

WIVES OF THE BIBLE

A Cross-Section of Femininity

by

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CHAPTER ONE

THE MOTHER OF ALL EVE—ADAM'S WIFE

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18).

As pastor of the First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, I have sought in the years of my service to do both a consecutive and a constructive work.

This endeavor is illustrated in the volumes emanating from that pulpit—the forty covering the entire Bible under the title, *The Bible of the Expositor and the Evangelist*, and the twenty-five and more additional ones that have reduced the many series there delivered to book form.

At this time three of these are emerging from the press: *My Bible—An Apologetic*—eight chapters; *Is Jesus Coming Again?*—a revised fourth edition of *The Evolution of the Kingdom*—ten chapters; and my four-chapter booklet on *The Victorious Life*.

With this sermon we enter upon another series— Wives of the Bible.

This series seems destined to find place in print. Let it be understood, however, that I did not speak for publication, but was motivated by what seemed to be the call of the hour.

In this day when the views of men have found voice, securing the audition of millions by the radio; in this day when movements, appealing to and seeking the enlistment of young people, are multiplied, it cannot be forgotten that woman is playing a conspicuous part on the stage of life; both her ambitions and her assumption of prerogatives have broken all bounds.

Neither can it be called into question that the wife's realm has been extended to all possible points of human interest and influence.

In the selection of the wives to be treated of in this series, we have sought to present a somewhat well-rounded cross-section of that influence as it affects society; and in this endeavor we solicit both your attention and interest.

ADAM'S WIFE

Three statements seem justified by the study of her history as recorded in Genesis—She was a miracle; she was emotional; she was immortal.

She Was a Miracle

These are days when doubt occupies the center of the stage for many people; and with doubters the miracle is in discard. Fortunately, however, contribution to human progress from that source is so meager that only the mentally weak care to feed on skepticism.

The Biblical record of Eve's arrival is both clear and convincing.

She was made after man, and from man.

For a long time philosophers have discussed the question — “Which came first, the hen or the egg?” We are on the side of the hen, if a hen's egg is involved!

There are people who spend hours in debate to prove that woman had to precede man as she is his mother. We admit the force of the argument, except in the first instance. There it can be equally well turned about: man had to precede woman as he is her father.

Since Science with all of its boasted attainments has failed to enlighten us at this point, let us accept Revelation and believe that woman came as recorded in Genesis 2:21-22.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman.

“Absurd!” the scientists say. “No facts with which we are familiar tend to confirm such a record!”

We admit it; but holding, as the universe seems to indicate, that there is a God of creative ability, we find no occasion of stumbling in the story. **“With God all things are possible!”**

Some years ago my daughter was a Junior in the University of Southern California. One day she returned from class, face-flushed and frowning. Being asked, “What's up?” she answered: “I'm angry! Our chapel hour this morning was taken by a professed preacher who put in his entire time in making fun of Genesis 2:21 and 22, holding up to scorn the Scriptures concerning the creation of Eve from Adam's rib.”

“So?” I said.

“Yes; and it's a moral as well as a mental outrage; as if God couldn't do that job!” she replied. “Quite correct you are,” I answered. “Perhaps you could get me an engagement to speak before that chapel?”

“No,” she answered. “Fundamentalism is not wanted. What would you say if I could secure it?”

“I would tell them that that was a small trick for God as compared with what the boasted scientists of this day can do. Let me illustrate: I have a Roman Catholic correspondent—a dentist—in Baltimore, Md., who wrote me some time ago that he had preserved for twenty years the most enormous tooth he had ever pulled, or had ever seen. Being a Christian believer it occurred to him one day that he would just test out the accuracy of supposed scientists; so he treated this tooth chemically and made it appear very antique. Then he submitted it to eight of them, asking them three questions:

“1. Is this a human tooth?

“2. If human, is it probably pre-historic?

“3. If human and pre-historic, can science tell me the size and sex of the individual whose head it once adorned?

“The answers came like a chorus. The scientists sang in unison on all points: ‘Yes, it is human.’ ‘Yes, it seems to be pre-historic’ ‘Yes, we have had an expert measure it up, and it comes from a male of enormous proportions.’

“He wrote: ‘Then I gave them the laugh, telling them that I had pulled it myself twenty years previously out of the head of a little woman who had never exceeded ninety-six pounds in weight!’

“But while these scientists can take the tooth out of the head of a little woman and make an enormous man out of it, they cannot afford to concede that God, the Creator of an infinite universe, can take a rib out of a man and make a woman of it!”

But the record stands; she was a miracle! She was meant as man’s helper . . .

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help-meet for him (Genesis 2:18).

The word “**help-meet**” conveys deeper meaning than mere sharing of life’s labors. In it was involved companionship, affection, counsel, co-operation, mutual content; yea more than can be named. Life itself in its fullest and highest meaning and joys is wrapped up in this phrase—“an help-meet.”

In my volume, *Messages for the Metropolis*—now out of print—I quoted a stanza that is appropriate here:

They talk about a woman’s sphere,
As though it had a limit;
There’s not a place in earth or heaven,
There’s not a task to mankind given,

There's not a blessing or a woe,
There's not a whisper, Yes or No,
There's not a life, or death, or birth,
That has a feather's weight of worth,
Without a woman in it.

Recently on a Western trip, I met a woman who seemed obsessed with the idea that her sex had been maltreated by man; she asserted that woman had been denied her rightful place in the home, in society, in the church, in business; in fact, everywhere: that even the Bible, translated by men, had been perverted to prejudice it for masculinity.

She went so far in her tirade as to discredit all that she said. But certain facts are in her favor. For instance: Henry Drummond's report of his visit to the grave of Mary Moffat Livingstone is a case in point.

That scholar and traveler rehearses for us, how, at the dying of a day, he and his party searching for this grave came first to a low, ruined hut by a grass-grown path, on which were the fresh footprints of a hippopotamus. Pushing back the door, they looked into a small chamber, with bare walls, and glassless windows facing the river. It was the bedroom in which Mary Moffat Livingstone lay dying twenty years before. Without, on the river bank, under a huge bayobab tree, was found her grave. It was matted with jungle grass, trodden by beasts, a forsaken mound!

Here was an instance in which a woman had endured more hardship for Christ's sake than had her great husband; in which she had laid her all upon the altar of love divine; and yet, while the husband was glorified and his body was given a place in Westminster Abbey, hers slept in the jungle forest.

But, after all, what matters it? She had fulfilled her vocation; she was an help-meet indeed! She was a companion, a lover, a counsellor, a servant, a wife; and if men gather about the slab that marks the resting place of Livingstone in Westminster Abbey, who knows but that angels gather under the bayobab tree and walk with light step over the jungle grass and look with more admiration than man is capable of feeling upon the final resting place of Mary Moffat?

And Mary Moffat is but one of the millions of women who have filled the high office for which God created Eve, namely—"an help-meet"

SHE WAS EMOTIONAL

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die (Genesis 3:1-3).

She was subject to temptation.

Eve was a creature.

The creature was made subject to vanity (Romans 8:20).

Satan was astute enough to understand that point of approach, and the serpent was his chosen agent.

When I read this Genesis report I never think of a snake. That remark—“**more subtle than any beast of the field**” could never be made of that dirt-eating, groveling, stupid thing. With beasts and birds we have astonishing instances of intelligence. A monkey can mimic man’s ways; a dog can understand man’s speech; a parrot can formulate and utter man’s words; the wolf and the fox can comprehend and outwit man’s traps; but this beast was wiser than any and all of them, and the very curse pronounced against it—**Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life** (Genesis 3:14) clearly indicates that, back of the day of Eve’s fall, this creature might have been as beautiful as any bird that dwells in the trees if not more so; in fact, may have been a denizen of the first heaven, more capable of thought than any beast that roams the fields, and as astute in speech, when satanically animated, as was man himself.

With such ability, with such beauty and with words of such persuasiveness, he moved woman—by nature emotional—to desire a wisdom enjoyed only by the gods.

In all ages, the same disposition to break the rules laid down, whether by men or God, has been strong with her sex.

If, as a young man, anybody had told me that the time would come when the most of the tobacco consumed in this country would pass women’s lips, I should have been more than astounded; I would have been even shocked at the suggestion. But such is life today!

When, a few years ago, the liquor crowd were pleading for the abolition of the Eighteenth Amendment, and fears were expressed that such procedure would result in drunkenness and debauching of our mothers and sisters, these minions of immorality scoffed at the idea; and even the President and his party promised that the old saloon with its bright lights and tempting accessories should never come back.

But the fears of the intelligent have proved to be well-founded, and a liquor regime a thousand times worse than that which existed twenty-five years ago has been foisted upon the States, and woman voted it back, and is, by all odds, the chief patron of this destructive custom—drinking!

The very fact of prohibition — Thou shalt not — seems to become a challenge to womankind, and her answer is that which characterized the brazen statue— “CHICAGO, IN 1894”—“I WILL!”

Take the latest illustration of this truth recorded in The Associated Press a little while ago.

The Royal Yacht Squadron of Cowes, England, is not only the most exclusive club in the world, limited to two hundred in number and only to kings and queens and those supposed to be their fit associates, but it is also the most conservative club in the world. Men may dress in yachting suits only, and the women in blue or grey flannel sport suits; and the exactions of conduct have been as strict as the limitation upon clothes.

But, recently, for the protection of their sex, some of these sisters who wanted to smoke have gone aside to quiet retreats and smoked in companies to save any one of them from being singled out and criticized for her conduct; and only a few days ago Viscountess Hinchinbrooke donned bright blue slacks and brazenly positioned herself under the frowns of the Royal Yacht officials. It is mother Eve over again; it is woman's answer to Thou shalt not. It is also an illustration of the truth stated by Paul, **The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God** (I Corinthians 2:14).

Eve led in the instance of original sin.

The question is sometimes raised as to why God made Adam and Eve capable of falling, possible subjects of temptation; but the answer is not difficult.

It is impossible to make free-will agents after any other manner. A machine has no moral responsibilities. If it goes wrong there is no moral fault with it. Either its inventor or creator made a mistake in its arrangement, or some portion of it has proved to be of poor material, or has been forcibly displaced, and the product involves no moral responsibility. The Mechanists of this day make little of morals. But man, made in the image of God, had to be a free moral agent, and this freedom may be exercised either for law or against it; for the right or for the wrong.

Doubtless due to the physical circumstance that woman's nature was more emotional than was that of man, and consequently her likelihood of transgression greater and her descent in morals deeper, she was made subject, and for six millenniums or more her freedom was restricted.

Beecher belonged in the last half of the nineteenth century, and so short a time ago as that he eloquently argued for "larger liberty for woman"; and, in speaking of that, said:

"It is only woman without a title that must have no privileges. With a crown on her brow she may enter Parliaments and govern empires. With only her own simple virtues she may not lift up her hand to cast a vote. Now, as a Christian democrat, I assert for her every right and every privilege that aristocracy accords her. That which is good enough for a queen is not too good for my wife. That which is noble in a duchess is honorable in my daughter."

Those of us who live in the first half of the twentieth century have seen all the changes that Beecher advocated accomplished. Women now need not belong to the nobility to cast votes, to be successful candidates for office, to govern labor unions, to be made presidents. They have been accorded equal rights with man; and, sad to say, with this larger liberty has come a regrettable license!

Certain of them not only paint their nails and lips, pencil their eyebrows, and crimson their cheeks, but they smoke like chimneys, drink like fish, divest themselves of clothing at pleasure, strut the streets almost in the garb that Nature provided, and defy both the legislation of men and the commandments of God!

Freedom is a good thing when exercised within moral limitations, but when freedom tramples the laws of God and men under its feet it becomes the menace of mankind and makes for the degradation of the individual and for social disruption.

SHE WAS IMMORTAL

Therein lay the gravity of her disobedience and the ruin of her rebellion. She was immortal in her offspring.

That is the immortality that all men admit, and the only immortality that Materialists accept. That immortality is grave enough! The sin of a mother becomes an evil inheritance to her children. That is why Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, wrote: **By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners** (5:19).

My great friend, Dr. B. H. Carroll, in my judgment the greatest preacher of his day, believed and taught that Paul here purposely shifted this original sin from the shoulders of Eve to those of Adam because Eve sinned unwillingly in ignorance, but Adam willingly and undeceived that he might share her fate.

But, while we consent to a measure of truth there, we cannot believe that Eve is exempt from this responsibility by the mere employment of terms, since the Genesis text makes it clear that she knew better; and the common employment of the word "man" in the Bible compasses the conduct of all human flesh.

Fathers live in their children, but, to a still greater degree children reflect the mother's influence; and, as we believe, inherit from her more of character than a father transmits. It is that thought which has finally brought about the exaltation of womanhood to the place of first honors.

When Mrs. Riley and I visited Liverpool in 1936, the thing that most interested me among the many sights shown us was the Liverpool Cathedral. One of the greatest of edifices in all England, it is still—after more than thirty years—in the process of building. Among its many features, perhaps the most unique is a memorial window glorifying womankind. The figures in it are not angelic; they are feminine instead and represent the titled and the humble, the noble and the unheralded. Queen Victoria holds her place and so does Kitty Wilkinson, the washerwoman, who, when cholera swept the land, daily risked her life to keep clean the homes and clothing of her sick neighbors. Susannah Wesley is there; so is Elizabeth Fry. Christina Rossetti, a sweet singer is there; and so is Grace Darling, the courageous maid. Louisa Stewart, a young missionary who, like Betty Stam, gave her life for Christ in China, speaks of the noble army of women martyrs as well as of the triumph of the saints.

The Rockefeller church in New York sought to honor the masculine immortals; the Liverpool Cathedral sets in fine perspective noble femininity instead.

The race considered, doubtless the wife, mother and sister have exerted the most lasting as well as the most far-reaching influence.

There is no question that one act of Eve has played in the world's history a more prominent part than all the acts of all the men and women beside. Such is the immortality of maternity!

She was also immortal in her very constitution.

God breathed into her the breath of life and she became a living soul.

And the life that emanated from Him and entered into her was not temporal; it could not be, for God is eternal.

That which belonged to Eve by creation has become the spiritual inheritance of every son and daughter of the race. Whether we would have it so or not, whether we like it or not, it remains a fact that we are deathless beings, every one of us.

The body, the tenement of clay, may decay and go to the grave; but not so with the spirit, it lives on!

That makes time a matter of infinite magnitude for time is the soul's opportunity. In it decisions for right or wrong are made; but in eternity the results of its decisions are faced and experienced.

On this the ignorant and the learned have agreed, for the very simple reason that God has implanted in every life the sense of an eternity. The Indian savage held as a hope of life beyond the grave "The Happy Hunting Ground." A philosophic Greek deposited in his tomb the ferryman's fee to assure crossing the stream of the Styx. Plato and Socrates alike held that we should live again in joy or sorrow, in happiness or ill-content.

But, for those of us who have been brought up in a Christian land, the language of the poet confirms prophet and apostle, and is final upon this subject—

*It is not all of life to live
Nor all of death to die.*

Osler may have thought that man's valuable days were over at fifty but when he came to breathe his last, December 29, 1919, he wrote: "Dear Friends: The harbor is reached after a splendid voyage with such companions on the way. My boy is waiting for me."

My old friend, the father of American surgery, Dr. W. W. Keen of Philadelphia, a man who, to his ninetieth year, was my kindly but ardent opponent over evolution—never so far lost himself to that uncertain philosophy as to doubt the immortality of the soul.

Before his death he said: “I accept Michelson when he tells me that light travels at the rate of 186,284 miles a second; and George Ellery Hale when he tells me that the nebula in Andromeda takes, at this wonderful speed, one million years to reach my eyes, because I believe these men know about these things; and when Jesus Christ said, **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life** (John 3:16) I believe Him, because He knew of the other world and knew whereof He spake. I am fully convinced that when I pass from this world I shall meet my dear wife who was taken from me forty years ago last July, and I thank God for that faith!”

I have had to go this past week into two broken homes. In the first, a young man in all the fulness of early manhood lay in the coffin ready for burial. In the second a little boy of eight years, in the daring of childhood, had been drowned. How miserable would have been my state, as a friend of these families and a minister of comfort, had I not had the sweet assurance of immortality, and had I not been able to preach to family and friends “**THAT BLESSED HOPE**”!

If Eve, our first mother, was the first human involved in the tragedy of sin, it is glorious to believe that she was also the first human redeemed by the Divine plan of God’s Son—the sinner’s Substitute!

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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