

**Disrupting the System: How Harriet
Beecher Stowe Used *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to
Challenge Calvinistic Ideas of Christianity**

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Christianity: Religion based on belief in God and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and on the Bible.



Slave: A person who is legally owned by someone else and has to work for that person.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN;
OR,
LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.

BY
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.



VOL. I.
FORTIETH THOUSAND.
BOSTON:
JOHN P. JEWETT & COMPANY.
CLEVELAND, OHIO:
JEWETT, PROCTOR & WORTHINGTON.
1852.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

- Anti-slavery novel
- Published in serialized form in 1851-1852
- Details the journeys of multiple enslaved peoples and the harsh realities and struggles of slavery
- The main journey focused on is title character Tom's as Stowe details his spirituality as he was sold, traded, and bought over the years
- Used to stir readers to action and fight against slavery
- Criticized the Christian Church's involvement in the institution of slavery
- Calvinism: Theological perspective of Christianity with emphasis on the idea of predestination

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe challenges earlier Christian ideals by...

- ◎ Nontraditionally designating her characters as Christlike and Antichrist figures
- ◎ Utilizing formally lowly and oppressed people as her protagonists
- ◎ Attacking the defense of slavery and domination via biblical scripture
- ◎ Introducing a new version of Christianity deviating from Calvinist tradition

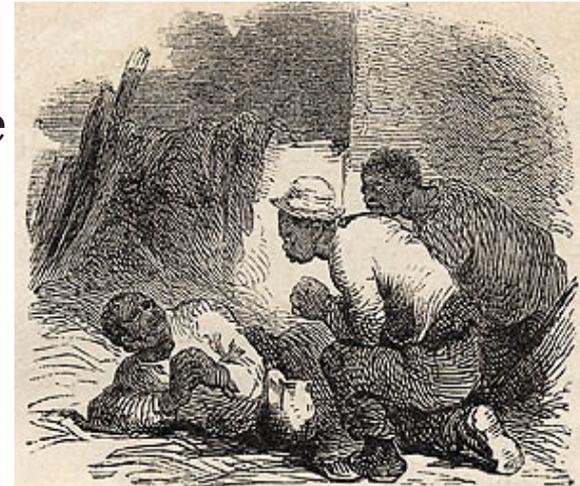
1. Characterization

How HBS uses typological characterization.

HBS Challenges Readers to Envision Enslaved People Differently by...

- **Showing Tom as symbolic of the "sympathies of Christ"**
 - Tom's resistance of evil
 - Demonstrates a stronghold on his faith
- **Showing Tom as a Christlike Figure**
- **Showing Legree as an Antichrist Figure**
 - Tom stands firm in faith
 - Legree continues to tempt Tom

Tom ministers in his final moments



2.

The Lowly and Oppressed-Unconventional Christian Characters

How HBS affixes nontraditional Christian protagonists.

HBS Challenges the Idea that only Certain People can Practice True Christianity by...

- **Emphasizing that race, age, and sex do no matter in salvation**
 - Eva, a young girl, and Tom, an enslaved black man, practice true religion
- **Questioning the Calvinistic idea of God's Chosen People**
 - Early settlers called themselves "God's Chosen People"
 - Stowe's defies this idea with her characters

Little Eva dies via consumption



3. Biblical Justification of Domination

How HBS condemns a biblical justification of slavery.

HBS Challenges a Biblical Justification of Slavery and Domination by...

- ◎ **Criticizing biblical justification of slavery**
 - ◎ Such interpretations promote domination which is not Christian on nature
- ◎ **Displaying true Christian acts of equality**
 - ◎ Stowe promotes equality over domination in her depiction of Christianity

Shelby Jr. Eats Dinner with Tom and his Family



4. Head v. Heart Religion

How HBS introduces a new form of Christianity.

HBS Challenges the Traditional Calvinist Practice of Head Religion by...

- **Portraying a new version of true Christianity through characters unable to practice head religion**
 - Instead, Stowe depicts characters who practice heart religion
 - She insists there is more to Christianity than the ability to read a Bible

Eva reads the Bible to Tom



Conclusion

- Stowe challenges the idea of who God's chosen people are by cementing nontraditional protagonist and antagonist figures and their typology.
- Stowe injects many figures generally not considered to be true Christians, the lowly and oppressed, and utilizes them to display how such people can often be the most Christlike.
- Stowe condemns a biblical justification of slavery by asserting the importance of the Golden rule of Christianity above all else.
- Stowe introduces her own version of Christianity in heart religion which juxtaposes the traditional practice of head religion.



A day of grace is yet held out to us. Both North and South have been guilty before God; and the Christian Church has a heavy account to answer. Not by combining together, to protect injustice and cruelty, and making a common capital of sin, is the Union to be saved, –but by repentance, justice and mercy; for, not surer is the eternal law by which the millstone sinks in the ocean, than the stronger law, by which injustice and cruelty shall bring on nations the wrath of Almighty God!

Citations

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Pictures

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