."

⁶⁶ Cf. TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 373-375.

⁶⁷ TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 378.

⁶⁸ TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 380.

⁶⁹ PARAMITA AYUNINGTYAS, "Gender Ideology in the Diary of Adam And Eve by Mark Twain," *Humaniora* 2 (2011), 372.

⁷⁰ AYUNINGTYAS, "Gender Ideology in the Diary of Adam And Eve," 372.



men”?⁷¹ But is it true that by doing something for someone else’s sake, one always tries to gain that person’s respect and that one considers that person superior? Do not parents do much of what they do for the sake of their children, without thereby thinking their children superior to themselves?

There is little doubt that, particularly in *Eve’s Diary*, Twain *intends* to present Eve, in her capacity to love unconditionally, as in many ways superior to Adam. For Twain, being able to love is better than not being able to love. And even if someone wanted to challenge this premise, it is nonetheless certain that in the story, Eve does not love Adam because of a sense of inferiority moving her to seek recognition from someone she considers superior. In fact, in many ways she considers Adam inferior: “He talks very little. Perhaps it is because he is not bright, and is sensitive about it and wishes to conceal it.”⁷² What motivates her love is thus certainly not her own need of recognition. She does not so much as think of herself. She is free from self. Her existence is existence-for. And herein, for Twain, lies her greatness. A falsely understood feminism may consider this kind of “existence-for” as a weakness. Other evaluations are possible, however. For Christianity, at least, existence-for is at the heart of the very nature of God; it is the essence of the Christ-event, and the constant call for Christ’s disciples, men and women alike: to be is to be-for. Freedom is freedom *from* self and the freedom *for* the beloved.

There is yet another peculiarity to the way Twain describes the relationship between Adam and Eve. In comparison with the biblical account, on Twain’s telling of the story, the dynamics of their relationship proceed in the opposite way. For Scripture, Adam is initially enthralled at the sight of Eve, enthusiastic about finally having found a counterpart that corresponds to him (Gen 2:23). Before the Fall, their relationship is blissful. They are transparent as they stand before each other, feeling no shame (Gen 2:25). It is only *afterward* that elements of severe rupture are introduced, as when Adam blames Eve before God for what has happened (Gen 3:12). In Twain’s rendition, it is instead *before* the Fall that their relation is strenuous, and Adam tries to evade “the new creature,” whose assertiveness in naming the animals, whose constant talking and extreme curiosity seriously strain his patience.⁷³ It is only after the Fall that Adam rethinks the matter and learns to appreciate her presence. Soon enough, the loss of the Garden appears to him a happy fault as it taught him to cherish his new companion.

⁷¹ AYUNINGTYAS, “Gender Ideology in the Diary of Adam And Eve,” 372.

⁷² TWAIN, “Eve’s Diary,” 366.

⁷³ Cf. TWAIN, “Extracts of Adam’s Diary,” 344: “The new creature says its name is Eve. That is all right. I have no objections. Says it is to call it by, when I want it to come. I said it was superfluous then.”



Both *Extracts* and *Eve's Diary* end on a similar note. Thus, Adam confides to his diary: "At first I thought she talked too much; but now I should be sorry to have that voice fall silent and pass out of my life. Blessed be the chestnut that brought us near together and taught me to know the goodness of her heart and the sweetness of her spirit!"⁷⁴

It is in their perception of the Fall that the two diaries for once agree in their judgments. Thus, Eve writes, "The Garden is lost, but I have found *him*, and am content."⁷⁵ Her diary is completed posthumously with a note by Adam, standing at her grave: "Wheresoever she was, *there* was Eden."⁷⁶ Their prank—whether it was eating apples from a forbidden tree or making a chestnut-type, old joke—resulted in their expulsion from the Garden, but they did not lose Eden. Theirs was a happy fault that made them realize that Eden is not a place, but a relationship. They were saved by their love, which, to be enkindled, first had to go through the ordeal by fire. On Twain's account, it is not divine but human love that saves, despite and in some ways because of all its limitations and imperfections.

The Sacrament

The diaries of Adam and Eve are certainly the work of a man who had an ambivalent attitude toward the Christian faith, a deist, freemason, and admirer of the new, empirical science. At the same time, their author is also someone who lived most intensely, who had an acute sense of justice, and who most certainly has known love and love's suffering, as he lived to mourn his wife and three of their four children. Despite his pain and human loss, he never fell into cynicism. Notwithstanding his doubts, he never despaired about salvation, seeking it not where an rigorous deist would look for it—in reconciliation with the inevitable strides of Fate—nor where any ardent disciple of the new science would search for it—in the conquests of technology—but exactly where the Old Book says it can be found: in a relationship. Eden is not a place but a person. As the author of the Letter to the Ephesians suggests, husband and wife are meant to be for each other signs of this Person, who is heaven (cf. Eph 5:31-32). Mark Twain stopped at the sign, seeking salvation in human love without connecting it to love divine. But by turning to the sign, he inevitably, perhaps quite despite himself, also touched upon the greater reality, for which the love of the two

⁷⁴ TWAIN, "Extracts of Adam's Diary," 356.

⁷⁵ TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 378.

⁷⁶ TWAIN, "Eve's Diary," 383.

is a sacrament: an efficacious sign that already mysteriously contains the reality it signifies.

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