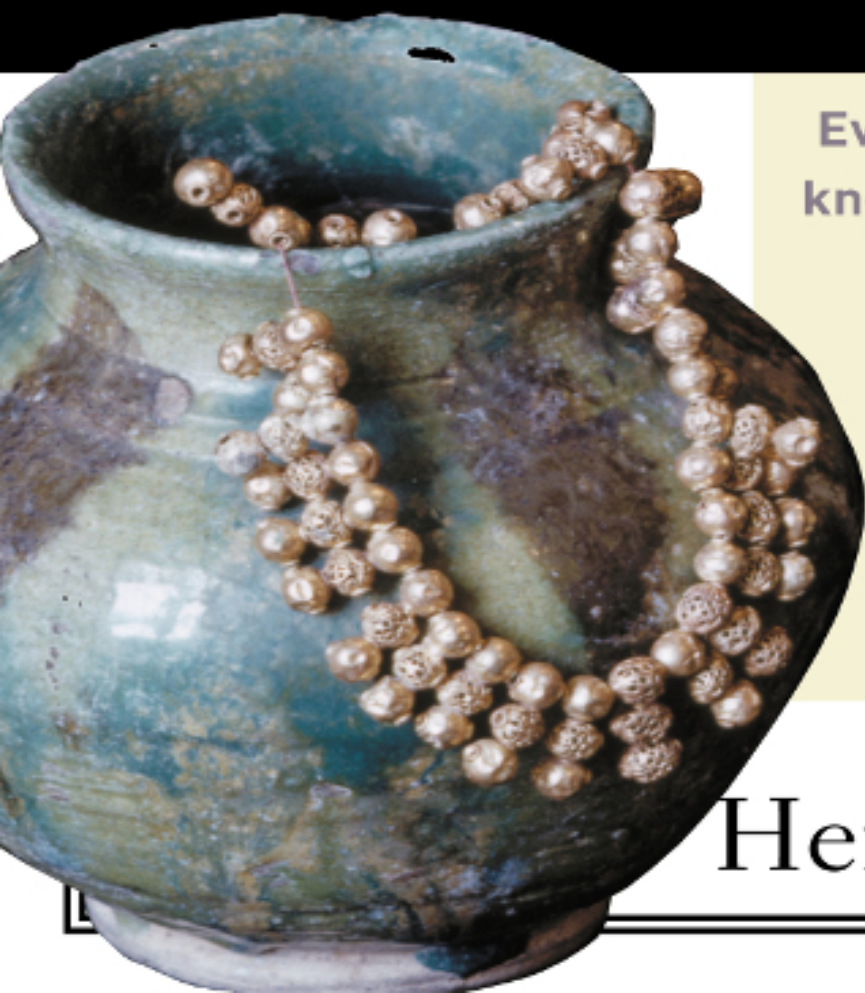


All the



WOMEN

of the Bible



Everything you wanted to  
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women profiled



What women of the  
Bible teach us today

Herbert Lockyer

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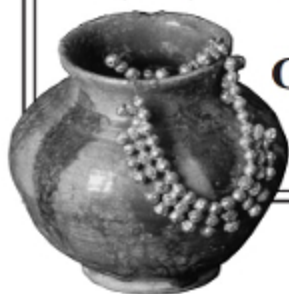
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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Herbert Lockyer was born in London in 1886 and held pastorates in Scotland and England for twenty-five years before coming to the United States in 1935.

In 1937 he received the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Northwestern Evangelical Seminary.

In 1955 he returned to England where he lived for many years. He then returned to the United States where he continued to devote time to the writing ministry until his death in November of 1984.

## Introduction

In 1956, during one of his business trips to Europe, Pat Zondervan, of the Zondervan Publishing House, and I met in a London hotel to talk over matters of mutual interest. Having been associated with both Pat and Bernie Zondervan from the small beginning of their now large publishing concern, I was always excited over any new venture undertaken. I was not prepared, however, for Pat's surprising proposal that I should author a large volume on *All the Men of the Bible*. But after a full discussion of the project, I consented, somewhat reluctantly, to the commission. At the time I did not realize that the Bible mentions some 3,000 men, but when I did I became frightened at the task of trying to delineate God's portrait gallery of male characters. Well, the volume appeared in 1958, and has gone through many editions.

The most logical companion study to follow would have been *All the Women of the Bible*, but in 1955 there had appeared a book bearing this title by the gifted authoress, Edith Deen. Published by Harper and Brothers, New York, this entrancing and incomparable coverage of the theme is the most comprehensive one extant, and one which no student of the female characters of Scripture should be without. It is superb in its classification and exposition of every known and unknown woman in the Bible, and will remain a classic in its field. Along with multitudes of other Bible lovers I acknowledge with gratitude my debt to Edith Deen for her monumental work.

Having received scores of requests from readers for a further companion on the women of the Bible, the publisher urged me to accede to his desire to author this volume. After much prayerful thought I decided to undertake the assignment in my own particular style, hence this further addition to the *All* series.

A continuous sojourn for over a year in the world of Bible women, caused one to realize how intimately they were associated with the unfolding purpose of God. With the first woman He fashioned there came



the first promise and prophecy of His redemptive plan for mankind. Because He is no respecter of person or sex, He used — and still uses — women to accomplish His beneficent ministry in a world of need. While it is sadly true that it was a woman who brought sin into God’s fair universe, it was likewise a woman who gave the world the Saviour from its sin. Furthermore, the student of Scripture female biography is impressed with the fact that men and nations are influenced by the quality of women; and it is still true that “the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

Another impressive fact I discovered was the way in which women in Bible times find an echo in the traits of women today, as Dr. W. Mackintosh Mackay so convincingly proves in his two volumes on *Bible Types of Modern Women*, and as Dr. George Matheson does in *The Representative Women of the Bible*. In the latter work, Dr. Matheson portrays fifteen Bible women as representing different types of female qualities as well as of universal humanity. One of his observations is that, “The women of the Sacred Gallery were much more dependent on environment than were men; the men could seek foreign influence, the women had to wait till foreign influence should seek them.” Human nature remains very much the same, as millenniums come and go. As long as history continues, women remain women, in spite of their present effort to become more masculine. Looking into the mirror of Scripture, women of today can see their counterparts both in the women whose names remain and in the lives of those who are anonymous. Unattractive women, like Leah of old, still clutch and strive desperately to hold the man they love. Others, who are beautiful like Rachel, Leah’s sister, still feel that life owes them romance and happiness. This is not because of any brains they may have, but simply because of their beauty — which is still, in spite of all artificial aids to enhance it, only skin deep. Hannah illustrates both the despair of being childless and yet the grace of noble motherhood (I Samuel 1-2:11); and in the motherly advice to a son, Solomon pictures the tireless life of a good and faithful wife and mother (Proverbs 31).

Referring to the fact that the women of the Bible form a feminine picture gallery unmatched in the whole of literature, H. V. Morton remarks that, “the change, the inventions, the fashions which are the keynote of our

time, are perhaps apt to make us forget that men and women have not changed much since the age of Genesis.”

In *God Speaks to Women Today*, Eugenia Price deals with 26 females of Scripture, and in a most stimulating and provocative way provides us not only with vivid character sketches of these women, but also with a summary of their dilemmas so common to women in our century. This popular authoress “whose every new book makes news,” also reminds us that we can study Bible women as an isolated group whose lives are lived on an island, remote from other human beings. Studying what the Bible says about them, “we also learn about their husbands, their children, their relatives and friends.” How can one read all about Ruth the Moabitess, without a knowledge of her association even with King David, and his greater Son, even our Lord Jesus Christ! Woman is an integral part of humanity, and if humanity is to be purified and Christianized to a far greater extent, it is imperative to have an enlightened, spiritual womanhood. May God increase the number of Christian women through whom He can draw a sin-cursed, war-weary earth nearer to Himself!

All the  
**WOMEN**  
of the Bible

# 1

## The Life and Lot of Bible Women

Although Bible women for the most part are shadowy, subordinate figures, particularly in the Old Testament, there were those like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Ruth and Esther who were outstanding, each having a distinction of her own, as our next chapter shows. What is striking is the fact that whether the women were queens or commoners, chaste or bad, their lives are frankly portrayed, proving the Bible to be a faithful biography of humanity.

The sacred record of woman's special creation (Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:18-24), declares not only her full humanity but also her superiority to the lower animal world which God also brought into being. Woman appeared as the counterpart and helper of man, and being part of his inmost being holds an intimate relationship to him. Adam, being a collective term for mankind, includes women. "Let us make *man* . . . and let *them* . . ." "In the image of God created he *him*; male and female created he *them*" (Genesis 1:26, 27). Woman is the feminine of man. While higher criticism and evolution discredit the Biblical record of woman's formation from the rib of man (Genesis 2:21-24), the passage emphasizes, most profoundly, the inseparable unity and fellowship of a woman's life with that of man's. She is not only man's helper (Genesis 2:18), but also his complement, and is most essential to the completion of his being. Matthew Henry's comment on the creation of Eve is most expressive —

If man is the head, she [woman] is the crown, a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was double-refined, one remove further from the earth. . . . The woman was *made of a rib out of the side of Adam*; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of

his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.

Eve, then, was Adam's second self and differed from him in sex only, not in nature. Priority of creation gave Adam headship but not superiority. Both man and woman were endowed for equality and for mutual interdependence. Often woman excels man in the capacity to endure ill-treatment, sorrow, pain and separation. Throughout history, man, through pride, ignorance or moral perversion has treated woman as being greatly inferior, and has enslaved and degraded her accordingly. Among many heathen tribes today woman is a mere chattel, the burden-bearer, with no rights whatever to equality with man.

While the ancient world was predominantly a man's world, woman enjoyed a status in Israel not generally experienced in the East. The Jews, holding to the revelation given to Moses of woman's endowments, worth and rightful position, were outstanding among other oriental nations in holding woman in high esteem, honor and affection. Christianity, as we are to see, brought full emancipation to womanhood, and wherever Christ is recognized as Saviour and His truth is obeyed, woman is esteemed as man's loved companion, confidant and, in many ways, his better half.

Before dealing with the manifold features of the life of Bible women, it may prove helpful to briefly outline the approach to women in the Scriptures. We take, first of all —

### *Old Testament Times*

The position of women in Israel was in marked contrast with her status in surrounding heathen nations. Israelite law was designed to protect woman's weakness, safeguard her rights, and preserve her freedom (Deuteronomy 21:10-14; 22:13; 22:28). Under divine law her liberties were greater, her tasks more varied and important, and her social standing more respectful and commanding than that of her heathen sister. The Bible has preserved the memory of women whose wisdom, skill and dignity it willingly acknowledged. Numerous names of devout and eminent Hebrew women adorn the pages of the Old Testament. To some extent, a woman was her husband's property (Genesis 12:18; Exodus 20:17; 21:3) and owed him absolute fidelity. While the husband had no formal rights over the

person of his wife, nevertheless, he was recognized as lord and master. By her chastity, diligence and love woman created an honorable position for herself within family and community circles.

Any prominence woman attained was obtained by force of character. There were those, like Deborah, who achieved greatness. Others, such as Esther, had greatness thrust upon them. Womanly virtues were foreign to pagan culture under which woman became subject to inferior and degrading conditions. Decline of woman in Israel was always due to the invasion of heathen influences. Morality lapsed as idolatrous customs were countenanced. "The prominence of women in idolatry and in the abominations of foreign religions is indicated in the writings of the prophets (Jeremiah 7:8; Ezekiel 8:14, see Exodus 22:18). The sordid effect of idolatrous women ruined the religious life of Judah and Israel and contributed to their overthrow."

### *Inter-Testament Times*

During the so-called 400 silent years from Malachi to Matthew, the women portrayed in the apocryphal literature of the Jews "reveal all the varied characteristics of their sex so conspicuous in Old Testament history." Anna, Edna (Tobias 1:9; 2:1-14; 7:10, 12), Sarah (Tobias 10:10; 14:13), Judith (16:1-17), Susanna, whose story is told in the LXX Version, all typify the ideal womanly virtues of "devout piety, ardent patriotism, poetic fervor and wifely devotion." Cleopatra (I Maccabees 10:58), influential in the counsel of kings, and conspicuous for political intrigue, is a striking example of the perverted use of a woman's power.

### *The New Testament Times*

It is from the teaching of our Lord, as well as from His example, that we gather the original function of woman and the obligation of purity toward her (Matthew 5:27-32). What an understanding of, and sympathy with, women He manifested (Luke 10:38, 42; Matthew 5:27-32)! The reverence Jesus had for woman and "the new respect for her begotten by His teaching were well-grounded, on their human side, in the qualities of His own mother. The fact that He was born of woman has been cited to her praise in the ecumenical creeds of Christendom." With the coming of Christ a new era dawned for womanhood, and wherever He is exalted woman comes into

her own. From the outset of His sojourn on the earth, women were intuitively responsive to His teachings and devoted to His person.

### *Early Church Times*

Through the examples of Jesus in His attitude toward women, and as the result of the truth He taught, women were prominent in the activities of the Early Church. Among the first converts in Europe (Acts 16:13-15), the apostles set high standards for Christian women (I Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:3-5; I Peter 3:1-6) and exalts woman as a type of the Church, the Lamb's Bride (Ephesians 5:21-33). Women ministered unto the apostles of their substance, and came to hold official positions of spiritual influence in the church (Romans 16:1). Later, Tertullian wrote of the spiritual wealth and worthiness of Christian women, and of how their modesty and simplicity was a rebuke to and reaction from the shameless extravagancies of the immoralities of heathen women. That they were among the most conspicuous examples of the transforming power of Christianity is manifest from the admiration and astonishment of the pagan Libanius who exclaimed, "What women these Christians have!"

### *Present Times*

Through the centuries the social and legal status of woman has fluctuated. In times of fierce persecution they suffered much. Where heathenism still reigns the life and lot of women are far from the freedom and joy they experience where Christianity is recognized. From the 18th century on, women in civilized lands have experienced universal education and the right to vote, and through the impact of the Christian faith they are equal with men in the great achievements of education, art, literature, social services and in missionary activities. Christian women, in particular, present to the world morality, home happiness and piety, domestic honesty, and full devotion to Christ. As morals become more lax, and society degenerates, God-fearing wives and mothers are more than ever vital factors in the spiritual elevation of the nation. Two courses confront every woman today. The one consists of pleasure-chasing, sin-loving, divorce-exalting, and sex perversion all springing from a rejection of Christ; the other course is the noblest and most beneficial for our homes, nation and church, namely, that of a God-inspired devotion which centers in the home, husband and

children, and in the Scriptures. Moral laxity among girls today, and the ever-increasing divorce rate with its progressive polygamy, constitute a call to continuous intercession that God will raise womanhood to the noble heights He intended for all the daughters of Eve.

As it may prove interesting to learn how Bible women lived, worked, dressed and expressed themselves religiously, we begin, first of all, with the institution, God originally created them for, namely —

#### MARRIAGE

The indissoluble nature of marriage, Jesus emphasized, is likewise demonstrated in the first man's one wife (Matthew 19:3-11). Originally, God sanctioned monogamy, that is, the marriage of one wife or husband at a time. From the earliest days in ancient Israel marriage symbolized festive joy, whether secular or spiritual, as well as the union and communion between God and His people. "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a *bridegroom* decketh himself with ornaments, and as a *bride* adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10, see John 3:29). Marriage, the sacrament of human society, was ordained of God for the purpose of a husband and wife to share and perpetuate their happiness in the creation of a family within the sphere of their own love. Marriage was not meant to be an end in itself but the means to ends outside of those who are married. By God's creative will Adam and Eve were made one flesh so that the world could be populated with family units.

*The Pictorial Bible Dictionary* reminds us that —

Distinctly Christian marriage is one in which husband and wife covenant together with God and publicly witness their commitment not only to each other but together to Him, to the end that they shall in unity fulfill His purposes throughout life (I Corinthians 7:39; II Corinthians 6:14). Marriage is contracted "in the Lord," received as a divine vocation, acknowledged with humility and thanksgiving, and sanctified by the Word of God and prayer (I Timothy 4:4, 5).

#### POLYGAMY

As civilization developed, and sin increased, man perverted the divine ideal and purpose in marriage, and became a polygamist, a man with more



than one wife. Lamech, of the family of Cain, the world's first murderer, appears to be the first to violate the original ordinance, for he is spoken of as having two wives, Adah and Zillah (Genesis 4:23). By the time of Noah, polygamy had degenerated into interracial marriages of the most incestuous and illicit kind (Genesis 6:1-4). By the time Moses came to write the Law, polygamy had apparently become general, and although accepted as a prevailing custom, was never approved. The Mosaic Law sought to restrict and limit such a departure from God's original purpose by wise and humane regulations. The curse that almost invariably accompanies polygamy is seen in Elkanah's home life with his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. The Old Testament presents similar indirect exposures of what polygamy can lead to. Failures and calamities in the reigns of David and Solomon are attributed to the numerous wives each had (II Samuel 5:13; I Kings 11:1-3, see Deuteronomy 17:7).

Under polygamy power was transferred from the wives to the queen mother, or chief wife (I Kings 2:9; 15:13). The husband had to house and feed his wives. Sometimes separate establishments were provided for the wives collectively or individually, "The house of the women" (Esther 2:3, 9; I Kings 7:8). Often wives had a separate tent (Genesis 31:33). For meals and social intercourse the wives gathered at one common table. Since the advent of Hollywood, film capital of the world, the command relevant to multiplying wives — and husbands — has been flouted (Deuteronomy 17:17). Movie manners have had most disastrous results, particularly in the matter of disregard for the sanctity of marriage. Hollywood has been described as "a town where marriages are too often tossed aside as casually as last year's Easter bonnet." The quick changing of partners is a vile principle, especially where children are concerned. What a travesty of the divine purpose of marriage it is when a woman has several children by a succession of husbands!

One of the reasons why Hollywood is a matrimonial cesspool is because husbands and wives are continually in the arms of others, making love for the screen. Not only does this unnatural association make for unfaithfulness on the part of those who make love for the movies, but tends to create jealousy and strife in the home life of married actors.

Films out of movie studios produced on TV are certainly tilting the scales against Christian morality, and constitute one of our most serious sinister evils. With such a menace to marriage and morals resulting in the collapse of a divinely ordained home life, how can we expect the nation to be strong? Much of the sexual perversion of our time can be laid at the door of Hollywood, whose terrible defiance of moral values has produced the atmosphere of immorality polluting a nation professing to trust in God.

#### DIVORCE

While divorce was originally instituted “to protect the sanctity of wedlock by outlawing the offender and his moral offense,” and was granted only in case of adultery (Matthew 5:32), it is most ludicrous to see how quickly people can be divorced today for trifling reasons. One has read of a marriage being dissolved because the husband snored too much. The free extension of divorce to include any marital infelicity, in which Hollywood leads the way, is to be deplored. The alarming increase of the divorce rate is having a most disastrous effect upon the characters of the children of broken homes. What presently concerns us, however, is the Biblical aspect of divorce in relation to women.

The public dissolution of the marriage contract was, in some cases, allowed by the Law of Moses. But such an allowance was much abused by the licentious, who sought to put away a wife for the most trivial cause (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). To some degree a woman was the property of her husband and he could repudiate her if he found “indecent in her” (24:1). Divorce was not pronounced by any court of law. A public announcement by the husband was made and a bill of divorcement given to the wife stating the repudiation and freedom of the wife. “She is not my wife, neither am I her husband” (Hosea 2:2). The divorced woman usually returned to her parents’ home, and was free to marry again. No priest was allowed to marry such a repudiated woman (Deuteronomy 24:1; Isaiah 50:1; 54:6; Jeremiah 3:8; Leviticus 21:14). The Mosaic Law refused the right of divorce to a man forced to marry a girl whom he had humbled or to a husband who wrongfully accused his wife of misconduct before marriage (Deuteronomy 22:19, 29).

Jesus taught the indissolubility of the marriage union, and affirmed that such was symbolic of the indissoluble union between Himself and His

Church, just as the prophets spoke of monogamy as being symbolic of the union of God with Israel (Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14; 31:32; Hosea 2:19; Matthew 9:15). While Jesus recognized the Mosaic bill of divorcement which declared adultery to be the sole reason of separation, He did not make divorce mandatory. Behind His teaching on this subject (Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18) there would seem to be the underlying principle that if a marriage is destroyed by unfaithfulness, it could not be further destroyed by divorce.

The teaching of Paul on the same problem has given rise to much controversy with some affirming that the Apostle allows for the remarriage of the so-called innocent party (I Corinthians 7:12-16, see Romans 7:2). Paul, who is the only other one in the New Testament besides Christ to speak of divorce, in no way modifies what Christ taught. The Apostle does not discuss the causes responsible for the disruption of marriage, but only the question of manners and morals *in* the relation. He nowhere teaches that a Christian partner deserted by an ungodly partner is free to marry someone else. If the husband or wife deserts, the remaining party should remain as he or she is. The Bible nowhere offers an easy road out of marriage such as is provided today. "Nothing could be more beautiful in the morals of the marriage relation than the direction given by Paul for the conduct of all parties in marriage in all trials." It is still widely held in the Christian Church that while severe marital difficulties may warrant a separation, there should never be divorce for any cause whatever.

#### FAMILY

Many mothers find honorable mention in the Bible. The constant reference to them in the biographies of successive kings indicates their importance as determining factors in the life of their royal sons. "The law of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20) pays tribute to her teaching, authority and example. Contempt for these merited the divine curse (Proverbs 19:26; 20:20; 30:11, 17). Among the Jews, women administered the affairs of the home with a liberty, sagacity and leadership unknown to surrounding Oriental peoples. Her varied domestic duties were more independent and honorable, and she was in no sense the slave or chattel of her husband. "More than elsewhere, perhaps, the family in Israel was the cornerstone of

society. In ancient times in particular, the individual counted very little, the family was everything, and the tribe was only the family on a larger scale.”

God’s Law required children to honor the mother equally with the father (Exodus 20:12), and such joint esteem continued through patriarchal times, and resulted in a happy and prosperous home life (Psalms 127:4, 5; 144:12-15). Dread judgment overtook those who cursed their parents (Leviticus 20:9). Mothers carefully attended to their children in their dependent years, and their love for their offspring is only surpassed by God’s love for His own (Isaiah 49:15). The Israelites were careful about the morals and religious training of their children, believing that with God’s Law written upon their hearts they would be safeguarded when they came to years of responsibility (Deuteronomy 4:4; 11:19; Joshua 4:6, 21; Psalm 78:5, 6; Proverbs 4:3, 4). Discipline, though somewhat stern, was not fruitless (Proverbs 22:15; 23:13; 29:17). Paternal and maternal affection was abundant for children who were worthy of it (Genesis 22:7; 37:3, 35; 43:14; 44:20; I Samuel 1:27; Lamentations 2:11, 19; 4:4, 5; 5:13). Filial devotion was held in high honor among the Jews, and mutual happiness prevailed (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3; Proverbs 1:8; 17:6; Ephesians 6:1-3). Jesus manifested righteous indignation when the sacredness of childhood was outraged. To Him, little children were models to those who aspired to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 11:25; 18:2-6; Mark 9:36, 37; Luke 9:47, 48, etc.).

#### WIDOWS

The lot of widows who, from earliest times wore a distinctive garb (Genesis 38:14, 19), was generally precarious and widows were therefore regarded as being under God’s special care (Psalms 68:5; 146:9; Proverbs 15:25). Childless widows usually returned to the parental home (Genesis 38:11; Leviticus 22:13). Deprived of husband and protector, a widow was exposed to all sorts of mean actions and extortions, hence laws to protect her and to uphold her cause. Those who ill-treated her were punished (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 14:29; II Samuel 14:4; II Kings 4:1; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:6). The Early Church cared for its poor widows, especially if they had been notable for good works (Acts 6:1; I Timothy 5:4, 9, 10, 16; James 1:27). Perhaps the most notable widow in the Bible is the poor one who in casting her two mites or a farthing — the smallest copper coin of

Herod Antipas—surrendered her all for the service of the Temple (Mark 12:42; Luke 21:1-4).

#### DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Ever since the first woman thought up the use of leaves for clothing (Genesis 3:7), women have become skillful in the provision and variety of their covering garments and ornaments. Animal pelts quickly followed leaves, with God Himself being the originator of such a warm and convenient form of clothing (Genesis 3:21). While none of the textiles the ancients used have survived, the many tools employed to dress the skins and fasten them together have been found. That women had greatly progressed in personal dress and decorations during some three and a half millenniums from Eve's day to the time of Isaiah is evidenced by the long catalog the prophet gives of the extensive wardrobe and jewelry of Hebrew women There were —

anklets, cauls, crescents, pendants, bracelets, mufflers, headtires, ankle chains, sashes, perfume balm, amulets, rings, nose jewels, festival robes, mantles, shawls, satchels, hand-mirrors, fine linen, turbans and veils.

Modern women, with all their extensive, elaborate and expensive wardrobes, would find it hard to match the feminine attire of over 2,000 years ago. The reproof of Isaiah for female haughtiness and excessive ornamentation was directed against exceptional tendencies to extravagance (Isaiah 3:16). How could the women grind meal and attend to other womanly household duties, if dressed up to kill? (Isaiah 47:2). In the light of the prophet's rebuke we can understand Peter's counsel to Christian women not to be overconcerned about their external adornment such as showy apparel, braiding of hair, and display of jewels of gold. Rather should they seek the inner apparel of a meek and quiet spirit (I Peter 3:3, 4).

While Hebrew women were forbidden to wear the same form of clothing as men (Deuteronomy 22:5), female clothing yet carried a somewhat basic pattern to that worn by men. But "there was always sufficient difference in embossing, embroidery and needlework so that in appearance the line of demarcation between men and women could be readily detected." The headdress of women was of a different quality, kind or color from that worn by men; and garments were longer than those of a man, reaching almost to the ankles. Women of moderate circumstances

were able to produce beautiful garments, “the fruit of her own hands” (Proverbs 31:19). Many articles of female clothing are mentioned in the Bible, some of which cannot be exactly identified. Undergarments were fashioned out of cotton, linen or silk, according to the wealth and position of a woman. Outer robes and skirts were made of fine needlework wrought with multicolored threads. The kerchief Ezekiel mentions was probably a headdress or veil of some sort (13:18, 21), while the mufflers Isaiah refers to were likely two-piece veils, one part covering the face below the eyes, the other, the head, down the neck (3:16-24). In early history, veils did not cover the faces of women, except when they were introduced to the men they were to marry (Genesis 24:16, 65). In the Cairo Museum can be seen the original dress of a royal Egyptian lady. A huge wig of black human hair and sheep’s wool covers her plaited natural hair. She has a necklace consisting of three rows of semi-precious stones, and her garment is a single piece of exceedingly fine linen, pleated into a chevron pattern behind. Close fitting, the edge in front is fringed. Wimples, or “shawls,” and stomachers — the part of a woman’s dress covering the breast and the pit of the stomach, and often highly ornamented — were other parts of female clothing. Saul clothed the daughters of Israel in scarlet (II Samuel 1:24).

The modern craze among women of painting the eyelids, plucking out eyebrows and pencilling false ones supposedly to enhance beauty, is spoken of in the Bible as a device unworthy of God-fearing women. The treacherous Jezebel painted her eyes (II Kings 9:30). In these days when colossal sums are spent on cosmetics, it is interesting to find references in the Bible to make-up. Excavations at Shechem have unearthed make-up jars as used by Egyptian women, to hold stibium, a compound rubbed out with oil or ointments and used as a powder which was applied with a brush to the eyebrows and lashes, to make the eyeballs seem whiter and the eyes larger. “Thou rentest thy face with painting”; “Thou paintedst thy eyes” (Jeremiah 4:30; Ezekiel 23:40). Describing the dress and ornaments Sarah wore as a citizen of Ur of the Chaldees, Albert E. Bailey in *Daily Life in Bible Times* speaks of her having, “at her girdle a small conical copper box with leather cover that held her toilet kit: tweezers, ear-pick, stiletto and a round-ended paint stick. More than likely at home she kept a bronze razor and used cuttlefish bone as a depilatory. When she was ready for the parade she must

have beauty. Though she may have discarded a good deal of this town make-up when her husband, Abraham, became a nomad, she kept it by her for occasions. According to the story in Genesis 12:12-16, when she went back to civilization for a time in Egypt even Pharaoh could not resent her.”

Among archaeological discoveries in Ras Shamrah was a necklace made up of beads of gold and silver, amber and pearls, worn in ancient Israel. These are doubtless included in the *tablets, chains about thy neck, ornaments of fine gold, chains of gold*, which the Bible mentions (Exodus 35:22; Proverbs 1:9; 25:12; Song of Solomon 1:10). Sometimes half-moons and small bottles of perfume served as pendants (Isaiah 3:18, 19). The necessary hand mirror was also thought of, and consisted of cast, convex of silver or brass. The laver of brass for the Tabernacle was made out of “the lookingglasses of the women assembling” (Exodus 38:8). Elihu speaks of the sky which is strong as a molten looking glass (Job 37:18).

Jewels were varied and abundant. Wives, and also their sons and daughters, wore golden earrings (Genesis 35:4; Exodus 32:2; Numbers 31:50). There were likewise signet rings, worn by the Israelites around the neck (Genesis 38:18), and by the Egyptians upon the finger, and in later days by the Israelites too (Genesis 41:42; Jeremiah 22:24). Gold bracelets were added to help out female beauty (Genesis 24:22; Ezekiel 16:11, 12). Nose rings or jewels made necessary the piercing of the nostrils, and rings were often worn on the toes and anklets or spangles on the ankles (Isaiah 3:18). It is said that Arabs liked to kiss their wives through the nose ring frequently mentioned in Scripture (Genesis 24:22; Judges 8:24; Proverbs 11:22; Hosea 2:13). Nose rings were also used to drag prisoners to the triumphant procession of their conqueror (II Kings 19:28; Isaiah 37:29, etc.).

#### TASKS

We have the adage that “men must work, and women must weep.” In Bible times women both worked and wept. While not treated as beasts of burden, as they are even today in some dark corners of the earth, women had to shoulder manifold tasks. For instance, they were grinders of grain, two women working a rotating hand-mill together. Grinding was a woman’s job in preparation for baking, and was often done during the night, when sufficient flour would be ground to last the next day (Deuteronomy 24:6;

Job 41:24; Proverbs 31:15; Matthew 24:41, see Judges 9:53). It was an insulting humiliation for a man or a youth to be required to do the grinding (Judges 16:21; Lamentations 5:13).

Not only did women grind the grain, churn the butter and prepare the meals (Genesis 18:6; II Samuel 13:8; John 12:2), they had to invite and receive guests (Judges 4:18; I Samuel 25:18; II Kings 4:8-10), and draw water for household use as well as for the guests and camels (Genesis 24:11, 15-20; I Samuel 9:11; John 4:7). Pitchers filled with water were carried on the head. The wives of farmers would carry, on their heads, fuel, in the form of dried, flat cakes of dung and straw. Often these dung and straw slabs constituted a heavy load. Women also spun the wool, and made the family clothes (Exodus 35:26; I Samuel 2:19; Proverbs 31:19). Sometimes her weaving and needlework aided the family income (Proverbs 31:14, 24), and supported charity (Acts 9:39).

In time of war women and children were taken away in bullock carts by the conquerors. Under the Assyrians the treatment of prisoners was very severe and cruel. Unlike the men, women were not chained (Nahum 3:10), but the coarse soldiers escorting them amused themselves by “discovering their skirts and to see the shame of nakedness” (Nahum 3:5). Ancient basreliefs of female prisoners depict them as tearing their hair, throwing dust upon their heads, and bewailing their lot. What a baptism of tears, anguish and indignities women have received through the centuries from brutes of men!

#### RELIGIOUS SERVICE

As we conclude this section dealing with the life and lot of Bible women, reference must be made to their preeminence in the spiritual realm. It is true that woman was the leader in the first transgression (II Corinthians 11:3; I Timothy 2:14), but she redeemed her position to become most influential in the religious life of mankind. The pages of the Old Testament carry the names of women who remain because of their devotion to God. The prayers and piety of Hannah, for example, purified and vitalized the religious life of the entire Jewish nation. Mary, the mother of our Lord, will ever be revered as the most blessed among women because she believed that God would perform the miraculous. In Scripture biography, women are more conspicuous than men in religious devotion. When Jesus entered upon



His ministry women intuitively responded to His teachings, sympathized with Him in His darkest hours and found in Him their Benefactor and Friend. Women were the last to leave the cross, first at the tomb on Christ's resurrection day, and first to proclaim the glorious news of His victory o'er the grave.

In the annals of the Early Church, women are likewise notable for their spiritual devotion, fidelity in teaching the Word of God, and sacrificial support of God's servants. Their faith and prayers were mingled with those of the apostles in preparation for Pentecost, and all through the Christian era the church owes more than it realizes to the prayers, loyalty and gifts of its female members. Today, churches would go to pieces if it were not for the presence, perseverance and prayers of women. In church attendance, women far outstrip men; and in Sunday school work, women's meetings and groups, missionary service and in church activities, women hold the field in spiritual endeavor. From the time when women labored with Paul in the Gospel (Philippians 4:3), religious leaders have been dependent upon the ministries of women. The spiritual value of a godly woman's influence is seen in the fact that many rose to a position of eminence as prophetesses (Exodus 15:20; Numbers 12:2; Judges 4:6; II Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36; Acts 21:8; Romans 16:1, 6, 12; I Corinthians 11:5). Gifted and consecrated women figure prominently in the labors of Paul. Owing much to the Redeemer for her emancipation and ennoblement, woman has endeavored to pay her debt in unreserved devotion to Him who was born of a woman. Chaucer, of the 13th century asked —

What is better than wisdom? — Woman.

And what is better than a good woman? — Nothing.

Myriads of women were — and are — good because with Cowper they learned to sing—

'Tis joy enough my All in All,  
At Thy dear feet to lie;  
Thou wilt not let me lower fall,  
And none can higher fly.

## 2

# Alphabetical Exposition of Named Bible Women Abi to Zipporah

Many of the personal names people are known by today go back to the early twilight of human history when man learned to distinguish his fellowmen by names, and a large number of our names, especially surnames, are the simple names of Bible characters. Further, the Jews of old attached special significance to their names, most of which had definite meanings, emphasized by the frequent occurrence of the phrase, “He shall be called.” William Camden (1551-1623), the English historian, in *Remains Concerning Britain* wrote —

It seemeth to have been the manner, at the giving of names, to wish the children might perform and discharge their names as when Gunthram, King of the French, named Clotharius at the font, he said, *Crescat puer et Lujus sit nominis executor* — meaning, “Let the boy grow up and he will fulfill his name.”

In early English history Bible names associated with personal traits and also dramatic incidents were chosen as font or baptismal names, as the lists of female names in Webster’s *Dictionary* reveal. Thus Eve, because of her association with the creation of the world, along with its cognates, Eva and Evelyn, enjoyed widespread popularity as did, several poetic names as Sarah, meaning, lady, princess, queen; Susanna, Lily; Hannah, grace; Miriam, bitterness or sorrow; Esther, star; Hagar, flight, etc.

A remarkable feature of the Puritan Age was the choice of names expressing the sense of humiliation and consciousness of sin. There is no other explanation for the mentality of parents choosing names like Delilah, Tamar and Sapphira for their daughters. In these modern days when reason

proudly rejects the Puritan faith, it is well to remember what we owe to the men and women whose Bible names bore witness to a consecration of life to what was best and noblest.

As we hope to prove, the women of the Bible form the most remarkable portrait gallery in existence. Many of them are among the immortals, with records imperishably enshrined for us in God's biography of humanity. As H. V. Morton expresses it—

They form a feminine picture gallery unmatched in the whole of literature. Their histories, the diversity of their fate, and the influence which the story of their lives has exerted on the World, make them unique. Why, one may wonder, do these women so far from us in time and so briefly described, live so vividly in the imagination? It is not merely because they happen to occur in Scripture: it is because they are so palpably alive.

George Matheson develops a similar thought in his *Representative Women of the Bible*.

Amid the galleries of the ancient world there is one whose female characters are unique: it is that of the Bible. As I look into this Judaic Gallery that which arrests me most is the beginning of it and the end of it. At its opening and at its close the hand of the artist has been strikingly at work, and in each case on a female portraiture. The hall of entrance and the hall of exit are each occupied by a picture of Woman. The pictures are different in execution and unlike in their expression; but in each the idea is the same — the enfranchisement of the feminine soul. . . . The entrance portrait is that of Eve, a hymn of female conquest expressed in colours. . . . Woman is recognized as the prospective possessor of the Garden of Life — the future mistress of the home. . . . At the other end of the Gallery — the completing end . . . we have an exultant woman proclaiming to all the earth the tidings of her emancipation. "He that is mighty hath done great things for me." We hear womanhood rejoicing in the lifting of her chain . . . the prediction of the morning that the female spirit should bruise the serpent's head. . . . One of the effects of Christianity has been the enfranchisement of Woman. . . . Yet not simply *one* of the effects of Christianity: it is *the* effect of which all other changes are results.

Further, our expositions of Bible women who stand out in their race and time as no women of later generations stand out, will be allied to present-day application — a feature W. Mackintosh Mackay has so admirably developed in his *Bible Types of Modern Women*. We shall see how the best among female characters in Scripture who were trail blazers for larger freedom of thought and action have contributed to the present high status of womanhood; and how the worst Bible women remain as signals marking the dangerous shoals, quicksands and rocks of life. Circumstances wrecking their lives still exist as death traps.

As human nature has not changed much through past millenniums, the whole of womanhood, which is presented to us as the women of the Bible, unchanging, unvarying from age to age, is a feminine portrait gallery drawn with a marvelous stark economy and unsurpassed in its variety in the whole of literature. Eve is the mother of all those mothers who have seen their favorite first-born branded with shame. Among our friends can be found an acquaintance devoted and firm-minded like Sarah; a monument of fierce and doting motherhood such as Rebekah was; a well-favored Rachel, “whose easy charm vanishes into an envious and petulant old age.” Within our own families we have opportunities of studying Mary and Martha. As for Potiphar’s wife she “moves through the newspapers in a variety of guises, and Delilah is a character known to the police and the legal profession: the female Judas who is always willing to entrap a Samson for silver.”

For the sake of convenience we have chosen to list the named women of the Bible alphabetically rather than chronologically. In this way it is easier for those who use the material to identify each character. As truth is the common property of us all, the writer sincerely hopes that the sketches he has drawn will prove to be useful in the ministry of those who have opportunities of winning girls and women for the Master. Eternity alone will reveal the extent of the influence of women whose spirit came to rejoice in God their Saviour, and who, having discovered the Well of Life, left their waterpots.

ABI

THE WOMAN WITH A BAD HUSBAND BUT A GOOD SON

*Scripture References* — II Kings 18:2; II Chronicles 29:1; 26:5

*Name Meaning* — My father is Jehovah, or The Will of God

*Family Connections* — Abi was the daughter of Zechariah who had an understanding of the visions of God, and was one of the witnesses used by Isaiah (18:2). She also became the wife of the godless King Ahaz, and was the mother of the godly King Hezekiah. She is also named Abijah, of which Abi is a contraction. Abijah was also the name of several men including the son and successor of the wife of Judah's grandson Hezron, to whom was traced the origin of Tekoa (I Chronicles 2:24).

In spite of the idolatry of her royal husband, Abi or Abijah, true to her name, clung to the Fatherhood of God and sought to do His will. She counteracted any evil influence of Ahaz over their young son, Hezekiah, who, when he came to the throne, did that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that King David, his royal ancestor had done. Inspired by God, about whom he had learned a great deal from his noble mother, Hezekiah brought about a mighty, national, religious revival. The name Hezekiah means, "Strong in the Lord," and doubtless his mother Abijah or Abi, had much to say in the choice of such a name reflecting, as it did, her confidence in Jehovah. There are many mothers like Abi in the world who have godless husbands but good, Christian children! The reverse is also true for there are those women who have godly husbands but most ungodly children.

### ABIA or ABIAH

#### THE WOMAN WHO WAS AN ANCESTRESS OF CHRIST

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 2:24

*Name Meaning* — God is Father

*Family Connections* — She was the wife of Hezron, grandson of Judah by Pharez, and mother of Ashur, father of Tekoa. From the genealogies of Jesus (Matthew 1; Luke 3) who came of the tribe of Judah, Abiah has honor as an ancestress of the Saviour. Some writers identify Abiah with the female Abijah, seeing that Abi and Abiah are variants of her name. Abiah was also the name of the second son of the prophet Samuel (I Samuel 8:2). We are not informed as to the influence of

Abiah's home life. It is to be hoped that she knew and honored God as her heavenly Father.

## ABIGAIL

### THE WOMAN WITH BEAUTY AND BRAINS

*Scripture References* — I Samuel 25:1-42; II Samuel 3:3

*Name Meaning* — Father of Joy, or Cause of Joy

*Family Connections* — Scripture gives us no clue as to Abigail's parentage or genealogy. Ellicott suggests that the name given this famous Jewish beauty who became the good angel of Nabal's household was likely given her by the villagers of her husband's estate. Meaning "Whose father is joy," Abigail was "expressive of her sunny, gladness-bringing presence." Her religious witness and knowledge of Jewish history testify to an early training in a godly home, and acquaintance with the teachings of the prophets in Israel, Her plea before David also reveals her understanding of the events of her own world.

The three conspicuous characters in the story of one of the loveliest females in the Bible are Nabal, Abigail and David. Nabal is described as "the man churlish and evil in his doings" (I Samuel 25:3), and his record proves him to be all that. Churlish means, a bear of man, harsh, rude and brutal. Destitute of the finer qualities his wife possessed, he was likewise avaricious and selfish. Rich and increased with goods and gold, he thought only of his possessions and could be classed among those of whom it has been written —

The man may breathe but never lives  
Whoe'er receives but nothing gives —  
Creation's blot, creation's blank,  
Whom none can love and none can thank.

Nabal was also a drunken wretch, as well as being unmanageable and stubborn and ill-tempered. Doubtless he was often "very drunken." This wretch of a man was likewise an unbeliever, "a son of Belial," who bowed his knee to the god of this world and not to the God of his fathers. Further, as a follower of Saul he shared the rejected king's jealousy of David. Added to his brutal disposition and evil doings was that of stupidity, as his name

suggests. Pleading for his unworthy life, Abigail asked for mercy because of his foolishness. “As his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him” (verse 25). Nabal means “a fool,” and what Abigail actually meant was, “Pay no attention to my wretched husband for he’s a fool by name, and a fool by nature.” Truly, such a man will always provoke the profoundest perversion in all who read his story.

Abigail is as “a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance.” In her, winsomeness and wisdom were wed. She had brains as well as beauty. Today, many women try to cultivate beauty and neglect their brains. A lovely face hides an empty mind. But with Abigail, loveliness and intelligence went hand in hand, with her intelligence emphasizing her physical attractiveness. A beautiful woman with a beautiful mind as she had is surely one of God’s masterpieces.

Added to her charm and wisdom was that of piety. She knew God, and although she lived in such an unhappy home, she remained a saint. Her own soul, like that of David, was “bound in the bundle of life with the Lord God.” Writing of Abigail as “A Woman of Tact” W. Mackintosh Mackay says that, “she possessed in harmonious combination these two qualities which are valuable to any one, but which are essential to one who has to manage men — *the tact of a wise wife* and *the religious principle of a good woman*” Eugenia Price, who writes of Abigail as, *A Woman With God’s Own Poise*, says that, “only God can give a woman poise like Abigail possessed, and God can only do it when a woman is willing to cooperate as Abigail cooperated with Him on every point.” True to the significance of her own name she experienced that in God her Father there was a source of joy enabling her to be independent of the adverse, trying circumstances of her miserable home life. She must have had implicit confidence in God to speak to David as she did about her divinely predestined future. In harmony with her many attractions was “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is more lustrous than the diamonds that decorate the delicate fingers of our betters, shone as an ornament of gold about her head, and chains about her neck.”

David is the other outstanding character in the record. He it was who fought the battles of the Lord, and evil had not been found in him all his days (25:28). He could match Abigail’s beauty, for it was said of him that

he was “ruddy . . . of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to” (I Samuel 16:12). When Abigail and David became one they must have been a handsome pair to look upon! Then, in addition to being most musical, David was equal with Abigail in wisdom and piety for he was “prudent in matters, . . . and the Lord [was] with him” (I Samuel 16:18).

The sacred historian tells us how these three persons were brought together in a tragic way. David was an outlaw because of Saul’s hatred, and lived in the strongholds of the hills with his loyal band of 600 followers. Having often helped Nabal’s herdsmen out, being in need of food for his little army, David sent a kind request to Nabal for help. In his churlish fashion, Nabal bluntly refused to give David a crumb for his hungry men, and dismissed David as a marauding hireling. Angered, David threatened to plunder Nabal’s possession and kill Nabal and all those who emulated his contempt. Abigail, learning from the servants of David’s request and her husband’s rude refusal, unknown to Nabal, acted with thought, care and great rapidity. As Ellicott comments —

Having often acted as peace-maker between her intemperate husband and his neighbours, on hearing the story and how imprudently her husband had behaved, saw that no time must be lost, for with a clever woman’s wit she saw that grave consequences would surely follow the churlish refusal and the rash words, which betrayed at once the jealous adherent of Saul and the bitter enemy of the powerful outlaw.

Gathering together a quantity of food and wine, sufficient she thought for David’s immediate need, Abigail rode out on an ass and at a covert of a hill met David and his men — and what a momentous meeting it turned out to be. With discreet tact Abigail averted David’s just anger over Nabal’s insult to his messengers, by placing at David’s feet food for his hungry men. She also revealed her wisdom in that she fell at the feet of David, as an inferior before a superior, and acquiesced with him in his condemnation of her brutal, foolish husband.

As a Hebrew woman was restricted by the customs of her time to give counsel only in an emergency and in the hour of greatest need, Abigail, who had risked the displeasure of her husband whose life was threatened, did not act impulsively in going to David to plead for mercy. She followed the dictates of her disciplined will, and speaking at the opportune moment her



beautiful appeal from beautiful lips, captivated the heart of David. “As his own harp had appeased Saul, the sweet-toned voice of Abigail exorcised the demon of revenge, and woke the angel that was slumbering in David’s bosom.” We can never gauge the effect of our words and actions upon others. The intervention of Abigail in the nick of time teaches us that when we have wisdom to impart, faith to share, and help to offer, we must not hesitate to take any risk that may be involved.

Abigail had often to make amends for the infuriated outbursts of her husband. Neighbors and friends knew her drunken sot of a husband only too well, but patiently she would pour oil on troubled waters, and when she humbly approached with a large peace offering, her calmness soothed David’s anger and gave her the position of advantage. For her peace-making mission she received the king’s benediction (25:33). Her wisdom is seen in that she did not attempt to check David’s turbulent feelings by argument, but won him by wise, kind words. Possessing heavenly intelligence, self-control, common sense and vision, she exercised boundless influence over a great man, and marked herself out as a truly great woman. After Abigail’s successful, persuasive entreaty for the life of her worthless husband, the rest of her story reads like a fairy tale. She returned to her wicked partner to take up her hard and bitter life again.

It is to the credit of this noble woman that she did not leave her godless husband or seek divorce from him, but remained a loyal wife and the protector of her worthless partner. She had taken him for better or for worse, and life for her was worse than the worst. Wretched though her life was, and spurned, insulted and beaten as she may have been during Nabal’s drinking bouts, she clung to the man to whom she had sworn to be faithful. Abigail manifested a love stronger than death. But the hour of deliverance came ten days after her return home, when by a divine stroke, Nabal’s worthless life ended. When David hearkened to the plea of Abigail and accepted her person, he rejoiced over being kept back by her counsel from taking into his own hands God’s prerogative of justice (Romans 12:19).

When David said to Abigail, “Blessed be thy advice,” he went on to confess with his usual frank generosity that he had been wrong in giving way to wild, ungovernable passion. If Abigail had not interceded he would have carried out his purpose and destroyed the entire household of Nabal,

which massacre would have included Abigail herself. But death came as the great divorcer or arbiter, and Nabal's wonderful wife had no tears of regret, for amid much suffering and disappointment she had fulfilled her marriage vows. In that farmer's house there had been "The Beauty and the Beast." The Beast was dead, and the Beauty was legally free of her terrible bondage.

After Nabal's death, David "communed with Abigail" (25:39) — a technical expression for asking one's hand in marriage (Song of Solomon 8:8) — and took her as his wife. Married to Israel's most illustrious king, Abigail entered upon a happier career. By David, she had a son named Chileab, or Daniel (compare II Samuel 3:3 with I Chronicles 3:1). The latter name means, "God is my Judge," and one has an inkling that the choice of such a name was Abigail's because of her experience of divine vindication. She accompanied David to Gath and Ziklag (I Samuel 27:3; 30:5, 18). Matthew Henry's comment at this point is, "Abigail married David in faith, not questioning but that, though now he had not a house of his own, yet God's promise to him would at length be fulfilled." Abigail brought to David not only "a fortune in herself," but much wealth so useful to David in the meeting of his manifold obligations.

Among the lessons to be learned from the life of Abigail, the first is surely evident, namely, that much heartache follows when a Christian woman marries an unbeliever. Unequal yokes do not promote true and abiding happiness. The tragedy in Abigail's career began when she married Nabal, a young man of Naon. Already we have asked the question, Why did she marry such a man? Why did such a lovely girl throw herself away upon such a brute of a man? According to the custom of those times marriages were man-made, the woman having little to say about the choice of a husband. Marriage was largely a matter of family arrangement. Nabal was of wealthy parentage and rich in his own right with 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats and thus seemed a good catch for Abigail. But character should be considered before possessions.

Many a woman in the world today made her own choice of a partner. Perhaps she knew of his failures and thought that after marriage she would reform him, but found herself joined to one whose ways became more evil. Then think of those brave, uncomplaining wives who have to live with the

fool of a husband whose drunken, crude ways are repellant, yet who, by the grace of God accept and live with their trial; and who, because of a deep belief in divine sufficiency retain their poise. Such living martyrs are among God's heroines. All of us know of those good women chained with the fetters of a wretched married life for whom it would be infinitely better for them —

To lie in their graves where the head, heart and breast,  
From care, labour and sorrow forever should rest.

Thinking of modern Abigails the appropriate lines of noble Elizabeth Barrett Browning come to mind —

The sweetest lives are those to duty wed,  
Whose deeds, both great and small, and close-knit strands  
Of an unbroken thread; where love ennobles all.  
The World may sound no trumpets, ring no bells:  
The Book of Life the shining record tells.

#### ABIGAIL No. 2

She was David's half-sister of whom we know nothing apart from the fact she had the same mother as David, but a different father, namely, Zeruah Nahash, and that she became the wife of Jether also known as Ithra. This Abigail became the mother of Amasa, a leader in David's army (II Samuel 17:25; I Chronicles 2:16, 17). Amasa came to a tragic end at the hands of his cousin, Joab.

#### ABIHAIL

This name is used of both males and females in Scripture.  
*Name Meaning* — Father, or Cause of Strength or Father of Splendor

#### ABIHAIL No. 1

She was the daughter of a son of Merari, of the tribe of Levi the mother of Zuriel, a "prince" among the families of Merari (Numbers 3:35).

#### ABIHAIL No. 2

She was the wife of Abishur of the tribe of Judah, in the line of Hezron and Jerahmeel (I Chronicles 2:29).

### ABIHAIL No. 3

She was the mother of Rehoboam's wife, Nahalath, and daughter of Eliab, David's eldest brother. There was frequent intermarriage in the Davidic house. The LXX Version makes this Abihail the second wife of Rehoboam (II Chronicles 11:18).

ABIHAIL was also the name of Queen Esther's father (2:15; 9:29).

### ABIJAH (see ABI)

### ABISHAG

#### THE WOMAN WHO NURSED A KING

*Scripture References* — I Kings 1:3, 4; 2:13-25

*Name Meaning* — My father wanders or errs, or My father causes wandering

*Family Connections* — She was a Shunammitess from Issachar.

Because of the feebleness of King David his physicians recommended a fresh young maiden be found to "cherish" him, a treatment implying that through physical contact she could give David the advantage of her superabundant vitality. Abishag was chosen for the task with great care on account of her virginity, youth, beauty and physical vigor, and as a practical nurse for the aging king. The prescribed method was not successful, for David died soon after Abishag had taken on her duties.

After David's death, Adonijah, the rebellious son of David and Haggith, desired Abishag as his wife, and approached Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, with a seemingly harmless but really insidious request, "Let Abishag be given to me." Seeing nothing wrong with such a request, but thinking it simply an affair of the heart, Bathsheba innocently acted as a matchmaker. Solomon, with due reverence, received his mother, but as soon as the request was presented, the mental acumen of the king saw through the scheme. He construed Adonijah's desire as virtual treason seeing legal rights followed the possession in marriage of a deceased king's wife. Matthew Henry observes, "That Abishag was married to David before she

lay with him, and was his secondary wife, appears from its being imputed as a great crime to Adonijah that he desired to marry her after his father's death." Although David had not "known" Abishag (1:3), that is, had no sexual relations with her, nevertheless she was considered an inheritor, and with her could go the rights to the throne. "Having once failed in an abortive attempt to seize the kingdom, Adonijah now sought in a more subtle way to gain his objective." But his scheme cost him his life, and relentless judgment fell upon him for his intrigue. Because of her close association with David, Abishag was present when, through Bathsheba's intercession, Solomon was placed on the throne. "If that act had been questioned she would have been a most important witness. By reason of this and of her personal charms, she might become a strong helper to any rival of Solomon who should intrigue to supplant." With keen insight Solomon saw what was behind Adonijah's wish to marry Abishag, and he was slain by the hand of Benaiah.

#### ABITAL

*Scripture References* — II Samuel 3:4; I Chronicles 3:3

*Name Meaning* — Whose father is as dew

The historian took a mere seven words to tell us all there is to know about this colorless female character. Born in Hebron, she was one of David's many wives. In his most profitable study, *Personal Names in the Bible*, W. F. Wilkinson reminds us that in the figurative language of Scripture poetry, "Dew often represents blessing, beneficence, refreshment, consolation; and in this sense it may be understood in such a name. Or its significance, when thus used, may be found in the early appearance and rapid evanescence of dew (Hosea 6:4; 13:3); and so it may intimate the death of a young husband, perhaps the birth of a child." Perhaps the name Abital was chosen by the parents to whom her birth came as a blessing, as a source of consolation.

#### ACHSAH

THE WOMAN WHO WANTED MORE

*Scripture References* — Joshua 15:16, 17; Judges 1:12, 13; I Chronicles 2:4, 9

*Name Meaning* — Adorned, or Bursting the Veil

*Family Connections* — Achsah was the daughter of Caleb, prince of the tribe of Judah. She was the only girl in the family, and had three brothers (I Chronicles 4:15). She became the wife of Othniel, son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. Othniel became one of Israel's judges and had, through the Spirit of God, the noble faith of his race (Judges 3:8-11).

The story of Achsah is told in charming and picturesque detail in the above Scripture. Her father promised her in marriage to the gallant man who was able to capture Debir, or Keriath-sepher which means, "The City of the Book." The feat was accomplished by Othniel, and Caleb gave to his daughter, as a dowry, a portion of the south land. Not satisfied, she wanted springs of water to irrigate her fields, so Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. Although, as a Jewess, Achsah looked for great things through faith in God's promise of the land, her request for an addition to the generous dowry already bestowed, reveals an element of covetousness in her disposition. W. Mackintosh Mackay in his character-study of Achsah speaks of her as "The Discontented Bride."

Not content with the noble present her father Caleb had given her, she urged Othniel her husband to make a further request, but reading between the lines of the story it would seem as if he felt it ungracious to ask for more. Thus Achsah, who had not learned to be content with what she had (Hebrews 13:5), approached her father with a significant word, "Give me *also*," and as Dr. Mackay expresses it, "There is always a something more needed to complete the circle of perfect peace in every earthly lot; the

. . . little more, and how much it is;

The little less, and what worlds away." Solomon reminds us that the human heart is like the horseleech whose two daughters never have enough, and bear the names of *Give, Give* (Proverbs 30:15). There is, of course, a divine discontent all of us should foster. Dissatisfied with our growth in sanctity of life we should constantly pray, "More holiness give me," and as the bride's father graciously granted his daughter's request, so our Heavenly Father will answer our yearning for the life more abundant.

Caleb gave Achsah the springs of water she desired, and in the upper and nether springs we have a type of the spiritual and temporal mercies

from our Father above. As heirs of the promise, His children can humbly and confidently ask and expect great blessings from His generous hand. Both *upper*, or heavenly provision, and *nether*, or earthly necessities come from Him in whom are all our springs (Psalms 81:10; 84:11; Isaiah 33:16; Luke 11:13; John 4:13, 14; 7:37-39; Ephesians 3:20; I John 3:22). At times it seems as if the “nether springs” dry up, as Job experienced when the Lord took away so many of his earthly possessions and pleasures. But the “upper springs” never run dry for, like those Achsah received, they flow from the everlasting hills. “The river of water of life flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” cannot fail. When the waters of earth fail, we have a reservoir above, never impoverished by drought.

### ADAH No. 1

#### THE WOMAN WHO GAVE THE WORLD ITS FIRST MUSICIAN

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 4:19-23

*Name Meaning* — Adornment, beauty, pleasure. The pure Hebrew name is found in the compounds, Adaiah, “whom Jehovah adorns,” and Maadiah, “ornament from Jehovah.”

*Family Connections* — Adah, and the co-wife, Zillah, are the first women to be named after Eve. The names of Cain’s wife, and the other daughters of Adam and Eve are not given. Adah was one of the two wives of Lamech who was of the seventh generation from Adam. Adah was the mother of two sons, Jabal and Jubal. Jabal became a famous shepherd, the father of a tent-dwelling people, and nomad tribes. Jubal was the first person to introduce the noble art of music to the world, “the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ.” Says Matthew Henry, “When Jabal had set them in a way to be rich, Jubal put them in a way to be merry. Jabal was their Pan, and Jubal their Appollo.”

The world certainly owes a great debt to Adah’s two sons, particularly to the musical Jubal. In his *Table Talk*, Martin Luther, the great Reformer, wrote —

Music is a fair and glorious gift of God, and takes its place next to Theology. . . . The fairest and most glorious gift of God is music. Kings and princes and great lords should give their support to music. Music is a

discipline; it is an instructress; it makes people milder and gentler, more moral, and more reasonable.

Lamech was not only the father of two sons by Adah, who gave much to the world, but he was also the first polygamist in the Bible, and probably in the world. Lamech's initial polygamous household led the way in so much jealousy, heartache and sorrow. Adah and Zillah, by their agreement to become wives of the same man, yielded to a union that degraded the dignity of womanhood, profaned God's ordinances and brought terrible complications by sin upon the human race. The destruction of true family life and the injection of poison into the veins of children born in a polygamist's household, must be reckoned as Lamech's responsibility.

Further, Lamech's *Poem* in praise of himself, and dedicated to his two wives, is worthy of note. The oldest poetic fragment in the Bible, it was known as *The Song of the Terrible Lamech*:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice,  
You wives of Lamech, give ears to my words;  
I kill a man for wounding me.

.....

If Cain is to be avenged seven-fold.  
Then Lamech seventy and seven-fold.

With the weapons which another son, Tubal-Cain, invented, Lamech exults over the violent revenge he can take over any who attack him, and so with the vigorous poem in praise of armed defense and bloodshed, joined with indications of luxury and a life of pleasure, the historian concludes the record of the race of Cain.

## ADAH No. 2

### THE WOMAN WHO BECAME A GRIEF OF MIND

*Scripture References* — Genesis 26:34; 36:2

*Family Connections* — This second Adah was a daughter of Elon the Hittite. She became one of the wives of Esau, and was the woman who became a “grief of mind” to his parents, Isaac and Rebekah. She became the mother of Eliphaz, Esau's first-born son, and along with



Esau's other wives after the settlement in Mount Seir became an ancestress of the Edomites who were treated as brothers by the Israelites.

Scholars are agreed that this Adah is the Bashemath of Genesis 26:34; 36:2. Women received new names when they married. Bullinger suggests that this second name was dropped in Genesis 36:2 to avoid confusion with the daughter of Ishmael. In Genesis 26 we have general history, but in Genesis 36, precise genealogy.

AGAR (see HAGAR)

AHINOAM No. 1

*Scripture Reference* — I Samuel 14:50

*Name Meaning* — Brother of pleasantries

Two women are known by this name in the Old Testament. The first Ahinoam was the daughter of Ahimaaz. She was the wife of Saul, Israel's first king, to whom she bore a noble son, Jonathan, who inherited his mother's commendable traits. It was her daughter, Merab, who was first promised to David in marriage, but it was Michal her next daughter who became the young champion's first wife. Saul had two more sons by Ahinoam, namely, Isha and Melchishua.

Her name is most suggestive. As we have seen, it means "brother of pleasantries," in the sense of "pleasing or dear brother." A parallel name is that of Abinoam, father of Barak, one of the heroes of the Book of Judges, whose name means, "brother's delight." Wilkinson suggests as a feasible origin for such a name, "Extreme partiality of affection exhibited by a very young infant for a brother — a domestic phenomenon by no means unusual."

AHINOAM No. 2

*Scripture References* — I Samuel 25:43; 27:3; 30:5; II Samuel 2:2; 3:2; I Chronicles 3:1

She was the Jezreelitess who became one of David's eight wives. She became the mother of David's first son, Amnon, who dishonored his half-sister Tamar, and was murdered for this act of seduction by Tamar's brother,

Absalom. Did Amnon inherit his evil trait from his Jezreelite mother who probably was bad as she was beautiful? Outward beauty was David's snare, and thus some of his children had more of outward attractiveness than inward grace. Ahinoam, along with Abigail, Nabal's widow, were captured by the Amalekites at Ziklag but David attacked them and recovered both his wives.

#### AHLAI No. 1

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 2:31, 34

*Name Meaning* — O would that!

The first Ahlai was the daughter of Sheshan who had several daughters, and a descendant of Pharez, elder son of Judah by Tamar whose name appears in the royal genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1). She was given in marriage to an Egyptian servant, Jarba, and became the mother of Attai.

#### AHLAI No. 2

She was the mother of Zabad, one of David's mighty men (I Chronicles 11:41).

AHOLAH (see SYMBOLIC WOMEN)

AHOLIBAH (see SYMBOLIC WOMEN)

AHOLIBAMAH or OHOLIBAMAH

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 36:2-25

*Name Meaning* — Tent of the high places

This female character was one of Esau's wives, and the mother of Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah, who are spoken of as "Dukes" (Genesis 36:18). There seems to be some confusion about references to her. For instance, she is referred to as a daughter of Elon the Hittite and also as a daughter of Anah (Genesis 26:34; 36:2). Aholibamah is also identified with Judith mentioned in Genesis 26:34. Each of Esau's wives has a name in the genealogy different from that in history. Aholibamah was her personal name, and Judith her second name. Her father, Anah, received a second name also from his discovery of the hot springs, Beeri being from Beer, a well.

Through Aholibamah, Esau's descendants, the Edomites, became the occupants of Mount Seir, and were troublesome to the descendants of Jacob

(Numbers 20:14-21). They were the ancestral stock of the Idumeans, from whom Herod the Great came.

## ANAH

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 36:2, 18, 25

The meaning of this name is uncertain. Cruden suggests that it may signify, “one who answers, or who sings” — “one who is poor, or afflicted.” Anah was the daughter of Zibeon and the mother of the foregoing Aholibamah. It is likewise the name of two men (Genesis 36:20, 24, 29; I Chronicles 1:38, 40, 41). Anah is the only named mother of any of Esau’s wives.

Some authorities read *son* instead of *daughter* and suggest that it is quite possible to reduce all the foregoing references to one person.

## ANNA

### THE WOMAN WHO BECAME THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY

*Scripture Reference* — Luke 2:36-38

*Name Meaning* — Favor, or Grace. Anna is the same with Hannah of the Old Testament, and was the Phoenician name used by Virgil for the sister of Dido, queen of Carthage.

*Family Connection* — Anna was the daughter of Phanuel, a name identical with Penuel, and meaning, “The face, or appearance of God.” The name of her husband who died young is not given. Like Anna, he, too, doubtlessly waited for the salvation of God. Her father was of the tribe of Asher — one of the so-called “lost tribes.” This is all we know of the ancestry of Anna, who, although her biography is one of the briefest in Bible history, lived a life that is still fragrant. Her name is a popular one for girls. Elsdon C. Smith in *The Story of Our Names* says that there are over half-a-million girls and women in America alone who have the name of Anna.

In our exposition of this most renowned of Bible widows we deem it best to take her record as given by the beloved physician, Luke, who says of her that —

*She Was a Prophetess*

Jezebel, the self-styled and false prophetess is the only other one in the New Testament (Revelation 2:20) to bear this designation. Philip's four daughters also prophesied (Acts 21:9). The narrative does not tell us why she was known as a prophetess. It may be that her long departed husband had been a prophet, or because under divine inspiration she herself told future events, or spent her time celebrating the praises of God (I Samuel 10:5; I Chronicles 25:1-3). To prophesy simply means to proclaim a divine message, and Anna was one to whom it was given to know events before and after, and one through whom God spoke to others. Anna must be included in that continuous line of prophets and prophetesses who had heralded the coming of the Messiah through succeeding generations. As she gazed upon the face of the Babe of Bethlehem Anna knew that the past predictions of Him were fulfilled. Through her long, godly life her mind had become saturated with Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head. Waiting unceasingly for Christ she believed, along with Simeon, that Mary's first-born Son was indeed the rod out of the stem of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1; Micah 5:2).

### *She Was of a Great Age*

Anna was married for only seven years, and remained a widow for eighty-four years. All of this means that she must have been over one hundred years old when her failing eyes beheld the Saviour she had longingly expected. She had grown old in the service of the sanctuary, and having seen, with Simeon, God's Salvation, was ready to depart in peace. How encouraging it is to meet those who through a long life have remained true to the Lord and whose gray hairs are honorable because of a life lived in the divine will, and who, when they pass away, are ready for glory.

### *She Was a Widow*

Paul exhorted young Timothy to "honour widows who are widows indeed," and Anna, a worthy widow, all should certainly honor. In fact, we wonder if the Apostle had the aged Anna before his mind's eye when he gave Timothy this thought —

She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplication and prayers night and day (I Timothy 5:3, 5).

Anna was desolate, that is, alone, or solitary. A widow can know what it is to face a long, lonely and cheerless life, and a solitude made more acute because of the remembrance of happier days. But it was not so with Anna. When as a young, motherless wife, God withdrew from her the earthly love she rejoiced in, she did not bury her hope in a grave. In the place of what God took, He gave her more of Himself, and she became devoted to Him who had promised to be as a Husband to the widow, and through her long widowhood was unwearied in devotion to Him. She “trusted in God,” and her hoary head was a crown of glory (Proverbs 16:31). Repose of soul was hers for eighty-five years because the one thing she desired was to have God’s house as her dwelling place all the days of her life.

#### *She Departed Not From the Temple*

When death ravaged her own home, Anna turned from all legitimate concerns to join the band of holy women who devoted themselves to continual attendance at the “night and day services of the Temple.” She was no occasional attender or dead member, but a constant, devout worshiper. Her seat in the Temple was always occupied. What an inspiration worshipers of this sort are to a faithful pastor who feels he can minister more freely when they are present because of their prayer support! When their seat is empty in the church, he knows there must be something unusual accounting for their absence.

#### *She Served God With Fastings and Prayers*

Without doubt, Anna was one of God’s own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, and who was heard in that she feared. It was not in some retired nook of the Temple she prayed, or in a corner where females only supplicated God. She would join with others openly in the presence of the congregation and pour out her soul audibly in the Temple. The One to whose birth she witnessed was to say that praying and fasting are necessary requisites in a God-used life, and Anna not only prayed but also fasted. She was willing to miss a meal in order to spend more time before God. Hers

was a life of godly self-control. She had learned how to crucify the flesh in order to serve God more acceptably.

### *She Gave Thanks Likewise Unto the Lord*

Anna's prayers were paired with praises. How arrestive is the phrase, "she coming in that instant." This was no mere coincidence. Through her long pilgrimage, day after day, she went to the Temple to pray for the coming of the Messiah, and although He seemed to tarry she waited for Him, believing that He would come. Then one day the miracle happened, for as she entered the Temple she heard sounds of exultation and joy proceeding from the inner court, and then from the lips of the venerable Simeon she heard the words, "Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Gazing upon the Holy Child who was none other than her long-looked-for Messiah, Anna, too, was ready to depart in peace and be joined with her husband above.

### *She Spoke of Him to All*

Anna not only prayed and praised, but went out to proclaim the glad tidings to those who had shared her hope and faith. Note, again, the glimpse we have of Anna in her brief record. We see her, first of all, as —

*A Daughter* of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher — a somewhat interesting fact seeing that she is the only one of note mentioned in the Bible of the tribe of Asher, even though the name means blessedness.

*A Widow* of a great age.

*A Devout Worshiper* of the living God.

*A Prophetess* proclaiming the prophetic word.

Now she assumes another role. Old though she is, she goes forth to become —

*A Missionary.* Anna was one of the godly remnant in Israel who, through centuries, even in the darkest days before Christ came, looked for the Dayspring from on high. Thus, as she heard Simeon's praise for prophecy fulfilled, she went out to her godly intimates to declare the glad tidings. Faith, through her long years of waiting, was rewarded and she became the first female herald of the Incarnation to all who looked for the

Redeemer in Jerusalem. In Anna we have “a sample of an aged female’s waiting faith, as Simeon is of an aged man’s.” Blessed are all those who patiently and prayerfully await Christ’s second appearance (Hebrews 9:28).

## APPHIA

*Scripture Reference* — Philemon 2

*Name Meaning* — That which is fruitful

This believer, belonging to Colossae, the ancient Phrygian city now a part of Turkey, is spoken of as our “dearly beloved” and “our sister” (R.V., margin). It is likely that she lived out the significance of her name by being a fruitful branch of the Vine. Apphia is believed to have been the wife of Philemon and either the mother or sister of Archippus who was evidently a close member of the family. She must have been closely associated with Philemon, otherwise she would not have been mentioned in connection with a domestic matter (Philemon, verse 2). Tradition has it that Philemon, Apphia, Archippus and Onesimus were stoned to death during the reign of Nero. It was Onesimus who went to Colossae with a message for the Philemon household.

## ASENATH

THE WOMAN A KING GAVE TO HIS PRIME MINISTER

*Scripture References* — Genesis 41:45-50; 46:20

*Name Meaning* — An Egyptian name implying, “one who belongs to Neit the heathen goddess of wisdom, of Sais.”

*Family Connections* — Three times over Asenath is spoken of as “the daughter of Potipherah, priest of On.” This priest was associated with the “Great Temple of the Sun” at Heliopolis, near to modern Cairo. She became the wife of Joseph, Egypt’s great deliverer, and before famine stalked the land bore two sons, Manasseh, meaning, “God hath removed from me all my troubles and from my father’s house”; and Ephraim, implying, “God hath made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

The marriage Pharaoh arranged between Joseph and Asenath revealed his determination to completely identify Joseph with Egyptian life. Joseph

had become a most valuable man in the land of Egypt, and was next to Pharaoh in power. Among the honors he lavished upon Joseph was a marriage into a caste of priests ranking high in Egypt. These were the sages trained in the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22), and by his marriage to the daughter of one of these sages, Joseph became assimilated with the priestly caste — heathen in nature. As Kuyper expresses it in *Women of the Old Testament*—

Joseph's marriage was a diplomatic arrangement, designated by Pharaoh to place him inside a strictly delineated, aristocratic society, and thus to convert him into a naturalized Egyptian. But by becoming son-in-law to Potipherah, Joseph became involved in Egyptian idolatry and became a member of a caste which borrowed all of its prestige from that idolatry.

Although around the 5th century, A.D., there was an effort to attach Asenath as the heroine of a remarkable Jewish and heathen romance, in which she renounced her false gods before her marriage, the fact remains that as a Hebrew with a pronounced God-consciousness pervading his life Joseph should have refused to marry an idolatress. Had he resisted Pharaoh's arrangement, as he had resisted the tempting allurements of another Egyptian woman, Potiphar's wife, he would have still held his position of power, for as a statesman, Joseph was indispensable to Pharaoh and to Egypt. Future history proved that some of the blood of Asenath coursed through the veins of Ephraim and Manasseh injecting separation and idolatry into Jacob's generations. The influence and distinction Joseph attained was annihilated, and the glory of Jacob's family passed to Judah alone. If you ask why Joseph's tribe was so swiftly obliterated, the Scriptures point to only a single answer; Joseph married Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, high priest of the Sun worshipers of On. What a treatise this is on Paul's injunction about believers having no agreement with the temple of idols! (II Corinthians 6:11-18).

## ATARAH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 2:26

*Name Meaning* — Crown

Atarah was the second wife of Jerahmeel, grandson of Pharez, and mother of Onam. Jerahmeel's first wife by whom he had five children is not



mentioned by name (I Chronicles 2:26, 28).

## ATHALIAH

### THE WOMAN WHO WAS A NOTORIOUS MURDERESS

*Scripture References* — II Kings 8:26; 11; II Chronicles 22; 23:13-21; 24:7

*Name Meaning* — Taken away of the Lord, or Jehovah has afflicted.

Athaliah is also the name of two males (I Chronicles 8:26, 27; Ezra 8:7).

*Family Connections* — She was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and so was half Israelite and half Phoenician, and she personified all the evil of her ill-famed parents and transferred the poison of idolatry into Jerusalem's veins. She was the granddaughter of Omri, 6th king of Israel, "who waded through slaughter to a throne he never inherited." Athaliah married Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat. After many years of strife between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel political relations were more friendly, and as a mother of political expediency on the part of Jehoshaphat — which remains a blot upon his otherwise good memory — he gave his eldest son, Jehoram, in marriage to Athaliah whose brothers, loyal to the worship of Jehovah were murdered by Jehoram. Of this union Ahaziah was born who, with such a revolting figure as a mother, licentious and the personification of despicable arrogance, never had a chance to develop finer qualities of character. With such a mother as his wicked counselor what else could he do but walk in the ways of godless Ahab (II Chronicles 22:3).

After reigning for eight years Jehoram died, unmourned, of a predicted incurable disease. While he reigned, he was dominated by Athaliah who had the stronger character of the two, and who, having inherited from her evil mother strength of will and fanatical devotion to the worship of Baal, made Judah idolatrous. Ahaziah only reigned for a year. Wounded in battle by Jehu, he fled to Megiddo, where he died, and his wicked mother (II Chronicles 24:7) became envious of the throne. But the sons of Ahaziah stood in her way, and with fanatical ambition she seized the opportunity and massacred all the legal heirs — so she thought. This wholesale, merciless, cruel-hearted murderess sought to exterminate the last vestiges of the House of David through which the promised Messiah was to come. Behind her

dastardly crime to destroy “The Seed Royal” we can detect the evil machinations of the devil — a murderer from the beginning — to annihilate the promised seed of the woman predestined to bruise the satanic head. A bad woman bent on destruction is doubly dangerous.

After putting to death her young grandsons, Athaliah reigned for six years, and was the only woman to reign as queen of Judah. The daughter of a king, wife of a king, mother of a king, she is now queen. While her husband reigned she was the power *behind* the throne — now she is the power *on* the throne, and proof of her energy, forcefulness and ability are seen in the length of her reign. A despotic ruler, her every gesture had to be obeyed. During her reign part of the Temple of Jehovah was pulled down and the material used in the building of a temple of Baal. But the God who overrules in the destinies of men and nations, intervened to redeem His promise of a Saviour from the tribe of Judah.

Unknown to Athaliah as she set out to massacre all her grandsons, the youngest was hid from the orgy of destruction. The sister of Ahaziah, Jehosheba, wife of Jehoiada the high priest hid Joash until he was seven years old (II Kings 11:2; II Chronicles 22:11). Jehoiada had plotted to put Joash (Jehoash) on the throne and waited for the opportune moment to declare the remaining son of Ahaziah the lawful king of Judah. Athaliah came into the Temple as the coronation of Joash took place, and rending her robe, cried: “Treason!” To save the Temple from being defiled with her evil blood she was slain just outside the door where the avenging guards waited to end her infamous life. Thus, as Edith Deen expresses it, The horses trampled over her body where she lay dead at the gates. In her miserable end Athaliah bore a singular resemblance to her mother Jezebel, who was abandoned to the dogs. Athaliah was left in a horse-path, to be trampled upon. Like her mother she died a queen, but without a hand to help her or an eye to pity her.

Among the lessons one can gather from the record of the murderess is that we reap what we sow. To Athaliah life was cheap, and thus those who thwarted her purpose must be destroyed. But taking the sword, she perished by it. She breathed out murder, and was in turn murdered. A further lesson we learn from her stained history is that no one can thwart God’s purposes of grace. Having promised a sinful world a Saviour, none could make such

a promise null and void. Persecution and martyrdom have never been able to destroy the loyal worship of the true God. Idolatry and infidelity cannot possibly annihilate the imperishable Word of God. As we leave the shameful story of Athaliah we find ourselves in full agreement with the summary of her bloody career as given by Dr. Robert G. Lee —

Her very name is an execration. She put the whole nation under the shadow of a great horror. She trampled on all faith. She violated all obligation. She lived with the shrieks of those she butchered in her ears. She lived with her hands red with the blood of princes and princesses. She died, frantic with rage, with the accusation of Treason on her lips. She died in the barnyard under the battleaxes of an aroused people.

#### AZUBAH No. 1

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 2:18, 19

*Name Meaning* — Deserted desolation The promise of God not to desert His people is confirmed in a few symbolical names. For instance, in the phrase, “Thou shalt no more be termed *forsaken* — or — *desolate*” (Isaiah 62:4), we have in the last word, *Azubal*. The first holder of the name was the first wife of Caleb, not Joshua’s friend, but one of his descendants. She became the mother of Caleb’s three sons, Jeshar, Shobab and Ardon.

#### AZUBAH No. 2

*Scripture References* — I Kings 22:42; II Chronicles 20:31

The second Azubah was the daughter of Shilhi whose name, signifying “Armed of the Lord,” speaks of a man who knew God as His defense. She became the wife of King Asa, third king of Judah, who reigned for 46 years and who is reckoned among the good and noble rulers in Judah. Azubah became the mother of Jehoshaphat, who, in spite of wrong alliances he formed, stands out as another commendable king. There is every evidence that she was one of the God-fearing women of her time, and was a strong religious force in the life of her son. The recurring phrase in the genealogy of some of Israel’s rulers, “His mother’s name was — and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord,” testifies to the godly influence of the mother in the life of her son.

## BAARA

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 8:8

*Name Meaning* — The burning one

Baara was a Moabite woman whom Shoham, a Benjamite, married when he went into the land of Moab. Hushim was his other wife. Her name has an interesting connection and is derived from Beera, “to burn,” or “a burning,” “a kindling.” Some scholars suppose that it designates the same person before called Hodesh, by allusion to the kindling of fires as beacons which was customary among the Israelites in very ancient times to announce the appearance of the new moon.

## BASHEMATH, BASEMETH, BASMATH

*Name Meaning* — Fragrant or Perfumed

These variations of the same name all mean the same thing and are from basam, an aromatic plant — the “balsam.” The R.V. gives Basmath in all of the following references.

### BASHEMATH No. 1

*Scripture References* — Genesis 26:34; 36:10

She was one of the wives of Esau, who is also called the daughter of Elon the Hittite. Esau married her out of spite because his father was not pleased with his other wives who were among the daughters of Canaan. Bashemath was doubtless the name of praise conferred upon her at marriage (see Adah).

### BASHEMATH No. 2

*Scripture References* — Genesis 28:9; 36:3, 4, 13

She was the daughter of Ishmael, and the last of Esau’s three wives according to the Edomites genealogy. From this Bashemath came her son Renel, from whom four Edomite tribes were descended (see Mahalath).

### BASHEMATH No. 3

*Scripture Reference* — I Kings 4:15

Bashemath was a daughter of Solomon who became the wife of Ahimaaz, one of the King's tax collectors at Naphtali.

## BATHSHEBA

THE WOMAN WHOSE BEAUTY RESULTED IN ADULTERY AND MURDER

*Scripture References* — II Samuel 11:2, 3; 12:24; I Kings 1:11-31; 2:13-19; I Chronicles 3:5

*Name Meaning* — The Seventh Daughter, or The Daughter of an Oath. “Bath” means “daughter.” A kindred name is Bath Shua, a Canaanite name which implies, “the daughter of opulence.” The wife of Judah is referred to as “Shua's daughter” (Genesis 38:2; I Chronicles 2:3). Bath Shua was also the name of the daughter of Ammiel and wife of David (I Chronicles 3:5).

*Family Connections* — Bathsheba came of a God-fearing family. She was the daughter of Eliam or Ammiah, who was the son of Ahithophel. Eliam, whose name means “God is gracious,” was one of David's gallant officers. Bathsheba became the wife of Uriah, the most loyal of David's men. After the murder of Uriah, she became the wife of David, and mother of five sons by him. The first died in infancy. The others were Solomon, Shimea, Shobub and Nathan. She is mentioned in our Lord's genealogy as “her that had been the wife of Uriah” (Matthew 1:6).

The sacred record informs us that David's association with Bathsheba was the only stain upon the escutcheon of David. “David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah” (I Kings 15:5). If this was the only blot on his page, it was a heavily engrained one, and one that could not be erased, as far as the effects of his treatment of Uriah was concerned. While God freely pardons a sinner, often the effects of committed sin remain. The tragic lapse in the life of the man after God's own heart is built up with consummate art, from David's first sight of Bathsheba to the climax of his unutterable remorse when realizing the enormity of his most grievous sin, he flung himself upon the mercy of God.

The sad story begins with the significant phrase, “But David tarried still at Jerusalem” (II Samuel 11:1). The Israelites were at war with the Ammonites, and the king who had shown himself brave and victorious in battle should have been with his army. But now a mature man, and veteran of many wars, and ruler over Israel for some twelve years now David had become somewhat soft and self-indulgent. He had had his day of hard campaigning and war weariness. Now it was time to leave the rigors and risks of battle to his officers, and sit back and take things easy. But no longer fighting the battle of the Lord, David was open to attack and so found himself involved in the triangle drama of passion, intrigue and murder.

Lazing around on the flat roof of his palace, David saw a woman on the roof of a nearby house undressing and bathing herself, and his passions were excited. Bathsheba, the woman exposing herself nudely, was “very beautiful to look upon,” and David, ever attracted by lovely women, coveted her, and became guilty of an outrageous disgrace. Although David was to confess that his foul sin was his, and his alone, one wonders how far Bathsheba was the accomplice in such a sin, as well as its provocation. Had she been a careful, modest woman, surely she would have looked around the easily seen adjacent roofs, and if others had been looking her way, she would have been more appropriately modest in bathing herself.

Further, when sent for by David, had she been a true wife and a woman of principle she should have refused to obey the king’s summons. As she saw David feasting his eyes upon her, did she have a presentiment of what would happen? If not, then, when before the king, she should have bravely refused to yield to adultery. Later on in the sacred record, a heathen woman — a queen — brave Vashti, stoutly refused to expose herself before wine-inflamed men, and was expelled from court. Had Bathsheba shown the same determination to preserve her dignity, David, the anointed of Israel, would never have sinned as he did. After the adulterous act in the king’s bedchamber, Bathsheba manifested no sense of guilt, but after her husband’s murder almost immediately went to the palace to supplement David’s many wives.

Bathsheba only added insult to the injury by indulging in her illicit affair with another man, while her lawful husband was risking his life in the

service of her seducer. Learning of Bathsheba's pregnant condition, David hurried Uriah home to allay suspicion, but returning, the devoted soldier, a man of highest principle, refused any physical contact with his wife. David's clever plan failed, and the plot thickens. Uriah must be gotten rid of, so he was sent back to the battlefield with a letter to Joab to put Uriah in a foremost place where he was bound to be killed. Godly, gallant Uriah had no idea that that sealed letter carried his death warrant. Thus, for David lust, adultery, deceit, treachery and murder followed in quick succession.

After the accustomed period of mourning Bathsheba became the wife of David, and their child of an adulterous union was born without disgrace, only to die within a week of his birth. "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare David." The deep grief of David over the sickness and death of the child, while not relieving the king of his murderous crime, gives us a glimpse of his better nature and of his faith in reunion beyond the grave. Perhaps no other passage of the Bible has been used to comfort sorrowing hearts in the hour of death as that in which David assures us of immortality. Mourning over his dead child he said, "Can I bring him back again?" No, he could not. Then came words binding up the cruel wound death causes, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Both David and Bathsheba must have had much agony of soul as they became deeply conscious that the death of their son, conceived out of wedlock, was a divine judgment upon their dark sin.

Divinely instructed, Nathan the prophet brought David to a realization of his terrible evil, and sincere in his confession of his iniquity, he received from Nathan the assuring word, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." Much has been written about David's repentance preserved for us in Psalm 51 — a Psalm saturated with penitential tears — and of Psalm 32, expressing David's gratitude to God for His pardoning grace and mercy. But graciously forgiven, even God could not avert the natural consequences of David's transgression, and he came to prove its inevitable subsequent sorrow. Evil rose up against him in his own house (II Samuel 12:11). David found himself disgraced by one son (13:4), banished by another (15:19), revolted against by a third (I Kings 2), bearded by his servant, betrayed by his friends, deserted by his people, bereaved of his children.

What about Bathsheba? With David, was she made conscious of her share in the iniquitous transaction of the past? Co-responsible in David's sin, did her tears of repentance mingle with those of her husband's? It would seem so, because God blessed them with another son whom they called Solomon, meaning, "Beloved of the Lord." Why was not such a son given to one of David's other wives? Given to David and Bathsheba was not Solomon an evidence and expression of God's pardoning love for both? Then, is not Bathsheba's inclusion in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1) another token that God had put her sins behind His back? Restored to divine favor, and now virtuous and wise as well as beautiful, Bathsheba brought up her son Solomon in all godly diligence and care. Solomon himself came to write, "Train up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6), which counsel reflected his own godly upbringing. Tradition says that it was Bathsheba who composed Proverbs 31, as an admonition to Solomon on his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. If this be so, we can understand all the warnings against the flatteries of strange women with which Proverbs abounds.

After her lapse, recovery and the birth of Solomon the rest of Bathsheba's life is veiled in silence. We can imagine how noble calmness, gentle dignity and queenly courage became hers. That she retained her influence over David until his death is proven by the way she reminded the king of his promise to make their son, Solomon, his successor. The veil of silence is lifted again when Solomon became king, and Bathsheba, whom Solomon revered, came into his presence to ask that Abishag, who cared for David in his last days, be given in marriage to Adonijah, the son of Haggith, one of David's other wives.

A lesson we can learn from Bathsheba is that being assured of God's forgiveness she did not let her one sin ruin her entire life. Repentant, she used her mistake as a guide to future, better conduct. When we brood over sins God has said He will remember no more against us, we actually doubt His mercy, and rob ourselves of spiritual power and progress. Read again Psalm 51 and then Psalm 32.

BERNICE

THE WOMAN GUILTY OF INCESTUOUS CONDUCT



*Scripture References*—Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30

*Name Meaning* — Bernice (Greek — *Bernicke*), or Berenice, is a Macedonian corruption of *Pherenice*, and means, “victorious,” or “carrying off victory.” Wilkinson informs us that the name occurs in previous history, being given “to the wife of Ptolemy, one of Alexander’s generals, who became King of Egypt, and founder of an illustrious dynasty.” Another compound with *nike*, implying “victory,” is found in Eunice (Greek — *Eunicke*) the name of Timothy’s mother. “. . . The word is expressive of a good or happy victory, and in its origin doubtless commemorated some such event. It is noticeable that *nike* was a favorite termination of females in the Macedonian age, as for example, *Thessalonice*, the daughter of Philip, King of Macedon, and *Stratonice*, the name of the wife of Antigonus, one of Alexander’s generals and successors.”

*Family Connections* — Bernice was the eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I who ruled, A.D. 38-45, and is described as the one “who vexed the church” (Acts 12:1). Josephus says that she was first married to Marcus. After a while she married her Uncle Herod, king of Chalcis. When he died, she was suspected of evil relations with her own brother Agrippa, with whom she always appeared as his consort. In company with Agrippa, Bernice visited Festus when he became procurator of Judea. Leaving Agrippa, she married Polemon, or Ptolemy, king of Cilicia who for her sake embraced Judaism by the rite of circumcision. She soon left Ptolemy, however, for a future period of intimacy with her brother. Subsequently she became the mistress of Vespasian, then of Titus, son of Vespasian, but when Titus became emperor, he cast her aside.

“If heredity stands for anything, its lessons are forcibly taught in the history of the Herodian family.” For instance, Bernice and her sister Drusilla (Acts 24:24, see DRUSILLA), were two of the most corrupt and shameless women of their time in Roman history. As Bernice, a wicked woman who lived an incestuous life, listened to Paul’s impassioned appeal as he repeated what God had done for his soul, one wonders what impression it made upon her evil heart. As her brother listened, he said to Paul, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” What a different

record would have been written if Agrippa and Bernice had repented of their sordid sin, and yielded their lives to Him whose blood can make the foulest clean!

### BILHAH

*Scripture References* — Genesis 29:29; 30:3, 4, 5, 7; 35:22, 25; 37:2; 46:25; I Chronicles 4:29; 7:13

This slave girl was the handmaid of Rachel, Jacob's much loved wife, whom Laban gave his daughter when she married Jacob. Childless for many years, Rachel gave Bilhah to Jacob as a secondary wife, that she might have children by her. Such an act was strictly in accordance with the Code of Hammurabi. In this polygamous system, Bilhah was ranked above a mere concubine but did not have the prestige and position of a free-born mistress. Bilhah bore Jacob two sons, Dan from whom sprang Samson, called a Danite (Judges 13:2), and Naphtali, the founder of a very large tribe.

Reuben, Jacob's first son was guilty of incest with Bilhah and "Israel heard it" (Genesis 35:22). Because he had defiled his father's mistress in this way, Reuben was deprived of his birthright which was given to the sons of Joseph (Genesis 35:22; 49:4; I Chronicles 5:1). A sidelight of the morals of that time is given by Blunt, the commentator who reminds us that so vivid was the desire for the promised Redeemer that —

The wife provoked, instead of resenting, the faithlessness of her husband, the mother taught her own child deceit, daughters deliberately worked their own and their father's shame, and the daughter-in-law courted the incestuous bed, and to be childless was a byword.

(See Genesis 16:2; 30:3, 9; 25:23; 27:13; 38:14.)

### BITHIAH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 4:18

*Name Meaning* — A daughter of Jehovah

Evidently a woman of position, Bithiah is spoken of as a daughter of Pharaoh. Whether Pharaoh as used here was an Egyptian title or a proper

Hebrew name is not easy to determine. Says Wilkinson, “This Pharaoh may have been an Israelite, deriving his name from the Hebrew word *pernoth* or *paroth*, from *para* meaning ‘to take the lead.’ If we suppose him to have been really a king of Egypt, which is not altogether inconceivable, the name of the daughter may be understood to imply her conversion to the Israelitish faith, and admission into the bond of the covenant.” Perhaps she was among the Egyptians who became proselytes after the disaster of the Red Sea, and, like Ruth, renounced home, country and the past to take an Israelite husband and to have Israel’s God as her God. She married Mered, a descendant of the tribe of Judah, whose other wife was Jehudijah, “the Jewess,” to distinguish her from Bithiah of Egyptian extraction.

## CANDACE

*Scripture Reference* — Acts 8:27

*Name Meaning* — Queen or Ruler of Children

The exact name of this Ethiopian queen is not given by Luke. It was the name of a dynasty, not of an individual, and was used for many years by the queens of Ethiopia, just as Pharaoh was the hereditary title given to ancient Egyptian kings and Caesar to Roman emperors. The fascinating context Luke gives us is taken up with the eunuch, a man of great authority, a potentate in his way, returning through the desert to Meroe, Ethiopia, interested in Old Testament Scripture. Philip the Evangelist found him sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah 53, and from this chapter so full of the truth of the cross, preached unto him Jesus. The eunuch was converted to God, and baptized there in the desert, and returned to his country rejoicing. Tradition has it that he witnessed to the Candace of his newly-found Saviour and that she, too, embraced the Christian faith. Such was the influence of this converted eunuch, that many souls were saved and ultimately he became bishop of the first Christian Church in Ethiopia. It is interesting to note that the present emperor of Ethiopia is a professed believer.

## CHLOE

*Scripture Reference* — I Corinthians 1:10, 11

*Name Meaning* — Green herb

We are not told anything about the background of this Corinthian matron and head of a Christian household. Evidently she was well-known to the Corinthians by her personal name which means “green herb,” and in the Greek represents the first green shoot of plants. Chloe is therefore emblematic of fruitful grace and beauty. It was while he was benefiting from the hospitality of her home that Paul received information of strife among leaders in the Early Church and which he sought to deal with in this first chapter of First Corinthians. The Church at Corinth gave Paul a good deal of concern and heartache because of its low spirituality.

### CLAUDIA

*Scripture Reference* — II Timothy 4:21

*Name Meaning* — Lame

Tradition has more to say about this Roman Christian worker than the Bible. She can be included among the chief and honorable women of Gentile origin who heard and believed the Gospel. Doubtless she was a member of one of the great old houses in Rome. We find her associated with Paul and the other members of her church in sending Timothy Christian greetings. Several scholars suggest that Claudia was the wife of Pudens, with whom she is mentioned, and that Linus, who became bishop of Rome was their son. There is no warrant, however, for the assumption that Claudia might possibly have been Pilate’s wife, who was traditionally known as Claudia.

There is an interesting legend that affirms Claudia, as a British lady of high birth — the daughter of the British king, Cogidubnus. She was put under the patronage of Pomponia, wife of Aulus Plautius, conqueror of Britain and from this Christian learned the truths of the Gospel. Tacitus the Roman historian speaks of an inscription found in Chichester, England, declaring Claudia to be of British stock. All the Bible tells us of her is that she was among the devout women who greatly encouraged the Apostle Paul in his arduous labors for the Master he dearly loved.

### COZBI

*Scripture Reference* — Numbers 25:6-18

*Name Meaning* — Deceiver, deception

This Midianitish woman, daughter of Zur, head of a chief house in Midia, had a pure Hebrew name the meaning of which corresponding to her character, for Cozbi is derived from the verb *cazab*, meaning, “deceiver” or “deception.” Given by her parents the name may have expressed their disappointment over the birth of a daughter instead of an expected son. But, says Wilkinson in *Personal Names*, “It is conceivable that this name may have been given from the observation of proneness to falsehood and deceit in early childhood.” In the degraded moral condition of the Midianites of the time, craftiness and deceit were common.

Although a princess, her influence among leaders was evil. She was among those who effected the moral and religious corruption of the Israelites. She cast a spell over Zimri, son of Salu, prince among the Simeonites. This temptress was slain by Phinehas, son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron (see Psalm 106:30, 31). It would seem as if the javelin “thrust through her belly” stayed the plague overtaking Israel for its whoredom and idolatry. What a sad day that was when thousands of Israelites perished! (Numbers 25:9; I Corinthians 10:8.)

## DAMARIS

*Scripture Reference* — Acts 17:34

*Name Meaning* — A heifer

This female convert of Paul’s witness at Mars Hill (Acts 17:34), must have been a well-known Athenian. Her name is from the form of *Damalis*, meaning a “heifer,” and in use signified a young girl. Singled out with Dionysius the Areopagite, one of the court judges, indicates personal or social distinction (Acts 17:12). There is no evidence that she was the wife of Dionysius, as some writers affirm. When Paul was mocked at Athens, Damaris along with Dionysius clave unto the Apostle and believed. How their conversion must have cheered his heart! What a precious touch the chapter ends with “and others with them.” Although their names are not given they are recorded in the illustrious Lamb’s Book of Life.

Among the female characters in Scripture biography are two with the name of Deborah — the one was the wet-nurse who served with her bosom’s milk in Jacob’s patriarchal family; and the other was the

prophetess and the only female judge in the era when Israel was ruled by judges or saviours whom the Lord raised up.

## DEBORAH No. 1

### THE WOMAN WHO SPENT HER LIFE AS A NURSEMAID

*Scripture References* — Genesis 24:59; 35:8

*Name Meaning* — Deborah means a “bee,” and is emblematic of industry, patience, sagacity and usefulness — a beautifully appropriate name for a maidservant or nursemaid. Deborah’s conduct throughout her long life fulfilled the expectation, or hope, expressed by her name. As a bee symbolizes constant activity, industrious diligence and care, the God of grace enabled Deborah to live her life as a devoted, quiet and faithful nurse.

*Family Connections* — We know nothing of Deborah’s background. She was probably born in servitude, yet her parentage was commendable enough to warrant the domestic office of great trust in the patriarchal household of Nahor.

As Rebekah’s nurse she accompanied her mistress to her new home after her marriage to Isaac. When Jacob and Esau were born into the home we can imagine how lovingly Deborah would care for them. Then when Jacob married, and his family increased rapidly, it is probable that Rebekah and Isaac gave Deborah to nurse them. When Rebekah had no further use for her nurse, she did not dismiss her. Deborah remained in the family and was held in great reverence. She became an indispensable treasure in that ancient patriarchal circle. When she died at an advanced age — almost 100 years according to some writers — she was lamented for as one of the family, and great honor was paid to her at her death. Her name and the place of her burial are immortalized in the words, “Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried beneath Bethel under an oak tree whose name Jacob called Allon-bachuth (which means, *Oak of Weeping*).” The entire family was touched by her passing, and all who had been the recipients of Deborah’s faithful devotion wept for her as for one of their own. Through her faith to God, she had transformed the bonds of servitude into those of love, and earned the devotion and gratitude of those whom she had so long and loyally served. Deborah brought the glory of God into the most

commonplace duties of Jacob's home. No wonder all eyes were wet with tears as they buried her aged, bent body under that oak tree. Famous men, like Earl Shaftesbury and Robert L. Stevenson, have testified to the debt they owe to devoted nurses who were so kind and devoted to them in their earlier years, and who greatly influenced their lives, even more so than their own parents.

DEBORAH No. 2  
THE WOMAN WHO WAS A FEARLESS PATRIOT

*Scripture References* — Judges 4 and 5; Hebrews 11:32-34

*Name Meaning* — Although we know nothing of the early history of this prophetess-judge, it may be that her parents with a knowledge of the unselfish and untiring service of Deborah the nurse, gave their baby girl the same name which, as already indicated, means "a bee." This we do know that the practical qualities symbolized by the busy bee were as necessary to Deborah as they were to the right performance of the less conspicuous and humbler duties of the former nurse Deborah. While Deborah the patriot gathered honey for her friends, like a bee she had a fatal sting for her enemies as the Canaanites came to experience. "Science confirms the ancient belief that, of all the animal kingdom, the bee ranks among the highest in intelligence" says Mary Hallet. "So Deborah stands out as among the wisest of all the Old Testament women."

*Family Connections* — We have no genealogy of this female warrior and writer. The only personal touch we have is that she was "the wife of Lapidoth" (Judges 4:4), whose name is the only thing the Bible gives us. Their home was between Bethel and Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. The palm tree under which Deborah ruled and possibly lived was a land mark, as palms were then rare in Palestine. In honor of her works, it became known as "The Palm of Deborah" (Judges 4:5). Although referred to as a "mother in Israel," we have no record of Deborah being a mother of natural children by Lapidoth.

Occasionally, a strong-minded and unique woman breaks in upon human history and by her exploits leaves the impact of her personality upon events and secures for herself an imperishable honor. England, for instance,

will never forget the bolds deeds of Margaret of Anjou, who at the head of her northern forces swept over the country like a cyclone, destroying armies and tearing down thrones. In France, Joan of Arc, the patron saint of her country, professed to have divine visions as to her destiny to restore peace to her distracted nation by the crowning of Charles. From school days we have known how she led 10,000 troops against the English at Orleans, and compelled them to retreat, and of how other victories followed as her consecrated banner struck terror into the hearts of her enemies. Ultimately, she was burned at the the stake as “a martyr to her religion, her country and her king.” Her ashes, thrown into the Seine, were carried to the sea, and the sea, taking them around the world became emblematic of her universal fame.

Similarly gifted with superior spiritual, mental and physical powers to leave her mark upon the annals of time was Deborah whom God raised up and endowed with a remarkable personality and varied gifts for the deliverance of His distressed and defeated people. A woman of unusual attainments, Deborah carved out an enviable niche for herself. With characteristic resoluteness she occupied several positions.

### *She Was a Wife*

While nothing is said of her husband and home life, there is no reason to affirm, as some writers do, that being born to rule, Deborah was master in her own home. Some writers feel that since Lapidoth was the husband of a prominent woman, that he was “hen-pecked” or that Deborah “wore the trousers.” Wharton in *Famous Women* suggests that Lapidoth was a weak man married to a strong-willed and a strong-bodied woman. “His very name is in the original Hebrew put not in the masculine, but in the feminine gender. I have no doubt that while by no means so great, he was yet ‘as meek as Moses’ ” Although meek, Moses was by no means weak.

We prefer to believe that Lapidoth admired the ability and influence of his more conspicuous wife. His name means, “torches” or “lightning flashes,” and we can well imagine how in his quieter way he was the encourager of Deborah in all her activities. Although not so forceful and capable as his wife, yet he was illuminative in his own way and behind the scenes was as good and conspicuous in faith as the woman he loved, and in



whose glory he was content to bask. Many of the notable men of the world have testified to the succor and inspiration they received from their wives who walked with them in full agreement as they climbed the heights. Perhaps the shoe was on the other foot in that God-fearing home. Deborah would never have become the dazzling figure she did, had she not had the love, sympathy, advice and encouragement of a husband who was happy to ride in the second chariot.

### *She Was a Prophetess*

Deborah is one of several females in Scripture distinguished as being endowed with the prophetic gift, which means the ability to discern the mind and purpose of God and declare it to others. In the days of the Old Testament, prophets and prophetesses were the media between God and His people Israel, and their gift to perceive and proclaim divine truth stamped them as being divinely inspired. Such an office, whether held by a male or female, was a high one and corresponds to the ministry of the Word today. Can you not picture how hungry-minded Israelites found their way to that conspicuous palm tree beneath which Deborah sat, stately in person with her dark, penetrating, prophetic eyes, and poured out wisdom and instruction as she declared the whole counsel of God? As a woman, she had intuition as well as inspiration, which is always better than a man's cold reasoning. Had Pontius Pilate taken the advice of his wife he would not have signed the death warrant of Jesus Christ.

### *She Was an Agitator*

As one meaning of "agitation" is to stir up or excite public discussion with the view of producing a change, then Deborah was an effective agitator who stirred up Israel's concern about its low spiritual condition. The land was debauched and well-nigh ruined, and under the rule of the Canaanites liberty had been lost. The people were dejected and afraid, for their spirits had been broken and all hope of deliverance had vanished. But Deborah did more than prophesy; she aroused the nation from its lethargy and despair. Hers was a fearless and unsolicited devotion to the emancipation of God's people, and she awoke in them a determination to free themselves from their wretched bondage and degradation. Out went her

call and challenge to the help of the Lord against the enemy. Day after day, she excited those who gathered to hear her words of divine wisdom with the certainty of deliverance from a heathen foe if only they would bestir themselves from their folly and fear and go out and fight.

### *She Was a Ruler*

Deborah was the fifth of the leaders or “Judges” of Israel raised up by God to deliver His people from the bondage their idolatry had caused, and instant both in word and deed she fulfilled her role as “Judge,” at a time when men tried to do right in the sight of their own eyes. As the position of woman in those days was of a distinctly subordinate character, Deborah’s prominence as a ruler is somewhat remarkable. All Israel was under her jurisdiction, and from the palm tree bearing her name, and elsewhere, called “the sanctuary of the palm,” she dispensed righteousness, justice and mercy. After the victory over the nation’s foes, she ruled with equity a land that had rest from war and captivity for forty years.

### *She Was a Warrior*

Having fought with words she went forth to throw off the oppressor’s yoke with swords, and what a fighter this patriotic and inspired heroine proved to be. Deborah sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam of Naphtali, and told him that it was God’s will that he should lead her forces and deliver the country. Long slavery and repeated failures made Barak hesitate, but ultimately he decided to lead the army provided Deborah, the brave-hearted and dauntless ruler, went with him. Barak felt he could face the foe if his ruler were at hand, and out they went to meet Sisera, a mighty man of war, who had terrorized Israel for many years. Great were the odds against Deborah and Barak, for their army consisted of some 10,000 men. Sisera commanded 100,000 fighters, and had 900 iron chariots. When the eventful moment of combat came, the dauntless spirit of Deborah did not quail. True, tremendous odds were against them, but Deborah had God as her Ally and “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.” A fearful hailstorm overtook the land, and the Canaanites were almost blinded by the rain, and were ultimately overwhelmed in the swollen river of Kishon. Sisera escaped but was killed by Jael while asleep in her tent. (See Jael.) Thus Deborah

gained undying fame as the female warrior who rescued her people from their cruel foes.

### *She Was a Poetess*

The prose and poem of Judges 4 and 5 are associated with the same historic event, and reveal that Deborah could not only prophecy, arouse, rule and fight, but also write. It was said of Julius Caesar that, “he wrote with the same ability with which he fought.” This observation can also be true of Deborah, who, after her victory over the Canaanites, composed a song which is regarded as one of the finest specimens of ancient Hebrew poetry, being superior to the celebrated song of Miriam (see MIRIAM). This song of praise, found in Judges 5, magnifies the Lord as being the One who enabled Israel’s leaders to conquer their enemies. Out of the contest and conquest came the moral purification of the nation, and the inspiring genius of it was a woman daring and dynamic in the leadership of her nation. No character in the Old Testament stands out in bolder relief than Deborah — prophetess, ruler, warrior and poetess. Her song is immortal because her life was dedicated to God and her deeds heroic and sublime.

### *She Was a Maternal Figure*

The last glimpse we have of Deborah is as “a mother in Israel” (5:7). Commenting upon our Lord’s action in taking up little children into His arms and blessing them as being a father’s act in Hebrew custom, Bengel says, “Jesus had no children that He might adopt all children.” Perhaps it was so with Deborah who, as far as we know, had never experienced actual motherhood, but yet became as a mother to all in Israel, and the source of this spiritual motherhood was her piety. Above all of her remarkable gifts was her trust in God which is ever the source of any woman’s highest adornment. As she sat under her palm tree to rule in righteousness and translate the revelation of God, her heart was filled with that “grace divine which diffused itself like a sweet-smelling savor over the whole land.” Hers was a brilliant career because of a heart that was fixed in God. Meroz failed God, and under a curse, vanished, but Deborah is immortal because she served God to the limit of her ability and capacity. She was indeed the

female Oliver Cromwell of ancient Israel who went out to fight the Lord's battles with a psalm on her lips and a sword in her hand.

## DELILAH

### THE WOMAN WHO BETRAYED HER HUSBAND FOR SILVER

*Scripture References* — Judges 16:4-21 (Read Proverbs 5)

*Name Meaning* — Delilah is a sweet-sounding name which any vain woman would covet, for it means “delicate” or “dainty one.” Because of the foul deed of which Delilah was guilty, no other female in Scripture appears with such a tarnished name. In fact, it is rare indeed to find a woman bearing this name.

*Family Connections* — The Bible gives us no knowledge of her parentage and background save that she came from the valley of Sorek which extended from near Jerusalem to the Mediterranean, and which entrance was beautiful with rare flowers perfuming the air with sweet odors.

The record of Delilah, the heartless wrecker of a mighty man, is given in eighteen verses; and the description of Samson's betrayal, fall, bondage and death is one of the most graphic in the Bible. We cannot, of course, write of Delilah without mentioning Samson. What a contrast they present, and how symbolic they are of characters in the world today! Samson was physically strong but morally weak. Although able to rend a lion, he could not fight his lusts. He could break his bonds, but not his habits. He could conquer Philistines but not his passions. Delilah was a woman who used her personal charm to lure a man to his spiritual and physical destruction, and she stands out as one of the lowest, meanest women of the Bible — the female Judas of the Old Testament.

This Philistine courtesan was a woman of unholy persistence and devilish deceit, who had personal charm, mental ability, self-command, and nerve, but who used all her qualities for one purpose — *money*. She and womanly honor and love had never met, for behind her beautiful face was a heart as dark as hell, and full of viperous treachery. “Her supreme wickedness lay not in betraying Samson to his enemies but in causing him to break faith with his ideals.” Shakespeare might well have had Delilah in mind when he wrote —

O Nature! What hadst thou to do in Hell,  
When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend  
In mortal Paradise of such sweet flesh.

Deluding Samson into believing she really loved him, Delilah sold him to blindness, bondage and death. The ease with which she betrayed her husband revealed that she belonged to the enemies of God's people, the people of whom Samson was the recognized leader at that time. The Philistines did not like Samson around because he was the champion of Israel and as such interfered with their practices. Therefore he must be got rid of, and in Delilah, the Philistine prostitute, the Philistines had one who was willing to be bribed to act as their agent. She had one purpose and that was to secure money, and had no qualms of conscience to trifle with love for the sake of wealth. Thus, as Kuyper expresses it, "All the while she kept a police force quartered in her rooms and awaited the moment in which she could surrender her lover into his enemies' hands."

Samson became a traitor to himself because he could not resist a woman's charm. First one woman and then another took advantage of this deep-seated weakness and basic sin of his, and Delilah was the most effective in destroying him. She remains as a warning to all men to beware of the charm and wiles of a wicked, scheming woman. As one unknown writer puts it —

The women of the Bible pass before the imagination in the vision of antiquity, like pure and radiant stars, their frailties scarcely more than the wing of a transparent cloud upon these beautiful spheres. Delilah rises suddenly from darkness, as a glorious meteor, describes an arc of romantic and fatal light, and goes down in a horizon of awful gloom.

The lords of the Philistines offered an enormous sum as a bribe, namely, 1,100 pieces of silver. Jesus was sold by Judas for only 30 pieces of silver. Such a fortune was no small temptation to Delilah, and sharing her tempters' passion for revenge, she set about, in a subtle way, to earn the price of blood. She tried four times in her cunning, evil way to get Samson to reveal the secret of his supernatural power. The first three times Samson humorously lied in answering Delilah's question by enumerating the green withs or twigs, the new ropes, and the weaving of the hair. Thrice deceived, Delilah the enchantress employed her final weapon — *tears*. Sobbing, she

said, “How canst thou say I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth.”

Samson was conquered. A weeping woman melted his heart, and he confessed the truth of his Nazarite vow, and how, if shorn of his long hair, his strength would depart and he would become like any other normal man. Recognizing that the truth had been told, Delilah lulled Samson to sleep. As he slept, the waiting Philistines destroyed the sign of the vow, and when Samson awoke, although he tried to exert his power as before, he found it had deserted him. The rest of the tragic story belongs to Samson. His foes gouged out his eyes, bound him in fetters and in Gaza, where his God-given strength was manifested, he was made to grind corn. The spiritual Hercules had been reduced to the very depth of degradation. Samson knew that his bitter servitude was the result of his sin and could confess—

Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave.  
Prison within prison,  
Inseparably dark!  
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me  
But justly; I myself have brought them,  
Sole author I, sole cause. If aught seems vile,  
As vile hath been my folly.

But out of the depths Samson cried unto the Lord, and, as we read, his hair began to grow. Forsaken by all, there was One near at hand, and the God of grace restored unto His sinning and now repentant servant, the power he had lost. Samson's extremity became God's opportunity. While Samson was in prison, in the palace, three thousand Philistines gathered to honor their god Dagon for victory over their feared enemy. As hearts beat high and warm, with banquet wine and dance, the cry goes up to have blind Samson brought in to be made the butt of their jests and ridicule. A lad brings the giant in and places him between the pillars of the heathen temple where all eyes could see him. The mockery of the drunken crowd begins. They ask for a riddle and Samson acted one they did not expect. With his arms around the

pillars, and deeply penitent for his sins, he prayed, “O Lord, remember me and give me strength only this once.”

Then shaking himself as of old, he threw his arms around the pillars, the massive temple tottered and the 3,000 Philistines, including the treacherous Delilah perished. It was a victory that cost Samson his own life, and we find that he slew more at his death than he had in the heyday of his power.

There is no evidence for John Milton’s idea that Delilah was deeply repentant for her crime against Samson, and visited him in prison imploring his forgiveness, or of his stern reply —

Out! out! hyena, these are thy wonted arts,  
And arts of every woman false like thee;  
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray.  
Then as repentant, to submit, beseech  
And reconciliation move with feigned remorse.

In his drama, *Samson Agonistes*, Milton goes on to describe Delilah’s further efforts to secure forgiveness and at last throws herself upon her reserved resource and pleads her love of country and the grateful esteem in which she will be held by her posterity. But a woman like Delilah did not know how to repent; and as Judas went out and hanged himself, so it would seem as if Delilah, gloating over the price received for Samson’s betrayal, died a terrible death when buried beneath the frightful ruins of the temple her husband’s restored, divine strength had caused.

What are the lessons to be gathered from Samson and Delilah, whose record Hollywood could not resist turning into a sexy movie with box-office appeal? The question may be asked, How can we learn any lesson from such an unpleasant story? Why is this sordid record to the last degree in the Bible? The reading of the man under a vow to God and of great physical strength and mental agility choosing a woman of no morals may be deemed unfit for inclusion in Holy Writ. Yet *all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and the writer of the Book of Judges was guided by the Spirit to set forth the details of the amorous life of Samson. Our answer is that the Bible would not be true to life and to its mission in the world if it did not hold up the mirror and reveal to us, in restrained language, workings of evil, and the boundless love and grace of God toward those whose lives

are so bankrupt of virtues pleasing to Him. As the biography of humanity, the Bible is most up-to-date for us, as H. V. Morton reminds us —

The police courts are always telling the old story of Samson and Delilah. It comes up in a number of ingenious disguises, a theme capable of infinite variation, but the main motif throughout is that of a man who plunges deeper and deeper into his own lack of self-control until the moment arrives when, trapped and shorn of his strength he is blinded and branded.

This same writer goes on to say that Delilah vanished, as such women do, when her task was completed and she received a reward. Morton then relates a conversation he had with a criminal lawyer about the prosecution in a recent case when certain charges were brought against a man who ruined him. “It is simple,” said the lawyer. “A girl pretended to be in love with him and gave him away.”

“You mean his enemies bribed her?”

“Of course,” he said.

This incident, like the story of Delilah, needs no moralizing. The record is sufficient in itself. Delilah was not concerned about the weakness of Samson, but his strength. Once a man betrays his strength, he has no reserve, and courts disaster. A further lesson to be learned from the story before us is that true feminine charm and the appeal of love are gifts received from the Creator, and that when these fairest and most effective of gifts are misused or deliberately trifled with, divine retribution overtakes those who prostitute such gifts.

Another lesson to be gleaned from the ancient record before us is that of the folly of being unequally yoked. Samson married outside his own country, people and religion. Had Samson, hero of Israel, married an Israelitish maiden, the tragedy overtaking him would never have happened. But he took to wife a devotee of a heathen god which, for a judge of Israel, was against the divine decree, and he paid the fatal price of his action.

## DINAH

### THE WOMAN WHOSE SIGHTSEEING HAD FATAL RESULTS

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 34



*Name Meaning* — Dinah means “justice” or “one who judges,” and was doubtless given her as a token of her parents’ belief in divine justice.

*Family Connections* — She was a daughter of Jacob and Leah, and as a member of a family under covenant blessing should have been more careful regarding her personal obligation in maintaining the honor of her home and nation.

Dinah’s love for sight-seeing set off a train of tragic consequences. Young and daring, and curious to know something of the world outside, she stole away one day from the drab tents of her father, to see how the girls in their gorgeous Oriental trappings fared in nearby Shechem. Roaming around, the eyes of Prince Shechem, son of Hamor lighted upon her. He *saw her* means he lusted after her (see Job 31:1), and then as the record puts it, “he took her, lay with her, and defiled her” (Genesis 34:2). Although Dinah’s vanity was flattered at Shechem’s attention so that she went to his palace, she never meant to go so far. *Took her* implies he forced her, and although she may have resisted his advances, resistance was futile and she was seduced.

Had Dinah been content to remain a “keeper at home” (Titus 2:5), a terrible massacre would have been averted, but her desire for novelty and forbidden company spelled disaster. Josephus tells us that Dinah went to the Canaanite annual festival of nature worship (Numbers 25:2) — a forbidden association for an Israelite. Sin, shame and death came to Dinah and Shechem through the windows of their eyes and ears (see Genesis 39:7). The young prince offered the usual reparation for his seduction of Dinah — marriage and a payment to her father which was sufficient according to Hebrew law (Deuteronomy 22:28, 29). Evidently there was more than lustful desire on the part of Shechem, for we read — “His soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto her.” When Hamor went to Jacob and his sons to discuss the matter of marriage between his son and Dinah, he said, “The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter. I pray you give her him to wife.”

The sons of Jacob, angry over the shame brought to their sister and nation, said that such a thing “ought not to be done.” By what Dinah had become — a seduced woman — she caused her father to be a “stink among the inhabitants of the land.”

Seeming to acquiesce in Hamor's suggestion that his son and Dinah should marry and that there should be established a friendlier association between the Israelites and Shechemites, the sons of Jacob, particularly Simeon and Levi, said that they would agree to Hamor's proposition on one condition. The condition was that all the male Shechemites submit to the rite of circumcision — an act of priestly consecration. When the pain of the operation was at its height and movement was difficult, on the third day, Simeon and Levi attacked and slew all the males in the city, including young Shechem himself. For centuries, among the Arabs, seduction was punishable by death, the judgment being generally inflicted by the brothers of the one seduced. For their crime, Simeon and Levi received a curse instead of a blessing from Jacob their father, as he came to die.

One salutary effect of this tragedy was the reconsecration of Jacob who had lapsed somewhat as the result of his settlement near Shechem (Genesis 33:17-20). Remembering his vow to make an altar at Bethel to God who had appeared to him while fleeing from Esau years before, his family surrendered their strange gods and purified themselves, and at Bethel the forgotten covenant was fulfilled. In this way God overruled evil for good (Genesis 35:1-5).

How many young Dinahs there are today captivated by the glitter and glamor of the world, and, tired of life at home, leave without warning, and become lost in the whirl of a large city. There is an alarming increase in the numbers of girls who, anxious for change and wanting to see something of the world, turn aside from the shelter of a good home and are never heard of again. Many of them end up in sin, crime and degradation. May we never cease to pray for those who try to seek out and restore the lost, young womanhood of our day!

## DORCAS

### THE WOMAN WHOSE DRESSMAKING MADE HER FAMOUS

*Scripture Reference* — Acts 9:36-43

*Name Meaning* — Dorcas implies “the female of a roebuck,” “a gazelle” — an emblem of beauty. Dorcas is the first Greek name of a female in the New Testament, its Hebrew equivalent being *Tabitha* which is the Syro-Chaldaic form of the Hebrew *Zibiah*, or *Tsibiah*, the name of a

princess of Judah, the mother of King Joash. Wilkinson says that “the Greek equivalent for her Syriac name may be accounted for by her residence at Joppa, a seaport much frequented, and no doubt partially inhabited by foreigners speaking chiefly the Greek language.

*Family Connections* — The Bible is silent concerning the parentage and genealogy of Dorcas. In the seaport town of Joppa she became known for her acts of charity and is the namesake for a charitable group named the Dorcas Society. Here was a woman “who with her needle embroidered her name ineffaceably into the beneficence of the world.” Where did she learn to sew, make garments for the poor and become notable for her charitable works? It could possibly have been in a godly home that she was taught how to use her fingers and her funds for the comfort and relief of the needy. Dorcas must have been a woman of means to serve humanity as freely as she did. We have five glimpses of her witness and work in the historical account Luke gives us.

### *She Was a Christian*

She is called, “a certain disciple,” and is thus included among the numerous disciples mentioned in the New Testament. Through the Spirit-empowered ministry of Philip the evangelist, a Christian Church was established at Joppa — now known as Jaffa — and from an early date the church was not only a center of fervent evangelism but also of a well-organized social service. Possibly Dorcas came to know Christ as her Saviour in this church, and there caught the vision of how she could serve Christ with her money and her needle. Dorcas knew what it was to have a regenerated heart and this was the source of her unselfish life and charitable acts. Behind her sewing of garments was a saved soul. Giving of alms, and the making of garments in themselves gain no merit with God who, first of all, claims our hearts before our talents. It was only when Mary Magdalene was recovered from her stained past, that Christ accepted her desire to minister to His wants.

In our churches and also in commendable societies there are many public-spirited women who, with humanitarian ideals, are engaged in various relief activities, and whose sole object is to do good. But they are not actuated by Christ. Trying to emulate Dorcas, they lack her Christian

discipleship, forgetting that caring for widows and others in need springs from “pure religion” which also reveals itself in keeping oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:26, 27). When Luke says that Dorcas was *full* of good works, he meant the word “full” to refer primarily to her inward grace, which prompted the outward deeds. “Good works are only genuine and Christian when the soul of the performer is imbued with them.” The cup of cold water to be acceptable must be given in His name. With Dorcas, then, *being* good meant *doing* good. Her manifold good works flowed from a heart grateful to God for His saving grace.

Lange the commentator says that “The gazelle is distinguished for its slender and beautiful form, its graceful movements and its soft but brilliant eyes; it is frequently introduced by the Hebrews and other Oriental nations as an image of female loveliness, and the name was often employed as a proper name, in the case of females.” Whether Dorcas, whose name means “gazelle,” was a beautiful woman or not we are not told. She certainly lived a lovely life, and had eyes reflecting the compassion of the Master whom she so faithfully served. All whom she influenced and helped saw in her the beauty of Jesus. As a disciple she certainly had faith in the One who had called her, but she came to see that faith without works is dead. She also knew that works without faith gained no merit with God, and so the hands that dispensed alms and made garments were inwardly inspired by Him whose hands were nailed to a tree.

### *She Was a Philanthropist*

Dorcas the believer was likewise Dorcas the benefactress. “This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds *which she did.*” How significant are these last three words! Too many well-meaning people sit around and talk about charitable works they never do. Sometimes they propose these works and leave others to execute them. Dorcas not only thought up ways of relieving the needy, but she also carried out her plans. *Which she did!* She knew what she could do, and did it. Studying the female characters of Scripture it is interesting to discover how several of them are conspicuous for one grace or work of mercy, or for another.

Rizpah we remember because of her loving care of the dead.

The widow of Zarephath for giving bread to the hungry.

Anna the prophetess for her fastings and prayers day and night.

Martha, as the queen of gracious hospitality.

Mary for her box of fragrant ointment.

Joanna, and her ministering unto Jesus.

Dorcas, for her care of widows and clothing the poor.

Further, a few Bible characters have inspired profitable institutions for the welfare of human society —

Mary Magdalene — home for wayward and lost girls.

Lazarus — whose name has been given to hospitals caring for the sick and poor.

Dorcas — source and inspiration of Dorcas Societies all over the world.

Among her good works was that of fashioning coats and garments for widows and the needy of her church and community with her own loving hands. The practical, unselfish service of this Christian philanthropist has filled the world with fragrance, for there flowed out of that little city of Joppa a multitude of benevolent and charitable organizations in which women have been prominent. The question came to Dorcas as it did to Moses when he felt he was not the man to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, “What is that in thine hand?” And Moses answered, “A rod” (Exodus 4:2). And that rod became the symbol of delegated divine power. “What is that in thine hand?” the Lord asked Dorcas. She said, “A needle,” and He took what she had and she stitched for Christ’s sake. All praise, then, to the needle that represented practical benevolence among the needy. The garments Dorcas cut out and sewed represented Christian faith in action. “I was naked and ye clothed me,” said Jesus of those who clothed His poor and destitute children.

### *She Was Mourned and Missed*

It was a sad day for the church at Joppa when one of its most beloved and devoted members died in the midst of her works of charity. “Death loves a shining mark, a signal blow,” and death certainly found such a mark in the bountiful Dorcas whose passing was a blow to the community. The vessel containing the costly ointment was broken, and the odor filled the

house as never before. Kind hands washed the corpse and placed it in the upper chamber, with feelings expressed by the poet —

Sister, thou wast mild and lovely,  
Gentle as the summer breeze,  
Pleasant as the air of morning  
When it floats among the trees.

While Dorcas doubtless owned her home, she seemed to have no relatives to mourn her going. The widows she had clothed and to whom she had been a friend laid her out; and great grief prevailed. Although so diligent on behalf of others, Dorcas died in the midst of a useful life. The writer had a preacher-friend who always said that he would like to die with his boots on — and he did, one Sunday morning, while preaching the Gospel. Is it possible that Dorcas had a sudden call with her needle in hand? What a grand way to go!

### *She Was Raised From the Dead*

Her fellow disciples at the church where she had worshiped, learning that Peter was nearby, sent two members to beseech the apostle to visit the grief-stricken company. They knew that he had exercised supernatural power, and doubtless entertained the hope that their greatly-loved benefactress might live again. Like the faithful minister that he was, Peter did not delay in accompanying the two men to the death chamber at Joppa where the weeping widows were assembled. The apostle must have been moved as they reverently exhibited the coats and garments Dorcas had made for them. Then after Christ's example at the raising of Jairus' daughter, "Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed" (see John 11:41, 42). When he felt his request had been received, Peter spake the word of power and authority, "Tabitha, arise," and life returned. Dorcas sat up, and Peter presented her alive to the saints and widows (compare Matthew 9:25; Mark 5:40, 41).

What a moving scene that must have been! What joy must have prevailed among her fellow-saints and the widows, now that their much-loved Dorcas was alive again, and in her resurrected life, with fuller dedication to the service of the Master, was willing to take up her needle again. Her return from death must have been a great gain to her church. Her

only pang was that she would have to sicken again and for the second time enter the gates of death.

### *She Was the Cause of Revival*

The resurrection of Dorcas had a twofold effect. First of all, the miracle comforted the mourners for she had returned to her life of good works and almsdeeds. This miracle was thus like our Lord's miracles — one of mercy. The second effect was to convince all of the truth of the Christian faith attested as it was by miraculous power. Throughout Joppa the message rang, "Dorcas is alive again," and "many believed in the Lord." The miracle in that upper chamber, then, was not a miracle for the sake of a miracle. Dorcas raised from physical death became the cause of the resurrection of many from their graves of sin and unbelief. How the church at Joppa must have increased its membership through the many who were saved as the result of the return of Dorcas from the realm of death. After the resurrection of Lazarus we read that many of the Jews believed on Jesus. Is not the same true in a spiritual resurrection? A transformed life attracts others to the Saviour. We read that after the miracle, Peter stayed in Joppa for many days, and we can assume that his ministry greatly helped the church there in the establishment of the new converts. Peter stayed with Simon the tanner, a saint who prepared skins for leather to the glory of God, just as Dorcas made up her garments with consecrated hands.

A lesson to bear in mind as we part with our saintly benefactress is that she was unconscious of the magnificent work she was doing and of its far-reaching consequences. Dorcas did not aspire to be a leader, but was content to stay in her own home and try to do all she could in all the ways she could. Thus, in spite of herself, she became a great leader in an almost universal philanthropic cause, just as "The Lady of the Lamp," Florence Nightingale, did when she went to Crimea to care for the wounded, dying soldiers on the field of battle. May grace be ours to do whatever our hands find to do, as unto the Lord!

### DRUSILLA

#### THE WOMAN WHO WAS LOVELY BUT LOOSE

*Scripture Reference* — Acts 24:10-27

*Name Meaning* — “Drusilla” is a diminutive formed from Drusis, a notable name among the Romans and means “watered by the dew.” What a different record Drusilla would have left behind if only her heart had been refreshed by the dew of heaven, and her life made as “a watered garden full of fragrance rare.”

*Family Connections* — She was a granddaughter of Herod the Great, and the youngest daughter of Herod Agrippa I, “the first royal persecutor of the Church” whose other two daughters were Mariamne, not mentioned in Scripture, and Bernice (see BERNICE). These three girls were nieces of Herod Antipas who beheaded John the Baptist. At about the age of 15, Drusilla married King Aziz of Emesa on his becoming a Jew. She proved to be unfaithful to her husband whom she left. She illegitimately married the Roman governor, Felix, who, enamored of her Oriental beauty, abducted her through the subtlety of Simon, a Jewish necromancer. Her marriage to Felix was sinful in that as a Jewess she married a heathen who did not confess the faith of her fathers. It was also sinful because she married Felix illegally, seeing her first husband from whom she had not been divorced, was still alive. Her only child, born to Felix, was Agrippa.

Drusilla was more beautiful than her sisters, and between her and Bernice there was great hatred. Also, both of them were shameless. Drusilla is first mentioned in connection with Paul’s second appearance before Felix, and she would be about 20 years of age at this time. Felix, whose name means, “fortunate,” was chosen by the dictator Sylla, and the choice was certainly justified by his extraordinary fortune. Beginning life as a slave he ended up as a ruler of a Roman province. But as Tacitus says, “There was a slave’s heart all the time under Felix’s royal robes.” Savage, treacherous and steeped in blood he had every reason to tremble as Paul preached.

As a Jewess, a wicked one at that, Drusilla had a guilty conscience about Paul in his prison cell awaiting judgment at the judgment seat of Felix, and doubtless urged Felix to bring him forth again that she might hear what he had to say concerning his faith in Christ. Both Drusilla and Felix heard a message they did not expect. As Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance or self-control, and judgment to come” Felix trembled or became afraid — and no wonder! What Paul said of “righteousness”



convicted Felix of his unrighteous, illegal act in abducting Drusilla. The emphasis on “temperance” or strict self-control of passions and lusts hit hard at his loose living. “Judgment to come” would remind Felix of the certainty of eternity and of the harvest he would reap for his sins. It also would remind him of the fact that he was judging a man who was innocent and had no right to be in the position he was in, but that for Felix himself there was a justifiable assize awaiting him. So, as Alexander Whyte expresses it —

Felix sat in transfixed silence while Paul stood up before him, and plunged the two-edged sword of God’s holy law into his guilt conscience, till the hardened reprobate could not command himself. A greater seal was never set to the power of Paul’s preaching than when Felix shook and could not sit still under the Apostle’s words.

So greatly was Felix moved and disturbed that he dismissed Paul, saying that a convenient season he would hear him again. Although he communed often with Paul after that, the apostle refused to pay a bribe for his release. What about Drusilla? How did she react to the faithful preaching of Paul? Alexander Whyte says that he has a suspicion that because her conscience was greatly disturbed by Paul’s convicting truth, that it was she who cut short the discourse and had the apostle sent back to prison.

My belief about the royal pair is, that had Drusilla not sat beside Felix that day, Felix would have been baptized, and Paul would have been set free, before the sun had gone down. But Drusilla and her sisters have cast into their graves many wounded. Many strong men have been slain to death by them. Their house is the way to hell, and their steps go down to the chambers of death.

Had Drusilla trembled and repented, and as a Jewess, a daughter of Abraham, intreated Paul to pray for her that she might be saved, what a trophy of grace she would have become. But the earnest look and manner of Paul, and the power with which he preached, filling the palace as it did with the light and awe of the Great White Throne itself, failed to bring the lustful Drusilla to her knees. She saw in Paul the enemy of all she represented and hated him for his exposure of her private sins.

After the trial Felix and Drusilla disappear from the pages of sacred history. What became of them? In respect to Drusilla, Josephus the

historian, who lived about the same time, relates that about 20 years after Paul's transfer from Felix to Festus, the terrible eruption of Vesuvius occurred when prosperous Pompeii and Herculaneum were buried under the burning lava. Many fled to escape the catastrophe but Drusilla, endeavoring to escape with her child, Agrippa, was too late to evade disaster. Under estimating her danger, she left the retreat too late, and with her son was buried beneath the lava. At last, judgment overtook her, and she realized too late what it was to fall into the hands of the living God.

## EGLAH

*Scripture References* — II Samuel 3:5; I Chronicles 3:3

*Name Meaning* — Heifer or Chariot

Eglah was one of the eight wives of King David of whom so little is known. She became the mother of David's sixth son Ithream. Unsuccessful efforts have been made to identify Eglah as another name for Michal, Saul's daughter, and David's first wife.

## ELISABETH

THE WOMAN WHO BORE A SON IN HER OLD AGE

*Scripture Reference* — Luke 1:5-80

*Name Meaning* — Elisabeth means "God is my oath" that is, "a worshiper of God." In his hymn of praise, uttered soon after the birth of his son John, Zacharias alludes to the significance of his wife's name when he said, "the oath which God swore to Abraham." The son was called John by divine command, and means "the mercy or favor of God."

*Family Connections*—Luke describes Elisabeth as "one of the daughters of Aaron" which means she came of an honored priestly line (Exodus 6:23). She was the wife of a priest, Zacharias, of the course of Abia, that is one of the sets of priests who ministered in the Temple from Sabbath to Sabbath (I Chronicles 24:10). There was thus a priestly descent on both sides. Priests were allowed to marry pious women (Leviticus 21:7). Elisabeth became the mother of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Assessing the life and character of Elisabeth we know that she was prominent as —

### *A Godly Woman*

It is said of both Elisabeth and Zacharias that they were “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.” What a coveted commendation! The priestly wife was a woman of unusual piety, strong faith and spiritual gifts. All through her life she preserved the blessed traditions of Aaron and his descendants.

### *A Childless Woman*

Righteous toward God and most faithful to her husband we yet have five words containing a world of heartbreak and disappointment, “And they had no child.” For years they had both prayed and longed for a child; now they were both well-stricken in years and the prospect of natural childbearing was past. A childless state, more so for the daughter of a priest and the wife of a priest, was humiliating, for in Israel it was the dream of every woman that it might be her privilege to be the mother of the Messiah, promised to Eve, earth’s first mother.

### *A Privileged Woman*

For this beloved wife with a pious heart and cultivated intellect, God performed a miracle, as He did for Mary her cousin. “She conceived a son in her old age.” It was while Zacharias was exercising his holy office in the sanctuary that the angelic messenger appeared and said, “Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.” Although beyond the age when the birth of a child was possible, did Zacharias and his wife believe that God was able to do the impossible, and even at their advanced age remove their “reproach among men”? Well, the miracle happened. God gave Elisabeth conception, and after six months of her pregnancy, another miracle happened when without cohabitation Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Zacharias, who had been struck dumb as a sign that God would fulfill His word and grant him a son, had his speech restored when John was born. He hailed John’s birth with a God-glorifying song in which he said of the God-given child, “Thou shalt be called the prophet of the highest.” This famous son, who came to prepare the way of the Lord, was privileged to

have such godly parents to teach him ineffaceable lessons. But John was also directly nurtured by God in the deserts where he lived “till the day of his shewing unto Israel.” Thus, as Donald Davidson reminds us in *Mothers of the Bible* —

It was not at his mother’s knee that John learned the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but out on the lonely desert where in the silence and the solitude he found close fellowship with God, and came to know the secrets of His will.

Because of their old age when their son was born, we can assume that Zacharias and Elisabeth both died years before their godly son was cruelly murdered by Herod.

But Elisabeth was a privileged woman in another way in that she was the first woman to confess Jesus in the flesh. When she was six months with child she was visited by her cousin Mary and as soon as the Virgin entered the home, the babe leaped in Elisabeth’s womb, as if to welcome the One whom Mary was to bear. Both mother and child were affected by the Holy Spirit, and Elisabeth gave Mary the most honorable of names, “The mother of my Lord.” Elisabeth knew the Messiah was come and she prayed to Him and confessed Him. All Messianic hopes were about to be fulfilled for, “There, beneath that woman’s clothes, my Saviour is concealed.” It was her Spirit-filled greeting which prompted Mary to reply in a song called, *The Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-56; compare I Samuel 2:1-10).

For queens and females of all walks of life Elisabeth has been a favorite name, evidenced by the fact that in America alone there are almost two million females bearing such an honored name. If only all who bear this name would be “righteous before God” and blameless in character, what a mighty spiritual force they would be in the life of the nation of which they are a part. The present sovereign of Great Britain is Queen Elizabeth II, who seeks to live a life beyond reproach, and who manifests deep interest in Dr. Billy Graham’s work.

## ELISHEBA

*Scripture Reference* — Exodus 6:23

*Name Meaning* — God’s oath or God is her oath

This name is the Hebrew form of Elisabeth and may be an allusion to the great promise to Abraham confirmed by the oath of God. Wilkinson remarks that, “Perhaps the name was an appeal to that oath in the extremity of national depression and distress; for she must have been born towards the close of the bondage in Egypt, and about the time during which the cruel edict of Pharaoh for the destruction of male children was in operation.”

Elisheba was the daughter of Amminadab, and sister of Naashon, captain in Judah’s army. She became the wife of Aaron, the high priest and brother of Moses, and marrying thus she connected the royal and priestly tribes. To Aaron and Elisheba were born Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar (Exodus 6:23). Thus Elisheba became the foundress of the entire Levitical priesthood. Isaac Williams in his *Female Characters of Scripture* has this most interesting comparison —

It is not only in the New Testament that Elisabeth and the Holy Mary are those associated together: their types in the Old Testament are in like manner combined, for there is a remarkable circumstance which sets forth beforehand what was now taking place, and there we find them brought into a like connection. Elisabeth herself was, it is said by Luke, of the daughter of Aaron, but it is mentioned in the Book of Exodus that Aaron’s own wife was named Elisheba, that is Elisabeth (6:23); again, we find in Luke, that the Virgin Mary was the cousin of Elisabeth, so in the former instance the sister of Aaron was named Miriam, that is, Mary, for it is the same name; Miriam or Mary, the virgin prophetess, who took the lead of all the other women in singing the song of thanksgiving for the miraculous deliverance of Israel (15:20). Thus even now the Blessed Mary is followed by all other women in singing her Magnificat; the virgin and the prophetess, she leads the sacred company in the Church unto this day.

## EPHAH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 2:46

*Name Meaning* — darkness

Ephah was the name of Caleb’s concubine, prince in Judah, who was allotted Hebron as an inheritance. She bore Caleb three children, namely

Haran, Moza and Gazez. Ephah was also the name of two males (Genesis 25:4; I Chronicles 2:47).

## EPHRATH

*Scripture References* — I Chronicles 2:19, 50; 4:4; see Genesis 35:16

*Name Meaning* — Fruitland land

Ephrath is a shortened form of Ephratah, and Ephrathah. As Bethlehem means, “house of bread” so the above terms imply fruitfulness because the region of Ephrathah abounded in corn (Psalm 132:6). *Cruden’s Concordance* has the note, “It is believed that the city *Ephratah* otherwise called *Beth-lehem*, took its name from Ephratah, Caleb’s wife.” She was his second wife and became the mother of Hur, and the grandmother of Caleb the spy. After her husband’s death she cohabited with his son, and a son was born of the illicit union who became the father of Tekoa.

## ESTHER

THE WOMAN WHO SAVED HER NATION FROM GENOCIDE

*Scripture Reference* — The Book of Esther

*Name Meaning* — Esther was the Persian name of this descendant of Benjamin and is from “aster” meaning “a star” and implies, like Venus, that of “good fortune.” We refer to “the star of hope” — “the star of joy” — “the star of superiority,” and Esther was all these to her people for in “the splendid galaxy of Hebrew women of the olden time, no name stands more prominent or shines with a richer lustre.” Rabbi Jehudah affirms that Esther is “sether,” meaning “to hide,” because she was hidden in her guardian’s home and because her nationality was concealed (2:7). Mordecai had made the girl promise that she would not reveal her nationality to the king — which she did not until the opportune moment came. Hadassah, signifying “myrtle” was Esther’s original name. The change of name from Hadassah to Esther may indicate the style of beauty for which this once captive, now a Persian queen, was famous for. She is revealed as “a woman of clear judgment, of magnificent self-control and capable of the noblest self-sacrifice.” The lines of Byron can be fittingly applied to Esther—

She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes.

*Family Connections* — This last woman of the Old Testament of whom we intimately know nothing, was related to a family carried away captive with Jeremiah, about 600 B.C. and was born of this family preferring to remain in the land of captivity rather than return to Jerusalem. Esther was the daughter of Abihail who lived at Shushan, the Persian royal city. When her parents died she came under the guardian care of Mordecai, a palace official, to whom she was related by marriage. Mordecai had a deep affection for her and reared her as his own daughter. Esther was always obedient to her uncle and even when she became queen, sought his practical advice. She trusted this gentle Jew as her father. As Alexander Whyte expresses it, “Mordecai brought Esther up, and his one love in his whole life, after his love for Israel and for the God of Israel, was his love for his little adopted daughter. . . . He stood by and watched his sister’s child lifted up in a moment from her exile and poverty, and actually made the queen of the greatest empire then standing on the face of the earth.”

The story of Esther as we have it in the book bearing her name is a romance of captivity in Persia, for a king set at nought Persian law and prejudice to make her his queen. The marriage of Ahasuerus to Esther, a Jewess, was against Persian law which held that one of the royal line must marry a wife belonging to the seven great Persian families. What Esther did and how she did it is described in ten intensely vivid chapters, and her story is one of great dramatic power in which “incident after incident is related until the climax of difficulty is reached and the knot is so tied that it seems impossible to escape. Then it is untied with wonderful dexterity.”

A peculiar feature of the Book of Esther is that, with the Song of Solomon, it shares the distinction of not mentioning God or any divine name once throughout its pages. Yet the fast-moving action in this drama is eloquent with the overruling providence of God in bringing Esther to the throne for such a time. At times, God may appear as if He is hiding Himself, but seen or unseen He ever accomplishes that which is according

to His will. Because of her beauty Esther became an inmate of the palace, and when courageous Queen Vashti was deposed, Esther was chosen to succeed her. The combined wisdom of Mordecai and Esther's courage became the means of lightening the load of the Jews under Persian rule. With Mordecai, Esther shared faith in the high destiny of Israel as a nation.

Haman, the chief court favorite, was the Jews' enemy — the Old Testament Adolph Hitler — and conceived a plan to massacre the Jews *en bloc*. Exhorted by Mordecai, Esther revealed her Jewish nationality to the king, and this courageous action brought about a complete reversal of the decree. Haman was executed, Mordecai was honored by the king, and Esther's position as Queen was considerably strengthened. It is because she saved the Jews from destruction that the Book of Esther is read every year by Jews at the Feast of Purim, held on the 14th day of Adar. We cannot but agree with the summary of Esther, as one of the most attractive women in the Old Testament that —

As an historical character, Esther is the supreme heroine who delivers her nation from disaster: as a woman, she is that rare individual, a mixture of charm, strength and guile: a human being whose character is secure from the rot of wealth, prosperity and power.

That Esther had great personal beauty goes without saying. Her dark, exotic features marked her out, and she was thus chosen as a candidate for the king's favor who, when he saw her for the first time must have been captivated by her physical charms. But through her beauty there shone a radiance of personality and character which enhanced her beauty and gave it distinction in the eyes of Ahasuerus who chose her as his queen. Kuyper, who does not have anything good to say about Esther's character when he deals with her in his *Women of the Old Testament*, confesses that Ahasuerus reckoned her to be the most beautiful of the maidens presented to him when seeking a successor to Vashti. The one thing about Esther we cannot understand was the way she exhibited the vindictiveness of the age and the country in her request that Haman's ten sons should be hanged, and a day set apart when the Jews could take vengeance on the enemies who had sought to kill them. She had not learned to love her enemies. She lived on the other side of the cross and therefore was ignorant of its cry for the forgiveness of enemies.



What are some of the lessons to be gleaned from the fascinating story of Esther? First of all, her record abides because she was one who kept her pledge. May such allegiance be ours! She dutifully obeyed her foster father. Having no natural father or mother to honor, she loved and was loyal to her guardian parent. How commendable it is when young people revere their parents and obey them in the Lord! Further, Esther loved and clung to (although she concealed) her despised but honorable descent. She was a true patriot and in the hour of crisis was not ashamed to own her race. The lesson to learn from the dramatic moment when she revealed her identity as a Jewess has been applied by H. V. Morton in this way —

When a person has gone up in the world and has achieved a position of power and eminence, it requires strength and beauty of character for that person still to love and remember the simple people from whom he, or she, sprang. Humble girls have often married rich men and have forgotten their origin. They have, in fact, been ashamed of anything that might remind them of it.

Witnessing to the rock from which she had been hewn, Esther dared to risk death for her people and so escaped dying with them. By her patriotism she won for her nation a great deliverance and God used her as an instrument of His providence for the working out of a glorious purpose. There had been preparations of humiliation and prayer and when the king held out his scepter and she approached to make her plea the cry was in her heart, “How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?” How national life sorely needs godly patriots after this order? You may be tempted to sigh and say, “If only I were like Esther with great opportunities what would I not do to glorify God.” Realize that all around you, no matter how mean your environment may be, there are magnificent and unparalleled opportunities of serving God and a needy world that angels envy. Serve the Master to the limit of your ability where in His Providence He has placed you, and thus prepare yourself for a larger circle of service if such be His will.

Leaders of women’s groups could elaborate on the following points while dealing with the story of Esther, the strong-minded woman of ancient history —

*From her character we learn —*

1. To seek divine guidance in times of difficulty (4:15-17).
2. To obtain a knowledge of human nature, so that we may know how to take advantage of any circumstances which may favor our cause if it be a proper one.
3. When there is a necessity, to be ready to renounce self and exert ourselves for the good of others.
4. To value and seek the cooperation of fellow-believers.

Dealing with the ultimate safety of the Jews which Esther secured, we learn —

1. To have unbounded confidence in God's Providence—not to undervalue small things.
2. To acknowledge God as the Author of all mercies.

Thinking of the reversal of fortune of Haman, which Esther brought about, we further learn —

1. There is such a thing as righteous retribution. Haman himself received what he had proposed for others. He was paid back in his own coin.
2. The transitory nature of earthly grandeur and the end of all ill-gotten earthly power and possessions.

## EUNICE

THE WOMAN WHOSE SON BECAME A FAMOUS EVANGELIST

*Scripture References* — Acts 16:1-3; II Timothy 1:5; 3:14, 15; 4:5

*Name meaning* — Eunice implies “conquering well,” and was a name expressive of a good or happy victory, and in its origin doubtless commemorated some such event. *Nice* or “nike” was a favorite ending of female names in the Macedonian age. Eunice lived up to her name for she conquered in the effort to bring up her son in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

*Family Connections* — Eunice was the daughter of Lois whose name is of Greek origin. Scripture is silent as to the identity of her father. A Jewess, Eunice married a Gentile, and as nothing is said of him it can be assumed that he was dead by the time Paul contacted the family.

The commanding feature of the Scriptural record of Eunice and her mother is their religious influence upon Timothy who, from childhood days

had known the Scriptures (II Timothy 3:14, 15). These two godly women had trained him up in the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6). How gratified they must have been when Timothy set out to do the work of an evangelist! (II Timothy 4:5). His name, Timothy, means “one who fears God,” and must have been chosen by his Jewish mother, and not by his Gentile father who probably had little leaning Godward. Evidence seems to point to the contention that Lois, Eunice and Timothy were won to Christ by Paul on an earlier visit to Lystra where the family lived (Acts 14:6, 7). Although Lois and her daughter were Jewesses and well-versed in Old Testament Scriptures, and taught the child Timothy the same, it was Paul who brought them to see that the One who died upon the cross to save sinners was the long-promised Messiah. That the Apostle led Timothy to Christ is proven by the way Paul speaks of him as his “beloved son” and his “son in the faith.” How grateful to God Eunice must have been when Paul chose her much-loved son to be his companion in his evangelistic work! How she would appreciate the word of Solomon, “She that bare thee shall rejoice” (Proverbs 23:25).

Hereditary piety and personal faith are implied in Paul’s reference to the unfeigned faith which first dwelt in Timothy’s grandmother, Lois, then in his mother, Eunice, and then in himself also. While one parent’s faith can sanctify a child (I Corinthians 7:14), it is a personal faith in Christ that saves the soul. Notice is taken of the faith of Timothy’s mother, but not of his father. After Paul’s reference to Lois and Eunice in his second epistle to Timothy, they are not mentioned again. There may be a veiled reference to them, however, in what Paul had to say about widows and the children of widows (I Timothy 5:4, 5).

The important feature we glean from the record of Timothy is that of the value of a positive Christian training in the home. Paul seems to be saying to Timothy in effect, “That you have always been schooled in the Scriptures represents an inestimable grace, for which you ought always to thank your God.” We can be sure that Timothy constantly praised God for a home wherein His honor dwelt. Augustine always confessed the debt he owed to his saintly mother, Monica. Not all children have godly parents and the safeguard of a Christian home, but those born into a home where Christ is its Head are privileged and grow up to bless God for their spiritual heritage.

Alas, the heartache of godly parents is to have a child or children who, as they come to the age of accountability, spurn the Christian influences of the home created for them!

## EUODIAS

### THE WOMAN WHO FELL OUT WITH HER FRIEND

*Scripture References* — Philippians 4:2 (see Acts 16:13-15; 17:12)

*Name Meaning* — Euodias is actually a man's name. Euodia is its right form here (Philippians 4:2, R.V.). Euodias means 'prosperous journey'—Euodia, "fragrant." Wilkinson has the note, "Euodia is 'a good journey,' and was used in the colloquial Attic Greek as the French use the expression *bon voyage*." Euodia is coupled with another female, Syntyche, and both may have been among the women who resorted to prayer at the river bank (Acts 16:13-15), and among the honorable women who believed (Acts 17:12). Scripture is silent on the genealogy and family association of these two women who, after their conversion became colaborers with Paul in the Gospel (Philippians 4:3). Belonging to a class bespeaking prosperity they doubtless ministered unto Paul of their substances.

At Philippi women were the first hearers of the Gospel and Lydia the first convert. If Euodias and Syntyche were also brought to the Lord there, they naturally took a leading part in teaching the Gospel to other women in a private sphere of labor once the Church had been formed there (I Timothy 2:11, 12).

When Paul exhorted these two prominent workers to "be of the same mind in the Lord," he implied that they had been previously at variance. What caused the breach between these two deaconesses in the Philippian Church we are not told. Perhaps one had a more dominant personality than the other and received more attention. Whatever the dispute was, it became serious and hindered the work of the Lord, so Paul besought the two women to give up their differences and live at peace in the Lord. The lack of harmony between Euodias and Syntyche disturbed the Apostle, so he urged a reconciliation, for as those professing to be redeemed their whole life should be lived in peace and in an endeavor to please Him who had saved them.

A humorist has suggested that because of the strife between these sisters in Christ they should have been called *Odious* and *Soon-touchy*. It was sad that there was this difference of opinion, and more tragic still that divisions have kept Christians apart all down the ages. “How can two walk together except they be agreed?” is an old adage we have lost sight of. We like to believe that Paul did not plead in vain, and that Euodias and Syntyche were completely reconciled and went on unitedly to serve the God of peace. Is there any need of such a reconciliation in your life as a Christian? If so, for the sake of your own peace of heart and your influence in the world, go out and put wrong things right.

## EVE

### THE WOMAN OF UNIQUE DISTINCTION

*Scripture References* — Genesis 2 and 3; II Corinthians 11:3; I Timothy 2:13

*Name Meaning* — There are three names applied to Adam’s wife. She is called “Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23). “Woman” is more of a generic designation than a name, and is associated with Eve’s relation to Adam, a relation she was created to fulfill. Literally “woman” means “man-ess.” Then both Eve and her husband are called “Adam.” “Male and female created he them . . . and called their name Adam” (Genesis 5:2). This inclusive name implies that the divine ideal for man and wife is not merely that of association but an indissoluble unity. God made them “one flesh” and gave them one name. Eve, the name given her after the transgression and its prophesied results, was the choice of Adam “who called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living” (3:16, 20). This was the name describing her function and destiny in spiritual history of which she was the beginning. Eve means “life” or “life-giving,” or “mother of all who have life,” and her life is in us all. In Bible days great significance was attached to a change of name. Why then did Adam change his wife’s name — which was his own, Adam, to Eve? Donald Davidson says that, “In view of the awful judgment pronounced upon them, the man might have been pardoned if he had reproached her as ‘death,’ for it was her sin that brought death into our

world and all our woe. But Adam gives her a name which is expressive of the prophetic life bound up in her. For through the seed of the woman, sin would one day be vanquished, and death would be swallowed up in victory.”

We have given our cameo of Eve the caption “The Woman of Unique Distinction” because she is distinct, in so many ways, from all other women who have ever lived. There are a good many “Firsts” to her credit.

### *Eve Was the First Woman to Live Upon the Earth*

The product of a divine creation, Eve appeared as a complete, perfect woman. She was never a child, or a daughter or a maiden. The first female born into the world was Eve’s first daughter (Genesis 5:4). How many daughters were born to Adam and Eve we are not told. If Eve lived as long as her husband — 930 years (Genesis 5:5)—there would likely be many sons and daughters in earth’s first family. Eve, then, was not born. She was created out of Adam. Having existed in God’s thought, she appeared upon the earth.

Modernists, evolutionists, and secular writers may mock that “rib of Adam” out of which Eve was made. Adam was directly created by God out of the dust of the earth, but Eve was fashioned out of a bone taken from Adam’s side. George Herbert comments, “The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double refined.” Says Seeker, “The rib was taken from under his arm. As the use of the arm is to keep off blows from the body, so the office of the husband is to ward off blows from his wife.”

There is a spiritual application of the bride God created for Adam. It speaks of the sacred mystery, the bride of the Lamb, who owes her existence to His wounded side (John 19:36), and who, even more than Eve, has a place near to the Bridegroom’s heart (Jeremiah 31:3), and who is destined to enjoy His companionship in a sinless paradise (Revelation 2:7; 21:9). The marriage of the Lamb, like that of Eve’s, is made in heaven.

### *Eve Was the First Woman to Be Called a Wife*

Fashioned out of man, she became man's counterpart and companion. God saw that although Adam was in a state of perfect innocence, it was not good for him to be alone. It would be good for him, spiritually, intellectually and socially to have a wife. He needed someone to love and bear his children since the command had gone forth "to multiply and replenish the earth." And so with Adam —

The world was sad, the garden was a wild,  
And man the hermit sighed till woman smiled.

God spoke of the woman He was to provide for Adam as his "helpmeet" — a help meet or adapted to him — a term giving woman her true position in the world. It is only where the Bible exists and Christianity is practiced that she attains to such a position as the helper, or equal of man. In lands where darkness reigns, woman is the slave, the chattel of man. Thus Eve was given to Adam and their two hearts beat as one in love for each other and for God. Eve was formed while Adam slept. He knew no pain during the operation for as yet there was no sin in the world. How true it is that God is continually working while men sleep! He often imparts real blessings to His own as they sleep (Psalm 127:2).

When I wake from sleep,  
Despair has fled, and hope is near;  
The sky seems blue, and visions clear  
Have banished all my dread and fear.

### *Eve Was the Most Beautiful Woman the World Has Known*

Century after century women have appeared renowned for their beauty of face and form but Eve excelled them all. Created by a perfect God, Eve reflected the divine perfection. Hers was no artificial beauty. Face, features and form were the loveliest women have ever had. While the Bible has no description of Eve's physical appearance, Adam's first reaction as he saw the lovely figure before him was to give voice to earth's first poem —

This, then, at last is bone of my bones,  
and flesh of my own flesh:  
This shall be called Wo-man  
For from man was she taken.

While we have Biblical warrant for the beauty of Sarah, the Talmudist says —

All women in comparison with Sarah are like monkeys in respect to men. But Sarah can no more be compared to Eve than can monkey be compared with man.

John Milton expresses a similar commendation in one of his most daring idioms —

Adam the goodliest man since born  
His sons; the fairest of her daughters Eve.

The blind poet goes on to say of the loveliness Adam saw —

So absolute she seems  
And is herself complete.

*The Venus of Milo*, in marble, or the *Venus of Titian* in oil, only convey a faint idea of what Eve must have looked like as she came from the creative hand of God. No wonder she has been described as

Heaven's best, last gift.

To quote from Milton's *Eve* again —

O fairest of creation, last and best  
Of all God's works, creature in whom excelled  
Whatever can to sight or thought be formed,  
Holy, Divine, Good, Amiable or Sweet.

Yet again Eve's original beauty is expressed in these lines —

That what seemed fair in all the world seemed now  
Mean, or in her contained or in her looks;  
Grace was in all her steps, Heaven in her eye,  
In every gesture dignity and love.

*Eve Was the First and Only Woman Born Without Sin*

Being the first woman Eve had no inherited sin. Coming from the hand of God, Eve had an advantage no other woman has ever had — she was pure and holy, with the divine image unimpaired. Created sinless, she yet became the world's first sinner, and introduced sin to her offspring, and thus, all since her were “born in sin and shapen in iniquity.” The best and holiest born into the race have natures that are prone to evil (Romans 7:21). Fashioned with “innocence and sinless perfection and endowed to all



fullness with gifts of body and mind, and rich in external blessing without spot or alloy she yet transgressed in the sin with which she caused Adam to sin.” Fresh from the hand of God with unmatched grace and beauty of body and mind, sin and ruin followed, and paradise was surrendered for a world of thorns, thistles and tears.

### *Eve Was the First on Earth to Be Assailed by Satan*

Before her creation, Satan, who like Eve had been created a holy being, led a rebellion against the Creator and was cast from his high estate. Now he begins his rebellion on earth and beings with one who is fascinated by his approach. Thus we have the Fall and the source of original sin. There was no great daring to sin for the first time on Eve’s part. As sin was unknown to both Adam and Eve when created by God, Eve saw no wrong in the masterpiece of satanic subtle suggestion. Satan did not tell her to sin, but insinuated in the cleverest way that there was nothing to worry about in eating forbidden fruit. As George Matheson puts it, “The temptation was not in itself the wish to transgress, but the will to possess; the transgression is merely a means. . . . If the tempter had said, ‘Steal,’ he would not have been listened to for a moment. But he did not say, ‘Steal!’; he says, ‘Speculate!’ . . . Temptation since the days of Eden has never ceased to clothe itself in a seemly garment.”

Satan succeeded in painting the downward way as leading to an upward path issuing in God-likeness or a fall upwards, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Eve succumbed to the wiles of Satan and the steps leading to her surrender are illuminating — she saw, she coveted, she took, etc. “The tree was good for food” — bodily appetite was tempted. It was “a delight to the eyes”—her sensuous nature was tempted. Then, “the tree was to be desired to make one wise” — the most powerful temptation of all, namely, “the spiritual temptation to transcend the normal experience of men and to taste of the wisdom that belongs only to God.”

What about her husband? Well, Adam made no effort to restrain Eve from eating of the fruit although the divine prohibition was addressed to him as well as to Eve. If he was not the first to pluck the fruit, he must have been standing under the tree, and when he saw that it was safe to eat, then he took his share of the forbidden fruit. When God faced Adam with that

first act of sin, he not only blamed Eve, but God Himself — “The woman *Thou* gavest me” — as if to say, “If You knew that Eve would have tempted me, why did You create her for me?” H. V. Morton says that “the words of the first Adam are like the words of a rather sneaky little boy caught out by the headmaster and blames another — *She* gave me of the tree and I did eat.” But thereafter, in Scripture, Adam, the federal head of the human race, is made responsible for adamic sin. (“In Adam we die”; “By one man’s sin”; Roman 5:12; Job 31:33.) What followed the disobedience of the world’s first sinners is only too well-known — pain in childbearing, the introduction of sin and servitude into the world, the earth cursed, expulsion from paradise, and the introduction of disease and death.

### *Eve Was the World’s First Dressmaker*

If Adam was earth’s first gardener, Eve was the first to fashion garments out of leaves. “They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:7). Andrew Johnson, who became president of the U.S.A. after the murder of Abraham Lincoln, once was a tailor in Greenville, Tennessee, where he had a shop. In a speech made at Gallatin in 1874 he said —

Adam, our great father and head, the lord of the world, was a tailor by trade. Adam and Eve “sewed fig leaves together, and made them aprons.” That is the first we ever heard of tailors, and I do not see that — without intending to be personal — anyone need be ashamed to be called a tailor, nor any young lady need be ashamed to be a seamstress, for her mother Eve, it seems, handled a needle with some skill.

Clothing is a reminder of sin, for in their innocency our first parents had no sense of shame because they had no sense of sin. “They were both naked . . . and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). Says Matthew Henry, “They need have no shame in their faces, though they had no clothes to their backs.” But after they sinned their eyes were opened, and they *knew* that they were naked. Although shame may have a fairer and a gentler face than sin, it is still its twin sister. Shame can be an expression of regret for sin, or the protest of conscience against it. When Ezra blushed and was ashamed to look up, the pardoning mercy of God came out to meet him (Ezra 9:6).

Conscious of their nakedness, why did Adam and Eve seek a covering? Not only because they knew they were without clothing but also because they were exposed to the gaze of Him against whom they had sinned. However the fig leaves they made into a garment were not sufficient to hide them from God's piercing eyes, so they hid among the trees. Even there they were under His gaze and discovered, and they tried to cover themselves with vain excuses (3:7, 8, 11, 13). Those who try to cover their sin never prosper (Proverbs 28:13, see Job 31:33). God rejected the covering the first sinners on the earth made because it represented their own effort. So God provided them with "coats of skins" (3:21), and placed them on the guilty ones. The wonderful invention of fastening animal pelts together was ascribed by the ancient Hebrews to God. Skins speak of sacrifice. Animals have to be slain ere man can be covered with clothes or shoes. Surely the divine provision of those sacrificial skins foreshadowed Calvary, where Jesus through the sacrifice of Himself provided a spotless robe of righteousness for all who repent and believe.

Naked, come to Thee for dress.

### *Eve Was the First Mother to Have a Son Who Was a Murderer*

What a trail of sorrow and anguish followed her transgression! When Cain, her first born, came into her life and home how Eve must have loved him. She named him Cain, meaning "to get" or "to possess" or, "acquisition." He became a tiller of the ground. Her second son was Abel, a name implying, "that which ascends" or "a vapor" —something doomed to fade. The latter was a spiritual man and sacrificed the firstlings of his flocks unto the Lord. The former son brought of the fruit of the ground, that is, that which he had produced, and presented it to the Lord who rejected it and accepted Abel's offering because of its sacrificial content. Cain lost his temper over this act of divine acceptance and rejection, and slew his brother Abel. Thus Eve's favorite first born was branded with shame, and spiritual Abel became a martyr. Behind Cain's slaughter of his brother was the serpent who had made their mother the world's first sinner. Jesus said that he was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). After the crime and banishment of her first son, and the burial of her second one, God gave her another whom she called Seth. "For God," she said, "hath appointed me

another seed instead of Abel, for Cain slew him.” In naming her third son thus she voiced her faith in God’s love, mercy and provision. It was through Seth that the spiritual lineage was maintained and it was after his birth that Eve’s name disappears from the pages of the Old Testament, although it is mentioned twice in the New Testament. While Eve doubtless shared the length of Adam’s life — 930 years — and bore an indefinite number of sons and daughters, we have no record of her maternity apart from the three named sons.

### *Eve Was the First to Receive the Divine Prophecy of the Cross*

Eve was the first sinner and saw the fruit of her sin as she stood at the world’s first grave and buried her dead. After confessing her sin she heard the Lord say to that old serpent, the devil, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). With this first promise of the Redeemer there began the scarlet highway ending at the cross where Christ, born of a woman, provided a glorious victory over sin and Satan. Through a woman, God’s fair universe was blighted and became “a world of sinners lost, and ruined by the fall.” Now, through a woman, a perfect salvation has been provided for a sinning race. Through Eve’s sin, death entered the world, but at the cross both sin and death were conquered, for by “dying, death He slew.” When Jesus cried, “It is finished,” He meant that the serpent’s head, representing power and authority, had been bruised. He laid hold of all satanic principalities and powers that Eve’s transgression brought into the world, and put them under His feet. Hallelujah! What a Saviour!

As we leave our reflection upon the world’s first woman, first wife, first sinner, and first mourner, there are one or two lessons to be gleaned from her record. For instance, “many daughters of Eve have discovered that the serpent is never more dangerous than when he professes to be the earnest well-wisher interested in nothing but her advancement and welfare.” What a subtle, cruel deceiver Satan is. How ignorant so many are of his devices! Further, temptation is a universal experience, and each of us should learn from the first person on earth to be tempted, its manner of approach and successive steps, and safeguard ourselves from a fall through the

appropriation of Christ's own victory over the enemy. There is no sin in being tempted. We only sin when we yield to temptation. Refusing to yield to the enticement of sin, our Garden of Eden remains inviolate. At the heart of Eve's pathetic story, however, is the moral lesson that a woman has the power for bane or blessing over a man's life. If she falls, man falls with her. How expressive are the verses John White Chadwick quotes in his chapter on Eve in *Women of the Bible* —

Ah, wasteful woman, that she may  
On her sweet self set her own price.  
Knowing we cannot choose but pay,  
How has she cheapened Paradise;  
How given for naught her priceless gift,  
How spoil'd the bread and spill'd the wine  
Which, spent with due respective thrift,  
Had made men brutes and men divine.  
O Queen, awake to thy renown,  
Require what 'tis our wealth to give,  
And comprehend and wear the crown  
Of thy despised prerogative.

It will be noticed that we have said nothing about whether the story of Creation, and of the appearance of Adam and Eve should be taken literally and historically, or treated as an allegory of sacred symbolism. We firmly reject the unproven, anti-Christian theory of evolution, just as we protest that the account of the creation of Adam and Eve, and the temptations of the serpent is ancient myth or folklore conveying withal a pertinent truth or message. It is becoming more common for modernistic preachers and writers to speak of the beautiful fables and myths of the Bible. We believe the first three chapters of Genesis contain historic realities. If Adam is a myth, so is Christ. Luke reminds us that Adam was a son of God (3:23-28), and the first man from whom Christ was descended. How could a mythical son become one of the ancestors of the actual Christ? The whole of Luke's genealogy of Jesus is based Upon the assumption that Adam was an actual person. Further, in discussing Adam and Christ as the two federal heads of the human race, Paul said, "in Adam we die — in Christ we are made

alive.” You cannot die in a myth. By deduction, if Adam is a mythical figure, so is Christ.

Then Eve and her association with the serpent is likewise treated as a myth. Paul says that the serpent beguiled Eve (II Corinthians 11:3). Paul regarded the tempter of Eve not as a myth, but as a stern and powerful reality. If there has never been a personal devil, then we would like to know who is doing the work that only a denizen of hell could do. In urging loyalty to Christ, Paul uses Eve to illustrate the ease with which one is corrupted, and to him she was a historical figure whose record should be taken literally (see I Timothy 2:12-14). The mythical treatment of Old Testament historical figures and events is an evidence of the appalling apostasy of our age.

## GOMER

### THE WOMAN INFAMOUS FOR HER HARLOTRY

*Scripture References* — Hoses. 1:1-11; 3:1-5

*Name Meaning* — Gomer means “completion,” that is, the filling up of the measure of idolatry, or ripeness of consummate wickedness. Her name was indicative of the wholesale adultery and idolatry of the kingdom she represented. As “a wife of whoredoms,” this woman of the Northern Kingdom, regarded as an idolatress, became a symbol of her people.

*Family Connections* — Gomer was the daughter of Diblaim, whose name signifying “double layers of grapecake,” speaks of one completely given up to sensuality. With such a father we can understand why Gomer became such a woman of sensual pleasure. She became the wife of Hosea, the godly prophet, and symbolized God’s grace in taking out of “a world which had whorishly departed from Him a Church to be sanctified by communion with Himself in Christ, as Gomer was sanctified by communion with the prophet (I Corinthians 7:14). The Saviour unites to Himself the unholy, to make it holy.”

To Hosea and Gomer were born three children whose names are meaningless if the record of Gomer is to be treated as mere allegory as some critics do. The marital experience of Hosea was an acted parable for the whole nation to see, and the poetic description of a figure so ugly would have been unnatural in such a writer if he had not had a bitter experience

of all the figure represented. “Only the real pain of that experience could have made the man brave enough to use it as a figure of God’s treatment of Israel.” The symbolic names Hosea and Gomer gave their children indicate divine displeasure with Israel for her whoredoms. Some writers suggest that the three children were not Hosea’s but those of his wife’s paramours during her period of unfaithfulness, hence the term “the children of harlotry” (1:2). But the names themselves discount such an idea.

*Jezreel*, the first born means, “God sowed,” which is susceptible of two senses — “God scattereth” or “God planteth” (1:4). Calvin, commenting on this typical name represents God as saying, “Ye are not *Israel*, but *izrahel*, a people whom God will scatter and cast away.” Later, the same name appears in connection with the promise of restoration to divine favor, “Great shall be the day of Jezreel.” “They shall hear Jezreel, and I will sow her in the earth” (1:11; 2:22, 23). *Israel*, once called *izrahel* as “the dispersed of God,” shall not be called *izrahel*, as “the sown of the Lord” (Isaiah 60:21). At the birth of his first son, Hosea was not aware of his wife’s whoredom.

*Lo-ruhamah* signifies “She will not be shown compassion.” This girl’s name, meaning “unfitted,” speaks of God’s rejection of the house of Israel because of its iniquity. He was more pitiful toward the house of Judah (1:6, 7).

*Lo-ammi*. This name of the third child meaning, “Not my people or kinsman,” extends the judgment on the nation expressed in the first two names. Gomer and her children, then, give us a clear picture of wayward Israel in its relationship with God. Yet, as we shall see, the story ends with the wonderful love and faithfulness of God.

We are not to assume that at the time of Hosea’s marriage to Gomer she was depraved. Because of her ancestry the evil taint was in her veins, and having inherited immoral tendencies they manifested themselves. Thus, as the unfaithful wife of the prophet, she went deeper into sin, left Hosea and became the slave of one of her paramours (3:1). Commanded by God, Hosea bought her back, paying the price of an ordinary slave for her. What the prophet experienced in his own life was typical of Israel’s unfaithfulness, and of her exile, but also of God’s willingness to take her back. The love of Hosea for his wayward wife was not quenched by her

betrayal of love and faithfulness. “Go *yet*, love a woman, beloved of her friend (Hosea himself), *yet* an adulteress.” Thus out of his anguish Hosea rises to a deeper understanding of the forgiving love of God. As Dean Farrar expresses it, “If the love of man can be so deep, how unfathomable must be the love of God.” If Hosea’s love enabled him to take back his poor misguided, repentant wife, how much more will the love of God receive as graciously and love us freely.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan in *The Minor Prophets*, gives us the following excellent summary of the significance of Hosea’s anguish —

Out of his own heart agony Hosea learned the nature of the sin of his people. They were playing the harlot, spending God’s gifts in lewd traffic with other lovers. Out of that agony he has learned how God suffers over the sin of His people, because of His undying love. Out of God’s love Hosea’s new care for Gomer was born, and in the method God ordained for him with her, he discovered God’s method with Israel. Out of all this process of pain, there came full confidence in the ultimate victory of love. Thus equipped he delivers his messages and all through them will sound those deep notes of Sin, Love, Hope.

### HADASSAH

This is the Jewish name for Esther (see ESTHER). In Jewry this revered name is recognized in Hadassah Societies which exist for beneficent purposes.

### HAGAR

#### THE WOMAN WHO LOST A BOTTLE BUT FOUND A WELL

*Scripture References* — Genesis 16; 21:9-17; 25:12; Galatians 4:24, 25

*Name Meaning*—Hagar, an Egyptian name, closely resembles the root of the Arabic, *flight*, familiar to us as the history of Mohammed, descendant of Hagar. It may be taken as an adaptation of her original name to the principal circumstances of her life, and understood to mean, *fugitive* or *immigrant*, which Hagar became.

*Family Connections*—While the Bible gives us no record of Hagar’s genealogy, legend has supplied her pedigree, as being the daughter of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, the same who coveted the possession of



Sarah in vain. This legendary source affirms that the Egyptian princess became so attached to Sarah that she told her royal father that she would accompany her when she returned to Abraham.

“What!” cried the king, “thou wilt be no more than a handmaid to her!”

“Better to be a handmaid in the tents of Abraham than a princess in this palace,” the daughter replied.

Hagar would not stay behind and join again in the idolatrous rites of her home, so when Abraham and Sarah moved on, she went with them. Sarah was an active missionary of the faith of Jehovah among women, as Abraham was among men, and so Hagar became a convert to the worship of the true God. While this is a pleasing tradition, the likelihood is that Hagar was an Egyptian girl-slave whom Sarah secured for her household while she and Abraham were in Egypt. Hagar bore Abraham his first son, Ishmael, and thus became the foundress of the Ishmaelites and Arab peoples from whom came Mohammed, the founder of Islam.

If Hagar was a slave girl then her mistress was legally entitled to do as she pleased with her. Knowing that it was humanly impossible for her to have children by Abraham, she gave her handmaid to him, that she might have children by her — a custom consistent with moral standards prevailing at that time. Abraham reminded Sarah that her word was law to her own slave and that he had no choice in the matter. Under Sumero-Babylonian law there is this clause in Hammurabi’s Code —

If she has given a maid to her husband and she has borne children and afterwards that maid has made herself equal with her mistress, because she has borne children her mistress shall not sell her for money, she shall reduce her to bondage and count her among the female slaves.

But Sarah ran ahead of God in giving a Gentile idolater from a pagan country to Abraham to bear the promised seed. Poor Hagar — she became the helpless victim of Sarah’s scheming! The whole affair was a sin before God — a sin all three were guilty of. Sarah distrusted God when she resorted to such a wicked expedient. As a child of faith, did she not know that God was able to raise up children out of stones unto Abraham? As for this “friend of God,” in spite of current custom, he should have stoutly

refused Sarah's scheme and obeyed the law of God, and believed the divine promise made to him. The attempt to secure the Child of Promise by Hagar was the result of a lack of faith in God's omnipotence. Then, Hagar, although the least free and the least responsible, should not have yielded to such an unholy alliance merely to gratify any ambition she may have had. What sorrow, anguish and loneliness Hagar reaped for her compliance in such a plan to forestall God's promise of an heir for Abraham (Genesis 15:4, 5).

Although the chapter recording the unworthy method of trying to fulfill a divine purpose is only a short one, yet like the shortest verse in the Bible, it is saturated with tears. Genesis 16 is made up of only sixteen verses and with such we have these three features —

### *The Folly of Sarah*

We have already seen that Sarah's folly had its root in unbelief. She was impatient, and wanted the promised child without delay. Her unbelief became contagious for "Abraham hearkened unto her voice." The pious phrases she uttered were worthless. "The Lord judge" (16:5). She should have appealed for judgment to the Lord before she took the wrong step. She was a godly woman (Hebrews 11:11), but fell into the meshes of unbelief. With distrust there came dishonor. She confessed "my wrong," but Hagar was the real sufferer, and Sarah's sin bore bitter fruit, for when she gave Hagar to Abraham, she originated a rivalry which has run in the keenest animosity through the ages, and which oceans of blood have not quenched.

### *The Flight of Hagar*

Strife quickly followed the human arrangement which Sarah had made. Having conceived by Abraham, Hagar chides the childless Sarah, and the jealousy begotten between these two women was transplanted to their maternal hearts and penetrated even their children. Ishmael came to tease and vex Isaac, and discord arose between Abraham and Sarah. The ill treatment accorded to Hagar by Sarah was not only cruel, but also irrational. Had Sarah not instigated the wrongdoing that was the cause of her jealousy? Therefore it was unreasonable for her to lay the blame upon another. As things were, mistress and maid could scarcely dwell together, so

Hagar fled. Better a flight than a fight! Being compelled to flee was a thing forbidden to a bondwoman.

Far from home in “the way to Shur,” the appearance of a calm and gracious angelic messenger from God must have been a relief to the poor, pregnant fugitive. As Hagar traveled further from her jealous mistress the Lord was at her heels, and said to her in her distress, “Return to thy mistress.” Hagar had left her position as handmaid without notice and without permission, so she must return. Sarah had wronged her, but she was not permitted to retaliate by doing wrong herself. Two wrongs do not make a right. It was no easy matter for Hagar to return and submit herself to Sarah, but it was the only right course, and a divine revelation helped her to pursue it.

At that renowned well Hagar met God, and in awe cried, “Thou God seest me.” He had given her counsel, and although not pleasing to flesh and blood, Hagar took it and went back to Sarah. Had she persisted in remaining in the desert she might have died in it. God gave her a promise that although the wrongdoing of her master and mistress had led her into a false position, yet His favor would rest upon her and she would have a son who would be the progenitor of a great multitude. The soothing promise of God was a balm for the wounded spirit of the poor and lowly handmaid. Though Ishmael, the name God gave Hagar for her coming son, might not be the Child of Promise as Isaac would be, yet he would be the child of a promise made to her.

Is it to be wondered at that she called the well where God spoke to her and revealed the future of her son “Beth-lahairoi,” meaning, “The well of Him that liveth and seeth me”? It was there that the veil fell from Hagar’s eyes, and she received the assurance that she was the object of God’s special care. Dr. Alexander Whyte extols Hagar for her submission to God in this glowing fashion —

Hagar, by reason of the extremity of her sorrow; by reason of the utter desolateness and brokenness of her heart; and by reason of the sovereign grace and abounding mercy of God — Hagar, I say, stands out before us in the very foremost rank of faith, and trust, and experience, and assurance. Hagar, to me, stands out among God’s very electest saints. Hagar has only one or two who can stand beside her in her discovery of

God, in her nearness to God, in her face-to-face fellowship with God, in the instructiveness, in the comfort, and in the hopefulness of her so close communion with God. . . . The best and the most blessed of them all was not more or better blessed than was Hagar the polluted outcast on her weeping way to Shur. The pure in heart shall see God.

*The Forecast Concerning Ishmael*

In the strength of the revelation of God received in the desert, Hagar returned to her mistress and bore Abraham his child. Abraham was 86 years of age (Genesis 16:16) and then, when he reached his 100th year (Genesis 21:5), Sarah bore him Isaac. This means that for over 14 years Hagar and her son lived in the patriarch's home with all the tension and feeling there must have been as Sarah daily looked upon the son of her husband by another woman. After Isaac was born Hagar and Ishmael began to manifest their jealousy, and when Ishmael began to maltreat Isaac, Sarah could stand it no longer, and compelled Abraham to cast out the bondwoman and her child. As Bible names often set forth some feature of the character or history of those who bore them, so Ishmael meaning "God shall hear," was fully understood by Hagar when in the wilderness (Genesis 21:9-21) God heard the moaning of her broken heart.

How painters and poets have seized upon this pathetic incident of the poor woman and her boy in the wilderness, thirst-ridden and ready to die! One of the finest masterpieces adorning the Dresden Gallery is the painting called *Hagar in the Wilderness* — and cold is the heart that can gaze upon it without deep emotion. The boy is pictured on his back, dying with thirst, while his poor but beautiful mother in an agonizing prayer, "lifted up her voice and wept," saying, "Let me not see the death of the child." Could anything be more poignant? True, Hagar had "despised Sarah" and "mocked Isaac," but surely she had not deserved such cruel treatment as this — death from hunger and thirst in a barren land!

But how Hagar's extremity became God's opportunity. When the last drop of water had gone, and Hagar tenderly places her almost dead boy under the shrubs, God heard the dying cry of the lad, and also the wail of Hagar's broken heart, for out of heaven came His voice, "What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not." Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and both she and her boy were saved from death. Abraham had given Hagar

a bottle, but it was soon empty. God gave her a well, and the lad drank and God was with him, and he grew and became an archer in the wilderness. The last glimpse we have of Hagar is of her securing a wife for her son, out of the land of Egypt, her own land (Genesis 21:21) — the land of idols and worldliness. Untaught by the piety and instruction of Abraham, and by God’s mercy to herself, Hagar failed Him in the choice of such a wife for the boy whom He had blessed.

The practical lessons to be learned from the history of Hagar have been fittingly summarized by Dr. James Crichton in his article on Hagar in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* —

The life and experience of Hagar teach, among other truths, the temptations incident to a new position; the foolishness of hasty action in times of trial and difficulty; the care exercised over the lonely by the all-seeing God; the Divine purpose in the life of everyone, however obscure and friendless; how God works out His gracious purposes by seemingly harsh methods; and the strength, comfort and encouragement that ever accompany the hardest experiences of His children.

It only remains to be said that Paul uses the story of Hagar as an allegory to distinguish law from grace (Galatians 4:21-31). Hagar the bondwoman is contrasted with Sarah the freewoman, and Ishmael “born after the flesh” with Isaac “born through promise”; thence freedom and grace appear as the characteristic qualities of Christianity. Hagar represents the Old Covenant and Sarah the New Covenant which is superior to the Old with its ordinances. Under grace all within the household of faith live by faith, and Sarah represents “the Jerusalem that is above” — “our mother” (R.V.), which is the free spiritual city to which all children of the promise even now belong (Philippians 3:21).

## HAGGITH

*Scripture References* — II Samuel 3:4, 5; I Kings 1:5, 11; 2:13; I Chronicles 3:2

*Name Meaning* — Festival or dancer

This female character was the fifth wife of David, and the mother of his fourth son, Adonijah. In all references to her she carries the label, “the

mother of Adonijah.” He was born in Hebron while David had his capital there.

## HAMMOLEKETH, HAMMOLECHETH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 7:17, 18

*Name Meaning* — The Queen or the Regent

This long name, found in the genealogy of Manasseh, suggests the characteristics of eminence. Tradition has it that she reigned over part of Gilead. She was the daughter of Machir, sister of Gilead, the granddaughter of Manasseh and the mother of Ishdod, and Abiezer, from whose line sprang the mighty Gideon, and Mahalah.

## HAMUTAL

*Scripture References* — Jeremiah 52:1, 2; II Kings 23:31; 24:18

*Name Meaning* — Kinsman of the dew or father-in-law of dew

This wife of a king and the mother of two sons who became kings had a most interesting name. She was the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah and mother of the ungodly sons, Jehoahaz and Mattaniah, or Zedekiah whom Jeremiah denounced for his wickedness.

Whenever the phrase “his mother’s name was” — “her mother’s name was” — occurs, the characteristics of the child or children whether good or bad suggest the potential influence of the mother. It did not seem as if the two sons followed the example of their father who, when he was yet young, “began to seek after the God of David his father,” and who in life, “declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.”

## HANNAH

### THE WOMAN WHO PERSONIFIES IDEAL MOTHERHOOD

*Scripture References* — I Samuel 1; 2:1, 21

*Name Meaning* — The Hebrew setting of Hannah has the beautiful and attractive meaning of “gracious” or “graciousness” or “favor” and by a slight change becomes the smoother Ann, Anne, or Anna — the latter

form touching the classic world with keen interest. Anna was the name given by Virgil to the twin-souled sister of the lovelorn Queen Dido.

And now Aurora from the heavens had rent the mist apart,

Sick-souled her sister (Anna) she bespeaks, the sharer of her heart.

*Family Connections* — Hannah was the favorite wife of Elkanah, a Levite of Ramathaim Zophim who belonged to one of the most honorable families of that priestly portion of Jacob’s progeny — the Kohathites. Although a godly man he followed the common custom of polygamy in those days when “every man did that which was right in the sight of his own eyes.” As it was the burning desire of every Hebrew parent to have a son, Hannah who was barren, may have urged her husband to take another wife, as Sarah arranged with Abraham to do, so that Elkanah’s name might be perpetuated. The second wife was Peninnah, of whom we know nothing save that she bore Elkanah several children, and grieved Hannah with her cruel and scurrilous tongue. “The sacred writer does not keep us long in Peninnah’s company,” says Alexander Whyte, “he hastens past Peninnah to tell us about Hannah, that sorely-fretted and sequestered woman, who waters her couch with her tears.” The curse accompanying polygamy shows up in Elkanah’s home life. Hannah became the mother of the renowned Samuel, and also bore Elkanah three other sons and two daughters none of whom are mentioned by name (I Samuel 2:21)

The Bible has been called “The World’s Gallery of Lasting Fame,” and in this gallery the portrait of Hannah occupies a conspicuous place. All that is recorded of this mother, who was one of the most noble Hebrews who ever lived, is an inspiration and a benediction. Whether she was as beautiful as Sarah we are not told, but because of her inner serenity she must have had “a very sensitive face, in which her moods were reflected like sunshine and shadow on a quiet lake.” The story we have of her is “a harp-note of the immortal triumph of patience.” Hannah is a beautiful example of how the most unpleasant and untoward circumstances can produce a character blessing the world. “The outline touches of her life,” says John F. Jurst, “sombre and mournful at first, but radiant with faith and hope at last, form the fitting introduction to the narrative of the career of her great son Samuel

in his combined character of Judge and Prophet of Israel.” Perhaps we can best summarize Hannah’s career in the following fivefold way —

### *Her Sanctity*

From the record we have of Hannah she appears to have been a woman with an unblemished character. Piety reigned in her heart, and she maintained constant communion with the religious ordinances of her nation. Pious Hannah was separated unto the Lord, and amidst trying domestic relationships knew how to have recourse to Him for all necessary grace to bear her troubles. She cried day and night unto the Lord, and was heard in that she feared Him whom her soul loved. Because of her godliness, devotion, trust, patience and self-sacrifice, she came to be signally blessed of the Lord, and, in turn, communicated to her renowned son Samuel something of her saintliness of life and character. It was no easy task to live for years with a nasty woman like Peninnah, but Hannah retained her serenity of soul and was a veritable lily among thorns.

### *Her Sorrow*

While Hannah had a house she did not have a home. The ideal of every Jewess was to be “head of the home,” but she had no child, no family. True, she had a devout husband who loved her, and bestowed richer gifts upon her than he did upon his other wife, but she was childless. Comforting her yearning heart Elkanah said, “Am I not better to thee than ten sons?” Hannah, however, longed for a son out of her own womb to love and fondle. As the years went by her agony became more intense, and her barrenness was a greater burden because of the jealousy and heartlessness of her rival, Peninnah, who frequently tantalized Hannah for being childless. But true to her name, she manifested the grace of self-control amid the cruel chidings and reproaches of Peninnah, “her adversary who provoked her sore, and made her to fret.” Can we wonder that Hannah referred to herself as, “a woman of a sorrowful spirit”? Jealousy, “the green-eyed monster that mocks the meat it feeds on,” had taken possession of Peninnah, but not of Hannah. Although the Lord had “shut up her womb” her heart was still open toward Him. Made to sorrow by those nearest to her, Hannah was never guilty of any unwomanly, retaliatory conduct.



Whenever her husband tried to comfort her stricken heart, her adversary was provoked to fresh insults and taunts. The fact that Elkanah loved Hannah and bestowed a double portion upon her only added more fuel to the fire of contempt in Peninnah's heart.

### *Her Supplication*

Childless, Hannah was not prayerless. Barren, she still believed, and her pain found a refuge in prayer. In God's house, she besought the Creator "to raise her into the empire of motherhood," and to interfere with the law of nature on her behalf. How moving is the episode of Hannah pouring out her soul before God in His house and vowing that if He would give her a son, then she would give him back to God for His exclusive use! She bargained with God, and kept her bargain. She took her particular sorrow to God, and prayed, not that Peninnah's joy might be less, but that He would take away the cause of her own anguish. She gave herself to prayer, and in the presence of God her sorrow burst its bonds. Yet even in God's house at Shiloh she did not find at first the sympathy and understanding she sought. Think, for a moment, about some of the features of her heartfelt cry!

First of all, her prayer was of a peculiar kind. It was a supplication without external speech. Her lips moved but there was no sound. Her prayer was internal, and as she spoke thus to herself she created the impression that she was drunk with wine. She had learned that prayer is the Christian's native breath, "unuttered or expressed." While she never said a prayer, "she breathed a wish in her soul and sent it up unspoken right to the throne of God. It is a unique experience for the age of the Judges; the piety of Hannah is a ripe flower in an almost sterile field." The old priest Eli, not meaning to be unkind when he saw Hannah's lips moving and her whole being caught up in the fervency of her supplication and yet heard no words being expressed, somewhat felt that Hannah was drunk and upbraided her for coming into God's house in such a condition. How his hasty, ill-founded conclusions added gall to the sorrow of her heart.

Hannah protested her innocence and declared that she had never taken strong drink, and then poured out her soul to Eli who, discerning that her desire for a child was intense and her spirit, sacrificial, for she wanted nothing for herself alone, assured her that her inarticulate prayer had been heard. “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.” Down she went to her house content for *she believed*. She was no longer forlorn, sorrowful, heart-hungry, but joyous and buoyant. God granted her wish, and the yearned-for child arrived and she called his name Samuel, which means, “asked of the Lord.”

### *Her Song*

Hannah’s Psalm of Thanksgiving marks her out as a poetess and prophetess of no mean order. With her desire fulfilled she bursts into song and pours forth her gratitude to God for His goodness, and her Magnificat became the basis of the one the blessed Virgin Mary was to offer to the same covenant-keeping God. The reader will find a strong resemblance between Hannah’s song and that of Mary’s (Luke 1:46-55). The spiritual lyric of Hannah is equal to any of the Psalms and is eloquent with the divine attributes of power, holiness, knowledge, majesty and grace. Such an elevated poetic utterance elicited by God’s answer to her prayer, has stirred the hearts of saints all down the centuries. The following parallel arrangement brings out the points of resemblance between Hannah’s song and that of Mary’s

<b>Mary’s Song</b>	and	<b>Hannah’s Song</b>
My soul doth magnify the Lord		My heart rejoiceth in the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God		Mine horn is exalted in the Lord;
my Saviour.		The bows of the mighty men are
He hath shewed strength with his		broken
arm;		And they that stumbled are
He hath scattered the proud in the		girded with strength.
imagination of their hearts.		The Lord killeth, and maketh
		alive:

He hath put down the mighty from  
their seats,  
And exalted them of low degree.  
He hath filled the hungry with good  
things;  
And the rich he hath sent empty  
away.

He bringeth down to the grave  
and bringeth up;  
They that were full have hired  
out themselves for bread;  
And they that were hungry  
ceased.

### *Her Sacrifice*

Hannah prayed and promised, and when her prayer was answered she quietly redeemed her promise. More than anything in the world she wanted a son, and when God gave her one, she gave him back to the Lord. Although Samuel was not born to the priesthood, his mother had sacredly pledged him to the Lord; and that pledge must be kept no matter what it might cost her in loneliness. So when weaned, Samuel was taken to the house of the Lord, “there to abide forever.” Once a year she visited him and what a human touch we have in that she made a little coat for him to wear. Her saintliness and sacrifice were rewarded for she bore Elkanah five more children. As for Samuel, he grew up to reflect his revered mother’s godliness. True to the meaning of his own name, and in likeness to his mother’s prevailing intercession, he became a man of prayer and intercession all his days — and beyond all men had power with, and from, God. How appropriate are the lines of Tennyson as we think of Samuel and his saintly mother, Hannah —

Happy he  
With such a mother! Faith in womankind  
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high  
Comes easy to him, and tho’ he trip and fall  
He shall not blind his soul with clay.

The lessons to be gathered from the fascinating story of Hannah are clearly evident. First of all, as we think of all Samuel became we realize how the excellencies of many men have usually been foreshadowed, if not exemplified, in the characters of their mothers. “The genius and intellectual sweep of Goethe were foretokened in the many-sided brilliancy of Frau

Rath.” The mother of John Wesley was remarkable for her intelligence, godliness and executive ability earning her the title of “The Mother of Methodism.” As no one in all the bleak world is more fitted to guide little feet Godward, may heaven grant us more mothers like godly Hannah.

From Peninnah’s harsh treatment of Hannah we discover how a thoughtless, unloving word of ours can give sorrow to others. How necessary it is to guard our tongues! (James 3:9, 10). From Hannah’s conduct under much provocation we first of all learn that the heart of God is a comforting retreat for a sorrowful soul. Whatever our particular sorrow may be, the Man of Sorrows waits to undertake. Hannah carried her trial and yearning to God in prayer and she teaches us something about the necessity for form and the spirit of intercession. Compare her silent heart-prayer with Psalm 19:14. From Eli who misjudged Hannah we learn not to be too hasty in our conclusions. Too often we wrong others by misinterpreting their motives. In Hannah’s mild and dignified defense of her character we learn how to defend our rights in all humility (see John 8:48, 49; Acts 26:24-26).

#### HAZELELPONI, ZELELPONI

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 4:3

*Name Meaning* — Deliver me, O God who regardest me, or the deliverance of the God who regardeth me

This word with its somewhat strange and uncouth sound for a female name includes the sacred name El, meaning “God” as one of its medial syllables. Zelel or Tselel means “a shade or shadow,” which occurs in the formative of such proper names as Bezaleel, Zilthai or Zillethai, and implies “the shade turned towards me,” and doubtless suggests a sense, or acknowledgment, or hope of divine protection, and embodying the idea conveyed by the assurance, “The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.” Tzelphoni is the name of a daughter of Etam, and she was the sister of Jezreel, Ishma and Idbush appearing in the genealogy of Judah.

#### HELAH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 4:5, 7

*Name Meaning* — Sick

Many names in the various lists of pedigrees found in the Old Testament are derived from the sorrows, dangers, and other circumstances of the natal hour. Mahli, meaning “sick,” and Mahlal, “sickness,” are understood to allude to the precarious state of the mother at the time of birth. Mahalath has a similar meaning, so has Helah who was one of the wives of Ashur, the posthumous son of Hazon, and the father of Tekoa. Ashur was the head of a family of the tribe of Judah, and Helah bore him three sons, Zereth, Jezoar and Ethnan.

## HEPHZIBAH

*Scripture References*—II Kings 21:1; Isaiah 62:4

*Name Meaning* — My delight is in her

This musical, symbolic name was borne by the wife of godly King Hezekiah, who became the mother of his son, Manasseh. Manasseh, who reigned over Judah for 55 years, a longer period than any other king, was as ungodly as his father was godly. He was the exact opposite of his father both in life and in the leadership of the nation.

Hephzibah is Jehovah’s symbolical name of Zion when restored to His favor —

“Thou shalt be called by a new name. . . .Thou shalt be no more termed *Forsaken* (Agubah, the name of the mother of Jehoshaphat), neither shall thy land any more be termed *Desolate* (Shemamah), but thou shalt be called *Hephzibah* (my delight is in her) and thy land *Beulah*” (married). The words “desolate,” “forsaken” and “married” also appear in a similar promise (Isaiah 54:1, 6).

Having lived and prophesied in the days of good King Hezekiah, it was appropriate for Israel to employ the use of symbolical names in the writing of his prophecies. Hezekiah’s marriage to Hephzibah naturally suggested Beulah, meaning “married,” and also the implication of the queen’s name, “My delight is in her.” These names are likewise symbolic of the church. Paul speaks of her as being married to Christ whose delight is in her.

## HERODIAS

THE WOMAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER OF A PREACHER

*Scripture References* — Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:14-24; Luke 3:19, 20

*Name Meaning* — As a member of the Herodian dynasty, perhaps the most despicable dynasty history has known, the name Herodias is but the female form of Herod, the royal name for the political rulers during the time of Christ and the apostles. It was under the vile and cruel orders of the Herods that Jesus and His followers were often persecuted and punished. Herod means “heroic” — not very applicable to the Herodian family, the majority of whom, particularly Herodias, were more hellish than heroic.

*Family Connections* — Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus, son of Herod the Great and Mariamne, daughter of Hyrcanus. Her first husband was Philip I, son of Herod the Great and Mariamne, so she married her own uncle, by whom she had a daughter, Salome, whom her mother used to destroy John the Baptist. When Herod Antipas visited Rome, he was entertained by Philip and Herodias. Herod abducted his royal brother’s wife. His own wife, an Arabian princess, was an obstacle to an illicit marriage, so he divorced her, and Herodias became queen in her stead, and with her daughter was installed in the palace. “The corroding immorality of Herod’s race shows itself in his marriage with Herodias his brother’s wife and the wanton offense thereby given to Jewish sensibilities.”

Among the female characters in God’s portrait gallery there are many wicked women as we are discovering, but surely Herodias stands out among them as one of the most vile and vicious. Amid the putrefying influence of the palace, however, there was one man who knew no fear, John the Baptist. Herod “feared” him and regarded him as “a just man” and whom “he heard gladly.” Herod found music in the preacher’s message until he sternly rebuked the king by saying of Herodias, “It is not lawful for thee to have her.” But such a warning bell was to toll the Baptist’s doom. For his faithful rebuke of Herod’s sin, John was cast into prison, and the evil, scheming mind of Herodias began to work. She was stung by the arrow from the preacher’s quiver and hated him for exposing her shame. “For Herodias’ sake,” he was imprisoned and thus the greatest of the prophets was sacrificed for this lewd and vicious woman. But the hatred of such a vile creature was more to be desired than her affection (Matthew

10:23; Luke 6:26). Herodias, with her conscience in turmoil because of her accuser, planned to silence him. She did not want Herod to listen too closely and constantly to John's forceful preaching. She feared her illegal husband — for her first husband was still alive — might repent, and her position as queen, imperiled.

Herodias knew Herod only too well. He easily succumbed to sensual excitement, and as his birthday drew near her foul design was hatched. On the day when drink freely flowed, Herodias used her own daughter to inflame Herod's passions. She was willing to sacrifice her child's modesty in order to bend Herod to her will. Herod was overcome by Salome's form seen through the flowing flimsy garment she wore, and influenced by the act of the dancing girl took a rash and foolish oath to give her whatever she asked, even to half of his kingdom. Approaching her mother, Salome said, "What shall I ask?" Without hesitation Herodias, the female hyena, replied, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist." Returning to Herod she presented her demand, and Herod was extremely sorry at such a request. Yet, because of his oath's sake, he sacrificed the preacher whom he regarded as just and holy, and all because of his guilty love for a vile woman. No wonder he was smitten with fear when he heard of the fame of Jesus, thinking it was John the Baptist risen from the dead to torment his conscience further. One wonders how Salome felt when the gory dish of the preacher's head was handed to her? (See SALOME.)

Herodias' Old Testament counterpart was Jezebel. What Herodias was to Herod, Jezebel was to Ahab. Both Ahab and Herod were wicked, and in both cases the woman was more wicked. Both Jezebel and Herodias fostered hate that became deadly against a prophet of God. Jezebel hated Elijah and sought to kill him — Herodias hated John the Baptist, the New Testament Elijah, and succeeded in his murder. What was the end of Herodias? Since she was the source of Herod's sin, Herodias also became the source of his shame. According to Josephus, Herodias' ambition was the ruin of Herod. Jealous of the power of Agrippa her brother, she prodded Herod to demand of Caligula, the emperor, the title of king. Agrippa saw to it that this demand was refused, and Herod was banished and ended his days in shame and exile. The pride of Herodias forced her to be faithful to her husband in the disgrace and misfortune she herself had caused.

## HODESH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 8:8, 9

*Name Meaning* — New moon

This is the name of one of the wives of Shaharaim. The other wife of the Benjamite was Hushim. It will be noticed that in the pedigree of the family of Benjamin the wives of Shaharaim are said to have been Hushim and Baara; but, when the children of each of his wives are enumerated, the name of Hodesh appears instead of that of Baara. The explanation of these two names on the one person is given thus by Wilkinson — “The word Baara is derivable from baar, ‘to burn,’ and may thus mean ‘a burning,’ ‘a kindling,’ which is the sense of beera in Exodus 22:6; whence some suppose that it designates the same person called Hodesh, by allusion to the kindling of fires as beacons, by which it was customary among the Israelites in very ancient times, to announce the appearance of the *new moon*.”

## HODIAH

*Scripture References*—I Chronicles 4:18, 19; Nehemiah 10:18

*Name Meaning* — The Splendor of Jehovah

Evidently there is some confusion over whether this is the name of a male or a female. It is identified by various scholars with Hodijah, a Levite (Nehemiah 10:18). The AV says that Hodiah was the wife, one of Mered’s two wives (I Chronicles 4:18, 19) but the RV shows that Hodiah was a man who married the sister of Nahum, who was reckoned in the tribe of Judah. If by Hodiah is meant Jehudijah, then she was the mother of the three sons Jered, Heber and Jekuthiel.

## HOGLAH

*Scripture References* — Numbers 26:33; 27:1-11; 36:1-12; Joshua 17:3

*Name Meaning* — A partridge or a boxer

This is the name of the third daughter of the five girls born to Zelophehad, a Manassite. Banded together these daughters fought for and declared their rights to their deceased father’s property and won a decision upheld by legal courts in law to this day. Their right of inheritance was



decided in their favor because there were no male joint-heirs, and on the condition that they marry men within their own tribe.

## HULDAH

### THE WOMAN WHO UNVEILED THE FUTURE OF A NATION

*Scripture References* — II Kings 22:14-20; II Chronicles 34:22-33

*Name Meaning* — Huldah, signifying “weasel” is supposed to have been an old totem clan name.

*Family Connections* — All we know of her, apart from her ministry is that she was the wife of Shallum, the keeper of the royal wardrobe. As a prophetess in the reign of King Josiah, she could be found sitting in the central part of the city ready to receive and counsel any who wished to inquire of Jehovah.

Ranking with Deborah and Hannah among the rare women of the Old Testament, Huldah’s standing and reputation are attested to in that she was consulted, rather than Jeremiah, when the lost book of the law was found, and that her word was accepted by all as a divinely revealed one. When Hilkiah the priest found the book in the Temple, Josiah sent immediately for Huldah and, attesting to the genuineness of the scroll, she prophesied national ruin because of disobedience to the commands of God. Her prophetic message and the public reading of the law brought about a revival resulting in the reforms carried out by Josiah. With a renewed spiritual life king and people vowed to follow the God of their fathers more faithfully. When men recover the lost truths of Scripture, and apply them to life and morals, what great and mighty changes take place!

## HUSHIM

*Scripture References* — I Chronicles 8:8, 11, see Numbers 26:42; I Chronicles 7:12

*Name Meaning* — To hasten

This name is from Hush (*chush*), and is supposed to denote a hasty or a premature birth. Hushim, a Moabitess, was one of the two wives of Shaharaim, a Benjamite who went to live in Moab, and the mother of his two sons, Abitub and Elpaal. Hushim is also the name of two males.

## ISCAH

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 11:29

*Name Meaning* — She will look out

Here we have the interesting name of the daughter of Haran, Abraham's younger brother. It is to be hoped that she shared her uncle's forward look of a city without foundations (Hebrews 11:10). Josephus identifies this sister of Lot and Mileal as Sarah, Abraham's wife. There is not sufficient proof, however, for the historian's contention.

## Jael

### THE WOMAN WHO KILLED A MAN WHILE HE SLEPT

*Scripture References* — Judges 4:17-22; 5:6, 24-27

*Name Meaning*—Jael means “wild or mountain goat” or “gazelle,” and as Dean Stanley expresses it, “a fit name for a Bedouin's wife—especially for one whose family had come from the rocks of Engedi, the spring of the wild goat or chamois.”

*Family Connections* — The only association given of this woman who sprang from obscurity by a single deed which, because of its nature, hardly deserved fame, is that she was the wife of Heber, the Kenite. In those days everything connected with a tent was a woman's job and the women became expert in all the phases of making, pitching and striking tents. This was why Jael was able to turn her skill to good account, as with a tent pin in one hand and with a maul in the other, she drove the pin home through the skull of Sisera as he slept — a deed not allotted to divine leading although the victory over Sisera was (Judges 5:10).

How can we explain or justify such an act deemed treacherous according to the morals of Jael's own time? “Hospitality was one of the most strictly adhered to, of all desert obligations, and was a matter of honor among the Hebrews,” says Mary Hallet. “In betraying Sisera, Jael broke this code of hers; but to us that is more easily understood than the revolting cruelty of her method of murder!” “So Sisera died” — and Jael's treachery was forgotten in the more important fact of her courage. The circumstances occasioning such a revolting act have already been touched upon (see

DEBORAH). Israel chafed under the severe rule of Jabin, king of the Canaanites, and Deborah arose and with Barak went out against the armed force of Jabin. God intervened, and unleashing the powers of nature completely disorganized Jabin's army. Sisera, captain of the host, and Israel's cruel oppressor escaped and fell into the hands of a woman (4:9).

Sisera fled to the tent of Heber the Kenite, whose wife Jael met Sisera and urged him not to be afraid but to turn in and rest. Seeing how worn and weary Sisera was, Jael covered him with a mantle, and when he asked for water to slake his thirst she opened a bottle of milk for him to drink. Then, assuring him that she would shield him from any searchers, she watched him as he fell asleep. Going softly to his side, Jael drove the tent nail through his head and pinned it to the ground. Shakespeare says of woman that "she can smile and smile and be a villain." Jael was not a crude or coarse woman, or a tiger of a woman. Lacking courage, she dare not attack Sisera fairly. She resorted to trickery, for although she met Sisera with a beaming face, there was murder in her heart, and she killed him by foul and reprehensible means. Had Sisera attempted to rape Jael, and in defense of her honor she had killed him, that would have been another matter, but to kill him as an assassin kills a victim was something different. Her murder of Sisera reminds us of Judith of Behulia, who drove a sword through Olopernes' throat as he slept.

Jael did not kill Sisera as David did Goliath, a champion of the Lord bent on destroying His arch-enemies. While divine judgment fell upon Sisera, Jael erred in that she did not allow God to designate the means of punishment. Perhaps she felt an irresistible impulse to slay the persistent enemy of God's people, but she remains forever censurable for the cruel way she killed Sisera, even though Deborah gloated over the act and praised it in poetic form. When Deborah said, "Blessed above women shall be Jael," perhaps she was only praising her faith and not her treachery. Any woman killing the country's enemy must be the friend of Israel, and so the method of Sisera's death mattered little to Deborah who doubtless thought that all was fair in time of war. What atrocious crimes have been committed in the name of patriotism! Jael had no conception that she was the one person at the opportune moment to render "stern justice on an enemy of God." Knowing that the tide of battle had turned against the Canaanites she

realized that Sisera would be captured and killed, therefore she acted as the executioner herself, thereby cementing a friendship with Deborah, the conqueror, who thought Jael worthy of praise because of her love for Israel.

### JECHOLIAH, JECOLIAH (RV)

*Scripture References* II Kings 15:2; II Chronicles 26:3

*Name Meaning* — Is powerful

The only record we have of this female character is that of her name and the fact that her “son did that which was right in the sight of God,” and that “he prospered so long as he sought the Lord” — a sure evidence of her good influence over her child. Jecholiah was the wife of Amaziah, king of Judah, and mother of Azariah, or Uzziah, king of Judah whose death was deeply mourned by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-3). As to the meaning of her name, Wilkinson remarks upon the names of Uzziah’s parents being similar in such to his own and to each other, though in them the name of Jah is compounded with different words. In Amaziah, his father’s name, the word Amaz or Amatz signifies “is strong” or “hath strength,” and in Jecoliah, his mother’s name, Jecol signifies “is powerful,” or “hath prevailed.”

### JEDIDAH, JEDIDA

*Scripture Reference* — II Kings 22:1, 2

*Name Meaning* — Darling of Jehovah

This sacramental name must not be confused with Solomon’s birth name, Jedidiah, signifying “beloved of Jehovah” (II Samuel 12:24, 25) even though it is similar to it. Jedidah was the daughter of Adaiyah of Boscath, or Bozhath, and the wife of Amon, the wicked king who was murdered by his own servants. Jedidah became the mother of Josiah, who succeeded his slain father when he was only eight years old, and reigned most prosperously for 31 years. While Josiah had a wicked father, his mother Jedidah must have been a godly woman who greatly influenced her son, for after his name we have the suggestive phrase, “And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.”

### JEHOADDAN

*Scripture References* — II Kings 14:2; II Chronicles 25:1

*Name Meaning* — Jehovah is her ornament The stepdaughter of Athaliah, Jehoaddan became the wife of Joash, who was rescued when he was but six years of age by Jehosheba. Her diseased husband was slain in bed after a reign of some 27 years. Jehoaddan was the mother of Amaziah who succeeded his murdered father. Although he started out to rule the nation in righteousness, he reintroduced idolatry into the land. Like his father, Amaziah was murdered.

### JEHOSHEBA, JEHOSHABEATH

*Scripture References* — II Kings 11:2; II Chronicles 22:11

*Name Meaning* — Jehovah is her oath

Here we have another divine name — a name referring to some solemn promise of God, or representing Him as the Being to whom vows are to be offered, or to whom alone appeals are to be made, as in the frequent phrase, “Swear by His Name.” Jehosheba was the daughter of King Jehoram, or Joram, by his secondary wife, half-sister of King Ahaziah. She became the wife of the high priest, Jehoiada, and is the only instance of a princess marrying a high priest. She was also the courageous woman who stole her nephew, Joash, from among the corpses of the king’s sons and hid him for six years from the murderous Athaliah. Thus to Jehosheba goes the credit of preserving “The Seed Royal,” for had Joash also perished the line of Judah would have been extinct.

### JEHODIJAH (see also HODIAH)

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 4:18

She is referred to as the Jewish wife of Mered as distinguishable from his Egyptian wife, Bithiah.

### JEMIMA

*Scripture Reference* — Job 42:14

*Name Meaning* — A little dove

Several commentators refer to Job’s three daughters as those who were born to him after the return to his prosperity. The same is said of the seven

sons born to him following his restoration to peace after severe trials, but are not the three daughters, “the three sisters” (1:4) who are assumed to have been destroyed when a hurricane destroyed their home? Although the sons and daughters were eating and drinking together before the storm struck (1:18), when it did fall upon the house we read that it “fell upon *the young men*, and they are dead” (1:19). There is no mention, however, of their “sisters” being killed with these young men. Are we justified in affirming that “the young men” who perished, were Job’s sons? Then, seeing 1:2 is identical with 42:13 are we not right in affirming that the more Job had at his latter end refers only to the material blessings of sheep, camels, oxen and asses (42:12), and not to added children? If children were included in the statement “The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before” (42:10), and his original seven sons and three daughters (1:2) were all killed by the hurricane that destroyed his house, livestock and servants, then we should read after his restoration to health and prosperity when his latter end was blessed more than his beginning — “He had also fourteen sons and six daughters.” But the verse said, “He *had* (past tense) seven sons and three daughters.” If *all* these whom the Lord gave were taken away, then it would be a most remarkable coincidence indeed if He gave Job at the end of his trials exactly the same number of children again. Certainly Job was blessed in this area also seeing he lived to love four generations springing from his original seven sons and three daughters. The writer adds to the original mention of three daughters, their names and facts about their beauty and inheritance. The sons’ names are not mentioned.

Jemima, the name of the eldest daughter, is reckoned to have an Arabic association meaning “a little dove.” Says Wilkinson, “the name, like those of her two sisters, is apparently due to some trivial occurrence, or experience, connected with early infancy. . . .” The Septuagint renders Jemima as derived from the Hebrew word for “day,” so that her name could mean “bright or beautiful as day.” The three daughters were unsurpassed in their beauty in all the land (42:15). Jemama, a central province of Arabia, was so named by the Arabs, tradition says, in honor of Job’s first daughter.

## JERIOTH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 2:18

*Name Meaning* — Tent curtains

This name is given as belonging to the wife of Caleb, son of Hezron. Some writers regard Jerioth as another name for Azubuh.

### JERUSHA, JERUSHAH

*Scripture References* — II Kings 15:33; I Chronicles 6:12; II Chronicles 27:1-6

*Name Meaning* — Taken possession of *or* married

This name belonged to the daughter of Zadok, a priest during David's reign. She became the wife of King Uzziah who died a leper, and whose death was deeply mourned by Isaiah (6:1). Jerusha bore Uzziah a son, Jotham, who became king of Israel. The household must have been a godly one for we read that Jotham "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord" and that he "became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord."

### JEZEBEL No. 1

#### THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SHE-DEVIL

*Scripture References* — I Kings 16:31; 18:4-19; 19:1, 2; 21:5-25; II Kings 9

*Name Meaning*—This heartless woman with a bloody history belied the name she bore, for Jezebel means, "chaste, free from carnal connection"; but by nature she was a most licentious woman. She was a voluptuary, with all the tawdry arts of a wanton woman. Thus no name could have been more inappropriate for such a despised female.

*Family Connections*—She was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and both king and priest of Baal worshipers. The Phoenicians were a remarkable race, and outstanding as the great maritime peoples of the ancient world, but they were idolaters who regarded Jehovah as only a local deity, "the god of the land." Their gods were Baal and Ashtaroath or Astarte, with their innumerable number of priests, 450 of whom Ahab installed in the magnificent temple to the Sun-god he had built in Samaria. Another 400 priests were housed in a sanctuary Jezebel erected for them, and which she

fed at her own table. Cruel and licentious rites were associated with the worship of Baal. Jezebel sprang from an idolatrous stock, the same source which afterward produced the greatest soldier of antiquity, Hannibal, whose temper was not more daring and unforgiving than hers.

It was this heathen woman who married Ahab, king of Northern Israel, and who in so doing was guilty of a rash and impious act which resulted in evil consequences. As a Jew, Ahab sinned against his Hebrew faith in taking as his wife the daughter of a man whose very name, Ethbaal, meant, "A Man of Baal." How or where the strong-minded idolatrous woman and the weak and spineless king met we are not told. Doubtless seeing her, Ahab was fascinated by her beauty and forcefulness of character and fell for her, and Jezebel, ambitious and proud, eagerly seized the opportunity of sharing the throne of a king. Any man, able to resist the wiles of a beautiful but wicked woman possesses true heroism. Joseph succeeded against the lovely yet lustful wife of Potiphar, but Caesar and Antony after conquering almost the whole world, were conquered by the fair but foul Cleopatra.

Let conquerors boast

Their fields of fame. He who in virtue arms  
A young, warm spirit, against  
beauty's charms, Who feels her brightness, yet defies her thrall,  
Is the best, bravest conqueror of them all.

Ahab, captivated by Jezebel, "took her to wife, and went and served Baal and worshipped him." All the other sins of Ahab were light compared with his marriage with Jezebel and the serving of Baal that followed (I Kings 16:31, see Micah 6:16). For over 60 years idolatry had made terrible inroads upon the life and ways of the Hebrews and meant more to them than the breaking of the first two commandments of the law; it produced spiritual and moral disintegration which was accentuated by Jezebel's determined effort to destroy the worship of Jehovah. Let us try to delineate the character of Jezebel — a name which has come to mean in all ages a striking proverb for seductive power, worldly subtlety and wickedness of the worst type.

*She Possessed an Extraordinary Force of Character*



Jezebel was no ordinary woman. Such was her demeanor that she attracted immediate attention. Edward B. Coe wrote of her as “the Clytemnestra, the Lady Macbeth of Hebrew history. Though by no means an attractive personage, she was invested by her extraordinary force of character and her appalling fate with a tragic grandeur which belongs to no other woman of the Bible.” While the Bible does not analyze or even portray her character, but simply sets forth the events in which she bore so prominent a part, yet as we read between the lines we cannot fail to see her as a woman of prodigious force of intellect and will. The sacred narrative does not record that she possessed any of the finer, nobler feminine qualities. She knew nothing of the restraint of higher principles. Savage and relentless, this proud and strong-minded woman carried out her foul schemes. A gifted woman, she prostituted all her gifts for the furtherance of evil, and her misdirected talents became a curse. Persuasive, her influence was wrongly directed. Resolute above other women, she used her strength of character to destroy a king and her own offspring, as well as pollute the life of a nation.

### *She Was an Ardent Idolater*

Baal had no more dedicated devotee than Jezebel. None could match her zeal for the worship of Ashtarothe famous goddess of the Zidonians, as zealous and liberal maintenance of hundreds of idolatrous priests clearly proves. Not content with establishing the idol worship of her own country in her husband’s court, she sought to convert Israel to Baal worship. Two heathen sanctuaries were built, one at Samaria with its 450 priests, and the other at Jezreel with its 400 priests. In a most relentless fashion Jezebel tried to drive out the true prophets of Jehovah from the land, and thus became the first religious female persecutor in history. From her idolatrous father, a high priest of Ashtarothe, she inherited her fanatical religious enthusiasm which inspired her to exterminate the worship of the true and living God, and almost succeeded in the attempt.

The flooding of the nation with all the immoralities and cruel superstitions of such a demoralizing cult as Baalism, brought upon the scene the chief of the true prophets, Elijah. He appeared suddenly before Ahab, predicted three years of drought, and at the end of the period

unexpectedly appeared again and challenged the 850 prophets of Baal to a supreme test of power on the top of Mount Carmel. “In language of unparalleled audacity Elijah taunted them with the impotence of their boasted deities, and the strange contest ended in the triumphant vindication of Jehovah.” The people seized the priests of Baal and massacred them and Ahab was completely frightened.

The triumphant Elijah had yet to reckon with Jezebel, however, who, when she heard from Ahab about the slaughter of all her well-fed priests, swore a terrible oath to destroy Elijah and his partners “by tomorrow this time.” But Elijah, although he had defied the king and stood out alone against the multitude of the priests and worshipers of Baal, felt that the fury of a murderous woman was more than he could face, and fled for his life across the kingdom of Judah, leaving the haughty queen, for the time being, in undisputed possession of the stage.

### *She Was a Dominating Wife*

Ahab was like a puppet in the hands of his overpowering wife. Because he was pliant and weak, Jezebel found it easy to achieve her murderous designs. How could worthless and spineless Ahab resist the evil scheming of his unscrupulous partner? With Lady Macbeth, Jezebel was the evil genius of the man, and a frightful crime ensued. It was Jezebel who became the feared commander in Israel and not the cowardly husband she could wrap around her thumb. It may be that Ahab was more luxury-loving and sensual than cruel, but under the complete domination of a ruthless woman he was forced to act against his finer feelings. “His culpability in this hideous drama lies chiefly in his using his personal power as a means to Jezebel’s wicked ends,” says Mary Hallet. “For without Ahab’s authority, Jezebel would have been a serpent without fangs.” In this marriage, Ahab was the weaker vessel with a wife who mocked at his conscientious scruples and bound him in all wickedness as with strong chains.

### *She Was a Corrupt Tree*

Our Lord used a striking figure to illustrate the continuing influence of evil, emanating from a life destitute of godly principles —

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? . . . a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . . a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit (Matthew 7:16-20).

Jezebel was rotten root and branch, and thus everything connected with her was contaminated. How appropriate are the lines of Shakespeare as we think of Jezebel who, in her strength of character, lust for power, remorseless rejection of godliness, and unshrinking and resolute activity to abolish all that interferes with the fulfillment of her wicked designs, was a veritable prototype of Catherine de Medici —

A strong adversary, an inhuman wretch, incapable of pity, void and empty from every drachm of pity.

Her offspring imbibed and continued the wickedness they grew up in. Jezebel's evil influence was revived in her daughter Athaliah of Judea (see *ATHALIAH*). Her malign character reappears in her eldest son, Ahaziah, who, like his idolatrous mother, was a devout worshiper of Baal. Her second son, Jehoram or Joram, was another image of his mother — further corrupt fruit from a corrupt tree. It was Jehoram, who heard from the lips of Jehu who had been raised up to obliterate the Ahab dynasty, that there would be no peace in Israel, “so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many” (II Kings 9:22). Is it to be wondered at that Jehoram suffered a similiar fate to that of his mother's at the hands of Jehu?

### *She Was a Treacherous Schemer*

The tragedy of Naboth and his vineyard reveals how despicable a woman Jezebel was. Life was cheap to such a female who had murder in her veins. Her father, Ethbaal, murdered his predecessor, Phelles. Brought up in such a home of intrigue and massacre what else could we expect but a she-devil as Jezebel became? Clarence E. Macartney in his volume on *Bible Characters* in dealing with Naboth says —

His refusal was the introduction to one of the strangest, most powerful, and most terrible dramas of the Bible; a drama, on the one side, of innocence, courage, independence, and the fear of God, and, on the other side, of covetousness, avarice, cruelty, perjury, death and terrible retribution. Outside of the Bible itself, it would take a Shakespeare or one of the Greek tragic poets to do justice to it.

As a typical Oriental despot, Jezebel was prepared to murder in her stride toward the desired objective, as the incident of Naboth's vineyard reveals. King Ahab happened to see this fruitful vineyard and inquired as to its owner. Learning it belonged to Naboth, Ahab called him to the palace and offered to buy the vineyard. But it was not for sale. It had belonged to his fore fathers and had become precious to Naboth, and as an Israelite Ahab understood his desire to retain it. Thwarted in what he coveted, Ahab took to his bed and refused food.

Then Jezebel came upon the scene. Learning what had happened, and, as a foreigner from a country where the wishes of a king were never questioned, she revealed herself as a woman of accumulated authority when she consoled Ahab by saying —

Arise and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry. *I will give thee* the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

Jezebel ordered, by letter, stamped with the royal seal, a public feast. She also instituted an assembly of the people of Jezreel to try the pious Naboth for blasphemies against God and the king. Naboth was arrested, tried and condemned on the false witnesses secured by Jezebel. She found these witnesses in order to appear within the bounds of the law. Found guilty, Naboth was stoned until his innocent life was beaten out of him, and Ahab took possession of the much-coveted vineyard. But the blood of godly Naboth did not cry out in vain. God called Elijah out of his retirement to go to Ahab and pronounce the fearful doom awaiting the murderous pair and their unholy seed. The prophet told the king of his fate —

In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

This prophecy was fulfilled shortly after its pronouncement for war broke out between the Israelites and the Syrians, and Ahab, while riding in his chariot, received his death wound. The blood-soaked chariot was taken to the spring which ran through Naboth's vineyard, and the dogs came and licked up the bloody water. Concerning Jezebel, Elijah said, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel," and shortly we shall see how this prophecy was also fulfilled to the very letter.

*She Loved Personal Adornment*

The death of the one whom Jezebel had “stirred up to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord” revealed her to be as incapable of remorse as of fear. There was no sign of repentance in her, as she went out proudly to meet her prophesied doom. Jehu had been appointed and anointed as the avenger of Jehovah, and he set about his grim task of meting out justice to those who had polluted the land. Jezebel’s son and grand son met Jehu in the blood-stained vineyard Naboth had once possessed. Jehu slew Jezebel’s son, the king of Israel, and her grand son was overtaken in flight and was slain. The still proud, defiant queen-mother knew her last hour was not far away, and great-grandmother though she was, she took time to arrange her hair and paint her face, and looked out at a window to greet Jehu as he passed by. Perhaps as Morton suggests, “Jezebel did not paint her face from any motive of coquetry or vanity. She knew that death was ready to take her. Therefore, she determined to die like a queen. . . . As Cleopatra, when about to die, robed herself in festal garments, so Jezebel painted her eyes with antimony and placed her jewelled crown upon her head; then, mounting to the palace tower, she watched the thundering advance of Jehu’s chariot.”

This one touch of grandeur in her foul life gave rise to the bitter taunt, “a painted Jezebel,” which came into vogue in England during the sixteenth century when, as Edith Deen reminds us, “painting the face was accepted as *prima-facie* evidence that a woman had loose morals. Certainly no woman’s name in history has become so commonly accepted as a synonym for wickedness.”

### *She Died a Horrible Death*

The climax came as Jehu entered the city gate. Reaching the palace, he looked up to the window from which came the taunting voice of Jezebel: “Is it peace, thou Zimri, thou murderer of thy master?” Such a taunt maddened her victorious enemy, and seeing the two eunuchs standing at the window with the defiant queen he shouted up to them, “Who is on my side? Who? Throw her down!”

They obeyed and threw her out of the window, and as she fell the walls were sprinkled with her blood. Below her were the soldiers with their spears, the horses to tread her underfoot and the hungry dogs waiting for

her flesh. The triumphant Jehu entered the palace over Jezebel's dead body. As he ate and drank, he remembered that the one who had just died as prophesied had been a queen and a mother of kings, so he ordered —  
Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her. And they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.

So died Jezebel, the idolater, the tyrant, the murderess. She had sown to the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. Many of the godly in Israel must have felt that while Jezebel held evil sway over the land, the mills of God seemed to grind slowly. They came to realize, however, that they grind exceedingly sure and small. Thus Jezebel encountered a “mysterious, terrible and divine retribution.”

Ere we turn from our portrait of one of the most wicked women who ever breathed, there are one or two lessons to glean from her deeply stained record. No matter from what angle we approach the life of Jezebel she stands out as a beacon to both nations and individuals that the wages of sin is death. Further, from this great tragic figure of literature and of history we learn how important it is for the influence of a wife and mother to be on the side of all that is good and noble. As Ahab's evil genius, Jezebel was the absolute negation of all God meant woman to be, namely, a true help-meet of man. Ahab, we read, was “stirred up” by Jezebel but stirred up in the wrong direction. When a man marries a woman because of her beauty or forceful personality, or marries a wicked woman or one opposed to his religion, he usually courts sorrow, heartache and disappointment. Jezebel retained her obstinate, unbending character to the very end. The death of the man whose life she polluted brought no repentance. What a difference story would have been written if only she had learned how to stir up her husband and children to love God and follow good works (II Timothy 1:6; II Peter 1:13). Her misdirected talents, however, brought upon her a curse. The evil she perpetrated was done under the guise of religion, just as the cruelties of the Inquisition and the tortures of Smithfield were.

Finally, evil and craft and godlessness bring their own reward, and the wicked reap what they sow. Retribution overtook Jezebel when her body was thrown out of the window to be torn and mangled, and then eaten by

dogs. As a daughter of the devil, she suffers a worse retribution in the realms of the doomed. Milton wrote of the God-rejector as —  
Him the Almighty Father hurled headlong flaming with hideous ruin and combustion down to bottomless perdition, there to dwell in adamantive chains and penal fires, who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

There are those who reject such a lurid description of the fate of the wicked who, like Jezebel, defy and deny God, but the divine Word still stands, that Christ is to be revealed from heaven to take vengeance on those who spurn God and who reject the saving Gospel of His beloved Son (II Thessalonians 1:5-10).

## JEZEBEL No. 2 THE WOMAN WHO SEDUCED GOD'S SERVANTS

*Scripture Reference* — Revelation 2:18-29

In His message to the church at Thyatira, Christ, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, searches out the character of another Jezebel, the New Testament counterpart of Jezebel we have just considered. The question arises, was the Jezebel whom John mentions a real person, or are we to think of her in a symbolic sense? Walter Scott in his renowned exposition of the Book of Revelation suggests that Jezebel represents the rise and power of papacy through the centuries.

Jezebel (O.T.) was a woman, a queen, an idolator, a persecutor, and the virtual ruler and director of the government of Israel. Ahab was a puppet in her hands (I Kings 18 - 21). All this and more is Jezebel of the Apocalypse. Combining in herself these and other features of the Popish system (Revelation 17:18), she arrogantly assumes the title “prophetess.” She professes to teach with authority. Combined with teaching she can employ all the arts and seductions of minds specially trained to effect her full purpose. “Hear Mother Church” is the cry of every Romanist.

Scott goes on to enlarge his contention that the Roman Church is still the Jezebel of modern times. It is evident that in the church at Thyatira there arose a group guilty of a sinful mixture of Christian confessions with idolatrous necromancy, and that this section of the church became antagonistic to the spiritual integrity of the true Christian faith. With a sentimental fanaticism indulgence in terrible wanton ness and positive

fornication grew, and the name Jezebel is given to this unworthy element in the church because of the resemblance between its perversion of truth and the idolatrous wife of Ahab. “Prophetess” can mean “a set of false prophets — the Hebrew feminine expresses collectively a *multitude* — as closely attached to the Thyatira church as a *wife* is to be to a husband, and as powerfully influenced that church for evil as Jezebel did her husband.”

It is more than likely that there was a forceful, influential woman in the church who held sway over those who prided themselves upon an enlightened liberalism (2:24), and whose sorceries, prognostications and lax morals exercised a dangerous influence upon weaker Christians in the community. It is interesting to observe how many false religious systems began with a misguided woman. Because of this strong-minded woman’s prominence at Thyatira she earned the name synonymous with idolatry and wickedness, but in a broader sense the name covers the cult she founded. We rest the case with Ellicott’s comment —

It seems best to view the name as symbolical, always remembering that the Jezebel spirit of proud, self-constituted authority, vaunting claims of superior holiness, or higher knowledge, linked with a disregard of—and perhaps a proud contempt for — “legalism,” and followed by open immorality, has again and again run riot in the churches of God.

### JOANNA

#### THE WOMAN WHO, HEALED BY CHRIST, HONORED HIM

*Scripture References* — Luke 8:1-3; 23:55; 24:10

*Name Meaning* — The Hebrew name of this woman who was numbered among Christ’s disciples is the same with Joannes, Johanan, or John, and means, “Jehovah hath shown favor” or, “The Lord is grace” or, “The Lord give graciously.” It was because the Saviour showed favor unto Joanna that she rose up and followed Him.

*Family Connections* — All we know of Joanna’s history is that she was the wife of Chuza, the house-steward of Herod the Tetrarch—whom some writers identify as the Nobleman of John 4:46-54. Joanna was also the name of a male, the son of Rhesa (Luke 3:27), an ancestor of Christ who lived about 500 B.C.



As we read between the lines in the short account Luke gives us in his sacred narrative of the female Joanna, we see her a devoted disciple of the One to whom she owed so much. There is as much difference between her and the monstrous Jezebel we have just considered as there is between light and darkness. We breathe a purer air while in Joanna's company whose life and labors are set forth in a fivefold way —

### *A Sick Woman Healed by Christ*

Joanna, along with Mary Magdalene and Susanna were among the “certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities” (8:2). Whether Joanna had been demon-possessed or suffered from some mental or physical disability we are not told. It is evident that this female of the upper class, restored to normal health by Christ, gave her life to Him. She is here seen as one of the traveling company who went before Christ and the Twelve to arrange for their hospitable reception. Out of her own resources many expenses were met, and in this way she ministered *unto Him* of her substance. Having freely received His healing touch, she freely gave of herself and of her means for His welfare.

### *A Loyal Witness in an Unusual Sphere*

Chuza, the husband of Joanna, was the “steward” of Herod, which is the same word given as “tutor” (Matthew 20:8) or “guardian” (Galatians 4:2). Chuza must have been a man of intelligence and ability in order to hold the position he did as manager of Herod's income expenditure. Both Chuza and Joanna were likely among the servants to whom Herod imparted his belief, when he heard of the fame of Jesus, that it was John the Baptist, whom he had murdered, now risen from the dead. As Joanna was known as one of the Lord's disciples, naturally she would speak of Him among Herod's servants (Matthew 14:2), and Herod would often speak concerning the Master, for his foster brother, Manaen, was a teacher in the church (Acts 13:1). The office of Chuza gave Joanna an excellent opportunity of witnessing in the palace, and we can imagine how she took full advantage of it. As a child of the heavenly King she felt that she must speak her joy abroad. Often through divine grace, Christians find themselves in most unlikely places, wherein they can witness a good confession for Christ. Paul, a prisoner in

Rome, persecuted by Nero, the worst ruler who ever lived, was able to write of the saints in Caesar's household. Tradition has it that Chuza lost his position in Herod's palace because of his wife's conversion to Christianity and her courageous testimony among Herod's servants. If this really happened we know that both of them were sheltered by the Lord.

### *A Generous Supporter of Christ*

Healed and saved, Joanna gave thanks. Christ had ministered to her physical restoration and salvation and in turn she ministered to Him. By "substance" we are to understand material possessions, such as money and property, and Joanna honored the Lord with these. Knowing that He and the disciples accompanying Him had very little to support them, Joanna, out of her plenty, gave liberally to their needs and thus exemplified the grace of giving. It is said that Cato, the philosopher, at the close of his honored life, told his friends that the greatest comfort of his old age was that "that which gave him the highest satisfaction, was the pleasing remembrance of the many benefits and friendly offices he had done to others." We can imagine what joy filled the liberal heart of Joanna as she recalled how she had ministered unto the Lord who had done so much for her, and helped to meet His material needs.

### *A Sorrowful Mourner at the Grave of Christ*

Among the women at the cross, the heart of Joanna must have been rent with anguish as she saw her beloved Lord dying in agony and shame. Was she not among the number of the consecrated women who had followed Him from Galilee, and who, after His brutal death, prepared spices and ointments for His body (Luke 23:55, 56)? The One who had cured her body and her soul had become precious to Joanna, and, having ministered to Him while He was alive, she continues her ministry of love as His body is still and cold in death. Too many save their flowers for the grave. Joanna gave hers to Jesus when He was alive and could appreciate them, as well as produce them at the tomb in honor of Him. Her "last respects" were the outward token of the inner reverence in which she had ever held the Saviour.

## *A Joyful Herald of Her Lord's Resurrection*

Joanna was among the sorrow-stricken women who early on that first memorable Lord's Day gathered at the sepulcher to linger in the presence of the dead. But to their amazement the tomb was empty, for the living Lord was no longer among the dead. Perplexed over the vacant grave, they beheld the angelic guardians and heard them say, "He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee." How could they forget His words! Recalling all He had said of His sufferings, death and Resurrection, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, became the first human heralds of the Resurrection. With all haste they went to the apostles and told them the good news, but for awhile their words seemed as idle tales until Peter saw for himself the graveclothes but no dead Master (Luke 24:1-12). He then believed the women's declaration of the Lord who was alive forevermore. Joanna, then, was among the last at the cross, and among the first to witness the empty tomb and likewise among the first to proclaim that the Lord whom she had so dearly loved was risen indeed. How much the cause of Christ owes to its consecrated Joannas!

### JOCHEBED

#### THE WOMAN WHOSE CHILDREN BECAME GREAT

*Scripture References*—Exodus 1; 2:1-11; 6:20; Numbers 26:59; Hebrews 11:23

*Name Meaning* — Jochebed implies, "glory of Jehovah" or, "Jehovah (is her or our) glory." It is plain from this name of the mother of Moses, that the announcement of Jehovah, as the name of God, was not made for the first time when God revealed Himself in a special manner under that title to Moses in the burning bush. Jochebed is the first person in Scripture to have a name compounded with Jah — or Jehovah. One cannot but be fascinated with Alexander Whyte's suggestive comment on her name —

It is very tantalizing to be told her remarkable name and to be told no more. Was *God-thy-glory* the remarkable name that Moses gave to his mother as often as he looked back at all that he owed to her, and as often

as he rose up and called her blessed? Or was her very remarkable name her own invention? Was her striking name her own seal that she had set to her own vow which she made to her own God after some great grace and goodness of her own God? Or, again did the angel of the Lord visit that daughter of the house of Levi or some Jabbok-like or Annunciation-night, and so name her as the sun rose upon her prayer?

*Family Connections* — Jochebed is spoken of as a daughter of Levi who married a man of the house of Levi (Exodus 2:1; Numbers 26:59), whose name was Amram. Strange though it may seem, she married her nephew, and was thus both the wife and aunt of Amram, seeing his wife was his father's sister (Exodus 6:20). Marriages with aunts and nieces were not unlawful before the giving of the law by Moses. They were very common throughout the East.

To Amram and Jochebed were born three children each of whom became renowned in their own sphere (Numbers 26:59). She bore and suckled all three on the same strong milk, till she weaned them from milk and put them on the marrow of lions. The oak has its roots around the rock, and the children of Jochebed had their roots around their godly mother.

There was Moses, who became one of the greatest national leaders and legislators the world has ever known.

There was Aaron, who became Israel's first high priest and the founder of the Aaronic priesthood.

There was Miriam, the gifted poetess and musician, who was intimately associated with her two brothers in the history of Israel.

Jochebed's prominent place in the divine gallery is secure, then, and the aspect of her career especially emphasized in Scripture is that of her clever design to preserve the life of her baby boy. It was for her courage and trust in such an act that had far-reaching consequences for the nation that she is placed among the heroines of faith in Hebrews 11:23. Let us recall the circumstances of the preservation of Moses which caused his mother to be included among that "great cloud of witnesses" whose lives and labors testified of their faith in God's providential care and goodness.

At the time of Pharaoh, the Hebrews had multiplied so greatly as to cause the monarch to fear lest they should outnumber the Egyptians and take over the nation. Thus he commanded that all newly-born Hebrew boys

be thrown into the Nile — a most dastardly edict! Jochebed was heavy with child. Already there were Miriam, about ten years of age at the time, and Aaron, possibly about three, in the home. Now another child was on the way. Knowing of Pharaoh's command and that, as a rigid executive, he closely checked up on all male births, Jochebed must have had intense suspense as she awaited her third child. Would it be a boy that would be wrenched from her and thrown into the Nile? What were her feelings when the child was born and the midwife told her it was a boy? What maternal grief must have been hers!

But the horror of that crocodile-infested Nile transforms Jochebed into a heroine and the preserver of a boy who became one of the world's greatest figures. The moment she saw her baby, she was determined to fight for his life. Three times over we read that "she saw that he was a goodly child" (Exodus 2:2; Acts 7:20; Hebrews 11:23). This means that Moses was not only a lovely child to look at, but also, as the margin explains, he was "fair to God," implying that there was something other-worldly or angelic about his features. As the little one lay in her lap, Jochebed felt that he had been sent from God, and that He, along with her mingled faith and love, would somehow preserve the child.

How Jochebed managed to hide her baby, who doubtless cried as lustily as other babies, in some secret place where he could not be seen or heard, is a mystery! When she was unable to conceal him any longer, "God through the intensity of her faith caused her to inherit a vision of what He had appointed for Moses." She made a little cradle of plaited reeds which were believed to be protection against crocodiles, then placed the cradle with its treasure secretly among the rushes at the river's bank, and told Miriam her young daughter to stand near to watch over the small craft. The brief but vivid account of what happened is given by the historian, even by Moses himself who, in his latter years, by divine inspiration, wrote the first five books of the Bible.

At her usual time Pharaoh's daughter came to the feathery greenness edging the ancient Nile to wash herself, and her maidens walking by the river side saw the cradle among the rushes. When the royal lady saw the beautiful baby and heard his cry she had compassion on him. A Hebrew woman must be found to nurse the child. Jochebed was fearfully watching

the fate of that precious child she had borne and the rough cradle she had fashioned. Young Miriam was also near at hand, and quite naively said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?"

Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go!" Miriam was not long in calling her mother and presenting her as a nurse. Pharaoh's daughter asked her to nurse the child for her at a given wage. Thus Jochebed's baby was not only saved, but Jochebed was paid to care for him until he was weaned. Pharaoh's daughter must have loved the child for she brought him up as her son. However, Moses later refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, even though she had given him her name, Moses, which means "drawn out of the water" (Exodus 2:10). If Jochebed was guided by God to make that small cradle and place her three-month old baby in it, and hide him among the rushes, surely the steps of Pharaoh's daughter were ordered by the same God, even though she was an idolater. It was to her that Jochebed owed the saving of her son, as well as the royal protection and all the advantages of Pharaoh's palace as his home for the first forty years of his life.

How long Jochebed lived after her delivered child no longer required her nursing, we are not told. Doubtless she was dead by the time Moses fled into the wilderness when he was forty years of age. Although she did not live to see how famous her children became, dead, she yet spake again in their utter devotion to God. She had lived her life as unto Him, and her sons and daughter lit their torches at her flame. Jochebed was the chief influence unto God in their preparation for the great tasks they were to accomplish in leading His people out of Egyptian bondage. It was Jochebed's love, faith and courage that saved her child from a cruel death and preserved him to bless the world. A mother who loves the Saviour, and who has a more severe anguish when she knows that, not the life of her child is at stake, but its soul, can rest in the assurance that Jochebed's God still lives, and is able to save her dear one from eternal death.

## JUDAH

Jeremiah 3:7, 8, 10

(See chapter on SYMBOLIC BIBLE WOMEN)

## JUDITH

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 26:34

*Name Meaning* — The praised one

This daughter of Beerli the Hittite and one of the wives of Esau whom he married when he was forty years old, was a Hittite with a Semitic name. Esau was exactly the same age when he violated the Abrahamic principle of marrying an idolater (Genesis 24:3), as his father Isaac was, when sixty years before, he married Rebekah. By his act in taking both Judith and Bashemath, who were Hittites, as his wives, Esau caused his parents much bitterness of spirit or mingled anger and sorrow (Genesis 26:34; 36:2), and also forfeited his birthright. Judith is the feminine form of Judah. Wilkinson observes that “Judith as a pure Hebrew name is a feminine form of Jehudie, which as a proper name has the same sense as Judah, ‘praise’ or ‘one who is praised.’ ” Unsuccessful efforts have been made to identify Judith with Aholibamah spoken of as a wife of Esau (Genesis 36:2, 24, 25). As a female name Judith has ever been a popular one. There are over 250,000 girls and women in America alone who are known by this name. Judith is the heroine in the apocryphal book bearing her name.

## JULIA

*Scripture Reference* — Romans 16:15

*Name Meaning* — Having curly hair

By birth a member of one of the great old homes in Rome, Julia was doubtless a member of the imperial court and therefore among the saints to be found in Caesar’s household. Perhaps she was the wife or sister of Philologus with whose name she is coupled. She is named among those to whom Paul sent a warm salutation. The extension of her name, Julius, implies, “curly-headed” (Acts 27:1, 3).

## KEREN-HAPPUCH

*Scripture References* — Job 1:2; 42:14

*Name Meaning*—Beautifier or horn of paint

This was the name of the last of Job’s three daughters, and she shared with her two sisters the paternal inheritance (see JEMIMA). Her name speaks of “box of paint” which was a vessel containing liquids frequently made of

horn, and called “horns.” Such a name is indicative of beautiful eyes made so from the dye used to tinge the eyelashes and make the eyes more lustrous (II Kings 9:30; Jeremiah 4:30).

## KETURAH

*Scripture References* — Genesis 25:1-6; I Chronicles 1:32, 33

*Name Meaning* — Incense

After the death of his beloved Sarah, Abraham took as his third wife, if we count Hagar as a wife, Keturah, a young woman. When Sarah died, and Isaac his son married, doubtless Abraham now an old man was very lonely and remarried for the sake of companionship. Keturah is called a concubine (I Chronicles 1:32). Her name is like Kezia, a perfume name. She became the mother of Abraham’s six sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah who became the progenitors of six Arabian tribes of Southern and Eastern Palestine. Ancient Israelites regarded the Arabs as distant relatives. It was through Keturah’s offspring that Abraham became “the father of many nations.” The patriarch in his declining years was surrounded by a woman’s care and love, and a circle of dear children. Kuyper, writing of the relationships between Abraham and Keturah, says that we cannot think of it as being romantic. It was a marriage in which a less passionately vehement love attains high ethical qualities.

Keturah is not depicted as a young wife who has come to an independent position in a tent of her own. She appears as a wife who nurses and provides for the aged. Such an attitude also implies a devotion but it is a devotion which combines the love of a wife with that of a daughter.

Although Abraham’s wife, Keturah, sustained and cared for him as the eldest daughter of a family would support her father, she therefore has something to say to any unmarried woman who marries a far older man with previous marital experience. “There must be sincere devotion and the consecration of that higher quality in which love combines with a sacred urge to be a helpmeet to the desolate and forsaken.”

## KEZIA

*Scripture Reference* — Job 42:14



*Name Meaning* — Cassia

This second daughter of Job has a perfume name speaking of an aromatic herb (Psalm 45:8), and was expressive of her beauty. (See JEMIMA.)

LEAH

THE WOMAN LACKING LOVELINESS WAS YET LOYAL

*Scripture References*—Genesis 29; 30; 49:31; Ruth 4:11

*Name Meaning* — Leah as a name has been explained in many ways. “Wearied” or “Faint from Sickness” with a possible reference to her precarious condition at the time of birth, is Wilkinson’s suggestion. Others say the name means “married” or “mistress.” The narrative tells us that she was “tender eyed” (Genesis 29:17), which can mean that her sight was weak or that her eyes lacked that luster reckoned a conspicuous part of female beauty which Rachel her sister “beautiful and well-favoured” evidently had.

*Family Connections* — Because Jacob was Rebekah’s son he was related to Leah by marriage. Leah was the elder daughter of Laban who, by deception, married her to Jacob, to whom she bore six sons and a daughter. By her maid, Zilpah, Leah added two more sons to her family.

The romantic story of Jacob and his two wives never loses its appeal. After fleeing from and meeting God at Bethel, Jacob reached Haran and at Laban’s well he met his cousin Rachel drawing water for the sheep. It was love at first sight for Jacob, and his love remained firm until Rachel’s death in giving birth to her second child. Going to work for his Uncle Laban, Jacob was offered wages in return for service rendered, but he agreed to serve Laban for seven years on the condition that at the end of the period Rachel should be his wife. Because of his love for Rachel those years seemed but a few days.

At the end of the specified period however, Jacob was cruelly deceived by his uncle. As it was a custom of the time to conduct the bride to the bedchamber of her husband in silence and darkness, it was only with the morning light that Jacob discovered that he had been deceived by Laban as he saw Leah and not Rachel at his side. Laban condoned his unrighteous act by saying that the younger girl could not be given in marriage before the

first-born, and Jacob covenanted to serve another seven years for Rachel, his true love inspiring him to be patient and persevering. Perhaps Jacob treated the deception as a retributive providence, for he had previously deceived his blind and dying father.

Whether Leah participated in the deceit to win Jacob from her more beautiful sister we do not know. The moral tone of the home was low, and Leah may have been a child of environment. This much is evident, that although she knew that the love of her husband's heart was not for her but for Rachel, Leah genuinely loved Jacob and was true to him until he buried her in the cave of Machpelah. While Jacob was infatuated with Rachel's beauty, and loved her, there is no indication that she loved him in the same way. "Rachel remains one of those women with nothing to recommend her but beauty," says H. V. Morton. "She is bitter, envious, quarrelsome and petulant. The full force of her hatred is directed against her sister, Leah."

The names Leah gave her children testified to the miraculous faith God had planted in her heart. Somewhat despised by Jacob, she was yet remembered by the Lord. In spite of the polygamous marriage, she became the mother of six sons who were to become the representatives of six of the twelve tribes of Israel. The names Leah chose revealed her piety and sense of obligation to the Lord.

Reuben, her first-born, means "Behold a son," and Leah praised God for looking favorably upon her. Thus, divine compassion was carefully treasured in such a name which also the holder tarnished.

Simeon, the second son, means "Hearing," so given by Leah since God had heard her cry because of Rachel's hatred. Such a name as Simeon is a lasting monument of answered prayer.

Levi, the next to be born implies, "Joined" and Leah rejoices feeling that her husband would now love her, and that through Levi's birth she would be more closely united to her husband.

Judah was the fourth son to be born to Leah, and she gave him a name meaning "Praise." Perhaps by now Jacob had become a little more affectionate. Certainly the Lord had been good to both Leah and Jacob, and with the selfishness in her heart defeated, Leah utters a sincere *Soli Deo Gloria* — "I will praise the Lord." Leah had two other sons named Issachar and Zebulun, and a daughter, Dinah. Leah was uncomely when compared to

her lovely sister, but what she lacked in beauty she made up for in loyalty to Jacob as a wife, and as a good mother to his children. “It seems that homely Leah was a person of deep-rooted piety and therefore better suited to become instrumental in carrying out the plans of Jehovah than her handsome, but worldly-minded, sister, Rachel.”

One evident lesson we can learn from the triangle of love in that ancient Israelite home is that solemn choices should not be based upon mere external appearances. Rachel was beautiful, and as soon as Jacob saw her he fell for her. But it was Leah, not Rachel, who bore Judah through whose line the Saviour came. The unattractive Leah might have repelled others, but God was attracted toward her because of an inner beauty which the lovely Rachel lacked. “There are two kinds of beauty,” Kuyper reminds us. “There is a beauty which God gives at birth, and which withers as a flower. And there is a beauty which God grants when by His grace men are born again. That kind of beauty never vanishes but blooms eternally.” Behind many a plain or ugly face there is a most lovely disposition. Also God does not look upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart.

## LOIS

*Scripture Reference* — II Timothy 1:5

*Name Meaning* — Agreeable or desirable

While there are numerous grandmothers mentioned in the Bible, as these cameos show, the term “grandmother” itself is only used once in the Bible, and that is in connection with Lois, the mother of Eunice, and grandmother of Timothy (see EUNICE). Lois preserves in her name an old Greek word and corresponds to Naamah and Naomi, both of which carry a similar significance. We can imagine how the nature of Lois corresponded to the implication of her name.

Lois was a devout Jewess who had instructed her beloved daughter and grandson in Old Testament Scriptures. The family lived at Lystra, and it is possible that Paul, during his visit there, had the joy of leading Lois, Eunice, and Timothy to Christ (Acts 14:6, 7; 16:1), and then wrote of the “unfeigned faith” that dwelt in all three. We have no record of Timothy’s father apart from the fact that he was a Gentile. Fausset observes, “One godly parent may counteract the bad influence of the ungodly, and win the

child to Christ” (I Corinthians 7:14; II Timothy 3:15). Paul dwells upon the faith of *the mother and grandmother alone* in the spiritual instruction of Timothy who became his son in the faith.

## LO-RUHAMA

*Scripture References* — Hosea 1:6, 8

*Name Meaning* — Not pitied or not have mercy

Nothing beyond the name of the bearer is known. She was the daughter of Hosea and Gomer and her symbolic name was applied to Israel from whom God had withdrawn His loving compassion because of the nation’s spiritual whoredoms (Hosea 2:1, 23; Romans 9:25).

## LYDIA

### THE WOMAN WHO WAS DILIGENT IN BUSINESS

*Scripture References* — Acts 16:12-15, 40; Philippians 1:1-10

*Name Meaning*—*Lydia*, who was an Asiatic, derived her name from the country on the borders of which her native city, Thyatira, was situated. It was not an original Greek name, but probably Phoenician, and a common name meaning “bending.” Readers of Horace will be familiar with Lydia as a popular name for women. There are those writers who think that it means “The Lydian,” seeing Thyatira was a city of Lydia, and that her personal name is unknown.

*Family Connections* — Scripture does not supply us with any information regarding Lydia’s background apart from the fact that she lived in Thyatira which was one of the Macedonian colonies. From names discovered on monuments it is evident that the city was the melting pot of many nations, and that the chief object of worship was Apollo, who was worshiped as the sun-god under the name of Tyrinnus. There was also a strong Jewish element in the city maintaining faith in Jehovah. Lydia, one of the prominent women of Thyatira, is presented to us in various ways, namely —

*As a Business Woman*

Thyatira was conspicuous for its many guilds which were united by common pursuits and religious rites. One of these guilds was that of *dyers*. The water of the area was so well-adapted for dyeing, that no other place could produce the scarlet cloth out of which fezzes were so brilliantly and so permanently dyed. This unique purple dye brought the city universal renown. Lydia was a well-known seller of this product (Acts 16:14), and typifies a successful business woman in a prosperous city. Ability, enthusiasm, singleness of purpose and mental acumen were hers, and she prospered greatly in an honorable and extensive calling of “selling purple.” Lydia was an example of the comparatively independent position some women attained to in Asia Minor. That she became prosperous in business is seen in that she owned a spacious home, and had servants to care for her.

#### *As a Devout Woman*

While it is not certain whether Lydia was of Jewish descent it is evident that she was a Jewish proselyte. “She worshipped God,” we are told. Often business people are so engrossed in their affairs as to have no time for religion. But Lydia, in spite of all her secular obligations, found time to worship according to the Jewish faith. Daily she made her way to the riverside where prayer was wont to be made. She knew that in order to successfully meet the stiff competition of the Philippian traders, she needed grace as well as knowledge. At that riverside prayer meeting perhaps she met other Jewish dyers, and with them eagerly waited upon the ministry of Paul and his companions.

#### *As a Seeking Woman*

Although sincerely religious, Lydia was not a Christian. She did, however, have a hunger for a deeper spiritual experience. The mind is closed against the full truth either from ignorance or prejudice and cannot discern it, or from pride and perversity and will not admit it. Ignorance was responsible for Lydia’s closed mind, but as she attended to the truth of Christ which Paul spoke of in conversational style in that small seated Jewish gathering, the light dawned, and her heart opened to receive that Christ as her Saviour. As Chrysostom puts it, “To open is the part of God,

and to pay attention that of the woman.” Her faith was born through hearing the Word of God (Psalm 119:18, 130; Luke 24:45).

### *As a Christian Woman*

As an evidence of her surrender to the claims of Christ she was baptized, “the waters of Europe then first being sacramentally used to seal her faith and God’s forgiveness in Christ.” Her conversion was declared by a public confession, and such was her enthusiasm that she immediately told her household what had happened, and all within it likewise believed and were baptized as disciples of the same Saviour. Thus Lydia had the honor of being Paul’s first European convert — the forerunner of a mighty host to honor the Lord. Becoming a Christian did not make her less of a successful business woman. Now she had Christ as her Senior Partner and with Him we can imagine that trade remained good and that much of her profit was used to assist His servants in the work of the Gospel.

### *As a Hospitable Woman*

Lydia’s transformation of life was evidenced by her eagerness to give missionaries the hospitality of her fine home. Truth in her heart was manifested in kindness to each other — as they ought to be! “Be ye kind one to another.” First came Lydia’s faith, then the winning of her servants to Christ, then her love in gracious hospitality, and finally her reception of Paul and Silas into her home after their discharge from prison, bruised and battered though they were. She was not ashamed of the Lord’s prisoners (see I Timothy 5:10; Hebrews 13:2; I Peter 4:9). While benefiting from Lydia’s generous hospitality Paul warned all present of the terrible trials before them, and then parting from godly Lydia, praised God for all she had meant to him and his companions.

### *As a Consecrated Woman*

Lydia always had “open house” for the saints of God and her home became a center of Christian fellowship in Philippi with perhaps the first Christian church being formed therein. When Paul came to write his letter to the Philippians, we can rest assured that Lydia was included in all the saints at Philippi to whom he sent his salutations (Philippians 1:1-7); and

was also in his mind as one of those women who labored with him in the Gospel (Philippians 4:3). William Ramsay thinks that Lydia may have been either Euodia or Syntyche (Philippians 4:2).

When Paul penned the triple exhortation — “Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11), we do not know whether he had his hospitable convert, Lydia, in mind. She certainly exemplified these three virtues, and grace can be ours to emulate them.

### *“Not slothful in business”*

If our business is honorable and we are diligent in it, and if we are the Lord’s, we have the assurance that if we honor Him in all transactions, He will honor us. He places no premium upon idleness or indolence. Did not Paul say that if we are not willing to work we have no right to eat?

### *“Fervent in spirit”*

Moffatt’s translation is suggestive here. He expresses it, “Maintain the spiritual glow,” which, by God’s grace Lydia was able to do as she cared for her business interests and pursuits which were no bar to her spirituality. Too often, we allow the secular to rob us of our glow. Our affection becomes too set on things below.

### *“Serving the Lord”*

Lydia not only sold her dyes — she served her Saviour. She stayed in business that she might have the money to help God’s servants in their ministry. How her generous care of Paul and Silas, and of many others, must have cheered their hearts. Lydia was, first of all, a consecrated Christian, then a conscientious business woman who continued to sell her purple dyes for the glory of God. When we reach heaven, we shall find this “seller of purple” wearing more superior garments, robes not stained even with the notable dye of Thyatira, but “washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.”

## MAACHAH

*Name Meaning* — Oppression or depression

Scripture employs this name in three different ways. It is given as the designation of a city in Syria (II Samuel 10:8; I Chronicles 19:6, 7); of three or four males (II Samuel 10:6; I Kings 2:39; I Chronicles 11:43; 27:16); and of several females distinguished thus —

1. Maachah, the son of Nahor by his concubine, Reumah (Genesis 22:24).

2. Maachah, the concubine of Caleb, son of Hezron (I Chronicles 2:48).

3. Maachah, a woman of Benjamin, the wife of Machir the Manassite who was the father or founder of Gilead. This Maachah was the daughter-in-law of Manasseh, son of Joseph and mother of Peresh and Sheresh (I Chronicles 7:12, 15, 16).

4. Maachah, the wife of Jehiel, father or founder of Gibeon, and ancestress of King Saul (I Chronicles 8:29; 9:35).

5. Maachah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur, and therefore a woman of royal rank. Taken in battle by David, she became one of his eight wives and mother of Absalom (I Chronicles 3:2; II Samuel 3:3).

6. Maachah, daughter or granddaughter of Absalom. According to common oriental usage, “daughter” must be understood as “granddaughter.” Absalom had only one real daughter, Tamar, who, if she married Uriel of Gibeah, had Maachah or Maacah as her daughter (II Chronicles 13:2). The Maachah before us became the favorite wife of King Rehoboam and mother of King Abijah of Judah (I Kings 15:1, 2; II Chronicles 11:20-22). Although a woman of strong character, her influence was on the side of idolatry. She maintained her position in the palace until the reign of her grandson, Asa, who finally degraded her for an act of peculiar infamy (I Kings 15:13; II Chronicles 15:16).

7. Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom, mother of Asa, king of Judah, who followed his forbear David in doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord (I Kings 15:10; II Chronicles 15:16).

## MAHALAH, MAHLAH

*Name Meaning* — *Sickness or disease*

This name found in several lists of pedigrees is a birth name and may have been related to the sorrows, dangers and other circumstances of



the natal hour, personal either to the mother or the child. Thus, used as a title for Psalms 53 and 88, its significance is apropos seeing that in these Psalms the writer is dwelling upon the subject of man's spiritual sickness.

1. Mahalah, the sister of Machir, and daughter of Hammoleketh, and identified as the granddaughter of Manasseh, Joseph's first-born son (I Chronicles 7:18).

2. Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, son of Hagar, sister of Nebaioth, and the woman Esau took as his third wife (Genesis 28:9).

3. Mahalath, the first of the eighteen wives of King Rehoboam who had sixty concubines. She was David's granddaughter (II Chronicles 11:18).

4. Mahlah, one of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 26:33; 27:1; 36:11; Joshua 17:3. See HOGLAH.).

## MARA

*Scripture Reference* — Ruth 1:20

*Name Meaning* — Bitter

Returning from Moab, Naomi chose this name for herself. She felt it to be appropriate to her pitiable plight (see NAOMI).

## MARTHA

### THE WOMAN WHO WAS MORE PRACTICAL THAN SPIRITUAL

*Scripture References* — Luke 10:38-41; John 11; 12:1-3

*Name Meaning* — As a Chaldee or Syriac word, Martha is the feminine of *moro* or *more*, meaning "lord," "master." We find this in the form *maran* in the well-known phrase Maran-atha, "The Lord cometh" (I Corinthians 16:22). There are those who think that *Kyria*, translated "lady" in II John, verse 1, is a proper name, the Greek equivalent of this word. Carpzov supposes that this *Kyria* was the same person as Martha of Bethany.

*Family Connections* — Of the history of Martha, the Bible tells us nothing save that she was the sister of Mary and Lazarus, and lived with them at Bethany. Some early writers have made Martha, the daughter, wife, or widow of Simon the Leper, and that on his death the house became

hers, hence the reference to the house when the resurrection of Lazarus was celebrated (Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3). Others think that Martha may have been a near relative of Simon for whom she acted as hostess. But the narrative seems to suggest the home belonged to Martha and being older than Mary and Lazarus, she carried the responsibility of all connected with household affairs in a home where “Jesus found the curse of the sojourner lifted from Him, and, in reversal of His own description of His loneliness and penury, found where to lay His head.” What strikes us forcibly is that after Jesus left His natural home at the age of thirty to enter upon His public ministry we do not read of Him returning to it for rest and relaxation. It was to the warm, hospitable home at Bethany to which He retired, for He loved the three who lived in it, Martha, Mary and Lazarus — in this order — which is something we do not read concerning His own brothers and sisters according to the flesh.

Martha and Mary seem to belong together in God’s portrait gallery, just as Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau do. Expositors also bracket the two sisters together, comparing and contrasting their respective traits. Martha, busy with household chores — Mary, preferring to sit before Jesus for spiritual instruction. Martha, ever active and impulsive — Mary, meditative and reticent. Truly drawn are the characters of these two sisters, Martha usually busy supervising the hospitality of the home, Mary somewhat indifferent to house work, anxious only to seek that which was spiritual. But we have no Scriptural warrant for affirming that the difference between the quiet, pious Mary and her industrious sister is that of the opposite of light to darkness. In the church there are vessels of gold and others of silver, but we are not justified in saying that the character of Mary is worked in gold and that of Martha in silver. These two sisters in that Bethany family had their respective, appropriate talents, and each of them served the Master accordingly.

George Matheson deprecates the effort to always bracket Mary and Martha together. Each figure stands for itself alone. These sisters have “both suffered from being uniformly viewed in combination, and the bracketing has been more injurious to Mary than to Martha. To say that Mary stands in contrast to Martha is true, but it is inadequate.” Too often

“Martha has been held up to fine scorn as a worldly-minded and jealous creature, and Mary exalted for an indifference to the duties of hospitality, concerning which, for aught that we know, she may at various times have been quite as zealous as Martha.” Let us, therefore, take these female characters separately, and beginning with Martha note how she nobly fulfilled her mission in life.

The majority of the women of the Bible are revealed to us in passing hints. None of them are as fully pictured as we would like. But when we look at Martha it does seem as if her character is more fully revealed than that of many other females. Luke gives us our first glimpse of her in “a piece of writing which is one of the marvels of literature,” as H. V. Morton expresses it. “There is not one word we could do without, yet the picture is complete, and framed, as it were, by a kitchen door. Luke tells it in ninety-eight words” (10:38-42). We have scattered evidence as to Martha’s ability to care for Jesus and the saints in the practical ways she did. Her home at Bethany was one of the few of social standing and substance with whom Jesus was on friendly terms. The hospitality afforded Him, the supper of some pretensions Martha provided for invited guests, the number and quality of friends who gathered around the sisters in the hour of their deep grief, and the wealth displayed in the anointing of Jesus, all alike bespeak of affluence. When Bethany is referred to as “the village of Mary and her sister, Martha,” the implication is that they were important figures in the community and that their home was the chief one in the village.

What, then, are the characteristics of Martha, the only Bible woman to have her name repeated, as Jesus did, when affectionately He said, “Martha! Martha!”?

### *She Was Most Hospitable*

The first glimpse we have of Martha is that of one “given to hospitality,” for we read she “received Jesus into her house”—*her house*, suggesting she was its owner. Then, when Jesus was sent for to hurry to the aid of her sick brother, Lazarus, we read that when Martha heard that Jesus was coming “she met Him,” and bade Him welcome (John 11:20, 30). And the provision of that home meant much to Jesus. One day we have Him saying, “The Son of man hath not where to lay his head,” but the next day,

“He came to Bethany . . . and Martha made him a supper.” His lonely heart found in that loving, hospitable home a woman waiting to minister to His weariness and exhaustion, and from the swift-handed care of gentle womanhood Jesus received the physical refreshment He needed. Even when there was death in the home, the energetic and practical Martha dried her tears and went out to meet the Lord of life, leaving the mystical Mary sitting in the house still weeping. What a superb life-like touch that is! “Martha went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house.”

Knowing Martha as we do, we can be assured of this fact, that whenever Jesus visited Martha’s home she never had any need to apologize for untidy rooms, a neglected household, or lack of necessary provisions. To her, home responsibilities were never a drudgery. Martha loved her home, was house-proud, kept it “spick and span,” and was ever ready to entertain her divine Guest or others seeking a refuge beneath her hospitable roof. Eugenia Price expresses this aspect of Martha’s character when she says —

The superb hospitality He found in Martha’s home was extremely important to Him. No one enjoyed her cooking more than He enjoyed it. No one found her spacious home more beautiful, more inviting. But always He had the real issues in full view. He could not be distracted from them, even by His tired body and His human need of Martha’s services.

### *She Was Meditative*

We do not read the record of Martha and Mary aright if we think that the former did all the serving, and the latter all the sitting. Too often, we think of Mary as the meditative one, and Martha as the practical one. But the next glimpse we have of Martha shows us that she was found at Jesus’ feet—“which *also* sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word.” So both sisters studied in the College of the Feet. Conversely the phrase, “she has *left* me to serve alone,” suggests that Mary joined her sister in the reception of Jesus, and worked with her for a while but betook herself to her place at Jesus’ feet. We must not for a moment feel that Mary thought serving beneath her, or that Martha had the idea that sitting was beyond her spiritual capacity. Both sat before the Master, but while Mary thought that listening was better, Martha felt that feeding Jesus was just as necessary as waiting upon His word. Martha’s practical service on His behalf was inspired by

what she had heard from His lips and came of her love for Him. As George Matheson puts it —

Every article on Martha's table was constructed out of sympathy, built of the fibres of her heart. The feast which she devised was the fruit of solicitude for Jesus and would have had no existence apart from that solicitude.

### *She Was Guilty of Complaint*

Luke, who must have gone with Jesus to the house, noticed that “Martha was cumbered about much serving.” The word “cumbered” means “distracted.” It is God's will “that we attend upon the Lord without distraction” (I Corinthians 7:35). But being the one who managed the household and served, Martha found herself drawn hither and thither by conflicting cares. She loved Jesus and wanted all in the house to do their best for Him. So we have her double complaint, with the first part of it directed to Jesus Himself, “Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?” The next half of the complaint was a command, “Bid her therefore that she help me.” This means that if Jesus were still speaking to Mary sitting at His feet, her somewhat vehement complaint must have interrupted our Lord's calm demeanor while conversing with Mary. It irritated Martha to see Mary, cool and idle, while she was busy getting the meal ready for the visitors, and most likely their accommodation for a night or so.

It may have been that Martha was “secretly vexed with herself as much as with Mary, that the latter enjoyed the privilege of hearing Jesus' word seated at His feet, while she could not persuade herself to do the same for fear that a varied enough repast should not be served up to Him.” It was as if Martha had said to Jesus, “Lord, here am I with everything to do, and this sister of mine will not lay her hand to anything; thus I miss something from Thy lips, and Thou from our hands — bid her, therefore, that she help me.”

Martha would not presume to call her sister away from Jesus to help. In her vexed state of mind she included Jesus in her rebuke, and asked Him to release Mary from the season of meditation to help out with practical duties.

### *She Was Rebuked by Jesus*

In our Lord's answer to Martha's complaint there was no condemnation of her activity, for He must have appreciated her warmhearted, practical management of the household. He knew that she was seeking to entertain Him with her best, and so lovingly warned her of the danger of forgetting amid her many cares the one thing needful. In the repetition of her name, Martha! Martha! there is an affectionate reproof. The only other example of a twofold utterance of a name during our Lord's ministry was when He said, Simon! Simon! (Luke 22:31). From glory He said Saul! Saul! (Acts 9:4). Following His repetition in which there was a gracious blending of kindness, sadness and surprise Jesus went on to remind Martha that she was careful and troubled about many things but that one thing was needful—the good part Mary had chosen and which He would not take away from her.

Jesus did not tell Martha that she had neither part nor lot in Him, or that she was allowing the cares of this life to choke the seed. He recognized that she was working for Him, but reminded her that she was permitting her outward activities to hinder her spiritually. Because of wrong emphasis regarding her necessary labor, her inner communion with her Lord was being hindered. In her restless activity Martha felt that her sister carried "her quiet, peaceful, faith-engendered mysticism" too far. H. V. Morton says that in our Lord's reply to Martha's complaint there can be traced a play of ideas, and that His words can be interpreted —

Martha, Martha, you are busy with many courses when one dish would be quite sufficient. Mary has chosen the best dish, which shall not be taken away from her.

The term "careful" refers to inward worrying anxiety. Martha was mentally solicitous, anxious with a divided mind which is forbidden (Matthew 6:22-31; I Corinthians 7:32). "Troubled," means disturbed, distracted outwardly about many things or dishes. Fausset comments that "Much serving has its right place and time (I Thessalonians 4:11; II Thessalonians 3:12; I Timothy 5:14), but ought to give place to hearing when Jesus speaks, for faith whereby the good and abiding portion is gained, cometh by hearing" (Romans 10:17). The "good part" Mary chose was bias in the direction of that which is spiritual.

*She Was Loved of the Lord*

In a marvelous way John takes up where Luke leaves off, and with his skillful brush fills in the details of the character study of Martha the “practical.” First of all, the “apostle of love” tells us that “Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus.” How different were their personalities and temperaments, yet Jesus loved each of them with an equal love! He had a human heart enabling Him to love those who loved and cared for Him. So all three in that Bethany home had a place in His heart, and were embraced in His holy kindness. Such a love must have knit those sisters and their brother more closely and tenderly together than did even the bond of natural affection. Knowing all about Martha, Jesus loved her, and she in turn ardently loved Him and shared His confidence and became the recipient of a sublime revelation of her Lord.

### *She Was a Woman of Deep Sorrow*

Sickness and death shadowed that loving, hospitable Bethany home. Lazarus fell sick, and his sister sent word to Jesus, “Behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick.” Jesus did not hurry to Bethany but abode where He was, and by the time He reached Bethany Lazarus had been in his grave four days. Was He indifferent to the call and grief of Martha and Mary? Loving them, how could He be? He wanted them to learn that His delays are not denials; that He knows the exact moment to display His power. He knew that this was a death that would result in Him being glorified as the Son of Man (11:4).

While many of the Jewish friends came to comfort grief-stricken Martha and Mary, they eagerly awaited the coming of the divine Comforter Himself and as soon as they heard He was on the way, Martha dried her tears and went out to meet Him, leaving Mary sitting disconsolate in the house. As soon as Martha met Jesus she uttered a rebuke in her usual blunt fashion, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Then uncovering the real depths of her soul she hurried on to say, “But I know, that even now [with my dear brother in the grave] whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”

What unbounded faith and confidence in her Lord’s omnipotence she had! A most remarkable conversation on the Resurrection followed between the Master and Martha. Immediately Jesus healed her broken heart by

assuring her that her brother would rise again. No explanation of His delayed arrival was given. Jesus began right away to unfold the truth He meant both His delay and the death of Lazarus to convey.

A desolate heart now, in the presence of the Prince of Life, expressed its faith in a resurrection of the dead in “the jubilee of the ages,” as Martha knew the ancient Hebrew Scriptures taught. What she was not prepared for was the revelation that the One before her was the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus sought to lead the thoughts of Martha away from her dead brother to Himself, the One in whom the yonder becomes the here. Martha thought of the resurrection of her much-loved brother as a far-off event, but Jesus asserts His claim to be in Himself the power by which the dead are raised. Martha’s reply provided the Master an occasion to present one of the most outstanding statements in the Bible as to His deity, power and authority — “I am the resurrection and the life.” How astounded Martha must have been as she listened in awe to the tremendous truths flowing from the lips of Jesus. When He challenged her with “Believest thou this?” she uttered a remarkable confession of faith which some professed Christians today, alas, cannot subscribe to —

“Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art  
The Christ,  
The Son of God,  
which should come into the world.”

Although Martha could not fathom the depths of the Master’s revelation of Himself, she believed and implied three well-known titles to Him who loved her —

*The Christ* — The One of whom glorious things had been predicted as the anointed prophet, priest and king.

*The Son of God* — A confession of His deity, for this is a title pertaining not to His office or position, but to His nature and Person as the Only Begotten of the Father.

*He that should come into the world* — This was a common description among the Jews of Him who was at once the heart of prophecy, the object of the aspirations of all illuminated and reborn souls, and the desire of all nations (Haggai 2:7; Matthew 11:3).



With her heart stilled by the mighty and mysterious message of the Master, and yet more by the calm majesty of His presence, Martha confessed her faith, and while she did not fully understand the depth of her own words, the Lord's Resurrection from the dead enabled her to understand in some measure why He came into the world. Leaving Him after such an overwhelming experience, Martha went back to the home and called her sister "secretly," perhaps for fear of the Jews. This precious touch reveals how concerned Martha was for the safety and cause of Him who had done so much for her. Mary was told that the Master asked for her, and rose up "hastily" and went to Him.

'Tis love that makes our willing feet  
In swift obedience move.

Meeting Jesus, she fell down at the feet she had loved to sit at, and between her sobs repeated the complaint of Martha, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Mary was in no way behind her sister in her love for her departed brother (11:19), her faith in the Lord Jesus (11:21), and in her belief in the final resurrection. The tears of Mary and of the mourning Jews moved the sympathetic spirit of Jesus, and affected by such sorrow He groaned in His spirit (11:33, 38). The groaning here was possibly an inner indignant feeling over the mockery of sorrow of the Jews whom He knew would try to kill Lazarus after his resurrection (11:47; 12:10), as well as kill Jesus also (11:53). It was this hypocrisy that stirred His spirit to anger so intense that it caused nerve and muscle and limb to tremble beneath its force. Then came the spectacle of "A God in Tears," for we come to the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept!"

How true it is that in every pang that rends the heart, the Man of Sorrows shares a part! Here was the evidence of His humanity.

At the grave Martha gives vent to her feelings again, and implied by her statement that as her dead brother's body had passed to corruption, it would be terrible to see him thus. But the miracle happened and the glory of God was manifested. Jesus uttered the all-commanding word, and Lazarus came forth, with a body fresher than it had been for years. Thus Jesus justified His claim to Martha of being "The Resurrection," not merely able to raise the dead, but also the Life-Power conquering the death-power in its own

domain. The great I AM is the Resurrection for in Himself He has the keys of death. Then when He spoke of Himself as “The Life,” He gave utterance to one of the most profound expressions in the Gospel (John 14:6). He is Life —the primal, all-originating, all-comprehending, everlasting life. It is in Him we live.

### *She Was a Joyful Woman*

What tears of joy both Martha and Mary must have shed as they embraced their brother risen from the dead! That physical miracle resulted in spiritual miracles, for many believed on Jesus. The last mention of Martha was at the supper in her home to celebrate the resurrection of Lazarus, and as usual she was active and served. While the guests were seated at her hospitable table, Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with costly spikenard, but Martha raised no objection. She acquiesced in her sister’s preparatory act associated with Christ’s own burial. For all that we know Martha may have had a large share in the purchase of the precious ointment, which Judas Iscariot thought was being wasted. While the service of Martha was the same, her spirit was blessedly changed. She was no longer “distracted” over her tasks, nor mentally anxious and outwardly bustling, but calm, trustful and in full agreement with her sister’s act of love and devotion to the Master. At last Martha, too, has chosen that good part which could not be taken from her. It is more than likely that Martha was present with the two Marys and other devout women at the cross and then at the empty tomb of the Saviour, and joined them as a herald to the disciples that Christ was risen indeed (Matthew 28:1-11).

What are some of the lessons to glean as we think of the life and character of Martha? One of her noblest acts was to open her home to Jesus and entertain Him. She little knew at the beginning of His visits that He was the Son of God with power, and when we receive Him into our hearts as Saviour we do not know all there is to know of His majesty and power. Eternity alone will bring us the full revelation of why and what He is.

Further, Martha represents those dear religious women who allow themselves to be distracted overmuch with their home cares and obligations. Some are all Martha, and no Mary. Others are all Mary and no Martha. The happy combination is that of Martha and Mary, the practical

and the spiritual making possible the glory of the commonplace. The church requires both the Marys and the Marthas for both are necessary to complete the Christian character (I Timothy 4:13-16; James 1:25-27). From the records we have considered we surely learn, do we not? —

1. To sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him.
2. To keep so-called secular service in its right place, conscious that both *servicing* and *learning* are duties, and *in* both we should honor God.
3. To trust the Lord with our cares, responsibilities and sorrows knowing that He is able to undertake for us. If His help appears to be delayed we must remember that He is never before His time, and that He never lags behind.
4. To offer our best to Him who broke the alabaster box of His own body that heavenly forgiveness and fragrance might be ours.

## MARY

### THE WOMAN HONORED ABOVE ALL WOMEN

*Scripture References*—Matthew 1; 2; 12:46; Luke 1; 2; John 2:1-11; 19:25; Acts 1:14

*Name Meaning* — No female has been honored as has Mary by millions of peoples in all the world who have named their daughters Mary. This Hebrew name has ever been popular in all countries of the Western world, and has altogether some twenty variations, the most conspicuous being Maria, Marie, Miriam and Miriamme. Mary is about the only feminine name that has pronounced masculine forms such as Mario, Marion and Maria. Elsdon C. Smith says that Mary heads the list of female names in America, the estimated number some ten years ago being 3,720,000 — Marie, 645,000 — Marion, 440,000 — Marian, 226,000. “The name of Mary has been given at least 70 different interpretations in a frantic effort to get away from the Biblical significance of bitterness.” Today the most common name for girls is the Biblical Mary, just as the Biblical John is for boys. In Christian lands the name of Mary is first.

The name Mary occurs 51 times in the New Testament, and its prevalence there has been attributed to the popularity of Miriamne, the last representative of the Hasmonean family, who was the second wife

of Herod I. As a name Mary is related to the Old Testament Miriam, to Mara, the name Naomi used to describe her affliction (see NAOMI), and to Marah, the name of the bitter water reached by the Israelites in their wilderness journeys. The original and pervading sense of these root-forms is that of “bitterness,” derived from the notion of “trouble, sorrow, disobedience, rebellion.” Cruden gives “their rebellion” as the name-meaning of Miriam. Mary the virgin, whom we are now considering, certainly had many “bitter” experiences, as we shall see.

*Family Connections* — According to the sacred record, Mary was a humble village woman who lived in a small town, a place so insignificant as to lead Nathanael to say, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46), but out of it, and from the womb of the peasant woman came the greatest Man the world has ever known. Mary was of the tribe of Judah, and the line of David. In the royal genealogy of Matthew and the human genealogy of Luke, Mary is only mentioned in the former, but her immediate forebears are not mentioned. She became the wife of Joseph, the son of Heli (Luke 3:23). Apart from Jesus, called her “firstborn,” a term implying that other children followed after the order of natural generation (Luke 2:7). As a virgin, Mary bore Christ in a miraculous way, and Elisabeth most spontaneously and unaffectedly gave her the most honorable of titles, “Mother of the Lord” and praised her unstintedly as one, “Blessed among women.” Later Mary was married to Joseph the carpenter and she bore him four sons and several daughters, the former being named — James, Joses, Judas and Simon, and the daughters unnamed (Matthew 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3). During His ministry, none of His brothers believed in Him. In fact, they sneered at Him, and once concluded that He was mad, and wished to arrest Him and take Him away from Capernaum (Mark 3:21, 31; John 7:3-5). But as the result of His death and Resurrection, His brothers became believers, and were among the number gathered in the Upper Room before Pentecost. None of His brothers was an apostle during His lifetime (Acts 1:13, 14).

The Roman Catholic Church, in its effort to support its erroneous dogma of Mary’s perpetual virginity, produces two theories as to “the

brethren of the Lord.” First, they were sons of Joseph by a former marriage, having thus no blood relationship with Mary or Jesus. Second, they were Christ’s cousins, sons of Mary, the wife of Alphaeus (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40). The term “brother” only implies mere kinship, just as Laban called Jacob, his sister’s son, his “brother” (Genesis 29:15). We reject, however, all theories of Rome, preferring to take the Scriptures at its face value. Mark says, “His brothers and sisters,” and we believe these to have been the natural children of Joseph and Mary, after the birth of Jesus by the Spirit’s power. Coming to the events of Mary’s life, as well as the excellencies of her character, perhaps we can group them around the following key heads —

### *Her Super-eminence*

Mary, as the mother of Jesus, is better known than any other female character in the Bible, and has been the best-known woman in the world since those days of the manger in Bethlehem. After the centuries, the statement still stands, “Blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28). While we have no word as to her beauty or pedigree, we know that she was poor. Yet in the Bible and outside of it she came to occupy the highest place among women. Madonnas abound in which eminent artists have vied in trying to imagine what she looked like. What she did possess was beauty of character. In spite of the fact that he was a Roman Cardinal, Gibbons rightly says —

The word is governed more by *ideals* than by *ideas*; it is influenced more by living, concrete models than by abstract principles of virtue. The model held up to Christian women is not the Amazon, glorying in her martial deeds and prowess; it is not the Spartan women who made female perfection consist in the development of physical strength at the expense of feminine decorum and modesty; it is not the goddess of impure love, like Venus, whose votaries regards beauty of form and personal charms as the highest type of female excellence; nor is it the goddess of imperial will like Juno. No; the model held up to women from the very dawn of Christianity is the peerless Mother of our Blessed Redeemer. She is the pattern of virtue alike to maiden, wife and mother. She exhibits virginal

modesty becoming the maid, the conjugal fidelity and loyalty of the spouse, and the untiring devotedness of the mother. . . . The influence of Mary, therefore, in the moral elevation of women can hardly be overestimated.

Although the Roman Catholic dogmatic and sentimental exaggeration of Mary's eminence has removed her from the clear and vivid picture we have of her in the gospels, we cannot fail to be impressed with her character even though we are not told more than we have in sacred history. "Highly favoured of the Lord" and having "found favour with him" (Luke 1:28, 30) surely gives her a pedestal all her own. Mary belongs to those grand majestic females inspired with the spirit of prophecy, who is capable of influencing those who become rulers of men and also the destiny of nations.

### *Her Selection*

Among all the godly Jewish maidens of that time in Palestine why did God select such a humble peasant young woman as Mary? Her choice by God to be the mother of the Incarnate Son is as mysterious as her conception of Him within her virgin womb. When the fullness of time had come for Jesus to be manifested He did not go to a city, but to a remote and inconsiderate town — not to a palace but a poor dwelling — not to the great and learned but to lowly partisans — for a woman to bring the Saviour into a lost world. The gentle and lowly Mary of Nazareth was the Father's choice as the mother of His beloved Son, and that she herself was overwhelmed at God's condescending grace in choosing her is evident from her song of praise in which she magnified Him for regarding her lowly estate, and in exalting her.

Mary, then, was selected by divine wisdom from among the humblest and it was in such an environment that the Father prepared His Son to labor among the common people who heard Him gladly. The one of whom He was born, the place where he was born were arranged beforehand by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Centuries before Mary became the mother of the Saviour of mankind, it was prophesied that it would be so (Isaiah 7:14-16; 9:6, 7; Micah 5:2, 3). Born of a peasant maiden, and having a foster-father who eeked out a frugal living as a

carpenter, Jesus was best able to sympathize with man as man, and be regarded by all men as the common property of all.

### *Her Sanctity*

Because Mary's divine Child was to be "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners," she herself had to be holy unto the Lord. When Gabriel announced to the virgin whose name was Mary that she was to bring forth a Son to be called Jesus, he recognized her spiritual fitness for such an honor when he said, "The Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:28). The woman who was to give Him birth, whose breast would be His pillow and who would nurse and care for Him in infancy, who would guide His steps through boyhood years, and surround Him with true motherly attention until His manhood, had to be a sanctified vessel and meet for the Master's use. That Mary excelled in the necessary, spiritual qualities for her sacred task is evident from the record we have of her character. Augustine says that, "Mary first conceived Christ in her heart by faith, before she conceived in the womb," and the testimony of Elisabeth expresses and stamps the whole character of the Virgin, "Blessed is she that believeth," implying that she wore the crown of faith above all others.

Mary exhibited a true and genuine piety, as well as a profound humility — the accompaniment of holiness. As we read the narrative given by Luke, to whom, as a physician, Mary could speak intimately of her profound experience, we are impressed with her quietness of spirit, meditative inwardness of disposition, admirable self-control, devout and gracious gift of sacred silence, and a mind saturated with the spirit and promises of the Old Testament. All who reverence Mary for her true and womanly character are pained by the way in which some of the early Church fathers treated her. Origen, for instance, wrote that "the sword which should pierce through her heart was unbelief." Chrysostom did not control his "golden mouth" when he accused Mary of "excessive ambition, foolish arrogance, and vainglory," during her Son's public ministry.

Advanced as she was to the highest honor that could be granted to a woman, Mary yet retained a deep sense of personal unworthiness. She would have been the last to claim perfection for herself. Born like the rest of women in sin and shaped in iniquity, she had her human faults and

needed a Saviour as others did — “My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” — but the witness of Scripture is that in circumstances of unparalleled responsibility she was a true and godly character, and in spite of any female weaknesses she may have had, she was “the most pure and tender and faithful, the most humble and patient and loving, of all who have ever borne the honored name of Mary.”

### *Her Submission*

What amazes one about the Annunciation is the way Mary received it. She was in no way credulous or skeptical. Certainly she asked intelligent questions of Gabriel as to how she could become the mother of Jesus, seeing she was a pure virgin. Following a full explanation of how the miracle would happen, she, with a tremendous feat of faith, replied, “Be it unto me according to thy word.” In these days when reason is seeking to dethrone revelation, and the Virgin Birth of Christ is rejected as a fundamental fact and treated in a mythical way, we affirm our faith in this initial miracle of Christianity. We accept by faith the Biblical statement that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit as He overshadowed the virgin. Thus, as Fausset states it —

Christ was made of the substance of the Virgin, not of the substance of the Holy Spirit, whose substance cannot be made. No more is attributed to the Spirit than what was necessary to cause the Virgin to perform the actions of a mother.

When Mary willingly yielded her body to the Lord saying, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word,” the Holy Spirit, by His gentle operation, took Deity and humanity and fused them together and formed the love-knot between our Lord’s two natures within Mary’s being. Therefore, when Jesus came forth it was as the God-Man, “God manifest in flesh,” or “that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” *Son of Mary*—humanity! *Son of God*—Deity. We may not understand the mystery of what happened when Mary yielded up her body that Christ should be formed within it, but believing that with God nothing is impossible we accept what Scripture says as to the birth of Christ. Further, there is the unanswerable argument Donald Davidson reminds us of, namely, “that Jesus Christ Himself is such a



miracle that it is no straining of faith to believe that His birth was also a miracle.” We cannot account for His perfect holiness apart from His Virgin Birth. Born of a woman, He was yet clean.

### *Her Salutation*

Taking the Lord at His word, Mary praised Him as if what He had declared had been fully accomplished. What a marvelous song of rejoicing the Magnificat is! It reveals poetic and prophetic genius of the highest order, and takes its place among the finest productions of the world. This extemporaneous ode expressing Mary's joy is indeed one of the choicest gems of Hebrew poetry. As given by Luke (1:46-55) this lyric expresses Mary's inward and deeply personal sacred and unselfish joy, and likewise her faith in Messianic fulfillment. It is also eloquent with her reverential spirit. Her worship was for her Son, for her spirit rejoiced in Him as her own Saviour.

Her "hymn" also spoke of her humility, for she was mindful of the fact that she was but a humble village maiden whose "low estate" the Lord regarded. Mary's "firstborn" Child was to say of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart," and such poverty of spirit is the first beatitude and the very threshold of the kingdom of heaven. By her "low estate" Mary not only had in mind the material poverty she was accustomed to, but also the sharpest of all poverty, the low estate of one of Royal birth. Mary never claimed anything for herself, but Christendom wrongly selected her as the object of worship and one entitled to a consideration above her Son.

### *Her Service*

What must not be forgotten is the fact that Mary not only bore Jesus, but also mothered Him for the thirty years He tarried in the poor Nazareth home. Thus from childhood to manhood she did everything a devoted mother could do for the Son whom she knew was no ordinary Man. "Hers was the face that unto Christ had most resemblance." While Mary did not neglect her motherly duties to the sons and daughters she bore Joseph, because of all she knew Jesus to be she surrounded His early years with character-forming influences. From the divine side we know that as Jesus grew "he waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him," and that He "increased in stature and in favour with God and man." But from the human side Jesus was subject to the home control of Joseph and Mary.

There were some things Mary was not able to give her Son. She could not surround Him with wealth. When she presented the divine Infant in the Temple all she could offer as a gift was a pair of pigeons — the offering of the very poor. But little is much if God is in it! Then she could not introduce Jesus to the culture of the age. Being poor, and enduring an enforced exile in Egypt, she had little of the acquired education of one like Luke who recorded her story. But she gave her Saviour-Son gifts of infinitely more value than secular and material advantages. What did she give Him?

First of all, from the human angle, she gave Him life, and He became bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, and, until He was weaned, her warm milk nourished Him.

Then, along with Joseph, she gave Jesus a home, which although it was most unpretentious, was yet the only home He knew in the days of His flesh. Because of the character of Mary, we feel that her home was permeated with mutual trust and love and sympathetic understanding.

Purity of heart was among the flowers of character Mary cultivated in the home in which Jesus—and the other children—grew up. Can it be that when Jesus left home to become a preacher, He had His pious mother in mind when He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”? Christ’s holiness was a part of His divine nature, but it was also a part of His humanity received from His mother who thought of herself as “the handmaid of the Lord.”

Another quality Jesus grew to appreciate in His mother was the sense of the presence of God. Gabriel said to Mary, “The Lord is with thee” and this divine awareness surrounded the holy Child Jesus. To Mary, God was not a being afar off, uninterested in her life or in the world. He had created but One who was so near and real. Why, because her Son was “very God of very God,” Mary was ever in the divine presence, and must have realized it.

Obedience, a trait prominent in Mary’s own life, was another quality in which she trained her Son. There is an old saying to the effect that a child who is not taught to obey his parents will not obey God. Mary submitted to the Father’s will as the channel of the Incarnation, and her holy Child grew up not only obedient to Mary and Joseph but also to His heavenly Father whose will was His delight.

Further, the one book in that Nazareth home was the Old Testament. That Mary's mind was saturated with its promises and prophecies is evident from her song of praise. Like Timothy, Jesus, from a child, was familiar with the Holy Scriptures (II Timothy 3:15). As His mother read to Him the records of the saints and prophets, how interested He must have been. Then there came the time when He knew that the Scripture testified of Him; that He came to be the Living Word.

### *Her Sorrow*

When Mary brought her infant Son to be dedicated in the Temple, the aged, godly Simeon, taking the Babe in his arms and blessing Him, said to His mother, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Mary was to experience darkness, as well as delight, as her "first-born" went out to fulfill His mission in the world. She would see Him as the "sign spoken against." Manifold sword piercings were to be hers as the mother of the Lord. We cannot imagine the bitter trials of the years of her Son's sojourn on the earth, particularly His last three and a half years ending in His death. Mary had listened to those angel voices rending the air as they hailed her new-born Baby as the Saviour of mankind, and heard the shepherds as they recounted the vision they had seen. She had witnessed the worship and homage of the wise men when, guided by a star, they came to the feet of her Child; and "she kept all these in her heart." Whether she recounted these things to her growing Child we are not told. Personally, we believe that born the Son of God, Jesus had an inner awareness of who He was, from whence He came, and what His mission in the world was to be, from His earliest conscious years. During the years that Jesus was at home, Mary must have had many an inner pang, but by divine grace both then and after, she remained silently submissive, patient and trustful, knowing that the sword, piercing her heart from time to time, was in her heavenly Father's hand.

Following the records of the gospels concerning the conversations between and about Jesus and Mary, the first event we notice took place in Jerusalem where Mary and her husband, Joseph, and Jesus had gone for the annual Feast of Passover. When the ceremonies were over Joseph and Mary, with their relatives, left for home, lost in animated gossip about each other's

affairs. Mary suddenly realized that Jesus, now twelve years of age, was not near her, and searching for Him among her kinsfolk and acquaintances could not find Him. Retracing her steps to the Temple she found Jesus where He had been left, and came upon Him in conversation with the fathers of the sanctuary. Remonstrating with her Son, Mary said, “Thy *father* and I have sought thee.”

Christ’s reply was like a sword piercing her heart: “Wist ye not that I must be about *my Father’s business?*” He had no earthly father for He came as the only babe to enter the world without any earthly father. He was born of a woman, but not of a woman *and* a man. Young though He was, He knew of His divine parentage that separated Him from others, and He expected His mother to realize what such a gulf meant. Perhaps now, for the first time, Mary understood that her Son knew God to be, in a special sense, His *only* Father. There in the Temple, Nazareth faded from the mind of Jesus and earthy ties receded into the distance. He felt only one presence — the Father above in whose bosom He had dwelt from the dateless past. Mary had left her Son behind — behind with God. Her divine, “lost” Boy was to be God’s only hope for a “lost” world.

The mixed feelings in the mother’s heart, and her almost reproachful language as she sought to charge Jesus with having disregarded His mother’s natural feelings, must have been checked by a sort of awe as she looked at Him in the Temple with rapt countenance and then heard Him say that His place was in His Father’s house. Thus the narrative develops so naturally, tenderly, and in a most human way.

Being only twelve years of age, Jesus knew that every Jewish son must be subject to his parents. He indicated this in His reply to Mary, for He “went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” For the next eighteen years He yielded to His home authority. It is felt that during this period Mary lost the protection of her husband, for if he had been alive he would have been certainly mentioned in succeeding events (Mark 3:31; John 2:1; 19:25). Joseph had been a carpenter, and on his death Jesus took over the village business. In that carpenter’s shop we have “the toil of divinity revealing the divinity of toil.” “Is not this the Carpenter?” Then Joseph’s place in the home would be filled in measure by Jesus the first-born, who would care for His mother and give her years of peace.

We now come to recorded incidents causing Mary to realize that Jesus had severed Himself once and for all from her control. There were to be further sword-thrusts as she understood that her illustrious Son was absolutely independent of her authority and of human relationships. For thirty years Mary had carried in her heart the secret of His birth and the prophecy of His Messianic mission. Now the moment of parting comes when Jesus leaves the home that has sheltered Him for so long. And the striking thing is that we do not read of Jesus ever returning to it. In the home Mary had made for her Son, God had been preparing Him (for thirty years) for a brief but dynamic ministry lasting just over three years. As Jesus began His public life, His first miracle gave Him the occasion for impressing His mother with the fact that she must no longer impose her will and wishes upon Him (John 2). There must have been a pang in Mary's heart the day Jesus left her home for good, and another heart-wound as she encountered the lack of official recognition as His mother. Whenever He met her it seemed as if He repelled her.

At the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, at which Jesus and Mary were guests, a predicament arose when the stock of wine failed, and Mary, who failed to see that the youth had become a man, sought to order her Son to meet the crisis. His mother, conscious of the supernatural power Jesus was to manifest, approached Jesus and said suggestively, "They have no wine."

Jesus replied abruptly: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." He was not disrespectful when He used the term "woman," for such was the common mode of respectful address among the Hebrews. Thus, in the original the words addressed by Jesus to His mother are free from any element of disrespect or of hardness. Mary said to the servants: "Whatsoever he saith unto you do it," and a short time later Jesus performed His first miracle. His purpose in speaking to His mother as He did was to check any undue interference on her part of His mediatorial work. As Augustine put it —

He does not acknowledge a human womb when about to work Divine works.

Although blessed among women, Mary was to learn that she must not be permitted to control the operations of the One sent of the Father. As the Son

of Mary, Jesus was willingly subject to her, but now as the Son of God, Mary must endeavor to be subject to Him. The very fact that He addressed her as *woman* and not as *mother* must have had but one meaning for her, namely, that from now on the direction of His course had entered into His Father's hands. Fausset's comment is —

The Christian's allegiance is solely to Him, not to her also: a prescient forewarning of the Holy Ghost against mediaeval and modern mariolatry.

After a double circuit of Galilee during which crowds gathered around Jesus for teaching and healing, so much so that He had little time, "to eat bread," His mother and brothers came to remonstrate with Him to take care. Had not the men of Nazareth sought to throw Him over the brow of the hill (Luke 4:29)? Now, anxious for His safety and fearing He would destroy Himself by His constant work and lack of food and rest, Mary and her sons "sought to speak with him, and to lay hold on him, for they said, He is beside himself" (Mark 3:21, 31-35). It was natural for a mother to be concerned about her Son wearing Himself out. He might fall exhausted under His load of work and perhaps sink into an untimely grave.

Thinking, perhaps, that she might save Jesus from the effects of an imprudent enthusiasm, Mary receives another mild rebuke in which He hinted that the blessedness of Mary consisted not in being His mother, but in believing in Him and in His God-given mission, and in obedience to His words. Jesus again denies any authority of earthly relatives, or any privilege from human relationships. "My mother! Who is My mother and My brothers?" Then pointing to those sitting around Him who had believed His word and followed Him, He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:46-50; Luke 11:28). In effect Jesus said, "I, in working out the world's redemption, can acknowledge only spiritual relationships." So the distance between Mary and her Son widens, and the piercings of the sword, which old Simeon had prophesied, were keenly felt. Although all generations were to call Mary blessed, yet privileged and highly favored beyond all members of the human family, here was a bitter cup of sorrow she was compelled to drink.

Mary's deepest sword piercing came when in agony she stood beneath that old rugged cross and witnessed the degradation, desolation and death of

the One whom she had brought into the world and intensely loved. She heard the blasphemies and revilings of the priests and the people, and saw the lights go out — but her faith did not die. If Calvary was our Lord's crown of sorrow, it was likewise Mary's, yet how courageous she was. Others might *sit* and watch the suffering Christ, or smite their breasts and cry, but "Mary *stood* by the cross." Should she not have been spared the agony of seeing the Son of her womb die such a despicable death? No! It was in the divine order of things that she should be found beneath that cross to receive the parting benediction of her Son and Saviour, and His committal of her to the affectionate care of the disciple whom He loved.

At the cross her station keeping  
Stood the mournful mother weeping,  
Close to Jesus to the last.  
Through her heart His sorrow sharing,  
All His bitter anguish bearing,  
Now at length the sword has passed.

At previous meetings with Christ, Mary expressed her feelings. Now, as He dies, she stands in silence. Those around her had no conception of her inner grief as she stood where her Son could see her. No Spartan mother ever displayed such fortitude as Mary manifested at the cross. How impressed we are with the valor of Mary, as the sword pierces her heart again "now that which she brought forth was dying"! Before He died Jesus recognized His human relationship to Mary, which He had during His ministry put in the background, that His higher relationship must stand out more prominently. Commending Mary to John, Jesus did not address her by name, or as His mother, but as "Woman." To John He said, "Thy mother" (John 19:26, 27). But even then she did not desert her Son. Some of His disciples forsook Him and fled, but her love never surrendered, even though her Son was dying as a criminal between two thieves.

To John, His much-loved disciple, Jesus left His mother as a legacy. In the last moments of His life, and in the crisis of His deepest sorrow, His thought was of the future of His brokenhearted mother whom John took to his own home. Thus, as Augustine expresses it, "He needed no helper in redeeming all; He gave human affection to His mother, but sought no help of man." The transference of the bond of motherhood from Himself to John



raises the question, “Why did He not entrust Mary to one of her older sons or daughters?” Evidently she was a widow, otherwise Jesus would not have called upon His beloved disciple to perform the duties of an elder brother. But why not commit Mary to His own brother who would become the elder in that Nazareth home? Perhaps in John’s home Jesus knew that Mary would find the spiritual atmosphere more suited to her thirst for God, and that in John Mary would find a soul on fire similar to His own zeal for God.

We may feel, that because of the steadfast tie of tender love and mutual understanding between Jesus and Mary, Jesus should have used a softer word and said, “Behold My mother!” and not “thy mother.” Was this the final sword thrust Simeon had predicted some thirty-three years before? No! He knew that Mary would be a true mother in Israel to John, and that he, in turn, would care for the blessed among women in her declining years. Further, as Donald Davidson reminds us, “In that moment the tremendous truth must at last have dawned upon Mary, that He who hung upon the cross was not her son; that before the world was He was; that so far from being His mother, she was herself His child.” On the morning of His Resurrection Jesus did not appear first to Mary His mother, but to Mary Magdalene — surely an evidence of His matchless grace.

The last glimpse we have of Mary is a heartwarming one. We find her among the group of believers gathered together in the upper chamber. She is mentioned, not first in the list, before the apostles, where the Roman Catholic Church places her, but *last*, as if she were of less significance than they (Acts 1:12-14). Her Son is alive forevermore, and life has changed for her. So she takes her place among those awaiting the coming of the Spirit to equip them for the beginning of the Christian community. Mary was present in that upper room not as an object of worship, not as the directress of the infant church, but as a humble suppliant along with the rest, including her sons, who, by this time, were believers. So the last mention of Mary is a happy one. We see her praying, along with her sons whom she had possibly led into a full-orbed faith, as well as the other disciples who had met to pray and await the gift of Pentecost.

This is the last glimpse we have of Mary. Her name is not mentioned again in the rest of the New Testament after the upper room appearance, which plainly teaches that she did not have the superhuman powers the

Roman Catholic Church has assigned to her. With the gradual development of Roman Catholicism from the third or fourth century, there emerged the Mariolatry so foreign to the Scriptural presentation of Mary as the most tender and lovable of women, yet a woman still. If Rome had only observed the reticence of the New Testament concerning Mary, it would not have been guilty of blinding the eyes of multitudes to the ineffable glory of the One who, though the Son of Mary, came as the express image of the Father and the only Mediator between God and men.

Mary does not stand apart from the rest of the sinful human race, born immaculate and remaining sinless throughout her life. As a member of a fallen race she recognized her need of deliverance from sin and guilt when she sang, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God *my* Saviour." The "culture" of Mary does not have its origin in the Bible for "there is not a word there from which it could be inferred; not in the Creeds, nor in the fathers of the first five centuries." Titles such as *The Tower of David; The Arch of Holy Alliance; The Door of Heaven; The Queen of the Apostles, Confessors and Martyrs; The Co-adjutrix with God in the work of salvation*, as applied to Mary, are the invention of Rome. Mary never magnified herself — only her Lord. Her glorification as the object of worship, her function as an intercessor through whom prayers must be addressed to Christ, her perpetual care of Christ and her present influence over Him, are the false creations of Rome. Therefore, "Mariolatry belongs, historically, to unauthorized speculation; and psychologically, to the natural history of asceticism and clerical celibacy." The elevation and worship of Mary is most unscriptural and idolatrous. The Bible portrays her as a woman "blessed among women," but only as a mere faithful, humble, godly woman. Rome's exaltation of Mary consists largely of fictitious and unreliable legends and dogmas. The true Christian portrayal of the mother of Jesus is that to be found only in the gospels in which the Master taught that man has access to God *only* through His all-sufficient mediatorial work (John 14:6).

MARY MAGDALENE  
THE WOMAN WHO HAD SEVEN DEVILS

*Scripture References* — Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1-19; Luke 8:2; 24:10; John 19:25; 20:1-18.

*Name Meaning* — For significance of Mary see the previous study. The present Mary is distinguished from all others of the same name as “The Magdalene,” which identifies her with her place of birth, just as Jesus was called “The Nazarene” because of His association with Nazareth. Magdala means “tower” or “castle,” and in the time of Christ was a thriving, populous town on the coast of Galilee about three miles from Capernaum. Dye works and primitive textile factories added to the wealth of the community. It may be that “The Magdalene” was connected with the industry of the town for it would seem as if she was not without means, enabling her to serve the Lord with her substance.

*Family Connections* — We have no record of Mary’s parentage, her marital status or her age. That she was free to follow Jesus in His journeyings would suggest that she had no home obligations.

Before we outline Mary’s life and character, we deem it necessary to disassociate ourselves from those who connect her with the unnamed woman “which was a sinner.” Luke, who knew her, wrote about this woman (Luke 7:37). The Jewish *Talmud* affirms that Magdala had an unsavory reputation, and because of the harlotry practiced there was destroyed. Doubtless it was from this tradition, and from the fact that Luke’s first reference to her follows the story of the sinful woman, that the idea developed that Mary was a prostitute, but there is not an iota of genuine evidence to suggest such a bad reputation. Those theologians who describe her as a profligate do her an injustice, just as calling institutions for the care of fallen women “Magdalen Homes” does. One writer defines Magdalen as “the inmate of a female penitentiary,” but the Bible depicts Mary as a pure, though deeply afflicted woman before she met Jesus. To suggest that she was dissolute because she was possessed by seven devils, is to affirm that every insane person is depraved. There is no word whatever in the writings of the Christian Fathers, whose authority stands next to the apostles, as to Mary having a foul reputation.

The Roman Catholic Church was guilty of fastening this slander upon Mary Magdalene when at Naples, in 1324, it established its first “Magdalen

House” for the rescue and maintenance of fallen women. Great masters, taken up with the idea that Mary was formerly a courtesan, have provided art galleries with paintings of her as a voluptuous female. The name of the woman taken in adultery was graciously withheld, but with every reference to “The Magdalen” her name is given, and after her liberation from demonic influence appears as one of the most faithful and beautiful characters of the Bible. The wide acceptance of the tradition that she was a reformed prostitute is utterly baseless. Mary was only a sinner in the sense that we all are, having been born in sin and shapen in iniquity. “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Having sought to relieve Mary’s name of the foul stigma attached to it, let us now outline her career.

She is mentioned fourteen times in the gospels, and from references to her we can see clearly what she did and how she did it. A striking feature in eight of the fourteen passages is that Mary is named in connection with other women, but she always heads the list, implying that she occupied the place at the front in service rendered by godly females. In the five times where she is mentioned alone, the connection is with the death and Resurrection of Christ (Mark 16:9; John 20:1, 11, 16, 18). In one instance her name comes after that of the mother and the aunt of Jesus. She stood close by the cross with these women, but because of their relation to Jesus it would not have been fitting to put her name before theirs (John 19:25). No woman, however, superseded Mary in her utter devotion to the Master.

### *In Demonic Bondage*

Although Mary was a woman of high standing and comfortable circumstances, she suffered from the malady of periodic insanity. For “the seven devils” we should read seven *demons*. There is only one devil — and one is more than enough — but there are legions of demons, or roaming fallen angels, who possessed men and women — and still do! Seven is a mystic number suggesting “completeness,” implying that when the evil spirits dominated Mary the suffering was extremely severe. Afflicted with nervousness, she may have been the victim of violent epilepsy, and when Jesus saw her with her peace of mind and control of will destroyed she must have been a revolting object to look at with her disheveled hair, glaring eyes and sunken cheeks. Her demonic possession did not affect her morals, only

her mind. Badness of character did not ensue, only the derangement of her mental faculties. Sometimes “love — misplaced and guilty love — has destroyed many women, first leading to insanity, and then to suicide. . . . Sometimes, too, women become victims of insanity by inheritance.” What weakness Mary may have had, making it easy for demons to enter her, we are not told. This we do know, they met their Master in Him who came to destroy the works of the devil.

### *A Liberated Soul*

Luke links Mary with Joanna and Susanna and “many others” as those healed of evil spirits and infirmities by Jesus. As Mary is referred to as having “seven demons” her condition must have been worse than the rest. But the moment Jesus’ compassionate eyes saw the wild-eyed and cringing woman of Magdala, He saw in her the ministering angel who would be a blessing to His own heart and to others. In His authoritative voice He commanded the tormenting demons to come out — and stay out — of her. “Back! back! to your native hell, ye foul spirits of the pit,” and the miracle happened. Her deranged and nerve-racked mind became as tranquil as the troubled lake Jesus calmed. Sanity returned, the rosy tint was restored to her cheeks, and she was made whole. Now, “clothed and in her right mind,” she was ready to become one of the most devoted woman disciples of Him to whom she owed so much. That she was deeply grateful for physical and mental healing is shown by what she endeavored to do for her Deliverer and His cause. Saved from the terrible power of hell, she gave of her best to Him who had fully emancipated her from demonic possession. When Christ saved her, He liberated the highest virtues of sacrifice, fortitude and courage.

### *In Journeyings Oft*

Delivered, Mary became a disciple. Freed from satanic bondage she became harnessed to the chariot of the Lord, and her personal ministrations, along with those of other women who had been healed, greatly aided Jesus in His missionary activities as He went from place to place preaching and teaching His message. Grateful, these women became generous, ministering unto Him of their substance. Mary left her home in Magdala to follow

Jesus. Constantly on the move as Jesus and His disciples were, there were many details in connection with their personal comfort and well-being requiring attention to which these women could see. Quietly and effectively Mary would do what she knew needed to be done. Further, money was necessary for the Master's campaign work. We never read of Him or His disciples asking for money, yet funds were necessary. Much of it came from Mary and other women like her who had been so richly blessed of the Lord. Alas, not all who have benefited are grateful! Christ once healed ten lepers, but only one came back to thank Him for His grace and power. Emancipated, Mary helped Jesus to evangelize as she willingly gave of her substance to help meet His needs. How much her personal presence and service must have meant to Jesus.

### *At the Cross*

Mary went with her Lord into the shadows, and is thus represented as being among those who followed Jesus on His last sad journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. And as they followed, they still "ministered unto Him." Mary was present with the other holy women at the mock trial of Jesus. No longer is He on the road with crowds gathering and hanging on His words. Fearless in His declaration and denunciations, He is arrested and tried for His life. Some of His intimate friends had deserted Him, but Mary and her band did not forsake Him. The poet reminds us —

Not she with traitorous kiss her Master stung,  
Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue;  
She, when Apostles fled, could dangers brave,  
Last at the Cross, and earliest at the grave.

Mary was present in Pilate's Hall and saw and heard the religious leaders clamoring for the blood of Him who was so precious to her heart. She listened as Pontius Pilate pronounced His death sentence of crucifixion although he had found no fault in Him. She witnessed and wept as Jesus left the hall to be spat upon and ill-treated by the crowd thirsting for His blood. Then she saw Him led out to Calvary's fatal mount to be nailed to a tree.

Mary was one of the sorrowing group of holy women who stood as near as they could to comfort Jesus by their presence in the closing agonies of the crucifixion (Luke 23:49). Mary listened with a broken heart to His bitter

cries and watched through those dread hours until at last the Roman soldier thrust his spear into the Saviour's side and declared Him dead. In the renowned picture gallery in the Louvre, there is a painting of desolation, despair and love. The artist has depicted the night of the crucifixion. "The world is wrapped in shadow; the stars are dead; and yet in the darkness is seen a kneeling form. It is Mary Magdalene with loving lips and hands pressing against the bleeding feet of Christ." Yes, she was there when they crucified her Lord.

No sooner had Jesus dismissed His spirit than the question arose among the Marys at the cross, "How could they secure that blood-stained body, and prepare it for burial?" Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, to the relief of the sorrowful mourners, had come for that very purpose. The artist Rubens, in his masterpiece, *The Descent of the Cross* represents Mary Magdalene, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, assisting Joseph and Nicodemus in receiving the battered body from the tree, preparing it for burial, then placing the precious remains in the new tomb in the garden. Mary Magdalene remained "sitting over against the sepulchre" and "beholding" until Joseph had laid the Lord's body away (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55).

### *In the Garden*

Last at the cross, where Jesus died as the Lamb of God, Mary Magdalene was also the first at the garden tomb to witness the most important event in world history and the pivotal truth of Christianity, namely the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. What a great honor God conferred upon the faithful Mary Magdalene in permitting her to be the first witness of that Resurrection! She was at the tomb early on that first Easter morning, and as the light of earliest day filtered across Jerusalem, she peered into the cave. Seeing it was empty, she wept. Then John, the inspired genius who wrote in unusually terse Greek, describes what happened in a way unparalleled in narrative literature. Finding the grave empty Mary rushed to Peter and John, and most excitedly said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre and we know not where they have laid him." These disciples returned with Mary Magdalene to the tomb and found that what she had told them was true, then departed "to their own homes." But not

Mary! She stood at the door of the sepulcher weeping, and as she wept two angels appeared, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Seeing her distressed and afraid, they tenderly asked, “Woman, why weepest thou?” Tremblingly she replied, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”

What pathos is in the word “*my Lord*” — my very own Lord, the One who did so much for me, and whom I loved to serve. Turning away she saw a figure, and thinking He was the gardener answered in reply to the question: “Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?” — in words most courageous — “Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and *I will take him away.*”

Mary, so full of her Lord, felt that all others must know Him whose body was missing from the tomb. “She never stopped to think of her own weakness as a woman: love nerves had to take it for granted she is able for the blessed task of taking the sacred body away.” Then one word from the Voice she now recognized uttered her name, “Mary”! That old familiar tone gripped her heart, and instantly she cried “Rabboni!” which was her strongest expression of reverent love. Casting herself before the risen Lord, she would have clasped His feet, but He said, “Touch me not!” Thrilled at having Jesus alive again, Mary’s love was of a nature which leaned upon the human presence of Jesus. Along with the other disciples, Mary, too, had to learn how “to rise to a higher and at the same time a nearer, but spiritual communion with Him. . . . Her earthly affection needed to be elevated into a heavenly love” (John 20:25-29).

Then Jesus commissioned Mary to become the first herald of His Resurrection. She had to go and announce the greatest good news ever proclaimed, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God.” We can imagine with what speed Mary ran back through the gates of Jerusalem to tell the disciples that their Lord who had died was alive forevermore. Mary had stayed near to Christ in His journeyings, and had cared for many of His human needs until His corpse was laid in the tomb. He now rewarded her with a closer knowledge of things divine, and she was given an honor that cannot be taken away from her, namely, that of being the first among men or women to see the Risen Lord, and to receive the first message from His



lips (John 20:18). Although this is the last glimpse we have of Mary Magdalene, we have no hesitation in assuming that she was present with the women (Acts 1:14) who assembled with the apostles in the upper chamber for prayer and supplication, and to await the coming of the promised Spirit. Upon that historic day, Pentecost, when a bequeathed Guide and Comforter came, Mary must have been caught up by His power and made an effective witness of her risen and now ascended Lord.

There are one or two important lessons we can learn from Mary of Magdala. First of all, in her we see what Christ is able to do for a woman. When He first met her she was an afflicted, tormented soul, but Jesus healed her of her insanity and also of the maladies of her soul, and made her His loyal and sacrificial follower. Have we been cleansed of demon-like sins? This is the application Alexander Whyte makes in his study of this Mary: “We do not know just what Mary Magdalene’s seven scars were. But for our learning, Dante’s own seven scars are written all over his superb autobiographical book —

Seven times

The letter that denotes the inward stain,  
He on my forehead, with the truthful point  
Of his drawn sword inscribed. And “Look,” he cried,  
When enter’d, “that thou wash these scars away.”

John Bunyan has the same number at the end of his *Grace Abounding*

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I find to this day these seven abominations in my heart. Pride, envy, anger, intemperance, lasciviousness, covetousness, spiritual sloth — these were Dante’s seven scars on his sanctified head. . . . It is better to enter into Heaven with seven devils excavated out of our hearts as with a knife, than to have them gnawing in our hearts to all Eternity.

A further lesson is that of what a woman can do for the One who has done so much for her. Once Mary was healed and saved, she practiced her faith in following Jesus and ministering to Him and His disciples of her substance and witnessing to His death and Resurrection to others. Are there not a thousand ways in which converted and consecrated women can serve the Master acceptably. Mary’s gratitude and love manifested itself in

devotion to Christ. She owed much, gave much, loved much, served much. Has He expelled Satan from our lives? If so, are we loving and serving Him to the limit of our capacity, daily witnessing to the power of His Resurrection?

MARY OF BETHANY  
THE WOMAN EVERLASTINGLY REMEMBERED

*Scripture References*—Given under MARTHA

*Name Meaning* — See material under MARY

*Family Connections*—Given under MARTHA

Comparisons and contrasts between the two sisters have already been noticed. Both loved the Master and were loved by Him. Martha sat at His feet but “her love and piety alike found adequate and satisfying expression at all times in the ordinary kindly offices of hospitality and domestic service.” Mary also sat at Jesus’ feet and was content to linger there because her disposition and inward, silent brooding made it hard for her to be at home in the world of affairs. Bustling around a house was not native to her deep emotion. In this cameo of her, then, let us try to sketch her as she was, as an individualist.

At the outset we affirm our disagreement with those expositors who connect Mary of Bethany with the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:36-50 with John 11:2; 12:1-8). Certainly both anointed the feet of Jesus, but the language used to describe the sinful woman is utterly out of harmony with what we know of the commendable character of Mary. The former’s anointing expressed the gratitude of a forgiven and cleansed penitent — the latter’s anointing was an act of gratitude for a much-loved brother brought back from the dead. Although the two anointings had the same outward form, they were not duplicates. (See further the chapter on NAMELESS WOMEN.) We likewise dissociate Mary of Bethany from Mary Magdalene. There are those writers who suggest that these two Marys are the same — that once the Magdalene was fully emancipated from demonic possession which drove her from home, she returned and became the Mary who loved to sit at the feet of Jesus. But we hold that Mary of Bethany cannot be identified with any other New Testament woman of the same name. Among the women mentioned in the gospels she occupies a prominent position, for

she it was who won the golden commendation from the Lord she dearly loved when He said, “She hath done what she could” (Mark 14:8).

There are four profiles of Mary who occupied her own peculiar place among the inner groups of Christ’s friends. She was a woman who cultivated deep, spiritual inner thoughts, and who was busier internally than she was externally. This inner world charmed her more than it did her sister Martha, as the particulars we have of her testify. She was —

### *A Spiritual Scholar*

More than anything else she loved to sit quietly and peacefully at Christ’s sacred feet, and become lost in His unfolding of the truth. Mary, more than any other individual in the New Testament, was associated with His feet, betokening her humility, reverence and hunger for spiritual knowledge. She sat at His feet as a disciple, eager to learn of His will and word; fell at His feet in worship and grief; anointed His feet with precious ointment and wiped His feet with her lovely long hair — all of which is in keeping with her spiritual character.

Believing Jesus to be the Prophet, she drank of the teachings He alone could impart as “the Truth.” Paul wrote about being “brought up at the feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3). Like his Master before Him, the apostle sat in the midst of learned men, learning and answering questions (Luke 2:46). David sat before the Lord, and listened for His voice (I Chronicles 17:16). Usually the rabbis, or teachers, sat on a high chair, and their scholars on the ground, and so they were literally at their master’s feet. Probably this was Mary’s position as with all teachableness she hearkened unto the Lord. George Matheson says, “We see Martha preparing the feast; we see Mary sitting quiescent at the Master’s feet and listening to His words, and we say, ‘The one is an outward worker and the other an internal mystic whose sympathies are all beyond the veil.’ Mary’s sympathies are nothing of the kind. Both sisters made their contribution to the Master.” But the “good part” Mary chose was that of a fuller appreciation of the necessity of mystic communion with her Lord. It was this glimpse of Mary that Charles Wesley had in mind when he wrote —

Oh, that I could forever sit,

Like Mary, at the Master's feet:  
Be this my happy choice:  
My only care, delight and bliss,  
My joy, my Heaven on earth be this,  
To hear the Bridegroom's voice.

### *A Sorrowful Sister*

Without doubt, both Martha and Mary loved their brother Lazarus, but we do not read of Martha weeping when death claimed him. We have mention only of Mary's tears. Yet we cannot but believe that Martha's grief was as deep and poignant as that of her sister. When word came that Jesus was on His way to their shadowed home, Martha arose and quickly ran to meet Him, but Mary sat at home nursing her sorrow. Yet when Martha had met Jesus, she came to Mary and told her of the desire of Jesus to see her. Mary arose and went out with the same haste to meet Him, and when she saw Him she threw herself at His feet and wept, and repeated the complaint of Martha, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Jesus, deeply moved by the tears of Mary, mingled His warm tears with hers. Why did Jesus groan in spirit at the weeping of Mary? The term "groaning in himself," actually means, "He breathed indignation." What was He indignant about? Could it have been the fact that death was a blot upon creation, and that in Lazarus death had claimed one whom He loved? How privileged Mary was to witness His sense that death ought not to be (John 11:28-37), even though at the time she did not understand why Jesus had allowed her brother to die!

### *An Effective Evangelist*

We are apt to forget the mighty effect of the resurrection of the dead upon the unconverted Jews who knew the Bethany family. The record says, "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him" (John 11:45; 12:9-11).

It would have been a wonder that any should not have believed after such a display of miraculous power. These Jews who came to Mary were those who had come to comfort Mary and Martha at the burial of Lazarus.

They had remained with Mary after Martha had left the house to meet Jesus, and they followed Mary when she herself went to see Him. Whether or not she witnessed to these Jews of the glorious truths she had heard from the lips of Jesus we do not know. What is evident is that her brother was alive again, and such a miracle convicted their hearts of their need of a spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin. So “they believed on him.”

### *A Grateful Giver*

To honor Christ for the return of Lazarus from the grave a feast was prepared for the rejoicing friends in the house of Simon — a common name at that time. He had been a leper, but had been healed and converted as the result of his contact with the wonder-working Christ (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 11:1; 12:1-11). The marginal note in the Scofield Reference Bible reads —

As Martha stands for service, and Lazarus for communion, so Mary shows us the worship of a grateful heart. Others before her had come to His feet to have their need met; she came to give Him His due. Though two of the evangelists record her act, John alone gives her name.

What impresses us about the record of that feast of gratitude is the absence of any conversation. Mary said nothing! While the others sat at the table, Mary was at her accustomed place at the feet of Jesus. “In Martha’s house Mary listens, and is silent; at her brother’s grave she weeps and is silent; in the house of Simon she works and is silent.” In fact, the only time Mary is found saying anything at all, was when she repeated the complaint of Martha (11:32). Silent love can be a mighty force. The greatest work in the world is not accomplished by the best talkers. As to the nature of her offering —

### *It Was Costly*

Mary had been the recipient of priceless truth from the lips of Jesus, now she is lavishly communicative. The box of spikenard, treasured up for such an occasion (John 12:7), was worth 300 pence, a great sum in those days. “A penny a day” wage (Matthew 20:2), means that 300 pennies would cover her wages for almost a year. Mary made that supper a sacrament as “she mingled divine poetry with the prose of the situation by anointing

Jesus with a bottle of expensive spikenard.” When Mary sat at His feet and heard His word she recognized Him as the *Prophet*; when in her grief she fell at His feet she knew Him to be the sympathizing *High Priest*; now as she anoints His feet she knows Him to be the *King* at whose girdle could be found the keys of death and Hades. Had He not triumphed over death and raised her beloved brother? No wonder the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. The odor of Mary’s loving service has filled the whole world.

### *It Was Criticized*

While the odor of the spikenard was sweet to many, it smelled of waste to others. Judas with his calculating mind quickly figured up the cost of it and called it wasted on Jesus. Its price would have fed many poor people. The word Judas used for waste actually means “perdition.” A “fit question,” says Bengel, “on the lips of the son of perdition” (John 17:12). Sordid Judas thought only of the money aspect of Mary’s expensive gift, because he kept his heart in the money bag he carried which “by office he bare, and by theft left bare.”

### *It Was Commended*

As our Lord quickly replied to the pious talk of Judas, He replied also to the reflection upon Mary by declaring that she had done a good work. Here was the charm of her service — she poured out the costly ointment for the sake of her Lord. “She hath wrought a good work on *me*” (Mark 14:6). Had she had more spikenard she would have given it, but she gave to the fullest extent of her ability — “what she could” (Mark 14:8).

Selfishness seeks a gift,  
Love loves to give;  
Love gives itself away  
Love loves to live.

Love’s grand munificence  
Counts not the cost;  
Feeling, tho’ nought is left,  
Nothing is lost.

## *It Was Commemorative*

Mary had often heard Jesus speak of His coming death and burial, and her alabaster box of precious ointment had been treasured up for the anointing of His body. But now she brings it out and uses it to dedicate the Lamb of God to the sacrifice He was about to make. “Against the day of my burying hath she kept this” — and Jesus appreciated the fragrance of that ointment while He was alive. Its perfume would have been lost upon His corpse. The grateful Christ went further and said, “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, then this also that she hath done shall be told for a memorial of her.” He erected a memorial to Mary who gave all she could, more enduring than many of the proud monuments that have perished with time. Mary’s love and unselfish goodness have been immortalized.

What are some of the lessons to be gleaned from the life and character of Mary of Bethany? She was a woman of vision but was by no means a visionary. She not only sat at the feet of Jesus, but also anointed them with the best she had and wiped them with her hair. She was practical as well as spiritual. If we have learned that “our higher place is lying low at our Redeemer’s feet,” then like Mary, our vision will become a vocation. Moses wrote of the fourfold privilege of all the saints —

He loved the people;  
All His saints are in His hand:  
They sat down at His feet;  
Every one shall receive of Thy words (Deuteronomy 33:3).

Mary gave to the limit of her love and ointment. Will the Lord say of us when we see Him face to face — You have done what you could? Do we constantly anoint Him as the Chosen of our hearts? Are His feet perfumed with our richest gifts? The world may count a life wholly consecrated to Him as a life wasted, but only the life abandoned to His sway is the one richly reproductive in the saint’s own life and also in the sinful world in which he lives.

## MARY, THE MOTHER OF JAMES AND JOSES

We are told practically nothing about this particular Mary, save that she was the mother of two children one of whom Jesus chose as an apostle, namely, James (Matthew 27:55-61; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1; Luke 24:10, see Luke 23:49-56). Some writers identify her as “the other Mary” (Matthew 27:61), or as the wife of Cleopas or Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3; Luke 24:18), or as a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. We do know that she was one of the women who followed Jesus and, having sufficient wealth, ministered unto Him and His disciples in material things thereby assisting them in their work (Luke 8:2, 3). The narrative suggests that her two fine sons likewise followed her from Galilee to Jerusalem. “It is interesting to note that two mothers with their sons joined the company of the disciples and that three out of the four became members of the apostolic group.” We feel that Mary’s sons were older than Jesus else they probably would not have dared to interfere with Him by force (Mark 3:21). These facts are evident —

Mary was among the women from Galilee who followed Jesus to Jerusalem there to witness His death on the cross (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40).

She was likewise a spectator at the tomb and fled when told by the angels that Jesus was not there (Mark 16:8).

She was among the first to bear spices to anoint the dear dead body of her Lord, and with joy went forth to declare that He was alive forevermore.

She was the mother of a son who became an apostle, known as “James the Less,” or James the Little to distinguish him from the more conspicuous apostle of the same name. She thus sacrificed both her sustenance and her son for the service of the Master. Motivated by the inner urge of gratitude to Him for all He had done for her, she became generous, faithful, loving and true. Hers was a simple faith and a trusting love. Thousands of Christian women down the ages have been likened to her because she loved her Lord and served Him unobtrusively. Kuyper, comparing this Mary with Mary Magdalene by an analogy of our two types of letters, calls Mary Magdalene “a vowel” and Mary, the mother of the apostle, “a consonant.”



The same analogy holds if we compare Peter with James the Less. We should then name Peter, who always took the initiative, the vowel, and James, who always remained in the background, the consonant. This Mary and those other quiet women were very much like James. They were consonants, they harmoniously joined in with the song of love that was sung for Jesus, but they were not originally creative.

Then applying this analogy and pointing out that the world generally deems quiet, unobtrusive and ordinary service somewhat tame and unambitious, Kuyper goes on to remark —

But God's scale of values weighs differently than ours does. In our alphabet, God gave us five vowels and twenty-one consonants. And He has given the human race very few people to assume the solo parts. To the many others He has granted only the capacity to harmonize when others lead in creation's hymn of love and praise. That situation is quite appropriate. Only in that way can a supreme harmony be attained. A company of successive soloists would be repulsive to our aesthetic taste.

The question is, Am I content to be a *consonant*?

### MARY, MOTHER OF JOHN MARK

Among the Marys mentioned in the New Testament, Mary, the mother of Mark who wrote the second gospel, is spoken of but once (Acts 12:12 — read 12:1-19), yet this brief description of her is suggestive of her life and labors. She was probably the aunt or sister of Barnabas, the one-time companion of Paul (Colossians 4:10), and such a relationship accounts for Barnabas' choice of Mark as his companion — a selection over which Paul and Barnabas parted. Further, being related to Mary would account for the leadership among the saints gathering in her spacious home. Evidently the family belonged to Cyprus, hence the choice of such by Barnabas as the first station in his journeyings (Acts 4:36; 13:4). Sir William Ramsay holds that the narrative of Mary in the Acts was by Mark, which would account for the details of his mother's large house becoming a well-known center of Christian life and worship. There is a legend to the effect that this same house was the scene of a still more sacred gathering when, in its upper room, Jesus observed the Lord's Supper on the night of His betrayal.

It was to Mary's home that Peter found his way after his miraculous escape, for he knew that a company of believers had gathered there to pray for his release. Peter had a peculiar affection for the godly home. He called Mark, "his son" (I Peter 5:13) — a spiritual son, having led him to yield his life to the Saviour. The way in which the saints met in Mary's home bespeaks her tried steadfastness and the bond of intimacy that existed between them. That Rhoda was one of the maids indicates that the household was considerably large, implying that Mary was a widow with means to maintain such a commodious home. As Barnabas her relative gave up his land for Christ, Mary gave up her Jerusalem home to be used as an infant church.

Mary was a woman of sterling qualities and was loyal to her Christian ideals. At that time Christians were a persecuted sect, yet she faced the consequences of yielding up her home as a center of spiritual power and influence, and was self-sacrificing in time, effort and money to serve the Lord. It has been suggested that young Rhoda who went to open the door for Peter was hesitant thinking perhaps it was the soldiers of Herod who had come to arrest some of the homeless Christian friends whose benefactress and patron Mary had become.

As for Mark the evangelist, her son, he was deeply attached to his mother which was probably one reason why he returned to Jerusalem from Perga (Acts 13:13). He wanted to be nearer the one who had meant so much in his life. Doubtless he derived something of Mary's straightforward and decided character so prominent in the gospel he wrote portraying Jesus as the lowly servant of God.

## MARY OF ROME

In Paul's portrait gallery of those saints in the church at Rome, to whom he was deeply indebted and to whom he sent warm greetings, another Mary has honorable mention. All we know about her is in Paul's personal salutation, "Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour upon us" (Romans 16:6). Among the twenty saints Paul designated by name, Mary is the only one with a Jewish name. It is quite likely that this Roman lady adopted this name, with its hallowed associations, at her conversion and baptism, and such a combination exemplifies how Christianity binds all in one bond of

fellowship. If she was a Jewess she yet labored for the uplift of Rome — Judah's oppressor.

How Mary labored energetically for Paul and his co-workers we are not told. Evidently she had a capacity peculiar to herself for lightening the apostle's heavy load, and furthered thereby the cause of the Lord. As another Roman female, Persis, is mentioned in the list as having "laboured much in the Lord" (16:12), Kuyper was led to suggest that Mary and Persis were evangelists who were employed in making the gospel known in the same way as the Salvation Army uses women today. These godly women exerted their influence in every possible way to aid Paul in making Christ known. Whatever personal gifts, or means, they possessed were dedicated to the Lord whose saving grace they had experienced. Paul thus commends them for their sacrificial and unstinted service.

#### MATRED

*Scripture References* — Genesis 36:39; I Chronicles 1:50

*Name Meaning* — Thrusting forward or expulsive

This name belonged to the mother of Mehetabel, who, through her daughter's marriage to Hadad or Hadar became the mother-in-law of the last of Edom's kings. The LXX Version designates Matred as a male — a son, not daughter of Mezahab.

#### MEHETABEL

*Scripture References* — Genesis 36:39; I Chronicles 1:50

*Name Meaning* — Whom God makes happy or benefited of God

The daughter of Matred, Mehetabel became the wife of Hadar or Hadad who was apparently the last of the ancient kings of Edom. A male in the time of Nehemiah bore this same name (6:10-13).

#### MERAB

*Scripture References* — I Samuel 14:49; 18:17, 19

*Name Meaning* — Increase or multiplication

This is the name of King Saul's eldest daughter. In II Samuel 21:8 *Michal* should read *Merab*, as the context shows. Merab was promised by

her father Saul to David for his victory over Goliath, but was finally given to Adried, the Meholathite (II Samuel 21:8) by whom she had five sons, all of whom were subsequently hanged by the Gibeonites as a revenge for Saul's bloodthirsty zeal against them (II Samuel 21:9). Thus Saul's sin recoiled on himself and his children (Exodus 34:7). Commentators suggest that possibly Merab died comparatively young and that her children were given over to her sister Michal who, being childless, cared for them as if they were her own (II Samuel 6:20-23; 21:8).

### MESHULLEMETH

*Scripture Reference* — II Kings 21:19

*Name Meaning* — Those who repay or retribution

This is the name given to the daughter of Harez of Jotbah — the earliest instance of adding the birthplace of a queen-mother. Meshullemeth became the wife of Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, and mother of Amon, who succeeded his father Manasseh as king of Judah. After her name we read that her son, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." How much, we wonder, did his mother's influence contribute to his departure from the Lord and his disobedience to His commands?

### MICHAIAH

*Scripture Reference* — II Chronicles 13:2

*Name Meaning* — Who is like Jehovah?

The various spellings of the name are Micah, Micaiah, Maachah, the full form being Micaiahu. The name occurs at least 12 times in the Old Testament and occurs as the name of males as well as females. Michaiah, or Maachah was the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah, and married Jeroboam (see MAACHAH No. 3).

### MICHAL

THE WOMAN WHO TRICKED HER FATHER

*Scripture References* — I Samuel 14:49; 18:20-28; 19:11-17; 25:44; II Samuel 3:13, 14; 6:16-23; 21:8; I Chronicles 15:29

*Name Meaning* — This name is allied to the previous name, Michaiah, and also to Michael, and mean the same — “Who is like Jehovah?” Michal, along with its cognates, illustrates the comparatively small class of proper names composed of more than two words. It is a name describing an admiring acknowledgment of the transcendent unapproachable majesty of the divine nature.

*Family Connections* — Michal was the younger daughter of Saul, Israel’s first king. Her mother was Ahinoam. She became David’s first wife, was given to Phalti the son of Laish, of Gallim for awhile, but was recovered by David. As the aunt of her sister Merab’s five sons, Michal cared for them after the somewhat premature death of her sister.

Michal, although a princess, does not appear to have had a very commendable character. Desire for prestige, fervor of infatuation, indifference to holiness, and idolatry mark out this Jewess who knew the covenant God yet persevered in idolatrous practices. Closely associated with David, her career can be broken up thus —

### *She Loved David*

What young woman would not be attracted by such a strong, athletic young man, who was “ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to”? Further, David was the young shepherd who defied and killed the giant Goliath who had terrified Michal’s father and his people. Thus Michal grew passionately fond of David, and made no effort to conceal her love for this much-lauded champion of Israel. While there may not be very much to admire in Michal, we cannot but express sympathy for her experiences in an age when women were treated as chattels, being thrown from one husband to another. But while “Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved David,” she did not love the Lord as David did. What a different story might have been written of her if she had been a woman after God’s own heart!

### *She Married David*

Saul had vowed that the man who killed Goliath would become his son-in-law, and Merab, Saul’s first daughter should have been given to David,

but Saul, regretting his promise, gave her to another man. David was now a veritable hero among the people, and Saul's jealousy prompted him to devise means whereby David would be slain by the Philistines. Learning of Michal's love for David, Saul asked as a dowry, usually paid to a father according to Eastern custom, the foreskins of 100 Philistines. David slew 200 Philistines, and Saul was forced to give his daughter to wife to the man whose death he had planned. As David had been victorious, Saul dared not go back upon his word. How Saul illustrates the adage that "Jealousy is as cruel as the grave"!

### *She Delivered David*

Still bent on destroying David, Saul had David's house surrounded. In a frenzy of envy Saul had messengers "watch David to slay him in the morning." But Michal's love smelled danger and, discovering her father's intention, "let David down through a window; and he fled and escaped." Then, as a truehearted wife she tricked her father and his emissaries. With her husband safely out of the way, Michal put a hair-covered image in David's bed, and when the men burst into the supposedly sickroom, they found that they had been cleverly tricked. When Saul heard he had been outwitted, he accused his daughter of disloyalty to her father, and was most bitter in his reproach. Michal, however, pretended that David had threatened to kill her if she did not help him to escape.

### *She Forsook David*

After this incident, Michal's love for David waned. Where was the pleasure in being the wife of a man forced to spend his days a fugitive, hunted like a wild animal in the wilderness? Phalti of Gallem was a better catch, she thought, seeing he was on his way to royalty which she was eager to secure and hold. So Michal became the wife of Phalti. This was an illegitimate union seeing David was alive and was in no way lawfully separated from Michal as her husband. That Phalti cared for Michal is proven by the way he followed her, weeping, when she decided to leave him for her former husband.

### *She Was Restored to David*

With Saul's death, circumstances changed for David whom God had already chosen to be king over His people. Michal and her husband Phalti were living to the east of Jordan during the short rule of Ishbosheth. Abner made an arrangement to assist David to take over the kingship of the nation, and David made the restoration of Michal the one condition of the league. So despite Phalti's sorrowful protest, Michal was forcibly restored to David as he returned from his wanderings as king. Evidently his ardor for Michal was the same as at the first, and his desire to claim her proves how he wanted her as queen in Hebron.

How pathetic it is to read of Phalti with whom Michal had lived for some considerable time. We see his sorrow as he went with her in tears, only to be rudely sent back by Abner! We do not read of Michal weeping as she left the man who had showered so much affection upon her. It did not require much force to make her leave Phalti. Her pride and love for prestige left little room for weeping and although she knew she could never become David's ideal love, seeing she had been the possession of another man, yet as his first wife Michal thought of the position that would be hers at court.

### *She Despised David*

The closing scene between Michal and David is most moving, for what love Michal might have had for David turned to scorn and disdain. After making Jerusalem his capital, David brought the sacred Ark of the covenant, the ancient symbol of Jehovah's presence, to Moriah. On the day of the Ark's return David was so joyful that, stripping himself of his royal robes, he "danced before the Lord with all his might." Michal watched from a window and seeing David—the king—leaping and dancing before the Lord, she "despised him in her heart." Although she had loved him, risked her life for his safety, she now abhors him for his loss of royal dignity. Her haughtiness was shocked by David's participation in such an excitable demonstration.

Nursing her contempt Michal waited until David returned to his household. When they met, she with a biting sarcasm, revealing "her self-pride, and lack of sensitiveness to her husband's magnificent simplicity," sneeringly said, "How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as

one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!” For her there were no pious and affectionate feelings at the return of the Ark to Zion. Like her father, Saul, she had no regard for the Ark of God (I Chronicles 13:3). But David, mortified by Michal’s pride as a king’s daughter, was curt in his reply. Resenting her reproach, he made it clear in no uncertain terms that he was not ashamed of what he had done “before the Lord” who had chosen him rather than any of Saul’s family to reign as king. Michal had missed the essential significance of David’s career, that in spite of his failures he was a man after God’s own heart. As Alexander Whyte put it, “What was David’s meat was Michal’s poison. What was sweeter than honey to David was gall and wormwood to Michal. . . . At the despicable sight [of David dancing] she spat at him, and sank back in her seat with all hell in her heart. . . . Michal is a divine looking-glass for all angry and outspoken wives.”

### *She Lost David*

After such an outburst of reproach we read that “Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death,” and such a final flat statement practically means that she lived apart from David, more or less divorced (II Samuel 6:16). The estrangement between them likely became more acute because of the other wives now sharing David’s prosperity. Childless till her death was a punishment appropriate to her transgression. David was given many sons and daughters, and her sister Merab bore five sons, but Michal never achieved the great attainment of being a mother. She ended her days without the love and companionship of a husband, caring for her dead sister’s five children, all of whom were ultimately beheaded.

What can we learn from this story of Michal and David? Misunderstanding arose in their relationship because of a clash of temperament, outlook and purpose. Had Michal shared David’s faith in God how different life would have been for both of them. But Michal made no effort to understand her husband’s Godward desires and so passed a wrong judgment upon him. How certain we should be of a person’s motive for his acts or attitudes before we condemn him. Further, had Michal loved David enough, she should have sought his forgiveness after he had explained his demeanor before the Lord. “She worshipped him when he was poor and



unknown and now that he is King ‘she despised him in her heart’ . . . David realized they could never love the same God. Therefore he cut her from his heart.” But being eaten up with pride there was no tolerance in her heart and so harmony was impossible. Love brings harmony and understanding into every human relationship. A fellow-minister confided in Alexander Whyte that he preached and prayed best when his wife stayed at home. This was something of the gulf between David and Michal. How different it is when husbands truly love their wives and wives sincerely reverence their husbands!

### MILCAH No. 1

*Scripture References* — Genesis 11:29; 22:20, 23; 24:15, 24, 47

*Name Meaning* — Queen or counsel

Nothing is recorded of the life and character of this daughter of Haran, who became the wife of her Uncle Nahor, the eldest brother of Abraham. She bore Nahor eight sons, the youngest being Bethuel who became the father of Rebekah and Laban. Thus Milcah was the grandmother of them both.

### MILCAH No. 2

*Scripture References* — Numbers 26:33; 27:1; 36:11; Joshua 17:3

This female bearing the same name was one of the five daughters of Zelophehad, and co-heiress of his inheritance. See HOGLAH.) Some authorities affirm that Milcah is an abbreviation of Bethmilcah, and is a geographical rather than a personal name.

### MIRIAM No. 1

#### THE WOMAN WHOSE JEALOUSY BROUGHT JUDGMENT

*Scripture References* — Exodus 15:20, 21; Numbers 12:1-15; 20:1; 26:59; Deuteronomy 24:9; Micah 6:4

*Name Meaning* — As a name Miriam belongs to a family of words having different root-form, all of which suggest “bitterness,” Mary, Maria, Mariamne. (See under *Name Meaning*, MARY.) Miriam, then, the same

as Mary, meaning “bitterness,” “rebellion” was apropos, for because of her jealousy, Miriam’s fate was one of extreme bitterness

*Family Connections*—Miriam was the eldest child of Amram and Jochebed, and the sister of Aaron and Moses. Says Bulwer, “I honour birth and ancestry when they are regarded as incentives to exertion, not title deeds to sloth.” Miriam owed much to her ancestry. She was the daughter of godly parents and the sister of two of Israel’s greatest figures. Josephus in his *Antiquities* informs us that Miriam became the wife of another well-known leader in Israel namely, Hur, one of the judges of the people when Moses was on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:14). This would make Miriam to be the grandmother of Bezaleel, the famous artist in the construction of the Tabernacle (Exodus 31:2). The Biblical narrative, however, suggests that Miriam remained in single blessedness all her days. “Miriam stands before us in an absolutely unsexual relation,” says George Matheson: “there is neither marriage nor courtship. Her interests are not matrimonial! they are national. Her mission is not domestic, it is patriotic. . . . Miriam the unmarried is a heroine in an age when female celibacy was not a consecrated thing, in a Book where the nuptial tie is counted the glory of womanhood.”

Some of the grandest women to benefit mankind were content to remain unmarried. Was there ever such a ministering angel in human form as Florence Nightingale, “The Lady of the Lamp,” whose sacrificial work among the suffering soldiers during the Crimean War laid the foundation for the great reformation that took place in the hospitals of the world? Many noble women do not marry from sheer choice, as the biographies of some female missionaries and nurses testify. We see Miriam —

### *As a Clever Girl on the Banks of the River Nile*

In dealing with Miriam’s mother, Jochebed (which see), we saw how Pharaoh had commanded all the male babies of the Israelites to be drowned in the Nile and how Jochebed took every possible precaution for her beautiful baby’s safety. Out of the common reeds grown along the banks of the river she fashioned a small basket-boat, and making it watertight by an inside covering of clay and an outside protection of bitumen, laid the baby

in its boat by the edge of the stream which she knew was frequented by the princess and her female court.

The anxious mother took the wise precaution of leaving the baby's sister, Miriam, nearby to mount guard over his safety (Exodus 2:4). Whether Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the stream or wash her clothes in it, we are not told. Among the reeds the little boat with its precious cargo was spotted and brought to the princess who, seeing the child, loved him. As he was lifted up, he cried. He wanted feeding. But who was to nurse the mite? Then came young Miriam's opportunity. Out of the shadows she stepped forth so innocently, and appearing to be curious at the screaming baby and puzzled princess, ask if she would like her to try and find a Hebrew nurse. Miriam kept her silence and did not reveal her relation to the baby and the nurse she secured. Thus the ready wit of Miriam, a girl of ten to twelve years old, saved her brother whom the Princess called *Moses*. When he became the great hero, how Miriam must have been grateful for her share in preserving her baby brother from the cruel fate of other Hebrew infants.

#### *As a Gifted Poetess and Prophetess at the Red Sea*

Miriam appears for the first time by name when she is called a "prophetess," and is identified as the sister of Aaron. Both her words and work were full of the inspiration of God and she is brought as a leader and pattern to the women of Israel. Prophets and prophetesses are those raised up by God and inspired by His Spirit to proclaim the will and purpose of God. It is at the Red Sea that we see Miriam standing out so prominently, proclaiming and singing the power and faithfulness of God. She, it was, who led the Israelite women in dancing and instrumental accompaniment as she sang the ode of praise and victory (Exodus 15:20, 21). By this time Miriam was well past middle life. If she was about 12 years of age when Moses was born, and he spent 40 years in Egypt, then another 40 in the land of Midian before the dramatic episode of the Red Sea, then Miriam was an aging woman in that time when longevity was normal.

After the plague that fell upon Egypt, Pharaoh let God's people go. Moses, leader of the almost two million people, with his brother Aaron as high priest, and his sister Miriam as his chief singer, set out for the land of

promise. God caused the waters to roll back and the Israelites passed through on dry ground, but as soon as they were through the waters rushed back and drowned the pursuing Egyptians. Miriam, the first poetess in the Bible, led the joyous acclamations of the multitude, and using her timbrel, sang, “Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” The Song of Moses and Miriam has been referred to as one of the oldest and most splendid natural anthems in the world. Whether Miriam composed the poem or not, we cannot tell. What we do know is that she wove the matchless, mighty ode of victory into the conscious life of the people.

Henry Van Dyke reminds us that, “The spirit and movement of the song are well expressed in the English verse of Thomas Moore’s paraphrase:”

Sound the loud timbrel o’er Egypt’s dark sea!  
Jehovah has triumphed, — His people are free!  
Sing — for the pride of the tyrant is broken;  
    His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave,—  
How vain was their boasting! the Lord hath but spoken,  
    And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.  
Sound the loud timbrel o’er Egypt’s dark sea!  
Jehovah has triumphed, — His people are free!

Praise to the Conqueror, praise to the Lord!  
His word was our arrow, His breath was our sword.  
Who shall return to tell Egypt the story  
    Of those she sent forth in the shew of her pride?  
For the Lord hath looked out from His pillar of glory,  
    And all her brave thousands are dashed in the tide.  
Sound the loud timbrel o’er Egypt’s dark sea!  
Jehovah has triumphed — His people are free!

This is a powerful verse. But there is even greater majesty and force in the form of the ode as it stands in the Book of Exodus. How grandly the antiphonal ascriptions of praise to Jehovah come into the description of the overthrow of Egypt’s pride and power!

Jehovah is a man of war:  
Jehovah is his name!

Thou didst blow with thy wind:  
The sea covered them:  
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.  
Who is like unto thee among the gods,  
    Jehovah?  
Who is like unto thee?  
Glorious in holiness!  
Fearful in praises!  
Doing wonders!

As the first of the sweet singers of Israel, Miriam sang for God, using her gift for the elevation of human souls into a higher life. A dreary wilderness faced the children of Israel, and Miriam knew that they would march better if they sang. So her song was one of cheer and full of the memory of all God had accomplished for His people. “The greatest stimulus for the crossing of Jordan is the fact that we have already crossed the Red Sea,” wrote George Matheson. “It was wise in Miriam to begin with that Sea and over its prostrate waves to sound her first timbrel.”

### *A Jealous Sister in the Wilderness*

What a faithful mirror the Bible is of the characters it portrays! Blemishes, as well as beauties, are revealed. It tells the naked truth of those it describes. There is a blot upon almost all its portraits, and “its blots are as much a bit of the art as its beauties.” A double feature of the failure of the Bible’s heroes and heroines is that they are usually associated with middle life after the morning inspired with hope and courage unbounded is past, as in the case of Miriam. Further, such failures come where we should not expect them to overtake the otherwise true and noble. Miriam, for instance, rebelled against the mission of her life, namely, to protect and labor in partnership with Moses whom she had been the means of saving for his country. Miriam was, above all things, a faithful patriot, with a love for her country greater than the love for her renowned brother. It was because he

was the chosen emissary of God to lead Israel out of bondage into freedom that she rebelled against him in a twofold way. Jealousy led Miriam to reject both the position of Moses as the leader of the host, and his partner in the wife he took unto himself. She found the management and marriage of Moses most irksome.

In the first place, Miriam rebelled against the bride of Moses whose first wife, Zipporah, was a Midianite or Gentile (Exodus 2:21). The second wife was an Ethiopian, a Cushite, a dark-skinned beauty from the African country south of the Nile cataracts. By this time Miriam was an old woman and possibly resented the presence of a younger and more attractive woman so close to her brother. Miriam despised the bride of Moses not because of her color, but because she was a foreigner. Race-pride made the Ethiopian woman objectionable. It was not so much feminine jealousy on Miriam's part as patriotic jealousy. She was a confirmed member of the Hebrew race, and dead set against any foreign alliance. Because the blood of a mean ancestry was in the veins of the Ethiopian whose people hated the worship of the true God, Miriam feared the influence of the new wife upon Moses.

But Miriam's greatest offense was her sarcastic rejection of the leadership of Moses. Hitherto, she had been a symbol of unity as she shared in the triumphs and hopes of Israel. Now, unfortunately, she is prominent as a leader of discord, division and discontent. It will be noted that Aaron is paired with his sister in the outburst against the acquisition and the authority of Moses. But by the order of the names it is evident that Miriam was the instigator and the spokeswoman in the revolt. "Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses" (Numbers 12:1). This is understandable because of the close bond of friendship between two who had never been parted. After Miriam as a young girl saved Moses' life, she scarcely saw him for almost 80 years, but with Aaron she had lived quietly at home. Now she takes the initiative in opposition against the younger brother, and uses his Ethiopian wife as a pretext to rebel against the superior authority of Moses. Her jealous heart led her to reject God's discrimination in favor of Moses against her and Aaron.

Thus personal jealousy and fear of their own respective leadership are mingled in their question, "Hath God indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?" Miriam and Aaron aspired to a joint partnership

in state power and in the government of Israel, and they failed. If Moses had erred in marrying his dark bride, it was a personal mistake and not a public crime. Miriam's chief error consisted in her effort to break down the God-given authority of Moses, and thereby imperil the unity and hope of the nation. Her fault then was greater than that of Moses, because it was an offense against the commonwealth.

It is true that Miriam had functioned as a prophetess and used Aaron as a prophet, but God had distinctly said, "My servant Moses is not so. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently and not in dark speeches." Such was God's elective sovereignty, and Miriam's sin was grievous in that she rebelled against what God had spoken. That such a sister should be jealous of her brother is beyond conception, but human nature even at its best is very frail. How true it is that "jealousy is the apprehension of superiority and the towering character of Moses doubtless disturbed the peace of Miriam." George Eliot has the phrase, "One of the torments of jealousy is that it can never turn away its eyes from the thing that pains it." Paul places "evil speaking" among the cardinal sins.

Moses, meekest of all men, acted as a deaf man who heard not, and as a dumb man who opened not his mouth. God had heard the complaints Miriam had voiced and He called the trio of leaders to meet Him at the tabernacle of the congregation. Taking up the defense of Moses, God spoke directly to Miriam and Aaron in no uncertain terms that they had not only hurt Moses but that they had failed in their duty toward Him. Moses received divine vindication as God's servant who had been faithful, and as the one whom He had chosen as the medium of a divine revelation. Then the rebellious sister and brother were reprimanded by God for speaking against His honored servant. How silenced the three must have been when, standing at the door of the tabernacle, they were silenced by the austerity and authority of the divine voice! In righteous wrath God withdrew from the holy place.

### *A Repentant Leper Outside the Camp*

As the divine cloud left the tabernacle, the eyes of Aaron sought his beloved and forceful sister, and to his horror she had been smitten with leprosy—the foul disease that made the victim look like death, white as

snow, a living corpse (Numbers 12:12). The proud, jealous prophetess was condemned to endure the most humiliating of diseases. While Aaron was united with Miriam in rebellion against Moses, judgment only fell upon Miriam which indicated that she had been the instigator, and had influenced her pliable brother. “Look at her in her rapture, like one out of the body with the joy of the Lord, at the Red Sea,” says Alexander Whyte, “and now see to what her wicked heart and her wicked tongue have brought her. Look at her with her hand upon her throat, and with a linen cloth upon her lip, and with her hoarse, sepulchral noisome voice wandering far from the camp, and compelled to cry Unclean! Unclean! when any one came in sight.”

How humiliating it must have been for Miriam to see people fleeing from her — the one who had before led them so triumphantly. Her judgment was swift and signal, even though hers was a temporary disgrace. Aaron and Moses, overcome with pity for their condemned sister and filled with brotherly love, prayed for Miriam that the punishment might pass from her. Prayer was heard on her behalf, and after her separation from the camp for seven days, she was healed of her leprosy. Evidently Miriam had the sympathy of the whole nation during her week of purification. Although she held up the progress of the host for those seven days, such was her popularity that “the people journeyed not [from Hazereth] till Miriam was brought in again.” When Moses came to write out the law in respect to leprosy, he mentioned his sister Miriam as an example (Deuteronomy 24:9). Thus her presumptuous effort to change the leadership of Israel ended in her humiliation and in the divine vindication of Moses as the undisputed leader of the people.

What happened to Miriam during her seven days without the camp as she bore the sorrow of seeing Israel’s march to the Promised Land arrested because of her jealousy we are not told. Doubtless she was repentant, but her strength was broken and the gift of prophecy had left her. One also wonders what the thoughts of Moses’ wife were during that lonely week as she thought of her sister-in-law punished and excluded because she condemned Moses for making her his wife. Further, had the confidence of Moses in Aaron and Miriam been so shaken as to make him walk alone? Restored to divine favor we would fain believe Miriam was noble and



submissive through the rest of her days, even though we do not hear again of her until her death.

### *A Dying Saint at Kadesh*

Alexander Whyte reckons that Miriam did not live long after that dread week, that she died not because of her old age, or the dregs of the leprosy, but of a broken heart. The Bible is silent as to any further service she rendered once the camp moved on. Had her sorrow crushed her song, and her presumption silenced her prophetic voice? This we do know, that as Moses was not permitted to enter the Land of Promise because “he spoke unadvisedly with his lips” at the rock, so Miriam because of her sin died before the entrance to Canaan, and was buried at Kadesh-barnea, where Israel mourned for her. She passed away at the eleventh hour of the completion of Israel’s journey of forty years (Numbers 20:1). Tradition has it that she was given a costly funeral and buried on the mountain of Zin, and mourned for some 30 days. But her last resting place, like that of her great brother, Moses, is one of the secrets of God. As an epitaph for her grave, wherever she sleeps, we can inscribe “She sang the song of Moses: but it was also the song of the Lamb.”

What are some of the lessons to be learned from the feminine jealousy and ambition which were the drawbacks in Miriam’s otherwise commanding character? First of all, we should learn to avoid the temptation to wield power at the expense of losing influence. Miriam had great influence in her sphere as prophetess and leader of the praises of Israel, but she was not content. She coveted equal power with Moses. Then is it not folly in trying to add to our prestige and dictating to others, as Miriam and Aaron when they gave vent to their feelings against Moses? The most impressive lesson to learn from Miriam is that it is injurious to our character to be discontented with our own distinction, and to jealously desire the higher place of honor which another holds. My soul, never forget that it was envy that crucified the Lord who personified humility!

### MIRIAM No. 2

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 4:17

While listed as a daughter of Ezra of the tribe of Judah, scholars are not certain whether a man or woman is meant.

#### NAAMAH No. 1

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 4:22

*Name Meaning* — Pleasant or sweetness

This heathen name is of the same derivation with Naomi and Naaman. It is one of the earliest female names recorded in Scripture. Naamah is the feminine form of Naam, son of Caleb (I Chronicles 4:15); and is also the name of a town in the low country of Judah mentioned by Joshua (15:41). Our first Naamah was the daughter of Lamech and Zillah and brother of Tubal-cain, the first worker in brass and iron. The refinement and luxury of Cain's descendants appear in the names of their wives and daughters (see ADAH and ZILLAH).

#### NAAMAH No. 2

*Scripture References* — I Kings 14:21, 31; II Chronicles 12:13

This was also the name of one of Solomon's numerous wives. She was from the royal line of Israel's inveterate enemies, the Ammonites, and her evil influence was abhorrent to the people of Israel as they witnessed her leading Solomon into her idolatrous ways. Since she was chief lady, the king erected a high place for her god, Moloch. Naamah became the mother of Rehoboam, who succeeded Solomon, and who was the last king of the united Kingdom of Israel. Rehoboam lived and died a monument of his evil mother's hatred of the true God.

#### NAARAH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 4:5, 6

*Name Meaning* — Girl or Child of the Lord

Naarah was one of the two wives of Ashur, the father of Tekoa. It is also the name of a town on the border of Ephraim (Joshua 16:7), which was also known as Naaran (I Chronicles 7:28).

## NAOMI

### THE WOMAN WHO TASTED THE CUP OF BITTERNESS

*Scripture Reference* — The Book of Ruth

*Name Meaning* — As indicated under Naamah No. 1 (which see) Naomi means “my joy,” “my bliss,” or “pleasantness of Jehovah,” and is a name suggestive of all that is charming, agreeable, attractive. Until deep sorrow overshadowed her, we can understand Naomi having a nature corresponding to her name. Although her character came to be purged and enhanced by her suffering, Naomi had an innate nobility that gave her personality an irresistible charm.

*Family Connections* — While both Naomi and Elimelech were staunch members of the Hebrew race, we are told nothing of their genealogy. Elimelech, who married Naomi, is thought to have belonged to one of the outstanding families in Israel, being a brother of Salmon, prince of Judah, who married Rahab. If this was so, then Naomi began her married life in comfortable circumstances. Naomi and Elimelech belonged to Bethlehem-Judah where two sons were born to them, namely, Mahlon and Chilion.

The Book of Ruth, which is one of the most lovely idylls in literature, and has enchanted every age, presents us with two women who are among the best-loved in history and whose story still captivates the world because of their unique devotion. Naomi and Ruth, her daughter-in-law, afford a relief after characters like Tamar, Delilah and Jezebel. In this sketch let us try to delineate the life and experience of Naomi who knew a great deal about “the ringing groove of change,” to use Tennyson’s phrase. Because of her manifold changes in life, Naomi came to fear God in a deeper way (Psalm 55:19).

*Her Change of Country*

During the rule of the Judges, Israel suffered a serious famine which was deemed to be one of the punishments visited upon the people when they had sinned (Leviticus 26:14, 16). Driven to consternation, Elimelech the Ephrathite of Bethlehem decided to emigrate with his family to another land where food was more plentiful, and so traveled from Judah and settled

in the highlands of Moab. For Naomi such an uprooting from her native home must have constituted a real sacrifice. Sincere in her faith, she loved the people of God and was strongly attached to the wonderful traditions of her race.

In taking the initiative to go to Moab — a foreign country — from Bethlehem, Naomi's husband stepped out of the will of God. If the famine was a judgment upon the nation, Elimelech should have repented, tried to have helped his fellow countrymen back to God, and prayed for the removal of the scourge (Psalm 34:9, 10, 17). One may argue that Elimelech was wise in taking Naomi and their two sons out of a famine-stricken area to another land where there was sufficient food. But Elimelech was a Hebrew, and as such had the promise, "In the days of famine, thou shalt be satisfied." Elimelech means, "My God is King." Had he truly believed God was his King, he would have stayed in Bethlehem, knowing that need could not throttle God who is able to furnish a table in the desert. But Elimelech belied the name he bore when he left Bethlehem — "the house of bread"— for Moab, meaning "waste" or "nothingness." With his family he went from a place where God was honored to another land so heathen in its ways.

Although the land of Moab may sound remote it was only some 30 miles from Bethlehem-Judah — a long enough journey in those far-off days when they had no transportation. The distance, however, was not one of *miles*, but of *mind*. As H. V. Morton puts it, "Distances in the Bible are not measured from one place to another, but from God. Naomi and her husband felt they were going into a far country because Moab was a land of foreign worship." Thus Bethlehem to Moab measured the distance from God to the alien worship of an alien country. What disturbed feelings Naomi must have had as, with her family, she found herself in a strange land, unknown, and with all the problems of establishing a home in repellant surroundings.

### *Her Change of Connections*

It was not long before Naomi discovered the error in leaving Bethlehem for in the new and heathen land nothing but misfortune dogged her footsteps. Her two sons married women of Moab. Instead of helping to support their mother they took wives of the alien country they were in. The Jewish law forbade marriage outside of the nation. Naomi's husband,

Elimelech, died. He had fled to Moab to escape a possible death from famine, and died in the midst of plenty leaving his wife a widow in a land of idolaters. Bereft of her husband, Naomi loses all heart to live on in a land of foreigners.

When the stem dies, the leaf that grew  
Out of its heart must perish  
too.

Naomi became one of the widows whom Paul describes as being “desolate.” To add to her desolation and grief, she also lost both of her sons and so Naomi “was left of her two sons and husband.” By this time she was old and helpless with her widowed daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to shelter. As they were not of her people, nor of her faith in God, Moab true to its name, must have been empty, desolate and inhospitable to Naomi’s grief-stricken, aching heart. Doubtless, Ruth and Orpah, whose hearts too had been emptied, were a source of comfort to Naomi, even though they knew that their marriage to Mahlon and Chilion was against her religious principles. So, as George Matheson fittingly expresses it —

To all appearance Naomi was desolate. Husband and children were gone — the place of sojourn was a land of strangers — the voices of the old sanctuary were silent. Her heart and spirit were broken, her conscience was up in arms. The God of her fathers, she felt, had deserted her for her desertion of Him. She must retrieve the past — she must go back — back to the old soil, back to the favour of her God.

Bethlehem was Naomi’s native land, and all her relatives and friends were there. Thus she left for Bethlehem, not so much because of her cup of sorrow in Moab, but because she had heard that “the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.”

### *Her Change of Character*

Naomi was determined to return to Bethlehem alone, but her daughters-in-law left with her, possibly excited about a new start in a new land. But on the journey back, Naomi paused and pleaded with Ruth and Orpah to return to Moab. She knew what it would mean for them as Moabites to cross the boundary line, stressing the point that in Canaan there would be very little prospect of their finding husbands. What a moment that must have been as those three widows stood there at the parting of the ways. Orpah, without

much ado, kissed Naomi, and then went back to her own idolatrous people, but Ruth clave unto Naomi and begged her to take her to Bethlehem (see RUTH).

As Naomi and Ruth entered the city together the thoughts of each must have been different. To Naomi there came flashing back thoughts of a happy youth and of a life at peace with God — thoughts which tended to aggravate her desolation. But for Ruth, there was the novelty and strangeness of a foreign people, a speech not fully understood, and youth's quest for new adventure. Naomi's arrival in the old community created a sensation. Quickly it passed from lip to lip that the well-known, beautiful and pleasant woman who had left ten years before was back, and as all the city met her they cried, "Is this Naomi?" Why the question form of their welcome? Did they detect a radical change in her appearance and demeanor? The repetition of her significant name irritated her as she cried —

Call me not *Naomi* [pleasant, winsome, agreeable], call me *Mara* [bitter]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

Naomi could not bear the contradiction between the name she bore, and the person she was. Ten years in Moab with all its anguish, and also the loss of fellowship with God and His people had dried up her finer feelings. Once so sweet, Naomi was now sour, and blamed God for the poverty and desolation she had endured. But why chide God? Was not her cup of bitterness the result of the act of disobedience when, with her husband, she left Bethlehem for Moab? Had she stayed in her own land and maintained her trust in God, in spite of the famine, He would have undertaken for her and her family and brought them through. But the journey to Moab was a journey from God, and consequently her bitterness was the fruit of such an act of disobedience.

### *Her Change of Circumstances*

Naomi was back in Bethlehem as a "returned empty." She went away to Moab with plenty but retraced her steps in poverty. How descriptive of her

adverse circumstances is her lament! “I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty.” Naomi and Ruth, then, clinging to each other, plunge into the poverty and solitariness facing them — but with a different outlook. Both women were widows and sufferers, but suffering old age often yields to hopelessness and despair, whereas suffering youth rebounds and seeks to be responsive to the life that is around. Thus Ruth felt the stir of excitement in her new surroundings. Naomi and she must eat, and knowing that her mother-in-law, whom Ruth surrounded with loving care, was too old to bend her back to work in the fields, Ruth goes out and secures work as a gleaner in the fields of Boaz. Under Jewish law the poor were allowed to glean in any harvest field, and Ruth qualified for the weary, humble task of following the reapers and gathering up the gleanings for Naomi and herself.

What romance followed is more fully told in our study on RUTH (which see). Boaz, related to Naomi’s husband, was therefore connected by marriage to Ruth, and by Jewish custom, Boaz, as next of kin, could be regarded as Ruth’s rightful betrothed. Naomi, with her bitterness now subdued and her former pleasant disposition restored, took a lively interest in the kindness of Boaz to Ruth, and advised her in the steps leading to her marriage to Boaz. The idyllic conclusion was reached as Naomi, through her tender boldness, saw Ruth lifted out of obscurity and poverty into marriage with a godly man, as well as a mighty man of wealth. For Naomi, the winter of desolation was past, and the time of the singing of birds had come. Although her natural hopes had perished, Naomi lived again in the life of her dear, sacrificial daughter-in-law, and there were loud rejoicings when Ruth’s firstborn, Obed, was carried to Grandma Naomi. Now her daughter-in-law who loved her was better to Naomi “than seven sons.” How lovingly she would nurse Ruth’s child and bless God because, as Professor R. G. Moulton expressed it —

The family she thought she had seen perish has been restored to the genealogies of Israel; for baby Obed lives to become the father of Jesse, and Jesse is father of the great King David. And in the genealogical tables of Matthew, the Moabitess who left her people for love of Naomi is duly named as an ancestress of the Messiah Himself.

## NEHUSHTA

*Scripture Reference* — II Kings 24:8

*Name Meaning* — A piece of brass

Nehushta is allied to Nehushtan (II Kings 18:4). She was the daughter of Elnathan, a well-known Jerusalem man, and became the wife of the ungodly Jehoiakim, Josiah's eldest son (Jeremiah 26:22). When King Nebuchadnezzar subdued Jehoiakim's kingdom, his mother, Nehushta, followed him in captivity at Babylon. Nothing is said of the queen-mother's character. As her son emulated the evil ways of his father, it is assumed that the mother's influence was likewise corrupt.

## NOADIAH

*Scripture Reference* — Nehemiah 6:14

*Name Meaning* — One to whom the Lord revealed Himself

Here we have a female character who contradicted the name she bore. She was a false prophetess, and stands over against Hulda who was a divinely inspired, true prophetess. Noadiah was an exceptional woman but most dangerous in her influence. She substituted the pseudo-ecstasy of her own feelings for the Spirit's direction through the Word of God. Noadiah is conspicuous as a companion, and possibly inspirer, of Sanballat and Tobiah in their opposition to Nehemiah whom they tried to terrorize. But the reformer never tried to debate and argue with the satanically-inspired woman and her evil-minded friends. He simply prayed, "My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat . . . and on the prophetess Noadiah . . . who would put me in fear." Prayer was answered. Noadiah's wiles were thwarted and Nehemiah finished the work of restoration.

Noadiah is also the name of a Levite in the time of Ezra (8:33).

## NOAH

*Scripture References*—Numbers 26:33; 27:1

*Name Meaning* — Rest or comfort

Here we have another of the five daughters of Zelophehad. (See HOGLAH.) Noah is likewise the name of the son of Lamech, preacher of



righteousness among the antediluvians who with his family escaped the Flood (Genesis 6).

OHOLIBAMA (see AHOLIBAMA)

ORPAH

THE WOMAN WHO REJECTED HER CHANCE

*Scripture Reference* — Ruth 1

*Name Meaning* — Various interpretations have been given of Orpah. Wilkinson says that by a not unusual change of letters it can be identified with Ophrah meaning, “a fawn, or young doe” and so is the feminine of Ephron, a Canaanitish name, signifying a “roebuck or stag.” Orpah is also said to mean “double-minded” which means to describe her dilemma when the crisis on that road to Bethlehem-Judah demanded a decision. Should she, like Ruth, go on to Bethlehem with Naomi, or return alone to Moab. James reminds us that a double-minded person is unstable in all his ways (1:8; 4:8). Other scholars assert that Orpah is derived from a Hebrew word for “neck” and so means “stiff-necked” or “stubborn” because of her turning back from following the other two widows (Ruth 1:4-14; 4:9, 10).

*Family Connections* — Of her pedigree we know nothing save that she married Chilion, the son of Elimelech and Naomi after they took up their abode in Moab. Because Ruth married the other son, Mahlon, Orpah became her sister-in-law. After Naomi lost her husband and two sons it is quite possible that both Orpah and Ruth lived in Naomi’s home, but what a difference there was in the two young women of Moab, hence the personal decision of each when Naomi, going back to her own country, urged Orpah and Ruth to return to theirs.

Both had been brought into contact with the truth of Jehovah because of their relation by marriage to the sons of Elimelech and Naomi. But while Ruth opened her heart to the revelation of the true God, and was ready to say to Naomi, as she urged the two widowed maidens to return home, “Thy God shall be my God — thy people my people”; Orpah continued to embrace Moloch, the heathen god of Moab as the object of her worship. Kuyper suggests —

Naomi had often studied Orpah, and had frequently observed that beneath her apparent piety there lurked the unmistakable influence of her former, heathen tendencies.

Naomi was determined to put Orpah to conclusive test. But when that test came, Orpah failed. She looked at the aged, childless and embittered Naomi of whom she no doubt thought highly. She also saw Ruth determined to go all the way with Naomi into an uncertain future, and felt that a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush. So she made her choice in favor of the rich and prosperous Moab she knew. She was likewise aware that the Jews hated the Moabites and she preferred to be with her own kin and kind. Ruth said to Naomi, “Thy *God* shall be my *God*,” but Orpah wanted nothing of Jehovah. She had left Moab along with Naomi and Ruth, but Moab was very much in her heart and so, after embracing Naomi, Orpah went back to her own people and to her own gods. After the farewell kiss, Orpah separated herself not only from Naomi and Ruth, but from the only true God. Back to Moab and Moloch Orpah went, and also into obscurity. She also vanished from the pages of sacred history. Calvary was enacted on that Bethlehem-Judah road. From the side of Naomi one woman went out into an abundant life, and the other retreated into darkness and despair. From the riven side of Jesus, one thief went to paradise, the other to perdition. (See RUTH and NAOMI.)

## PENINNAH

*Scripture References* — I Samuel 1:2, 6

*Name Meaning* — Coral

By taking Peninnah as his second wife, Elkanah brought much sorrow to his first godly wife, Hannah. Peninnah has no record apart from the fact that she lived in Ramah, was the wife of Elkanah and the mother of his children. Because of her initial barrenness, Hannah became the target of Peninnah’s jealousy, and her life was a constant fret through her rival’s tantalizing. If ever there was a heartless woman it was Peninnah. Her provocation became intensified because of Elkanah’s love and tenderness toward Hannah whose heart often smarted from Peninnah’s jealous thrusts. But Hannah’s patience, self-control and intercession prevailed and she

became the mother of Samuel who was “more than a prophet” (compare HANNAH).

## PERSIS

*Scripture Reference* — Romans 16:12

*Name Meaning* — One who takes by storm

Here we have an illustration of a name taken from a country for the Greek significance of Persis is “Persian” although there is no evidence that this Christian female worker in the Early Church at Rome was a Persian. Her name is apropos to her person, and because of her intense labors in the Lord, she must have seized many opportunities of witness. Regardless of hindrances and difficulties, she fought the good fight of faith. Herbert F. Stevenson points out “a delicacy indicative of profound Christian courtesy” is seen in that “the Apostle adapts the phrase from ‘my beloved’ when dealing with two brethren to ‘the beloved’ when writing of Persis, ‘which laboured much in the Lord.’ ” What a model of Christian conduct was the Apostle! (See MARY OF ROME.)

## PHANUEL

*Scripture Reference* — Luke 2:36

*Name Meaning* — The face or vision or appearance of God

It is not certain whether Phanuel was the name of the father or the mother of Anna the prophetess who was the first to proclaim Jesus to be the Messiah. The name is identical with Penuel, the name Jacob gave to the place where he wrestled with the angel.

## PHEBE, PHOEBE

THE WOMAN WHO WORE THE BADGE OF KINDNESS

*Scripture Reference* — Romans 16:1, 2

*Name Meaning* — Pure or radiant as the moon

We know nothing of this pious female who delivered Paul’s “inestimable packet”—The Epistle to the Romans — to Rome. We just have the brief mention of her name and service. Phoebe, a devout Christian, bore without change and without reproach the name of the Moon-Goddess of the

Greeks. The goddess Artemis, known by the common epithet “Phoebe,” was supposed to have been identified with the light of the moon. But the Phoebe whom Paul so highly commended shone as a light for Jesus, the “Light of the World.” That she must have been a woman of some consequence appears from the fact that she planned a long journey to Rome on business of her own, and offered to convey to the saints there Paul’s letter — “an inspired masterpiece of logic which struck the keynote of orthodoxy for the universal Church through all the succeeding ages.”

In some fifty words Paul gives us a beautiful cameo of this saintly servant of Christ for whom he urged the saints at Rome to do their utmost. The importance of her visit is indicated by the appeal of Paul to the Romans to “assist her in whatever matter she had need of.” Phoebe was —

### *A Sister*

As used by Paul, this designation implies a spiritual relationship. He calls the believing husband and wife, “the brother and the sister” (I Corinthians 7:15; 9:5). Young Timothy was his “son in the faith.” Phoebe, then, was a member of a spiritual family in which the relationship is based upon the redemption of Christ and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 4:4-7). Apart from natural relationships, no woman is my “sister” unless she shares my experience of God’s saving grace through which alone we are made members of His redeemed family. How or when Phoebe became a Christian and a sister in the Lord, we are not told. What is evident is the manifestation of her sisterly love and labors among her sisters and brothers in Christ. “Our sister” is a term indicating her Christian status.

### *A Servant of the Church*

Phoebe was not only a member of a spiritual family, but likewise a member of the visible church at Cenchrea when Paul arrived there on his third journey and from where he wrote Romans. Phoebe was not merely a confessing and active believer, she was also “a ministrant of *the Church*.” The word for “servant” is *diakonos*, from which we have “deacon” or “deaconess.” It is not certain whether such an official female Order as “Deaconess” was in vogue at that time. Phoebe, however, occupied such a position in the church, and as such could be a teacher of all female inquirers

of the faith, and be active in the relief of the temporal needs of the poor among the flock. We can safely assume that Phoebe was one of the first, if not the first, of the noble band of deaconesses in the Christian Church. If hers was not an official ministry, it was certainly a most gracious and effective one, and she was indeed one of the forerunners of the vast army of women who have rendered such loyal service to Christ and His Church.

*A Succourer of Many, and of Myself Also*

The word Paul used for “succourer” — *prostatis* — is a most expressive one. It literally means “one who stands by in case of need.” It is classical Greek describing a trainer in the Olympic games, who stood by the athletes to see that they were properly trained and not over-trained and rightly girded when they lined up for the signal. Moule translates the phrase, “She on her part has proved a stand-by (almost a *champion*, one who stands up for others) of many, aye, and of me among them.” Phoebe was the unselfish, liberal helper or patroness of the saints, conspicuous for her works of charity and also hospitality. To quote Moule again —

She had been a devoted and it would seem particularly *a brave* friend of converts in trouble, and of Paul himself. Perhaps in the course of her visits to the desolate she had fought difficult battles of protest, where she found harshness and oppression. Perhaps she had pleaded the forgotten cause of the poor, with a woman’s courage, before some neglectful richer “brother.”

As for the personal touch “a succourer . . . of *myself also*,” it has been suggested that Paul had in mind the visit he paid to Cenchrea and, shaving his head took a Jewish vow (Acts 18:18). “The vow seems to point to a deliverance from danger to sickness in which Phoebe may have attended him.” Because of her saintliness and practical works, Paul urged the believers in Rome to “receive her in the Lord, as becometh *saints*.” All in the Lord are saints but some are more saintly than others. Godly Phoebe is witness to what Christ can accomplish through consecrated spinsterhood.

PRISCA (See PRISCILLA)

PRISCILLA

THE WOMAN WHO WAS FOREMOST IN SERVICE

*Scripture References* — Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; I Corinthians 16:19; II Timothy 4:19

*Name Meaning* — Priscilla is the diminutive of Prisca, feminine of Prisca meaning “primitive,” hence, “worthy, or venerable,” as belonging to the good old time. This name is also found as a family name in the earliest Roman annals, and appears in the form “Prisca” in Paul’s Second Epistle to Timothy (4:19). Cruden says Priscilla means “ancient, old-fashioned simplicity.” It is also interesting to note that Aquila, Priscilla’s husband, had the family name of the commander of a legion, for it means “eagle” — emblem of the Roman army. Both names are Roman. From the prominence given in Roman inscriptions and legends to the name Prisca it is concluded that she belonged to a distinguished Roman family.

*Family Connections* — Of Priscilla’s background and parentage Scripture is silent. Doubtless, like her husband, she was born in Pontus. Both were Jews of Asia-Minor, and as such were expelled by Claudius from Rome, and in Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila became the honored and much-loved friends of Paul. In fact, they were the most distinguished among his fellow-helpers in the cause of Christ.

As Priscilla is always paired with her husband, Aquila, it is difficult to separate her and place her on a pedestal of her own. Their two hearts beat as one. Harmoniously, they labored together in the service of the church. They walked as one for they had mutually agreed to put Christ first. In the six references where both are mentioned, the name of Priscilla comes first in three instances, and Aquila first in the other three. They are never mentioned apart. Is there any significance attached to the fact that Aquila is not named first every time, but equally shares mention with his wife? A number of conjectures have been put forth why Priscilla comes first at all in the references to them both. Some writers suggest that she was the more energetic of the two, and perhaps had the stronger character. Dinsdale Young thinks that Priscilla may have been a believer before her husband, and that she won him for the Lord by her “chaste conversation,” or that perhaps hers was a primacy of character and service, or a more conspicuous intellectual ability, or that she may have been of nobler birth and social quality than Aquila.

Personally, we see no reason at all for Priscilla's name coming first in half of the Scripture references to her, even though she may recall the wonderful prominence of women in early Christianity, and in martyrdom and service for Christ. If, in any way, Priscilla outshone Aquila, he must have praised God for such a precious gifted wife. Charles Kingsley makes one of his characters in *Westward Ho!* say, "In her he had found a treasure and knew what he had found." This must have been Aquila's sentiment also. Let us now look at the many fascinating facets of the union existing between these two old-time saints.

### *They Were One in Marital Bliss*

What romance, love and blending of personalities are associated with such an ordinary phrase as "Aquila . . . with his wife Priscilla." How interesting it would be to know where and how they met, fell in love with each other and married! As nothing is said about any children that through the years came to grace their lovely home, we can take it that Priscilla was childless. From the record we have of Aquila and Priscilla their story is a beautiful idyll of home life. Together from the time of their marriage they are always named together, and were inseparable. What a pleasant picture of wedded love they present! To these two, wedlock was a divine ordinance and indissoluble union, and one which halved their sorrows and doubled their joys. They were not unequally yoked together but joined in the Lord.

In the truest sense, Aquila and Priscilla were "no more twain but one flesh," and all that they covenanted to accomplish together from the hour of their marriage vows was realized as the result of the perfect unity of the spiritual, nature of purpose, and of aim. As twin stars, Aquila and Priscilla were "bright with borrowed rays divine." They moved in one orbit and were united in all their labors as well as in their love. With Nabal and Abigail we have a sad illustration of husband and wife who had nothing in common, who were diametrically opposed to each other in character, and in whom sordidness and sublimity were associated. But with Aquila and Priscilla it was so different, for like Zacharias and Elisabeth they, too, were "both righteous" and like them, manifested a union, idyllic in its full-orbed loveliness and charm. Because the Bible is everybody's Book, it is the

married people's Book revealing how the Aquilas and Priscillas can live happily together.

### *They Were One in the Lord*

Further, this Christian couple were one in their experience of God's saving power, and so became one in their holy zeal for the Saviour, and in their service for His church. They were partners in faithful endeavors, not only to present Christ by lip, but also in the excellency of their walk and conversation. The supreme need of our critical time is not for more preachers, but for more lay workers like Aquila and Priscilla ready to exemplify Christ in the common round of life. Paul first discovered this godly pair when he came to Corinth from Athens where they had been driven by the edict of Claudius against the Jews. What an arrestive phrase that is, "Paul *found* a certain Jew named Aquila . . . with his wife Priscilla" (Acts 18:2). What a find that was! Fewer, grander discoveries have ever been made. "Paul was a wonderful discoverer. He was always finding, now a truth, now a grace, now a personality. He was ever finding because he was ever seeking." How many have we found for the Lord?

Just when Aquila and Priscilla became the Lord's, Scripture does not say. Had they been unconverted when Paul found them it would have been impossible for them to remain so, with Paul living in their home for eighteen months, and their contact with the Apostle's constant teaching of the Word of God in the nearby synagogue. The inference is that when Paul met them they were firmly established in the Christian faith, and that in them he found two saintly souls after his own heart. Both Aquila and Priscilla as Hebrews were drenched in Old Testament Scriptures and had found in the promised Messiah, their Saviour and Lord, and were thus able to enter into Paul's remarkable ministry during his stay in Corinth. With honored Paul as their guest, what times the three of them must have had together in prayer and meditation upon the Word. What spiritual knowledge Aquila and Priscilla must have acquired from the Early Church's greatest Bible teacher. Theirs must have been a thorough theological course.

### *They Were One in Secular Occupation*



Luke informs us that “by their occupation they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:3). This must have added to Paul’s delight in living with Aquila and Priscilla for he was of the same craft, and at times supported himself in this way (Acts 20:34; I Thessalonians 2:9; II Thessalonians 3:8). When not preaching and teaching we can imagine Paul, Aquila and Priscilla sitting together in Aquila’s shop as they plied their needles and fashioned or repaired tents. Aquila and Priscilla shared the duties of their workshop. They were not ashamed of manual toil. Proud of their craft, we can believe that the product of their joint labors was known for its excellent quality. The tents from their establishment made of honest goat’s hair, sewn with honest thread, seamed and disposed of at an honest price, gave Aquila and Priscilla a wide reputation. They were in the tent business first of all, for the glory of God.

As Jews, Paul, Aquila and Priscilla were taught the tent trade when they were young, for the teaching of rabbis was that the father who failed to teach his son a trade educated him to be a thief. Jesus Himself was taught a trade and was thus known not only as “the carpenter’s son” but also as, “the Carpenter.” We are thus shown the dignity of labor. The craft of Aquila and Priscilla may have been a common one, but it was approached in an uncommon spirit. Their toil was honorable and they honored God in their toil, even as Jesus did when for long years He worked at the bench. Do we turn our particular craft to good account for the Lord? “A particular craft will throw one into association with a particular class of persons, and if one is alert and always about the Master’s business, he may find in his particular calling a special opportunity for testimony from which others, not of the same craft, are circumstantially excluded.”

### *They Were One in Their Friendship for Paul*

As we read the references to Aquila and Priscilla we cannot fail to be impressed with the affection they had for Paul, and of the way he held them in high esteem. Of all the Apostle’s co-workers none were to prove themselves as loyal and helpful as these two. As a lonely man, and in constant need of friendship and comfort, none cared for Paul as that home-making couple provided for him. Their oneness in spiritual things made Aquila and Priscilla so precious to the heart of Paul who designated them

“my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus” (Romans 16:3, ASV). They were *workers* not *shirkers* in the divine vineyard, and their labors with and for the Apostle were not in vain, seeing they wrought “in Christ Jesus.” They shared Paul’s itinerant ministry. They went to Ephesus and to Rome assisting their friend in every way. As missionaries they scattered the good seed of the Gospel wherever they went (Acts 18:18; Romans 16:3; II Timothy 4:19).

This is why Paul was generous in his recognition and acknowledgment of indebtedness to these godly souls, who, for love of Christ labored with him so devotedly in the Gospel. When Paul left Corinth after a residence of a year and a half in the home of Priscilla and Aquila, they left with him for Ephesus. After some time he “left them there,” and sailed to Jerusalem. Being “left there” was in the providence of God as we shall see when we come to their contact with Apollos there. In the furtherance of the Gospel Paul tells us that Priscilla and Aquila laid down their own necks for his sake, earning thereby not only his heartfelt gratitude, but also that of all the Gentile churches which Paul had founded. Moule translates this passage, “For my life’s sake submitted their own throats to the knife” (Romans 16:3, 4) — referring to some stern crisis otherwise utterly unknown to us but well-known in heaven. In some way or another, possibly during the great Ephesian riots, they had saved the man whom the Lord consecrated to the service of the Gentile world.

The way Paul describes their readiness to sacrifice themselves on his behalf conveys the thought that they had been exposed to martyrdom for his sake. He never forgot the self-sacrifice of Priscilla and Aquila who, for the most part of their lives worked at their trade as tentmakers but who were capable of noble deeds equal to the occasion. In perilous circumstances they exhibited a martyr-like self-sacrifice, and thereby emulated the example of the Master whom they so faithfully served. Can we say that we are ready to lay down our necks for apostolic causes? Must we not confess with shame our effort to save our necks as much as possible.

While the last mention of Aquila and Priscilla is to be found in Paul’s Second Epistle to Timothy where they were back at Ephesus about the year A.D. 66 (II Timothy 4:19), there is a tradition to the effect that they ultimately laid down their lives for Christ’s sake. The 8th of July is the day

set apart for them in the martyrology of the Roman Church when it is said the faithful couple were led out beyond the walls and beheaded. If this is so it is not difficult to fill in the details of the pathetic picture. Aquila and Priscilla had loved each other through the years, and together had served the Lord so loyally. Now with eyes so full of unfading love, as if to say to each other “Farewell, fear not!” they were ready for the flash of the blade that sent them home to God, and to eternal fellowship with Paul, Apollos, and others they had so signally helped.

### *They Were One in Their Profound Knowledge of Scripture*

One of the most impressive aspects of the spiritual influence of Priscilla and Aquila was the way in which these two simple souls with a deep knowledge of Christian truth were used to open the eyes of a great Alexandrian divine to the reality of the Gospel. The eloquent and fervent Apollos with all his brilliance and power suffered a sorry limitation as a preacher. He knew only “the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25, 26). He knew nothing of salvation through the cross and the accompaniments of salvation. The larger truths of the Gospel of Redemption were as yet unknown to him. Priscilla and Aquila followed the crowds who went to hear this most popular and persuasive preacher.

As they listened, Priscilla and her husband detected the negative defects of the preaching of Apollos. He taught no positive error, denied no essential of the faith. What he preached was true as far as it went. Apollos knew the truth, but not all the truth, and so in the quiet way, with all humility, Priscilla and Aquila set about correcting the apparent deficiency of Apollos. Inviting him to their home they passed no word of criticism on what they had heard him preach but with consummate tact instructed him Biblically in the truth of the crucified, risen and glorified Saviour. “They expounded unto him the way of God more carefully” (ASV).

What was the result of that Bible course which Apollos received from those two godly, Spirit-enlightened believers? Why, Apollos became so mighty in the Gospel that he was called an apostle. In fact, he became so effective as a true gospel preacher that some of the Corinthians put him before Peter and Paul. But all that Apollos became he owed, under God, to the quiet instruction of Priscilla and Aquila. In Apollos, Christ gained a

preacher whose spiritual influence was second only to Paul himself. Says Alexander Whyte in his chapter dealing with Aquila, Priscilla and Apollos

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I admire all the three so much, that I really do not know which to admire the most; Aquila and Priscilla in their quite extraordinary wisdom and tact and courage, and especially love; or Apollos in his still more extraordinary humility, modesty, and mind of Christ.

If we cannot be great, by God's grace we may be the means of making others great. Quiet, unobtrusive Andrew little knew when he brought his brother Peter to Christ that he would become the mighty Apostle to the Jews. As husband and wife, and humble tentmakers, Aquila and Priscilla greatly enriched the ministries of Paul and Apollos whom God, in turn, used to establish churches.

### *They Were One in the Service of the Church*

Paul gives us a still fuller insight into the passionate desire of Aquila and Priscilla to bind the saints together in fellowship. To the Corinthians he wrote, "Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, *with the church in their house.*" In Romans, the Apostle sent his greetings to them and to "the church that is in their house." At stated times they gathered the followers of Christ for worship, meditation and remembrance at the Family Altar, and thereby invested "the domestic circle with a peculiar sanctity as the germ of that great organism which we call the Church of God."

In those apostolic days, poverty and persecution made separate buildings for worship almost impracticable, and so private, sanctified homes became the house of God. Aquila and Priscilla consecrated their home to God, as a gathering place for the saints. Because of this they became doubly sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. If such a dedicated home is "the masterpiece of the applied Gospel," should we not be careful that nothing enters our home to "unchurch" it? Perhaps the church of God could become a mightier spiritual force in the world if she could return to upper chambers and churches in the home.

As we take farewell of Aquila and Priscilla we remind ourselves that in the history of Christianity the truly great characters have always been simple and humble men and women. The God who made the mountains

also made the valleys, and both are needed. Paul, ever conscious of his indebtedness to inconspicuous persons, paid just tribute to Aquila and Priscilla. Whether we are prominent or otherwise, may we be found serving God to the limit of our ability. How much we owe to the quiet and useful lives of the world's Aquilas and Priscillas, as well as its more conspicuous saints we shall never know this side of heaven! The humble tentmakers we have thought of are, "a bracing and cheering study for Christians of every type and condition. They are especially a pertinent ensample for Christian husbands and wives. It will be a true loss if we neglect to contemplate this spiritually-minded pair who walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless."

### PUAH

*Scripture Reference* — Exodus 1:15

*Name Meaning* — Child bearing or joy of parents

Alarmed over the rapid increase of the population of Israelites in Egypt, Pharaoh ordered two Egyptian midwives to destroy all male children as soon as they were born (Exodus 1:15-20). He would never have employed Hebrew women to destroy the males of their own nation. The answer of the two named midwives, Puah and Shiprah, to Pharaoh's anger when he discovered that his cruel edict was not being carried out, implies that they were used to wait upon Egyptian women who only employed them in difficulty at childbirth (Exodus 1:19). Hebrew women seldom employed midwives for they were more "lively," or had far easier births than the Egyptians.

Puah and Shiprah are Egyptian names. Aben Ezra, the ancient Jewish historian, says that these two women "were chiefs over all the midwives, who were more than 500." As superintendents of such a large staff to which they had been appointed by the Egyptian government, Pharaoh ordered them to carry out his terrible command just as he would give orders to any other of his officials. As it is likely that only the chief Hebrews could afford the service of midwives, probably the order of Pharaoh only applied to them. Although Egyptians by birth, it would seem as if they had embraced the Hebrew faith, for we are told that Puah and Shiprah "feared God" (Exodus 1:21).

Receiving the royal command to commit murder, these two loyal, vigorous, middle-aged women were caught between two fires. Whom should they obey? The God of the Hebrews in whom they had come to believe, or the tyrannical king of Egypt? True to their conscience and honored calling they knew it would conflict with the divine command to kill, and so “saved the men children alive.” Thus, they obeyed God rather than man, and in so doing brought upon their heads the rage of Pharaoh. Confronting his anger, Puah and Shiprah took refuge in a partial truth. They said that because Jewish women had easy deliveries, their children were born before they could reach them and assist the mothers in labor.

Cognizant as He was of the partial truth the two midwives told, God knew all about the crisis behind it, and commended Puah and Shiprah for their courage of faith. They had risked their lives for many Jewish infants. Such an act was meritorious in the eyes of the Lord, and He honorably rewarded them by building them houses. Fausset suggests that the nature of such a reward consisted in the two midwives marrying Hebrews and becoming mothers in Israel (II Samuel 7:11, 27). Puah and Shiprah are striking witnesses against the scandalous practice of abortion, which several nations have legalized.

## RACHEL

### THE WOMAN IN WHOM ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY WERE BLENDED

*Scripture References* — Genesis 29; 30; 31; 33:1, 2, 7; 35:16-26; 46:19, 22, 25; 48:7; Ruth 4:11; I Samuel 10:2; Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18

*Name Meaning* — Rachel was the first person in the Bible to have a proper name derived from the brute creation. Wilkinson remarks, “that, for the most part, the formation of a human name from that of an animal is traceable to some peculiarity either observed or desired in an individual, which would thus be most intelligently expressed in a rude and simple age.” Rachel, the name of Jacob’s beloved wife means “ewe,” employed more or less as a title of endearment, just as the word “lamb” is among ourselves. Laban, accustomed to tenderly nursing the weak ewes as they were born, thought “ewe” to be a fitting name for his second daughter.

*Family Connections* — Rachel was the daughter of Laban, the son of Bethuel and Rebekah's brother. Rachel became the second wife of her cousin Jacob and the mother of his two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. (Compare material under LEAH.)

As we have already shown, the characteristic feature of the Bible in pairing certain individuals, compelling us to compare and contrast the lives they lived together, makes it difficult to separate any couple and deal exclusively with one or the other. Invariably, as in the instance of Leah and Rachel, their lives were lived out in close association. Yet we must try and isolate Rachel from her sister, for the galaxy of the Bible's famous women would be incomplete without such a star. Surely, the much-loved wife of Jacob, and mother of Joseph, Israel's saviour, and also Benjamin, could not have been an ordinary woman even though she shone with reflected glory. From the many references to Rachel we have the following facets of her life and character —

### *She Was Naturally Beautiful*

It would seem as if Rachel had all the loveliness of her aunt, Rebekah. The sacred record speaks of her as "beautiful and well favoured" (attractive). Her sister Leah was "tender-eyed," meaning some form of eye blemish making her less appealing than Rachel who prepossessed Jacob physically. Seeing her in all her natural charm and beauty, Jacob loved her. Although beauty may be only skin deep, it nevertheless wins admiration. The Hebrew form of Rachel's description (Genesis 29:17) suggests that she was "beautiful in form and beautiful in look." That God does not look upon the outward appearance merely is evidenced by the fact, of which Ellicott reminds us, that "it was not Rachel, with her fair face and well-proportioned figure, and her husband's lasting love, that was the mother of the progenitor of the Messiah, but the weary-eyed Leah."

### *She Was Divinely Guided*

While, as the younger daughter, it was Rachel's task to go to the well and draw water for her father's sheep, it was no mere coincidence that she went that day when Jacob arrived. She might have been sick or indisposed, and if Leah had had to go for the water *that* day, what a different story

might have been written of Jacob, as well as of the history of Israel. Fleeing from his home to Haran, Jacob met God at Bethel and left it “lifting up his feet” (Genesis 29:1, margin), implying a lighthearted alacrity as he continued his journey with the divine promise in his heart, “I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest” (Genesis 28:15). Thus, with the assurance of the divine presence and guidance as a guarantee of favor and safety he met the shepherds who told Jacob of Rachel (Genesis 29:6) — the name that was to charm his heart the rest of his life. That meeting between Jacob and Rachel was of God, and it was His providence that ordered the first glimpse of each other at the well. We are apt to forget that often the most seemingly ordinary incidents in life are as much of the divine plan as the smallest parts of a watch, and upon these smallest parts of the plan all the others depend. Our steps, when ordered by the Lord, lead to great issue.

As far as Jacob and Rachel were concerned that meeting was unforeseen and unpremeditated. “A divinely directed life is often shaped by circumstances that human prescience could not have foreseen.” As soon as they met it was love at first sight, at least with Jacob. The first sight of his cousin’s beautiful face and figure cast a spell over him and he “kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.” As she was his cousin, Jacob was not prevented from kissing Rachel by the etiquette of the East, which was the home of warm feelings and demonstrative actions. Probably the tears Jacob shed were those of gratitude to God in bringing him to his mother’s relatives, and also tears of joy because he knew instinctively that the lovely maiden he kissed would be his wife. Jacob removed the stone from the mouth of the well, helped Rachel water the flock, acquainted her with his story, and was taken home by an excited Rachel where he was hospitably welcomed.

George Matheson draws our attention to the interesting fact that the meeting of Jacob and Rachel is “the first courtship in the Bible growing out of a cousinly relationship—in other words, as having its roots in a previous friendship.” Jacob, a poet by nature, dazzled by Rachel’s beauty, broke out into a deep love *before* marriage — a thought to ponder in these days when young people are being told that pre-marital experiences are quite in order, to test whether they are suited for each other. Jacob was to prove that the



typical trial of love is waiting, and he had to wait many a year before the one whom he loved, as soon as he saw her, became his wife.

### *She Was Deeply Loved*

We are distinctly told that “Jacob loved Rachel,” and that the seven years he served Laban for his daughter, “seemed to him but a few days, because of the love he had for her” (Genesis 29:18, 20). Even after Jacob found that he had been deceived by Laban and had been given Leah instead, he served and waited for Rachel another seven years because “he loved her more than Leah” (29:30). From the first moment Jacob saw Rachel he loved her, and she became his choice as a wife. But while she alone was in the heart of her lover, “the real choice was not Jacob’s but God’s, and for the first place God had chosen Leah.” In his second marriage, Rachel only received half of Jacob, the other half had been given to her rival sister.

While Leah might have had “the keys of Jacob’s house, Rachel had the keys of his heart. Leah seems to have influenced his judgment: Rachel never ceased to hold his love. Leah bore Jacob six stalwart sons, Rachel was the mother of only two: but the sons of Rachel were dearer to him than the sons of Leah.” Jacob is outstanding among male lovers in the Bible for the true, romantic, abiding love he bore for Rachel. Whether such a deep and ardent love was reciprocated we are not told. The Bible has no reference to Rachel’s love for Jacob. She appears as a somewhat placid character. We have no record of any grief she felt, or protest she made when she discovered how Leah had taken the first place in Jacob’s life. We would like to believe that Rachel’s love for Jacob was as romantic as his was for her, and that also the years she had to wait for him seemed but a few days because of her heart’s affection for Jacob.

### *She Was Cruelly Deceived*

The deceit perpetrated by Laban upon Jacob, Leah and Rachel, adds color to the record. Laban cunningly beguiled Jacob into marriage with Rachel’s elder sister and less beautiful sister. Jacob had accepted Laban’s terms to take no wages for his labor in his fields, and at the end of the seven years’ waiting expected to receive Rachel. In the gloom the bride appears closely veiled, according to custom. The ceremony is performed and the

wedded pair return to their bridal chamber. But in the light of early morning Jacob discovers Laban's duplicity — a duplicity in which Leah must have had a part. How shocked Jacob must have been to behold the plain-looking, undesired Leah instead of the face of his dearest Rachel.

Leah, by her father's deceit, had stolen her sister's blessing. Isaac had blessed Jacob, believing him to be Esau, and now Jacob marries Leah believing her to be Rachel. In the moment of his surprised discovery did Jacob remember how he had stolen his brother's birthright by covering himself with a hairy skin and venison-smell, and making himself appear as Esau? Was this a retributive providence for his own deception of his blind and dying father?

Laban condoned his unrighteous act by declaring that in those times the younger daughter should not be given in marriage before the first-born. He should have told Jacob this when he covenanted to serve the first seven years for Rachel, or before the marriage anyhow. Jacob then became involved in two marriages, which were not deemed unfitting in an age when polygamy was tolerated even by godly men. For another seven years Jacob toiled bravely on, true love enabling him to persevere until Rachel was his. What interests us is the absence of any recorded protest on Rachel's part against her father's deception! Why did she not cry out when she saw that Leah, instead of herself, was being given to Jacob? If Rachel had resentment at the hour of marital vows between Jacob and Leah, she must have suppressed it. Why was she so placid amid such a calamity, at least for the man who loved her so deeply? Unmurmuringly, she goes on waiting for another seven years, ere she is able to share Jacob with the woman who by that time had borne him many children. Perhaps the deep, unchanging love Jacob had for Rachel found little echo from her own heart.

### *She Was Lamentably but Not Finally Barren*

Once Rachel became Jacob's second wife, her continued barrenness created an unreasonable and impatient fretfulness within her soul. Seeing Leah's many happy children made her jealous. What anguish is wrapped up in the phrase, "But Rachel was barren" (Genesis 29:31). Says Donald Davidson, "Rachel would taunt Leah on not having the love of her husband, while Leah would find revenge in the childlessness of her rival." Rachel's

whole being was bound up in the desire to become a mother, so she cried to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die” (30:1). Rachel should have cried to God instead of Jacob whose anger was kindled against her for her impossible request. Certainly he loved Rachel with a true and tender love, and indignation because of her, must have been a source of bitterness. He should have thought of the bitterness of Rachel’s disappointment, and quietly pointed out to her the withholdings of Providence.

Poor, childless Rachel was not forgotten by the Lord for He remembered her and opened her womb (30:22-24). She gave birth to a son, and thereby took away her reproach. The grateful mother became a prophetess for she called her baby Joseph, which means, “The Lord shall add to me another son” — which was not merely the language of desire but the prediction of a seer. Of all the children of Jacob, Joseph became the godliest and greatest. Renowned as the saviour of Israel he stands out as the most perfect type in the Bible of Him who was born of woman to become the Saviour of the world.

### *She Was Secretly Idolatrous*

The time had come for Laban and Jacob to part. While Laban had learned by experience that he had been blessed for Jacob’s sake the patriarch likewise had been blessed, and with his wives, children and rich possessions found he could no longer live at Haran. So he set out for his old home, and took with him all that God had given him. Laban was loathe to lose the diligent partner who had worked with him so faithfully for twenty years. While Laban was absent for a few days caring for his many sheep, Jacob gathered all his family, cattle and possessions and secretly left. Returning home and finding Jacob gone, Laban set out to overtake the travelers. Catching up with them Laban took Jacob to task not only for leaving so secretly but also for stealing some of his household goods and gods.

It was this accusation that revealed Rachel, lovely as she was, in an unlovely light. Although the wife of the heir to God’s promises, she evidently was a secret believer in old heathen superstitions. She stole the household gods, and when Laban sought for them among the goods of Jacob, she had them hid beneath her person. In her cunning in hiding the

small images in human form used for divination and which had a religious significance (Judges 17:5; 18:14, 17, 18, 20, etc.), Rachel manifested something of her father's duplicity. It was not until Jacob reached memorable Bethel that he buried those strange idols under the oak at Shechem. Those lifeless deities, the size of a miniature doll, were regarded as "indispensable evidence as to the rights and privileges of family ownership. Hence, Laban's query, 'Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?' " (31:30). Because of his superstitious beliefs, Rachel likely stole the gods to insure a prosperous journey. Such relics from the old home would guarantee all continuance of the old good fortune. Jacob's trust was in the great God at the top of a ladder with its ascending and descending angels, but Rachel wanted humbler gods that she could see. Further, those household divinities suggest the laxity of true worship in the home.

Thus, although living in a polygamous state, maritally, Rachel was also guilty of religious polygamy. There was a professed relationship to the God of Israel, yet at the same time she was married to idols (30:23, 24). Rachel had no right to carry away what was not her own. Had she known that those stolen images would become a terrible snare in Jacob's family, perhaps she would not have taken them (35:1-5). Images and relics have always been dangerous elements in connection with true religious worship. How prone the human heart is to forsake the spiritual for the material, the Unseen for the seen and temporal! May ours be the constant desire to obey the apostolic injunction to keep ourselves from idols! (I John 5:21).

### *She Was Tragically Taken*

We now come to a feature peculiar of Rachel as a mother. Hers is the first recorded instance in the Bible of death in childbirth and her sepulchral pillar is the first on record in the Bible. It would seem as if Rachel had surrendered her idolatry before the death stroke fell on her. The hallowing influences of divine blessing on her husband and his seed as the result of Bethel, begot within her a sense of divine awareness. Young Joseph's great reverence for God bespeaks of Rachel's godly training in his boyhood years. Jacob's love for her and his stronger faith (35:2-4) helped to purify her character and she lived on long after her death in the life of her noble son.

While Jacob and his host were on the way from Bethel to Ephrath, tragedy overtook Jacob when Rachel died in giving birth to her second son, Benjamin (35:16). She had named her first son Joseph, meaning, “The Lord shall add to me another son,” which prediction was fulfilled when Benjamin was born. How often the brightest anticipations of life are clouded by the gloom of the grave! Rachel prayed for children, but the beginning of her second son’s life was the ending of her own. What travail and anguish are resident in the phrase, “Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour . . . she died” (Genesis 35:16, 18). Facing death she called her son, Benoni, meaning “son of sorrow.” Suffering had brought her to the gates of death and the gift she coveted proved to be a crushing burden under which she sank. But Jacob chose another name for their child and called him Benjamin, signifying, “the son of the right hand,” and showered much affection upon the motherless child.

The last cry Rachel uttered as she died was “Benoni” — son of sorrow — and it is in the spirit of this Benoni that the Bible portrays Rachel. When Jacob came to die in extreme old age, he spoke sorrowfully of the early loss of his beloved Rachel who through her years had been caught in a web of much sorrow and unhappiness. He had loved her at first and ever afterward. Brokenhearted, Jacob buried Rachel on the way to Bethlehem, and set up a pillar over her grave. In “his heart that grave remained ever green, and he never ceased in fancy to deck it with flowers.” In a previous grave at Shechem he had buried Rachel’s idols, and with them her superstitious beliefs. Now he stands at the grave containing the dust of his beloved one and the pillar he placed over it was a sad memento of a broken heart. In later days Rachel’s tomb became a conspicuous landmark (I Samuel 10:2). With Leah, Rachel had helped to build the house of Israel (Ruth 4:11). One day Rachel’s precious dust will be reanimated and she will sit down with the glorified with “Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

### *She Was Symbolically Recalled*

Rachel’s cry for children was prophetic of the slaughter of the innocents when Christ was born (Matthew 2:16-18). Jeremiah pictures Rachel as rising from the grave to weep over the children being carried away to Babylon, never to return (Jeremiah 31:15). Thus the “Benoni” of Rachel’s

heart as she died has been re-echoed throughout the entire history of Israel. Often it does seem as if tragedy triumphs, but the key to the mystery of sorrow can be found in the words of the church which for centuries has been singing for Rachel whom Jacob loved—

Sad-eyed Rachel, do not weep,  
Your children die as martyrs go;  
They are the first-born of the seed  
Which from your blood began to grow;  
In spite of tyranny's dread days  
They bloom in glory to God's praise.

## RAHAB

### THE WOMAN GOD TOOK FROM THE DUNGHILL

*Scripture References* — Joshua 2:1, 3; 6:17-25; Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25

*Name Meaning* — The first part of Rahab—"Ra," was the name of an Egyptian god. As an Amorite, Rahab belonged to an idolatrous people, and had a name meaning "insolence," "fierceness," or "broad," "spaciousness."

*Family Connections* — While Rahab's parents; brothers and sisters were alive at the time of her association with the spies Joshua sent out, we are not given any of their names (2:13). Some of the ancient Jewish fathers who held her in high reputation reckoned that she was the wife of Joshua himself, but in the royal genealogy of Jesus, Rahab is referred to as being the wife of Salmon, one of the two spies she sheltered. In turn, she became the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth from whose son, Obed, Jesse the father of David came, through whose line Jesus was born (Matthew 1:5, where the ASV reads, "Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab" — not Rachab). Salmon was a prince of the house of Judah, and thus, Rahab, the one time heathen harlot, married into one of the leading families of Israel and became an ancestress of our Lord, the other foreign ancestresses being Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba. The gratitude Salmon felt for Rahab ripened into love, and when grace erased her former life of shame he made her his wife. Jerome's

comment of the inclusion of the four foreign women in Matthew's genealogy is suggestive —

In it none of the holy women are included, only those whom the Scriptures blame, in order that He who came in behalf of sinners, Himself being born of sinners, might destroy the sins of all.

Both Jewish and Christian writers have tried to prove that Rahab was a different woman from the one whom the Bible always speaks of as a "harlot." To them it was abhorrent that such a disreputable person should be included in our Lord's genealogy and by Paul, as a woman of faith, and so her story has been distorted in order to further a scheme of salvation based upon human goodness. Although man's sense of refinement may be shocked, the fact remains that Rahab, Tamar and Bathsheba were sinful women who were purged by God, and had their share in the royal line from which Jesus sprang.

It has been suggested that the word "harlot" can be translated "innkeeper," thus making Rahab the landlady of a wayside tavern. Guesses have been made that she had been a concubine, such as Hagar and Zilpah had been, but that in Jericho she was a reputable woman identified with a respectable business. The Bible, however, makes no attempt to smooth over the unpleasant fact that Rahab had been a harlot. Endeavoring to understand her character, we have —

### *Her Sin*

Three times over Rahab is referred to as "the harlot," and the Hebrew term *zoonah* and the Greek word *porne* have at no time meant anything else but "harlot"—a woman who yields herself indiscriminately to every man approaching her. Rahab indulged in venal wantonness as traveling merchants came her way and were housed in her ill-famed abode. Evidently Rahab had her own house and lived apart from her parents and family. Although she never lost her concern for her dear ones, perhaps she was treated as a moral leper. We are told that prostitution was not regarded with the same horror then, as now, but the Bible with one voice speaks of harlotry with moral revulsion and social ostracism.

Rahab's house was built against the town wall with the roof almost level with the ramparts, and with a stairway leading up to a flat roof that appears

to be a continuation of the wall. Thus, the people of Jericho knew all about the men who entered and left such a disreputable house. While her name came to be sanctified and ennobled, both Paul and James affix the label to her name, *Rahab the harlot*. She still carried the evil, distinguishing name, thus declaring the peculiar grace of the transforming power of God. How Rahab came to forsake her evil career we are not told! Like many a young girl today perhaps she found the restrictions of her respectable home too irksome. She wanted a freer life, a life of thrill and excitement, away from the drab monotony of the home giving her birth and protection. So, high-spirited and independent she left her parents, set up her own apartment with dire consequences. Frequently women like Rahab are more often sinned against than sinners. Man's lust for the unlawful is responsible for harlotry.

### *Her Scheme*

It was from some of the travelers Rahab entertained and sinned with, that she came to learn the facts of the Exodus of Israel, the miracle of the Red Sea, and the overthrow of Sihon and Og. So, when the two spies from Joshua sought cover in her house, she knew that sooner or later the king of Jericho would get to know of the accommodation she gave them. Here were two men, different from other men who came seeking her favors. These were men of God, not idolaters, bent on one mission, namely, the overthrow of the enemies of His people, and brilliantly she planned their protection and escape. The flax that she spread on her roof and the scarlet cord she used as a sign indicated that Rahab manufactured linen and also dyed it. If only, like Lydia, she had kept to such an honorable occupation, what a different story would have been hers.

Rahab's skillful scheme succeeded. The two Jewish spies were in desperate straits, seeing the Amorite pursuers were hot on their trail, but Rahab, although her safety and patriotism as an Amorite would be assured if she informed against the spies, decided to hide and preserve them. Seeing their hunted and dreaded look, Rahab assuredly said, "Fear not, I will not betray you nor your leader. Follow me," and taking them up to the flat roof of her house, bade the men cover themselves completely with a pile of flax lying there to dry. Shortly after, when the pursuers had tracked the two spies to Rahab's house, she met them with a plausible excuse that they were there



but had left by way of the Eastern Gate. If they doubted her word, they could come in and search her house. But off the pursuers went to catch up with their prey, not knowing that the spies were being befriended by Rahab. As soon as the way was clear, under cover of night, she let the spies down from the window in the wall and, knowing the country, guided the spies in the best way to escape capture.

There are one or two features associated with this clever plan of Rahab which are worthy of notice. First of all, idolater though she had been, with a phase of immorality associated with her idolatrous life, she witnessed to a remarkable understanding of the sovereignty of the true God for she said to the spies —

I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us. . . . The LORD, your God he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath (Joshua 2:9-11).

Harlot though Rahab had been, intuition from above had been given her that the spies were men of God, the forerunners of His people who were to execute His will, and that to take sides with them was to take sides with God Himself.

Further, there was in Rahab's mind, no matter how faintly understood, a distinct call from God, that she was being singled out from her own idolatrous people to aid the God she had a growing conception of. Her faith of this God who worked great wonders was altogether marvelous and singular. It was such a call that made her willing to sacrifice her own nation — an act which would have been otherwise treasonable. Does not her confession of God's power and purpose, and her service for the spies indicate that she knew the race of which she was part was accursed of God for its crimes and idolatry, and that she wished to be separated from such a doomed people, and identified with the people of God? The declaration of faith given by this Canaanite woman places her in a unique position among the women of the Bible.

### *Her Sacrifice*

When Rahab hid the spies, put those who sought them on a false trail and helped the spies to escape and melt away into the shadows of night, and lay concealed until they could reach Joshua with their report, she took her

life in her own hands. We cannot but admire her courage and willingness to risk her own neck. Had those spies been discovered hiding in her house, she would have died at the hands of the king of Jericho. Yet with a calm demeanor, and without the slightest trace of inner agitation, she met the searchers and succeeded in setting them out on a false trail. By her act Rahab was actually betraying her own country, and for such treason certain death would have been hers had she been found out. To hide spies was a crime punishable with death. Seeing the faces of the spies filled with fear, Rahab assured their hearts that she was on their side, and in spite of the sacrifice involved said, "I will not betray you. Follow me!" By military law the spies were likewise liable to instant death because of the threat of war, and Rahab, willing to do all in her power to protect her nation's enemies, faced a like terrible end. How gloriously daring was her faith, and how richly rewarded she was for her willingness to sacrifice her life in a cause she knew to be of God!

### *Her Sign*

As Rahab offered to shelter the spies and aid them in their escape, she received from them the promise that when they returned to her country, along with Joshua and his army, that she and her family would be spared alive. While her sin had possibly estranged her from her loved ones, she was concerned about their safety as well as her own. Rahab wanted the kindness she was showing the spies to be reciprocated, and they assured her that she would be dealt with "kindly and truly." The spies said, "Our life for yours if ye utter not this our business." Then the sign of the scarlet rope — their means of escape — was arranged. "According unto thy words, so be it," said Rahab as she let the spies down, and making fast the scarlet rope, she awaited her own deliverance. That red token at the window was likewise a signal to the outside world that Rahab believed in the ultimate triumph of Jehovah.

Much has been said of Rahab's deceit when confronted by the king of Jericho. She told a lie and Scripture forbids a lie or any "evil doing, that good may come of it" (Romans 3:7, 8). But under the rules of war, Rahab is not to be blamed for her protection of those righteous forces set against the forces of evil. What the Bible commends is not her deception, but the faith

which was the mainspring of her conduct. The characteristic feature of the scarlet rope was that it had to be placed outside the window for Joshua and his men to see. Those inside did not see the token of security. As that scarlet line, because of its color and sign of safety, speaks of the sacrificial work of Christ (Hebrews 9:19, 22), the ground of our assurance of salvation is not experience or feelings within, but the token without. Like the Israelites, Rahab and her relatives might not have felt safe within the house, but the same promise prevailed, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13).

### *Her Salvation*

Jericho was the worst of the cities of the Amorites, thus God commanded Joshua to destroy both the city and the inhabitants. By divine decree, it was to be given over to a perpetual desolation. When Joshua entered the city he set about the execution of the divine command, but respected the promise made to Rahab by the spies. Under the protection of the scarlet line, Rahab and all her kindred were brought out of the house. The spies came to her house, not to indulge in sin with Rahab, but to prepare the way for Joshua to take Jericho. She saved the spies not out of human pity, or because of expediency, but because she knew that they were servants of the Lord. In turn, she was saved. The spies she had hid brought her, and her father, her mother, her brothers, and all that she had out of her doomed house, and made them secure without the camp of Israel (Joshua 6:17-25). Brought out of an accursed city, and from her own sins which were as scarlet, Rahab is a fitting illustration of another miracle of divine grace, namely, the calling forth of His church out of a godless, Gentile world.

### *Her Status*

The threefold reference to Rahab in the New Testament reveals how she became a faithful follower of the Lord. She had been taken from the dunghill and placed among the saints in the genealogy of the Saviour (Matthew 1:5 where Rachab [KJV] and Rahab [ASV], are to be identified as the same person). Her remarkable faith was a sanctifying faith leading her to a pure life and honorable career. As the result of her marriage to Salmon,

one of the two spies whom she had saved, who “paid back the life he owed her by a love that was honourable and true,” Rahab became an ancestress in the royal line from which Jesus came as the Saviour of lost souls. “Poor Rahab, the muddy, the defiled, became the fountainhead of the River of the Water of Life which floweth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Her name became sanctified and ennobled, and is worthy of inclusion among many saints.

Paul highly commends Rahab for her energetic faith and gives her a place on the illustrious roll of the Old Testament of those who triumphed by faith. “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she received the spies with peace” (Hebrews 11:31). What a suggestive touch that is, “with peace.” There was not only faith in her heart that God would be victorious, but also an assured peace when she hid the spies that her deliverance from destruction would be taken care of. She knew the *rest* of faith. In fact, Rahab is the only woman besides Sarah who is designated as an example of faith in the great cloud of witnesses. What a manifestation of divine grace it is to find the onetime harlot ranked along with saints like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David!

The Apostle James adds to Paul’s record about Rahab being justified by faith by saying that she was likewise justified by works (2:25), and there is no contradiction between these two aspects for Rahab’s courageous deed was but faith in practice. Faith had wrought in her a change of heart and life, and it likewise enabled her to shield the spies as she did in the confidence God would triumph over His enemies. She exemplified her faith by her brave act, and so James quotes Rahab as exemplifying justification by *works evidentially*. As Fausset puts it —

Paul’s justification by faith alone means a faith, not *dead* but working by love (Galatians 5:6). Again, Rahab’s act cannot prove justification by works as such, for she was a woman of *bad* character. But as an example of *grace*, justifying through an *operative* as opposed to mere verbal *faith*, none could be more suitable than the saved “harlot.” She believed, so as to act on her belief, what her countrymen disbelieved; and this in the face of every improbability that an unwarlike force would conquer a well armed one, far more numerous. She believed with the heart (Romans

10:9, 10), confessed with the mouth, and acted on her profession at the risk of her life.

In conclusion, what are the lessons to be gathered from the harlot whom God used to fulfill His purpose? First of all, we are reminded by Rahab's change of heart and life, that "His blood can make the vilest clean," and that "His blood avails for me." Was it not a wonderful condescension on the part of the Redeemer when He became manifest in the flesh to take hold of a root so humble in type as poor, despised Rahab to magnify His abounding grace for all sinners? Rahab was well worth saving from her evil life both for her own sake and for the place she had in God's plan. Other women in Jericho saw no beauty in Rahab that they should desire her company, but through faith she became one of God's heroines, and is included among the harlots entering the kingdom of God before the self-righteous. Rahab's sins had been scarlet, but the scarlet line freeing the spies, and remaining as a token of her safety, typified the red blood of Jesus whereby the worst of sinners can be saved from sin and hell (Matthew 21:31, 32). While the door of mercy stands ajar, the vilest sinner can return and know what it is to be saved and safe.

A further lesson to be gleaned from Rahab the harlot is that of deep concern for the salvation of others. With the shadow of death and destruction over Jericho, Rahab extracted a promise from Joshua's spies not only to spare her, but also all those bound to her by human ties. While her life of sin and shame had estranged her from her family, self was not her sole consideration in her request for safety. She desired all her loved ones to share in the preservation. What a vein of gold that was in such a despised character! When the mighty change took place in Rahab's life, and she was transformed from a whore into a worshiper of Jehovah, we are not told. As she received and hid the spies, her tribute to God's omnipotence and sure triumph over His foes reveals a spiritual insight God grants to all who believe. And restored to honor and holiness, the redeemed harlot pleads for her parents, and brothers, and sisters. Do we make Rahab's prayer for the salvation of her family, the cry for our own homes? Is ours the same passionate supplication for all of our dear ones that when death strikes they may be found sheltered by the atoning blood of the Redeemer? When at evening the sun goeth down, will our loved ones be as stars in our crown?

Rahab is likewise a poetic and symbolic name for Egypt (Psalms 87:4; 89:10; Isaiah 51:9. See SYMBOLIC WOMEN).

## REBEKAH, REBECCA

### THE WOMAN WHOSE FAVORITISM BROUGHT SORROW

*Scripture References* — Genesis 22:23; 24; 25:20-28; 26:6-35; 27; 28:5; 29:12; 35:8; 49:31; Romans 9:6-16

*Name Meaning* — Rebekah is another name with an animal connection. Although not belonging to any animal in particular, it has reference to animals of a limited class and in a peculiar condition. The name means a “tie rope for animals” or “a noose” in such a rope. Its root is found in a noun meaning a “hitching place” or “stall” and is connected with a “tied-up calf or lamb,” a young animal peculiarly choice and fat. Applied to a female, the figure suggests her beauty by means of which men are snared or bound. Thus another meaning of Rebekah is that of “captivating.” If, then, Rebekah means “a noosed cord,” the loop was firmly around Isaac’s neck. When Isaac took her as his bride he forgot his grief for his dead mother, and lived happily with his wife for twenty years during which time they had no children.

*Family Connections* — Rebekah is first mentioned in the genealogy of the descendants of Nahor, Abraham’s brother (Genesis 22:20-24). When the pilgrims set out from the Ur of the Chaldees, Nahor was one of the party, and settled down at Charran where Terah, his father, died. Among Nahor’s sons was Bethuel who, by an unknown wife, became the father of Rebekah, the sister of Laban. Rebekah married Isaac the son of Abraham, by whom she had two sons, Esau and Jacob.

The story of Isaac and Rebekah as a love lyric full of romance and tender beauty has been retold times without number, and is a charming record that never loses its appeal. Such an idyllic narrative is almost too familiar to need rehearsal, and too simple to require comment, yet because it constitutes one of the most romantic scenes in the Bible, its “moving scenes, so fresh and artless in their old world simplicity” have a pertinent appeal for present-day society. Ancient Bible histories with their arrestive characters and remarkable sequence of events and fortunes never fail to leave an indelible imprint on our hearts. The chapter recording how a wife

was found for Isaac (Genesis 24) presents a link in the chain of events leading up to —

That far-off Divine event  
To which the whole creation moves.

Through the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, Abraham saw that day of Christ in which the church should become the Bride of Christ.

Almost two millenniums after the days of the patriarch whom God spoke of as His “friend,” there were those who considered it a privilege to belong to the race having Abraham as its fountainhead. To be “a son of Abraham” or a lineal descendant of such a grand, great old divine was an honor, but Isaac enjoyed a still greater advantage for Abraham was his own natural father. What a rich dowry of blessing must have been Isaac’s because of such a close relationship. He had the inspiration of his father’s godliness, and the benefit of his prayers and wise counsels — even in the matter of securing the right kind of wife.

Abraham’s opposition to idolatry is seen in his request that the partner for his son, Isaac, must not be “of the daughters of the Canaanites” (24:3). As he had refused a grave for his wife, Sarah, amongst the sepulchers of the Hittites (Genesis 23), so a wife for their son must not be sought among their daughters. Thus it came about that Abraham’s trusted, godly servant, Eliezer, was divinely guided to Haran where Nahor, Abraham’s brother settled. Too feeble to make the journey himself, Abraham gave his servant the most careful instructions, and impressed upon him the solemn significance of his mission. Confident as to the result of the search for a suitable wife for Isaac, Abraham assured the earthly seeker that he would be guided by God’s angel. Eliezer, the intelligent, prudent, obedient and praying servant went forth. Seeking a sign of divine guidance, not to prove God’s faithfulness, but for his own direction in the choice of a woman of character as a wife for his master’s son, the servant came to Nahor’s well at Nahor, and saw in Rebekah who had come to draw water the answer to his prayer and quest.

Eliezer lost no time in telling Rebekah who he was, and from whom he had come, and the purpose of his search. He revealed his tact in the way he wooed and won the heart of Rebekah. The gifts he bestowed upon her and

the good things he said of his master, secured the favor of Rebekah's family who gave its consent to the proposed marriage. Faced with instant departure from her dear ones, Rebekah is given her choice — "Wilt thou go with this man?" Without hesitation, feeling that she, too, was following the leading of God, as Eliezer had, Rebekah replied in a firm voice, "I will go."

The caravan set out for Abraham's home, and now we come to a superb touch in the romantic story. Isaac was out in the fields at eventide for his usual period of meditation. He saw the approaching camels and sensed the success of Eliezer in the choice of a wife. Reaching Isaac, Rebekah, according to custom, veiled her face, and the end of this exquisite poem of the meeting of bride and bridegroom is stated in most expressive terms — "Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her."

Marrying "sight unseen" is a most dangerous venture, but in this case it was successful because "the angel of the Lord" had directed the events leading up to the union. When Rebekah saw the handsome, mild-mannered and meditative Isaac, her heart went out to him. As for Isaac, a man of forty, and some twenty years older than Rebekah, he instantly loved the most beautiful woman he beheld, and she remained his only love. Some matrimonial matches have been described as "Lucifer Matches," because of clash of temperament and temper, but the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was certainly one "made in heaven." There would be fewer broken homes if only young people looking for partners would seek the guidance of God as the servant of Abraham did. We agree with Alexander Whyte when he says of the ancient record of the circumstances leading to the securing of a wife for Isaac —

A sweeter chapter was never written than the twenty-fourth of Genesis. . . . The picture of aged Abraham swearing his most trusty servant about a bride for his son Isaac; that servant's journey to Padan-aram in the far east; Rebekah, first at the well, and then in her mother's house; and then her first sight of her future husband — that long chapter is a perfect gem of ancient authorship.

As with other pairs in the Bible, it is hardly possible to separate Isaac from Rebekah whose lives were so closely knit together. Yet let us see if we can sketch a portrait of Rebekah herself.



## *Her Character*

As a damsel, that is, a maiden around twenty years of age, Rebekah was “fair to look upon,” meaning that she had an unaffected Oriental beauty. She was a virgin, and had a childlike simplicity. There was no trace of wantonness in her. As with her mother-in-law, Sarah, beauty carried its dangers. During his sojourn in Gerar, Isaac feared lest the physical charms of his wife might excite the desire of the king of Gerar and so he lied. Thus Isaac passed Rebekah off as his sister — a course of action which might have had dire consequences (Genesis 26:6-16). He fell into the same error as his father before him (see SARAH). Andrew Fuller says, “The falls of those that have gone before us are like so many rocks on which others have been split; and the recording of them is like placing buoys over them for the security of future mariners.” But in the story of Isaac the buoy served no beneficial purpose.

Beautiful Rebekah had been taken by Abimelech, but one day as he looked out of the window he saw Isaac caressing Rebekah, and he knew that he had been deceived. Isaac’s untruthfulness was discovered, and the heir of God’s promises was rebuked by a heathen king for his lying and deception. In the providence of God, Abimelech, an idolater, was made the protector of the child of promise (see Psalm 17:13). As “an amiable and lovely girl,” as her name suggests, she was industrious, for although she was a member of a family of standing she was not afraid to soil her hands. The hard work of drawing and carrying water, the provision she made for Eliezer’s camels, and the meal she prepared, speak of Rebekah as one who did not shun domestic duties. That she was a woman of faith is evident from what Paul says of her as being the recipient of a direct revelation from the Lord regarding universal blessing through her favorite Jacob (Romans 9:12).

Rebekah’s best qualities come out in the simple yet heartwarming narrative describing her response to Eliezer’s approach, in her service to him, and in her willingness to believe and act upon all he had told her. In his remarkable cameo of Rebekah, George Matheson uses the following terms or expressions — “a fine manner” — “remarkable tact” — “a sunbeam to her household” — “a very beautiful young woman, with the gift of physical charm which was apt to produce self-consciousness” — “the

gift of intellectual sympathy” — “Rebekah’s morning ray is a ray of sympathetic insight.”

Modest and meek, frank and open, ready kindness, great energy and faith, graciousness matching her physical charm, describe Rebekah. When she became a mother she revealed how masterful and clever she could be — a direct contrast to Isaac who was probably more simple, slow of wit, and mild of manner than his wife. The lines of Wordsworth can express Isaac’s feelings when for the first time he gazed upon the lovely Rebekah and came to experience her comforting love as she filled the empty place in his heart because of his mother’s death.

She was a phantom of delight  
When first she gleamed upon my sight;  
A lovely apparition, sent  
To be a moment’s ornament;  
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,  
Like twilight’s, too, her dusky hair.  
But all things else about her drawn  
From May-time and the cheerful dawn.  
A dancing shape, an image gay,  
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.  
I saw her upon nearer view,  
A spirit, yet a woman too!

### *Her Children*

Motherhood came to Rebekah somewhat late in life when Isaac was an aging man. For twenty years she had been childless, and conscious of God’s promise that the Abrahamic Covenant could not be broken, Isaac entreated God that his long barren wife might conceive. He graciously answered his earnest intercession (Genesis 25:19-34). As his prayer was in the line of God’s purpose, it was sure of an answer (I John 5:14). The years of waiting on the part of Isaac and Rebekah show that God has His own time for the fulfillment of His purpose.

Like coral strands beneath the sea,  
So strongly built and chaste,

The plans of God, unfolding, show  
No signs of human haste.

In an age of almost universal polygamy, Isaac took no handmaid, concubine, or second wife. Rebekah and he were bound together by the bonds of a mutual affection, and although childless, yet became the parents of two sons who were destined to be the progenitors of different nations. But when Rebekah became the mother of twins—the first of two Bible women mentioned as giving birth to twins — the other was Tamar (Genesis 38:27)—somehow she changed and was a different character from the young bride who rode south so gaily to meet her lover in Canaan, as our next glimpse of her will show.

The opposite characters of Rebekah's twins, Esau and Jacob, brought into sharp focus the dark side of their mother. As Esau was the first to emerge from her womb he had the precedence and was thus the heir of two things, namely “the sovereignty and the priesthood, of the clan — the birthright and the blessing. The birthright was the right of succession. . . . The blessing was something to be given during the lifetime of the father.” We learn that as the boys grew, “Esau was a cunning (skillful) hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.” At the time of their birth, Jacob seized his brother's heel — an incident prophetic of the day when he would supplant Esau. Often in children there are characteristics predictive of the manner of adults they will be.

The divergence of Rebekah's twins in temperament, inclination, occupation, and religious aspirations is most apparent. Esau was wrapped in a raiment of hair, a rough man of the wilderness, a clever hunter with something of the wild daring spirit of the modern Bedouin. Jacob was the opposite of his brother. He preferred a fixed abode, to dwell in his tent rather than roam the desert. Esau was probably more brilliant, attractive, forceful, daring than his twin brother. Jacob, in spite of his weaknesses and mistakes was the finer character, and on the whole truer to the Lord and more fitted to possess the blessing of the birthright. Further, there was the difference of regard on the part of Isaac and Rebekah toward their two sons that resulted in sorrow and separation.

*Isaac loved Esau*, but the love was somewhat sensual. He loved his son “because he did eat of his venison.” Such love is of a carnal nature, for love in its highest sense has regard not so much to what the loved one *gives* as to what he or she *is*.

*Rebekah loved Jacob*, not because he was more of a “homebody” than his brother, or possessed a more loving nature than he, but because Jacob was the Lord’s preference (Romans 9:13). Esau thought so lightly of the birthright that he was willing to sell it for a mess of pottage, and be guilty, thereby, of the sin of profanity (Hebrews 12:16). Jacob, however, recognized the solemnity of the birthright and wished to possess it. Esau thought of it as of no more value than a mouthful of food, but Jacob knew something of the sacred significance of the birthright and was therefore a more fit channel through which the blessing of God could flow to the seed of Abraham.

As Rebekah is often blamed for the partiality or favoritism she manifested for Jacob, it may be profitable to consider the matter of preference in family life. When parents single out one of their children as a favorite and shower more love and attention upon that one than the rest, such an unwise and unnatural course inevitably results in jealousy and strife. Although Isaac found “in Esau that strong practical nature, and energetic character which distinguished the woman he so dearly loved; and Rebekah saw in the gentle Jacob a replica of the father who had so strangely attracted her that first day when she met him meditating in the fields at evening,” the partiality was absolutely indefensible and led to lying and deception on Rebekah’s part.

What else can be expected but confusion and trouble when there is a crossing of purposes between parents concerning their children? Was the root-cause of Rebekah’s unnatural and unmotherly preference of Jacob over Esau and her treatment of Esau as though he was not, the lack of deep love for her husband, and that union of moral and spiritual ideas and ideals characteristic of every true marriage? We are certainly told that Isaac loved Rebekah, but not that she loved Isaac. Somehow we feel that if husband and wife had been *one* in all things in that ancient home, Rebekah would have been more concerned about Jacob’s character than his prosperity. But Isaac was partial to Esau and Rebekah partial to Jacob — which favoritism

resulted in Esau leaving home, and Jacob fleeing from it. Rebekah's record therefore shows that while Isaac was faithful to her, she was unfaithful to Isaac in a twofold way. First, she cheated Esau, her oldest son, and Isaac's pet out of his birthright. Then she cheated Esau out of his father's blessing, which prerogative had the effect of a testamentary bequest.

Comparing the chapter of the romantic meeting of Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 24) with its perfection of writing, and the dark chapter of Rebekah's deception (Genesis 28), Alexander Whyte says, "That the ship was launched on such a golden morning only the more darkens the surrounding gloom when she goes to the bottom." Then dealing with the secret alienation that developed between Isaac and Rebekah, the same renowned expositor adds —

When the two twin-brothers were brought up day after day and hour after hour in an atmosphere of favouritism, and partiality, and indulgence, and injustice, no father, no mother, can surely need to have it pointed out to them what present misery, and what future wages of such sin, is all to be seen and to be expected in that evil house.

One result of Rebekah's preference for Jacob was the spite and the sight of Esau going out and grieving his parents by marrying two ungodly women. Esau was forty years old when he did this — the same age at which Isaac married Rebekah. His parents must have seen in the foreign wives he brought home the firstfruits of the devil's garden they had sowed for themselves. "Their great grief would seem to have been almost the only thing the two old people were at one about by that time." Esau had seen little in his mother to admire and respect; therefore he was never in any mood to please her. What a different story would have been written if Esau's home had been "without partiality"!

### *Her Chicanery*

Chicanery is described as the act of one who deliberately deceives, and this was Rebekah's sin. The destiny of her favorite son, Jacob, was strongly influenced by his mother's strong-mindedness, and thus she became the authoress of the treacherous plan to deprive Esau of his father's blessing. Isaac is old, feeble and blind, and informs the members of his household that the time has come to give Esau, officially, what was left to him after

selling his birthright, namely, the blessing which carried with it the recognition of his headship, the ratification of the birthright. So Isaac told his favorite son to take his bow and arrow and go into the fields, hunt for his much-liked venison, and make a savory meal. At that time, and for centuries in the Orient, a meal taken together was a common symbol of a saved pledge when father and son partook together. In such an hour of sacred fellowship the father bestowed upon the elder son his rank and place.

Rebekah overheard, and her deceitful heart was stirred to action. She set about to thwart her husband's purpose. Her favorite son must not be displaced, and her hopes for him dashed to the ground, by the impetuous hunter whom Isaac loved. Cunningly she devised the plan of impersonation. While Esau was out in the fields hunting, Rebekah told Jacob to go to a flock nearby and bring two kids for her to dress and cook and pass off as venison. While cautious about his mother's duplicity, he had no conscience against it. What made Jacob hesitant was the fact that his brother was a hairy man, while his own skin was smooth, and that if his father felt him and sensed the deception, he would not bless him, but curse him.

Rebekah, however, was equal to this fear of Jacob, and he followed the counsels of his treacherous mother. He put the skin of the kids upon his hands and upon his neck, thus making himself feel and smell like Esau, and so deceived his aged, blind father. Doubtless Rebekah stood nearby in convenient concealment to see how her ill-conceived ruse would succeed. Smelling Esau's clothes, and feeling the false hairy hands, Isaac was a little doubtful and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." But reassured by the repeated lies of Jacob, the deceived father bestowed the unalterable blessing upon his son, and Jacob, by fraud, became the father of Israel's race. To his discredit, he played the role successfully which his mother had drilled into him with masterly skill. Covetous of the sacred, patriarchal blessing for her favorite son, Rebekah felt she had to resort to duplicity to gain her ends, and in doing so she prostituted parental authority. "My son obey my voice" (Genesis 27:8), and Jacob the misguided son obeyed, and in his subsequent career bore the bitter fruit of his conduct when Laban deceived him regarding Rachel.

A deceiver Jacob was  
Full of craft and guile;

Thro' long years he bore his guilt,  
Unrepentant all the while.

Samuel Morely once said, "I am much what my mother has made me." It was so in a wrong sense in the life of Jacob, for as in the case of Athaliah, "his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly" (II Chronicles 22:3). The thoroughness with which Jacob carried out his mother's plan of deception is surely one of the worse features of the narrative. Fearful of the failure of his mother's plot, Jacob said, "I will bring a curse upon me and not a blessing." But Rebekah replied, "Upon me be thy curse, my son, only obey my voice." The future scheming life of Jacob, however, was but the extension of the deceitful qualities of his mother, and both suffered as the result of adopting false methods to accomplish right ends.

When Esau found that he had been robbed of his blessing through the cunning scheme of his mother, he became a remorseless avenger and swore the death of his brother who was forced to flee for his life to Haran, some 500 miles away. Rebekah never saw the face of her much-loved son again. To add to her reproach she had to endure the grief of seeing her other son marry heathen women. Esau's heathen wives caused Rebekah to be weary of her life (Genesis 27:46). Esau received a promise from his father that he would be the progenitor of a great nation — the Edomites — and much misery accrued to Israel because of Edom. The wrath of Esau's enraged blood boiled in the blood of Herod the Idumean on the day he reviled the Man of Sorrows.

There are some writers who try to justify the actions of Rebekah by saying that she was prompted to take the course she did concerning Jacob because of the prediction that, "the elder shall serve the younger," but God had no need of trickery and deceit to fulfill His promise. Ambitious for her son, Rebekah sacrificed the love of her husband, the loss of the esteem of her elder son, and the peace of her soul, for the idolized son whose face she never saw again. Without doubt, Jacob was the divinely-appointed heir of Abraham (Genesis 25:23), and Rebekah seeking to overrule the purpose of Isaac in his blessing of Esau, resorted to deceit to accomplish the will of God. Her guiding principle was, "Let us do evil that good may come" (Romans 3:8), but wrong is never right (James 1:20). Esau had sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, and Rebekah catered to Isaac's carnal

appetite in order to accomplish a divine purpose. Had she laid aside “all guile, and hypocrisies” (I Peter 2:1), and reasoned with her husband about the solemn issue at stake she would have been saved from the disgrace which her worldly policy brought upon her own head and from the sorrow others had to endure.

Almost the last picture we have of Rebekah is when she tearfully witnessed the hasty departure of her favorite son. “A strong-minded, decisive girl had grown into an autocratic matriarch,” and ends her days a brokenhearted woman. When she died we are not told. Isaac, although much older than Rebekah, was still living when Jacob returned to Canaan over 20 years later. It is assumed that she died during Jacob’s long absence, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron (Genesis 49:31). A fitting epitaph for her grave would have been, “Died of a broken heart.” The only monument Rebekah has is to be found in the Anglican marriage service of *The Book of Common Prayer* where we read —

That as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them.

While she may have been faithful during the first 20 years of marriage while she was childless, Rebekah, by her unjustifiable treacherous and wholly inexplicable intervention for her favorite son, stained her solemn marriage.

Reviewing Rebekah’s life and character what are some of the warnings to heed? Are we not forcibly reminded that love which seeks success at the cost of truth and righteousness is of the earth, earthy? The devil’s maxim is, “Nothing succeeds like success.” But from God’s standpoint nothing succeeds which does not follow the way of truth and honesty. Then, while she had physical beauty, her domination of Jacob and her scheme to deceive her husband revealed the lack of the beauty of a godly character. Further, Rebekah is a warning to all parents that there should be no favorites in the family; that all alike should be dear to them. If there is partiality for any in a family, it should only be for those who are weak and helpless.

Another warning bell is that when a wife conspires against her husband, or vice versa, they are guilty of a baseness which language cannot describe. When one partner finds that he has been betrayed by the other, the world becomes a blank.



The mind has a thousand eyes  
The heart but one,  
But the light of a whole life dies  
When love is done.

There is one beneficial application we can make of Rebekah's prompt decision to follow Eliezer to meet her future bridegroom, Isaac — *I will go!* In connection with the higher betrothal of the soul to the heavenly Bridegroom, He comes to the sinner saying as Eliezer did to Rebekah, "Will you go with Me? Will you follow Me into that country where saints immortal reign?" When hearts respond to such an appeal, "Yea, Lord I will go. I will follow Thee, whithersoever Thou goest!" they are twice blessed.

## REUMAH

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 22:24

*Name Meaning* — Exalted

The first female in the Bible to be named a "concubine" is Reumah. Nothing, however, of an exalted nature is recorded of this secondary wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, who became the mother of four children, Tebah, Gaham, Thahash and Maachah.

## RHODA

THE WOMAN WHO WAS CALLED MAD

*Scripture Reference* — Acts 12:1-19

*Name Meaning* — Foreign born, this domestic servant of Mary the mother of Mark had a Greek name meaning "rose." Wilkinson remarks that as "Barnabas, Mary's brother, was of the country of Cyprus, it is a very reasonable supposition that the family had been resident there, and brought thence this maiden, who, like so many of her nation born in foreign parts, had received a Greek name." Although she carried one of the most beautiful names she was called by another not so pleasant. The saints in Mary's home called her *Manias* meaning, "a mad woman."

In the human episode in which Rhoda is the prominent character, nothing is said of pedigree. As a slave-maid she did not merit any

genealogy. As a servant, she had no hours. The fact that it was long past midnight when Peter reached Mary's house, and that Rhoda the portress answered the door, indicates that she was willing to serve long and late. Mary, her mistress, also found in Rhoda a spiritual help. Doubtless she, too, was on her knees with the others praying for Peter, and hearing his knock went to the door. Perhaps we can break up the narrative in this threefold way. Peter knocked — Rhoda was shocked — The saints mocked.

### *Peter Knocked*

The background of the record which Rhoda shares can be briefly cited. Mary of Jerusalem, a rich widow and mother of Mark the evangelist, owned a large and conspicuous house in the city which she placed at the service of the Lord. During the days of terrible persecution the saints in Jerusalem gathered regularly in her lovely home not only for the reading and exposition of the Word, but also to pray for afflicted saints. On the night in question the saints concentrated on the deliverance of a precious life, namely, Peter their leader. Herod's sword of persecution had fallen heavily upon the church in Jerusalem. James the Greater had already drunk the cup of martyrdom prophesied for him by his Lord, and the gathered intercessors had learned that Peter, imprisoned by Herod, was the next to be led forth to die. If their shepherd was smitten what could the sheep do. Such a crisis brought Peter's fellow believers to their knees in night-long intercession.

As the church in the house earnestly petitioned the Lord, their prayers were heard. In the prison the Lord, by means of an angel, miraculously freed Peter. Peter sped past guards and through opened doors, and came to the closed door of a house where he knew the saints were gathered together praying. Peter knocked at the door, but because of Rhoda's excitement, she failed to open the door. Peter continued knocking until the door was opened, not by angelic hands, as at the prison he had left, but by unbelieving human hands. Such a delay might have been dangerous, if the guards, discovering their prisoner had escaped, had tracked him down and found him standing at the closed gate of Mary's ancient house.

### *Rhoda Was Shocked*

Peter not only knocked but also spoke, for we read that she knew his voice — the dear voice she had listened to so often expounding the sacred truths of the Word. But she was so stunned and overwhelmed at the answer to those midnight prayers standing there, that she failed to draw the bolts and admit Peter. “She opened not the gate for gladness.” Such gladness would have been changed to sadness had Herod’s soldiers appeared at that moment and taken Peter back to prison. We can understand Rhoda not opening the gate as soon as she heard the knock. “Never open a door in the dark until you know who is behind it.” In those days when the saints were not sure who would be the next to join the noble army of martyrs, great caution was necessary. That knock might have been the summons of cruel Herod, making a fresh inroad on the little flock. But when Rhoda asked, “Who is knocking?” and received the muffled reply, “It is Peter, open quickly,” she should have opened the gate before opening her mouth to others in the house about Peter standing outside. Knowing that for certain it was Peter, it was her duty as the maid to open the door. But stunned by the glad tidings she was momentarily thoughtless.

There are some characteristics of this maidservant who only has this one notice in Scripture, which are attractive. First, unbounded joy was hers. Luke, the beloved physician, who wrote the Acts, analyzes Rhoda’s state of consciousness when the good news of answered prayer on Peter’s behalf overpowered her presence of mind. She forgot herself — and her duty — and *ran in* to tell the intercessors to pray no more for Peter was at the gate. We can imagine how excitedly she shouted, “Peter is free! Peter is knocking at the door!” A spontaneous child of nature, she manifested her exuberance. Had hers been a calmer, less passionate nature, she would have opened the door when she knew it was Peter, and then gone in to tell the praying band that Peter was safe and free.

Further, when her good, glad information was scorned by the saints whose prayers for Peter had been interrupted by Rhoda’s joyous outburst, “she constantly affirmed that it was even so.” Her young heart believed in God and in the power of prayer, and knowing definitely that prayer had been answered, she would not suffer the praying band in the house of her mistress to browbeat her into silence. Although only the maid, she was not to be subdued by the sarcastic criticism of the large congregation present.

She knew it was Peter, and nothing could move her from that belief. Rhoda wore the red rose of courage so beautifully as she persisted against opposition to constantly affirm the truth.

### *The Saints Mocked*

How revealing was the reaction of those gathered together to Rhoda's excited announcement. First of all, they told the glad maid that she was *mad*. They accused her of insanity! But Rhoda was in good company because it had been said of the Saviour whom she had come to know and love, "He is beside Himself." Then, when Paul's eye kindled with the glory of his message, just as the face of Rhoda glowed as she told of answered prayer, Festus said of the Apostle, "Thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad." The prophet speaks about the spiritual man being mad (Hosea 9:7). Have we ever been thought mad for Christ, or fools for His sake? We are in the best of company if others sneer at us as we declare and live the message of God's power through Christ. But being told she had lost her senses did not deter Rhoda from the repetition of what she knew to be true.

Departing from their accusation, the band said, "It is his angel." Failing to move Rhoda from her persistent testimony, the saints treated her message as coming from the dead. It was a common Jewish belief that every true Israelite had a guardian angel especially assigned to him, who, when he appeared in human form, assumed the likeness of the man whom he protected. The continued knocking of Peter, however, stifled that interpretation of Rhoda's testimony because guardian angels are not prevented from carrying out their mission by closed doors. So, feeling that there was something insistently human about that constant knocking "they opened the door, saw Peter, and were astonished."

*Astonished!* How this description of their feelings revealed their unbelief! They had been praying for hours for Peter, yet when Peter stood at the door they did not believe it. Lack of faith was mingled with their intercessions, and so they were surprised at the miracle God had performed in Peter's escape from prison. Our Lord instructed His disciples to pray believingly. "When ye ask, believe that ye receive." Spurgeon once said, "If the Lord wants to surprise His people, He has only at once to give them an

answer. No sooner do they receive an answer than they say, ‘Who would have thought it?’ ” Mary of Jerusalem came to value her godly maid, Rhoda, more than ever because of the great assistance she had rendered that memorable day. And once in the house, Peter must have commended her for her persistence.

## RIZPAH

### THE WOMAN WHO GUARDED HER DEAD

*Scripture References* — II Samuel 3:7; 21:8-14

*Name Meaning* — “A hot, or baking stone.” Rizpah certainly exhibited a white-heat passion in the protection of her murdered sons.

*Family Connections* — She was a daughter of Aiah, or Ajah, the Horite (Genesis 36:24; I Chronicles 1:40; II Samuel 3:7). Saul took her as a concubine and she bore him, Armoni and Mephibosheth. Ishbosheth, another son of Saul by a different woman, accused Abner, a cousin, of incest with Rizpah, and enraged by such an accusation Abner transferred his allegiance from Saul to David (II Samuel 3:7-21).

Among all the heart-moving episodes in the Bible, none is so compelling and touching as the story of Rizpah and her care of the dead. This narrative is probably responsible for the great poem of Tennyson, *Rizpah*, a verse of which reads —

Flesh of my flesh was gone,  
    But bone of my bone was left —  
I stole them all from the lawyer —  
    and will you call it a theft?  
My baby, my bones, that had sucked me,  
    the bones that had laughed and had cried  
Theirs? O no! they are mine —  
    not theirs — they had moved in my side.

Donald Davidson reminds us that, “Beauty is often to be found in the most unexpected places, and here we find the blackness of that pre-Christian night pierced by a pure white shaft of sacrifice and love.” It may prove profitable to present a threefold portrait of this most courageous woman.

### *She Was a Victim of Vengeance*

Like millions of women through the centuries, Rizpah, caught up in the holocaust of national strife and war, found herself bereft of husband and children and was left to fight a battle against loneliness and poverty. The background of Rizpah's empty heart and home is plainly stated. Saul, who became conspicuous for his pride and self-will, broke an oath that had been made with the Gibeonites by Joshua. Although the idolatrous Gibeonites had deceived Joshua, yet the treaty with them had been made, and an oath not to destroy them by the sword was sealed in the Lord's name. But when Saul came to power he set about the obliteration of Israel's enemies, and treating the Gibeonites as a heathen settlement in a holy land, endeavored to annihilate them. As soon as Saul met his death on Mount Gilboa, the Gibeonites sought for redress for the profanation of the oath given by Joshua.

A severe famine lasting for three years overtook the land of Israel, and David was divinely informed that the famine was in consequence of Saul's slaughter of the oath-protected Gibeonites. They demanded by way of compensation that the seven sons of Saul should be hung up "before the Lord" in expiation for what had been done there. It thus came about that innocent children had to bear heavy punishment for the sin of their father. The five sons of Saul by Merab, who were cared for by Michal after her sister's death (see MICHAL), and Saul's two sons by Rizpah were taken and hanged upon a hilltop for all to see. Thus vengeance, a divine prerogative (Romans 3:5; 12:19), was taken out of God's hands, and executed by revengeful men in God's name upon seven innocent men. They were cruelly slaughtered, not to appease divine wrath, but to satisfy a human thirst for vengeance. History affirms that innocent people suffer for the sins of their rulers.

### *She Was a Defender of the Dead*

The next glimpse of Rizpah offers a sharp contrast to the brutal revenge and slaughter that broke her motherly heart. What an effective illustration she gave of a mother's love being as strong as death! What a ghastly scene that must have been during barley harvest with those seven blood-covered

bodies hanging on the respective trees, and noble Rizpah protecting them from the vultures waiting to gorge themselves on the corpses! Through the days and weeks she watched those broken bodies gradually blacken, decay and wither, and never relaxed her vigil. She had no power to prevent the gruesome murder of her two sons, but none could stay her from the act of mercy in caring for their mangled bodies on the gallows-tree. Leaving those bodies to hang unburied testified to the vengeance being of man and not of God, for the law demanded that anyone hanged on a tree must be buried before sunset of the same day.

Rizpah continued watching the mouldering bodies of the dead standing out stark against the sky. Her beautiful, sacrificial motherhood wrestled through anxious days and more anxious nights with the foul stench of those rotting corpses filling her nostrils. Here is an episode unmatched in literature. As a widow who feared God, perhaps her tender care of the dead implied an instinctive sense of resurrection. Rizpah spread sackcloth on the rock. Sackcloth is not only associated with mourning for the dead (Genesis 37:34; II Samuel 3:31), but also with the public expression of humiliation and penitence in view of some misfortune, present or impending (I Kings 21:27; Nehemiah 9:1, etc.). Was Rizpah's use of the sackcloth a sign that the land had repented of its sin? At any rate, she defended the dead till the rain came — a token that God had withdrawn His judgment. Water out of the heavens, reviving the famine-stricken land, was recognized as the sign of God's mercy, and that the painful watch in sackcloth on the dead was over. "Refrain thine eyes from tears — thy work shall be rewarded — they shall come again from the land of the enemy."

Rizpah's long vigil was over. She had clung at all costs with desperate, sacrificial tenacity to guard the lifeless remains of Saul's seven sons (Song of Solomon 8:6; Isaiah 49:15), now she was at liberty to bury their withered corpses. David heard of her motherly devotion and long vigil. Remembering that the uncared-for bones of Saul and Jonathan were still exposed in the streets of Beth-shan he commanded that they should be recovered and mingled with the precious bones which Rizpah had guarded, and buried in the family grave at Zelah. "God was intreated for the land," and Rizpah's desire for proper respect for her dead was fulfilled.

*She Typified the Gloom of Golgotha*

Different writers have drawn attention to the similarities between Rizpah as she stood by those seven trees on the hillside, and Mary who stood by the tree upon which her Son was hanged. In that “hill before the LORD” (II Samuel 21:9), we have a shadow of Golgotha. Seven innocent men were hanged, or as the Latin Version puts it, *crucified*, to make atonement for the sin of others. They bore the curse of a broken oath, for “cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,” and those trees on that hill of Gibeah were the shadow of the one bearing the one great expiatory Sacrifice. By His death upon the tree, God’s Son satisfied His Father’s justice and righteousness, and provided a perfect salvation for a sinning race.

There is a striking way in which Rizpah the mother of two sons, and Mary Magdalene, the devoted follower of Christ, resemble each other. Rizpah could not forget the sons of her love, and in her sacrificial vigil of her dead expressed the secret instinct of faith in the hope of resurrection. In like manner, Mary sat over against the sepulcher watching the place where her dear Lord was buried. While not mindful of His predicted Resurrection (Psalm 16:9, 10), she was at His grave early the next morning to embalm His body, and would have been prepared to guard it as Rizpah had defended her dead, but that body was no longer in the tomb. Christ was alive forevermore, and Mary was privileged to become the first witness to this cardinal truth of Christianity. Rizpah saw her dead buried out of her sight (Genesis 23:4), as we have, but the Crucified One, “dead and buried” did not remain out of sight. He rose again, and provided, for all those redeemed by His blood, a glorious resurrection.

## RUTH

### THE WOMAN WHO ROSE FROM OBSCURITY TO RICHES

*Scripture References* — The Book of Ruth, Matthew 1:5

*Name Meaning* — Since the Ruth of ancient Bible times, her name has ever been a most popular one for girls. Elsdon C. Smith, in his compilation of the first hundred female names in America, places Ruth seventh in the list, with an estimated number of almost one and a half million bearing the name. The author’s only daughter bears this honored name. As to its significance, we cannot do better than the interpretation



Wilkinson gives us in his *Personal Names of the Bible*, in the chapter on “Heathen Names” —

The most distinguished person of the Moabitish race is Ruth, who became the wife of Boaz, and ancestress of David. Her name is a contraction of *reuth*, which may either be the word for “the act of seeing,” “sight” and hence, as in English, objectively “a sight,” “something worth seeing” — or the word for “friendship” or “a female friend,” like *reu* in Reuel, “friend of God.” If the former etymology be adopted, we must ascribe the name to the early beauty of the child; if the latter, it may be due to the exhibition in infancy of that amiable and affectionate disposition which was so characteristic of the woman.

Both meanings of the name were true of Ruth, for as a beautiful girl from Moab she was certainly a sight worth seeing, and her character revealed her to be a woman capable of rare friendship.

It took the grace of God to befriend a bitter woman as Naomi became, but Ruth was bound to her mother-in-law by the cords of love, and literature has no exhibition of friendship comparable to that dramatic episode on the way to Bethlehem (Ruth 1:16, 17). Not wanting to go back to Moab, as Orpah did, Ruth, cleaving to Naomi said with passion in her voice—

Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

What an appealing and stirring demonstration of undying friendship that was, and Ruth meant it, and through it changed Naomi’s sourness into sweetness! We have dear friends like Ruth who cling to us, and others like Orpah whose friendship is only veneer and who quickly leave us (see NAOMI and ORPAH). Scripture gives us a fivefold profile of this famous Moabite —

*A Young Widow*

The first glimpse we have of Ruth is as a young wife robbed by death of her husband. In our previous cameos of Naomi and Orpah we have already seen how Elimelech and his wife, along with their two sons Mahlon and Chilion, in order to escape prevailing famine in Bethlehem, emigrated to the neighboring country of Moab, the inhabitants of which were idolaters. After a while Elimelech died, and the two fatherless sons married women of Moab. Mahlon took Ruth to wife, and Chilion, Orpah. After some ten years' sojourn in Moab, Mahlon and Chilion died leaving their wives childless. In marrying women of Moab those two Hebrew men sinned against the Mosaic Law which prohibited any association with the idolatrous Moabites (Deuteronomy 7:3; 23:3).

Mahlon means "the sickly one," or "invalid"; Chilion, "the pining one," or "wasting away" — names probably associated with their natal frailty. They may have been twins, and from their birth Naomi had to surround them with great care and attention. This is evident that life in Moab, with all its food and comfort, hastened their end. Like their father, Elimelech, they found graves in foreign soil, and the desolation of widowhood came upon both Ruth and Orpah, who became sharers of Naomi's desolation. Ten years of widowhood brought the two younger women to a mature age. How far they had been influenced Godward by their marriage into a Hebrew family, with its recognition of God, and not their idols, as the only true object of worship, we are not told. As Ruth's husband, Mahlon, was the first-born of Elimelech and Naomi, we can imagine how he would strive through their years together to draw her from her heathen ways. With all we know of Ruth's honest nature, it is quite possible that she warmly received all her husband told her of the mighty Jehovah.

Bereft of her husband, Ruth, as well as Orpah, would be left without material resources of support, and would face the hard and bitter lot of a biting poverty, as many widows do when the breadwinner is taken. But if Ruth shed any tears over her sorry plight as she faced a gloomy future without her husband, there is no record of them. She did not seek for self-pity neither did she manifest the bitterness that had gripped the heart of Naomi because of her sad lot. Amid the shadows, Ruth maintained a poise and a serenity which even her mother-in-law must have coveted. When happy homes are ravaged by death, it requires grace to say, "The Lord gave,

the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” Naomi’s self-confessed bitterness over the loss of husband and sons spoke of her lack of faith in God’s good providence. But Ruth, heathen though she may have been, seems to have calmly acquiesced in the divine will.

### *A Faithful Daughter-in-Law*

Bound together by a bond of common grief, the three widows found consolation in each other’s company. “Fellow-feeling, makes us wondrous kind.” The widowed Naomi, now bereft of her two sons who died childless, had no links with Moab. As famine had passed in Bethlehem, the decision was made to pull up stakes and return to her own country and people, perhaps with a faint hope that God would prove Himself to be the Guardian of widows. “Let thy widows trust in me.” What about Ruth and Orpah? Deeply attached to their mother-in-law, who had become a second mother to them, and to whom they clung as their friend and counselor, they decided to accompany the pilgrim on her way. Naomi used no persuasion, but left the two young widows to make their own choice. Therefore all three left Moab together, but on the way they stopped and Naomi urged them to return to their own country, marry again and settle down. She did not want them to face uncertainty in a strange land. With poor Orpah, ties of kindred and her own idolatrous practices won out. Her heart failed, and kissing her mother-in-law she went back to her people and to her gods. It is possible that when among her heathen friends again, her conscience often whispered to her of the wrong course taken.

As for Ruth, the choice was different. She loved Naomi and was willing to leave her own land and share the unknown future with the aging woman in whom her life was bound up. In her happier days with Mahlon, and then in her desolation and bereavement, Ruth found in Naomi a home for her heart. Orpah manifested a show of passionate affection as she kissed her mother-in-law good-by! But Ruth, as always, revealed a quiet fidelity so characteristic of her association with the embittered woman now returning to Bethlehem. We agree with the sentiment of Alexander Whyte that there is not a love story comparable to the love of the Moabite daughter-in-law for her Hebrew mother-in-law.

Ruth's love for her dead husband's aged mother is as pure as gold and as strong as death. Many waters cannot quench Ruth's love. And her confession of her love, when she is constrained to confess it, is the most beautiful confession of love in all the world.

Ruth's declaration of love and loyalty for Naomi marks it out as being the purest and most unselfish form of devotion, especially when we remember that Naomi was more than twice the age of Ruth, and that, proverbially, it is not easy to live with a mother-in-law. Here we have a strong contradiction to modern flippancy — the passionate affection of a young widow for her widowed mother-in-law. History and literature cannot provide a more exquisite expression of love and loyalty as that to be found in the lovely idyll bearing the name of the lover herself. The matchless beauty of the character of Ruth appeared when she cried, "Intreat me not to leave thee." As A. S. Geden puts it, "The piety and fidelity of Ruth are early exhibited in the course of the narrative, in that she refused to abandon her mother-in-law, although thrice exhorted to do so by Naomi herself, on account of her own great age, and the better prospects for Ruth in her own country." In an age like ours with its ever growing number of strained relationships, broken homes and loveless lives it is most refreshing to go back to the charming picture of loyalty found in a short yet sublime book in which every prospect pleases.

### *A Determined Convert*

In spite of her heathen background and association with the degenerated tribe of Moab, Ruth became a devout worshiper of the true God. Just when she cast off her idolatry with its folly of bowing down to gods of wood and stone, and turned to the beauty and blessedness of true religion we are not told. Perhaps in her somewhat short married life, her heart was stirred by what her husband told her of the greatness of Jehovah. Then she must have seen that Naomi's God was totally different from the lifeless deity she worshiped. This much is evident, that her outburst of song of life devotion on the road from Moab to Bethlehem was the birth-strain of a new life. From henceforth the Hebrews would be her people, and Naomi's God her God. Her new-found faith constrained her to say, "The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

Had Ruth accompanied Orpah to Moab and to obscurity, she would have returned to the altars of Baal. But now with God in her heart, she longed to live with those people “whose God is the Lord.” Faith burst forth into the light of day, took the form of quiet, humble service, and remained untainted by any trace of pride or of spiritual haughtiness, as Kuyper expresses it. To which we can add the sentiment of Fausset that, “Ruth is an instance of natural affection made instrumental in leading to true religion. A blossom of heathendom stretching its flower cup desiringly towards the light of revelation in Israel.”

The firm decision of Ruth to follow Jehovah, and to completely identify herself with His people, brought her a rich reward when she became the ancestress of the Saviour who came into the world to save idolaters and sinners of every race. With her surrender to the claims of God, Ruth’s “beauty of heart, generosity of soul, firm sense of duty and meekness” were sanctified, and were used to place her winsome portrait among the immortals. There are thousands of Christian parents whose heavy load would be lifted if only their unsaved children would come home one day confessing, “Thy God shall be my God, thy people my people.” The miracle happened in the heathen heart of Ruth, and God is still the same today as when He won the young widow of Moab for Himself.

### *A Humble Gleaner*

Back in Bethlehem, Naomi was reminded of how her afflictions had changed her. Friends found it hard to believe that this was the beautiful woman who had left them ten years before. At that time she was clothed so well, but now she is clad in a poor and sorrowful dress. Her brow was wrinkled and her back bent, but by her side was the “foreigner,” to share her sorrow, and to taste any joys that might come to her. At first it seemed as if they were to remain desolate and uncared for, but fortunately it was harvest time, and the golden sheaves were being gathered in. Naomi and Ruth must live, and Ruth, with her characteristic thoughtfulness, knew that her aged mother-in-law was not able to work. Thus she went out and was directed to join the poor gleaners in the fields of the rich, godly landowner, Boaz.

We find ourselves in disagreement with those who try to portray Ruth as a lonely girl overcome with homesickness for her old Moabite friends as

she bent her back to glean in an unfamiliar field. In his *Ode to a Nightingale*, Keats sought to immortalize such a feeling in the arrestive lines —

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Thro' the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.

There is no trace whatever of such a doleful note in the record of Ruth. Having deliberately severed all association with Moab, she found joy among the strange people whom she had made her people, and when she went forth that bright morning to follow the reapers, it was with joy and confidence that the God under whose wings she had come to trust would undertake for her. Thus we much prefer the beautiful tribute Thomas Hood gives us in his poem on *Ruth*.

She stood breast-high amid the corn,  
Clasped by the golden light of morn,  
Like the sweetheart of the sun,  
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

On her cheek an autumn flush,  
Deeply ripened — such a blush  
In the midst of Brown was born,  
Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell,  
Which were blackest none could tell,  
But long lashes veiled a light,  
That had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,  
Made her tressy forehead dim —  
Thus she stood amid the stooks,  
Praising God with sweetest looks.

“Sure,” I said, “Heav’n did not mean,  
Where I reap thou should’st but glean;  
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,  
Share my harvest and my home.”

Ruth was not ashamed of the low order of her work as she took her place as a gleaner with the poor and outcast. The sacred historian tells us that as Ruth went out to secure food for Naomi and herself that it was “her *hap* to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.” But her entrance into the field of Boaz, and not into another man’s field, did not just happen. Under Jewish law Ruth had the right to glean in any harvest field. It was no mere chance, then, that brought Boaz and Ruth together, for even the steps of God’s children are directed by Him. In His plan for His own there is no such a thing as *luck*. Determined not to eat the bread of idleness, industrious Ruth walked right into the arms of divine providence. Little did she dream that she would become the much-loved wife of the master of the field in which the reapers had given her a friendly welcome (Ruth 2:12; Psalms 17:8; 36:7).

Being one who feared God, and one who cared for the poor, Boaz went among his reapers, spoke kindly to them, and earned their benediction. Coming upon Ruth he was arrested by her staid and modest look. Although poorly clad there was a dignity in her mien, a refinement giving her distinction, and Boaz is arrested by her beauty and personality. Making inquiries about her, Boaz learns of her sacrifice for Naomi, and of her conversion to the worship of Jehovah (2:6, 7), and commands the reapers to purposely drop extra sheaves for Ruth’s benefit. Boaz also bade Ruth to glean only in his field, and to stand fast by his female workers. He wanted to preserve her from coarse contact with men who might take advantage of such a poor woman, who was in his admiring eyes a superior one. She was not to eat with others but present herself at his feasts.

As for Ruth, her heart was full because kindness had been shown her by a stranger in the solitude of a strange land. How excited she must have been when she reached home and told Naomi all about her good fortune, and showed her all the parched corn she had gathered. Was there a lyric note in Ruth’s story of that first day? Had she sensed that somehow Boaz had been strangely attracted to her, hence his generosity in spite of the alien blood in her veins? As for Naomi, when Ruth came to mention the name of her benefactor, Boaz, she recalls the name as that of a kinsman of her deceased husband, Elimelech. It may be that in the mind of Naomi there entered a feeling that perhaps a brighter future may be hers and Ruth’s.

## *An Honored Mother*

We all know how matters between Boaz and Ruth developed which caused Goethe to say of the Book of Ruth that “we have nothing so lovely in the whole range of epic and idyllic poetry.” The name of Boaz became immortalized because of his loving-kindness toward Ruth, the poor Moabitess, while the kinsman who would not mar his own inheritance is unknown. It turned out that Boaz was one of Naomi’s nearest relatives and one of the few remaining kinsmen of her husband’s family. Therefore he was able to befriend the widow of Mahlon, Elimelech’s son, according to the deep principle pervading the law of Israel regarding the preservation of families. This Levirate Law stated that where a husband died without issue, the nearest brother-in-law (levir) might be called upon by the widow to perform for her all the duties of a husband, and raise up seed for the deceased.

In the case of Ruth, however, no brother-in-law was available seeing the only sons Elimelech had were dead. Consequently, the nearest of kin could be called upon to act as “redeemer” (goel) for the unfortunate, relieving them thereby of their distress. The nearest relative to Ruth by marriage was unable to function as her goel, and being the next relative, Boaz did not shirk his responsibility toward the lovely woman who had won his heart. Before the council of ten men at the city gate he announced before witnesses his decision to buy Ruth’s inheritance and marry her. Although bachelor Boaz was advanced in years, he was determined to play his part and as Naomi said, “The man will not rest, until he has finished the thing this day” — and finish it he did! So the idyllic conclusion was reached, with Ruth being lifted out of obscurity into a happy union with Boaz, the mighty man of wealth. This story provides us with one of the first records in world history of a rise from rags to riches, from poverty to plenty.

God smiled upon the marriage of honorable Boaz and virtuous Ruth, and blessed them with a son whom they named Obed which means “a servant who worships.” As Ruth was the servant who came to worship Jehovah, we can imagine her son’s name as being expressive of her own conversion from idolatry. Through the birth of Obed, who became the father of Jesse, who, in turn was the father of King David, Ruth found herself numbered among the elect, and God wove the thread of her life most



intricately into the web of the history of His people, both before and after Christ. A Gentile by birth, Ruth yet became the chosen line through which later the Saviour of the world appeared. As He came to redeem both Jew and Gentile alike, it was fitting that the blood of both should mingle in His veins. "A good name," says Solomon, "is rather to be chosen than riches, and loving favour than silver and gold." Ruth found it so, and thus her good name found a place in the royal genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). As George Matheson so beautifully puts it, "In the soul of Jesus the wedding bells of Ruth and Boaz are rung once more. Here again Moab and Israel meet together. In the heart of the Son of Man the Gentile stands side by side with the Jew as the recipient of a common divine fatherhood."

Those of us who are Christians praise God for Ruth's inclusion in His portrait-gallery, for she was the ancestress of Him who, by His death, brought us nigh to God. It was from Boaz, an Israelite without guile, and from Ruth, who became an "Israelite not in race, but in mind; not in blood but faith; not by tribe but by virtue and goodness," that Jesus came as the most perfect expression of all graces.

One could say much of the merits and message of the book to which Ruth gave her name, as well as of the many lessons to be gathered from it. Benjamin Franklin, who was ridiculed at one time in Paris for his defense of the Bible, was determined to find out how much of it his scoffers had read. He informed one of the learned societies that he had come across a story of pastoral life in ancient times that seemed to him very beautiful but he would like the opinion of the society. A night was arranged for Franklin to read to the assembly of scholars a lyric which impressed him. The Bible lover read the Book of Ruth, and when he had finished the scholars were in ecstasies and begged Franklin to print it. "It is already in print," said Franklin. "It is a part of the Bible you ridicule."

There is nothing in the entire range of biography sacred or profane, comparable to the idyllic simplicity, tenderness and beauty of the story of Ruth, the young widow of Moab. There are only two books out of the sixty-six forming the Bible that are named after women. Ruth is one, and the other is Esther — and both books have enchanted succeeding ages. The Jews have a peculiar regard for both books. At their Feast of Purim they read Esther, and at the Feast of Pentecost, the scroll of Ruth. Among the

many typical features in the latter, the most outstanding is that of the composition of the true church of Jesus Christ. Ruth was a Gentile, Boaz a Hebrew. Boaz redeemed Ruth's possession and then became her husband. All have sinned, both Jews and Gentiles, but Jesus died for all, and His church is composed of regenerated Jews and Gentiles whom He calls His Bride. Thus "the marriage-bells of Ruth at Bethlehem were the same bells which sounded at the marriage-supper of the Lamb."

From Ruth's outstanding qualities of unselfishness and loyalty we learn that such virtues are the only foundation upon which true happiness can be built. Without them, abiding friendship is impossible, home ties are loose, and the social structure weak. Ruth also teaches us that attractive graciousness is worth cultivating; and that racial hatred and religious bigotry can be solved by a right relationship to Him who made of one blood all nations. Further, the rare literary gem of the Book of Ruth, which takes one some fifteen minutes to read, shows us how our industrial and labor problems can be solved. Boaz was a wealthy farmer, yet he maintained a delightful relation to those who worked for him in a dark, chaotic period of Israelitish history. As he walked through his fields, meeting his servants he would say, "The Lord be with thee," and such was the harmony that prevailed that they would reply, "The Lord bless thee." In our time, the strained relationship between masters and employees would be quickly solved by the application of the good will manifested in those ancient days. Combining as it does all the traits of human life and character, Ruth is a book all can read with both pleasure and profit.

## SALOME No. 1

### THE WOMAN WHOSE DANCING MEANT DEATH

*Scripture References* — Matthew 14:6-11; Mark 6:22-28

*Name Meaning* — Salome is the feminine form of Solomon, and according to Wilkinson, is the Greek form in *shalom* meaning "peace." Cruden, however, says that Salome implies, "very shady," which is truer of the debased character of the daughter of Herodias—which was indeed shady, morally. The New Testament does not name her. It is Josephus the Jewish historian who identifies her as Salome.

*Family Connections* — She was the daughter of Herodias by her first husband, Herod Philip, a son of Herod the Great. Josephus tells us that Salome was married first to Philip the tetrarch, and afterward to Aristobulus, king of Chalcis, the grandson of Herod, and brother of Agrippa.

Mention has already been made of the part Salome played at the birthday of Herod, and how through her sensual dancing John the Baptist was beheaded, and Herod lost his kingdom (see HERODIAS). Kitto, the eminent expositor tells us that, “In the age of Herod, dancing was exceedingly rare and almost unheard of, and therefore the condescension of Salome, who volunteered to honour that monarch’s birthday by exhibiting her handsome person as she led the mazy dance in the saloons of Machaerus, felt it to be a compliment that merited the highest reward.” It was more at the instigation of her evil-minded mother, however, than her own initiative that Salome took part in her dance of death.

What must be borne in mind in our modern times with its evils of mixed dancing is that the Bible nowhere speaks of the mixing of the sexes in the dance. The only social dancing for mere amusement was engaged in by men void of shame whom Michal alluded to when she rebuked her husband for dancing alone *before the Lord*; the godless families described by Job, which produced increased impiety, and ended in destruction; and that of Salome which terminated in Herod’s rash vow and in the murder of John the Baptist, our Lord’s forerunner. As almost all forms of mixed dancing are taught and practiced in schools and colleges, and alas, countenanced by some churches, Christian parents are deeply concerned about the moral effect of dancing on the lives of their children. If they refuse permission for their children to dance, parents are daubed as being too tight-laced, old-fashioned, or out of fashion. Well, Noah was certainly out of fashion, but with his family was saved from the terrible deluge, while the giddy and corrupt world around perished. As the fashion of this world is to pass away, why should Christians shrink from non-participation in it? Moses, we are told, chose “affliction” rather than “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25). The evil heart of Herodias planned the evil act of Salome’s dance, and God’s greatest prophet died. Surely such a tragedy is sufficient to condemn dancing as we know it?

## SALOME No. 2

### THE WOMAN WHO WANTED THE BEST FOR HER SONS

*Scripture References* — Matthew 20:20-24; 27:56; Mark 10:35-40; 15:40, 41; 16:1, 2

*Name Meaning* — See SALOME, No. 1. Mark alone gives her name. Matthew designates her as “the mother of Zebedee’s children.”

*Family Connections* — Legendary attempts had been made to connect Salome with Joseph by a previous marriage, and therefore link her up with the family of Mary; or to make her a daughter of Zacharias. Inadequate attempts have sought to identify her as the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, using John 19:25 as the basis of association. Scripture is silent as to her genealogy. All we know is that she was the wife of Zebedee, the prosperous fisherman who had hired servants. The only glimpse we have of him is in his boat, mending his nets when Jesus came upon him and called his two sons to follow Him. That Zebedee shared his wife’s devotion to Jesus is evidenced by the fact that there was no action on his part to detain his sons from leaving his fishing business to accompany Jesus. Reading between the lines, it is not difficult to detect the harmony in that Capernaum family, concerning the call and claims of Jesus (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19, 20).

#### *Her Devotion*

Salome, one of the saintly women who followed Jesus in Galilee and ministered unto Him, appears to have been one of His disciples from the outset of His public ministry (Mark 15:40, 41; Matthew 20:20-28). She had no doubt whatever as to His Messiahship, and faced no difficulty in persuading her sons, James and John, to accompany her in obedience to the Master’s word. Both Zebedee and Salome by their life and teaching prepared their children to follow Jesus. That they never forgot their home influence and instruction is seen in the depth of devotion, wide range of vision and a godly joyousness the writings of James and John, who became apostles, clearly reveal. Salome remained a faithful disciple of Jesus up to

the very end. She was present at the crucifixion, beholding that grim scene afar off, even when her two sons had withdrawn.

Salome, along with the other women “stood afar off,” probably because of the malicious crowd, the rough soldiers, and the horrors of the cross, all of which was sufficient to make them timid. They were full of love and sympathy, even though they stood afar off. With tear-filled eyes with which they had shown their devotion on the way to the cross (Luke 23:28), they still beheld Him as He hung there in death. Salome was also with the women who came to anoint the body of Jesus, and shared in the glorious news of His Resurrection (Luke 24:10). They hastened to perform their last service for their Lord, but were not at the tomb soon enough to perfume His body with spices. Their devotion was rewarded by the revelation of the angel that He whom they loved and mourned was alive forevermore. They went forth to proclaim the blessed truth of the Resurrection — a miracle which Salome’s son, John, was to give emphasis to as he came to write the last book of the Bible (Revelation 1:17, 18).

### *Her Demand*

Salome was ambitious for her sons, and ambition is commendable when it is in full agreement with the mind and purpose of God. Ambition, when divinely directed, can lead to the heights of honor but when selfishly pursued can cast one down to the depths of degradation. Salome knew she was an honored mother because her two sons, James and John, were two of Christ’s best-loved disciples and along with Peter formed the inner circle among the Twelve. On different occasions, Peter, James and John are grouped together. Salome knew that Christ was the Messiah, but as a millennialist could not separate Him from Israel’s temporal glory. Feeling that the kingdom would soon be established, she requested that her sons be placed one on Christ’s right hand and the other on His left when He inaugurated His kingdom. Although such a demand arose from maternal pride and jealousy, it did not arise from true faith. She knew not what she asked (Matthew 20:20-24; Mark 10:35-40) when seeking seats of honor for her sons.

In His rebuke of Salome for her misguided ambition Christ did not reject the request of the mother for her children, but corrected it, and

accepted it in a way mother and sons did not anticipate. To be intimately near Him on His throne meant fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Our Lord did not treat Salome's ambition as if it were sinful but he was compassionate because of the ignorance behind the request. Salome did not know "what manner of spirit" she was of (Luke 9:55). In effect, Jesus asked if her sons were prepared to drink the cup of martyrdom, and implied that James and John would share His throne of suffering. This they did, for James was the first apostolical martyr and John, the last. Salome's dreams of the kingship of Christ with her sons sharing His rule were rudely shattered as she saw her much-loved Messiah dying as a felon on a wooden gibbet. Along with others she thought that it would have been "He who would have redeemed Israel," but there He is, hanging on a cross in agony and shame. Salome came to learn that the only way to sovereignty is through sacrificial service. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:26, 27). The mother sought earthly crowns for her sons, but through losing their lives for Christ's sake, they gained greater honor in heaven.

As we leave "the mother of Zebedee's children," it is with the realization of the influence of a godly mother in, and over, the lives of her children. So often it is from a mother's tender affection that her child imbibes the love of God, so that it becomes almost part of the child's nature. Further, there is no more potent antidote against sin within or without than faith in God generated by the holy life and teaching of godly parents. Salome and Zebedee were the Lord's and both of their sons became His followers and died for His cause. Happy and grateful are those Christian parents who live to see their offspring wholly dedicated to the service of the Lord.

## SAPPHIRA

### THE WOMAN WHO DROPPED DEAD

*Scripture Reference* — Acts 5:1-11

*Name Meaning* — A Hebrew name, Sapphira means the jewel, "sapphire" — a precious gem of deep blue, and probably is given in allusion to the color of the eyes. The name is from a Hebrew word signifying "beautiful" or "pleasant." The sapphire represents the blue veins of a

beautiful person (Ezekiel 28:13). The Bible gives us no record of Sapphira, nor of her husband with whom she sinned and died. Although we do not know their genealogy we are given an insight into their greed and deceit. It is not easy to separate these two who were partners in falsehood. Our cameo of Sapphira therefore is likewise that of her husband.

The satanically inspired deception of these two who agreed together to lie against God in the Spirit, was the first gross act of disobedience within the newly formed Christian church, hence, the justification of the severe punishment inflicted. As Meyer puts it, this was “the first open venture of deliberate wickedness” and the punishment was “an awe-inspiring act of Divine church-discipline.” As Satan sought to ruin God’s original creation through the disobedience of earth’s first pair, Adam and Eve, so here he is active again seeking to destroy the testimony of God’s new creation, His blood-bought church, through another pair, Ananias and Sapphira. “She is His new creation” we sing of the church, and its early members realized the necessity of being one in Christ Jesus, but Satan strikes at such a spiritual unity not from without, but within by two of its members who might have wrecked the church.

It has been suggested by some writers that Sapphira was the instigator of the deceptive transaction, costing the life of Ananias and herself. As Eve tempted Adam into sin, and Jezebel caused Ahab to perpetrate his terrible crimes against ancient Israel, so Sapphira tempted her weak husband to sin to his ruin. The narrative says that they “agreed together” to lie, and that both were equally guilty, for whatever Ananias proposed, his wife was “also privy to it.”

### *Discipleship*

A tragic aspect of the agreed decision of Ananias and Sapphira is that both of them were professed Christians who had turned from Judaism and had associated themselves with the newly-formed Christian community. Faith and zeal of some sort had led them to declare themselves as believers. Whatever they did, they accomplished together, and some time after Pentecost they unitedly became part of “the multitude of them that believed” (Acts 4:32). It was, therefore, their professed discipleship that

aggravated their sin. Deceit and lying are to be deplored in the lives of those who are not the Lord's. Lacking the ethical standard of Christianity they so act, but for two of Christ's own followers to try and deceive the Omniscient Spirit was indeed a sin unto death. To the best of saints there comes the exhortation, "Take heed lest thou fall."

### *Disposal*

In order to fully understand the record of Ananias and Sapphira we must read it in the light of what goes before. The days in which they lived were days of a voluntary Christian communism in the primitive church, when there was no compulsory abandonment of property, or absolute community of goods. The godless Communism of today in which there is an enforced equal distribution of property, and human rights are denied is totally different from the willing surrender of possessions for the sake of all which the apostolic age experienced. Then, "all that *believed* were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need." Such a voluntary forsaking of property for the sake of the cause of Christ was characteristic of the members of the church at Jerusalem, after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This compact on the part of the believers to sell what they had and place the proceeds of the sale in one common fund for the benefit of the needy, was a remarkable demonstration of their willingness to follow the Master's call to forsake all and follow Him. There has never been, in the long history of the church, such an exhibition of Christian stewardship and a sense of individual responsibility in the sight of God.

Conspicuous among those who had surrendered was Barnabas, who had gained praise and power because of his self-sacrifice. He had sold all his land and surrendered all the money it brought, to Peter, the representative and spokesman of the Twelve and leader in the Early Church. Then we come to the "melancholy *but*," as Matthew Henry describes the opening of the fifth chapter of the Acts. "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession." The action of Barnabas to sell all was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Now two other believers are actuated by the spirit of evil to pretend a similar surrender. Seeing the gladness and enthusiasm of others who had become generous benefactors, and of the way



they were praisingly spoken of because of their sacrifice, Ananias and Sapphira did not want to be thought selfish in retaining what they had. They wanted to be included among those who, from the highest motives, denied themselves of their earthly possessions, and so tried to ape the intense brotherliness which other believers had manifested. But the sincerity and spontaneity of the surrender of others only set forth in dark contrast the calculated deceit Ananias and his wife were to practice.

### *Deceit*

Acting together, Ananias and Sapphira sold the plot of land they had owned, and brought only “a certain part” to Peter. They were not bound by any rule of the church to sell their land and make a gift of any size. Had they brought nothing to Peter there would not have been any blame. Their sin consisted in surrendering a part as if it had been the whole, and keeping back the other part for themselves. They wanted to give the impression that their all was on the altar, when it was not, and thus they became guilty of sacrilege in the attempt to obtain the reputation of saintliness with the reality of sacrifice. It was an effort to serve God *and* mammon. Theirs was “the double mind”—the heart divided between the world and God which James describes (1:8; 4:8). Their money was their own to keep, or give in part or wholly. “Whiles it remained, was it not thine own?” Their deceit came in trying to represent themselves as completely sacrificial as Barnabas, but in the attempt they acted a lie. The part was offered as if it were the entire proceeds of the sale of land. The phrase “*keep back* part of the price” is rendered “purloining” by Titus, and conveys the idea of stealthy and dishonest appropriation (2:10), and is used of the sin of covetousness by Achan (Joshua 7:1).

Twice over the unworthy action of these two believers is referred to as “lying.” “Lie to the Holy Spirit” — “Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God” (5:3, 4). The margin gives “deceive” for “lie.” If there is any difference between these terms, deceiving is the end, and lying the means of its accomplishment. There was the attempt to cheat or deceive the Holy Spirit. Ananias and Sapphira felt that no one knew how much money their land brought, and dishonesty became a deliberate lie. Alas, they were not spiritually motivated as Barnabas had been when he sold and gave all, and

so in their resemblance of a full surrender, Ananias and Sapphira were most dishonest. They fell into temptation and a snare, and their avarice resulted in a fraud. Peter, who knew by experience the machinations of Satan, told the fraudulent couple that they had allowed Satan to possess their hearts, even as the same enemy moved Judas to sell his Lord for money. But falsehood and hypocrisy rather than greed were the sins which Ananias and Sapphira were so severely punished for.

Peter did not shrink from exalting the Holy Spirit as *God* (compare the phrases “lie to the Holy Spirit” — “lie unto God”). Here the personality and deity of the Spirit are emphasized. We cannot lie against a mere influence. Ananias and Sapphira tempted the Omniscient Spirit, by agreeing to practice a deception on men in whom He manifestly dwelt in an extraordinary manner, and through whom He now spoke and acted, as He did through Peter, the ruler and guardian of the Spirit’s infant church. How deceived by Satan they were into believing that they could sin in the dark without the divine Searcher of the secrets of all hearts — even their own — knowing of their pretension!

### *Death*

Judgment, swift and severe, overtook the two conspirators whose sudden death was a signal proof of God’s anger on their Judas-like hypocrisy. Had it not been for the exposure of the false, dishonest action of Ananias and Sapphira, the church at Jerusalem would have continued thinking of them as pious people who, like Barnabas and others, had sacrificed their possessions for the benefit of the flock. But Peter, reflecting the righteous indignation of the Lord over the deceit of Sapphira and her husband, “ripped the texture which had been woven out of the threads of pious appearances and greediness to shreds.”

Ananias was the first to suffer for the sin against the Holy Spirit. When he brought the “certain part” of the sale of his land to Peter, the Apostle immediately charged him with keeping back part of the price. Whether Peter had heard from others what the full price was, or had the amount been revealed to him by the all-knowing Spirit we do not know. All Peter did was to press home the intensity of the guilt of Ananias and immediately he was struck dead. Peter did not announce any sentence of death upon him.

Because the Church had just been established as a divine institution which its Founder was to use for the extension of His cause in the world, it was necessary to condemn on its first appearance by a visible, divine judgment, the particular form of evil Ananias had committed. This was, namely, the worst corruption of the best — the effort to gain “the reputation of a saint, without the reality of holiness.” While the shame and agony of detection, the horror of conscience not yet dead, paralyzed the powers of life and resulted in a quick death, behind any natural cause there was a visitation of God. The burial of Ananias followed immediately, in the burial place of the infant church. Ellicott asks whether the cemetery which the saints had free access to was the potter’s field that had been bought to bury strangers in and was Ananias buried near to Judas in the same grounds? (Matthew 27:7, 8).

Fortunately, Sapphira was not present during the three hours when her husband was brought face to face with his sin of deception, dropped dead and wrapped up in his winding-sheet and buried. Returning home, she expected to join her husband in receiving high honor for their pretended sacrifice, but in meeting Peter she continued the lie of Ananias. The Apostle’s question, “Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much?” that is, the amount given to Peter and which they represented as the full price they had received for the sale, gave Sapphira an opportunity of telling the truth and repenting of her share in the deceit. Unknown to her, it was too late to warn Ananias, but she had it in her power to clear her own conscience by a frank confession, and thereby save herself from death. The lie agreed upon, however, came glibly from her lips, and the solemn word of judgment was pronounced. Sapphira heard of the doom of her husband and that having shared in his crime, she must now share in his condemnation. Sudden death overtook her, and her warm body was carried to the grave to rest with that of her husband.

A word is necessary as to Peter’s ministry in this tragic episode of exposing the ugly secret of two hearts. Through the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter received a prophetic insight enabling him to read the thoughts and intents of Ananias and Sapphira, and to trace their evil to its fountainhead, namely, Satan, who had previously sifted Peter himself. Infidels have charged Peter with cruelty in bringing destruction upon these persons, but he did not decree or will their death. He only declared the

penalty which was carried out by the Spirit of God on whom the horrible deception had been attempted. Further, Ananias and Sapphira did not die from apoplexy caused by the shock of a sudden disgrace, but died miraculously through a divine stroke. Peter's exposure of their sin was the occasion of their death.

Remembering that Sapphira and her husband were Christians, how did their swift judgment affect their relationship Godward? Jeremy Taylor reminds us that God sometimes accepts a temporal death in place of an eternal death, and that a sudden death stands instead of a long and an explicit repentance. Augustine and others affirm that the two who were suddenly destroyed come under the category of those church members delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (I Corinthians 5:5; I Peter 4:6). Alexander Whyte expresses the trembling hope that "they were struck down in sanctifying discipline, rather than in an everlasting condemnation. And that they so died that we might learn of them so to live as not to die. Let us hope that both husband and wife had the roots of the matter in them at the time; and that we shall see them also saved in that day, in spite of Satan and all his fatal entrances into their hearts. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

The effect of this horrible experience in the early days of the church was immediate. A sense of awe and dread came upon the community of believers. When Ananias dropped dead, "great fear came upon all them that heard these things," and when it came to the turn of Sapphira to follow her husband in a sudden exit we read that "great fear came upon all the church." The assembly, purged of its deceivers, went forward to experience a succession of miraculous performances. Those saints stood in awe of sin, as the result of the exposure of the lying of two of its members, and the terrible judgment that overtook them. We, too, in this far-off day can be warned by the subtle sin to which Ananias and Sapphira succumbed. Avarice, fraud, deceit, lying, false pretensions, must be guarded against. Honor in the church cannot be bought by money. How we sin when we sing, "My all is on the altar," yet do not bring all the tithes into the storehouse! If God dealt with His erring saints today as He did with those two long ago when they lied to the Spirit, there would be scores of vacant

seats in our churches and assemblies because of removals by sudden death. Because all things are seen by His all-searching eye, may we be found living and walking in the light having, thereby, lives that are clear and transparent.

## SARAH, SARAI, SARA

### THE WOMAN WHO BECAME MOTHER OF NATIONS

*Scripture References*—Genesis 11:29-31; 12:5-17; 16:1-8; 17:15-21; 18:20:2-18; 21:1-12; 23:1-19; 24:36, 37; 25:10, 12; 49:31; Isaiah 51:2; Romans 4:19; 9:9; Hebrews 11:11; I Peter 3:6

*Name Meaning* — Among the classified names of the Bible are those known as sacramental names, and are so-called because they were names given by God Himself, or under His inspiration in association with a particular promise, covenant or declaration of His, as to the character, destiny or mission of those distinctly named. Thus a sacramental name became a sign and seal of an established covenant between God and the recipient of such a name. Two Bible characters bearing sacramental names are Abraham and Sarah, both of which signify the gracious purposes and promises of God.

The wife of the patriarch was originally known as Sarai, meaning “princely” or “a princess.” Elsdon C. Smith suggests it may signify “contentious” or “quarrelsome,” but was changed, not accidentally, or by the whim of the bearer, but by God Himself that it might be a sign of His purpose, into Sarah, implying the princess, a princess or princesses, the source of nations and kings. Sarah or “chieftainness,” the feminine of Sar, meaning a “captain” or “commander” is repeatedly used in this sense as a common noun as, for instance, by Isaiah who renders it “queen” (49:23). It has been observed that among ancient Jews there was a sort of a cabalistic translation that “the Hebrew letter *yod* signifies the creative power of God in nature, while the letter *hay* symbolizes the state of grace — that state into which Sarah had entered after receiving the covenanted promises.” The promise of ancestorship of many nations came with the change of the name of *Sarai to Sarah*. “I will bless her and she shall become nations.” She was thus associated with her husband in the great

blessing of the covenant whose name was also changed from *Abram* to *Abraham*. The former, original name means a “high, or honored father,” the latter, “a father of many nations.” The Apocrypha speaks of Abraham as “a great father of a multitude of nations” (Ecclesiasticus 44:20).

The root idea of Sarah means “to rule,” and fits the personality of the bearer. It was a name intended as a seal of the promise given to Abraham, “kings of peoples shall be of her.” Paul has an allegorical reference to Sarah as one who typified the gospel dispensation, “Jerusalem which is above . . . which is the mother of us all’ (Galatians 4:26). Thus, Sarah was to be *the* princess, not only “because she was to be the ancestress of a great nation *literally*, of many nations *spiritually*, but also because the rank and power were to be possessed by her descendants, or rather because the people descended from her were to be ruled over by a regal dynasty, by a succession of kings of their own race and lineage, is derived from her.” In the genealogy of the descendants of Esau, Sarah’s grandson we read, “These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.” The line of kings descended from Sarah terminated in God’s Anointed One, the Messiah, whose “kingdom is not of this world.” The sacramental name of Sarah, therefore, also symbolizes the spiritual seed, the whole multitude of believers of all nations who are “kings and priests unto God.”

Then the personal application of the changed name must not be forgotten. Called *Sarah* by God and the Angels (Genesis 17:15; 18:9), she exhibited the traits of a princess, “wielding a sceptre by the magic of which she could lord it over men’s hearts after her own will, even bring kings to her feet. If she came into the world with a will of her own as her dowry, nature further assisted her in developing it by the great beauty of her face and the grace of her stature. By these gifts she made her wish a command and disarmed opposition.” Both in bearing and character she illustrated the significance of her name. Through the long, long years of the quiet and steadfast devotion of Abraham to Sarah, peace reigned in the matrimonial tent more because of Abraham’s gentleness, kindness and forbearance, even though he lived

so long with the more expressive and possessive ways of Sarah. Twice over in the KJV of the New Testament she is referred to as *Sara*, but the ASV uniformly gives us *Sarah* (Hebrews 11:11; I Peter 3:6).

*Family Connections* — Sarah came from Ur of the Chaldees, Babylonia, and her former name Sarai, “princely,” identifies her as coming from an honored family. She was the daughter of Terah and was therefore half-sister to Abram, her senior by ten years (Genesis 17:17), whom she married in the Ur of the Chaldees. While Abram and Sarai had the same father, they had different mothers (Genesis 20:12). Marriages between near relatives were countenanced in those days and were sometimes common for religious reasons (Genesis 24:3, 4; 28:1, 2), but not marriages between those actually by the same mother. Sarai was well past middle life and childless when with Abram she left her own country and with him went out “not knowing whither they went” (Genesis 11:29, 30).

There are various ways of looking at this remarkable woman who through a long span of life was the faithful wife of a prophet known as “The Friend of God.”

### *Her Uniqueness*

Strange though it may sound and seem, the first Jew was a Gentile, for Abraham who came from beyond the Euphrates was the first man to be called a *Hebrew*, “Abram the Hebrew” (Genesis 14:13). The word Hebrew itself means, “the immigrant,” and was no doubt the usual designation among the Canaanites. As his wife, Sarah was the first Hebrewess — the joint fountainhead of the great Jewish race (Genesis 11:29-31; Isaiah 51:2). Abraham has been fitly called, “The fountainhead of the Hebrew hero life,” and Sarah is the heroine of such life. She remains the first unquestionably historical woman of the Hebrews, and their first mother. She is, therefore, one of the most important female figures in the world’s history, as the natural source of the Jewish people, through whom the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Only two women are named in the illustrious roll of those conspicuous for their faith: Sarah is the first, and Rahab the second (Hebrews 11:11, 31), both of whom lived by faith and died in faith

(Hebrews 11:13). Sarah or Sara have always been popular female names both among Jews and Gentiles.

### *Her Beauty*

The testimony of the Bible is that Sarah was unusually beautiful (Genesis 12:11, 14). The lines of Keats were true of her —

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams . . .

Hebrew folklore has kept alive stories of her remarkable beauty and ranks her next to the most perfect woman the world has known, Eve, “the mother of all living.” Sarah seems to have had beauty that grew more attractive with the passing years. “Of the things that are unfavourable to the preservation of beauty, the Orientals count travel as one that is most baneful, even fatal to it,” says Gustav Gottheil. “Yet when Sarah arrived, after a long journey through dusty deserts and under a scorching sun, at the frontiers of Egypt, she was more beautiful than ever, and this explains the curious speech of Abraham to his wife at that juncture: ‘Now I know that thou art a woman beautiful to look at.’ Did he not know that before? Not so convincingly, explains the rabbi, as after he had seen that even travel had left no touch on her countenance.”

Isaiah says that, “Beauty is a fading flower” (28:1), and a song of old has the stanza—

Beauty is but skin deep,  
And ugly to the bone.  
Beauty soon fades away,  
But ugly holds its own.

But with Sarah it was different, for even when she was 90 years of age she was so lovely that Abraham feared that kings would fall in love with her bewitching beauty — which Pharaoh and Abimelech did, as our next glimpse of her proves. As one of the most beautiful women who ever lived we can imagine that wherever she journeyed the admiring eyes of all were



cast upon her. “Grave is all beauty,” and Sarah’s renowned loveliness certainly brought its trouble.

### *Her Peril*

When famine drove Abraham and Sarah into the land of Egypt, and they felt that hostile kings might take them prisoners, Abraham came up with the abject, base proposal that if taken prisoners then his wife should represent herself as his sister. Fear of death unmanned him and led him to risk the dishonor of his wife and thereby save his own neck. She dearly loved her husband, and his life was too precious to her to make her think of the shame she might incur. Sarah was utterly wrong in yielding to her husband’s plot. How nobler she would have been had she stoutly refused Abraham saying, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” But she called her husband “lord,” and evidently he was lord of her conscience.

Abraham felt that if oriental despots knew that Sarah and he were married they would slay him and add the lovely woman to their harem. Married to a conspicuous beauty caused Abraham to be afraid, and he resorted to a falsehood to save his life. If taken, Sarah was not to say that she was his wife but his sister. This pretense was not an outright lie, but a half-truth, seeing that she was his half-sister. They were children of the same father, but not the same mother. It seems hard to believe that such a good man could deliver his lovely wife over to a heathen monarch, but he did, and Sarah entered Pharaoh’s harem. But God protected her by sending plagues upon the monarch. Pharaoh sent her back to her own husband, untouched. The same unworthy plan was carried out when Abimelech, king of the Philistines, admiring her bewitching beauty had her taken to his harem. But again God interfered and commanded the king to restore Sarah to Abraham, seeing she was his wife. Threatened with violent death, Abimelech obeyed, but severely rebuked Abraham for his deceit (Genesis 12:10-20; 20). Years later Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, used this same form of deception (Genesis 26:6-13, see REBEKAH).

God expressed His displeasure with Abraham and his wife because of their ill-conceived plot. As the Righteous One, He could not condone such trickery. Had He not called them out from their country for a specific mission? And was He not able to protect and preserve them from harm and

danger in a strange land? Was not the half-lie told on two occasions an indication of the lack of faith in God's overshadowing care and power to fulfill His promise? Abraham's lofty soul suffered an eclipse of the virtue of faith for which he was renowned when he adopted such a plan of deception, exposing his wife to great peril, and also thwarting of the divine plan for and through Sarah. (Compare HAGAR.) Abraham's deception was followed by an attempt to ease an offense, and the patriarch was more blameworthy than Sarah who should have resisted the dangerous plan of exposing herself for the sexual gratification of other men.

A lie that is half a truth  
Is ever the worst of lies.

A half-truth is always a lie. While it was true that Sarah was Abraham's sister, the assertion was in reality a falsehood. After the severe rebuke from Pharaoh for their deception, they should have learned their lesson, but to commit the same sin again a few years later, and further imperil God's plan to make of them a great nation, leaves Abraham and Sarah without excuse. How slow we are to learn from our past failures?

### *Her Sorrow*

The one great grief of Abraham and Sarah was that through their long life together they had no children. To a Hebrew woman, barrenness was looked upon as a gnawing grief, and sometimes regarded as a sign of divine disfavor. Childless, even when back in Babylonia (Genesis 11:30; 16:1-8), Sarah remained so until at 90 years of age God miraculously fulfilled His promise and made her the mother of the son of promise. Through the long years, "side by side with the prosperity, beat for beat with the pulse of Abraham's joy, there throbs in Sarah's heart a pulse of pain . . . There is as yet no heir." The constant grief of barrenness caused Sarah to become "The Woman Who Made a Great Mistake." In spite of the fact that, along with her husband, she had received the divine promise, that from her nations would spring, the possibility of ever becoming a mother died in her heart. Such a cross as barrenness inflamed and intensified her pride, and forced her to find a way out of this embarrassment to her husband. "Sarah sacrificed herself on the cruelest altar on which any woman ever laid herself

down; but the cords of the sacrifice were all the time the cords of a suicidal pride: till the sacrifice was both a great sin in the sight of God, a fatal injury to herself, to her husband, and to innocent generations yet unborn.”

Sarah revealed the sad defect of her qualities when she said to Abraham, “Take Hagar my maid, and let not the promises of God fail through me. Through her I can continue your hereditary line.” But all poor Hagar could do was to produce an Ishmael. It was only through Sarah that the promised seed could come. Although it might have been a custom of the time for a man with a barren wife to take a concubine in order that he might have an heir, Abraham, as a God-fearing man, should have stoutly refused to go along with the unworthy scheme, which in the end produced jealousy and tragedy. “Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai,” but the voice was the fatal siren of Satan who sought to destroy the royal, promised seed (Genesis 3:15). As one modern writer expresses it —

Little did Sarai think when she persuaded Abram to take Hagar, that she was originating a rivalry which has run in the keenest animosity through the ages, and which oceans of blood have not quenched.

In our cameo of Hagar (which see) we sought to show all that followed the blunder of Sarah, when she intervened in God’s plan and chose her way to continue her husband’s posterity.

### *Her Joy*

In His forgiving love and mercy God appeared to Abram when he was 99 years old, and assured him that his long barren wife, although now 90 years old, would conceive. To confirm His promise God changed the name of Abram to Abraham, and of Sarai to Sarah (Genesis 17; 18). At such a revelation of God’s purpose, “Abraham fell upon his face and laughed.” Although he marveled at the performance of the naturally impossible, Abraham yet believed, and his laughter was the joy of a man of faith. Laughter is sometimes mad (Ecclesiastes 2:2) but that of Abraham was highly rational. He rejoiced in the thought that Isaac should be born, and perhaps at that time he had a vision of the Messiah. Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day” (John 8:56). As for Sarah, what was her reaction when she overheard the Lord say to her husband, “Sarah thy wife shall have a son”?

The record says, “Sarah laughed within herself,” but hers was the laugh of doubt. Yet when her son was born he was named Isaac, which means “laughter” — a memorial of her sin (Genesis 18:13), and of her husband’s joy (17:17). Sarah’s joy knew no bounds, “God hath made me to laugh” (21:6; 24:36). She had laughter before, but God was not the author of her laugh of doubt. The joy of Sarah in the birth of Isaac reminds us of “the great joy” proclaimed by the angels who made known to the shepherds the birth of Christ who came of the line of Isaac (Luke 2:10; Romans 4:18-21). Paul reminds us that it was by faith that Sarah conceived beyond nature (Hebrews 11:11). It was not only in itself a miracle wrought by faith, but also in earnest of something far greater, even the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.

### *Her Longevity*

Sarah is the only woman whose specific age is stated in Scripture. A girl’s approximate age is given us in the gospels. The only daughter of Jairus whom Jesus raised from the dead was “about 12 years of age” (Luke 8:42). Sarah called herself old when she was 87 (Genesis 18:12), but she was 127 years of age when she died. Abraham had reached the patriarchal age of 175 when God called him home. Godliness has always been favorable to longevity. The “good old age” (Genesis 15:15) was a signal proof of the faithfulness of the Lord. When the Countess of Huntingdon came to die she said, “My work is done, and I have nothing to do but to go to my Father.” Surely the same contentment was experienced both by Sarah and Abraham who were not satiated with life, but satisfied with it. Abraham lived for another 38 years after Sarah’s death before his God-given task was completed.

The day came, then, for Sarah to leave the world in which she had sojourned so long, and hers is the first grave to be mentioned in Scripture. Although Abraham and Sarah were nomads living in their tent in a desert land, the aged patriarch wanted a more permanent resting place for his beloved wife than the shifting sand of the desert. Here vultures and beasts of prey would wait to gorge themselves off the dead, leaving behind nothing but white bones. Breaking with the ancient custom of the desert burial, Abraham purchased a cave at Machpelah as a sepulcher for his dear

Sarah, and when Abraham himself came to die his sons “buried him beside Sarah.” Thus, in death, symbolically, they were unseparated as they had been through their long and eventful life together. When Cornelia, the mother of Caius and Tiberius Gracchus, whom she called her “jewels” died, on her monument was inscribed, “Cornelia, the mother of Gracchi.” Had a monument been erected for the noble woman we have been considering, the simple inscription in enduring marble would have been sufficient —

*Here lies*  
SARAH,  
*the devoted wife of Abraham*  
*and*  
*mother of Isaac.*

There is a legend that Sarah died of a broken heart as she learned of God’s command to Abraham to offer their son Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. The sword pierced her heart, as it did Mary’s when she witnessed the slaying of her illustrious Son at Calvary. When Sarah saw her husband and son leaving the tent, taking with them wood and a large knife she became terrified with shock and died. When Abraham and Isaac returned — Isaac brought back from the dead as it were — it was only to mourn and weep for Sarah. Had she lived she might have received her dead son back from the hands of God, and heard from her husband how his hand had been restrained by the angel, “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.” But in the legend it goes on to tell us, eye and ear of the devoted wife and mother were closed to earthly things, and her heart stilled forever beyond the reach of the terrors, to which human flesh, and especially mothers’ hearts, are heirs.

### *Her Example*

When Paul came to emphasize that law and grace cannot exist together (Galatians 4:19-31), and uses the two sons of Abraham to illustrate the contrast, he mentions Hagar by name, but not Sarah. The Apostle called her “the freewoman” and “mother of us all.” In Hebrews, however, which we believe to be Pauline, the Apostle mentioned Sarah as being one of the

cloud of faithful witnesses (Hebrews 11:11, 12). The reason she received strength to bear Isaac when she was so old was because she came to believe in the faithfulness of God. If Abraham is “the father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11; Galatians 3:7), surely Sarah is their mother. “Sarah speaks of that which is in faith, and by promise, and is free—and therefore is carried on in those who live on God’s promises by faith in Christ, and have that perfect freedom which is alone found in His service, and thus belong to the Heavenly Jerusalem.”

Then Peter takes his brush and adds another touch to the portrait of Sarah (I Peter 3:5-7), where she is especially distinguished for obedience to her husband, becoming thereby a model of wives in subjection to their husbands. Beautiful, strong-willed and determined, Sarah, although on two occasions she lost her temper, never disobeyed her husband. From the moment she left Ur of the Chaldees with her husband, she became the obedient wife. Martin Luther once declared that if he wanted an obedient wife he would have to carve her out of marble. But Peter, exhorting wives to obedience, holds up Sarah as their model. She called Abraham “my lord” (Genesis 18:12), still her declaration of her husband’s lordship suggested incredulity rather than the obedience of faith. Yet Peter was right because all through her wanderings in desert places, and her occasional waywardness there ran the golden thread of a beautiful and loving submission to her husband’s interests, and in this respect is a pattern for “holy women” to copy. Sarah and Abraham were “two lives fused into one,” with Sarah conspicuous in sacrificial submission. How apropos are the lines of Longfellow as we think of her —

As unto the bow the cord is,  
So unto the man is the woman.  
Though she bends him, she obeys him,  
Though she draws him, yet she follows,  
Useless each without the other!

With peculiar force Peter describes Christian wives who manifest conjugal obedience, as daughters of Sarah, as long as they do well and are unafraid (I Peter 3:6). By her faith and obedience, a Sarai became a princess among women, and she teaches us the lesson that if “Man proposes: God disposes.” It was only after much suffering and sorrow that grace was hers

to look up into the face of God and say, “Thy will, not mine, be done!” Applying the life of Sarah with Abraham, Mary Hallet draws attention to Sarah’s weaknesses of jealousy and selfishness as being akin to ourselves, but by sharp contrast her fine qualities point to us an ideal of perfection. Her remarkable physical beauty may be regarded as indicative of inner grace.

We cannot doubt that, living with Abraham in an atmosphere of reverence and worship, Sarah developed a spiritual loveliness. Perhaps this can serve as a suggestion to girls of a modern day to take time for communion with God. For only in quietude, only as we listen, can we hear His unmistakable Voice.

## SERAH

*Scripture References* — Genesis 46:17; I Chronicles 7:30

*Name Meaning* — Abundance

Serah, a daughter of Asher, was a granddaughter of Jacob by his wife Leah’s handmaid Zilpah. In the KJV of Numbers 26:46 she is called Sarah, but the ASV cites her as Serah.

## SHELOMITH

Many of the Hebrew proper names are grouped as Miscellaneous, seeing they represent individuals less important than others. Further, there are names of men with a feminine termination, and names of women with a masculine ending. In cases where two forms of a word exist — a masculine and a feminine — the feminine is repeatedly found in use as the name of a man. A case in point is the miscellaneous name before us. *Shelomi* (“my peace,” or “peaceable,” Numbers 34:27), an Asherite; and *Shelomoth* (“God is peace,” I Chronicles 24:22), a descendant of Izhar; and *Shelumiel* (“God is peace,” Numbers 1:6; 7:36), chief Simeonite who was census officer in the time of Moses, are masculine forms and masculine names of *Shelomith*, which is in the feminine form and which is the name of several men and several women. It occurs seven times in the Bible, but only in two cases can the individuals be positively identified as women.

## SHELOMITH No. 1

*Scripture Reference* — Leviticus 24:10-13

Name Meaning — Peaceful

This was the name of the daughter of Dibri of the tribes of Dan in the time of Moses, who married an unnamed Egyptian — an association unfavorable to piety (II Corinthians 6:14, 15). She became the mother of the half-bred son who was stoned to death for blaspheming “the Name.” Angered because he was by divine law excluded from camping with his Israelitish mother, he cursed God who gave the law, and reviled the judges who pronounced sentence against him. Tradition has it that the Egyptian father of this blasphemer was the taskmaster under whom Shelomith’s husband worked in Egypt, that he had injured Shelomith and then killed her husband. It also says that this was the Egyptian whom Moses slew (Exodus 2:11) for the injuries inflicted both upon the Hebrew and his wife, and that the culprit before us is the issue of the outraged Shelomith by the slain Egyptian. The ancient Chaldee version, agreeing with this legend says —  
A wicked man, a rebel against the God of Heaven, had come out of Egypt, the son of the Egyptian who slew an Israelite in Egypt, and outraged his wife, who conceived and brought forth this son among the children of Israel.

#### SHELOMITH No. 2

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 3:19

This further bearer of the name was the daughter of Zerubbabel, not the great Zerubbabel who led back the Jews at the behest of Cyrus, but his cousin of the same name. She was the sister of Meshullam and Hananiah (see Matthew 1:12; Luke 3:27).

#### SHELOMITH No. 3

*Scripture Reference* — II Chronicles 11:20

It is not certain whether the son or the daughter of Maachah and King Rehoboam is meant by the historian. If a daughter then she was the sister of King Abijah of Judah.

#### SHERAH, SHEERAH

*Scripture Reference* — I Chronicles 7:24



*Name Meaning*—A female relation by blood

This further miscellaneous name belonged to a daughter of Ephraim who must have been a woman of physical power for she built or fortified three villages which she probably received as an inheritance and enlarged for family reasons (II Chronicles 8:5).

#### SHIMEATH

*Scripture References* — II Kings 12:21; II Chronicles 24:26

*Name Meaning* — Fame

The bearer of this interesting name was the mother of Jazachar, or Zabad who was one of the servants who conspired against the ailing King Joash of Judah and slew him in his bed. As an Ammonite, her evil influence appeared in her son.

#### SHIMRITH (Compare SHOMER)

#### SHIPHRAH

*Scripture Reference* — Exodus 1:15

*Name Meaning* — Prolific or to procreate

Under PUAH (which see), we drew attention to this midwife who with her companion risked her life in saving the male babies born to Israelite mothers. Shiphrah with Puah were the forerunners of a multitude of noble women to help to bring children into the world and bestow such loving care upon them in the first days of infancy.

#### SHOMER

*Scripture Reference* — II Kings 12:21

*Name Meaning* — Keeper or guarded of the Lord

Shomer is a masculine name. She was the Moabite mother of Jehozabad who along with Shimeath slew King Joash as he lay in bed. She is also named Shimrith (II Chronicles 24:26).

#### SHUA

*Scripture References* — Genesis 38:1, 2 I Chronicles 7:32

*Name Meaning*—Rich or prosperity or noble

Here is another name used of both sexes. Among the males cited in Scripture is Shua, the Canaanite whose daughter became Judah's wife. Shua, or Shuah was a Canaanitish name, and designates the daughter of Heber, the grandson of Asher. She was also the sister of Japhlet, Shomer and Hotham. No other facts of her are mentioned.

## SUSANNA

*Scripture Reference* — Luke 8:2, 3

*Name Meaning* — A white lily

Along with Shushan, Susanna is from the root *shush*. Susanna was one of those women whom Christ healed both physically and spiritually, and who revealed their gratitude by following Him and ministering unto Him and His disciples of their substance. Susanna was the name of the mother of John and Charles Wesley, and along with its shortened form, Susan, has ever been a popular name for females. In apocryphal literature it is also the name of the heroine in *The History of Susanna*.

## SYNTYCHE

*Scripture Reference* — Philippians 4:2

*Name Meaning* — Fortunate

What we indicated in our sketch of EUODIAS (which compare) applies here. A working member of the Early Church at Philippi, Syntyche doubtless became more so in her relationship with Euodias after Paul's admonition.

## TABITHA (See DORCAS)

## TAHPENES

*Scripture Reference* — I Kings 11:19, 20

*Name Meaning* — The head of the age

Among the heathen names of Scripture we have Tahpenes or Taphhanes. This name in a varied form describes an Egyptian city, but in its original form was the name of the queen of a king of Egypt in Solomon's time, whose sister was the wife of Hadad an Edomite king. When this sister,

whose name is not given, died, probably in childbirth, Tahpenes became the foster-mother of her only son, Genubath, and brought him up as her own child.

## TAMAR

A few of the proper names in the Bible are associated with trees and flowers (Susanna — “white lily”), and it would prove a profitable exercise to group these names together. Tamar, used of three females, which means, “a palm tree,” is one such name. Abiathar, a compound of Tamar, signifies “a palm-island” or “like a palm.” As the palm tree is the most valuable of Eastern trees, the ideas of beauty and wealth are combined in such names. It is very rare, however, to come across a modern female with the name of Tamar, in spite of its rich significance.

### TAMAR No. 1

#### THE WOMAN WITH A PATHETIC HISTORY

*Scripture References* — Genesis 38:6-30; Ruth 4:12; I Chronicles 2:4; Matthew 1:3

*Family Connections* — The Bible is silent as to her genealogy. All we know is that she was a Canaanite as her heathen name suggests, and that when widowed the second time, she returned to her father’s home, but who he was and where he lived we are not told. What we do know is that when she married into the family of Judah, heartache and tragedy were her lot.

First of all, Tamar married Er, the oldest son of Judah and Shuah — who, like Tamar, was also a Canaanite. What Er did to displease God we are not told. Whatever it was, it was sinful enough for God to slay him. The wickedness of Er is declared but not described. There are no sins He cannot see, and there are sins He alone can see. The Bible provides us with many instances of the personal intervention of God for the purpose of punishing the sins of individuals and of communities by death. But Tamar did not remain a widow long, for in accordance with Hebrew law, she married the next son in the family so that he could raise up seed for his deceased brother.

Onan was Tamar's second husband, but he failed to fulfill his responsibilities to his dead brother's memory and posterity. Unwilling to do his duty according to the law of the Levirate marriage, and knowing that any offspring would not be his, Onan spilled his semen on the ground, and for this act of faithlessness to the dead, God slew him also. Widowed again, in the ordinary course of events, the next son of Judah, Shelah, should have become the third husband of Tamar as the tribe-law required (Deuteronomy 25:5; Matthew 22:24). Judah promised to give his third son to the childless widow, but when Shelah became of age, his father broke his promise. Perhaps Judah feared that the fate that had overtaken his other two sons might also be the fate of Shelah, and the refusal of Judah to give Tamar his son Shelah in marriage led to far-reaching results.

Although we have no evidence of Tamar's faith in Jehovah, she must have had some conception of the important Messianic significance of the line of Judah, for denied Shelah, she was determined, though in an incestuous way, to save from extinction the family and tribe from which the Messiah was to spring. Tamar may have thought that if she could not marry Shelah, then according to the law of the country his father should marry her. So she resorted to a method we cannot condone for the purpose of securing her desired end. Thus it came about that she laid a trap for Judah, and consequently she and her sons found a place in the greatest of all genealogies.

After the death of his wife, Shuah, Judah was stricken with grief. Bereft of his two wicked sons, and now of his wife who, in spite of her idolatrous nationality, has nothing against her character, Judah went to his friend Hirah the Adullamite. Tamar, hearing of this, set her trap to reach the ideal which three times had been denied her. Disguising herself to look like a harlot, she sat in an open place where she could be approached. Not knowing Tamar's true identity, Judah bargained for her favors and secured them. His desire for intercourse with a harlot is reported without any moral judgment, seeing "there was little or no prejudice against purely secular prostitution in Israel."

Learning that Tamar had been playing the harlot, he commanded, "Bring her forth and let her be burnt." But when he learned that he was the cause of her guilt, Judah was compelled to vindicate Tamar and was forced

to admit that she had been more righteous. Judah was motivated in his despicable conduct by sensual lust alone, but Tamar by nobler motives, namely, to become the mother of Judah's tribal representative. Twin sons were born of that incestuous union, Pharez, or Perez, and Zerah. Through Pharez Judah and Tamar became ancestors of Jesus (Matthew 1:3).

Shocked as we are by the incestuous way Tamar sought to aid the perpetuation of Judah's line, a fruitful race followed, "God not sanctioning but over-riding evil to His own good purpose" (Ruth 4:12, 18; Romans 3:5-8). It shocks our inner, finer feelings to see Christ's lineage interwoven with such abhorrent degradation as we have in this chapter (Genesis 38). We cannot but wonder how Judah and Tamar have the distinction of mention in that sacred genealogy of Jesus Christ, but as Bishop Hall expressed it, "God's election is only by Grace, for otherwise Judah would never have been chosen." Judah was a Jew; Tamar, a Gentile, and thus their parentage of Pharez (Matthew 1:3) can be looked upon as a foreshadowing of the fact that both Jews and Gentiles were to share in the blessings of the Gospel.

## TAMAR No. 2

### THE WOMAN WHO WAS SEDUCED BY HER OWN BROTHER

*Scripture References* — II Samuel 13; I Chronicles 3:9

*Family Connections* — This second Tamar was the beautiful daughter of David and Maacah, and the sister of Absalom, and half-sister of Amnon, David's son by another of his wives, Ahinoam. Amnon, inflamed with passion as he gazed upon the beauty of Tamar, listened to the abominable suggestion of his bad friend, Jonadab, that he should seduce Tamar. What a snare physical beauty is unless grace accompanies and guards it! (Proverbs 31:30). Amnon invited Tamar to his quarters, and knowing what an excellent baker she was, feigned sickness and sought her care and attention.

Tamar tried to resist the incest but Amnon forced her, and after his sinful act turned with hatred upon Tamar and drove her from his apartment. Humiliated, she fled to her brother Absalom's house, because David failed to punish his son Amnon for his crime. It is to David's discredit that he failed to enforce the law of God against incest (Leviticus 18:9, 11). Even Absalom seemed to think the sin against his sister was not too heinous for,

in trying to comfort her, he said, “Hold your peace, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart” — a sidelight on the low moral standard of David’s home because of its polygamy. But in his heart Absalom hated Amnon for forcing his full sister, Tamar. Her rape rankled in his heart for two years when he arranged the murder of his half-brother for his violation of Tamar (II Samuel 13:10, 22, 32). How dreadful sin is — one step leads to another and we never realize what the end will be.

### TAMAR No. 3

*Scripture Reference* — II Samuel 14:27

Probably out of regard for his own sister, Tamar, Absalom called his sole surviving beautiful daughter by the same name. Like a palm tree, she might have been tall, attractive, even as her father was. She seems to have been a moral improvement on the other Tamars. She married Uriel of Gibeah, and bore Maachah, the wife of Rehoboam, king of Judah (I Kings 15:2; II Chronicles 11:20-22; 13:2), and became the mother of Abijah.

Tamar is also the name given by Ezekiel to the territory of the future Holy Land to be occupied by Israel (47:19; 48:28. See also I Kings 9:18; II Chronicles 20:2).

### TAPHATH

*Scripture Reference* — I Kings 4:11

*Name Meaning* — A drop of myrrh or stacti

Among Bible names are a few associated with perfume of some sort, such as the one before us. The only female with this name was one of the daughters of Solomon who married a son of Ben-abinadab who was Solomon’s commissariat officer in Dor.

### THAMAR (See TAMAR)

### TIMNA

*Scripture References* — Genesis 36:12, 22; I Chronicles 1:39

*Name Meaning* — Restraint

Two women bear this name. First, there was the concubine of Eliphaz, a son of Esau, who became the mother of Amalek. It is most likely that she

was taken as a slave during the war between the Edomites and Horites. She is referred to as a sister of Lotan. The other female with the same name, but sometimes given as Timnah, was probably the daughter of the previous Timna.

## TIRZAH

*Scripture Reference* — Numbers 26:33

*Name Meaning* — Pleasantness

This was the name of one of the five daughters of Zelophehad (see HOGLAH). Tirzah is also the name of a city captured by Joshua (12:24).

## TRYPHENA and TRYPHOSA

*Scripture Reference* — Romans 16:12

*Name Meaning* — Delicate or dainty one

As Paul links these two Christian ladies together, we shall think of them as one — which they were in many ways. Probably they were twin sisters in the flesh, as well as in Christ, or very near relatives, and belonged to the same noble Roman family. They must have been conspicuous in the service of the church at Rome — perhaps deaconesses — otherwise Paul would not have singled them out for his expression of gratitude for their devoted labor in the Lord.

Their names, characteristically pagan, are in contrast to their significance. Having a similar resemblance in appearance and constitution, if twins, they were given names having a like meaning. Being of noble birth they “lived delicately,” that is, in plenty and pleasure and luxury. Lightfoot says that, “It was usual to designate members of the same family by derivatives of the same root.” “Delicate” may, of course, refer to physical weakness, and as tender and delicate women, Tryphena and Tryphosa stand out as early examples of incessant and arduous labors in the service of the church.

Whether of gentle and refined manners, or delicate in health, or both, these active workers carved a niche for themselves in Paul’s portrait gallery of saints. Early Christian inscriptions in cemeteries used chiefly for the servants of the emperor contain both of these female

names, and so can be identified as being among “the saints of Caesar’s household” (Philippians 4:22). How we bless God for the record of those early “honourable women which were Greeks” (Acts 17:12) who became humble followers of the Lamb!

## VASHTI

### THE WOMAN WHO EXALTED MODESTY

*Scripture References* — Esther 1; 2:1; 4:17

*Name Meaning* — Vashti corresponded to the significance of her name, “beautiful woman.” She must have been one of the loveliest women in the realm of King Ahasuerus who thought so much of his wife’s physical charms that at a drinking debauchery he wanted to exhibit her beauty for she “was fair to look upon.”

*Family Connections* — Bullinger identifies this Persian beauty as the daughter of Alyattes, King of Lydia, but the only authentic record of Vashti is what we have in her brief appearance in Scripture as the queen of the court of Ahasuerus, or Artaxerxes. It would be interesting to know what became of the noble wife after her disgrace and divorce by her unworthy, wine-soaked husband.

While the Book of Esther holds a high place in the sacred literature of the Jews, it yet has no mention of God or of the Holy Land, and contains no definite religious teaching. Martin Luther is said to have tossed the book into the river Elbe, saying that he wished it did not exist for “it has too much of Judaism and a great deal of heathenish imagination.” The book contains a genuine strain of human interest, but it is also heavy with the air of divine providence (compare ESTHER). Although the story of Vashti only covers a few paragraphs in the book, yet in the setting of oriental grandeur we have the elements of imperishable drama. While the bulk of the book revolves around Esther, from our point of view the shining character in the story is the queenly Vashti, who was driven out because she refused to display her lovely face and figure before the lustful eyes of a drunken court.

By birth Vashti was a Persian princess, possessing along with her regal bearing, an extraordinary, fragile beauty. Although her husband was a king “who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces,” her self-respect and high character meant more to



her than her husband's vast realm. Rather than cater to the vanity and sensuality of drunkards, she courageously sacrificed a kingdom. Rather than lower the white banner of womanly modesty, Vashti accepted disgrace and dismissal. The only true ruler in that drunken court was the woman who refused to exhibit herself, even at the king's command.

### *The Demand*

An impressive banquet was to be held in Susa the capital of Persia, lasting for seven days, with the king and his dignitaries joining with hundreds of invited guests in an unceasing whirl of festivities during which wine flowed freely. Both great and small were to be found "in the court of the garden of the palace." Then came the crowning touch of a drunken tyrant's caprice. When "the heart of the king was merry with wine" he commanded that Vashti, his royal consort, appear before the guests. For a week, inflamed with wine and adulation, he had displayed the magnificent wealth and power of his kingdom and the princes had poured flattery upon him. Now for the climax! Let all the half-drunken guests see his most lovely possession, Queen Vashti, who was probably the most beautiful woman in his kingdom. He wanted the intoxicated jubilant lords to feast their eyes on her. The Bible plainly declares that Ahasuerus summoned his wife to the feast simply "to show her beauty."

Had the king been sober he would not have considered such a breach of custom, for he knew that Eastern women lived in seclusion and that such a request as he made in his drunken condition amounted to a gross insult. "For Vashti to appear in the banquet hall, though dressed in her royal robes and crowned, would be almost as degrading as for a modern woman of our modern world to go naked into a man's party." What Ahasuerus demanded was a surrender of womanly honor, and Vashti, who was neither vain nor wanton, was unwilling to comply. Plutarch reminds us that it was the habit of a Persian king to have his queen beside him at a banquet, but when he wished to riot and drink, he sent his queen away and called in the wives of inferior rank — his concubines. Perhaps that is the historic clue to Vashti's indignant refusal for she knew only too well that Persian custom dictated that a queen be secluded during the feasts where rare wines flowed freely.

### *The Disobedience*

To Vashti, the command of the king — her husband, who alone had the right to gaze upon her beautiful form — was most revolting to her sense of propriety, and knowing what the consequences of her refusal to appear before the half-drunken company would entail, refused in no uncertain terms to comply with the king's demand. She stood strong in womanly self-respect and "refused to come at the king's commandment." Her noble scorn at her threatened indignity deserves finer recognition. What the king sought would have infringed upon her noble, feminine modesty, therefore she had every right to disobey her wine-soaked husband. A wife need not and may not obey her husband in what opposes God's laws and the laws of feminine honor and decency. All praise to the heroic Vashti for her decent disobedience.

### *The Deposition*

Vashti's disobedience excited the king to madness. No one, especially a woman, had ever dared to humiliate such a despot whose word was law in all his realm. Such a slight had but one issue, for forth went the decree, "that Vashti come no more before King Ahasuerus." This degradation also meant divorce, not only from her husband, but also from the life and luxury she had been used to. Thus amid the tragic darkness Queen Vashti — never more queenly than in her refusal — disappears like a shining shadow. The wise men, court astrologers and princes agreed with the king that banishment from the palace was the only fit punishment for such a crime. They knew that Vashti's bold stand might incite other Persian ladies to disobey their liege lords, and so the warrant, silly as it was royal, was enacted that "Every man be master in his own house, and that all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small!"

As a Persian law once made could never be revoked, Ahasuerus, now sober, and likely regretful of his impulsive anger could not reinstate Vashti, thus Esther was chosen to succeed her as queen. It is quite probable that "Vashti continued to live in the royal household, stripped of the insignia of royalty, but with her own integrity clothed in purple." Surrendering the diadem of Persia, Vashti put on a crown which was beyond the power of a

despot king to give or take away, namely, the crown of exalted womanhood. How apropos are the lines of Tennyson as we think of the fine character of Vashti, the pagan Persian —

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.  
Yet not for power (power by herself  
Would come uncalled for), but to live by law,  
Acting the law we live without fear;  
And, because right is right, to follow right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

Vashti chose deposition rather than dishonor with a mortifying refusal to obey. Her refusal to exhibit herself was visited with “a punishment severe enough to re-establish the supremacy which it threatened to overthrow,” but to Vashti, conscience and personal dignity occupied a higher supremacy and for this ideal she was dethroned. Allied to her beauty and regal charm were courage and heroism, securing her character from the rot of power. Vashti had a soul of her own, and preserved its integrity; and if women today fail to honor their life they will never win the best God has for them. It is to be regretted that in our modern world many women are not as careful as Vashti the pagan was in guarding the dignity of the body. Fashion and popularity are a poor price to pay for the loss of one’s self-respect. Christian ideals in womanhood may be deemed old-fashioned and in conflict with the trend of the times, but divine favor rests upon those who have courage to be ridiculed for such high ideals. Any woman is one after God’s own heart when, as Mary Hallet puts it, she determines by His grace —

To remain refined in speech and action, when it is the style to appear  
“hard-boiled”—

To be dignified when everyone else pretends to be “wild”—

To maintain a true perspective, a real sense of values, in an  
irresponsible age.

## ZEBUDAH, ZEBIDAH

*Scripture Reference* — II Kings 23:36

*Name Meaning* — Bestowal or a gift

Often some of the names of God are compounded with other words to form proper names and are found in those exalting God as the Giver, such as Zabad, meaning, “He hath given” of which Zebudah is the feminine form. Zebadiah—New Testament, Zebedee, implies “Jehovah hath given.”

Zebudah was the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah, and became the wife of King Josiah, and the mother of their sons, Jehoiakim and Jehoahaz. Of Jehoiakim, who succeeded his father as king at the age of 25 and reigned for 11 years in Jerusalem, we read that “He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.” Can it be that his godless life was the fruit of his mother’s unwholesome influence, in and over his early days?

### ZERESH

*Scripture References*—Esther 5:10, 14; 6:13

*Name Meaning* — Star of adoration or gold

What a tragic experience it must have been for this wife and mother to see her husband and sons hanged on gallows! Here we have the Persian name of Haman’s wife. Haman the Agagite, and cruel enemy of the Jews, was prime minister under King Ahasuerus and the monarch’s favorite vizier. When Zeresh his wife learned that Mordecai whom Haman despised was a Jew, she predicted her husband’s downfall (see Isaiah 54:17). The irony of the story is that Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai (compare ESTHER).

### ZERUAH

*Scripture Reference* — I Kings 11:26-40

*Name Meaning* — Leprous

The significance of this name of the mother of Jeroboam who became king of the Ten Tribes who revolted against Solomon’s son, and successor, Rehoboam, is somewhat uncertain. She married Nebat of Zereda, who was a servant in Solomon’s employ. As she is spoken of as a “widow woman,” her husband was dead when their son lifted up his hand against the king.

### ZERUIAH

*Scripture References* — II Samuel 17:25; I Chronicles 2:16

*Name Meaning* — Balsam from Jehovah

The name of this desired and welcomed daughter expressed a similar sentiment of one or other of the parents. Zeruah, a sister of David, became the mother of Abishai, Joab and Asahel who are always referred to as “the sons of Zeruah.” Edith Deen remarks, “The fact that her name appears 25 times besides that of her sons is sufficient proof that she was a mother of distinction who had a marked influence over the lives of her sons.” Two reasons are advanced for the absence of their father’s name. He may have died early, or Zeruah may have been a most remarkable woman, with a more impressive personality, or we have in the omission a survival of the ancient custom of tracing kinship through the female line. Zeruah’s sons were conspicuous in Israelite history during David’s reign.

### ZIBIAH (TSIBIAH)

*Scripture References* — II Kings 12:1; II Chronicles 24:1

*Name Meaning* — A female gazelle

The name of this princess of Judah carries the ideas of grace, agility and beauty. A woman of Beersheba, Zibiah became the wife of King Ahaziah and the mother of Jehoash, or Joash, who was saved from murder in childhood and lived to become king of Judah and reigned for 40 years. All we know about Zibiah is her name, but the fact that her noble son is spoken of as one who did “that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him,” indicates something of her care to bring up her son in the fear of the Lord, and also of his willingness to follow the godly advice of his appointed representative, Jehoiada. How grateful we should be for the spiritual instruction of those who themselves are taught of the Lord!

### ZILLAH

*Scripture Reference* — Genesis 4:19-23

*Name Meaning* — Shadow of darkness or protection

Lamech had two wives, Zillah and Adah (which compare). Zillah was the mother of Naamah (which see), the first named daughter in the Bible

whose name indicates “loveliness.” Zillah was also the mother of Tubal-cain, who became the founder of the ancient crafts of metalsmiths and iron-makers. There is nothing suggestive of God or His service in the record of Lamech and his family. The names his wife and he gave their children “mark the growing voluptuousness and luxury of the Cainites. It was the period of transition to art and refinement; attended with the evils which often accompany such times.”

## ZILPAH

*Scripture References* — Genesis 29:24; 30:9, 10; 35:26; 37:2; 46:18

*Name Meaning* — Meaning uncertain

The slave girl Laban gave to his daughter Leah as a handmaid came to have a definite share in the development of Israel as a nation. When, for a time, Leah ceased to bear children, she gave Zilpah to Jacob that she might enlarge her brood by the handmaid, thus Zilpah became the mother of two sons, Gad and Asher. They became the progenitors of two of the tribes of Israel (see LEAH).

## ZIPPORAH

### THE WOMAN WHO WRONGLY OPPOSED HER HUSBAND

*Scripture References* — Exodus 2:21, 22; 4:24, 25; 18:1-6

*Name Meaning*—A Midian name, Zipporah means “a little bird,” “a sparrow.” Wilkinson observes that “the feminine termination *ah* added to the common word Zippor, which is also the father of Balak, king of Moab. Such a name like “dove” or “lamb” would originally be a term of endearment, and thus the word *passer* — “a sparrow”—is used by the Roman poets. *Passer* is also being found as a Roman family name. The root of this word is an Arabic verb, signifying “to chirp.”

*Family Connections* — Zipporah was one of the seven daughters of Jethro who is also called Reuel and Raguel (Exodus 2:18; 4:24, 25; 18:1-6; Numbers 10:29). It was to the home of this shepherd-priest in Midian that Moses came when at forty years of age he fled from Egypt, and meeting the seven girls drawing water Moses assisted them. Arriving home earlier than usual they told how the Egyptian had helped them.

Brought up as a son of Pharaoh, Moses must have looked every inch a cultured Egyptian. Invited home, Moses was content to live with Jethro's family, and married Zipporah, eldest of the seven daughters. Two sons were born of the union, Gershom and Eliezer. Some writers affirm, without adequate support, that the dark-skinned Ethiopian, "the Cushite woman" whom Miriam and Aaron were jealous over, is merely a description of Zipporah, and that therefore Moses was only married once. But the statement "He had married an Ethiopian woman" implies a recent occurrence, and that Zipporah, whom Moses had married 40 years previously, was dead. It is most unlikely that Miriam and Aaron would have waited all those years to murmur against Moses if Zipporah and the Ethiopian had been one and the same woman.

Zipporah, as a woman of Midian, did not share the spiritual values of her notable husband who found himself acting against the sacred tradition of Israel. This may be one reason why he named his second son Eliezer, meaning "The Lord of my father was my help." To keep the peace, Moses compromised with his unbelieving wife and withheld circumcision, the sign of God's covenant, from Eliezer. The Lord intervened, and as a sign of divine displeasure, Moses is stricken with a mortal disease. Both Zipporah and Moses became conscience-stricken over the profanation of God's covenant, and Zipporah yields. Moses is too prostrate to take a knife and circumcize the child, so his wife severed the boy's foreskin and, throwing it down before Moses said, "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me."

When Moses was restored to health relations in the home were not congenial, for he went on alone to Egypt, and Zipporah and the two sons went back to her home in Midian. Of this unhappy incident Alexander Whyte says, "There are three most obscure and most mysterious verses in Moses' history that mean, if they mean anything at all to us, just such an explosion of ill-temper as must have left its mark till death on the heart of Moses and Zipporah. The best of wives; his help meet given him of God; the most self-effacing of women; the wife who holds her husband in her heart as the wisest and best of men — under sufficient trial and provocation and exasperation, even she will turn and will strike with just one word; just once in her whole married lifetime."

When Moses became the mighty leader and law-giver of Israel, there was the episode when Jethro, his father-in-law came out to the wilderness to see Moses and brought with him Zipporah and the two sons. The union was devoid of any restraint for Moses graciously received them and neither disowned nor ignored his wife and sons. But after this visit during which Jethro gave his over-burdened son-in-law some very practical advice, nothing more is said of Zipporah. She disappears without comment from the history of the Jewish people in which her husband figured so prominently. “Neither as the wife of her husband nor as the mother of her children did she leave behind her a legacy of spiritual riches.” How different it would have been if only she had fully shared her husband’s unusual meekness and godliness and, like him, left behind footprints in the sands of time!

Zipporah is far from being an inspiring character with which to end our alphabetical coverage of all the *named* women of the Bible. One could have wished for a nobler and more godly example of female biography as a fitting conclusion to this section of our study. Looking back over the large number of women whose names are recorded in Holy Writ we realize that taken together they represent all aspects of human nature — good, bad and indifferent. For the majority, they lived their lives as they passed through this short scene of trial into eternity, leaving little trace behind them. But as we have seen, others, by their character and history, have left their names engraved in the impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture, with their records serving as either warning signals where they were conspicuous for evil, or as shining examples of high endeavor, where their lives were lived as unto Him who created both male and female for His glory.

Whatever was thus written in former days was written for our instruction, that by [our steadfast and patient] endurance and the encouragement [drawn] from the Scriptures we might hold fast *and* cherish hope (Romans 15:4, *Amplified Bible*).



# 3

## Nameless Bible Women

While there is a good deal of fascination in an understanding of the majority of *named* women of the Bible, its *nameless* women, many of whom hold a conspicuous place in sacred history, are often neglected by many writers of female biography. A somewhat baffling question is: “Why are these women associated with well-known men, and with outstanding events not named? What is the reason behind their anonymity? For instance, we have the names of the sons of Noah, but not those of his wife and daughters-in-law. We have a full portrait of “righteous Lot,” but silence prevails as to the names of his wife and two daughters. The three daughters of Job are named but we have no clue as to the identity of his wife or sons. Scripture gives us the name of the natural brothers of Jesus, but not His sisters. The two sisters at Bethany whom Jesus loved, have well-known names, but of His own sisters silence reigns as to how they were known. Peter “the big fisherman,” occupies a large niche in the portrait gallery of the New Testament, but all that is said of his dear partner is that she was his wife. Do you never wonder what her name was, and also that of her mother? Because of the close fellowship existing between Christ and the Twelve, the wives of the latter, if they were all married, must have been known both to the Master and to a large circle of disciples, yet the Bible is silent as to their existence and to the names they bore. Why did Paul not give us the given name of his own sister according to the flesh?

There is no satisfactory answer to the silence of Scripture regarding the identity of its nameless women. George Eliot once remarked that, “The happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history.” But many of the happy — and unhappy — unknown Bible women left their impact upon history. They played their part in important events, but their signatures are not attached to their service. Surely, it was not the oversight of Bible writers

to omit the names of those in female biography whose deeds are published. What many of them did is history, but history without a title page. Could it be that they willed the reticence as to who they were? Certainly, many of these unnamed female characters were far from being righteous, such as the sensual, faithless wife of Potiphar, and of the woman of Samaria. The historians may have felt that they were unworthy of being named. In other cases, perhaps the male members of a family are mentioned because of what they became and achieved, while the female members are not designated by name seeing they accomplished nothing of any merit warranting the use of their names. The brothers and sisters of Jesus did not believe in His divine mission, but as the result of the cross His brothers came to accept Him as Messiah, and two of them are numbered among the apostles (Matthew 13:55, 56; Galatians 1:19; Jude 1). Nothing is said of the surrender of His sisters to His claims.

In the Bible, humanity's intensely biographical volume, we have vivid sketches of a goodly company of saintly women who are "only remembered by what they have done." Their deeds are undying, and their characters glow in the sacred page, but the recording angel above alone knows who they were. Sir John Suckling gave us the lines —

Like the Milky Way is the sky,  
A meeting of gentle lights without a name.

As we are to see in the chapter before us, there are many "gentle lights without a name" in the Bible, as, of course, there are in world history. The Scripture gallery of unlabelled portraits well repays repeated visits, for these unknown ones have, like beauty, their own excuse for being. Although for some inscrutable reason the names of so many noble women have been withheld from us, yet they themselves have something of the immortality Rupert Hughes most impressively wrote about —

Sometimes at night within a wooded park,  
Like an ocean cavern, fathoms deep in gloom,  
Sweets scents, like hymns, from hidden flowers fume,  
And make the wanderer happy; though the dark  
Obscure their tint, *their name*, their shapely bloom.

So in the thick-set chronicles of fame,  
There hover deathless feats of souls unknown;  
They linger as the fragrant smoke-wreaths blown  
From liberal sacrifices. Gone face and *name!*  
The deeds like homeless ghosts, live on alone.

Plutarch, the ancient Greek biographer, once said that he “would not write the lives of bad men,” but the divine Author of the Bible saw fit to delineate, not only good men and good women, but likewise the bad and corrupt. If we want to know what human nature actually is in the ungodly or godly, all we have to do is to study the biographies the Bible revolves around. This is why we have endeavored to set forth *all* the anonymous women so that we can learn lessons from the vices of the bad, as well as the virtues of the righteous. As can be seen, we have dealt with these nameless women in chronological order. We believe that in such a way they can be easily traced, and likewise found to be wonderfully woven into the texture of a divine and progressive revelation — which the Bible is! Edgar Allan Poe has the lines —

Sorrow for the lost Lenore —  
For the rare and beautiful maiden,  
Whom the angels name Lenore —  
Nameless here for evermore.

Whatever names the unidentified godly women of the Bible may have in heaven, they must remain “Nameless here for evermore.”

#### CAIN’S WIFE Genesis 4:17

An “old chestnut” of a question, and one which agnostics and hecklers are fond of hurling at defenders of the authority of the Bible is, “Where did Cain get his wife?” To many who are not enemies of the Faith, such a question may cause an unnecessary anxiety. As Adam and Eve were the first human pair on earth, and by natural generation had three sons who are named — Cain, Abel, Seth — and there is no mention of any named

daughters — it does seem as if there is a problem in knowing where the female came from whom Cain made his wife. In the genealogy of Adam, as the natural head of the human race, we are told that “Adam begat sons and daughters” (Genesis 5:4). How many sons there were, apart from the three named ones, and how many daughters were born to Eve we are not told. Thus, because they lived long before the Sinaitic Laws were given, there was no moral difficulty involved in the marriage of near relatives. With Cain, the course was obviously a necessary one as it was with his brothers — they married their sisters. As we have already seen, Abraham married his own half-sister, Sarah.

After the birth of Seth, Adam lived for another 800 years, and died at the age of 930. When Eve died we are not told, but if she lived as long as her husband, and she was able to continue procreation through the centuries, then the family of earth’s first pair must have been large indeed. The register of births and deaths in Genesis 5 is an instructive record of remarkable longevity. The name of the earliest patriarchs are given, and the long years each of them lived upon the earth. If you add together the years that each one lived, you will find that their united lives cover a long period indeed. Enoch lived for the shortest period, 365 years — a year for every day of our normal year; while Methuselah lived the longest period of any known man, namely 969 years — 31 years short of a millennium. Adam lived for over one hundred years after the birth of Methuselah, and the latter would have been over 300 years old when his grandson, Noah, was born. There is little room for doubt that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, had the privilege of conversing with earth’s first man. By the end of the first two millenniums the population of the earth through direct intermarriage must have been enormous.

As there may have been a lapse of many, many years before Cain’s marriage, during such a period — 130 years between the birth of Cain and Seth, the substitute for slain Abel — some of the unnamed sons and daughters of Adam and Eve were likely born. As there were no other humans on earth apart from their descendants, Cain, attracted to one of his sisters, took her to wife. Whoever the sister was who chose to go into banishment with her branded brother, she deserves credit for her willingness to share Cain’s curse and wanderings. It is significant that they called their

first child Enoch, which means “dedicated,” and may suggest a change in Cain’s character. The word is akin to “train” as found in the phrase, “Train up a child” (Proverbs 22:6), and is also used in the dedication of a new house (Deuteronomy 20:5). Cain called the city he built after the name of his son “Enoch,” or “dedicated,” and, as Ellicott comments —

In old times the ideas of training and dedication were closely allied, because teaching generally took the forms of initiation into sacred rites, and one so initiated was regarded as a consecrated person. Though, then, the [Cain’s] wife may have had most to do with giving the name, yet we see in it a purpose that the child should be a trained and consecrated man; and Cain must now have put off those fierce and violent habits which had led him into so terrible a crime. We may add that this prepares our minds for the rapid advance of the Cainites in the arts of civilization, for the very remarkable step next taken by Cain — a fit spot where his offspring should dwell together in some *dedicated* common abode.

#### SETH’S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:6-8

Like his father, Adam, Seth had many daughters who are unidentified. Cain’s wife is not named, and the wife of Seth, who likely lived as long as her husband (912), is not even mentioned. There were wives aplenty for the numerous sons born to those early patriarchs. Many of the daughters of these men, however, were among those caught up in the Flood because of their unholy alliance with fallen angels (Genesis 6:12).

#### ENOS’S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:9-11

Hebrew genealogies omit the names of many sons, as well as daughters. Where they are named, the sons predominate because, as civilization expanded, daughters did not have the same value as sons. Sometimes a father sold his daughter as a bondwoman (Exodus 21:7), but only within Israel (21:8).

#### CAINAN’S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:12-14

Cainan lived for 910 years, and must have experienced much pleasure in his family of sons and daughters. How much more fascinating these antediluvian genealogies would have been if only they had been replete with the names, marriages and incidents in the lives of their anonymous females!

### MAHALEEL'S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:15-17

In this sixth generation since Adam we have the repeated phrase “begat sons and daughters,” but without their number and names.

### JARED'S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:18-20

It will be observed that after the wives of Lamech, who are both named (4:19-23), the wives of succeeding patriarchs down to Noah are not even mentioned. They shared the same anonymity as their daughters and some of their sons. Among Jared's sons and daughters, was one son who, because of his spiritual excellencies, is referred to as “the seventh from Adam,” and as a prophet (Jude 14). Seven is the number of perfection, thus Enoch attained the highest rank among the patriarchs. Jared lived for 800 years after the birth of his godly son, and one wonders how far Jared influenced Enoch, and what his sisters and brothers thought of his unique life and of his translation, at 365 years of age, into heaven without tasting death.

### ENOCH'S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:21-24

The only named son of Enoch, Methuselah, was to be a man of distinction in that his is the longest known age in human history. He died at 969 years of age. Significantly we read that it was after Methuselah was born that “Enoch walked with God,” for “three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.” During those 300 years spent in the immediate presence of and in constant communion with God, we can imagine what a godly home Enoch must have had, with his wife sharing his high ideals, and all his sons and daughters endeavoring to please God. The mournful refrain in these genealogies, *and he died*, is not attached to Enoch for God

translated him that he should not taste death. In comparison with the longevity of those who died, Enoch's pilgrimage before God took him was of short duration — 365 years! Do you not try to imagine what the feelings of Enoch's wife, sons and daughters were like when one day God took His companion to be with Himself? It is to be hoped that all within the family followed Enoch in a steady continuance in well-doing and that his daughters were as "corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace" (Psalm 144:12), and his dear wife for so many decades was as a fruitful vine by the sides of his house (Psalm 128:3).

### METHUSELAH'S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:25-27

Enoch gave his son a prophetic name for Methuselah means, "when he is dead it shall be sent," that is, the Flood with its terrible destruction. Having lived for almost a millennium, Methuselah and his wife must have had numerous offspring, what with their own sons and daughters, and the children's children. Who would not like to have had some indication of the kind of daughters the man who lived so long had? We can but hope that like their grandfather, Enoch, they too, walked with God.

### LAMECH'S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 5:28-31

Lamech named his first child Noah which means "rest" or "comfort." This is "the first recorded instance, since the days of Eve, of a child being named at his birth, and in both cases the name ended in disappointment. Noah brought no 'rest' but in his days came the Flood to punish human sin." The longing of Lamech for comfort, however, is in strong contrast with the arrogance of his namesake of the race of Cain (4:18). After the birth of Noah "sons and daughters" were born to Lamech and his unknown wife. Evidently these other children did not share the faith of their notable brother, and perished in the Flood, from which Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives were preserved.

### DAUGHTERS OF MEN

Genesis 6:1-8

This remarkable portion of Scripture has been variously interpreted. First, who were the anonymous “daughters of men” thrice mentioned? They were the offspring of men who began to multiply on the face of the earth, and thus include some of the daughters already considered. There are those expositors who suggest that these “daughters” with their cultivated beauty and yet corrupt ways were Cainites. They were descendants of the Cain who was the founder of civil institutions and social life, and that “the sons of God” were “Sethites,” pious men of noble rank. But there is no Scriptural evidence that either Seth or his descendants were conspicuous for their moral goodness, apart from Enoch. In our Lord’s human genealogy Adam is called “The son of God” (Luke 3:38). So the usual interpretation is that the pious descendants of Seth entered into alliances with the women of the corrupt race of Cain.

But no such marriages between humans—pious men and inferior women could have produced “giants,” “mighty men,” “men of renown” (6:4). Dealing with the Flood that overtook the world of the ungodly, Peter speaks of the angels that sinned and were cast out of heaven (II Peter 2:4, 5), and Jude refers to these angelic beings as those who kept not their first, or original, estate but left their own habitation, and of those who went after “strange flesh” (Jude 6, 7). It is our conviction that the abnormal men who appeared were the fruit of the corrupt union of fallen angels and godless women, and that it was this terrible phase of wickedness which precipitated the Flood that destroyed all save Noah and his family. It is true that angels, all the while they remain unsinning angels, “neither marry nor are given in marriage.” But when they leave that blissful, original estate, and go after “strange flesh” — strange to them — unique creatures emerge as the result of such an illicit union. This necessitated a Flood to cleanse the earth of such pollution. In Spiritism there are spiritual marriages, contracted between female mediums and spirits of the unseen world.

In his *Lectures on the Pentateuch*, Wm. Kelly, dealing with Genesis 6:2 says that, “The sons of God, in my judgment mean the same beings in *Genesis* as they do in *Job* (1:6; 2:1). This point will suffice to indicate their chief guilt in the traversing the boundaries which God appointed for His creatures. No wonder that total ruin speedily ensued.” Further, this record of unnatural union became the basis of fact for some of the tales of mythology



in which gods and women intermarried and produced great heroes. Bishop E. H. Bickersteth in his remarkable poem, *Yesterday, Today, Forever*, describes the descent of the malign fallen spirits and singles two out as being guilty of the violence and corruption it would take a total Flood to erase from the earth —

Of whom  
Were Uziel and Samihasai his mate,  
By birthright sons of God, now sons of wrath,  
Who prompted by the boast of Lucifer,  
Mankind should be his bride, and stung with lust,  
Mix'd with the daughters of unhappy Eve,  
Heir of her beauty, not her penitence,  
In wedlock. Fatal league! whence soon arose  
The monstrous brood of giants, ruthless race,  
Offspring of human and angelic kind,  
Who now confusion more confused, and stain'd  
The fairest homes with violence and blood  
Rapine ran riot on the earth.

As the shadows of judgment gather around a guilty world, “seducing spirits” are becoming increasingly active, and the coming “Great Tribulation” may provide the earth with a repeat of the appalling conditions resulting in the waters of divine wrath. Things were as rotten as they could be in the days of Noah, but grace was his to walk with God, and to live as perfectly as a human being could in a generation that was so vile and evil continually. Thus he was saved out of judgment.

NOAH'S WIFE, SONS' WIVES  
Genesis 6:18; 7:1, 7, 13; 8:16, 18

While nothing is said of the uprightness of Noah's wife, whose name we do not know, his three sons whose names are given, and their wives who are unnamed, all of them must have shared the righteousness God commended in Noah (7:1), otherwise they would not have been saved by water (I Peter 3:20). They were among the uncorrupted flesh and were included in the

divine invitation, “Come thou and all thy house into the ark.” As Noah was 600 years old when the Flood came (7:6), he had had a long life walking with God. He had endured much scorn from the ungodly as he went on building the ark, and preaching righteousness, calling on the ungodly to repent before judgment fell. During all those trying years, and in the tremendous venture of going into the ark with all its living cargo, Noah’s wife must have been a source of great encouragement to him. In his sons and their wives he found those in full sympathy with his faith and witness, and thus became the source of a new race on a purified earth. All the nations of the earth sprang from the children of the nameless wives of Shem, Ham and Japheth, who bore their children after they settled again upon the earth (Genesis 9:8, 9).

### SHEM’S DAUGHTERS Genesis 11:10-32

While the genealogies of Ham and Japheth have fragment references to sons born to them, and to their successors, we have no mention of daughters although there must have been many of them (Genesis 10). When we come to Shem and his successors, Salah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug and Nahor we have the repeated phrase, “begat sons and *daughters*.” When Shem was 100 years of age, he, two years after the Flood, begat his first-born, Arphaxad, and then lived for another 500 years, during which his offspring must have been numerous. The Flood was universal, and Noah and his family were the only persons on the earth, once the waters subsided. In order to replenish the earth, it was necessary, as at the beginning with Adam and Eve, for brothers to marry sisters. Thus, the children and grandchildren of Shem, Ham and Japheth intermarried, and laid the foundation of the nations divided on the earth after the Flood.

### LOT’S WIFE Genesis 19:15-26; Luke 17:29-33

When Abraham heard that his nephew, Lot, had been taken captive by the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, he pursued the enemies and freed Lot, and “the women, and the people.” Who the women were, Scripture does not say. They may have been Lot’s wife and daughters, or Sodomite female

servants. The first direct reference we have of Lot's unnamed wife is when the angels came to hasten the family out of doomed Sodom (Genesis 19:15). Who she was, of what race and family, of what life and character, by what name she was known, the Bible is silent. All the information we have about her is packed into one short verse, "His wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Yet we must give attention to her for it is written in burning words by the finger of God —

"Remember Lot's wife."

Some dozen words in the Old Testament, and three words in the New Testament, then, are all we have of this female character.

When, because of strife, Abraham and his nephew, Lot, came to part, Abraham gave Lot the pick of the land before them. Lot selfishly chose the best stretch of the country, "well watered everywhere . . . even as the garden of the Lord" (13:10). But such a greedy choice had dire consequences. Lot pitched his tent *toward* Sodom, and before long was in Sodom where its inhabitants "were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly" (13:13). Lot became a citizen of Sodom, sat at its gate as the city's mayor, and was treated with honor and reverence as a relative of the mighty Abraham who had delivered Sodom from the Elamite invasion. While Peter speaks of Lot as being just and of having a righteous soul vexed with the filthy lives of the Sodomites (II Peter 2:7-9), he yet somehow closed his eyes to the wickedness of the people, married a woman of Sodom and consented for his two daughters born in Sodom to marry Sodomites.

Sodom was such a cesspool of iniquity that God said He would destroy it. But because of Lot's presence in the city Abraham interceded for its preservation. If only there had been ten righteous people in it God said the city would be spared. The only apparent righteous person in it—whose righteousness had been made ineffective through compromise — was Lot. So the two angels came to deliver Lot and his family from the terrible judgment about to fall on Sodom. They were entertained overnight, and Lot's wife doubtless shared in the hospitality shown. Early the next morning the angels sought to hasten Lot and his family out of the city, but they lingered. They were loathe to leave the luxury, pleasure, and sin of Sodom, so the angelic deliverers had to remove them forcibly from the city and compel them to escape for their life.

The account of the tragedy is briefly related. As fire and brimstone out of heaven fell upon Sodom, Lot's wife looked back from behind her husband. In oriental countries it was the rule for the wife to walk some distance behind her husband, but as Lot's wife lingered and looked back she was overtaken by sulphurous vapors, and, encrusted with salt, perished where she stood. Entombed as a pillar, she became "as a monument of an unbelieving soul" in a desolate region, "of whose wickedness even to this day the waste land that smoketh is a testimony" (Wisdom 10:7). The wife of Lot looked back upon her own city with regrets at having to part with its sinful pleasures. She had been compelled to leave Sodom as a city, but all that Sodom represented was very much in her heart.

All the while Lot's wife was in Sodom, its "filthy communications" soaked into her soul, so much so that when the angel of mercy sought to save her from the angel of judgment, she could not be saved. In the look back to Sodom was regret for all she was leaving for an unknown life before her, and as she sighed the salt air whitened her body into marble, and "nature made for her at once a grave and a monument." "She became a pillar of salt," and in that word we have a symbol of *character* as well as a monument of *destiny*. A pillar of salt is the picture of many a society woman today. All the sweet blood of a true woman's heart has become brackish by the life she leads. Instead of a woman, you have only *a pillar of salt*. In Sodom, Lot's wife lived in pleasure but was dead as she lived. As the wife of a righteous man, she had a name to live, but the gay life of Sodom asphyxiated her soul. Thus when the warning voice of God sounded in her ear, she may have heard it but did not heed it. Sodom with its society and sin had been her whole life.

When dealing with the truth of His Second Advent, our Lord used the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot's deliverance from their destruction as an illustration of His emancipation of His own from the catastrophe to overtake a godless world, and warns believers to remember Lot's wife and not linger, look, and be lost. As those who wait His coming we are not to look back nor draw back, but *look up* for our redemption draweth nigh. How arrestive is Christ's exhortation! "Remember Lot's wife." Mary's one act of piety in breaking her alabaster box of precious spikenard brought her a perpetual memorial, and in like manner the one

tragic act of Lot's wife brought her a different kind of remembrance. For all who preach the Gospel what an appeal for immediate decision there is in the urgent summons of the angels to Lot and his family, "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee . . . lest thou be consumed." That stirring evangelistic hymn has led many a sinner to escape to the arms of the Saviour —

The Gospel bells give warning,  
As they sound from day to day,  
Of the fate which doth await them  
Who forever will delay —  
Escape thou for thy life;  
Tarry not in all the plain.  
Nor behind thee look, oh, never,  
Lest thou be consumed in pain.

#### LOT'S DAUGHTERS Genesis 19:12-17, 30-38

The two daughters born to Lot in Sodom were as shameless as they are nameless. Their father, righteous though he may have been in contrast to the godlessness around him, exercised no influence over them. In fact when Lot came to warn them and their husbands to leave Sodom because of its impending doom he seemed as one that mocked them, or as one that was joking, and so not in earnest. To his own, the warning of Lot was utter nonsense. Had he not made his home in Sodom, married one of its women, and "lingered" in the place of his choice, and become identified with its life and luxury? Further, had not Lot, when the men of Sodom sought to commit sodomy (which we now have legalized and call homosexuality), offered to give his virgin daughters to the Sodomites to rape (19:7, 8)? No wonder the girls had no respect for their father! Added to this, there was the evil influence of their socialite mother who was so much a part of life in Sodom.

The lack of any true morality whatever in Lot's daughters is evident by what happened in that cave once all three were clear of the smoking Sodom. There is no mention of any remorse on their part over the sin occasioning

the destruction of the city, and the tragic death of their mother. Their utter degradation ending in Lot's intense shame is the most dreadful part of his story. How revolting was the conduct of the daughters when they made their father drunk in order to make him the unwilling father of their children, Moab and Ben-ammi who were begotten in shame and had a shameful history! (Deuteronomy 29:19; Psalm 83:8). The family of Lot was a bad group, and have disgrace, disaster and death written in their epitaph. They remain for all time a solemn reminder of the truth that "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

### POTIPHAR'S WIFE Genesis 39

H. V. Morton in his sketch of Potiphar's wife says that "she occupies a prominent place as the first sensualist in the gallery of Scriptural women. The sins against morality committed by women up to this point in the Bible story were committed for dynastic reasons, or were due to the customs of the times." The immortal story of this ruler's wife's lust for Joseph is "a picture of a woman, spoilt, rich and beautiful, the product of a luxurious and licentious civilization," coveting one of the holiest and most attractive men in Egypt. Joseph enjoyed the favor of God who prospered him in his service in the house of Potiphar, the chief of Pharaoh's bodyguard. That he had the confidence of his master is seen in that he "found grace in his sight, and the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake." If there had been ten like him in Sodom it would have been spared.

But temporal prosperity was not an unmixed blessing for Joseph. He was "a goodly person, and well favoured," and his form and face were to bring him days of trial. His master had a godless wife whose character is revealed in her brief biography. If a wholly bad woman is Satan's masterpiece, then Potiphar's nameless wife takes the prize for diabolical cunning and dastardly wickedness. Joseph was a young man with natural instincts, but divine grace kept him from following youthful lusts, enabling him to resist the advances of the faithless wife of Potiphar to share her bed. She was persistent in her endeavor to have Joseph "to lie by her." This female wretch tempted him to commit adultery "day by day" (39:10). The more she persisted, the easier Joseph found it to say, No! Each victory

helped him the battle to win. On one of the days of the severe conflict we read, “There was none of the men of the house there within.” Secrecy often provides the facility for sinning, but Joseph knew what it was to be much alone with God, therefore his isolation with his temptress did not disturb him.

Amid all the fierce testing, Joseph acted magnificently. He had a deep respect for the husband of the lustful wife and could not sin against Potiphar who trusted Joseph with all he had and raised him to a position of influence and authority. Never for one moment had he the shadow of doubt as to Joseph’s integrity. That was the human side — the resolute determination not to betray his master who relied on him so fully. Then there was Joseph’s estimation of what Potiphar’s wife constantly tempted him to do. He called the suggested adultery, “great wickedness.” In his old Hebrew home he had been taught that it was a grievous sin to disregard the sanctity of the marriage law, and so power was Joseph’s to honor the claims of chastity. But above and beyond all reasons why he should not sin in the way he was urged to, was the recognition of the claims of God, “How can I do this great wickedness, and *sin against God?*” Joseph knew God to be the antagonist of all evil, and so sided with Him.

The last day of Joseph’s period of temptation was the most fatal. Coming into the house on business, Joseph saw that he and the she-devil were alone and with one passionate outburst she cried as she laid hold of his clothes, “Lie with me!” Disentangling himself from her grasp, Joseph fled, leaving some of his torn clothing in her hands. But Joseph little knew that in fleeing from a woman’s passion, he was fleeing into prison. The shreds of Joseph’s garment in the woman’s hand gave her a diabolical idea. Her desire for Joseph turned to hate, lust turned to lying and adultery to accusation. Calling in the servants, she showed them the remnants of Joseph’s garment, and with this piece of circumstantial evidence of his effort to force her to share her bed with him. Joseph’s quick flight from Potiphar’s wife underlines the strength of a character without flaw, but the woman’s slander cast a reflection upon his piety. Contemptuously, she called Joseph a “Hebrew” which her husband had brought into the house to mock its inhabitants. She may have been the first woman, but she was

certainly not the last “to exhibit the classic retaliation of the woman scorned.”

When Potiphar returned, his wife displayed the pieces of Joseph’s garment which she had torn from him, and with added color repeated her slanderous lie. How deeply the holy heart of Joseph must have felt the foul accusation, as the master he respected charged him with a sin he abhorred and never committed! Potiphar’s wrath, fed by the jealousy and falsehood of his wife, was kindled, and Joseph suffered the unjust punishment of imprisonment. But even in prison Joseph knew that it was better to rot there with an unsullied conscience than to prosper in a palace, if prosperity meant degradation. Yet in the prison the Lord was with Joseph, for He was the gracious Keeper of the pure prisoner. Others had wrongly blamed Joseph, but he had the approval of his own conscience and the confidence that the God he refused to sin against, would vindicate him, as He did. We can imagine how Potiphar’s wife had many a sleepless night as she thought of Joseph in his narrow cell all because of her passion and perjury. But to Joseph’s credit, we have no recorded word he uttered in his own defense, or against the evil woman responsible for his degradation. Thus —

This stirring old-time story of a soul  
That dared to do the right,  
Is ripe with helpful inspirations still  
That move toward the light.

SHAUL’S MOTHER  
Genesis 46:10; Exodus 6:15

An Israelite was forbidden to take a Canaanite to wife (Genesis 24:3). Ellicott comments, “Jewish tradition represents Shaul as being really the son of Dinah by a Canaanite father, Shechem, but as adopted by Simeon to save his sister’s honour, yet with a note that he was of half Canaanitish blood.”

PHARAOH’S DAUGHTER  
THE WOMAN WHO ADOPTED A BABY  
Exodus 2:5-10; Acts 7:21; Hebrews 11:24



Although we have already briefly considered this royal, unidentified female (compare JOCHEBED), a closer view of the only mother Moses really knew may be profitable. Who, exactly, was the new king over Egypt at the time of the birth of Moses we do not know. Conjectures have him as Aahames I or Rameses II, or Seti I. In like manner, what the name of his daughter was no one knows. This princess credited with a royal deed, without leaving her signature, has been made out to be Thermuthis, or Myrrina, or Mercis. Whatever name legend may give her, the Bible preserves her anonymity even though “she stands to the fortunes and fate of the Israelite nation, as its instrumental providence and contributory saviour.” Described as “the daughter of Pharaoh” suggests that she was the Egyptian ruler’s only daughter. Our first impression of the princess is the contrast her character affords to the portrait of another Egyptian female we have just written about. Potiphar’s wife manifests, “the undisciplined forces of womanhood in their most violent form — Pharaoh’s daughter blots out that dark portrait and gives us one of a woman — kind, tender and compassionate.”

### *She Was a Heathen Woman*

Destined to be the woman who should save a baby from a terrible death, care for him although he was a Hebrew, and lay the foundation of his great work for God, Pharaoh’s daughter was an Egyptian, an idolater who worshiped the sun. Yet in the motherhood of the child whom she delivered from the Nile and named Moses, she revealed that she was above the pagan plane — even above the cruelty of her pagan parent. At the risk of jeopardizing her favor with her father who had decreed the drowning of all male Hebrew babies, she felt it too cruel to murder the precious bundle of humanity found in the bulrushes.

### *She Had a Human Heart*

As an Egyptian woman, the princess enjoyed great liberty. Along with her female attendants, she came to a reserved part of the Nile to wash seeing its waters were considered to be healthy and fructifying. Seeing the small basket, Pharaoh’s daughter sent one of her maidens to fetch it. As soon as she opened it and saw the lovely child, she had compassion on him

in spite of the fact that he was one of the Hebrew's children, whom her despot father had ordered to be killed. The babe wept, and his tears opened a well of compassion in the heathen heart of the princess, and she exhibited a tender affection for children. With her love she mingled concern for the baby's welfare, and, as we have seen, his own mother was secured as his nurse until he was weaned (compare MIRIAM). Pharaoh's daughter did not look upon little Moses as a delightful plaything for the palace, but as the foundling for whom she had risked her own life.

### *She Became the Female Saviour of Israel*

Think of what would have happened if Pharaoh's daughter had not come down to the waters at the hour she did. The babe might have been destroyed in some way. But as God called a heathen ruler, Cyrus, "His servant," so He used the pagan princess to deliver the child who was to become one of God's greatest heroes. For 40 years Moses was cared for and educated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, having all the privileges of a son of the royal court. Stephen declared that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22). Surrounded with all the wealth and luxury of Pharaoh's court, Moses was taught to speak and write the Egyptian language correctly. Attention would be given to the grace of style which was later to guide Moses as the writer of the first five books of the Bible. His education would also include arithmetic and geometry, something in which the Egyptians even in that far-off age were most proficient. Moses also acquired a knowledge of Egyptian law, which he put to good use when he came to write the Mosaic law. From the priests of religion, he learned much about religious morality. Thus, in the education the princess gave her adopted son, we have an evidence of God's overruling providence in the shaping of the future of Israel's great leader. Theron Brown reminds us that —

The Hebrew nation — the whole world, proud of the sublime man Moses came to be, is indebted to her for his life, his education, and his name. . . . She alone stood effectually between him and death. . . . The tomb and fillet of this interesting woman have not been found. If ever her unperished form is brought to light, clad in the enduring cerements that wrap the dead of her kingly family, we shall know her name. But it would

be dearer to know that her living soul dwells not far from the son she adopted and loved, the grandest man of sacred history, who but for her would never have been.

Moses never forgot that he was a Hebrew, and through many years of his sojourn in Egypt he had to endure the ceaseless and implacable envy and hostility of the officers of the royal court. But Pharaoh's daughter never lost faith in her gifted son. One wonders whether Moses brought her to know Jehovah as God over all! It must have been a heartache for this foster mother when she could no longer protect her son. In a fit of indignation Moses killed an Egyptian taskmaster for savagely flogging a Hebrew, and fearing the vengeance of Pharaoh, Moses hid the body in the sand. But someone witnessed the deed, and Moses fled for his life from the stately lady who, for forty years, had lavished care and attention upon him, making life tolerable for him in a land of bondage. Did she ever see him again? Was she alive when, 40 years later, he returned to Egypt as the mighty deliverer of the Israelite nation from cruel bondage? We do not know. We think of her as the Bible pictures her—a kindhearted Egyptian princess, a noble and tender woman who lived in a cruel time. Through divine providence she was the instrument of saving the babe from death, who became "Moses, the Servant of God."

## DAUGHTERS OF REUEL

Exodus 2:15-22

When Moses fled from Pharaoh, he came to the land of Midian and, while sitting at a well, the seven daughters of Reuel, the priest, or prince of Midian, came to draw water for their father's flocks. The virgins, pestered by the shepherds, were afraid, but Moses—very much Egyptian-looking—came to their aid, and assisted them in the watering of the flock. The daughters invited Moses home, and he was glad and grateful for the hospitality offered. Reuel, impressed with the manner and appearance of Moses, invited him to share his abode which he did for almost 40 years. He married Zipporah (which see), one of the daughters, and she bore Moses two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. When faced with the necessity of observing the rite of circumcision, Zipporah, petulant and reproachful, regarded such a blood-drawing rite of her husband's religion as cruel and barbarous. She

failed to understand the significance of the divine visitation upon Moses because of his negligence in not circumcising their newborn son. Often our obedience to God is not understood by those nearest us. Not being one with us in our desire to honor the Lord, close friends think our devotion to Him somewhat strange.

### DAUGHTERS OF PUTIEL

Exodus 6:25

In the genealogies of Moses and Aaron, given in this chapter, Eleazar the priest, Aaron's son, is mentioned as having married one of the daughters of Putiel. Who Putiel was, how many daughters he had, and what was the given name of the daughter Eleazar took to wife and bore him Phinehas, we are not told. The zeal of Phinehas for the cause of the Lord was possibly the fruit of his wholesome home influence.

### WISEHEARTED WOMEN

Exodus 35:22-29

The Tabernacle and all its services form God's picture book of redemption. They were figures of a more glorious, eternal sanctuary (Hebrews 9). All the gold, silver and materials necessary for the Tabernacle had been received as presents from the Egyptians, ere the Israelites left Egypt (Exodus 3:22; 11:1-3), and these, along with the personal adornments of men and women alike, made possible the earthly Tabernacle in which God was pleased to dwell. Men, like wisehearted Bezaleel and Aholiab were empowered by God to fashion the furniture of the Tabernacle, and the women also played their part (35:22-29; 36:1-3). Here is the record of their share in the holy project —

All the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair (35:25, 26).

These skillful women of the wheel and the spindle, with willing hearts labored as unto the Lord. They gave their treasures, time and talents ungrudgingly for the completion of the Tabernacle which God commanded Moses to erect for His worship and service in the wilderness. We have a

touch of their prodigality in donating all that was required in the arrestive lines —

The men and women were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and *too much*.

How the church of today could do with a revival of such consecrated giving and working! Dorcas (which see) must have been a descendant of those wisehearted women of old who served God with their needles and thread. As women predominate in present day church attendance and activity, it would seem as if they are more willing-hearted than its men. So many necessities for the mission field are made possible by Christian women who spin with their hands.

### TABERNACLE WOMEN

Exodus 38:8

The margin mentions that these worshiping women “assembled by troops” at the door of the Tabernacle. What greatly impressed Moses was the surrender on the part of these women of their most highly prized of their possessions, namely, the beautiful, perfectly polished brass mirrors, wonderful specimens of Egyptian handicraft, which these women of Israel had brought with them from Egypt. As a mark of his approval of the devotion of the women, Moses melted down the mirrors and fashioned the laver, and recorded the fact to the women’s credit. Renouncing the articles associated with personal vanity, for the higher beauties of holiness, those anonymous women made possible a utensil of great service for the priests. After offering sacrifices upon the brazen altar, they had to tarry at the laver and wash their bloodstained hands and their soiled feet before going into the Holy Place to serve and worship the Lord. Hands represent work and feet represent walk, and both had to be clean in the priestly service of the Tabernacle. What a lesson there is for all women—and men—in the joyful sacrifice of valued treasures to the Lord for the needs of those whom He calls to serve Him!

### PRIESTLY DAUGHTERS

Leviticus 21:9

The Levitical law has much to say about the treatment of, and also the types of women. Whores, wizards, adulteresses, and the defiled are all dealt with in a way eloquent of God's holiness (Leviticus 19:20). Because of their sacred office, priests were to receive reverence, and their daughters, if guilty of violating the holy law of God, received greater punishment than those of the ordinary men who sinned. The daughter of an Israelite going astray was punished with death by strangling (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:23, 24), but the disgraced daughter of a priest endured the severer death by burning. By her whoremongering she had "profaned her father," brought shame upon his witness and office. It is to be feared that not all the children of Christian ministers realize their solemn obligation to live lives in keeping with the profession and position of their fathers, called of God to care for the souls of men.

### ETHIOPIAN WIFE OF MOSES

Numbers 12:1

We know the name of the first wife of Moses, and the names of his children (see ZIPPORAH and MIRIAM), but his second wife whom he took after Zipporah's death is an unnamed Cushite. Many Cushites followed Israel out of Egypt, and marriage with them was not forbidden by the Law (Exodus 34:16). This second marriage caused a rift between Moses and his sister and brother. Not all second marriages turn out happy.

### MIDIAN WOMEN

Numbers 31:9

Having made Midian his home for 40 years, Moses must have found it hard to war against the Midianites and slay their kings and rulers as well as people. The women of Midian along with their children were taken captive, and one can imagine the anguish of those women bereft of husband, uprooted from their homes, and robbed of their possessions. But many of these women, through Balaam, had been the cause of the apostasy of Israel, and were consequently punished for their seduction. As the result of this tragic episode, the law concerning marriage with captives was enacted (Deuteronomy 21:10-14). Does not James remind us that wars and fightings come because of lusts (4:1, 2)?

## SISERA'S MOTHER

Judges 5:28-31

If Deborah had any tenderness in her heart as “the Mother of Israel,” she must have found it hard writing about “the mother of Sisera,” waiting so anxiously for the return of her son, whom Deborah knew had been slain. What a pathetic scene it is of the mother sitting at the window and with a wail of impatience passing into deep concern asks, “Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?” What pathos there was in such a cry, and what a broken heart there must have been when the terrible truth was known! Deborah, prophetess and poetess, in a few broad sketches sets before us the last scene in the conquest of Israel’s foes.

The mother of Sisera and her attendant princesses had looked for the triumph and return of the host as confidently as the ladies of Spain expected the return of the Armada, or the ladies of Aberdeen sat “with their fans in their hands” looking out for the sails of Sir Patrick Spens.

But Sisera did not return to the mother who loved him. Another woman’s hand had killed him (see JAEL). In any war women are always the worst sufferers. The longing, yet fear and dread of Sisera’s mother has been multiplied millions of times in the wars of history.

## GIDEON'S WIVES

Judges 8:29-31

Honorable in many ways, Gideon revealed the worst side of his character in the polygamous practice he emulated (Judges 10:4; 12:9). He had forgotten the Mosaic law concerning the marital life of a king or ruler: “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself . . . neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold” (Deuteronomy 17:17).

Gideon had many wives, how many and who they were are not known. From these unknown wives there came 70 sons, all of whom were slain by another son (9:56). In keeping with oriental fashion nothing is said of his daughters. Gideon’s concubine, contemptuously called his “maidservant” (9:18), comes in for special mention as the mother of Abimelech, who became a bad reproduction of his father whose courage and energy he possessed but very few of his virtues. While the Bible leaves the mother of

Abimelech unidentified, Josephus gives her the name of Drumah. While Gideon died in peace, and in a good old age, the evil seed he had sown bore bitter fruit in the next generation (Judges 9).

WOMAN OF THEBEZ  
Judges 9:50-57; II Samuel 11:21

Abimelech met his death at the hands of his armorbearer (9:54). The constant mention of towers and strongholds in a time when men did what was right in the sight of their own eyes reveals the disturbed state of the country, and the Thebez tower to which all the people fled for safety as bloodthirsty Abimelech approached, speaks of the panic that prevailed. Fired with ambition for power, and scorning the decree of his father, “Neither shall my son rule over you. The Lord shall rule over you,” Abimelech was determined to be king. In order to make sure of his reign he murdered all rivals, including his 70 brothers — all except young Jotham who escaped. After the destruction of his own city, Shechem, flushed with victory, Abimelech attacked another revolted city, Thebez, but here he was to experience divine vengeance for his lust for blood and power.

Standing on the roof of the tower was an obscure daughter of Israel, who was to become the instrument of heaven to punish a sinner too bold and wicked to live. As a true patriot, this unknown heroine of Thebez saw her opportunity as Abimelech rushed against the tower to burn it and its terror-stricken occupants with fire. Seizing a large piece of millstone on the battlement she hurled it with all her strength upon Abimelech as he came near the tower door. As God was behind the aim of young David when with his sling and stone he killed the giant, Goliath, so He directed the fall of the millstone. It fell upon Abimelech’s head and broke his skull. As his armorbearer dragged him out of the perilous range of more millstones, Abimelech, recovering his senses for a moment, commanded his armorbearer to kill him off lest it should be said that a mere unknown woman killed him. He did not, however, escape the taunt (II Samuel 11:21).

At a critical moment in her nation’s history this “certain woman” delivered her people of a cruel monster, and made possible forty five years of national peace. Alas, there was no one to record the name and sing the praise of this heroine who must have received the gratitude of the now



liberated people of the city! The fate of Abimelech at the hands of a woman is but another instance of God's frequent method of justice — choosing the weak to destroy the strong. The battle is not always to the strong. The concluding verses of this dark chapter were doubtless added to prove that "God punishes both individual and national sin, and that men's pleasant vices are made the instruments to scourge them. The murderer of his brothers 'upon one stone' (9:5), is slain by a stone flung on his head, and the treacherous idolaters are treacherously burnt in the temple of their idol."

### GILEAD'S WIFE

Judges 11:1-3

Two women are to be distinguished in the life of Gilead, the grandson of Manasseh. First of all, there is the unnamed harlot who bore him Jephthah the Gileadite, who became a judge of Israel. Then there is Gilead's anonymous wife who bore her husband many sons who rose up and drove Jephthah from their father's house because he was the son of a harlot. Such an action was in perfect accord with the law, and with family rules and traditions (Genesis 21:10; 25:6; Deuteronomy 23:2, 3). Expulsion was hard on Jephthah who could not help his illegitimacy. We speak wrongly of a child as being illegitimate. The shame is on the parents who conceived him in an illegitimate way.

### JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

THE WOMAN WHO WAS SACRIFICED FOR AN OATH

Judges 11:30-39

After he was expelled from Gilead's home, Jephthah, who made a name for himself as a fearless, brave and successful chief of robbers, was recalled by the elders of Gilead to lead them in war against the Ammonites who had made war with Israel. Jephthah offered to fight on condition that if victorious over Ammon, he should be recognized as their head. In spite of his half-heathen origin, Jephthah seemed to have had a Godward inclination, for we are told that he "uttered all his words before the Lord." "The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah," "He vowed a vow unto the Lord," "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord," and his name is enrolled

among those who were conspicuous for their faith (Hebrews 11:32), displayed at memorable crises in national history.

While we have no mention whatever of Jephthah's wife — she may have died in childbirth — he is memorable because of his affection for his daughter, and of the vow he made concerning her. The full pathos of the story is the peculiarly tender language used. The nameless girl was "his only child," and, "beside her he had neither son nor daughter." His precious child was ever beside him. He made a rash vow that if God delivered Ammon into his hands he would sacrifice unto Him whatever came out of the door of his house to meet him on his victorious return. Leaving God to choose the victim, Jephthah likely thought one of the slaves would come out to greet him and be the burnt offering. God took Jephthah at his word, but he was stunned when he saw his precious daughter crossing the threshold to greet him. God answered his prayer and punished him through its answer. Shakespeare, when he selected an example of paternal tenderness, seized upon Jephthah in the scene between Hamlet and Polonius —

HAMLET: O Jephthah, judge of Israel what a treasure hadst thou!

POLONIUS: What a treasure had he, my Lord?

HAMLET: One fair daughter and no more, The which he loved passing well.

But when Jephthah felt the loving arms of his fair daughter thrown around him, he cried, "Alas, my daughter! crushing, thou hast crushed me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD and I cannot go back." What was her reaction as she saw the agony in her dear father's eyes, and heard his much-loved voice pronounce her doom? What did she think of her father's anguish and of the sudden realization of her own fate?

### *Her Response*

Her answer was most heroic. There were no resentful or rebellious tones in it. She shed no tears, nor shook with despair after her father with a crushed heart spoke of his vow. There was the quiet acceptance of the tragic fact that she was to be the burnt offering her father had promised. Only known by the simple title of "Jephthah's daughter," this most commendable

maiden may not have had the gifts and talents of some other women of the Bible, but she will ever remain as the incarnation of willing sacrifice. “My father, if thou hast made this promise to the Lord, do to me according to the promise.” If there is a quality for which a woman is supreme, it is sacrifice, and in this virtue the obedient daughter of Jephthah gave what was nobler than gifts—she offered *herself*. Her father said, “I cannot go back,” and she did not go back. She did not run away from her father, but with true devotion accepted his will and acquiesced in his grim behest. She felt that her blood would be a good price to pay for divine vengeance over the enemies of Israel. Known only as the daughter of a famous father, this lovely girl by her noble consent revealed a nobility of character which quickens our imagination and stirs our sympathy.

Ellicott comments, “We may well rejoice in the gleam of sunlight which is flung upon the sacred page by his [Jephthah’s] faithfulness in not going back from his vow, though it were to his own hurt (Psalm 15:4), and in the beautiful devotion of his daughter, cheerfully acquiescing in her own sacrifice for the good of her country.” History records similar sacrifices as when Marius offered his daughter for victory over the Cimbri. Tennyson caught the willing spirit of the daughter’s submission to her father’s vow when he wrote —

When the next moon was rolled into the sky, Strength came to me that  
equall’d my desire.

How beautiful a thing it was to die  
For God and for my sire!

### *Her Request*

To a Hebrew maiden the bitterest pang was to die unwedded and childless, and so Jephthah’s daughter asks for a delay of two months that she might bewail her virginity. “Let me alone,” indicated a postponement of the vow for a definite purpose (see Deuteronomy 9:14; I Samuel 11:3). To the desolate mountains she went to bewail the destruction of her hopes as a Hebrew maid of ever fulfilling the dream of motherhood. The heartbroken father willingly granted his noble daughter’s request, doubtless with the secret hope that somehow she might never return, and he be spared the

terrible sight of seeing his daughter, his only daughter, sacrificed upon the altar. How apropos are the lines of Tennyson as we think of the crushing of all aspiration of bearing a child that might be in the Messianic line!—

My God, my land, my father — these did move  
Me from my bliss of life, that nature gave,  
Lowered softly with a threefold cord of love  
Down to a silent grave.

And I went mourning, “No fair Hebrew boy  
Shall smile away my maiden blame among  
The Hebrew mothers” — emptied of all joy,  
Leaving the dance and song,

Leaving the olive gardens far below,  
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower  
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow  
Beneath the battled tower.

### *Her Renunciation*

True to her promise, the sorrowing maiden returned from her weeping place upon the mountains. She was a woman of her word, and came back for the execution of her father’s vow, “who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed.” Doubtless among the mountains her heart gathered strength and courage for her sacrifice in the valleys. Says Ruskin, “All great inspiration comes from the hills” (Psalms 121:1, 2; 123:1).

Up to the hills  
Where the torrent fills  
With storms of the Winter’s brewing,  
Close in the clasp,  
Of Nature’s grasp,  
There tell thy heart’s undoing.

The great question is, What did Jephthah actually do to his daughter on her return? The fulfillment of his vow could only mean one thing, namely, the offering up of his precious child as a burnt offering (11:31). But Bible scholars disagree over what is precisely meant by this “burnt offering.” According to one interpretation the vow of Jephthah consisted of two parts —

1. What *person* soever met him should be the Lord’s, or dedicated to His service forever.
2. What *beast* soever met him should be offered as a burnt offering, like the Tabernacle lambs, upon an altar.

Based upon this view, it is affirmed that Jephthah kept his daughter in sacred celibacy for the rest of her life; that what she and her female companions bewailed was not the prospect of coming sacrifice but her *virginity*. “She knew no man.” So the phrase “he did with her according to his vow” is made to signify the exclusion of his daughter as a kind of Old Testament nun, surrendered to live a secluded life in the service of the Tabernacle — a vestal virgin. Thus the shuddering thought of a terrible human sacrifice is softened down in this way —

It was not a human sacrifice in the gross sense of the word, not a slaughter of an unwilling victim, but the offering of a devoted heart, to free, as she supposed, her father and her country from a terrible obligation. . . . The heroism of the father and daughter are to be admired and loved in the midst of the fierce superstition round which it plays like a sunbeam on a stormy sea.

That Jephthah could not have sacrificed his daughter as an actual burnt offering is argued against in this way —

1. The sacrifice of children to Moloch was an abomination prohibited by an express law, and not an instance occurred of a human sacrifice to God.
2. The case of Abraham offering Isaac is not in point, as Isaac was not sacrificed. The command was given only to try Abraham’s faith.
3. No father could put even a criminal child to death without the consent of the magistrates.

4. The traditional laws of the Jews say: “If a Jew should devote his son or his daughter, his man servant or maid servant who are Hebrews, the devotement should be void.”

But in spite of the reasons advanced against a human sacrifice, the Scripture is heavily on the side of Jephthah’s vow being fulfilled as it was made. Martin Luther wrote, “Some affirm that he did not sacrifice her; but the text is clear enough.” The ancient Jews who had an intimate knowledge of the customs of their race and a unique meaning of their own language, have always understood that the daughter of Jephthah was a literal burnt offering. *The Targum* of Jonathan has the explanation —

It was a custom in Israel in order that no one should make his son or his daughter a burnt-offering, as Jephthah did, and did not consult Phinehas the priest. Had he done so, he would have redeemed her with money.

While the Levitical law forbade human sacrifices, the time of the Judges was a period when “every man did that which was right in the sight of his own eyes,” and consequently it was a period of ignorance and barbarity when the sacrifice of human life was common. They were the times of appalling ignorance which “God winked at.” Certainly we deplore Jephthah’s rash vow and terrible mistake in making such a useless sacrifice, but he fulfilled his vow; he did not set aside his daughter to perpetual virginity such as a girl does when she enters a convent to become “a bride of Christ.” He did not dedicate her thus, and then offer a burnt offering of an animal to seal his pledge. The heroic virgin became the burnt offering, and the giving of her life transfigured the wicked vow of her father. Her sacrificial love turned the blackest deed in Israel’s early history into a theme for “the songs of the daughters of Israel.”

Ancient writers wove into history, drama and poetry the tragic theme of such propitiatory sacrifice. Virginian submitted to be stabbed to the heart by her father, Virginius, rather than fall into the hands of the enemies of her country. The Spartan mothers told their sons to come back victors or be borne back dead on their shields. The sacrifice of Jephthah’s daughter was a perfect one because it was actuated by a twofold love — love for her father and love for her country. Mackintosh Mackay reminds us that this is the view Tennyson takes of her in his beautiful picture of her in the *Dream of Fair Women* —

In this splendid pageant of the illustrious women of history, the most lovely picture of all is this humble Jewish girl. Upon her breast the poet still sees the mark of the spear-wound; upon her face the gaze of tragic sorrow. Yet, when he would commiserate her, she refuses the proffered pity:

“Heaven heads the count of crimes With that wild oath.”

She neither wished or needs pity. What matter her poor life be sacrificed if her country be free.

Then Tennyson goes on to give us this beautiful picture of one infusing her sacrifice with the spirit of perfect love, which makes all things beautiful —

It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,  
That I subdued me to my father's will;  
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,  
Sweetens the spirit still.

Moreover it is written that my race  
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer  
On Arnon unto Mianeth. Here her face  
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She lock'd her lips: she left me where I stood;  
“Glory to God,” she sang, and past afar,  
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,  
Toward the morning-star.

### *Her Remembrance*

Is it any wonder that the daughters of Israel remembered and honored the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter with a four days' festival during each year? Although this was probably a local custom only, it was a gracious gesture not to “lament” her, but “to praise” or “celebrate,” as the word can imply. The feelings of those Jewish maidens toward their departed companion were akin to those of the Romans toward Claelia, the virgin martyr of A.D. 280, and of other national heroines whose self-sacrifice

helped their nations to victory. Byron expressed this sentiment in his lines

---

Though the virgins of Salem lament,  
Be the judge and the hero unbent;  
I have won the great battle for thee,  
And my father and country are free.

### IBZAN'S DAUGHTERS

Judges 12:8, 9

The period covered by the Judges was a time of moral degeneracy which always brings with it national weakness. The reins were given over to the passions of men, and as wealth accumulated, polygamy became rife, as already seen in Gideon (8:30). In the narrative before us we have the record of Abdon with his forty sons and thirty “nephews” (12:14, *ASV*), and also of Ibzan with his thirty sons and thirty daughters, and another thirty daughters from abroad he took as wives for his sons. The history of polygamy is stained with jealousy, hatred, intrigue, fatal favoritism and death.

### MANOAH'S WIFE

THE WOMAN WHO MOTHERED EARTH'S STRONGEST MAN

Judges 13; 14:2-5; Hebrews 11:32

It would have added greater interest to the story of Samson if we had had the name of his mother. It must have been a sweet and suggestive one for she was such a good woman. But while her husband's name is preserved, she herself is nameless although the Talmud says that she bore the name of Hazelponi or Zelelponi (see I Chronicles 4:3), and that she was of the tribe of Judah. Zelelponi means “the shadow falls on me,” and Manoah's wife was certainly one who dwelt under the shadow of the Almighty and became the mother of the strongest man who ever lived.

*She Was a Disappointed Woman*



Once again we have the poignant phrase “She was barren,” with the redundant expression common in ancient literature, “and bare not.” “Sarai was barren: she had no child.” “Thou shalt live and not die,” etc. As we have already seen, God made many barren wives to rejoice over the birth of children (see SARAH, REBEKAH, HANNAH, ELISABETH). These godly women who felt the intense sorrow and disappointment of a childless home received divine announcement and accomplishment of maternal joy. Manoah’s wife was a God-fearing Israelite whose faith taught her that heaven knew all about the maternity she cherished, and of the vain waiting that saddened her life. Evidently Manoah and his wife had all necessary material benefits. They seemed to have been fairly prosperous, but their greatest joy had been denied their home. Their child-longing and child-loving hearts had never been satisfied. Swinburne expressed the sentiment —

Where children are not, Heaven is not.

*She Was a Privileged Woman*

The wife of Manoah of Zorah was greatly honored in that she experienced a pre-incarnate appearance of the Messiah. By “the angel of the Lord” who visited her with the happy message that her barrenness would pass, and she would become the mother of a most unusual son, we are to understand not any human messenger, but a supernatural being. The phrase constantly used in Judges implies, “The angel of His presence,” and is equivalent to earlier references (Genesis 16:7; 22:11; Exodus 2:2, 6, 14, etc.). Speaking in the first person, the august visitor who came to Manoah’s wife was “the captain of the LORD’S host” (Joshua 5:13-15). Heavenly beings brought revelations to individuals, but the prophets were the media of revelation to nations. The announcer of the good news, “thou shalt conceive and bear a son,” assumed a human form, for reporting his appearance to her husband, she spoke of him as, “A man of God . . . his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible.”

Later on, when the heavenly visitant appeared to both Manoah and his wife and repeated his message that their prayer and desire for a child would be answered, again his name was asked for. “Neither told me his name” (13:6). “What is thy name?” (13:17). But the angel answered, “Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is *secret*,” or “wonderful,” as the margin

expresses it, where the same term is used of the promised Messiah. "His name shall be called Wonderful" (Isaiah 9:6). The same word is used in the phrase, "the angel did *wonderously*" (13:19). As angels do not receive worship, the supernatural person the over-awed couple saw was no ordinary angel, for they fell on their faces and said, "We shall surely die, because we have seen *God*" (Exodus 33:20). It is clearly evident, therefore, that Manoah and his wife had witnessed one of those Old Testament theophanic appearances of Christ.

### *She Was a Godly Woman*

Both of those humble Israelites must have walked with God to have been counted worthy to receive such a marvelous interview with the heaven-sent messenger. Barren though the nameless wife was, she was yet believing. We have no record of complaint or impatience over her childless state as we have in the case of Hannah. Constantly, she prayed for a child, and her prayer lightened the burden of her loneliness and sustained her patience. As a God-fearing Israelite, she had faith that He would answer her prayer.

Further, the fact that her promised son was to be separated unto God from the womb to the day of his death, marks her out as the sanctified vessel.

The cause of God is holy,  
And useth holy things.

This faithful, self-sacrificing, holy woman then, must have had a life corresponding to the separated character of the son she was to bear, and grace was hers to dedicate him to the Lord before his birth. That she was likewise a woman of sanctified common sense is seen in her reply to her husband's cry, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." Calmly and sensibly, she said, "If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these." This woman of godly intuition knew that having seen God she was to live as never before. A divinely promised son would come to brighten the home.

### *She Was a Happy Woman*

At last the prayers of Manoah's wife were answered, and she became a joyous mother. "The woman bare a son, and called his name Samson." How grateful to God she must have been as the promised son was now a reality and nestling on her breast! She understood God's overruling throughout her barren years, and rejoiced in the knowledge that her long-awaited child would be the saviour of Israel. We note, in the first place, the significance of the name she gave him — Samson. His father's name, Manoah, meant "rest" or "consolation" while his son's name implied "strength of the sun"—prophetic of his prowess as a Hebrew Hercules. The association of the sun with strength was most natural (Judges 5:31; Psalm 19:5, 6). Ancient Jewish fathers said that "Samson was named after the name of God, who is called sun and shield of Israel" (Psalm 84:11). Another scholar affirms that the name the mother gave her son is from an Egyptian root, and means "the servant of God," in reference to Samson's Nazarite vow. But the name itself is a Hebrew one, and meant to Manoah and his wife that the glory of their family would be sustained through the champion who would be without a rival in Israel.

The second thought is that the son God gave to wreak vengeance upon the enemies of His people was to be a Nazarite from his birth, and the angelic announcer gave to Manoah and his wife explicit instructions as to how they should live and rear their mighty son who was to "judge Israel twenty years." The mother herself, while pregnant, was under a dedicatory vow not to drink wine, or eat anything of an unclean nature, thus the son she conceived was in blood and bone a Nazarite. For Samson, his uncut hair was to be the sign that he was separated unto God (Numbers 6). In spite of his moral lapses, he never broke the sacred vow until a seductive woman discovered the secret of his power, and left him the helpless victim of carnal passions.

### *She Was a Sorrowful Woman*

Granted the blessing of motherhood, Manoah's wife must have wondered why such a turbulent son had been given her as a gift of heaven. It was true that Samson loved Israel and smote those who were his

country's oppressors. How the Philistines feared this giant of a man who knew no fear, and how unceasing they were in their efforts to destroy him. As his mother saw how he triumphed over Israel's foes, she doubtless blessed God for creating him as the answer to her prayer, for the removal of her barrenness, fashioning her son like an Atlas and giving him sinews of steel. But some of his unruly traits must have cast a shadow over her heart. Although his name carried the idea of "splendor," or "sun-like," some of his desires lacked the splendor of his name.

Appearing as the avowed enemy of the Philistine, Samson went to Timnath, and coveted the daughter of an "uncircumcised Philistine," which on the lips of a Jew was a term of peculiar hatred (I Samuel 17:36). Samson urged his parents to secure the woman as his wife seeing it was the custom for parents to make arrangements for a marriage and pay the dowry (Genesis 34:4-12). How such a marriage must have been repugnant to Manoah and his wife, and what sorrow must have been theirs when Samson came back after one of his conquests and found his Philistine wife taken from him and given to another man! Then there came his association with the harlot Delilah (see DELILAH) which brought about his tragic end. After Samson's marriage to the Philistine woman of Timnath we do not read of his parents again. It is to be hoped that they had died and were thus spared the tragedy of seeing their son, craftily seduced, robbed of his mighty strength, blinded and made as a slave at Gaza. What a different end Samson would have had, if only he had chosen a wife after the lovely character of the mother who bore him!

### MICAH'S MOTHER

Judges 17:1-7

The name of the Ephraimite, Micah, is suggestive. It means, "Who is like Jehovah?" and was doubtless given him by pious parents. His nameless mother, however, sinned against the second commandment in making a graven image to worship. Micah first stole 1,100 shekels from his mother, then restored them. Because of his penitence and confession of the theft, she forgave him and said, "Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son." But, taking the restored silver, aided by her son, she used it to establish an idolatrous form of worship. She spoke of wholly dedicating "the silver unto

the LORD,” but how could He receive that which was employed to set up a house of gods? Perhaps Micah and his mother did not altogether abandon the worship of Jehovah, but in trying to co-ordinate such worship with that of idolatrous symbols they sinned against the Lord. Like others they tried to serve Him yet bow to idols of their own creation. Was it not to God’s own redeemed children that John wrote “Keep yourselves from idols”?

### LEVITE’S CONCUBINE

Judges 19:1-10, 20-30

The somewhat sordid narrative takes us back to wild times when a man was a law unto himself, and when his passions expressed themselves in turbulent and fierce ways. Here we have a chapter revealing “the unutterable depth of profligacy and shamelessness into which some of the Israelites had sunk. At the same time, we see that the moral sense of the nation was still sufficiently keen to be aroused by the glare of unnatural illumination thus flung upon their consciences.” The unnamed Levite, because of his sacred associations, should have manifested a more commendable life. Residing in Ephraim, he took a concubine out of Bethlehem-Judah. As he is spoken of as “her husband,” this unfaithful woman was actually a wife with inferior rights. While the Levite was away for four months his wife played the whore against him. When he returned, he sought out his profligate wife, and spoke to her heart about a reconciliation.

A terrible tragedy overtook this woman as the result of the infamous conduct of the inhabitants of Gibeah who raped her “all the night until the morning.” Such a repulsive episode is made more repugnant when we realize that the Levite sacrificed his defenseless wife for such a night of sin and brutality. Stumbling home as morning dawned, the wretched woman fell down and died on the threshold, and her husband dismembered her polluted body into twelve pieces, a piece for each tribe of Israel, and roused the hearts of all throughout Palestine to seek retribution upon the guilty inhabitants of Gibeah (Judges 20:1-48). The whole of Israel felt the stain and shame of that dark night (see Hosea 9:9; 10:9). A similar method of arousing a nation for action can be found in the reign of Saul when he sent around pieces of a slain ox (I Samuel 11:7). How our hearts are moved as

we try to picture the outraged woman spreading out her hands upon the threshold after the night of shocking abuse as if she were stretching them out in one last agony of appeal. John Milton describes the corruption of Gibeah that fearful night —

When night  
Darkens the streets, then wander forth the sons  
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.  
Witness the streets of Sodom, and that night  
In Gibeah, when the hospitable door  
Exposed a matron to avoid worse rape.

#### FOUR HUNDRED VIRGINS OF JABESH-GILEAD Judges 21

Eleven tribes of Israel judged that the tribe of Benjamin had permitted the atrocity in the matter of the Levite's concubine which was inconsistent with the moral stature of Israel as a whole, and asked that those who had committed such an outrage be handed over to them for punishment. But the men of Benjamin refused this request and set out to defend themselves against the attack of the other tribes with the result that 18,000 valiant Benjamites were killed. Some 600 escaped and found refuge in the rock of Rimmon. As almost all the tribe of Benjamin had been destroyed the question was what to do to save the tribe from complete extinction. The other tribes had vowed that none of their daughters should marry Benjamites. How, then, could the tribe be preserved? It was found that 400 virgins remained after the battle at Jabesh-Gilead and these were given as wives to 400 of the scattered Benjamites, and from the daughters of Shiloh 200 more were gathered as wives for the remaining 200 men. With their wives, all the men returned home and rebuilt their cities destroyed by war.

#### DAUGHTERS OF ELKANAH I Samuel 1:4; 2:21

How many sons and daughters Peninnah bore Elkanah we are not told. None of them are mentioned by name. We do know that Hannah, his other

wife, had six children by him, but only one is named, Samuel. The rest are unidentified (see PENINNAH and HANNAH).

## TABERNACLE WOMEN

I Samuel 2:22-25

Old and weak, Eli the priest, guilty of indulgence for his wicked sons, brought discredit upon the national sanctuary he had loved and served most faithfully through many years. The shameful, adulterous conduct of his sons, Hophni and Phinehas on the very threshold of the tabernacle resulted in a terrible death for them and their families. The women they abused were in some way connected with the service of the tabernacle, perhaps in the liturgical side of the sanctuary worship. By their immoral act, the sons of Eli not only sinned against the women in question but also “against the Lord,” and against their godly father whose voice of rebuke they scorned. With hardening hearts they were suddenly destroyed. Their terrible transgression seemed to be beyond the limit of divine forgiveness.

## ICHABOD’S MOTHER

I Samuel 4:19-22

Scripture does not give us the name of the wife of Phinehas, who, with his brother, died at the hand of the Lord. All we are told of her is her anguish in travail and the striking name she gave her son whom his father never saw. There is a remarkable resemblance between this unnamed wife and Rachel, both of whom died in childbirth — were comforted by friends — and in death’s agony gave their sons impressive names. Perhaps Ichabod’s mother’s story is more touching than that of Rachel’s, for in spite of her husband’s immorality and godlessness, she died a martyr to her firm faith in Jehovah. Premature labor pains seized her as she heard that the ark of the Lord had been lost, yet she believed.

The fatal death of her husband, and also the death of her father-in-law, Eli, did not affect her so intensely as did the taking of the ark, and when her son was born she did not give him a family name but called him Ichabod meaning, “The glory is departed,” a fact she confirmed by repeating the lament, “The glory is departed from Israel for the ark of God is taken.” Ellicott says the name can be translated, “Alas! the glory.” She knew that

the holiness and honor of God had been profaned and that divine judgment was just. “The wife of this deeply corrupt man,” wrote Von Gerlach, “shows how penetrated the whole people then was with the sense of the value of its covenant with God.” We cannot think of the tragic death of this anonymous wife and mother, perhaps one of the most pathetic deathbeds in the Bible, without saying that she represents many a God-fearing woman who, in spite of a shameless and godless partner, remains true to divine realities. Disappointed and crushed though she was, because God’s honor was her honor, no word against her worthless husband left her lips, nor did she utter any complaint against God for the death of her dissolute priestly husband.

I-chabod, “where is the glory,” is a sad yet suggestive name, and can be written over many a church and life in which God was honored and glorified. There are religious areas, as well as professing Christians who were once most outstanding in their allegiance to God and to His Word. What spiritual influence they exerted, but their glory has departed. They may still have a name that they live, but are spiritually dead. Modernism, popularity, worldly compromise robbed them of their one-time power for God in a world of need. Profession remains, but it is the same as a kernel without a nut. Previous joy and fruitfulness in service have gone, and life is destitute of its former zeal for God. The Ark, symbol of God’s presence and favor, has been taken away by the Philistines. But the Ark was returned, and with it the fresh manifestation of the glory of the Lord — once the people returned to the Lord with all their hearts (I Samuel 7).

## FEMALE WATER-DRAWERS

I Samuel 9:11-14

What a captivating account that is of Saul’s early life as a choice young man deeply concerned over his father’s lost asses! While searching for them Saul and his servant remembered that there was a man of God near at hand who, they thought, might be able to direct them in their search. As they came near to the city they met young maidens drawing water — a recognized female occupation of those times — and one that afforded occasion for family gossip. Accosting the maidens of Ramah, Saul asked if the prophet they sought had been seen. In common with all the people of Ramah, the maidens knew all about Samuel and his comings and goings.



“Yes, this very day he came from his house unto the town. It is a festival day — you will find him presiding up here,” the young females said, as they pointed to the high place where sacrifices were offered. Following the instruction of the water carriers, Saul and his servant found Samuel to whom the Lord had revealed the previous day the quest of Saul and His choice of him as Israel’s first king. Little did those girls know of the momentous consequences of their information about the whereabouts of Samuel. Often the most insignificant details have their share in great events.

### MUSICAL WOMEN

I Samuel 18:6 9

The joy of the singing and dancing women at the triumph of David over Goliath begat jealousy in the heart of Saul. Their song, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands,” irked Saul and begat in him a determination to kill his rival. Music and song were closely related to dancing (Exodus 15:20, 21; II Samuel 6:14-16), and these happy women of Israel met together to laud young David for his defeat of the dreaded Philistine champion. There is always the outburst of song on the part of those victorious in war, but, alas! only tears for the conquered.

### ABIGAIL’S FIVE DAMSELS

I Samuel 25:42

After the death of Nabal, his wife Abigail gathered her possessions together, and after the set time of mourning became the wife of David. Abigail took with her five damsels, probably her devoted female attendants. Who they were and what part they had in the court of David we are not told. Doubtless they continued to care for Abigail and her son, Chileab (II Samuel 3:3).

### WITCH OF ENDOR

I Samuel 28

Without doubt, this is one of the most mysterious and difficult chapters in the Bible to deal with. Samuel was dead and buried (I Samuel 28:3), yet he reappeared to seal Saul’s doom. Here is a startling record unparalleled in

the creations of the greatest masters of fiction. Lord Byron said of the narrative of the Witch of Endor —

I have always thought this the finest and most finished witch scene that ever was written or conceived, and you will be of my opinion if you consider all the circumstances of the actors of the case, together with the gravity, simplicity and density of the language. It beats all the ghost scenes I have ever read.

The actors of the cast are Saul the king, the witch, and Samuel the prophet — surely a most unusual trio! Saul about to join the dead; the Witch and her traffic with the dead; Samuel, brought back from the dead.

### *Saul — About to Join the Dead*

In God's portrait gallery there is no more tragic figure than Saul, the son of Kish who, in his early days was "the glory of Israel." What physique and personality were his! Physically and morally he was head and shoulders above his fellowmen, and when anointed by Samuel as the first king of Israel, the people had high hopes of his prosperous reign. But corrupted by power, sin and murder and jealousy reduced this wonderful specimen of a man to a physical and, spiritual wreck. At last, facing the hosts of Philistines, Israel's ancient foes, Saul was scared and felt that his hour of retribution was near and that unless help came from God he must perish. But he cried to heaven in vain for God would not answer the doomed ruler "by Urim, by prophets, or by dreams." Driven by despair, Saul sought the ghost of the prophet who by his prudence and piety had prevented the ruin of Israel during Saul's reign.

Like a drowning man trying to clutch a straw, Saul came to countenance what he had so strongly condemned. He had issued orders that all who seek to traffic with the dead should be destroyed. "Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land." But what fearful pathos there is about Saul driven by despair, hastening to consult "the crooked crone who peeped and muttered in the caves on the height of Endor." As he looked at the huge camp of the Philistines "he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly," and his fear was a premonition of his approaching doom. Although full of dread, there was no sign of repentance in Saul and thus when he cried to the Lord, "the Lord answered him not."

By his dark sins he had severed himself from all divine influences, and as a last desperate resort disguised himself in the garb of a common soldier. He then leaves God to consult a witch for any ray of hope she may be able to bring about by producing the departed spirit of Samuel whose past counsel Saul had spurned.

### *The Witch — Traffic With the Dead*

Jewish tradition affirms that the nameless spiritualist medium was the mother of the great Abner. Whether this is true or not, certainly this witch of Endor has a distinction all her own in that she had a king of Israel for a consulter, and a prophet of God for an apparition. This well-known female at Endor, introduced to Saul by his servants, had a “familiar spirit,” that is, the supposed possession of a gift to induce or compel a departed spirit to revisit the world and submit to questioning. This aspect of the “black arts” was one of the things the Israelites copied from the original inhabitants of Canaan but the Mosaic command respecting those who practiced these arts is clear and decisive: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:27).

The manifold shapes of witchcraft had prevailed among the people and is given under a variety of names as “enchantments,” “sorceries,” “familiar spirit,” “wizard,” “observer of times,” “dreamer of dreams,” “diviners,” “charmners,” “necromancers,” or “consulters of the dead.” The New Testament speaks of “seducers,” “seducing spirits,” “unclean spirits, working miracles,” all of which are associated with arts of the devil. Those having intercourse with the unseen world were put to death, and all who sought the offices of such people were defiled (Leviticus 19:31). Idle curiosity and concern in the unseen world leading to a sinful interest in trifling with matters so awful was strictly forbidden (Deuteronomy 12:30-32). The Witch of Endor knew that the practice of dark arts was a capital offense still punishable by death. Thus she told Saul — although her professed power to contact the other world did not include the ability to recognize Saul in his disguise — that a snare was being laid to expose and kill her as the law demanded. But assured by Saul’s oath that nothing would happen to her, she asked him whom he wanted to have reappear from the dead.

Although this woman was a witch — the equivalent to a female medium in present day Spiritism or Spiritualism — yet the Bible does not depict her as a despicable character. Hers was not the gamut of illusions and tricks often practiced in séances. She actually indulged in forbidden communication with the unseen world of spirits. No obvious deceit was hers, and natural, feminine virtues were still prominent, for when she discovered Saul's identity and heard Samuel pronounce his doom, she tried to assist and comfort the distracted king prostrate on the ground before her after hearing of his fate. She demonstrated her sympathy for Saul by having his servants lay him on her own bed, and insisting that he eat, prepared an abundant meal for him and his servants. Yet in spite of her good points, she had sold herself to Satan. One wonders what level of spiritual achievement she might have attained had she wholly followed the Lord instead of her black art.

### *Samuel — Back From the Dead*

How those with spiritualistic tendencies take shelter in this episode of the apparent recall of Samuel from the dead! It is advanced as Biblical proof for the clairvoyance. But modern Spiritualism, which is merely a rehash of the Israelitish abomination, is spiritually and morally wrong, and still under divine condemnation seeing the Mosaic law against it has never been abrogated — even though witches are no longer burned. The question we now face is, Did God work through a spiritualistic medium, and through a witch satisfy Saul's request? Was it actually Samuel who appeared? Having sternly forbidden any traffic with witches, did God deign to use what He had condemned?

On the genuine appearance of the departed Samuel there has always been a great diversity of opinion. Some commentators believe that his supposed appearance was a deception practiced by the witch and was most effective with Saul because of his distraught, nervous and excited condition. Others say that it was an evil spirit who impersonated Samuel, or that it was a phantasm or semblance of the prophet that appeared, even as the figure of a man we have known may appear to us in a dream or vision, and not the man himself. Satan and his ministers are able to transform themselves into

the appearance of angels of light, and they may also have represented the saintly prophet. But what are the actual facts of the case?

Saul said to the witch, “Bring me up Samuel,” and the issue is plainly stated, “The woman saw Samuel.” “Then said Samuel,” and “Saul was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel.” The woman described the God-like, majestic and mantled form she saw, and Saul perceived that it was Samuel. Thus by some “hidden dispensation of the divine will, the prophet allowed himself to be thus made use of,” says St. Augustine, “even as our Lord Himself in the days of His humiliation submitted to be taken by Satan, and set by him on the pinnacle of the Temple.” It has been suggested that Samuel was sent by God to the consternation of the witch herself as she was about to have recourse to her usual arts; thus God Himself intervened to answer Saul by the prophet Samuel.

Further, the overpowering effect the apparition had upon Saul, the rebuke he received, and the prophecy of his death and of his sons the next day, all imply the reality and genuineness of Samuel’s appearance. Evil spirits are not permitted to forestall God’s decrees, thus no witch was able to make the prediction Samuel did. We therefore believe that as God allowed Moses and Elias to return to comfort Christ in view of His cross (Matthew 17), so He allowed Samuel to return to warn Saul of his doom. Bishop Wordsworth explains what happened in that cave at Endor in this way —

God designed that the spirit of Samuel should be recognized by human eyes and how could this have been done but by means of such objects as are visible to human sense? Our Lord speaks of the *tongue* of the disembodied spirit of Dives in order to give us an idea of his suffering; and at the Transfiguration He presented the form of Moses in such a garb to the three disciples as might enable them to recognize him as Moses.

As Samuel appeared, Saul told his woeful tale, but was reminded that God could do nothing for him because of his blatant sins. The prophet reminded the king of his past wickedness and its effects upon the nation, and then heard the solemn announcement: “Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me,” and this sentence of death was executed on Mount Gilboa. Yet it would seem as if mercy rejoiced over divine judgment for note well what Samuel said, “Tomorrow shalt thou . . . be *with me*.” Where was Samuel in

the unseen world? Not in the realms of eternal woe that is sure. As the Saviour said to the dying thief, “To day shalt thou be *with me in paradise*,” so to the stricken, and it may be, now fully repentant Saul there came the message, “Thou and thy sons shall be with me.” Tomorrow with Samuel in the abode of bliss! What a comforting thought that must have been for Saul’s troubled heart! Charles Wesley asked —

What do these solemn words portend?  
A ray of hope when life shall end.  
Thou and thy sons, though slain, shall be  
Tomorrow in repose with me.  
Not in a state of hellish pain,  
If Saul with Samuel do remain.  
Not in a state of damned despair,  
If loving Jonathan be there.

Our God is One who delights in mercy, and the gospel hymn states it —  
Whilst the lamp holds out to burn  
The vilest sinner may return.

Hardened, reprobate, and self-condemned as Saul was, if on that dark night in the witch’s cave he heard God’s voice as Samuel spoke, and on that last day of his life flung himself upon divine mercy, then his end was not one of unrelieved gloom. We would like to believe that ere Saul went out to be slain in battle, he set the house of his heart in order. Augustine wrote that Samuel’s word “Shalt thou be with me” does not refer to an equality in bliss, but to a like condition of death. Samuel himself was very much alive, although his body was in the graveyard at Ramah. If Samuel had said to Saul, “Tomorrow thou shalt be among the damned,” that would have crushed him completely, and likely hardened him to his impenitence. By using the gentler expression, *with me*, Samuel mildly exhorted Saul to repentance even at the end of a somewhat tragic life.

#### DAUGHTERS OF THE PHILISTINES II Samuel 1:20; Ezekiel 16:27, 57, etc.

We have frequent references in the Bible to the custom of women joining together to celebrate national deliverances and victories (Exodus 15:21; I Samuel 18:6). David did not want the daughters of the

uncircumcised Philistines to rejoice over the death of Saul and Jonathan and so urges “the daughters of Israel” to weep for the slain king who had brought them so much prosperity in past campaigns. In any war, however, women of the conquerors, and also of the conquered, are those who cry more than rejoice.

### MEPHIBOSHETH’S NURSE II Samuel 4:4

Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan. He had been lame in both feet since he was a child, five years old, and was thus physically incapacitated for the throne. Because of this, the house of Saul became practically extinct with the death of Ish-bosheth. The portrait of the unknown nurse who inadvertently was responsible for Mephibosheth’s crippled condition is given with one bold stroke, “His nurse took him up, and fled; and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame.” Tidings of war between the tribes and the murder of Ish-bosheth constrained the devoted nurse to preserve the child, but as she fled he dropped from her arms and became a cripple for life. Perhaps she made more haste than good speed, and fell with the child. She may have forever regretted the sight of him growing up and not being able to walk properly.

### WOMAN OF TEKOAH THE WOMAN WHO WAS A GOOD ACTRESS II Samuel 14:1-20

Theron Brown, whose work, *The Nameless Women of the Bible*, was published over 60 years ago, in which he deals with only sixteen of these unidentified females, tells us why he did not report on *all* the anonymous women of the Bible. His purpose was not to write about every unnamed individual of the female sex mentioned in the Bible, as we have endeavored to do, but rather to call attention to a few among the number “who by act or influence illustrated some virtue or pointed some useful lesson.” This is why Brown in his Preface dismisses the wise woman of Tekoah with the paragraph —

Whose shrewd parable reconciled a father to his son, becomes an unprofitable example to discuss when the son happens to be Absalom.

The question whether he was not a safer foe, or at least a better-behaved subject, in exile than he could be in the heart of the capital did not appear to be worth debating.

We beg to differ on this point, however, and agree with Clarence Macartney in his study on *The Woman of Tekoah* that the one sentence from her eloquent speech has made her immortal — “Yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him” (II Samuel 14:14). As a whole the speech of this female orator is one of the great speeches of the Bible, so full of beautiful metaphors and of language of pathos. It is comparable to the eloquent pleas of Judah to Joseph to let Benjamin go home to Jacob with the other brothers; and also of Abigail’s speech to David to stay his hand when he was determined to slay Nabal and all his house.

Kuyper profitably compares and contrasts the character we have just considered, the Witch of Endor, with the Woman of Tekoah. “Both stepped out of the occupational spheres common to women. She of Tekoah chose that of intriguing and acting. The Witch of Endor identified herself with secret and mysterious powers. Thus both made their living and gained an influence in their community by resorting to unusual spheres of activity. The woman of Tekoah created her own art, planned her own intrigues, and relied upon her own skill at dramatization and speech. The woman of Endor employed quite different means. She was not a particularly striking personality. She was hardly an artist; she said nothing extraordinarily significant. She borrowed her resources not from herself, nor from the Lord her God, but from demons and from the mysterious forces of nature.”

### *The Occasion of the Parable*

It was Joab who saw how King David yearned to see his rebel son, Absalom, and who conceived the artifice to bring him home. Living near Tekoah, Joab probably knew all about the reputable wise woman living there. She was no witch or a female with a disreputable character, but she was *wise*. Hers was not the spiritual wisdom springing from the fear of the Lord, but a sagacity and common sense coupled with the ability to make her sponsorship of any matter clear and effective. She was worldly-wise and able and willing to play any assigned role without readiness. When Joab gave this capable woman the gist of the parable which he knew would



impress David, the woman in her eloquent way dressed Joab's idea up and put it across with charm and heart-moving appeal. She took the bones of the idea Joab had given her, and clothed them with beautiful flesh. While Joab is said to "put the words in her mouth," she certainly used her oratorical skill in expanding the appeal of those words.

Joab, the capable and loyal aide of David, knew more than any man, the longing the king had to see his son. Absalom had been in exile three years for the murder of his brother Amnon, who had ravished his sister, Tamar (which see). Joab could see how grief was eating at the heart of David, unfitting him for his kingly duties. "In David's breast there was a conflict between David the king, the administrator of justice, and David the father," says Macartney. David the king, the upholder of the law, is saying: "Absalom, you are a murderer. You treacherously slew your brother. You dipped your hand in the blood of Amnon. You have broken the law of God and the law of man. Absalom, remain in exile. Never see my face again."

But David the father speaks in a far different manner saying: "Absalom come home. Without thee the feast is tasteless; without thee my heart is tuneless; without thee the palace halls are cheerless; without thee the pomp and circumstance of war is but an empty show. Thou hast slain thy brother; yet with all your faults I love thee still. Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, come home!"

Thus for three long, dreary years "the soul of King David longed to go forth unto Absalom," and Joab sought the help of the woman of Tekoah who had a reputation for wisdom, tact and eloquence to assist him in a scheme to bring the banished son home again.

### *The Oratory of the Parable*

The woman Joab solicited was well-able to dress up for, and act the part of, a widow, heartbroken over the threatened death of her remaining son. She attired herself in garments of sorrow and affliction, and in every detail looked the part of a mournful widow and distressed mother. Extending the outline of the speech Joab had given her, the woman of Tekoah, in a most eloquent fashion, used heart-moving metaphors to illustrate her appeal such as the one, "Shall quench my coal which is left," which was a covert and crafty allusion to Absalom as heir to David. What pathos and poetry are

packed in this moving metaphor — “My coal which is left — her last lump of coal glowing with affection for her bereaved soul and glowing with the light of hope for her lonely heart.

With consummate ease and poise she stood in the presence of the king, after making obeisance as she came before him. She masterfully executed her role, watching all the while the effect of her story as the widow with two sons who had quarreled, come to blows, with one being killed and an avenger pursuing the murderer. If her only son was taken and killed what could she as a poor, desolate, defenseless and childless widow do? So would the gracious king intervene in her favor, and protect her remaining son. David was moved and told the woman to go home assured that he would take care of the matter. But the woman wanted more definite assurance, and as an accomplished actress, prolonged the interview in order to lead the king to commit himself more completely, which he did, affirming that not one hair of her son would fall to the earth. Skillfully, the woman adapted her approaches to David’s emotional responses to her carefully prepared story. Having led him on to bind himself with the solemnity of an oath, the woman with incomparable grace, tact and humility came to the heart of her plea.

“Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king.” Fascinated by the demeanor, charm and eloquence of this woman of Tekoah, David replied, “Say on,” little expecting the direct appeal to his heart regarding the necessity of fetching his son home lest he die in banishment. In effect, her eloquent plea centered upon David’s action to do for his own son, Absalom, what he had promised to do for her supposed son. The force of her argument was irresistible. One of the king’s sons, Amnon, was dead, and it was useless to grieve over him; God does not respect persons. Absalom must die too, and so must David himself. Therefore, he must improve the time and the blessings yet left while there was opportunity to temper judgment with mercy.

### *The Outcome of the Parable*

Deeply moved by the words, gestures, intonations and personality of the woman, David came to feel that she was acting her role for another, and penetrating her disguise asked if “the wily and politic and unscrupulous”

Joab was behind her act. The woman confessed it was his scheme, and sought to absolve herself of all responsibility in her presence before the king. She had not been motivated by her own feelings regarding the exiled prince, but had simply professionally complied with Joab's request. The woman's clever presentation of Joab's strategem worked, and David sent for his aide and commanded him to bring young Absalom back to Jerusalem. The banished son came home but not to full fellowship. Absalom did not see his father's face for two years. He forced the issue, however, by burning Joab's crops, and compelling him to affect a full reconciliation with his father. "The king kissed Absalom." But what followed the reconciliation makes sorrowful reading. How different is our Heavenly Father's ministry of reconciliation when His banished ones return! At Calvary, through the death of His own beloved Son, He devised means whereby His banished sons should be no longer expelled from Him, and when Jesus cried, "It is finished," a full and perfect reconciliation was procured for a sinful, exiled race. What a glorious Gospel this is to proclaim that God waits to welcome penitent sinners home to His loving heart.

#### TEN CONCUBINES OF DAVID

II Samuel 15:16; 16:22; 20:3

What sorrow, shame and degradation polygamy heaps upon women! When David fled from his rebellious son, Absalom, he left ten of his concubines behind to keep his house, but when Absalom came to the forsaken, royal court he followed the counsel of Ahithophel to rape these women, who were unable to resist or flee. In a tent on the top of the house, and in sight of all Israel, Absalom satisfied his lustful revenge on the ten helpless women. The prophet Nathan had foretold that the nature of David's punishment would correspond to the character of his secret crime in his adulterous act with Bathsheba, and in the planned murder of her husband Uriah. Ellicott observes that —

The fact that this punishment takes place on the very roof where David had first yielded to his guilty passion makes it particularly striking.

When David returned home after the tragic death of his rebel son, he took the ten concubines Absalom had outraged and kept them in pleasant captivity as "widows" or in "the widowhood of life," having no further

sexual contact with them. What a boon Christianity brought womanhood! Through grace, woman is elevated to her God-given position as man's companion — not chattel.

### WENCH OF EN-ROGEL II Samuel 17:17-19

This is the only time in the Bible where the word “wench,” a once good English term for a young female, is used. Wycliffe's rendering of Matthew 9:24 reads, “Go ye away, for the wenche is not dead but slepith.” In the Midland counties of England when a peasant spoke of his wife as “my wench,” he expressed endearment. The Biblical reference probably indicates a well-known maid of the high priest who, although she saved the secret messengers, her deed, good in itself, only covered a risk that seems to have been needless, and her words to the pursuing party invite the casuists to explain “justifiable lying.” The wench from Bahurim was devoted to David's cause with her whole heart and soul, and when Jonathan and Ahimaaz found an empty well in a garden, to escape their pursuers they jumped into the pit, and the wench looking out of a window took in the situation. Seizing a cloth, she dashed out and covered the mouth of the well, then spread corn over the cloth to make it appear as if it was a heap of corn drying in the sun. When the pursuers arrived she directed them in a wrong direction, and David's life was saved.

It is most likely that David had never heard of, nor had seen, this inconspicuous, nameless, faithful follower, yet she was chosen by God to induce Absalom's runners to follow a blind trail, and thereby thwart his strategy against his father. Often in great movements the strength of a conqueror is not always found among his conspicuous friends and allies. The anonymous woman from En-rogel was used in a crucial moment to save the cause of David, and likewise the cause of the kingdom.

### WISE WOMAN OF ABEL II Samuel 20:16-22

The city of Abel had become proverbial for its wisdom. The Jewish *Targum* with Deuteronomy 20:10 in mind reads, “Remember now that which is written in the book of the Law to ask a city concerning peace at the

first? Hast thou done so, to ask of Abel if they will make peace?” (II Samuel 20:18). It was from this reputed center of wisdom that a woman who spoke of herself as one of “the peaceable and faithful in Israel” and as “a mother in Israel” went out to tell the people out of her wisdom, and aroused them to destroy the rebel Sheba. This unknown woman manifested commanding courage to act as the voice and champion of “the weaker side before an enraged soldiery in an age when all ethics of war made little scruple of sex.” Her influence with the people, and her skillful diplomacy mark her out as a lady of consequence. Joab was taken aback by her rebuke, but he assured this patriotic female that he did not want to slaughter indiscriminately. All he wanted was the man responsible for revolt among the tribes. When the woman found that the one sought was Sheba, who had entrenched himself among her people, she told them all about the crime of this traitor. The wrathful citizens then beheaded Sheba, delivered the head to Joab, and the city of Abel was saved. By her stern action this unknown heroine delivered up one guilty life and saved, thereby, thousands of innocent lives, and also secured peace in the kingdom of David. History, sacred and secular, is replete with records of women who, by their wit and courage in a time of crisis, brought deliverance and hope to their nation.

### SOLOMON’S WIVES AND CONCUBINES

I Kings 11:1-8; Song of Solomon 6:8

In the law regulating the life and reign of a king, it was distinctly laid down that he must not multiply wives who would turn his heart away from God (Deuteronomy 17:17). Solomon, above all other kings in Israel, sinned against this decree with disastrous consequences. The nameless daughter of Pharaoh whom he married started him out on the downward course of idolatry (I Kings 3:1-3; 7:8). He loved many “strange women,” that is, women of different nationalities, apart from Israel, and he had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. His wives turned his heart toward other gods, and because of his idolatry accruing from such a strong female influence, God said that at his death He would rend Solomon’s magnificent kingdom in two. While Solomon had built a magnificent temple for God, he likewise built heathen shrines for his idolatrous wives. “No man can serve two masters,” said the Master Himself. “Ye cannot serve God and the idols

of the world.” May we keep our heart perfect toward God, and not be guilty of seeking to worship and serve Him, yet at the same time have a forbidden shrine housing an idol!

## TWO HARLOT MOTHERS

### I Kings 3

The notable wisdom and intuitive sagacity of Solomon is revealed in his appeal to the maternal instinct of these two harlots who lived together, both of whom gave birth to children within three days of each other. One woman’s child died during the night from accidental smothering. In the morning, discovering that her child was dead, she accused her fellow-harlot of having substituted the dead, illegitimate child for the living one. It was a shameful assertion, and one wonders why the woman whose child died was anxious for a living one. Seeing that the child was the evidence of her prostitution one would have thought that she would be relieved over her baby’s death, seeing it was the fruit of a life of abandonment to sin. Seized with fear, perhaps she felt she would be held responsible for its death. The mother of the living child protested her innocence. As Israelites, withal degraded specimens, there was one way to settle the matter. Solomon, their king, was the wisest of men, and he would be able to decide which of the two was the mother of the living illegitimate child.

These female plaintiffs at court presented Solomon the royal judge with a problem. It was a difficult situation for him to solve. The only evidence he had to go on was that of the social outcasts themselves. There had been no witnesses of the asserted swap of babies, and because of the low character of the mothers the word of one was as good as the other. Which of the two was trying to save her own skin? As they argued back and forth, Solomon had a flash of genius. He asked an officer to bring him a sword, and silence fell upon the courtroom. As the officer came in with the sword, Solomon ordered him to cut the living child in two, and give a half to one mother and a half to the other. A heart-rending cry broke the silence, and the real mother of the living child, in spite of her sinful character, manifested true maternal affection. Rather than see her child killed, she was prepared to surrender it to her callous companion. Flinging herself before the king she begged him to spare the child — “O my lord, give her the living child, and

in no wise slay it.” As for the other woman, her response betrayed her lying accusation, and appearing to be on the side of Solomon’s judicial action she said, “Yes, divide it: neither of us shall have it!” That settled it. Commanding the officer to put up his sword, Solomon, pointing to the prostrate woman willing to give up her child said, “Give her the living child . . . she is the mother thereof.” The judgment of Solomon in this case greatly enhanced his reputation, for when the people of his kingdom heard of what had happened, “they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment.”

The record is a most revolting one and emphasizes the shame and sorrow of the illicit practice of prostitution. Yet a gem in the frail rubbish heap of humanity represented by these two harlots is the noble maternal affection displayed by the true mother. Wicked though she was, she retained a remnant of genuine worth. Unlike her baser companion, she was prepared for self-sacrifice and reminds us that down in the most sinful heart, feelings lie buried that grace can restore. It would be interesting to have the next chapter in the story of those two harlots. Did they part, and did the more noble of the two reform her ways? Did she seek to bring her son, without a father’s name, up in the fear of the Lord?

#### MOTHER OF HIRAM

I Kings 7:13-45; II Chronicles 2:13, 14; 4:11-16

Here is another instance of a renowned man whose name is known but whose parents are not mentioned by name in Scripture. This remarkably skilled craftsman who bore the same name as the king of Tyre, is also spoken of as Hiram (II Chronicles 4:11-16). We do know that Hiram who was “filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass,” had a widowed mother who was of the tribe of Naphtali, and that his late father was “a man of Tyre, a worker in brass.” But their names and genealogy are not given. Having a mixed parentage — Jewish mother, Tyrian father — enabled clever Hiram to enter into the spirit of Israelite worship, for which Solomon prepared the gorgeous Temple. Hiram brought to the Temple all the practical skill of a Tyrian artificer. Doubtless he received much of his skill in metal work from his unidentified father. While we have no record of any religious home life Hiram may have had, he must

have heard from his mother all about David's dream to build a house for the Lord, and of Solomon's determination to fulfill his father's dream. Because of the magnificent work he produced for the Temple, it would seem as if the Spirit of God augmented Hiram's skill as He did in the labor of Bezaleel.

## QUEEN OF SHEBA

THE WOMAN WHO LOVED WISDOM

I Kings 10:1-13; II Chronicles 9:1-12; Matthew 12:42

Among all the queens of the Bible none is so fascinating as the one who came from somewhere on the Persian Gulf to Jerusalem to prove for herself the profound wisdom of Solomon. (Consult the writer's volume on *All the Kings and Queens of the Bible*.) What she heard from the king's lips and saw of his wealth and power astounded her. We know nothing of her beauty, but it is certain she was all that could be desired in this respect. As we are discovering, the names of some of the most remarkable women of the Bible have been omitted. While this queen's name is not given in the Bible, Arab writers call her Balkis, and Ethiopian writers name her Makeda. In fact, the Abyssinians not only claim her as their ancient queen, but trace the descent of their present king from a son who, these traditions say, was born to her by Solomon. But such a contention is without any Biblical foundation. After her royal visit to Solomon we read that she returned to "her own country."

### *What She Came For*

What was the quest of this queen of the South? She did not take her long journey from vanity nor out of any feminine curiosity because she had heard of the much heralded greatness of Solomon. Hers was not a State visit to make a new treaty of some sort nor to behold the magnificence of the court of Solomon. No, she was a seeker after wisdom and so made the tedious journey from her own palace to that of Solomon's to increase her knowledge. She was inspired to make the visit because the fame of Solomon as the wisest man in the East had reached her. The Bible distinctly says that "she came to prove Solomon with hard, or perplexing questions," and her questions were both numerous and varied. This nameless queen had heard that Solomon knew all about "the name of the Lord," and it was this



particular aspect of his wisdom that attracted her to Jerusalem. She had not come to see the king's material possessions and trappings of wealth, for as a queen of considerable importance she had plenty of these herself. She came to see and hear "the Wisdom of Solomon," as Christ said of her. As, centuries later, wise men came from the East to Bethlehem to worship Him who appeared as, "the Wisdom of God," so Sheba's queen came to the Holy City in search of higher knowledge. She was not only a woman of enterprise and affluence but also of a penetrating mind. Cultured, she had a thirst for wider intellectual pursuits, and therefore represented the desire in the hearts of all princely characters for a deeper understanding of the true knowledge.

Josephus the Jewish historian says of the queen that "she was inquisitive into philosophy and on that and on other accounts also was to be admired." Word had reached her that it was Solomon's God who had made him so remarkably wise, and as a worshiper of other gods she wanted to know about this Jehovah who had favored the king in an outstanding way. Thus, there was no mere sensation seeking in her visit. The renown of such unparalleled wisdom drew her to Solomon and in going to him she revealed how wise she was. Possibly she had read some of Solomon's great proverbs, and the one affirming that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" gripped her and prompted her to seek out the king occupying the throne of Israel. She was seeking for a deeper knowledge of his God. While she gave utterance to religious expression such as "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, and set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made thee king to do judgment and justice," we have no Bible evidence that she was converted from her heathen gods to worship the God of Solomon. Her acknowledgment of God does not imply the acceptance of Him. "It expresses the belief that He, as the tutelary God of Israel, is to be held in reverence, proportionate to the extraordinary glory which He has given to His nation." We can but trust that the spiritual truths Solomon enunciated found a lodgment in the queen's heart and bore much fruit in her life after she returned to her own country.

*What She Heard*

Accustomed to gorgeous finery, the queen of Sheba was an eager student of a more coveted adornment — truth for the mind. What the true nature of her “hard questions” was we are not told. What the narrative does say is that “Solomon told [or answered] all her questions, there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not.” What did he tell? Did he recite the facts of creation of the earth and man, the Fall, the promise of the Redeemer, the significance of the law and the sacrifices, and of how the glorious “house of the Lord” she saw was designed to honor God? Did he unfold the significance of Israel’s choice and destiny and how she herself was connected with his God-honored nation? How is a descendant of Sheba, the son of Abraham by Keturah had wandered off and settled in the country bearing her name and from which she had come?

The queen “communed with Solomon of all that was in her heart.” *Her heart!* All the deepest questions within had been answered. Learned herself, she found Solomon’s knowledge supreme. How she would listen as the king opened his lips and gave utterance to truths that left her speechless! How the minds of these two royal persons must “have struck sparks in each other, their mutual attraction a leaping flame between them”! The lines of Addison are appropriate as we think of this king and queen, desiring above all else, wisdom and understanding —

Great souls by instinct to each other turn,  
Demand alliance, and in friendship burn.

By instinct the Queen of Sheba was drawn to Israel’s wise king, and we can imagine how, after they had parted, any further questions the queen had received a ready answer from Solomon.

### *What She Saw and Said*

Not only did Solomon’s “wisdom excell the wisdom of the children of the east country.” God also added to his wisdom, countless precious possessions. Although accustomed to grandeur herself, the magnificence which the queen gazed upon in Jerusalem was beyond her conception. What she saw was almost as remarkable as what she had heard — Solomon’s gorgeous palace with its retinue of servants, ministers and cupbearers with their conspicuous apparel and also the most beautiful house of the Lord, in which gold was everywhere. Such external wealth and prosperity

overwhelmed her until “there was no more spirit in her,” implying an almost speechless condition because of all the wonders she had seen. Her highest expectation had been outstripped by the abundant rich stateliness she had witnessed. Seeing Solomon in all his glory enraptured the queen’s senses, and so overcome she confessed to the king —

Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it; and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.

Ellicott says of these sincere sentiments, “They breathe at once the spirit of Oriental compliment, and a certain seriousness of tone, as of a mind stirred by unusual wonder and admiration.”

### *What She Gave*

After expressing her heartfelt gratitude for all she had seen and heard, she bestowed upon Solomon rare and costly gifts. The queen was accompanied by “a very great train” or numerous attendants and servants to care for all the camels bearing her gifts to Solomon — not that he needed any of them. “She gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.” The price represented by spices and stones must have been fabulous. As for the 120 talents of gold, the same was equivalent to a gift of about \$3,500,000 from the opulent queen.

### *What She Received*

The queen’s gifts doubtless seemed lavish — and they were — yet they were in the nature of tribute for what her ears had heard, and her eyes seen. When Solomon loaded her with gifts he gave “of his royal bounty.” We read that he gave the queen “all her desire, whatsoever she asked.” Doubtless they were many wonderful creations of Solomon which she praised and coveted, and all she said she would like to have in her own royal court, the king gave her. In addition, what he willingly gave her out of his enormous bounty must have been fabulous. But the greatest treasure she took back

with her was the spiritual and moral wisdom God had put into the heart of Solomon.

### *What Christ Said of Her*

As the Queen of Sheba returns to her own country, the curtain falls, and we do not know how she acted upon the knowledge of God received from Solomon, or when she died. We hear no more of her until the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, and when, exercising His public ministry He said to a crowd gathered around Him —

The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

The Queen of Sheba was superior to the generation Jesus wrestled with in that she journeyed some 1,200 miles to hear and see Solomon, yet a greater than Solomon was in their midst and they would not listen to His God-given truths. They failed to appreciate Christ as Wisdom incarnate. “A greater than Solomon is *here*.” How blind were the religious enemies of Christ to the fact that the manifold wisdom of God, some of which Solomon had been made the recipient of, was before them personified in Him who was made unto us Wisdom! So, the illustrious Queen of Sheba “rises up in judgment,” and is poised in mid-air for all to see. She does not say a word, but Jesus voices her appreciation and appropriation of the divine wisdom to which Solomon gave utterance. The Queen of Sheba will not rise in judgment to condemn any of us, if only in our hearts there reigns the One who is, in every way, greater than Solomon. She sought the wisest and most wonderful teacher she knew of. Loving wealth and wonders, she loved wisdom more, and made the long and patient journey to the throne-city of the king. Is it not the height of folly to despise all which the King of kings, who is closer to us than breathing, so freely offers us out of His royal bounty?

### WIFE OF HADAD I Kings 11:19, 20

Hadad, a prince of the royal house of Edom, escaped from Joab’s massacre, and fled to Egypt where he was graciously treated by Pharaoh.

The female relative whom Pharaoh gave to Hadad to wife is unidentified. She was the sister of Queen Tahpenes, the wife of the Pharaoh who governed Egypt toward the end of David's reign, and bore Hadad a son named Genubath, which means "theft."

WIFE OF JEROBOAM  
I Kings 14:1-17

Because of the new idolatry Jeroboam I introduced at Bethel, it is always described as pre-eminently "the sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin." But away from God, the gross idolater seeks guidance from God through the medium of Ahijah the prophet. Abijah, Jeroboam's son, fell sick and he instructed his nameless wife to journey to the prophet, disguised as an ordinary woman. She feigned herself to be another woman, that is, different looking from the wife of a king. Ahijah may have been old and blind but his sixth sense told him that the sound of the feet he heard belonged to the distracted wife of Jeroboam. "Why feignest thyself to be another?" It is quite probable that God who gave Ahijah the heavy, or hard and tragic sayings to deliver to Jeroboam, also revealed to him the identity of the female visitor, who soon had her answer as to whether her sick son would live. The prophet not only told her that Abijah would die, but that the idolatrous house of Jeroboam I would be utterly destroyed, with the king himself having a contemptuous end. As soon as Jeroboam's wife returned, crossing the threshold of her home, the boy died according to the word of the prophet. It was a mercy that the child did die before being contaminated by his father's iniquitous ways, and caught up in his deserved destruction for casting God behind his back. We learn, do we not, from the tragic episode that God is never fooled by our disguises?

WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH  
THE WOMAN WHO SHARED HER LAST  
MORSEL  
I Kings 17:8-24; Luke 4:25, 26

What deeper interest we would have in some of the conspicuous characters of the Bible if only we knew their names and their significance! The renowned widow of Zarephath, or Sarepta, so

sympathetic, kind and self-sacrificial, must have had a lovely name. Yet both her own name and that of her boy are not given. The prophet Elijah who lived with them for so long must have come to know them well, but he has left us with no clue as to their identity. Even the Lord, who has our names engraven upon the palms of His hands, does not lift the curtain of anonymity, but simply refers to this commendable female, as “a woman that was a widow.” Evidently, attention is focused on what she did, rather than on who she was.

### *Her Position*

She lived in Sarepta which belonged to Zidon — a fact marking the striking providence of God. When the land of Israel was apostate and unsafe, Elijah found a welcome refuge in a heathen country, which was, moreover, the native place of his deadliest enemy, Jezebel, daughter of King Eth-Baal of the Zidonians. Although brought up among worshipers of strange gods, it would seem as if she had come to know about the faith of the Hebrews before Elijah the prophet came her way. She came to accept it more fully as the result of what she saw and heard due to Elijah’s sojourn in her poor home.

Of an alien race, she was likewise a widow with a child to keep. Half-way between Tyre and Sidon, she had the humble home her husband had left her, and from a few olive trees and a small barley field she was able to eke out a frugal living for herself and her growing boy. When seasons were favorable what she was able to gather sufficed for her modest needs, but when a terrible drought killed the growing harvest then her poverty was most acute. What struggles some women have after they become widows. Straitened circumstances and oppressive cares make life difficult. With the able breadwinner taken, widows frequently have more cares than they can cope with. Yet godly widows have the promise of divine provision and protection, as this widow of Sarepta came to experience. When famine struck she did not know where the next meal could come from to keep the two of them alive.

### *Her Provider*

Little did the distressed widow realize that deliverance was at hand — that never again would she and her son suffer the pangs of hunger — that the rough-looking stranger who appeared at her door one day was to be her provider for many a day. Elijah was a hunted man on the run, for the godless Queen Jezebel had set a price upon his head, and the sleuths of the wicked queen hunted in vain for the prophet who had pronounced the doom of Jezebel and her equally godless husband, Ahab. They never thought of looking for Elijah in the poor home of a starving widow. Yet she was the one whom God had singled out to shelter the prophet for some two years. She fed him, as a heaven-protected guest, with fearless faith. When Elijah met the widow she was gathering sticks to make a final scanty meal out of the last cakes and oil she had. What pathos was in the woman's reply to Elijah's request for a drink of water and a morsel of bread. She said —

As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, *and die.*

Famine in the land had emaciated the widow and her boy, now they have come to their last meal. Once this was eaten there would be nothing to do but throw their haggard, fleshless bodies on the bed and await their release from suffering — the terrible death of starvation. But she was to be the widow whom God would command to sustain Elijah. His commands were to be His enablings, as she was to daily prove. Hereafter she and her son were to live from hand to mouth, but it would be from God's ever open hand to their mouths — and the prophet's as well!

Although she came to speak of Elijah as the “man of God,” and saw in him the prophet as he performed the miracle of multiplication, there is no evidence that she recognized in him, as he came to her as a stranger in a crucial moment asking for water, that he was indeed God's honored servant. While God had marked her out as the widow to sustain Elijah, she had not received any advance word that the beggar coming to her would be the prophet. She did not know beforehand of God's purpose for she was preparing to die. Further, lacking any intuition that the one asking for water would miraculously preserve her and her son from death by starvation, as soon as Elijah told her to go on with the preparation of what the widow felt

would be her last meal, and share her penury with the prophet, she mechanically obeyed, believing what he had said about her meal never wasting and the cruse of oil not failing until the famine was past. “She went and did according to the saying of Elijah.”

This woman of true hospitality who, in her willingness to share her only mouthful of food with a stranger whose face indicated a weariness born of fatigue and thirst, and exhaustion due to long travel, knew not that she was to entertain an angel unawares. She yet took the stranger in, and proved herself to be a noble type of Christian hospitality in that it was exercised out of the depth of her poverty. She might have protested when the beggar asked for food by saying, “Have a heart, sir! Do not mock me, a destitute widow who, with a dying son, has only one scanty meal left.” Had this nameless woman met the request of Elijah with bitter scorn, asking him what he expected to find in a famine-stricken house, and also what kind of a man was he to take the last morsel of food out of her mouth, we would have understood her refusal. But no, she did none of these things. It may be that her kind heart said, “I’ll share these last cakes with him, for death will soon end our hunger.” Although she felt sharing the final meal would hurt both herself and her boy, she ventured out to give the hungry man who had come her way a portion of it, not realizing that her venture was to be one of faith, and would become the evidence of things not seen.

The widow of Sarepta, then, went ahead with her baking and used up her last handful of meal. She served the stranger *first* for this was what he had said, “Make me a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.” The astonished woman had little to say for the bold prediction and the manner of its announcement gave the man’s message a commanding solemnity and convinced her that this man was no ordinary beggar. Hastening to do what her innate love of hospitality prompted her to do, she came to prove that “little is much if God is in it.” Can you not imagine her after that first meal together—which she thought would be the last — was over, how anxiously she would steal away to the empty meal tub and examine her oil cruse to see if the prediction of the stranger had been fulfilled. How hope must have leaped in her heart as she fingered fresh meal and saw the empty cruse refilled. Truly the guest with whom she was willing to share, was a prophet! The widow was to



experience a continuing miracle for until the rains came and famine was past —

The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

Daily, the widow of Sarepta proved that sharing what she had with another needy one did not impoverish her life, but greatly enriched it, just as the heavenly Stranger does when we open the door for Him to come in and sup with us. Yes, God multiplied her handful of meal and cruse of oil as Jesus multiplied the five loaves and the two fishes to feed the hungry crowd following Him. How expressive are the stanzas an American poet has given us —

Is thy cruse of comfort failing?  
Rise and share it with another:  
And through all the years of famine  
It shall serve thee and thy brother.

Love divine will fill the storehouse,  
And thy handful still renew;  
Scanty fare for one will often  
Make a royal feast for two.

For the heart grows rich in giving;  
All its wealth is golden grain:  
Seeds, which mildew in the garner,  
Scattered, fill with gold the plain.

Is thy burden hard and heavy?  
Do thy steps drag wearily?  
Help to bear thy brother's burden —  
God will bear both it and thee.

### *Her Perplexity*

What a difference the God-sent prophet had made to the home of the widow! All trial was past and daily their need was met by Him who opens

His hand and supplies what His own require. Before this the widow had come to know that her guest was a prophet and what blessed truths she must have received from his lips. As the weeks and months rolled by Elijah became part of the home, and without exposing himself unnecessarily must have helped in gathering sticks and helping in other ways when manual labor was required. Then there was the widow's young son, who, like the rest of his kind, must have been inquisitive and full of questions as to the lodger's name and experiences. The rugged personality of Elijah must have had an impact on the mind of that boy, whose coming had saved him from death by starvation.

As time rolled by the widow must have grown to feel as calmly secure as Elijah himself who knew that whomever the Lord hides is safe. But one day the peace and contentment of the home miraculously sustained were disturbed for the widow's son was suddenly seized with illness and finally died. Once again the widow knew despair. Before Elijah came to the home, she feared the death of her boy because of the famine. Now he is actually dead and her mother-heart is perplexed and torn with unspeakable anguish. Why was her child rescued from death the first time, if only to die now? In her grief her conscience seems to trouble her. She feels that the boy's death was a form of divine judgment because of sin and she said to Elijah —

What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

The presence of the prophet in her home must have impressed her with the reality of God, resulting in a deeper sense of sin within herself, and thus she connected Elijah, whom she had come to regard, with this terrible calamity. She felt that this man of God had looked into her heart and had detected that it was sinful, and that divine vengeance had fallen upon her. But Elijah knew the bereaved mother was beside herself, and had committed no evil meriting the death of her son. This anguish was to be another trial of her faith.

### *Her Praise*

Somewhat bitter, the Sarepta widow was not permitted to reproach Elijah who did not rebuke her nor answer her question, but simply said, "Give me thy son." The dead form she was clasping was placed in the

prophet's arms, who took the lifeless body up to his chamber and asked God why He had allowed such a grief to overtake the widow who had been so kind to him. Three times he stretched himself upon the child and prayed most earnestly that the child might live again. For the mother downstairs it must have been an agonizing wait, but she was to be the witness to another miracle. The Lord heard Elijah's prayer, the child's soul came into him again, and, hastening down the stairs, the prophet handed over the precious burden saying, "See, thy son liveth." The faith of the mother returned with a fervent vigor, and her sorrow turned to song as she praised God and exclaimed —

Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

In such a declaration we have the final victory of faith brought out by the crowning mercy of her child's resurrection. The widow's growing apprehension of God is seen in her concept of Him. As a heathen woman speaking of Jehovah from without, she said, "The LORD thy God" (I Kings 17:12). Not *her* God but Elijah's — *thy* God, and as "the LORD God of Israel." Now she believes as never before that Elijah, God's servant, is indeed "a man of God" and in accepting "the word of the Lord" from his lips as "the truth" seems undoubtedly to express the widow's full surrender to Him whose miraculous power on her behalf had been manifested through His servant whom she had befriended.

### *Her Prominence*

It must have been a sad day when God called Elijah to leave the shelter and love of the widow's home and go to show himself to Ahab and pronounce the end of the three and a half years drought. While, possibly, Elijah never lost contact with the Sarepta widow who had become such a part of his life, the Bible does not tell us anything further about her and her son whom God raised from the dead. Yet because of our Lord's reference to her, she is held in everlasting remembrance. While in the synagogue at Nazareth He selected this incident from the Old Testament and said that although there were "many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah," unto none of them was the prophet sent save unto the widow of Sarepta (Luke 4:26). As the heathen woman was visited of God, so Christ had come to

gather Gentiles, as well as Jews, unto Himself. Jesus immortalized that lowly woman who was so hospitable, to emphasize the immortal truth that in this dispensation of divine grace God is no respecter of persons. No favored nation, nor exclusive privilege enters into His scheme of salvation. God's favor becomes the portion of those who repent of their sin and accept His Son as their Saviour and Lord.

### MOTHER OF ELISHA

I Kings 19:20

Whoever this nameless mother was she must have been a holy woman to have had such a godly son who came to perform twice as many miracles as Elijah. Evidently it was a home where there was deep affection between its members for when the call came to follow Elijah, Elisha said, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." In Elijah's reply, "Go back again: for what have I done to thee," we have a reminder of a similar request made to our Lord by the young man who had declared his willingness to follow Him but wanted time to bid farewell to those at home (Luke 9:61, 62). Says Ellicott in his comment on Elijah's words —

The comparison suggests that the answer of Elijah is one of half-ironical rebuke of what seemed hesitation — "Go back, if thou wilt; what have I done to restrain thee?" In both cases we have the stern but necessary rejection of half-hearted service, even if the heart be distracted by the most natural and sacred love. But Elijah sees that Elisha means simply farewell, and he apparently waits till it is over.

### WIDOW AND HER POT OF OIL

THE WOMAN WHO WAS DEEP IN DEBT

II Kings 4:1-7

Evidently this bereaved woman was the widow of one of Elisha's pupils who, left with two sons, faced the anguish of seeing her sons taken as slaves in payment of the debts facing her. She confessed to Elisha that her dead husband was a man who "feared the Lord," even though he was not able to make adequate provision for her and their children. As a prophet, his calling prevented him from making money. Here was another widow who was to

prove what God was able to accomplish. Because of the interest Elisha had in all of his students, the penniless widow of one of them approached the prophet for advice and help in her predicament. Those “sons of the prophets” were not young unmarried men living in a monastic life under the supervision of their chief, but were heads of families having their own separate houses, with Elisha taking a deep interest in their welfare.

“Heaven helps those who help themselves,” the axiom has it, but how could this debt-ridden woman help herself? Elijah said to her, “What hast thou in the house?” She replied, “Not anything, save a pot of oil,” and like the Sarepta widow, and the lad with his loaves and fishes, the young student-prophet’s widow was to prove how God is able to multiply what we surrender.

Elisha is conspicuous in Bible history as a miracle worker. For a full coverage of all the miracles he performed the reader is referred to the author’s volume on *All the Miracles of the Bible*. The miracle of the pot of oil is most instructive. First of all, it reminds us of the Levitical law concerning children exchanged for debt (Leviticus 25:39), who continued in servitude until the year of Jubilee. Under the ancient and more severe Roman law, no provision was made for the future release of an unhappy debtor (see Matthew 18:26). Then, as to the miracle itself, we note the combination of faith and action for the young widow, believing that the prophet would find a way out of her problem, obeyed his command to borrow all possible vessels from her neighbors. The one small pot the widow possessed did not hold sufficient oil to sell and pay off her husband’s debts which were not due to any profligate living on his part. The vessels borrowed had to be empty ones. Often we pray for the infilling of the Divine Oil, but we are not empty enough for Him to fill. “Emptied! that Thou mayest fill me.”

A further feature of the miracle is that when all the vessels had been gathered, the widow and her sons had to shut the door and follow the instructions of Elisha in private. Curiosity and disturbance from without had to be avoided because widespread publicity would be undesirable in such a miracle. Jesus imposed a similar injunction of secrecy on those whom He healed (Luke 8:51, 54). Spiritual miracles are entirely contingent upon the closed door.

Pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Empty vessels are of little use if there is no closed door. With the door shut the widow took her own pot of oil and started to fill the empty pots, and as she measured out the oil it miraculously multiplied, as did the water turned to wine (John 2:1-12). When all the borrowed vessels were filled, the excited yet grateful widow said to her eldest son, “Bring me yet a vessel,” but sorrowfully he replied, “There is not a vessel more.” Then comes the suggestive phrase, *And the oil stayed*. God never allows His provision to run to waste.

The conclusion of the miracle is likewise suggestive. The delighted widow went and told Elisha of the wonderful amount of oil which her own meager supply had produced, and he told her to sell the abundance of oil she had and pay her creditor, and with her children *live on the rest* of the money secured for the oil. Over and above what was necessary for the debts the widow inherited, there was sufficient for the family to live on without any further shadow of debt. How like God it is to give us more than we could possibly ask or think! What a prodigality characterizes His giving! With divine benevolence there is never any niggardliness. After the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the disciples gathered up twelve full baskets of fragments. The pattern of divine bounty was set forth by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount, “Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over” (Luke 6:28-46).

GREAT WOMAN OF SHUNEM  
THE WOMAN WHO WAS BOTH GREAT AND GRACIOUS  
II Kings 4:8-37; 8:1-6

Although Rabbinic tradition identifies this woman with Abishag the Shunammite (I Kings 1:3), the Bible clothes her with anonymity. Great though she was in her own city, that is, a female of high rank and riches (see I Samuel 25:2; II Samuel 19:33), conspicuous and well-known as she was, she is yet nameless in Scripture. It would have added greater interest to her record of hospitality and benevolence if Elisha had given us the name of this noble woman who had been so kind to him, and for whom he had done

so much. All that we know of this lady of social distinction is narrated in the chapter before us.

### *Her Persuasion*

It is evident that she and her husband were of the Jewish persuasion and that although theirs was a social distinction they were yet humble and devout worshippers of Jehovah. As a true daughter of Issachar, she was faithful to the motto of her tribe, "Ready for the Burden." Doubtless this childless pair who did not permit their domestic disappointment to embitter them, determined to use their lovely home in the beautiful city of Shunem on the Jezreel plain for the entertainment of God's people who passed that way. Before any traveler was invited as a guest the wife consulted with her husband as to the invitation. Dutiful, she never acted on her own initiative. Her husband and she were one, thus with her it was always, "Let us" (II Kings 4:10). Elisha came to experience the delightful harmony that prevailed in their home, and how husband and wife never faltered in their task of happiness which was their way of serving the Lord. It would seem as if the "great woman" was much younger than her God-fearing husband. "She hath no child and her husband is *old*," The Shunammite could have made her own way in the world, but as a worshiper of Jehovah she took a partner older in years and experience than herself, and thus prepared to care for the aged Elisha when he came her way.

### *Her Perception*

From the window of their large house the Shunammite and her husband had a commanding view of the well-traveled road from Samaria or Carmel to Shunem and watched the travelers, remarking on those who appeared to be different from others. Such a passer-by was a man of grave and masterful countenance, wearing a pastoral mantle and having a long staff in his hand. Although they may not have known who he was, his whole demeanor attracted attention, and marked him out as "an holy man of God." Her perceptive ability told her that this man who often passed their way was no ordinary man, and she decided to invite him into the house to rest whenever his mission brought him her way. Perceptiveness is indeed a useful gift and in this case resulted in true considerateness for a weary prophet in need of

gracious hospitality. More of us ought to try and cultivate this spirit of perceptive helpfulness so that as tired and needy people pass our windows, we may have the joy of building for them a little chamber on the wall.

When Elisha was a younger man he could make the journey from his home in Carmel to Jezreel in a single day and not feel at all fatigued, but as he grew older his pace slackened and his periodic visits became more tiring and wearisome. As he passed the house of Shunem's most prominent woman, she noticed how the step of this frequent passer-by lagged, and with her husband she decided to have this man of God, whose fame was in all Israel, to share the rest and refreshment of their spacious home. They felt that this man, looking like a prophet, must be a holy man going about doing good continually. So one day she went out and met Elisha as they noticed his approach and extended to him the generous hospitality of their home.

### *Her Provision*

The decision to invite the prophet in and to make full provision of a guest room for him was taken before they accosted Elisha. On the roof of their house was a small chamber walled on each side against the weather which the Shunammite and her husband felt would secure the prophet from interruption or intrusion on his journey, and they fitted it out with the essentials in oriental furnishing — a bed, a table, a stool and a candlestick or lampstand. We can imagine what pleasure the wealthy woman had in preparing a chamber for a poor prophet. When it was all ready she likely said to her husband, "There, now, when that weary traveler passes this way again, we will ask him to turn in hither, and tell him it is for his use as often and as long as he needs it." What a sanctum of health and peace to the weary man of God that prophet's chamber proved to be!

One day as Elisha journeyed along that highway he knew so well, he received the invitation to pause and rest himself. Readily he responded to the kindness extended, and must have been grateful for the provision made for his comfort and needs. Doubtless he spent many happy hours with that godly pair. "Many a night, if not many a day," says Theron Brown, "Elisha enjoyed that pleasant chamber as his regular way-station, going and coming probably no less than four years. Did he ever look through his windows down the next twenty-eight centuries, and contemplate what multiplicities



of comfort to ‘prophets’ yet unborn would during that time develop from his aboriginal bed, table, stool and candlestick?” Throughout the Bible there are many accounts of women in all the circumstances of domestic or public life — wives, mothers, queens, prophetesses—brought into contact with prophets and apostles, even with Jesus Himself and greatly helped them by ministering unto God’s servants of their substance. Prominent among these female benefactresses is the great and good woman of Shunem.

### *Her Perquisite*

Because of her affluent position the Shunammite needed no remuneration for the food and shelter she afforded Elisha. Noble-hearted as she was, as one of God’s own had she been as poor as the woman with her pot of oil, she would have still given of her best for the relief of the prophet. Deeply appreciating all she had done for him, Elisha felt that the Shunammite should have some return for her kindness. Thus one day he sent his servant, Gehazi, with a message that he wanted to reward her for her most gracious and frequent hospitality. Would she like the prophet to further her interests by securing a position for her husband at the court, or in the army, seeing he had influence both with the king and the captain of the host? Her reply was characteristic of the humility of her nobility. “I dwell among mine own people,” or “in the midst of my people I am dwelling far from the court and courtly interests. My husband and I are humble commoners, quietly living in the country, and do not seek the company of exalted personages.”

When Gehazi reported the refusal of the woman to accept any perquisite for service rendered, Elisha said, “What then is to be done for her?” He felt that he was deeply in her debt and must somehow repay her. Gehazi said to the prophet, “Verily, she hath no child and her husband is old.” Immediately Elisha said to his servant, “Call her.” We must pause here and draw attention to Elisha’s manner in dealing with the Shunammite. As a servant of the Most High there was no undue familiarity or worldly courtesy. Elisha approached her through his servant Gehazi. When she did come before the prophet “she stood at the door,” and heard him pronounce the end of her misfortune and reproach. Her barrenness was to end. “Thou shalt embrace a son.” Overcome with emotion she said, “Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do

not lie unto thine handmaid,” meaning that she did not want the prophet to raise any delusive hopes (see Isaiah 58:11). Perhaps she remembered the credulity of Sarah when she received the promise of motherhood (Genesis 18:12, 13). The miracle happened, and the glad day the woman of Shunem thought could or would not come dawned, and she nestled her promised baby to her breast. What greater reward could God have given her and her husband for their kind treatment of His servant!

### *Her Pang*

The grateful Shunammite had three or four years of happy motherhood. What a difference her son made in the home! Would you not like to know what she and her husband named him? How eagerly they watched the boy grow up and trot with his daddy to the fields. Alas, however, human hopes are often uncertain, and are sometimes crushed! One day the little boy, with uncovered head, went out by himself to the fields and stayed too long, and under the blazing sun of the hot climate was stricken with sunstroke and could only cry as he held his burning brow, “My head, my head.” The father carried him back to his pang-stricken mother who had bestowed so much care upon the boy, and she nursed him until he died. Up the stairs she went carrying the little corpse. She placed it tenderly on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door. Ellicott comments —

She wished to keep the death secret, and the corpse inviolate, during her intended absence.

As experiences often sanctify places, that precious prophet’s chamber in which Elisha had spent so many hours in prayer and meditation was held in reverence. What better place, therefore, was there in the home for the lifeless form of the child with whom the prophet was the means of delighting the home. As a godly woman, the brokenhearted mother knew that her child was safe in the arms of the Lord, and doubtless felt —

I thought him lovely when he came,  
But he is saintly now;  
Around his pure angelic brow  
I see a slender ring of flame.

## *Her Pilgrimage*

In her great grief the Shunammite thinks only of God and of the man of God through whose instrumentality the blessing of motherhood came to her. So she determined to journey to Elisha with the hope in her heart that he might be able to restore her treasure. Seeking the co-operation of her likewise distressed husband, she set out on an ass, accompanied by one of the male servants, and promised to return as soon as possible. The servant was urged to ride without restraint for such was the bereaved mother's eagerness to tell Elisha what had happened. As she sped along her heart nursed the hope that the wonder-working power of the prophet would reverse the terrible blow that had made her childless. Ultimately Carmel was reached and never had a burdened beast traveled those thirty miles from Shunem so quickly before.

Recognizing the woman in the distance and sensing some calamity had overtaken her, and seeing her visit was unusual, Elisha sent his servant, Gehazi, to inquire if all was well with her and her husband and child. To Gehazi she replied: "It is well." Then, because she had come to see Elisha and not his servant, the desperate woman fell as a humble and urgent suppliant before the feet of Elisha. Gehazi, thinking her passionate outburst was a trespass upon his master's dignity, made to thrust her aside (see Matthew 19:13; John 4:27). Elisha intervened and said, "Let her alone; for her soul is vexed [bitter] within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." The latter part of the prophet's reply reveals that supernatural knowledge of *every* event was not a characteristic of the gift of prophecy (see II Samuel 7:3). The Shunammite's question to Elisha was the spontaneous outflow of a mother's poignant sorrow: "Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?" In effect she meant, It would have been better to have had no son, than to have one and then lose him. From the few words she uttered Elisha discerned that something was wrong with the boy, and surmising that he had fallen into a death-like lethargy, or swoon, sent Gehazi to the home and bade him lay the prophet's staff across the child's face.

But a dead stick was of little use in the raising of a dead child, and the grief-stricken mother herself felt that what Elisha had arranged was a cheap substitute, and vowed she would not leave Carmel until the prophet

accompanied her. Convinced of the fearful need that compelled the Shunammite not to return to the shadowed home without the prophet, he set out with her, and outside the gate of Shunem, Elisha met the returning Gehazi who confessed that the child was dead and that the prophet's staff was of no avail to revive him. "The reaper whose name is *death*," had visited the hospitable house of the godly parents. Hurriedly, Elisha went up to the room preserved as his chamber, and there on the bed where he had often refreshed his weary frame, was laid out the corpse of the child. Closing the door, and left alone with the dead, Elisha prayed unto the Lord beseeching Him to bring back the departed spirit of the lad.

Earnest intercession was accompanied by vigorous action for Elisha gathered the lifeless form to his bosom and pressed its face to his, as if to impart the magnetism of his own strong vitality, and warm the still, little heart into motion again. In that caress and kiss of life, all the energy of the prophet's love and faith were focused, and so "the flesh of the child waxed warm" — the life of the divine Spirit, the Giver of life, was miraculously imparted by contact with that still, cold form. "All the force and virtue of Elisha's inspired will pleaded in that contact with the tender clay for the return of its absent soul." Exhausted, the prophet left the bed and paced the floor, then returned to the child, picked him up and repeated the same embrace, still praying for another's life as he would never have prayed for his own. Then, what relief, a feeble gasp shook the child's frame, and he sneezed seven times, the repeated sneezing being a sign of restored respiration, and the boy opened his eyes and with delight saw the saintly face of the prophet.

Exhausted with the stress of trial, Elisha called his servant and told him to bring up the Shunammite who, weak from hours of sleepless exertion and solitude, dragged herself up the stairs. But all pain, strain and despair quickly vanished as she came into "the little chamber" and saw her boy alive, and heard Elisha say, "Take up thy son." Agony gave way to joy, for the funeral had been turned into a feast. With her mother's heart overflowing with worshiping gratitude she sank at her benefactor's feet in deep veneration for his miraculous ministry as a servant of Jehovah.

The man of God came forth and led the child  
Unto his mother, and went on his way

And he was there — her beautiful — her own —  
Living and smiling on her — with his arms  
Folded about her neck, and his warm breath  
Breathing upon her lips, and in her ear  
The music of his gentle voice once more.

The dark shadow had lifted from that loving home, and once again the laughter of the lad brought joy to his loving parents. Doubtless Elisha continued to visit the home, and enjoyed its ungrudging hospitality. He praised God for His life-giving power as the happy boy “climbed the prophet’s knee the envied kiss to share.”

### *Her Penury*

Alas, our last glimpse of the Shunammite is not a pleasant one! It had been revealed to Elisha that a seven year’s famine would overtake the land as divine judgment upon its idolatry. Because of his long association with the pious Shunammite, Elisha advised her to leave her cherished home and inheritance in Shunem and with her son escape the horrors of the famine by seeking exile on the south seaboard. Because of her faith in and reverence for the prophet she left home and “sojourned in the land of the Philistines.” As her husband is not mentioned again he probably died just before or during the famine. Through all those years of the long and terrible drought the woman must have often thought of her old home and the desolated fields.

Her son, now a strong, fine youth must have been a consolation to her during that trying period: and when, at the end of the famine, she entered her appeal for the restoration of her abandoned possessions, the thought of what her grown son would be able to do, filled her with hope. King Joram asked Gehazi for a recital of the miracles Elisha had performed, and came to the raising of the Shunammite’s son from the dead. The woman herself with her son appeared, and the king asked the woman to verify the story, which she did with a conviction that must have impressed the king for he commanded that all that was hers should be restored unto her. Although she returned to the old home husbandless, she had her son, the image of his father, to comfort and care for her in her old age. Thus her story has a happy ending and with Theron Brown we agree that —

None of all the more glorious females on the roll of ancient Hebrew wifehood, motherhood and queenhood ever more justly earned a place for her picture in the sacred cabinet of nobility and virtue than this highminded daughter of Issachar; and none of all the nameless more richly deserve a name. Were we to invent one for her it would be *Ashere!* —“Blessed of God.”

Among the lessons to be gleaned from the story of the Shunammite there are two we can single out and emphasize. First of all, we have in her the personification of the hospitality the New Testament exhorts us to manifest. Spoken of as a “great woman,” one phase of her greatness came out in her kindness toward God’s servant, Elisha, for whom she provided the best. How lovingly hospitable she was! Hospitality is defined as “the practice of entertaining strangers gratuitously — kindness to strangers,” and the woman of Shunem excelled in such an art. The original word from which hospitality is derived — *hospes* — means a guest, and also a host, one who entertains a guest. From this word names have come describing institutions, like hospital, for the sick, and hospice, an inn for the benefit of travelers. Hotel is likewise related to *hospes*. “Use hospitality one to another without grudging,” was a guiding principle of the Early Church (I Peter 4:9).

The other precious lesson is to be found in the Shunammite’s reply to Gehazi’s question, “Is it well with the child?” Although he had just died, she said, “It is well.” While she may have spoken thus to avoid any further answers, being desirous to tell her grief in Elisha’s ear, and to no other, yet her answer expressed an unfaltering faith in God’s overruling providence and in immortality. With her darling child dead, she was able to say, “It is well.” When death robs our home of a treasure do we share the Shunammite’s secret and confess, “All, all is well”?

#### WIFE OF NAAMAN

II Kings 5:2-4

While the captain of the host of the king of Syria who was honorable, had great influence with the king, and was a mighty man of valor is named — Naaman — his wife is unidentified. Naaman had been stricken with leprosy although the case was not so severe as to incapacitate him for his

conspicuous military service. Such a condition must have caused his nameless wife much concern, and when her maid told her of the wonder-working prophet in Samaria who could cure her husband of his loathsome malady, eager to try anything that would relieve him she told him of what her maid had said. Evidently the testimony of the little Jewess sounded convincing, for when Naaman's wife repeated it, and the king of Syria came to know of it, action was taken to contact Elisha. How fortunate a wife is when she has a faithful maid as Naaman's wife had!

MAID OF NAAMAN'S WIFE  
THE WOMAN WHO SHARED HER FAITH  
II Kings 5:1-19

The whole of Naaman's fascinating story revolves around the nameless, captive little maid who belonged to Israel. Do you never wonder why this maid's name is not given, while another maid's is — Rhoda? Some twenty words cover all we know of this Jewish female slave whose record consists of only one remark, which is often sufficient to describe a character as it does in the story of this nameless heroine. Mary Hallet reminds us that "one of the most amazing things about Bible stories is their sheer restraint. With one or two deft strokes a scene is painted, a character is sketched, or an incident described. . . . There is, I say, something astonishing in the terse poetry of the Bible." How true this observation is in the three brief paragraphs in which principal characters are portrayed, the scene laid, and the play presented. From what is recorded of the captive maid we gather that —

*She Was a Believer*

The home from which she was forcibly taken was a godly Hebrew one in which God was honored, and His servant, Elisha, was revered. Young though the maid was, she feared the Lord and her incorrigible faith was a flame lighting the spirit of every other person in the drama. Naaman and his wife, the Syrian king, the servants who quickened Naaman's spirit, and the prophet Elisha himself, all felt the impact of a little maid who was wholly the Lord's and believed implicitly in His power. Brought to live among idolaters, she clung to her own faith in the living God and sought to share

her knowledge of Him with others. Hers was a strong, contagious faith, enabling her to live without any feeling of homesickness in an alien land, and any resentment against her captors. Her love for God inspired her to love her masters and to win her way into their affection and confidence. She never hid her light under a bushel. Although only a maid, this godly girl did not feel she was too unimportant to influence others.

### *She Was a Slave*

Think of the tears and tragedy wrapped up in the phrase, “Brought away captive out of the land of Israel.” Nothing but a slave, the Hebrew girl was counted among “the spoils of war.” During one of the Syrian incursions or flying raids, she was stolen and taken across the border. Perhaps the raid occurred at night and she was aroused by the groans of those who were being slaughtered, among them those of her own father. All at once she felt the grasp of a cruel raider, and was wrenched from all that was dear to her heart. That tragic night she lost all that made life precious — all her dear ones, and even liberty itself—and was taken to the slave market of Damascus where Naaman secured her as a servant for his wife. Can you not imagine how bewildered, frightened and tearful this lone and sorrowful figure must have been when Naaman secured her? Heaven has seen oceans of tears shed by slaves, and heard their groans of anguish, and God-fearing men like Shaftesbury and Lincoln have arisen to loose the captive’s chains. How the dear girl dragged away by the Syrians must have turned her heart heavenward for the protecting care of the Jehovah who had promised to be as a covert from the tempest!

### *She Was a Maid*

Among the girls taken as slaves, some were used to labor in the fields and stables of their captors, others had a higher rank in the social life of Naaman’s day and became house servants and were given as maids-in-waiting to the mistress of a home. It was in this capacity that the Jewish girl whom Naaman had appropriated, served his wife. While such a lowly station was inferior to the position she occupied at home before it was plundered by the Syrians, she yet became attached to her master whom she admired as a “mighty man of valour,” and to her mistress to whom she was



most loyal and whose confidence she held. While Naaman's wife was not a follower of Jehovah, she must have respected the religious faith of her maid who doubtless expressed it on more than one occasion, and who certainly lived it in her captured home. Reading between the lines we somehow feel that the Syrian lady was kind to the lonely slave, and treated her more as a confidant. The possibilities and environment of the maid were limited but she had a strong faith and a loving heart, and although humble, was true to her God in a moment of need. Thus she is remembered throughout succeeding generations. Does not her fascinating story, brief though it is, teach us the far-reaching influence of the humblest and most insignificant in God's service? Godly maids and nurses, with an appropriate sense of their responsibility, wield a tremendous influence over their fellow-servants, and also over children and parents in a home. It was thus with the nursemaid in the home of the Earl of Shaftesbury to whom that great reformer said he owed his soul. His parents had little interest in his well-being but his pious nurse loved him, filled his young days with joy, and led him to the Saviour. Shaftesbury owed much to that nursemaid, and he never forgot her. Those in lowly spheres of labor should ever remember that their opportunities of service for the Lord are not as restricted as they think.

### *She Was a Herald*

As she dutifully waited upon Naaman's wife, the captive maid came to know about the great soldier's disease, and how concerned her mistress was over his condition. Perhaps one day while the maid was waiting upon her she expressed the feeling, "If only something could be done for my husband's leprosy, how relieved I would be. While it is not a severe type of the disease, I wish some means of curing him could be found." The maid might have noticed how the incurable disease was preying upon the mind and body of her kind master. This shadow over the household gave the maid her opportunity, and having learned to sing the song of the Lord in a strange land, she was ready to tell her distressed mistress that her husband could be cured. Listen to the cry that forced itself from the heart of this young Hebrew herald! —

Would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

Because of her concern, Naaman's wife was willing to welcome any sympathy and snatch at any hint of relief for her husband. The pity and yet faith in the face of her maid did not escape her, and she immediately told the leprous man of the good news her maid had so positively declared.

Naaman believed what the captive maid had said, took her word to his ruler who, impressed with the testimony of the girl, sent an embassy to the king of Israel asking that Elisha might be allowed to cure his brilliant but diseased commander. While it might have been the diplomatic thing to do on the part of King Benhadad in his letter to King Joram, and Naaman arrived in great pomp at the house of the prophet Elisha, his pride received a blow when he was met by Gehazi, Elisha's servant who conveyed to Naaman the message that if he desired to be cured of his leprosy he must bathe himself seven times in the muddy water of Jordan. At first, Naaman was enraged and humiliated, but with a temper somewhat cooled by his servants, and remembering the maid's convincing testimony as to Elisha's power as a miracle-worker, Naaman carried out the prophet's instructions and came out of the river after the seventh bathing completely healed of his leprosy. He went home to Syria not only with a body thoroughly healed but also with a cleansed soul. No longer a worshiper of idols, he became an avowed worshiper of Jehovah, and received Elisha's benediction on his confession of faith.

How the little maid must have felt rewarded for her loyalty to God for her part in the entire episode. Wordsworth wrote of her as "one in whom persuasion and belief had ripened into faith, and faith became a passionate intention." Had she not expressed her faith as her mistress expressed her anxiety over her husband's leprosy, the narrative before us would never have been written, and we should have "missed one of the finest bits of literary perfection and of religious inspiration in the Scriptures." Mackintosh Mackay wrote of the little captive maid as, "The First Girl Guide" because, "in the first place she was a guide to Naaman, a guide to him to those waters of blessing in which alone he could find healing. And in the second place, she evidently belonged in spirit to that sisterhood who believe in doing a kind action every day."

We have no doubt whatever that the maid's mistress came to share her husband's newly-found faith in God, and their home became thoroughly

transformed. A star can be placed upon the Jewish girl's head as the one who had brought such relief and blessing to it. Because of her acceptance of her lowly lot, and her simple faith and sweet intercession, that despised captive, too obscure to be called by any name, will be held in everlasting remembrance. As a true daughter of Abraham she was true to God in an idolatrous family. While we have no further word about the maid after her faithful testimony, we would believe that Naaman did not forget his young benefactress, as the chief butler forgot his friend, Joseph. The valiant soldier had a generous heart, and wanted to reward Elisha with a gift as a token of his gratitude for the gift of healing, but the prophet refused any gift. Gehazi had different thoughts, however, and the liberal way Naaman treated Gehazi revealed how generous he was. We wonder how the restored mighty man of valor treated the captive maid after his return. Did he reward her for all she had meant to him with her freedom, sending her home to surviving relatives with rich gifts to establish herself among her own? Whatever recompense Naaman gave his wife's wonderful maid we know that it was an expression of his grateful heart and noble character.

### MOTHERS WHO ATE THEIR SONS II Kings 6:26-30

When King Benhadad of Syria besieged Samaria severe famine overtook those within the city, and as Israel's king, Jehoram, went around the defenses encouraging his garrison, a woman seeing him appealed to him for justice against her neighbor. The two women, driven to despair by the terrible scarcity of food, entered into a pact to eat their sons. One day the two women ate one of the boys, but the next day the mother whose son was still alive hid him and refused to deliver him up for human consumption. When the king heard this appalling story from the woman whose son had been eaten, he dressed himself in sackcloth, a sign of his desire to appease the wrath of Jehovah who permitted the dire famine because of the nation's departure from Him. Jehoram, holding Elisha responsible for the famine, threatened to kill him, but heard from the prophet the prediction of the days of plenty. The hideous recourse of eating human flesh in time of siege is referred to elsewhere (Deuteronomy 28:55; Ezekiel 5:10).

## SHESHAN'S DAUGHTER

I Chronicles 2:34, 35

Listed in the posterity of Jerahmeel is Sheshan who had daughters but no sons; and to his Egyptian servant, Jarha, he gave one of his unnamed daughters to wife and she bore him Attai.

## JABEZ'S MOTHER

I Chronicles 4:9, 10

When this anonymous woman gave birth to her child she named him Jabez meaning "sorrowful," because as she said, she bore him with sorrow or with much pain. In his prayer Jabez prayed to be saved from sorrow or pain. Behind his faith in God and his desire to be blessed of Him, and also because he was more honorable than his brethren one can detect the influences of his nameless yet good mother.

## SHIMEI'S DAUGHTERS

I Chronicles 4:27

None of the sixteen sons or six daughters of Shimei are mentioned by name in the genealogy of the tribe of Simeon which tribe increased greatly, but not as much as the prolific tribe of Judah.

## MACHIR'S WIFE

I Chronicles 7:14, 15

It is not easy to explain the curious tribal record in parts of this chapter. The woman Machir took to wife was a sister of Maachah, but she herself is not identified. For mention of the daughters of Zelophehad in this portion see HOCLAH.

## HEMAN'S DAUGHTERS

I Chronicles 25:5, 6

To Heman, the celebrated musician, God gave fourteen sons and three daughters all of whom assisted their father in the sanctuary praises. None of the children are named, and the mention of "the three daughters" in connection with the service of song bears out David's description of the

worship of God in His sanctuary. Among the singers and players on instruments “were damsels playing with timbrels” (Psalm 68:25). In our day, women play a large part in leading church congregations in thanksgiving and praise (see Nehemiah 7:67).

### ARTAXERXES’ QUEEN Nehemiah 2:6

It was not at a public feast that Nehemiah revealed his heart’s desire to the king. Usually a queen was not present at public feasts (Esther 1:9-12). Here, Artaxerxes and his nameless queen were wining and dining in private and Nehemiah as the cupbearer was serving them. The word for “queen” used here is *Shegal* found again in Psalm 45:9. “Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.” Who the legitimate queen — wife of Artaxerxes — was we are not told. Tradition identifies her as Damaspia.

### SHALLUM’S DAUGHTERS Nehemiah 3:12

Evidently Shallum, governor of the second half-district around Jerusalem, had no sons to assist him in the repair of the city’s walls. But he had daughters. How many, we are not informed, and these nameless females voluntarily helped in the work of restoration. They were thus the forerunners of those good women who labored with Paul in the Gospel (Philippians 4:3).

### BARZILLAI’S DAUGHTERS Nehemiah 7:63, 64

Barzillai was so named because he married one of the daughters of the noted Barzillai the Gileadite. The daughter’s name, like those of her sisters, is not given. Perhaps their names were among the registration of names that had been lost.

### WOMEN OF MIXED MARRIAGES Nehemiah 13:23-29

Jewish men in marrying women who were not of Israel sinned against the Covenant (Ezra 9:12, 14; Nehemiah 10:30). Ezra, who labored with Nehemiah in the restoration of Israel after the captivity, is most explicit regarding the unraveling of mixed marriages, or the affinity of Jewish males with women of nations apart from Israel. Because Israel was a “holy nation” — “peculiar people” — “holy seed,” affiliation with foreign female idolaters was a desecration (Exodus 19:6; Ezra 9:1, 2, 12-15; Deuteronomy 7:3; Isaiah 6:13). Nehemiah found that children born of the women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Joab, whom the Jews married had a kind of mongrel language. Brought up by their mothers, the speech of the children betrayed them. They found it difficult to pick up the Hebrew of their fathers. Therefore as Jews must speak the Jews’ language, Nehemiah set about correcting such a corruption of the national tongue.

### JOB’S WIFE

THE WOMAN WHO URGED HER HUSBAND TO COMMIT SUICIDE Job 2:9, 10;  
19:17; 31:10

Strange, is it not, that while we have the names of Job’s three daughters (42:14, 15), we do not have the name of his wife who remained at his side all through his trials and tribulations? She is identified by only ten words which she uttered to her husband as she saw him suffering from so much bodily pain and discomfort. “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die,” or “Curse God and die by your own hand. End your suffering by taking your own life.” She urged him to commit suicide and thus relieve himself of further anguish. There was also the diabolical suggestion that he should relinquish his faith in God, seeing He was permitting him to endure such terrible physical torment and material loss. It is because she allowed Satan to use her as an instrument to grieve rather than comfort her husband, that commentators have spoken ill of her character. Augustine referred to her as “The Devil’s Accomplice,” and Calvin wrote of her as “An Instrument of Satan” and as a “Diabolical Fury.” The little she said to her husband whose heart was at breaking point was enough to crush him altogether. The one closer to him than all others should have encouraged him and offered him human sympathy. Job’s wife, however, was the female foe in his household and reminds us that “the

worst trial of all is when those nearest us, instead of strengthening our hand in God and confirming our faith, conspire to destroy it” (Micah 7:6; Matthew 10:36).

Job’s triumphant faith is seen in his most appropriate answer to his wife: “What, emancipate myself from God, and take my own life?” Sitting on his ash-heap he replied: “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh.” He was not biting, bitter or condemnatory in his rebuke but gave vent to a question that multitudes of perplexed hearts, all down the ages, have found consolation in: “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”

Job was determined not to sin with his lips as his thoughtless wife had done. What a sublime contrast there is between the testing of Job and that of Jesus! (Matthew 26:39-42; Hebrews 5:8). Because God has given woman an affectionate heart, and a large capacity for sympathy and compassion, it is incumbent upon women who profess faith in Christ, to bind their husbands closer to Christ and persist in encouraging them in times of great trial and tragedy. It is only thus that a woman functions as God meant her to, as an “helpmeet.”

### LEMUEL’S MOTHER

Proverbs 31:1

Unsuccessful efforts have been made to make Lemuel another designation for Solomon, but who he actually was is not revealed. The opening statement reads, “The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.” As mothers, especially queen mothers, were looked upon with great veneration, and treated with marked respect in the East, this mother expected her royal son to give heed to what she said regarding the vices of women to shun, and also of female virtues to look for in one whom he would select as his partner in life (see IDEAL BIBLE WOMAN).

### ZION’S DAUGHTERS

Isaiah 3:16-26

In this sad chapter, Isaiah describes the desolation of Jerusalem, with its tyranny, anarchy, oppression of the poor, and luxurious living on the part of few. In this portion the prophet turns from the princes who had caused the

people to err, to their wives, sisters and concubines who had manifested themselves as degenerate daughters of godly Sarah and Rebekah (see also 32:9-12). It would be interesting to know how far Isaiah's godlike outlook influenced his denunciation of the gross extravagance of Zion's daughters. The minuteness of detail given of dress and ornaments would indicate that Isaiah's wife told him of all that could be found in the boudoir of one of the female leaders of fashion in Jerusalem. Altogether, 21 distinct articles, the majority of which had a foreign association, are mentioned. The downfall of Zion's daughters who put fashion before faith is predicted by the prophet. How Christian women delight in giving heed to what Peter has to say about outward adorning and inward adornment (I Peter 3:1-7). Males, as well as females, need to possess the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

### VIRGINS OF HONOR Isaiah 7:14-16

The somewhat mysterious prophecy which the Lord gave to Ahaz concerning the virgin and her conspicuous son has been interpreted in different ways. There are those writers who see in this portion a sign Isaiah gave the faithless king, of a young virgin or bride who would bear a son whose name would be a rebuke to the faithlessness of Ahaz. Immanuel, meaning, "God with us," would witness to God's living and abiding presence among His people. The land of Israel was peculiarly the land of Immanuel (Isaiah 8:8), and that in spite of the sin of its inhabitants. God was still in their midst to restore unto them the years the locusts had eaten.

The generally accepted view of the virgin and her child is that they are prophetic of the Messiah, the Son born of the virgin mother and his name was called Immanuel (Matthew 1:23). The prophet Isaiah, borne along by the Spirit, declared the truth of the coming Christ. In the virgin mother he spoke to Ahaz about, Isaiah had a vision of the far-off event of the Incarnation. The direct and present application of Isaiah's prophecy was the natural birth of a child whose mother would name him Immanuel. He would be a pledge and earnest of the abiding presence of God with His people during the prophet's generation, because prophecy has its "springing and germinant accomplishments." The prophecy of Isaiah also takes a forward leap to the appearing of Jesus, the ultimate and true Immanuel. What



comfort we can continually derive from the name the virgin gave her son—Immanuel, “God with us”! God’s beloved Son is very near, and has promised to be with us always even unto the end of the age.

### ISAIAH’S WIFE

Isaiah 8:1-4

Apart from the fact that Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, was the son of Amoz, we know almost nothing about his background. His name meaning, “Help of God” or “God helps” was doubtless given him by parents who had experienced divine assistance in their lives. Isaiah himself certainly knew God as his unfailing Helper. We know that his wife was a prophetess and that there were two sons who were given as signs (8:18). As a prophetess, the prophet’s wife, like Deborah, and Huldah (which see under respective names), possessed prophetic gifts to be used in the service of God. Isaiah and his nameless wife were one in the understanding of God’s thoughts and counsels. Their united life was so different from the celibate life of Jeremiah (16:2), the miseries of Hosea’s home life (1:2), and the tragic loss Ezekiel had (24:16-18). The first of their two sons was Shear-jashub, who was old enough to be taken to meet Ahaz (7:3), and whose name means, “The remnant return” and was prophetic of the literal and spiritual return of Israel. As Isaiah and his wife had the gift of prophecy they gave their son a name that was so hopefully significant.

The second son had an extended, mystic name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, meaning, “haste, spoil, speed, prey,” and implies “They—the Assyrians—hasten to the spoil—the taking of Syria and Samaria — they speed to the prey.” Such a name, prophetic of the desperate flight of Syrian and Samaritan armies before their conquerors, was thought of as an enigma in Jerusalem. The prophecy was fulfilled in 732 B.C. when Tiglath-pileser III captured Damascus. How grateful the godly prophet must have been for a wife who shared his prophetic insight!

### JEREMIAH’S MOTHER

Jeremiah 15:10

Jeremiah, the “prophet of tears,” gives us his father’s name, Hilkiyah, possibly the high priest of that name (1:1; II Kings 22:4; 23:4), but leaves

his mother unnamed. Anonymous, she was yet godly, for Jeremiah came out of her womb sanctified and destined to be a prophet to the nations (1:5). Called while quite a young man to the extraordinary office of a prophet, he exercised his great ministry for at least 40 years. His name, meaning, “elevated or exalted of the Lord,” given him by God-honoring parents, expressed their desire to have their son set apart for the Lord from his birth to magnify and extol Him as he did. But what intense grief was Jeremiah’s as he earnestly and constantly called the people of God to repentance. His reproofs and threatenings for their sins were saturated with his tears. Imprisoned because of his faithful ministry, he yet lived to see his people return from captivity.

In the remarkable mural to be seen in the Sistine Chapel, Rome, Michaelangelo depicted Jeremiah with brooding, downcast eyes, and in sorrowful meditation which fittingly describes the weeping prophet’s character and life. Of all the Old Testament prophets, Jeremiah seems to have had the hardest lot of suffering. Was there “sorrow like unto his sorrow” (Lamentations 1:12; 3:1)? He seemed to protest fruitlessly against the sins of his time. In the portion where he addresses his mother in tones of pathetic tenderness, it would seem as if she were still living and that the thought of her suffering because of her son’s grief only added to his burden. The sword of anguish of the nation’s sins pierced her soul also (Luke 2:35). What heartbreak is behind his cry, “Woe is me my mother, that thou hast borne a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth!” In previous verses Jeremiah speaks of widows being increased above the sand of the seas, and doubtless his dear mother was one of them. As he addresses her, he wants her to understand “the awfulness of his calling as a vessel of God’s truth,” and that he had found that he had been raised up “not to send peace on earth, but a sword,” like the Greater Prophet after him (Matthew 10:34). All the while Jeremiah’s mother was alive she must have consoled her son’s sorrowing heart, seeing he was divinely forbidden to take a wife to weep with him as he wept (16:2). For vividness of imagery, pathos and passionate intensity the Book of Jeremiah is unsurpassed.

## ZEDEKIAH’S DAUGHTERS

Jeremiah 41:10

What a terrible spoiler war is! How it breaks up and destroys the home life of many caught in the holocaust of plunder and slaughter! The sons of King Zedekiah were slain before his eyes, then his own eyes were put out. Bound with fetters he was taken to Babylon, and his royal house was consumed by fire. Now Zedekiah's daughters suffer the horrors of war. Fortunately their lives were spared, but they were consigned as captives to the protection of Gedaliah. Doubtless these princesses and survivors of Zedekiah's harem were among the women who were liberated after the death of Gedaliah (41:16).

### WICKED HEBREW WIVES Jeremiah 44:7-10, 15-30

The wickedness of these females, as well as the males, condemned by the prophet, consisted of participation in idolatrous practices which the Israelites as exiles in Egypt came to adopt. Women were responsible for introducing Solomon, as well as some of his successors, to gross idolatry (I Kings 11:4; 15:13; II Chronicles 22:2). The particular form of idolatry countenanced by the wives, and acquiesced in by their husbands was the burning of incense to an imaginary goddess, the queen of heaven, which consisted of offerings of crescent-shaped cakes, and the pouring out of drink offerings. While the husbands tried to excuse themselves as they came under the solemn warning of Jeremiah, the women were convicted by his exposure of their idolatrous practices, but sought to disclaim any sole responsibility for such forbidden worship. Had not their husbands turned a blind eye and likewise paid homage to the goddess? As Israelites they were doubly guilty for they had the Law: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

### WOMEN WHO WEPT FOR TAMMUZ Ezekiel 8:13-15

Tammuz, nowhere else mentioned in Scripture, is identified by ancient tradition with the Babylonian god recognized as the king of the underworld, and who gave his name to the fourth month of the Jews. This Adonis was supposed to have died and then returned to life, and at an annual feast accompanied by terrible abominations and licentiousness the women

engaged in the service of idolatry near the Temple, indulged in the wickedness Jeremiah exposed and condemned as being corrupt and debasing (II Kings 23:7; Jeremiah 7:18).

EZEKIEL'S WIFE  
Ezekiel 24:15-27

To our finite minds, many of God's actions are hard to understand. "Now we see through a glass darkly." Ezekiel's wife was deeply loved, "the desire of his eyes," yet with one fell stroke God removed her from the husband whom she had loved. To add to the poignancy of such a tragic separation, Ezekiel was not to weep for her, not engage in the accustomed period of mourning, but to work away as if nothing had happened. Did the wife deserve no tears? Was she a depraved, prodigal woman and worthy of departing without being desired? No, Ezekiel's wife was the best of women with a lovely face and a still lovelier soul, and a woman who was a true comforter of her prophet-husband in his hard and sorrowful task. Yet Ezekiel was forbidden a dying farewell of his beloved one.

The reason given for this terrible experience is that Ezekiel in his loss was to be a sign of what God would strip His people of because of their departure from Him. As the lines of an anonymous Scotch poetess expresses it —

He needed me,  
To be a sign for Him; my death to stand  
A figure to my people of the things  
Which He will do to them, except they turn  
And seek His face. I am so content  
To die for this. I could not speak for God  
As thou hast done so well; but I can be  
To God and for my people, and for thee  
To aid in thy great work — a sign.

Die as a sign she did, and the morning after her death the prophet with grief buried in his heart sternly fulfilled the divine command. When chided by those who knew how he and his wife loved each other, he told them that the sorrowful experience was but a sign of the greater grief they were to endure, and that when such overwhelmed them they must "bear themselves

bravely like men, not sink with despair, but by courage and repentance prepare the way for a national resurrection in the distant future.” The prominent truth for our hearts in the surrender Ezekiel was called to make is that “there are times in life when love and duty should always be paramount.” Our natural love and desires must be subject to a higher love.

I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honour more.

### BELSHAZZAR’S MOTHER

Daniel 5:10-12

None of the names of the king’s wives or concubines are mentioned (Daniel 5:2), neither is the name of his mother — the queen mother — given. Herodotus, known as “The Father of History,” would have us believe that this queen is not without a name. He recognizes her as Queen Nitocris who did so much to beautify fabulous Babylon. But in Daniel’s record of her “she appears and disappears, like a face at the window, with not even a pseudonym to tell us who she was. She rightly belongs, therefore, in our Bible cluster of un-indexed luminaries.” She is conspicuous in the narrative because of her short and single speech to her frightened son.

After Belshazzar succeeded his illustrious father, Nebuchadnezzar, he gave himself over to his vicious pleasures. During his periods of dissipation, it is more than likely that his strong and wise mother, practiced in administration, took over some of the affairs of State as Queen Regent. Thus, when during the extravagant feast when Belshazzar profaned the consecrated cups of God’s Temple by using them in their debauchery of what followed, the shape of a naked hand moved along the wall. Its fingers wrote three mysterious words, and a sobering fright gripped the drunken crowd. The terror-stricken king called for his wise men, the Babylon magicians who professed to have power to interpret signs. But they were all baffled by the mystic handwriting on the wall. It was then that the stately queen entered the banquet hall, and, as mistress of the situation, said to her son, “O King, live forever,” a formula to be quickly shattered.

Although an idolater, the queen had an intuition as to Daniel’s superiority to all the wise men of Babylon. She told how the divinely inspired prophet had interpreted the dreams of Belshazzar’s father, and

because the wisdom of the gods was in him would be able to read out the significance of the writing on the wall. The king following the command of his mother, “Let Daniel be called!” sent for him to interpret the words, which he did to the consternation of Belshazzar who heard Daniel pronounce his doom. One wonders what the thoughts of his mother were like as she heard the crushing sentence, which the great Hebrew prophet whom she had come to revere, pronounced. Theron Brown concedes her a place among the queens of the world. It was she who produced the prophet as the interpreter of the heavenly message, even though she had a fear of its tragic import. As Brown expresses it —

We picture her facing with heroic fortitude the decree of Heaven that made her city the stranger’s prey, and herself the consort of a crownless captive and mother of a crownless son. She stands the grandest figure, next to Daniel, in one of the most dramatic of the world’s events. The Hebrew interpreter and seer was there by her own instructions, and vouched for by her own testimony, and her noble candour would not gainsay his words. She knew at last that Divine vengeance must smite the throne of Babylon, and no descendant of hers would ever ascend it again. . . . Her plume of honour was her friendship for the great Hebrew Prophet who foretold the coming of Christ.

#### SOUTHERN KING’S DAUGHTER

Daniel 11:6-9, 17

Whatever futurist application there may be in Daniel’s prophecy of this southern princess, her historical reality must not be lost sight of. There are those expositors who affirm that the language used here is very general and that the “daughter” refers to the Southern Kingdom itself rather than to a princess out of it. The generally accepted historical interpretation is after this order. The king’s daughter from the South refers to Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt. In order to end his war with Antiochus Theus, “King of the North,” or Syria, Ptolemy gave Berenice to Antiochus, who thereupon divorced his former wife, Loadice, and disinherited her son, Seleneus Callinicus. But Berenice was not able to effect the purpose of the alliance, namely, that she should be the mainstay of peace. When Ptolemy died, Antiochus took back Laodice who poisoned him and caused Berenice and her son to be put to death, and raised her son, Seleneus Nicator, to the

throne. The intrigues following this abortive plan are related to the disasters overtaking Egypt.

As for the reference, “He shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him” (11:17), the same is the wily purpose of Antiochus who, instead of immediately invading Ptolemy’s country with his “whole strength,” devised the plan of giving to Ptolemy Epiphanes his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage promising Coelo-Syria and Judea as a dowry, thereby securing his neutrality in the war with Rome. He hoped through his daughter to obtain Syria, Cilicia and Lycia, and even Egypt itself at last. But the scheme failed because Cleopatra favored her husband rather than her father. For the prophetic significance of the rulers of the South the reader is referred to the same exposition to be found in *The Climax of the Ages*, by Dr. F. A. Tatford. Through history women have often been used as pawns in international and national politics, sometimes beneficially, but often with tragic results.

As we approach the nameless women of the New Testament, the majority of whom are mentioned in the four gospels, it is a most profitable avenue of study to find out what our Lord’s attitude was toward women. Luke, the beloved physician, whose gospel depicts Him as “the Man,” has a good deal to say about His treatment of the women who crossed His pathway. Condescending to be born of a woman, Christ exalted the female sex, and in all generations countless numbers have risen to call the mother of the Redeemer blessed (Luke 1:48). As we think of Jesus among women we note the following ways He dealt with them.

### *He Elevated Woman*

Jesus raised her social position, and wherever Christianity travels and is accepted woman is emancipated from inferiority, and gains equal respect with men. Think of the five widows Luke mentions, and see how Jesus gives them prominence—Hannah (2:36), Sarepta widow (4:25), Nain widow (7:11), distressed widow (18:3), widow in the treasury (21:1-4). Woman’s elevation is likewise seen in the place given her in the Christian Church. They were present in the upper chamber praying and awaiting Pentecost (Acts 1:14) “With the women.” “Both of men and women” (Acts 5:14). This fact is all the more impressive seeing that at that time

participation in the worship of and work for God was mainly for men. It was somewhat new for women to gather with men in a religious assembly. Women owe more than they realize to the example and teachings of Jesus who lived with His mother for thirty years.

### *He Knew and Fulfilled Woman's Longings*

When John said that Christ knew what was in man, the generic term for man includes woman. He knew all about the woman of Samaria, as we shall presently see, and met her instinct for worship which is more strongly marked in a woman than in a man (John 4). It was the instinct for deep meditation that Jesus responded to in Mary of Bethany (Luke 10:39). Martha, her sister, was more concerned about serving Jesus, and He appreciated such service. Then, mark how He dealt with Salome's ideal for her two sons.

### *He Ennobled the Marital Relationship*

Jesus set His seal upon monogamy, which means God's original purpose in the creation of the first pair, one man—one wife. Behind His teaching on marriage there is the thought that such a union means the devotion of a whole person to another whole person. That Christianity enhances the relationship of the woman to her husband is proven by its use as a symbol of the indissoluble union of Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:23-33). The home where He is the Head is protected against the disintegrating influences of the outer world. The observation of the sacred relationship of marriage in the humble Nazareth home in which He lived for so long, colored Christ's teaching on marital affairs, and fostered sympathy for motherly cares and griefs seen in His compassion for the widow of Nain burying her only son (Luke 7:13).

### *He Relieved the Bodily Sicknesses of Women*

Both named and unnamed women came under Christ's healing power as He responded to their faith and cry. Whatever the nature of their physical infirmity or disease He quickened their mortal body, and, as in the case of Jairus' daughter, raised the dead (Luke 8:43, 47, 49; 13:11). Many of the women He healed served Him with their treasures and time, and He



condescended to accept and honor what they gave. How He extolled the sacrificial mind of the poor widow who gave her all! (21:1-4).

### *He Accepted the Service of Women*

Luke begins his gospel with a number of songs of praise, in which women play a prominent role: Hannah, Elisabeth and Mary (1:42-55; 2:36-38). Christ sang the praises of Mary when she anointed His feet and earned the testimony, “She has done what she could.” He was grateful to the women who followed Him in His itinerant missions, and cared for His material needs, and whom He rewarded by making them the witnesses and heralds of His Resurrection. Then His apostles also recognized the part women can play in the tasks of His cause. Think of Dorcas, Phoebe, Euodias, Syntyche and Priscilla, and others who labored with Paul in the Gospel. (See under these named women.) All through the ages, the practical life of Christian women has been a living demonstration of their gratitude to Christ for all He has meant — and means — to the women of the world.

We now come to the unidentified women of the New Testament in which the writers, recording the unknown females, have obscured “their tent, their name, their shapely bloom.” While it may be true that “written lives that answer to no proper noun are unique in the interest that keep both the narrator and reading wishing for the missing name,” it would be more fascinating to have the names and background of many of the females more or less prominent in their chronological order in the gospels.

#### PETER’S WIFE

Matthew 8:14-18; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 4:38-41

In the references to Peter’s nameless wife attention is focused upon her equally nameless mother. Although the Roman Catholic Church, falsely claiming Peter as its first pope, would like to discredit the fact that the Apostle had a wife, the Scripture is emphatic in its assertion that he had both a wife and that his wife’s mother, living with them, was healed by Jesus. From Paul we learn that Peter’s wife accompanied her husband on some of his missionary journeys, caring for his many needs (I Corinthians 9:5). We do not know why the name of this noble woman who was a faithful partner of Peter during the days he fished for a living, and then

during the long years of his apostleship, is hidden from us. Peter's writings in the New Testament were written after his surrender to the claims of Christ, but behind him, as behind many men attaining eminence, is a sympathetic, discreet and understanding woman.

Naturally, Peter was an impulsive man, and had a tendency to quit when things went against him. Coming home in such a mood we can imagine how his wife would reason with him, caution him to go slowly, and encourage him to rise above trials and disappointments. In sickness she would be his comfort, as she was when her mother was stricken with fever. We are not told whether there were any children in their Capernaum home. If there were we are sure that Peter's wife was the best of mothers. When the Apostle came to write his two epistles, and described in them ideal womanhood and wifedom, did he have before him the example of his wife, as one who was equal to, subject to, her husband, and worthy of all honor as the weaker vessel (I Peter 3:1-12)? Did she inspire Peter's description of a modestly dressed woman who thought more of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit than gaudy apparel? We feel that she was a most worthy wife who was willing to be hidden in order that the cause of the Master to whom Peter and she were dedicated, might be advanced and adorned.

Tradition has it that Peter's wife was the daughter of Aristobulus, so that while Mark is described as "sister's son to Barnabas" he was also brother-in-law to Peter. There is also a touching legend concerning Christians in Rome who ceased not to urge Peter to escape when seized and cast into prison so that he might continue to be of service to the church at large. The Apostle yielded to their entreaties and somehow escaped, but when free on the open road he was arrested by a vision of Christ, and he asked Him, "Whither art Thou going?" The glorified One replied, "I am come to Rome to be crucified a second time." Peter, humiliated, turned back to prison. When death came, his wife was martyr first, and as she was led out to die, Peter comforted her with the words, "Remember the Lord." When Peter's turn came he begged his crucifiers to crucify him head downward, feeling he was unworthy to die in exactly the same way as his Lord. In heaven, Peter and his loyal wife shine together as stars for having turned many to righteousness.

## PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW (References above)

The gospels do not say whether Andrew, Peter's brother was married, but evidently the brothers had a house in Bethsaida or Capernaum, probably their father's legacy, and that this was the home the mother of Peter's wife shared after the death of her husband. Mothers-in-law have been made the objects of ridicule, but in that ancient home there was a happy domestic relationship in which Peter loved his mother-in-law as well as he did her daughter. It was because of this fervent filial love permeating the families of Israel that all the relatives were concerned when fever brought Peter's mother-in-law down to the door of death. Anxious about her, Peter told Jesus of her condition, and He went immediately to the house and, stretching out His hand, touched her and she was healed. The healing was by personal contact for Jesus took her by the hand — it was a rapid healing because she rose immediately — the reality of the healing was manifested in that she ministered unto all who were present as soon as she was healed. What she did as soon as she was cured suggests her love of hospitality and her habit of usefulness. Fully healed she went immediately to the kitchen and prepared a meal for her Healer and for all who had witnessed the miracle. Serving was such an essential part of her make-up that even in the thrilling, excited moment of her recovery she could not refrain from doing menial yet necessary tasks. This grateful mother-in-law loved and was loved, and found delight in caring for those who loved her — a fact the evangelists notice. "Anon they tell Him of her." How foolish we are not to seek Jesus in hours of need! All He has for sorrow and suffering that may arise is ours for the asking.

## WOMAN WITH ISSUE OF BLOOD THE WOMAN WHO WAS HEALED BY A TOUCH Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48

This sick, anonymous woman must have been emaciated after a hemorrhage lasting for twelve years, which rendered her legally unclean. She could not throw herself, therefore, at the feet of Christ and state her complaint. Her modesty, humility, uncleanness and pressure of the crowd made close contact well-nigh impossible, hence her eagerness to touch in

some unnoticed way the hem of His garment. Who was this woman of faith? The primitive church, feeling she was entitled to a name, called her Veronica, who lived in Caesarea Philippi, but in the gospels she is enrolled in the list of anonymous female divines. There are several aspects of her cure worthy of note —

### *She Was Cured After Many Failures*

What this poor woman really endured at the hands of the medical men of the time is left to the imagination. What a touch of reality is given to her story by the knowledge that she had suffered many things of many physicians and was no better but rather “grew worse.” Where men failed, Christ succeeded. Down the ages men and women which no agency could reclaim have been restored by Christ. What is not possible with men is blessedly possible with God. Her disease was of long standing yet she was swiftly healed, for as soon as she touched the hem of His garment, “straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up.” If a person suffers for a while from a complaint and seeks no medical advice, but in the end goes to the doctor, he invariably says, “You should have come to me sooner.” But it is the glory of Christ that He can heal those who come late to Him.

### *She Was Cured With the Utmost Rapidity*

Mark’s favorite word, “straightway,” which he uses 27 times in his gospel, is in most cases related to Christ’s rapid cures. How swift He was in His relief for the suffering! As at creation, so in His miracles of healing, “He spake and it was done.” Spiritual parallels of His instantaneous power can be seen in the conversions of Matthew, Paul and the dying thief. Many of us, too, can testify to the fact that He can transform character in a moment of time. The term Jesus used in addressing the nameless sufferer suggests that she was still young, though wasted and faded by her malady which made her look older than she was. But the nature of her disease and the age of the one afflicted made no difference to Him in healing the sick and saving the lost. As Jesus passed by the withered fingers of the woman brushed the border of Christ’s sacred dress, and all at once her thin body felt the painless health of her girlhood return. A strength she had not known for 12 years renewed her being, and she knew that Christ had made her whole.

### *She Acknowledged Receipt of the Benefit Bestowed*

As soon as the woman touched Christ's garment, He felt that "virtue had gone out of Him," and turned about and said, "Who touched me?" The disciples mildly rebuked Jesus by saying, "Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" Perhaps her touch had been unnoticed by the eyes of those around, and she must have been one of many who touched the Master that day as he proceeded on His errand of love, but a *touch of faith* could not be hidden from Him. Quickly the Physician saw the patient, and trembling with self-consciousness but too glad and grateful to falter, she confessed to her touch of His robe. "She told him all the truth." She experienced that open confession is good for the soul. What a glow of gratitude her countenance must have had, as she publicly stated that her burden for twelve years had rolled away!

### *She Was Commended for Her Faith*

The crowd who listened to her confession also heard the Saviour's benediction, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." As a true daughter of Abraham (Luke 13:16), her faith is crowned by the Master. Hers was not faith without a touch, or a touch without faith. Believing, she appropriated and was healed. "Daughter," was an endearing term for Jesus to use. Some tender insight of His own must have prompted Him to use it. As Theron Brown puts it so beautifully —  
The restored sufferer would never forget the friendly benignity that assailed her with one indulgent epithet or the sympathy in that endearing term by which the Messiah of Israel recognized her as His own. . . . She cherished her debt to the Man of Galilee.

### *She Has a Place in Legend*

It is said that this woman who was healed of her plague walked with Jesus as He went to His cross, and that seeing His blood and sweat, she drew out her handkerchief and wiped His brow. Later on, as she reverently caressed the piece of linen, she found the image of the blood-stained face of Jesus imprinted on it. Face cloths for the Roman catacombs alleged to hold the impress of His features were called Veronicas. About A.D. 320, Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea and a dependable historian records that when

he visited Caesarea Philippi, he heard that the woman healed of her issue of blood out of gratitude for her cure had erected two brazen figures at the gate of her house, one representing a woman bending on her knee in supplication — the other, fashioned in the likeness of Jesus, holding out His hand to help her. The figure had a double cloak of brass. Eusebius adds this explicit statement as to these figures, “They were in existence even in our day and we saw them with our own eyes when we stayed in the city.” The well-known Sankey gospel hymn recalls and applies the story of the nameless woman whom Jesus healed —

She only touched the hem of His garment,  
As to His side she stole,  
Amid the crowd that gathered around Him,  
And straightway she was whole.

It is encouraging to know that His saving power this very hour can give new life to all who by faith take hold of His skirt (Zechariah 8:23).

### JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

THE CHILD — WOMAN JESUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD  
Matthew 9:18-25; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:41-56

Actually, the miracle previously considered was “a miracle within a miracle,” for Jesus was “on the wing,” as it were, during His journey through a busy city street to the house of Jairus to heal his young daughter. Thus the healing of the woman with an issue of blood was a story folded in a story and vividly illustrates the swift and strenuous ministry of Jesus while in Galilee. The wayside incident of the sick woman and her sudden care as she touched Jesus was an interruption in His walk in response to the call of Jairus. But what a miracle He performed during that interruption. Often when extremely busy we resent any interruption, but Jesus turned interruptions to good account.

The subject of this cameo comes before us nameless in her girlhood, just as her mother who shared the deep anxiety of Jairus over their child, is also nameless. Unlike many other unidentified feminine lives and characters, the part of this girl of twelve summers is a passive, not an active

one in the Bible record. The woman Jesus healed on the way to her, suffered for twelve years — the girl herself was twelve years of age. What a blow it is to a family where love reigns, when one of its members is taken in life's fair morning. The miracle Jesus performed in raising Jairus' daughter from the dead marked the beginning of the end for Jesus, who was being closely watched by the Sanhedrin whose members hated Him and sought His death. There were not many happy days left to Him in Galilee, and "when He raised up the little maid of Israel it was as if, by a sweet domestic deed of love, He sought to leave in His cherished city one young life to shed its gratitude on His path of pain, and assure one welcome if ever again He came to His own and His own received Him not. He had saved perhaps, a future Christian mother." We would like to believe that when the resurrected Jewish maid grew up that she was numbered among the saints who loved and worshiped the Redeemer, and who held communion with His risen life. For those wishing to develop a message on the petition of Jairus and the raising of his daughter from the dead, the following outline might help—

### *His Position*

Jairus was "a ruler of the synagogue," and was presumably a man of no small worldly means with an inherited distinction, as well as a personal one. Yet with all his pedigree position and possessions he was unable to do anything for his dear daughter's relief. His coming to Christ proves how He reached out to all classes, lowly and great, just as the sun shines on a hovel as well as a palace. The religious rulers of which Jairus was one, were, as a body, adverse to the claims of Christ (Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 11:19; John 10:20). The appearance and social position of Jesus, poorly clad and poor did not mark Him out as the expected Messiah. But one of these rulers had the moral courage to manifest his faith in Christ's authority, and the homage he paid Him is a miniature anticipation of the universal adulation He will yet receive (Romans 14:11).

### *His Prayer*

Falling at the feet of Jesus, Jairus presented his request, "My little daughter is at the point of death." Trouble, a common heritage, attracted

him to the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with human grief, and in a greater Ruler he found relief.

Trials give new life to prayer;  
Trials bring me to His feet,  
Lay me low and keep me there.

### *His Perception*

This ruler with his most urgent mission was delayed by the interruption of the healing of the woman with the issue of blood. Every moment counted if the life of his daughter was to be saved. Yet the healing “on the wing” as Jesus was making His way to the home of Jairus was an encouragement to his faith. He believed that once the hand of Jesus was laid upon the fatally sick girl that she would live, but his faith was tried when word reached him as he was soliciting Christ’s aid that his daughter had died. However, such an announcement made more room for trust in Christ’s power. While the sad news added the last pang to his sorrow, his faith did not weaken. Had not he sought the aid of One who had raised the widow’s son at Nain?

### *His Promise*

The grief-stricken father had the best of promises whispered by Jesus, “Fear not, only believe.” What a staff to lean upon that was in the shadow of death! How faith receives strength from the divine promises! (II Peter 1:4; 3:13). At last Jesus reached the death-stricken home and the ruler’s faith was honored when his child was raised to life. The hired mourners attracted attention by their “weeping” and “laughing” (Mark 5:39, 40). With authority He rebuked the unseemly noise of those whose presence in the death chamber was an impertinence. Those professional mourners mocked Jesus when He said, “The little girl is not dead, but asleep” — sleep, referring to the body (see John 11:11-13; 12:1).

### *His Praise*

What praise and adoration must have filled the heart of Jairus as he witnessed Christ’s power as “The Resurrection and the Life.” With the weeping mother and sorrowful father, along with Peter, James and John, Jesus went into the room where the young girl was lying in a dreamless



world. Already she had heard the heavenly voice saying, “Come up hither!” Now she was to hear the majestic voice of One who could command both worlds.

Standing by the little bed, Jesus took one of the girl’s cold hands in His and tenderly said in her own Aramaic tongue, “Rise up, little maid!” No lengthened process was necessary once His divine hand had been put forth. Quickened by His word and touch, the dead girl revived, saw the Saviour and got out of bed and walked. In his description of the miracle, Luke the physician says, “her spirit came again . . . her parents were astonished.” The command of Jesus that the grateful parents should not publicize the miracle was meant to guard them against the temptation to talk unnecessarily about the wonderful event, and thereby lose the full benefit of the blessing they had received. Then when Jesus, further requested that food be given to the resurrected girl, He revealed how practical He was, and how He fully recognized and honored natural laws. Yet in spite of the silence imposed on Jairus and his nameless wife whose praise for Jesus knew no bounds, the two miracles of that brief period caused His fame to spread “abroad through all the land.” Thus a woman with her helpless disease of twelve years charmed away in a moment, and the extinguished life of a girl twelve years of age lit again, to burn in gratitude, both lived to glorify the Lord and Giver of life. How Jairus, his wife and restored daughter must have become bound to Jesus in loyal faith, and consoled His lonely heart when friends who misunderstood His mission “walked no more with him.”

### JESUS’ SISTERS

Matthew 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3

While we have the names of the natural brothers of Jesus, we know nothing of the number, names, history, belief or unbelief of His sisters. When Jesus declared who His spiritual relatives were He said, “Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” It would seem, as Ellicott suggests, that the special mention of the sister implies the thought that those who bore that name had joined their brothers in the attempt to interrupt His work. Mother, sons, and daughters were offended at Him (Mark 6:4). Among His foes were those of His own household. Can it be that those privileged sisters of Jesus came to

recognize in Him the Saviour of the world, and experience that in Him they had a Friend, sticking closer than a brother?

### HERODIAS' DAUGHTER

(See SALOME)

### SYRO-PHOENICIAN WOMAN

THE WOMAN WHO BEGGED AS A DOG

Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30

This remarkable female in Bible biography is called by Matthew, “a woman of Canaan,” and by Mark, “a Greek.” There is no contradiction here because the term Greek was commonly used to distinguish Gentiles from Jews. She was a heathen woman of Gentile stock who came to earn a rare commendation from Jesus even though she was a descendant of the old Canaanite worshipers of Baal. Her name, and that of her husband and also of her daughter are not known. She is presented as a mother suffering unspeakable grief because of the incurable demoniac affliction of her daughter. We likewise have her portrayed as a woman of resolute determination as she sought to get relief for her child from the great Israelite Healer of whose fame she had heard.

#### *Her Region*

This unhappy woman of heathen surroundings belonged to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon whose inhabitants had been despoiled by the children of Israel, and who were given over to idolatry (Ezekiel 28:22-26). No love was lost between the Jews and the Phoenicians, but the One who went through Samaria where the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans and left a blessing behind Him, here visits the Gentile district of Northern Galilee to reach some of “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” mixed up Gentiles in the district. As the Shepherd, He went out after the sheep (Luke 15:4), and brought His salvation to Jew and Gentile alike (Luke 10:9; 19:10). It may be that one object of Christ’s unusual trip to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon was to seek rest and have closer fellowship with His apostolic band, seeing that Capernaum had ceased to be a home of peace for Him. But He could not be hid. His fame followed Him and news of this miracle-worker reached

the ears of this poor Canaanite mother, whose excitement would not let her wait until Jesus arrived. Out she ran as if to be the first to meet Him with a cherished hope that He could relieve her daughter. Coming before Him she immediately told Him her sad story, and besought His mercy.

### *Her Request*

Briefly, yet explicitly, the Canaanite woman presented her plea which contained three appealing elements —

1. Her Petition: “Have mercy upon me.” In dire need we are so dependent upon the unfailing mercy of Him who is full of compassion.

2. Her Recognition: “O Lord, Thou Son of God.” Heathen though she was, this grief-stricken mother yet recognized the authority and deity of Him whose name was great in Israel and also among the Gentiles (Psalm 76:1; Malachi 1:11). In the royal title she used she implied that Jesus alone was able to cast out the devil from her daughter.

3. Her Statement: “My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” Mark says she had an “unclean spirit.” This mother never wasted words as she stated the terrible trial shadowing her home. Eloquent language is not necessary when we present our needs to Him who knows all about them before we state them.

### *Her Repulse*

The pitying Saviour, who refused no call for mercy, was silent to the pleader’s pointed prayer. “He answered her not a word.” Weary with the pressure of His long and arduous ministry in Galilee, He retired into a friendly, hospitable house nearby, and left the seeking mother outside. Why did our Lord appear to turn a deaf ear to the pitiful cry for the relief of her afflicted daughter? Usually He responded immediately for the exercise of His power, but at this time He was silent, and His disciples as bigoted Jews who were deeply nationalistic and despised all Gentiles, shared the Master’s silence. Why should their Lord bestow a favor upon a Gentile?

Artists never depict Christ with His back turned. He stood with His face to blind Bartimaeus, to the foaming demoniac, to the limping paralytic, to the turbulent sea which He hushed, to the dead whom He raised, but here He turned His back on the suffering woman, throwing positive

discouragement upon her petition: “Lord, spare the life of my demon-possessed daughter; it will not cost You anything.” Because of all we know of Christ’s love and compassion, we cannot believe that He meant to ignore altogether her cry for help. Often the problem of unanswered prayer is acute, but He who ever hears the pleas of those who seek Him always answers prayer in His own best way. Perhaps with this Gentile mother, His repulse was meant to try her faith, which proved to be a faith accepting no rebuff.

### *Her Resoluteness*

Driven by a pressing need, this woman of Canaan was determined not to take, No! as an answer. She knew Christ was able to cure her daughter and was determined that the assistance she sought would be granted. So she pestered the disciples for another audience with Christ whose expression of His mission might have discouraged her Gentile heart, “I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He rallied to the woman’s earnestness, however, and to make His mercy more conspicuous, met her persistence by saying, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread [that is, salvation appointed for the Jews] and cast it to dogs” (or the Gentiles which was the ordinary parlance of the Jews in regard to Gentiles). The gentle, gentlemanly, and loving Jesus never meant to characterize the woman as a dog.

Even this further rebuff did not deter her from falling at the feet of the great Galilean Teacher and sobbing, “Lord, help me!” Although a wild Gentile she begged grace of the Shepherd of Judah. In the passion of her sorrow and resolve she would not let Him go until He blessed her. Even when He further denied her in the words, “Let the children first be fed. It is not fitting to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs.” Such a sentence might have crushed her, but inspired humility enabled her to quickly reply with all meekness, “Truth, Lord, yet dogs [tame, house, pet dogs] eat of the crumbs that fall from the master’s table.”

Behind Christ’s seeming frowning countenance there was the smile of love. Although He had addressed the helpless woman in a somewhat austere, traditional way, His coolness made the final favor sweeter. The stranger had not asked for a whole loaf of bread or even for a large slice —

only for the crumbs falling to the floor. The Master felt the wit and the earnestness and the stratagem and the faith of this determined woman who dared to persist in her desperate petition, and the expression of His heart revealed Him in His true mission — the Saviour of mankind.

### *Her Reward*

“The aptness and the subdued beauty of her patient reply had charmed Jesus,” and she heard Him say, “O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” It was as if He had meant, “You have conquered Me. Your daughter is well now. Go home, mother; but before you get there she will come down, skipping to meet you. The devil has left her.” Her conquering faith exhibited the three ascending degrees of all true faith. The trial of her faith consisted of silence (15:23), refusal (15:24), and reproach (15:26), all of which were intended by Christ for a beneficent, loving purpose. The trial resulted in triumph, for the woman had turned a seeming rebuff into an argument in her favor, and her faith resulted in definite and practical results. Blind Bartimaeus broke through hindrances cast up by his fellow men, but this woman broke through apparent hindrance even from Christ Himself.

Reaching home the poor Canaanite mother found her darling girl in her right mind, calm and smiling, and how her relieved heart must have praised the Man of Galilee. Her faith had prevailed, and Christ’s disciples began to learn that divine pity was larger than racial boundaries and that their Master’s salvation was a fountain for all. A peculiar feature of Christ’s miracle on behalf of the Canaanite woman is that it was accomplished by remote control. He did not go to the home of need as in the case of Jairus, but stayed where He was, and the moment He uttered the word of healing, the demon-possessed girl was made whole. It was one of His “absent cures.” Distance makes no difference to Omnipotence. “He spake and it was done.”

### WIFE SOLD FOR DEBT Matthew 18:25; Luke 17:3, 4

In His law of forgiveness which Christ propounded to Peter, Jesus drew attention to the lord who commanded one of his servants deep in his debt to

sell wife, children, and all that he had to meet the debt. Many a righteous woman was sold for silver, and a poor one for a pair of shoes (Amos 2:6; 8:6; Nehemiah 5:4, 5). The law was strained to allow an insolvent debtor to sell himself and his family into bondage to redeem a debt (Leviticus 25:39; II Kings 4:1). In this far-off enlightened age, there are still parts of the world where women and children are bartered with.

#### MAIDS AT PETER'S DENIAL

Matthew 26:69-71; Mark 14:66-69; Luke 22:56-59; John 18:16, 17

In the High Priest's palace the damsels employed there asked questions of Peter, causing him to deny the Master he had vowed to be true to until the end. His first denial came in the courtyard of the palace as he answered the question of the female slave who kept the door (John 18:17). The second denial came as the result of another statement by a second maid who possibly tended the fire (Matthew 26:69). About an hour later, after Peter left the fire at which he warmed himself, he answered the maid who had spoken to him before (Mark 14:69; Matthew 26:71). These nameless maid servants in the employ of Caiaphas did not imitate each other in their conversation with Peter. Both of them knew that Jesus who was being tried was no ordinary prisoner, and that He faced the death penalty. With womanly intuition, the maids also detected Peter's reticence and that he tried to hide himself. Teasing him about concealing who he was, they uttered words that tore at his heart like the thrust of a dagger. Heartless girls, they entertained themselves at the cost of Peter's embarrassment, and caused him to curse his Lord. How smugly they would laugh as they saw Peter weeping bitterly in deep remorse over the way he had failed his Master in such a grim hour. From those gossiping maids we learn that superficial prattle can prove disastrous — that unnecessary talk can inflict grievous wounds. How we need to be saved from the sin of unguarded lips!

#### PILATE'S WIFE

Matthew 27:19

While the Bible does not tell us who the wife of Pilate the governor was, the Apocryphal book, *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, identifies her as Claudia Procula, and a granddaughter of the Emperor Augustus. The book

also says that she was a proselyte to Judaism, being among the women of higher classes over whom the Jewish religion exercised considerable influence. Her appearance is brief and all we know about her and what caused her to be included among the nameless in God's portrait gallery, is told in thirty-eight words. As Jesus was being tried by Pilate in the Praetorium, a messenger hurried to him with a brief but urgent note from his wife. In the moment of crisis she had had a dream and begged her husband not to condemn the Prisoner before him.

When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Because of her interest in the Jew's religion she must have discussed Jesus with Pilate, and the urgency of her petition revealed a sharp appreciation of the tragedy facing Him. Calling Jesus the "just man" testifies to the impression He had made on her mind in contrast to the religious leaders seeking to destroy Jesus because of His claims. We can appreciate why the Greeks and Abyssinians made a saint of her, and legend says that she became a Christian, and may have been the Claudia mentioned by Paul (see CLAUDIA).

Various interpretations of the dream, convincing this wife that Jesus was an innocent Man, and that if her husband condemned Him he would certainly invite disaster, have been given. The safest understanding of her dream is that it was the reflection of her day thoughts as a sensitive and devout woman of One who was holy, just and innocent. God directed that dream in order to add a striking testimony to the sinlessness of the One being tried for the truth He declared. Pilate's wife sensed her solemn responsibility and made her plea, even though her husband who was also convinced of Christ's innocence, ultimately delivered Him to be crucified.

## WOMEN AT CALVARY

Matthew 27:55

Distinct from "the daughters of Jerusalem" (Luke 23:28), this group of women is identical with the certain women who followed Jesus, and ministered unto Him (Luke 8:2, 3). Who all the "many women" beholding the final agonies of the cross were we have no means of knowing. Two or

three of them are mentioned, namely, the Marys, but for the rest they are the nameless lovers of the Lord who remained near Him until the bitter end. Of this we can be certain, that their names are inscribed on the illustrious Lamb's Book of Life.

WIDOW WITH TWO MITES  
THE WOMAN WHO GAVE HER ALL  
Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

Of all the nameless women in female biography, this most sacrificial widow is one whose name and background we would dearly love to know about. As we read the gospels her devotion always touches our hearts, and we are grateful that Jesus noticed her sacrifice and has preserved her story in the safekeeping of His praise and Word.

*The Occasion*

During Paschal Week women from all over poured into their court in the Temple with their offerings for its manifold services. Along the walls of the court there were receptacles into which the people dropped their gifts. Many who were rich cast in much and probably took no pains to conceal what they gave. The Scribes who devoured widows' houses, getting all they could, doubtless paraded their giving, but here was a widow intent on a far nobler purpose, namely, to give all she could. The Scribes were rich, but selfish — the widow, poor, but sacrificial (Mark 10:24; James 2:5). Among the crowds this poor anonymous widow was unnoticed by those around her as she dropped into one of the chests her two tiny copper coins. Making her offering, she passed along unaware that any one but herself knew the measure of her gift and what it cost. When we speak about "the widow's mite" we have in mind a small offering, but to this nameless widow her mite represented *all* she had. If the rich had given proportionately that Holy Week, what a tremendous offering the Temple would have had. Among all the money gathered that day none had the stain of blood on it apart from those two mites. With true Israelite devotion she gave all she had earned, and then went on her way to earn a little more to care for her frugal needs, and for those of any children she might have had.



## *The Omniscience*

As an Israelite the widow would have a knowledge of Hagar of old and of how she called Jehovah by the distinguished and comforting name, “Thou God seest me” (Genesis 16:13). She surrendered her all that day feeling that God’s eyes alone would know of her offering. Little did she know that the One sitting near the treasury was God manifest in flesh, and that because of His omniscience He knew all about her and also the amount of her sacrificial gift. Whether Jesus may have learned of this godly widow on one of His previous visits to Jerusalem, we do not know. The narrative seems to suggest His divine insight into the lives and characters of people as in the cases of Nathanael (John 1:47, 48) and of the woman of Samaria (John 4:18).

Because of her penury, the widow would come and go unobserved in the presence of the crowd for she had none of the ostentation of the Pharisees in dress and disposal of gifts. But an All-Seeing eye saw her and knew all about her secret and took an exact inventory of the comparatively small gift she had dropped into the treasury box. The Bible does not tell us whether Jesus spoke to her and thanked her for her offering. It is probable that she was not conscious of what omniscient eyes had seen, and how her minute offering among so many gifts that day had gladdened the sorrowful soul of Him who was on His way to give His all at Calvary and also provided Him with a text for an everlasting lesson on what sacrificial giving really is.

## *Her Offering*

What a rebuke Jesus delivered to the rich Scribes and Pharisees who cast large gifts into the treasury-boxes! But what they gave was insignificant, proportionally, alongside what the widow gave, and her slender gift brought forth from the greatest Giver of all a message that lifted the poor to their rightful fraternity of service with the godly rich in the kingdom of God: “Of a truth. . . this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: [With this sentence Jesus must have waved His hand in the direction of those who loved the praise of men and not of God.] For all these have of

their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.”

Over against the show of easy service, Jesus placed the piety of self-denial. The widow’s two mites represented her two hands that had earned the mites, and which would earn more for another sacred fraction for the God she worshiped. Paul commended the churches of Macedonia because their deep poverty had abounded unto the riches of their liberality (II Corinthians 8:1, 2). As it is “by him actions are weighed” (I Samuel 2:3), in His balances the loving act of the poor widow outweighed the munificence of the rich Pharisees. It is not *what* we give but *how* we give that counts with Him who gave Himself for a lost world. The widow gave all she had at the time, and surrendered it gladly. May we ever remember that our giving must be inspired by what we owe Him who redeemed us at such cost, and also placed over against what is left after we give! How apropos are the words of Solomon as we think of the poor, unnoticed widow whom Jesus rewarded with everlasting remembrance: “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3).

### WIDOW OF NAIN

THE WOMAN WHOSE DEAD SON CAME BACK FROM THE GRAVE

Luke 7:11-18

Among the many widows who were in Israel (Luke 4:25), quite a few of them crossed the pathway of Jesus in the days of His flesh. He seemed to have a special, tender care for these women whom death had impoverished, and who often became the particular prey of the unscrupulous, and victims of the fraudulent. Already in this volume we have written of the significance of Bible widows, who were not to be afflicted, and whose cry heaven always heard (Exodus 22:22; Jeremiah 7:6; Matthew 23:14). The accounts of widows deserving of honor and care are both instructive and interesting for our guidance in church life today (I Timothy 5:3; James 1:27). Before us is another widow whom Jesus helped in her affliction. Like other widows, this grief-stricken one of Nain received a special dispensation from heavenly hands, and is an example of “millions of bereaved mothers whose sorrows have been sweetened by some revelation of divine love and pity.”

### *The Mourner*

Luke alone records the breaking up of the funeral procession Jesus met on the way to the cemetery. The city of Nain was approached by a steep ascent, with burial caves on each side of the road. The day after Jesus had healed the centurion's servant, He set out with His disciples on a missionary tour around the Lake of Galilee, and as He journeyed, the size of His followers increased. As they reached the rock-hewn tombs, they met a humble train made up of one weeping mourner and a few sympathizing neighbors. They learned quickly of the widow's loss of her only son and child, and of the two facts enhancing the bitterness of her sorrow. She was a widow, bereft of her beloved partner for many years, and now was motherless seeing that the one prop of her life, her hope and stay in widowhood, had been taken from her. The young man doubtless worked and kept the home together. Now he is dead and the widow's future must have seemed so bleak.

### *The Master*

A peculiar feature of our Lord's miracle on the widow's behalf was the fact that this was the first manifestation of His power to raise the dead. The resurrection of Jairus' daughter and of Lazarus followed. Prophets of old, like Elijah and Elisha, had raised the dead, and when Jesus raised the dead youth, the people knew that He was a prophet of the same order. We further notice that the heartbroken widow did not seek Jesus, but that He came to where she was. The moment He saw her drooping figure alongside the hand-borne bier with its lifeless form, He had compassion on her. The miracle that followed was not only an unmistakable credential of His deity and mission, but also the spontaneous outflow of His infinite sympathy with human suffering.

Note His fourfold action —

“He said unto her, Weep not.” What authority and consolation were wrapped up in that tender exhortation! As God incarnate, He was able to dry the widow's tears.

“He touched the bier.” On the open stretcher lay the corpse wrapped in a winding sheet with a handkerchief over the face, and as Jesus touched the

bier, its bearers stood still. All around knew that He was a Teacher and that most rabbis would not touch the dead for fear of pollution. But here was One who came into contact with the dead, and that cortège, stopped in its progress, came to experience that His touch had still its ancient power.

“He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise! And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak.” How awe-stricken the onlookers must have been as in a moment of time, at the mighty command of Jesus reaching the abode of the dead, the spirit of the widow’s only child returned! As the mother had no idea of what would happen as she left her humble home for the grave, what a shock of joy must have been hers when her son sat up, and tearing away the cerement of death around his face, “began to speak.” How fascinating it would have been if Luke had set on record what the youth’s first words were when brought back from the dead by Jesus!

“He delivered him to his mother.” What a lovely touch this is! It literally means, “He gave him to his mother.” At birth he came as God’s gift to the home; now that he is risen from the dead, he was God-given in a higher sense. As the Lord of life came to die He manifested the same care of His own widowed mother, Mary. Thinking of her uncertain future, Jesus said to John, the disciple whom He loved, “Behold thy mother,” and from that hour the Apostle took her home and protected and provided for her through the rest of her days.

### *The Multitude*

The fame of this miracle quickly spread. The people of the city of Nain who accompanied the widow, and those who had followed Christ were overwhelmed at His first resurrection miracle, and great fear came upon them all. They glorified God, for in the One who had brought life and immortality to light God had visited His people. The grateful company saw in Jesus the Great Prophet raised up by God and was indeed —

Creator from the wreck of things;  
Death is but hope with folded wings.  
When light from His strong spirit streams  
And stirs cold dust to breathing dreams.

What was the reaction of that widowed mother as she returned home with her restored son? We can imagine how both of them expressed their thanks

to Jesus, and set about knowing more of Him and the gracious truths He taught. Blessing Him for His ineffable goodness in giving back her boy, the attitude of this poor Galilean Jewess must have been —

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer;  
No other thought her mind admits,  
But “he was dead”—and there he sits.

WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER  
THE WOMAN WHO SINNED YET LOVED MUCH  
Luke 7:36-50

All women since Eve, the world’s first sinner, were born in sin and sinners by birth became more or less sinners by practice. But this woman whom Jesus met in the house of Simon has the distinguishable labels, “Which was a sinner,” “She is a sinner,” “Her sins which were many.” Her doom seemed to be sealed in that word “sinner.” The simple but moving record of this disreputable woman that Luke alone gives us, compels us to say that no human imagination invented it. As Mackintosh Mackay says, “The story bears stamped on its very face the impress of Him who spake as never man spake.”

A striking aspect of the episode before us is the willingness of Jesus to fellowship with the sinful or the sole purpose of reaching their hearts with the truth. While He never sought such feasts, as the one to which Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus, He never refused them but deemed them openings for doing His Father’s work. While He never ate with sinners for any personal gratification, He was careful not to adopt a holier-than-thou attitude toward them. Separate from sinners, in respect to their original and practiced sin, He yet was willing to contact them in order to transform their lives. Thus, when invited by Simon to a dinner, Jesus graciously accepted in order to instruct him, as He did. And when a notorious female sinner tried to reach Him at the dinner, He did not refuse her admission to His presence, but graciously received tokens of her penitence and love, and commended her for her faith. If we would rescue the perishing we must be willing to go where they are.

*Her Past*

The word used for “sinner” in connection with this city woman suggests the special sin of unchastity and that she was known among the people in her community for her sensual and hateful calling — a woman of the streets. Jesus evidently knew that “her sins were many,” implying that her prostitution was habitual, and that her illicit practices were continuous. All in Nain knew her as a woman who had rejected her virtues and her honor. She had sacrificed the white flower of a blameless life for monetary gain. Harold Begbie, in one of his volumes describing miracles of grace experienced in Salvation Army activities, tells of a prostitute who was saved from her life of sin by the gift of a flower from a female Salvationist on a London street. As the biographer puts it —

The flower was white. The idea of this whiteness pervaded her consciousness. She made a contrast of the whiteness of that flower and the spreading darkness of her own soul. She said to herself, “I was once white like this flower.” She looked at the white flower through a mist of pain and said to herself, “I wish I could be pure.” She covered her eyes with her hands, moved her face to the pillow, and wept.

As that white flower unlocked the cabinet of memory and began a spiritual process resulting in the transformation of her character, it was thus with the woman who was a sinner. She saw her degraded life in the white light of divine holiness personified in Jesus, and as she wept her tears brought her triumph over a shameful past. Coming to Simon’s house in all her guilt, afraid and ashamed to mingle with the invited guests, she flung herself at the foot of Him who said that Publicans and harlots would go into His kingdom before the self-righteous Pharisees.

There is no Biblical evidence whatever for identifying this sinful woman with Mary Magdalene or with Mary of Bethany as some commentators have done. While the first Mary is spoken of as having “seven devils,” there is no evidence that she was immoral when under demoniac influence. The conduct of the sinful woman in Simon’s house was totally different from the wild frenzy of a demoniac. As for Mary, sister of Martha, what is said of her devout spirit is strikingly adverse to that of a harlot of the streets. While “the woman which was a sinner” was probably known to the women Jesus healed of their infirmities (Luke 8:1-3), reticence as to her name both on their part and that of Luke was at once

natural and considerate. That she was a woman deep-dyed in her particular kind of sin and yet found deliverance from her shameful past, confirms the truth that His blood can make the vilest clean.

### *Her Penitence*

Those tears of hers, evidence of her sorrow for her many sins, cleansed her vision and gave her a sight of Him who came to save sinners. Guilt produced grief. Evidently she knew all about Jesus and followed His movements. It is most likely that she had heard of His compassion for the sorrowing widow of Nain, and had listened to His parable on the prodigal son. As a prodigal daughter of Israel, drawn by the ineffable pity and tenderness of His words and looks, she, like the prodigal son said, "I will arise and go to my Father." Brought back to God and purity, she found her way to Simon's house where her gift and her tears revealed how much she owed the Saviour and how greatly she loved Him.

The grateful woman brought with her an alabaster box of ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus, who did not refuse such a token of her love. While it does not say that the aromatic ointment was as costly as that with which Mary anointed Jesus, we can assume that it relatively was as precious. "The lavish and luxurious use of perfumes characterized the unhappy class to which the woman belonged." Now she brings the store she had saved to seduce men, and with it anoints Him, the purest of men. He accepted the gift and transfigured it into the devotion of a saint, thereby making the instrument of sin a symbol of penitence and she surrendered to the claims of Jesus.

Further, this transformed sinner not only anointed the feet of Jesus with ointment, but also washed them with her tears and wiped them with the flowing locks of her hair. She could not manifest stronger tokens of her sorrow for sin and of her faith in Jesus. She was looking upon the compassionate face of Him who was about to be pierced and mourned for her sin (Zechariah 12:10). As Jesus reclined on a couch, the woman, modestly, and without attracting the notice of assembled guests, recognized by her tears and perfume the august character of the One who had raised her from the dunghill. Those sobs and the deed at Jesus' feet revealed the woman as having a sympathetic and fervent character. She was not too

hardened in her sin as to be incapable of tears. In this she was so different from the cold, calculated attitude of the unsympathetic Simon who witnessed the woman's expression of gratitude and devotion. The different emotions of shame, penitence, joy, praise, love, found natural relief in her tears, ointment and kiss.

### *Her Provoker*

What a study of contrasts we have in the attitude of the sinful woman and Simon the Pharisee! How incensed Simon was over the way Jesus allowed such extravagant attention from such a woman of ill-repute! Expressing his irritation and disapproval over the Saviour's countenance of the woman's gift of tears and perfume, he received his just rebuke for his lack of a sympathetic understanding of the situation. Because of the Pharisee's cold, austere, loveless manner, the woman knew she could not approach him for he would despise and dismiss her. But with a revelation of the Saviour's condescension and compassion, she believed He would mercifully receive her and so she cast herself upon His mercy.

We are told that what Simon had witnessed at the feet of Jesus had aroused thoughts of protest and provocation in his heart. He spake within himself about the action of one who professed to be a Prophet receiving homage of such a shameful woman. Was this not inconsistent with His character as the Prophet? He never voiced his irritation over the recognition on the part of Jesus of the woman's approach, but He who could read the secrets of the heart, answered the unspoken thoughts of the Pharisee (I Corinthians 15:24, 25). Then in masterly manner, without directly reproving Simon for his pharisaical thoughts, told the story of the two debtors which is similar to another parable of His (Matthew 18:25).

What a moving and thrilling climax Luke gives! In a quiet authoritative tone Jesus said, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," and recognizing Him as a Teacher come from God, Simon replied, "Master, say on." Then came a question "in the form of a kind of ethical proposition sum of the debtors that owed, the one five hundred pence, and the other fifty pence — a question that needs no answer."

Whatever hope either debtor had lay in the fact that pardon was offered to both as a matter of free gift and bounty, and driving home His point that



the creditor had freely and frankly cancelled the sums owed him, Jesus asked Simon the pointed question, “Tell me which of them will love him most?” He answered somewhat indifferently, not fully understanding the drift of Christ’s parable, “I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.” This was the answer needed to rebuke Simon, and so with dramatic swiftness He turned to the half-concealed, worshiping woman, and in a tone vibrating with authority, indignation and condemnation said —

I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears. . . Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

The contrasts which Christ used are impressive. Simon gave no *oil* — the woman anointed His feet with costly ointment. Simon gave nothing for the *head* of Jesus — the woman lavished her love upon His *feet*. How Simon reacted to Christ’s message on forgiveness and love we are not told! His cold, unloving, and unforgiving heart must have been smitten as Jesus revealed the depths of love in the woman’s contrite heart, in the words, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

### *Her Pardon*

Turning from Simon to the female sinner who must have been overawed by Christ’s parabolic defense of her tears and gift, He uttered the assuring word, “Thy sins have been forgiven.” Any lingering fear in her penitent heart as to divine acceptance was banished and assurance became hers. The guests at the feast, seeing and hearing all that had taken place, ask the question, “Who is this that forgiveth sins also?” This was an echo of the Scribes who said that Jesus was a blasphemer because He forgave the sins of the man sick of the palsy (Matthew 9:3). Who can forgive sins but God only, and in Simon’s house God was present in the person of His Son? Because He was God manifest in flesh He accepted the woman’s sobs and perfume as the pledge of a past forgiveness and the promise of a life to be lived for His glory.

Christ’s final word to the saved sinner was, “Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.” Twice He uttered the joyful tidings that her sins had been

pardoned and her soul saved. What He emphasizes in His confirmation of deliverance from her sin was that it was by her *faith* that she had been saved. When He said to Simon, “Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much,” attention must be given to the single word “for.” The phrase does not mean that Christ forgave because of her overflowing love; that because she was a soft and loving woman Christ forgave her faults so natural to her past life. He did not mean, “Forgive her, she has a kind and tender heart, and was more sinned against than sinning.” It was not her *love* but her *faith* that brought about her forgiveness, for a sinful soul can only be saved by grace through faith in Christ. Forgiven on the basis of her penitence and faith, pardon expressed itself in the tokens of her love. “Go in peace” was the last word the transformed harlot heard. It actually means, “Go *into* peace.” Peace was to be the new home in which she was to live, even the perfect peace Paul wrote about in his letter to the Philippians —

God’s peace [be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding, shall garrison *and* mount guard over your heart and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7, *Amplified Bible*).

#### A CERTAIN WOMAN’S MESSAGE

Luke 11:27, 28

Bursting with enthusiasm over Christ’s healing of the blind and dumb demoniac and His answer to His enemies about being in league with hell, a nameless woman in the crowd exclaimed, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.” This charming little incident and profoundly instructive record is only given by Luke who had an eye for details. With true womanly feeling, this unidentified female envied the mother of such a wonderful Teacher. Our Lord did not condemn the woman for her saying but held it up and replied, “Blessed rather are the hearers and keepers of God’s word” (Luke 11:28). Spiritual relationship, which acceptance of His saving truth makes possible, is higher than any natural or family relationship. Any woman wholly given to Christ is as His mother (Matthew 12:47).

AFFLICTED DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM  
THE WOMAN WHO WAS MADE STRAIGHT  
Luke 13:11-13

The miracle of the infirm woman recorded by Luke the historian, is not only the report of a trained observer, but because of medical terms used, reveals Luke as the beloved, gifted physician, who alone cites the incident that took place on a Sabbath Day in a synagogue. Unbelievable as it may seem, it was on this day when religious leaders went the round of their prayers that they closely watched Christ in the hope of trapping Him in the breaking of some law concerning the Sabbath. Our Lord consecrated such a sacred day to the purposes of His Gospel, and performed many of His miracles on it. What blind leaders of the blind those leaders were! They failed to see Him as One greater than the Sabbath. They thought more of the day than its Designer. This Sabbath miracle can be summarized thus—

*The Daughter Suffering the Malady*

Christ spoke of this crippled woman as “a daughter of Abraham,” and was therefore more precious in His eyes than the ox or ass about which He chided the Pharisees. This title by which He called her suggests that she was one of the inner circle of pious Israelites like Simeon and Zacchaeus (Luke 2:25; 19:9). Being a descendant of Abraham, this female was possessed of his faith, and because of it, was in the Lord’s house on the Lord’s Day. As an inheritress of Abraham she was in the right place to be healed. Although a firm believer in Jehovah she yet was afflicted for a long time. However her painful malady did not keep her from attendance at the synagogue. Walking must have been difficult for her, but her seat was never vacant when the Sabbath came around. Think of what she would have missed if she had absented herself from God’s house that Sabbath when Jesus visited it! What encouragement this faithful daughter of Abraham brings to all godly women, who, in spite of bodily infirmities, household cares and chores, find their way to the sanctuary where the Lord is ever present to undertake for true worshipers.

*The Description of Her Malady*

The phrases Luke employs reveal his professional touch. First of all the woman had “a spirit of infirmity” which does not mean that she had a weak and infirm spirit, but a mysterious derangement of her nervous system. She was “bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself” — language implying a physical curvature of the back, a condition producing mental obliquity. She was “bowed together,” a phrase not found elsewhere in the Bible and indicating dislocation of the vertebrae. Jesus said that she had been bound by Satan — that her disorder had been inflicted on her by Satan, just as he had smitten Job with sore boils. Her deformity must have made her a pitiable sight and caused her a good deal of mental despair, but she was to experience the power of One who had come to destroy the works of the devil and was able to relieve both mind and body of affliction.

### *The Duration of Her Malady*

For eighteen long years the woman suffered, and eighteen years is a large slice out of one’s life. Her trouble was long-standing and hopeless, and as the years dragged by we can imagine how she, as “a daughter of Abraham” resigned herself to the divine will although she did not understand why she had been afflicted thus through all those years. Many a saint is destined to suffer a lifetime, but he acquiesces in the will of God believing that as the Potter, He knows best how to shape the clay. Thus as Professor Laidlaw expresses it —

Her bent form and furrowed face were to Him as a book in which He read the story of her eighteen years’ bondage and patient struggle to sustain her infirmity. Her faithful attendance at divine worship, and perhaps other features to which we have no clue, showed Him genuine religious and spiritual character.

It made no difference to the divine miracle-worker how long a person had suffered, or how deep-seated their disease or malady. A word from Him was sufficient to heal the worst.

### *The Deliverer of Her Malady*

It is most profitable to study our Lord’s varied methods in healing the sick. He did not cure in the same way all who came to Him. No standard rule was followed in His miracles. In the display of His power before us,

note these actions: He saw—He called—He laid His hands on her. Nobody and nothing escaped the look of Jesus. There in the synagogue, at her habitual devotion, His eye singled out her crippled form as a special object of His mercy. Then with that compassionate voice of His, He called the woman to His side and said to her, “Thou art loosed from thine infirmity.” There was no approach by the woman for relief. Christ took the initiative, and unsolicited, uttered the all-commanding authoritative word of healing. His eye saw her, His voice called her — now His hand touched her and conveyed an instantaneous cure. Neither length of time nor inveteracy of her disorder could in any way obstruct the combined action of His eye, lips and hands.

“Thou art loosed from thine infirmity.”

“Immediately she was made straight.”

These two phrases reveal the knowledge of Luke as a physician. “Thou art loosed,” the only passage where this phrase is used of a disease, is a term which medical writers use to describe release from disease, relaxing tensions, and taking off of bandages. Through Christ’s word and touch a current of new life entered the deformed body of the woman, and her bonds were loosened.

“She was made straight.” After eighteen years of such apparent physical deformity immediate erectness became hers. Contracted muscles were relaxed, the curvature of the spine vanished, and all at once she stood erect — a lovely specimen of a woman. What He did in the physical realm for this woman He is able to accomplish spiritually in our lives in which there are so many crooked things needing to be made straight (Isaiah 42:16). Such a miracle resulted in opposite effects —

*The woman herself glorified God.* The unasked-for, immediate manifestation of divine power was followed by immediate gratitude. Although she was so badly deformed, she was constant in her attendance at the synagogue to worship and praise God, but this momentous day resulted in the pouring forth of her thankfulness in a continuous strain of praise. Now, with the restored use of physical powers she would be able to serve the Lord, as she had not been able to through those long, hard and weary eighteen years of infirmity.

*The people rejoiced.* All her friends, fellow-worshippers in the house of God, who knew of her piety and sweet resignation under severe trial, likewise “rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.” Surely this benediction must have gladdened the Healer’s heart. Alas, too often He looks in vain for gratitude from those He blesses! (Psalm 107:8).

*The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation.* What an opposite effect the miracle had on this religious leader who should have been the first to lead the praises of the assembled congregation for the Master’s mercy in healing the needy woman! But no, while the crowd acclaimed Christ, His adversaries accused Him. At the back of the ruler’s adverse criticism of Christ’s miracle was not so much the performance of it on the Sabbath Day, but that his feelings were hurt over the popularity of the Master. His pride of position was hurt as he saw the crowds applauding Christ as He confirmed His divine mission by such displays of power. The ruler’s professed regard for strict Sabbath observance was a thin veil, hiding a heart destitute of any compassion for the suffering.

In His reply to the ruler’s indignant rebuke, Christ vindicated His act of mercy in a most unanswerable manner, by tacitly acknowledging the necessity of sanctifying the Sabbath, and that there was no better way of honoring it than by caring for the needy. His convincing argument was that if the rigid Sabbath-keepers considered themselves at liberty to loose an ox or an ass from the stall in order to meet its material needs, surely the effort to loose the grievous bonds of a rational being was more justifiable, particularly when the bound one was a daughter of Abraham. Was it not a true Sabbath deed to heal a woman who had suffered much through eighteen years? So apparent was our Lord’s argument, that His adversaries were put to shame and silenced, and His character as the Messiah rose in the estimation of the friends of the healed woman, for whom that Sabbath Day was a memorable one indeed.

What a comfort we can gather from this miracle! In all our troubles Jesus is at hand, and whether our disorders are spiritual or bodily, the word of His mouth and the touch of His hand are ours. If we are “bowed down greatly,” the Son of God with power is near to “heal that which is sick, and to raise up them that are bowed down” (Psalms 38:6; 146:8; Isaiah 61:1). All that concerns His own is of deep concern to Him.

## DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

Luke 23:28

After Pilate had passed sentence of death upon Jesus, whom he knew to be innocent of the trumped-up charge of the Jewish rulers, He was taken out to die upon the cross which He was compelled to carry and a great company of people followed Him. Making up the crowd were “the daughters of Jerusalem who bewailed and lamented him.” Who were these women whose wailing was loud and bitter as they looked upon Him who was despised and rejected of men? Deutsch, the commentator, suggests that they may have formed one of the sisterhoods resident in Jerusalem for mitigating the sufferings of condemned criminals by narcotic drinks. Among those weeping women were those women from Galilee including Mary and Martha who had followed Jesus for many a day (23:49). He had always been most gentle to their sex, and women saw in Him their emancipator. Now they express their deep sorrow with their tears.

But comforted though Jesus must have been by the sympathy of those women, He said, “Weep not for me.” To the outward eye Jesus was in a most woeful plight seeing He was being led to Calvary to die as a felon on a wooden gibbet, but He wanted them to see Him with the eye of faith as One going forth to His coronation. How amazed those loving women must have been when on His Via Dolorosa He said to them “Weep not for me”! Some there are who have never wept for Him. As they pass by, all His suffering on their behalf is nothing to them.

Have we no tears to weep for Him,  
While foes revile and men deride?

Jesus accepted those tears of womanly grief, but implied that they would soon be dried because His thorn-crowned brow would soon be diademed with glory. They must save their tears for themselves and for their children and shed them when the dark days of judgment will overtake their city rejecting Him. Under Titus in A.D. 70, women remembered His word about the barren being blessed when they saw babies delivered up to the knife. So Jesus urged those women not to weep for Him, but to weep over the sin taking Him to His cross, and over the coming national disaster such sin would occasion. Alive for evermore, and Prince of the kings of earth, Christ

does not need our tears. But our gross sin against Him, whether personal or national, should result in deep contrition of soul.

WOMAN OF SAMARIA  
THE WOMAN WHO LEFT HER WATERPOT  
John 4

The pregnant phrase to underline in the incident at Sychar's well which is so rich in spiritual instruction, is the announcement John gives at the beginning of the chapter, namely, "He must needs go through Samaria." Why the necessity? While this was the shortest and most usual road for a traveler going from Galilee to Jerusalem (Luke 9:52), the Pharisees avoided this customary route, and took a longer, round-about one through Peraea. They did this in order to avoid any contact with the Samaritans with whom, as Jews, they had no dealings. While the Jews and the Samaritans were physically alike in many ways, requiring the same food, following the same occupations, having the same hopes and ambitions, and suffering the same diseases, yet there was a racial hatred that kept them apart.

The origin of this hostility between these two peoples may be traced back to the Assyrian colonization of the land of Israel (II Kings 17:21). From this followed the antagonism of the Samaritans to the Jews at the return from captivity (Ezra 4; Nehemiah 4), which led to the erection of rival temples on Mount Gerizim. This was in the mind of the woman at the well when she said, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" (4:20). From that time the spirit of religious bitterness lingered, and this accounts for the Jewish reproach.

"He who eats the bread of a Samaritan is as he who eats swine's flesh."

"No Samaritan shall be made a proselyte."

"They have no share in the resurrection of the dead."

Jesus spoke of a Samaritan as an alien (Luke 10:33; 17:16, 18), and in turn was accused by the Jews of being a Samaritan Himself and possessed by a demon (John 8:48). While the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, Jesus had. He spoke well of them, healed one of them of leprosy, and rebuked two of His disciples for wishing to destroy some of their number with fire from heaven (Luke 9:55, 56; 10:30-37). As the omniscient Lord,



He knew all about the woman in Samaria and went there to show and teach that He was above all religious and racial prejudices and that true worship consisted of worshiping God in spirit and in truth.

Thus necessity brought Jesus to the place where the Samaritan woman lived, and reaching Jacob's well, being wearied because of the long noontide journey, He sat by the well while His disciples went into the city to buy food. The reality of our Lord's fatigue testifies to the reality of His humanity. As the Man, He was weary and required food and drink, but as the God He could tell the woman who met Him at the well all about her guilty past and her soul's deepest need. Jesus was often weary *in* His work, but never weary *of* it. As Man, He knows all about our human and spiritual needs, and as God, He can meet every one of them. So about noon that day, Christ, a Jew, and the God-Man, met a Samaritan who was a woman, whose life was to be transformed as the result of that contact.

### *Her Individuality*

Twice over this nameless female is referred to as "a woman of Samaria" (4:7, 9). Prominent in this phrase is her religious and national position. She was not only an alien as far as the Jews were concerned, but was also poor, for women of affluence did not draw water in those times. The Samaritan woman differs from many of the other women who came before Christ in His itinerant work. Some of them pressed into the kingdom or took it by violence with their earnest prayers. We think of Anna who spent her nights and days in fastings and prayers — of the sinful woman of Canaan who washed His feet with her tears — of the widow of Nain who moved His heart by her silent weeping in her great loss, but for the woman before us no petition was granted, no miracle was wrought except her spiritual transformation. Yet she was a privileged woman in that Christ confessed to her that He was indeed the Messiah which He did not usually confess even to His disciples, leaving them to discern for themselves the truth of His Godhead from His mighty works and miracles of mercy. Thus this woman has an individual prominence in that she was among the number who sought Him not (Isaiah 65:1) Further, He did not usually offer His gifts unasked, but waited until they were sought or importuned. Here He offered the woman the unspeakable gift of Himself. First of all, He asked relief of

the woman, then He offered her relief, not common water to slake her thirst, but Himself, the Well of Everlasting Life.

### *Her Iniquity*

What kind of a woman, morally, was this Samaritan water-carrier? When the disciples returned from their shopping errand they “marvelled that Jesus talked with the woman.” Perhaps they were surprised to see Him talking in public with a woman, which was directly contrary to the Rabbinic precepts affirming that a man should not speak in public to his own wife, and that the words of the Law should be burned rather than taught publicly to a woman. Probably there were three reasons why the disciples marveled at the sight of Jesus and the Samaritan woman in earnest conversation. First, they wondered that He, as a Rabbi or Teacher sent from God, talked with her because she was only a woman. Second, because she was a Samaritan woman with whom no Jew should have dealings. Third, because she was a sinner. Some versions speak of her as “*the woman of Samaria*,” and she was likely well-known because of her association with men.

As a Samaritan, this woman had and knew the Pentateuchal law against adultery. When Jesus found her she was living with a man who was not her husband, but He did not expose her sin to others. He wanted her to feel the sense of sin herself. So when she asked Jesus for the living water of which He spoke, He replied: “Go, call thy husband.” Her life had to be a clean receptacle to hold the living spring, so Jesus revealed the foulness that had to be destroyed, and His thrust left its mark. Her past and present life had been laid bare by the omniscient Lord who said, “Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.” If death had invaded her home upon five occasions, and the five men she had lived with in succession were actual husbands, she certainly did not gather praise for her five marriages. But to bury her fifth husband and go and live with a man who was not a husband, revealed how she had fallen into the depths of sin. We can imagine how the people of her locality avoided her because of her lack of feminine modesty and purity.

Behind the questions, “What seekest thou?” “Why talked thou with *her*?”—such a woman — is the thought that whatever His talk with such a woman, whose reputation the disciples may have heard about in the city, it

must have been of the highest nature and was related to her spiritual welfare. Because those disciples believed that Jesus was perfect, and knew no sin, ulterior motives could not be ascribed to such a Holy One, as He talked with one whose sin became apparent in the white light of His holiness.

### *Her Ignorance*

It is inferred that the woman complied immediately with the thirsty Man's request for a drink of refreshing water, even though she could see by His features and dress that He belonged to the nation who hated her people. As she drew water from the well she asked Him, "How is it that thou, being a *Jew*, asketh drink of *me*, which am a woman of Samaria?" Little did she realize that in her willingness to give the Jew a drink she was fulfilling the Christian law toward Him, "If he thirst — even if he is thine enemy — give him drink," and that cup of water she gave Him did not lose its reward (Matthew 10:42). Jesus answered the woman's question by bringing home to her mind her ignorance of the greatness of the One sitting at the well.

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

What the Samaritan woman was so ignorant of was the fact that she had been coming daily to a deep well of water that had been God's gift of refreshment to man and beast since Jacob's time, yet there was a deeper well of spiritual truth so necessary for man's hidden needs, of which she was unconscious. She was a traveler in the journey of life, travel-stained by her sins, but had not discovered as yet the fountain opened for uncleanness. Instead of Christ begging her for a refreshing draught of water, she should have been beseeching Him for the unfailing supply of spiritual water from the eternal well.

From her ungracious manner and slur at Christ's people, she answered His comment in a tone of respect. There was something about His voice and manner that gripped her heart, and while she did not understand His message, she was conscious of its latent force, and felt that this traveler was no ordinary man. He seemed to speak with authority, and so passes in her address to Him from, "Thou, being a Jew" — the last word uttered in the

tone of contempt — to the reverential, “Sir,” Having had five husbands she was not easily worsted in conversation and wanted to know where was the better well than Jacob’s from which the “living water” could be secured, and her ignorance begins to vanish as she asks Him, “Art thou greater than Jacob, our ancestor?”

### *Her Instruction*

As the woman spoke of the deep well before her, and of Christ having no bucket to secure more vitalizing water from the depths of the well, Jesus, pointing to the ancient well, said, “Anyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but anyone who drinks of the water I shall give him will never thirst any more; the water I shall give him will turn into a spring of water, welling up to eternal life.”

What Jesus supplied was not external water to satisfy the recurring physical need, but an internal and eternal source of unfailing spiritual, life-giving water. Such living water was a divine gift (Isaiah 55:1), was Christ Himself (4:10), easily reached—the woman walked far to reach Jacob’s well, but the spiritual well is ever at hand — and a satisfying, unfailing gift for “whosoever drinketh” (Revelation 22:17). As light broke in upon her darkened mind, the woman replied to Christ’s teaching, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.”

But a full understanding of His words was not yet hers. Still thinking of them in their physical sense, she thinks of toilsome hours and weary journeys that could be saved if only she knew the marvelous well the Stranger was speaking about. Jesus answered her request, and cut short her argument with a command that went straight to her heart: “Go, call thy husband and come hither.” Our Lord wanted to turn her from a proud argumentative frame of mind to the humility of confession. Here was a sinful creature worth saving, but she must be made conscious of her sin, and when she humbly said, “I have no husband,” she became a different woman.

Proceeding gently, Jesus replied, and revealed His omniscience as He unmasked her secret: “Thou hast well said. . . For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband.”

The very wounds her shame would hide were seen by His all-searching eye, and her ignorance gives way to spiritual insight as she reverently confesses the prophetic gift of the One who knew all about her past and present life and asks Him to solve the problem of the right place of worship for both Jew and Samaritan. The woman was taken up with the *place* of worship, but Jesus sought to teach her that the *spirit* of worship is more important than the place. Alas, on any Lord's Day there are thousands in the place of worship as they gather in churches, but they are strangers to the spirit of worship which is related to the worship of God in spirit and in truth — worship inspired by the Holy Spirit in conformity to the truth of the Word.

It was to this woman that Jesus revealed the only basis of acceptable worship, and also the truth of His Messiahship. Perceiving that Jesus was a Prophet, the woman felt He knew the nature of true worship, namely, the spiritual worship of a spiritual Being not only at Jerusalem or Gerizim, but wherever there is a heart seeking Him. With her mind opening to Christ's instruction about spiritual worship, the Samaritan woman confessed the power of the coming Messiah to reveal all things, and perhaps now sensed that because the Jew before her had told her all things about her life, He must be the Messiah. Then came the dramatic word of Christ's claim, "I that speak unto thee am the Messiah." How privileged this sinful woman was to hear from the lips of Jesus Himself the divine secret of His Messiahship!

### *Her Influence*

By the Spirit, the woman acknowledged the truth of Christ's Messiahship and Omniscience, and immediately became a powerful witness to her remarkable discovery. With her mind full of the new truth she had learned, she left her water-pot and, full of her great discovery, hurried back to the city. In her enthusiasm she left her water-pot behind as a pledge of her return, not only for natural water, but also for a further spiritual draught from the living well she had found in Christ. Reaching the city, she met the men who knew her only too well, and declared the truth she had learned of Christ's Messiahship. Because He had unveiled her past life, He must be the Christ for whom both Jew and Samaritan were looking.

Her ignorant mind had grasped the secret of true worship and of Christ's mission, and her instinct for telling news became apparent as with the passion of an evangelist she said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" He had awakened her to a new and better life and such was the effect of her earnest witness that many of those Samaritans went out and came to Jesus at the well. For two days they listened to His teaching, and came to believe in Him, and accept Him as the Christ, the Saviour of the world. This was not only because of what His first native woman evangelist in Samaria had said of Him, but also because they had heard Him for themselves, and hearing, believed. In the glow of her new-born faith, the woman had to tell others and share with them all she had heard and experienced. Some four years later, when Philip the Evangelist came to preach "in many villages of the Samaritans," he doubtless met "the woman of Samaria" and realized how wonderfully the Holy Spirit had used her life and witness as well as the testimony of the Samaritans she had been the means of leading to Christ, to prepare the way for his miraculous ministry in Samaria. When the disciples returned from the city and saw Jesus talking with the woman, they knew what He meant by telling them that the fields were white already unto harvest. Because of the seed sown by the woman who, when she found the well, left her water-pot, Philip experienced a great ingathering of souls in Samaria, so much so that there was great joy in that city. The most joyful inhabitant was the woman who from her heart confessed, "Come see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (Acts 8:5-25). She had laid the foundation of that Samaritan Pentecost. At Jacob's well she saw Jacob's Star (Numbers 24:17), and ascending Jacob's Ladder (John 1:51) became the means of others climbing to God.

### WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

THE WOMAN CHRIST SAVED FROM DEATH BY STONING

John 8:1-11; Deuteronomy 17:5, 6

Having come to seek and save the lost, Jesus never shrank from close association with sinners. He ate and drank with them, in order to win them to Himself. In His journeys He conversed with at least three women who had been guilty of adultery — the Woman of Samaria, the Woman who

came to Him in the house of Simon, and now the woman of the narrative before us, and His loving-kindness and tender mercy characterized His dealings with each of them. It is interesting to observe the circumstances leading up to the exposure of the woman taken in adultery. After spending a night on the Mount of Olives, Jesus, rising early the next morning made His way to the Temple where a large company of people soon gathered to hear about His Messianic work. But as He fearlessly witnessed, danger hovered around Him, for members of the Sanhedrin were seeking to kill Him, and the Scribes and Pharisees were in sympathy with such a wicked design. While He was seated in the Temple instructing the people, a number of the Scribes and Pharisees arrived bringing with them a woman who had been caught committing a most degrading and serious offense.

### *The Accusers*

The religious leaders who brought the woman to Christ, preferring a charge against her, and trying to trap Him by asking what should be done to her, belonged to a class most eager to deal with harlots. They regarded themselves as custodians of public morality and woe be to those who came under the observation of these self-appointed inspectors of moral nuisances. Knowing all about the requirements and punishment of the Mosaic Law, and their own traditions surrounding it, they treated sinners with sanctimonious contempt. To them, it was sinful to be touched by a woman like the one they brought to Jesus, but as we shall see, their zeal against the sins of others was only a cloak to cover their own vileness.

How partial those accusers were! They brought the woman taken in the very act of adultery, but where was the man, the chief offender? Why was he not brought? Was he a Pharisee belonging to our Lord's enemies, and one whom policy demanded should be allowed to escape? The law and justice demanded that the adulterer and the adulteress should be brought together and be put to death (Leviticus 20:10), but true to the way of the world those foes of Christ made the woman bear the severity of her offense. Divine justice, however, is "without partiality" (James 3:17).

### *The Adulteress*

The woman presented to Christ by her accusers was without doubt guilty of the sinful conduct with which she was charged, and He in no way condoned her serious offense. Doubtless He pitied the woman's weakness and made full allowance for the force of temptation compelling her to sin. But He regarded her conduct as being a manifestation of wickedness evidenced by His command that she sin no more. Adultery takes its place in the front rank of "the works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19), and is ever against the Creator's just and holy law regarding the welfare of the race (Exodus 20:14). But could anything have been more cruel or harsh than that of setting this sinful woman "in the midst" of the Temple, exposing her to the gaze of the multitude? The conduct of those Scribes and Pharisees "showed on their parts a cold, hard cynicism, a graceless, pitiless, barbarous brutality of heart and conscience." It was bad enough for the woman to be conscious of the guilt of her sin, but to parade her before others was a cruel act and destitute of the love eager to hide a multitude of sins (I Peter 4:8). While Jesus never excused sin in those who came His way, He was ever tender and gracious in His treatment of them.

### *The Advocate*

As a Jew, and as the Messiah, Jesus was under solemn obligation of respecting the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 31:9; Matthew 5:17), and in His life on earth fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:18). Therefore when the Pharisees quoted the law about an adulteress being stoned to death, they appealed to a standard which He regarded and honored (Psalm 40:8), even though the great prevalence of adultery had made punishment of being stoned to death obsolete. Our Lord told the Pharisees that Moses was their accuser (John 5:40), and is it not strange that in their accusation of the woman they should appeal to Moses? Their question, "What sayest thou?" did not imply that they respected His teaching about the law. All they hoped to do was to snare Jesus into making an answer contrary to the law. If He had said, "Let her be stoned," His tenderness and kindness in dealing with the sinful and degraded would have been shown as being false. Had He said, "Let her go," there might have been a revolt among those who, although they were favorable to Him were yet staunch defenders of what Moses taught.



The cunning of the old serpent, the devil, was behind the effort of the Pharisees to tempt and accuse Christ and He needed wisdom to deal with such a situation. But able to read the hearts of men He knew how to answer their question, which He successfully did — by silence. He stooped and wrote in the dust around His feet, “*as though he heard them not.*” We pause here to ask two questions, namely, Why did He look down? What did He write with His finger on the ground?

Why did He look down?

It may have been out of consideration for the feelings of the guilty woman, that Jesus fixed His gaze on the ground and not on her. Men of corrupt hearts Peter speaks of as “having eyes full of adultery” (II Peter 2:14), might stare at the exposed woman, but as the Holy One having a compassionate heart He looked away from the frightened female dragged into His presence. She was humiliated by so many eyes fastened upon her, but here was the Friend of sinners, not guilty of any morbid curiosity, bowing His head and looking downward.

Another reason for His action might have indicated the lack of relish for what had been thrust upon Him. He always looked upward to heaven and spoke to His Father (Matthew 14:19), and directly at Peter and others whom He sought to restore to His favor (Luke 22:16), but when asked to pronounce judgment upon a guilty soul, more sinned against than sinning, His whole being shrinks from such a task (John 3:17; Luke 9:56; 12:14). As He came to fulfill the law, He cannot evade it now and thereby shield a manifest sinner from her sin which the law justly condemned.

What did He write on the ground?

It has been suggested that this was a common method of signifying intentional disregard. Jesus certainly acted as if He had not heard the woman’s accusers. What His finger actually wrote we are not told. It was the divine finger that wrote the law (Exodus 31:18), and perhaps Jesus reflected upon this fact as He wrote on the ground. As He stooped in the Temple that He might write, our Lord may have remembered how He had stooped from heaven that the broken law might be rewritten in the temple of man’s being. The woman had broken the law, but He would honor it. Incensed at the evident unconcern of Christ, the Pharisees, discerning the symbolism of His writing, kept up their demand for an answer to their

question. That solemn silence was more than they could stand, for it spoke in a power greater than His words. He was slow to anger, even with the most obdurate.

When He did look up and speak, the judicial decision was not forthcoming, but what the Pharisees did hear stunned them. “He that is without sin among you — that is, the type of sin men engaged in with such a woman, the particular sin the Pharisees had condemned her with — let him cast the first stone.” The only One present that day without sin of any kind, was the sinless Lord Himself, but He would not cast a stone nor pass judgment as to what should be done with the woman in the role of a civil or ecclesiastical judge. Delaying any word for the woman, He again stooped down and wrote on the ground, the repeated action expressing His determination to avoid the office of a judge. What He wrote this second time must have been seen by His accusers, and they slunk away, lest He reveal their further guilt. One ancient translation adds to the repeated verse (8:8), the words, “Wrote on the ground the sin of each of them.”

Whatever that writing was, the Pharisees were convicted by their own conscience, and beginning with the eldest, all of them left Jesus and the woman alone. Says Matthew Henry, “They that are convicted by their conscience will be condemned by their Judge if they are not requited by their Redeemer.” How the hypocrisy of these accusers, both of Christ and of the woman, was exposed! Here they were condemned as being guilty of the very sin they cast against the woman. Not one of them was innocent of the sin of adultery they brought against the woman, even the eldest man among them.

### *The Acquittal*

The second time Jesus looked up from the ground, He saw none but the woman. She might have fled as the convicted Pharisees left the Temple in shame, but somehow she was constrained to remain with the One who had become her Advocate and Deliverer. Now, facing her, Jesus asked, “Where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?” The woman simply answered, “No man, Lord.” She recognized that He was the only One who had the right to pass sentence on her. But there was no attempt at

defense or excuse on her part, no plea for divine mercy and forgiveness. He knew all about her, and thus she reverently called Him “Lord.”

Then came the word her heart longed to hear, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” The accusers who had just left could not condemn her, neither would Jesus. “Go, sin no more,” or “Be no longer a sinner,” was an utterance in harmony with His purpose of saving sinners from their sin. While there was no expression of forgiveness or peace as in the case of others (Matthew 9:2; Luke 7:48), we believe that she went forth, and in obedience to Christ’s command, entered a new life of pardon, peace and purity. The old adulterous life passed away, and she became a new creation. It would be most interesting to have more history of this nameless female. Our obligation is to glean these lessons so patent from the episode, namely, be slow to condemn every human judgment of another’s sin; to condemn every sin in our own lives; to declare to every sinner God’s forgiveness.

### HEBREW WIDOWS

Acts 6:1-4

Evidently some of the widows and children of many Jews had been neglected. The chief objects of relief from a common fund, somehow their daily needs had been overlooked, and so seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, among whom was Stephen, were appointed to care for these women as Scripture directed (I Timothy 5:3-16). Being particularly helpless, widows were reckoned to be the special care of God, because few others troubled, and to show them kindness was to qualify for God’s approval and blessing (Job 29:13; Psalms 68:5; 146:9; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:6; see further under WIDOWS in Index).

### THE WOMEN OF ANTIOCH

(Acts 13:50)

Luke mentions that these women were the proselytes converted from heathenism to Judaism who gave absolute submission of conscience to the Rabbis and Jewish Elders. These women had a real hunger for a higher and purer life than they could find in the infinite debasement of Greek and Roman society. “Satisfaction and grace in the life are the fruit of Grace.”

But when Paul and Barnabas came upon the scene proclaiming salvation and eternal life these “devout and honorable women,” meaning, they were worshiping females of high rank and station, the Jewish leaders strove to influence them against the effective ministry of the apostles. As for the “chief men of the city,” these may have been the husbands of these women of renowned social position who evidently acquiesced in their wives’ conversion to Judaism. “The potent influence of the female character both for and against the truth is seen in every age of the church’s history.”

DEMON-POSSESSED DAMSEL  
THE WOMAN WHO WAS DELIVERED FROM DIVINATION  
Acts 16:16-24

It was after the conversion of Lydia and her household that Paul and Silas after a period of gracious hospitality in Lydia’s spacious home, left for a season of prayer on the following Sabbath — not by the riverside (16:13), but in a sanctuary where prayer was wont to be made. On the way, people gathered about the apostles, whose mission produced friends — and foes — and excitement was evident as they continued their journey, especially when one like the demon-possessed girl cried after them, and sought from them the way of salvation.

*Her Divination*

What exactly was “the spirit of divination” which possessed this slave girl and made her soothsaying so lucrative to the masters who owned her? The margin gives us the rendering, “a spirit of Python,” or as some MSS give it, “a Python spirit.” In Greek mythology Python was the name of a serpent which guarded an oracle on Mount Parnassus and was slain by Apollo, thence called Pythius, as being himself the god of divination. This girl was not a mere ventriloquist or sheer imposter, nor a somnambulist or lunatic as some have supposed. She was a demoniac who, when she was possessed by the evil spirit, was looked upon as having power to divine and predict. When caught up by the demon, the girl’s wild cries were received as oracles, and her masters or joint-owners who usually had partnership in valuable slaves, traded on her supposed inspiration and made her answer those who sought for oracular guidance in the problems and perplexities of

their lives. Luke, who in his gospel describes “soothsaying” as coming from evil or unclean spirits, here, in his record of the demon-possessed girl, recognized in her phenomena that which was identical with those of the priestesses of Delphi — the wild distortions, the shrill cries, the madness of evil inspiration. How ignorant we seem to be of the reality of the power of Satan’s emissaries, especially in these last days when their influence is more apparent than ever!

### *Her Declaration*

If the girl was under the spell of a demon, how can we account for the content of the continued cry, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew—declare or proclaim—unto us the way of salvation”? This was indeed a true description of Paul and his companions in their itinerant ministry. Was the demon using the girl to mock the apostolic witness to Christ in order to thwart their work? Were the expressions “servants of the most high God,” and “the way of salvation” among those the girl had heard Paul use beforehand? Did she now repeat them under demoniac influence not knowing what they meant, and which demons Jesus had dispossessed (Luke 4:34; 8:28) now used in scornful irony, or as an involuntary testimony to the truth that Paul declared? Did the declaration indicate any particular motive on her part to conciliate Paul, or to increase the profits of those who owned her by acting as a prophetess? Or can it be that the unfortunate girl was impelled by a desire for emancipation from her demoniac influence to cry forth the message she did? Had she listened to Paul and Silas at the riverside to which many had resorted, not only to pray, but also to hear the apostles preach, and felt that these men were able to deliver her, and were as unlike as possible to the masters who traded on her maddened misery? The fact remains that she came to experience that Paul was a servant of the most high God with power to make her whole.

### *Her Deliverance*

We read that the girl followed Paul and his co-workers for many days and that Paul became worn out, wearied, impatient over her constant repetition of cries, which impeded the apostolic task of speaking to inquirers. Perhaps Paul was grieved or sorry by her constant cries, not in

any sense of being offended, but because she was demon-possessed and therefore not responsible for her utterances and actions. It will be noted that Paul in no way reproved the girl herself, but, facing her, spoke to the evil spirit possessing her: “I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” As the authoritative representative of Christ, Paul ordered the demon to vacate his abode in the girl. Command means to order peremptorily, as an officer his soldiers, and at the name of Jesus the demon was subject unto Paul and withdrew his control of the girl.

Two aspects of her restoration to her true self are conspicuous. First, it was instantaneous, “he came out the same hour,” or “that instant.” Immediately, the miracle took place, and the girl was wonderfully emancipated from her degradation. Second, her deliverance was complete for “her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone.” All their present and future profit from the girl’s demoniac gift had gone. There she was silent and subdued, clothed in her right mind, no longer a slave, but a transformed girl. When “the spirit of divination” went, with it vanished the lucrative business of her owners. Angry at Paul and Silas over their obliteration of financial gain, they seized the apostles and brought them before the magistrates who found them guilty of the trumped-up charge of the slave owners, and cast them into prison. Rough treatment was given the apostles for the saving work God enabled them to accomplish, but triumph was also theirs, for they were able to pray and sing praises even at the midnight hour in their prison cell. Also, witness again God’s miraculous power both in the earthquake and the salvation of the jailer and his household.

What of the girl herself whose history ends with the expulsion of the demon and his evil influence? We cannot believe that she was left to drift back into ignorance, unbelief and demoniac possession. Lydia and the other noble women would know all about the girl, laboring with the Apostle as they did (Philippians 4:3), and likely afforded the transformed girl all necessary shelter, comfort and guidance. As for the girl herself, did she show her gratitude to Paul for the miracle performed in her life, by including her gift with the gifts sent to the Apostle to assist in his work of salvation? (Philippians 4:15). Now, saved herself, did she confess out of a

delivered and cleansed heart, “Paul is indeed a servant of the Most High God, for he showed unto me the way of salvation”?

## DAUGHTERS OF PHILIP

Acts 21:8, 9

Philip the evangelist was one of the seven disciples set apart as a distinct body for the exercise of a particular ministry in the church (Acts 6:3). While blessed with four commendable daughters, whose names, along with the name of their mother, are not given, nothing is said of any sons that Philip might have had. Absence of any mention of Philip’s wife may imply that he was a widower, and that his four daughters cared for him and the home. We are safe in assuming that his wife had been a devout wife and mother, and that she had had a formative influence over the lives of her four daughters who became a remarkable quartet of gospel women who lived out their lives among heathen neighbors.

### *The Four Daughters Are Nameless*

It would have been interesting to have had their names, as we have those of Job’s three daughters, but they would have been non-existent in Bible history were it not for the one single verse telling us that they actually lived and occupied so important a place in the primitive fellowship of the church. Reticence as to their identity we accept as one of the wise silences of the Bible. Their names are inscribed upon the roll of the redeemed in heaven. “Not every flower that blooms on earth, and not every star that moves in Heaven has a name in human syllables; but all the same they smile and shine; and Philip’s four anonymous daughters represent countless numbers of the faithful, serving a generation who knows them not.”

### *They Were Virgins*

We think of these four daughters as being beyond the period of youth, women in the full ripeness of godly experience and exercising rare spiritual gifts, who had chosen a celibate life deeming such preferable for women called or specially qualified to be God’s interpreters, like Miriam of old. Roman Catholic writers regard them as the first nuns of the Christian Church. J. D. Alexander suggests that their virginity is probably mentioned,

“only as a reason for their still being at home, and not as having any necessary connection with their inspiration.” Paul sanctioned the unmarried life as presenting a higher standard of excellence than the duties of domestic life (I Corinthians 7:8-34).

### *They Prophesied*

Joel had prophesied extraordinary spiritual gifts to be bestowed upon both sexes, and to daughters as well as sons. At Pentecost Peter, inspired by this prediction said, “Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.” It may be that Philip and his four daughters were present on that historic day, shared in that marvelous outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and became by that divine unction, Christian exhorters. How those four handmaids of Christ “Who kept their maiden record white,” must have been blessed and used as they declared a God-given message, giving not only predictions of the future, but also expounding the Word for the enlightenment and edification of those who heard them. Because of the teaching of Paul regarding the silence of women as preachers in churches (I Corinthians 14:34; I Timothy 2:12), it is possible that Philip’s daughters confined their ministry to their own sex. If, and when, they accompanied their father in his missionary journeys, opportunities would come their way of preaching to women, both among Jews and Gentiles, and of assisting in the baptism of female converts. Their utter devotion to the Lord must have constantly cheered the heart of their father whose faith they followed. The church will never know how much it owes to its unknown, consecrated women.

### PAUL’S SISTER

Acts 23:16-22

Like Zinzendorf, Paul had one passion, namely, Christ, and thus the passage before us is the only reference we have to any of the Apostle’s natural relatives — his sister and her son — both of whom are unnamed. Whether his sister and his nephew were Christians, we are not told. The latter’s eagerness to save his uncle from imminent danger suggests he had a deep regard for him. How could mother and son be so closely related to the mighty Apostle, and not share his devotion for Christ! If mother and son were among his kinsmen at Rome whom Paul mentions (Romans 16:7, 11),



then they might have come up to Jerusalem to keep the Feast. While there the son heard of the plot to kill his notable uncle, and thus became the means of his escape from death. Ever grateful for the assistance of those who loved him in the Lord, Paul must have been thankful for the nephew who came to him as soon as he heard of the intention of the Apostle's foes to get rid of him. Here, again, we wonder at the silence of Scripture as to the identity of many it mentions! Why does Paul give us the names of other women and their sons, yet withhold the names of his own dear sister to whom he must have been attached in childhood, now, probably, a widow, and her son?

### RUFUS' MOTHER Romans 16:13

There may be those who dismiss the last chapter of Romans as being just a catalog of names. In many respects, however, it is a most impressive chapter seeing it contains twenty-six personalities, all of whom are named with some of their relatives who also are nameless as in the case of the mother of Rufus. About most of the personalities we know almost nothing. That they had their joys and sorrows, burdens and cares, hopes and disappointments, trials and triumphs, can be assumed, seeing we all drink of the cup of human experience. What is evident is the fact that all whom Paul mentions as being his friends in this most personal chapter were all followers of the Lamb, and had in some way served the Apostle, and who now receive his gratitude, greetings and salutations. A few of them may have been near relatives, his kinsmen. Handley G. Moule's comment on the chapter is worth quoting —

We watch this unknown yet well-beloved company, with a sense of fellowship and expectation impossible out of Christ. This page is no mere relic of the past; it is a list of friendship' to be made hereafter, and to be possessed for ever, in the endless life where personalities indeed shall be eternal, but where also the union of personalities, in Christ, shall be beyond our utmost thought.

Who, exactly, was Rufus, whose mother Paul wished to be remembered to? Mark speaks of Simon of Cyrene as "the father of Alexander and Rufus" (15:21), and there is a substantial tradition that the Rufus of whom

Paul speaks was Simon's son. As Mark wrote primarily for Roman readers the family was well-known to him, and so Paul, writing to the Romans, mentions the son of the cross-carrying Simon with whom he was so friendly. Paul speaks of Rufus as a chosen man in the Lord, "a saint of the *élite*" as Moule calls him, or "that choice Christian," as Dr. James Denny wrote of him. Doubtless Rufus was conspicuous in the service of the church. As a youth he may have seen his father shouldering the Saviour's cross to Calvary, and witnessed His death there, and from then on became His bond-slave.

Further, what are we to understand by the inclusion of the phrase in Paul's greeting to Rufus — "and his mother and mine"? Did he have two mothers in mind, Rufus' and his own mother? Above all unknown mothers in the Bible, Paul's mother is the one whose biography we wish we could have had. Brought up a Pharisee of the Pharisees, Paul's parents must have been thoroughly Jewish and antagonistic to the claims of Christ when He appeared as the Messiah. Did a sword pierce the heart of Paul's mother when she learned that her brilliant son had forsaken the Jews' religion and had become a Christian, or was she brought to experience His saving grace and power? Was she alive when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, as some writers seem to suggest, seeing that he mentions a few of his relatives in this epic chapter, who, with his mother, had found their way from Tarsus to Rome? The more general acceptance, however, of Paul's salutation — his mother and mine — is that Rufus's mother had been so kind to him on different occasions, mothering him in days of sickness and strain, and is remembered by the Apostle for all her loving attention. Says Herbert F. Stevenson in his *Galaxy of Saints* —

Through an overflowing of "motherly" love and care for the Apostle, a tender relationship had been established. The most sturdy self-reliant and ruggedly resourceful still need occasional "mothering"; and in this gracious tribute, Paul pays the mother of Rufus the highest compliment which even an apostle could confer.

Although the nameless mother of Rufus had played a mother's part to the probable motherless apostle in his hours of need, her name, along with her loving-kindness stands recorded now: "In either Book of Life, here and above."

NEREUS' SISTER  
Romans 16:15

Doubtless there were other godly women among “all the saints” whom Paul includes in his greeting to Nereus and his sister. The Apostle must have known the name of this woman as well as that of her brother, yet for some reason he left her nameless. We have glimpses of information about some in this roll of names, but total ignorance regarding others, save that they were in Christ. Seeing that Nereus and his sister are grouped together would seem to suggest that they were unmarried and remained as the only members of the family and that they cared for each other, Nereus experiencing, in the words of Christina G. Rossetti that —

There is not friend like a sister  
In calm or stormy weather;  
To cheer one on the tedious way,  
To fetch or if one goes astray,  
To lift one if one totters down,  
To strengthen whilst one stands.

We have thus reached the end of the list of the actual, yet anonymous women of the Bible, thick-set in chronicles of saints and sinners. Although unknown, they live on in their deeds whether good or bad.

## 4

# Symbolic and Representative Bible Women

Both animate and inanimate objects are used in the Bible to illustrate and enforce various aspects of truth, and women form a large part of animate beings employed to typify different vocations, vices and virtues. Even in our time female names are attached to certain phenomena, such as wind storms in America, where the last was known as Hurricane Betsy.

Capable of angel heights, or devil depths, the female sex has ever been employed to symbolize the vices or virtues of the human race. The ancient nation of Israel was pictured as God's adulterous wife; the coming federation of apostate religions is as "the great whore"; while the true church is figured as the Bride of the Lamb. Familiar and indispensable objects such as "ships" are often given female names and referred to in a feminine way as, for instance, "*She* is a sea-worthy vessel." Think of the applications of the precious term "mother" that we have. A true patriot speaks of the land of his birth affording him privileges and protection, as his "Motherland" —

Land of our birth, our faith, our pride,  
For whose dear sake our kinsfolk died,  
O Motherland, we pledge to thee,  
Head, heart and hand through years to be.

It is because so many necessary blessings spring from the great world upon which both man and beast are dependent, that we speak of it as "mother earth." Further, the first thing we learn to do after our birth is to speak, and so the language we learned from our parents and were brought to use is our own tongue, our "mother tongue." Because Jerusalem gave us the Christian faith it is spoken of as "The Mother of Our Religion," and the church which

Jesus founded as “The Mother Church.” Thus, the aspect of Bible female biography which we are now to consider is the way femininity is used in a symbolic and a representative fashion. In the interpretation and application of any Bible symbol or metaphor we must guard against extreme and unwarranted handling. Often we are tempted to read into symbols what their authors never intended. As the reader can see, we have followed the chronological sequence of these particular women in the Bible.

### SEED OF WOMAN Genesis 3:15; 9:9, etc.

Metaphorically, seed represents offspring, race, family. All descended from Abraham are spoken of as “The seed of Abraham” (Genesis 13:15; 17:8; Galatians 3:7, 29). When John wrote of the “seed” within the believer, he had in mind vital energy, or indwelling principle of the divine life by which the child of God is kept from known sin. After our first parents sinned, the one responsible for their sin received the first promise and prophecy of deliverance from sin. It was Satan who heard the initial message of the cross, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between *thy seed* and *her seed*.” At His incarnation, Christ came as “the seed of the woman,” to fulfill the predicted truth which Satan received after his deception of Eve. Born of a woman, Christ, by His death and resurrection, made possible freedom from Satan’s thralldom. Between “his seed” and all born of God through Christ by the Spirit, there is constant enmity. There are other legitimate applications one could make of Christ as the Seed.

### PAGAN GODDESSES I Kings 11:5, 33; II Kings 21:3; 23:6

Among the host of heaven worshiped by pagans, and, alas, by the Israelites through their contact with idolatrous nations, were female deities existing only in the imagination of those who worshiped them. Prominent among Canaanite gods we have —

*Asherah*

Worshiped as the goddess of fertility, Asherah was represented by a wooden pole bearing her name and planted in the ground (Judges 6:24; I Kings 14:22; 18:18; II Chronicles 15:16). Sacrificial vessels were used in her worship, which she shared with Baal (II Kings 23:4). Her sacred tree was spoken of as “an abominable image” and “a graven image” (II Kings 21:7). It was the image of Asherah which Manasseh set up in the Temple, and which was destroyed by Josiah (II Kings 21:7; 23:6). Priests of this goddess were slain after Elijah’s challenge on Carmel (I Kings 16:33). Asherah, which is the Hebrew form of Ashirtu, stood in Canaanite places of worship, and was periodically decorated by woven hangings by her female votaries (II Kings 23:7). The totem poles of Indians carried a corresponding symbolical significance.

### *Ashtaroth*

This plural form of Ashtoreth was the general name of the goddesses of the Canaanites, whose center of worship was the ancient Bashan (Deuteronomy 1:4; Joshua 9:10). Ashtoreth, parallel to Astarte, has been identified with Venus or Aphrodite, goddess of love. She also appears as goddess of war, and was worshiped in Sidon. Gross sexual orgies were associated with the worship of Ashtoreth (I Samuel 31:10; I Kings 11:5, 33; II Kings 23:13). The Queen of Heaven, to whom Jeremiah refers, was probably this same Phoenician goddess (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:15-30). The Roman Catholics erroneously worship the Mother of our Lord as “Universal Queen of Heaven and Earth.”

## PASSING THE LOVE OF WOMEN

II Samuel 1:17-27

There is no pathetic and expressive eulogy comparable in the realm of literature to this one that came from David’s lips when he heard of the death of Saul and Jonathan upon Mount Gilboa. Between David and Jonathan there existed a remarkable affection in spite of the most untoward circumstances, and when David compared his friend’s deep love as being beyond the love of a faithful wife for her husband, he expressed an affection that could only exist between two such noble natures united as they were in the fear of God. David’s intense personal sorrow over his friend’s death is

felt in his praise of him, “Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.” David had every reason to speak thus of Jonathan, particularly when the latter knew that the one he loved was to take the crown over his head, and yet to remain so loyal and loving to his rival.

KING’S DAUGHTER — HONORABLE AND GLORIOUS  
Psalm 45

In this great psalm of the king, we have references to his queen and daughters. As one of the prophetic psalms, it looks forward to Christ’s coming reign (Hebrews 1:8, 9). The queen is symbolic of church, the queen consort, whom, by an everlasting covenant Christ had betrothed unto Himself (Revelation 19:7-9). The daughters can be looked upon as individual believers, born from above, all glorious within. Theirs is an inherent beauty and holiness, and not merely an outward professed relationship with the King. What joy will be theirs when together they are brought into the palace of the King whose worship of Him shall be eternal!

RAHAB CUT IN PIECES  
Psalm 89:10

Rahab was not only the name of an actual female character (see RAHAB), but was also a poetical name for Egypt, conveying the idea of haughty and inflated arrogance. “Rahab sitting still” was a political caricature, but she was cut in pieces (Psalm 87:4). Rahab was most likely a Coptic name for a large sea or river monster, symbolic of Egypt (see Job 9:13, 26, 27), which God conquered and crushed (Isaiah 30:1-7).

DAUGHTERS AS CORNER STONES  
Psalm 144:12

What a beautiful simile this is of the daughters of those happy parents whose God is the Lord! (Psalm 144:15). The phrase “corner stones” only occurs once again in the Old Testament, namely, in Zechariah 9:15, where it is used of the corners of the altar. Hewn and polished (Isaiah 51:1), these stones have the resemblance of a stately palace, an image suggestive of the wall of which Solomon speaks (Song of Solomon 8:9) and implying unassailable chastity and virtue. Such daughters are “women of strength or

of a strong fortification.” Matthew Henry’s comment on the symbolism used here is suggestive —

By daughters families are united and connected, to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the cornerstones; and when they are graceful and beautiful both in body and mind they are then polished after the similitude of a nice structure. When we see our daughters well-established and stayed with wisdom and discretion — when we see them by faith united to Christ — when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.

In these over-sexed days, when so many girls are growing up with warped morals, how grateful godly parents are when they see their daughters as “daughters of the King,” whose inner beauty He greatly desires.

## MOTHERS LIKE MERCHANT SHIPS

Proverbs 31:14

Because of his prolific practice of polygamy, King Solomon knew more about women than any other man of his time. He certainly had ample opportunity to study them from every angle even though they resulted in his loss of the smile and favor of God. This may be one reason why he had much to say about women, especially in Proverbs in which the advice about women that he gave, but did not follow, is prominent. In Chapter Five, under “The Ideal Among Bible Women,” we have summarized what Solomon wrote about their vices and virtues in this “book of wisdom.” At this point we draw attention to one of the many ways by which he symbolizes the work and worth of a virtuous woman—“She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar” — which metaphor implies that she is ever on the lookout for opportunities of buying cheaply at a distance from home, instead of paying a larger price on the spot. This striking simile of “the merchant ship” describes the mother “whose price is above rubies,” and was analyzed in this sevenfold way by Dr. Fred John Meldau in a “Mother’s Day” article in his commendable *Christian Victory* magazine.

1. Merchant Ships Must Have a Pilot — A true Christian mother has Jesus Christ as the Pilot of her heart and home.



2. Merchant Ships Are Guided by a Compass and the North Star — True Christian mothers guide their lives and homes by the Word of God.

3. Merchant Ships Bring Precious Cargo From Distant Lands — True mothers transfer the blessings of heaven to the lives around them.

4. Merchant Ships Endure Storms at Sea — True mothers have divine protection when moral and spiritual storms threaten the welfare of her children.

5. Merchant Ships Are Ever Active, and Well-Stocked for Long Journeys — True mothers are always on duty to cheer and comfort, exhort and encourage.

6. Merchant Ships Head for a Harbour to Unload Their Cargo — True mothers seek to bring those around them into the harbour of safety and security in Christ. They want their children to be prepared for the high seas of life.

7. Merchant Ships Keep Nothing for Themselves. What they carry is for others. Reaching their destination, their goods are unloaded for the benefit of others — True mothers are unselfish and sacrificial, whose lives are spent for the enrichment of others, and who never fail to deliver the best of goods to those around them. Home, is ever a “sweet home” to its inmates when amid all harassing circumstances, when its queen is a woman after God’s own heart.

There are in this loud stunning tide  
Of human care and crime,  
With whom the melodies abide  
Of the everlasting chime.  
Who carry music in their heart  
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,  
Plying their daily task with busier feet  
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

May God grant us more homes where mothers drink daily of the well of spiritual water, and who, by their devotion to Him bring a serenity into the home safeguarding it thereby from breakdown amid the heat and strain of modern life!

## FEMALES AS SNARES AND NETS Ecclesiastes 7:26

Solomon experienced that none of his sinful follies had been so ruinous as snares in seducing him from God as idolatrous women (I Kings 11:3, 4; Proverbs 5:3, 4; 22:14). He knew that “God’s favor is better than life,” and that the women who had enticed him from God were “more bitter than death.” Solomon used “snares” to describe the trapping of birds, and of those who lay siege to a city (Ecclesiastes 9:12, 14). As for the “nets” which ungodly women employ to catch their fish, the same describe the fisherman’s craft (Ezekiel 26:5; Habakkuk 1:15). “Bands” represent a fettered condition (Judges 15:14). This disparaging estimate of the female sex Solomon cites, and the condition of life in countries where polygamy is practiced. Evidently with all the women in his harem, the king could not find a good one among them. He yet recognized the wholesome influence of a woman whose life was lived unto God and not unto the lusts of men (Proverbs 18:22; 19:14; 31:10)

## THE SHULAMITE Song of Solomon

Although Solomon composed 1,005 songs (I Kings 4:32), the one before us from his gifted pen was in a class by itself, which he named, “The Song of Songs,” meaning a very excellent song, or the most surpassing of his Songs. Because of the sexual atmosphere of this song, or poem, there have been those writers who have protested against its inclusion in Holy Writ, not only because of its love content, but also because it is destitute of any declared divine name or truth. Solomon’s “Song” is not simply an oriental love poem, full of exquisite beauty and charm, set amid beautiful pastoral scenes. It is also the portrayal of a lovely yet lowly maiden from her northern home who could not be swayed by the wealth and splendor of a gorgeous court life. She loved her beloved for what he was, not had, and gave him all her love, and was adverse to his sharing his love with any other woman.

Immersed in polygamy as Solomon was, and which in his heart, he knew to be against God’s law, it may be that he wrote this Song as a protest

against an almost universal practice, and as a portrayal of the purity and constancy of a pure woman's love and of the ideal relationship God ordained for a man and a woman. Today, human society is saturated, to its detriment, with lower ideals of free love, loose practices and easy divorces. The attractive Shulamite impressed upon the ladies (?) of the court her love and loyalty to the one man who had wooed and won her heart. That she triumphed can be gathered from her confident confession, "I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me," and many waters could not quench such singular love. Spiritual minds all down the ages have seen in this remarkable Song a symbol of the new union and communion existing between Christ and His true church — His Bride.

### CARELESS WOMEN

Isaiah 32:9-20

It would seem as if the prophet is here describing the sinful and selfish indulgences of the harem, somewhat unaffected by the reformation under King Hezekiah. "Women at ease," "careless daughters" were exhorted to repent before desolation overtook the country. They must cast away their sloth and careless living, strip themselves of their costly finery and clothe themselves in sackcloth — the outward symbol of inner repentance (Jonah 3:3-5). In the unabated luxury of these easy-living women of Jerusalem, Isaiah saw the precursor of the riches the city would be stripped of when the palaces would be forsaken as the result of divine judgment. One ancient writer understood by the careless women who cared little about the political signs of the times, the cities and villages of Judea (Ezekiel 16; Amos 6). In our affluent society, people have more leisure than ever. At ease and careless, they kill so many precious hours that could be used for the service of God in a world of sin and need. Alas, too many professing Christians are at ease in Zion and live carelessly! (Isaiah 47:8).

### THE LADY OF KINGDOMS

Isaiah 47:1-15

Here is an instance of a nation being personified as a woman. "The virgin daughter of Babylon," "Daughter of the Chaldeans," "The Lady of Kingdoms," "A Lady for ever," all describe Babylon itself, unconquered for

so long but about to be dethroned and made to sit in the dust as a menial slave. Stripped of its boasted possessions, Babylon would be as a widow bereft of husband and children, experiencing the full bitterness of widowhood. When Isaiah depicted Babylon as “a lady for ever,” he caricatured Babylon with all its pride and snobbishness and self-importance. But pride of possession became Babylon’s shame and ruin. Mackintosh Mackay, dealing with the denunciation of Isaiah, says that there are three types of woman’s pride Babylon manifested — Pride of Rank, Pride of Wealth, Pride of Intellect — and gives us these three Bible illustrations of them —

Michal — the wife of David, who loved *pride of rank*.

Salome — the mother of Zebedee’s children, who represents *pride of wealth*.

Miriam — the sister of Moses, who typifies *pride of intellect*.

Babylon was mistress of the world (Isaiah 13:19), “a lady of the kingdoms,” puffed up with pride of rank, wealth and intellect, but her utter humiliation was depicted and was experienced when her king was slain and she sat as a widow and childless because its inhabitants were to be carried away as captives (Isaiah 23:4; 54:1-5). Judgment overtook the lady of the kingdoms suddenly, “in a moment.” This was realized when in a single night Babylon was taken, unexpectedly, by Cyrus, the heathen king, whom God called His servant.

## WOMAN WHO FORGETS HER CHILD

Isaiah 49:13-16

Describing the preservation and restoration of Israel, God reminded His people that even in those dark days when it seemed as if He had been indifferent regarding their trials, that they were ever before Him, graven upon the palms of His hands. Although it is unthinkable that any mother could act in such an unnatural, cruel way toward a child of her womb and forget him, yet the fact remains that some mothers have this feeling toward unwanted children. But God assured Israel — and our own hearts — that His own are precious in His sight and are ever remembered by Him. Too often He is the One who is forgotten. In this same chapter, when Isaiah comes to predict judgment upon the foes of His never-forgotten children, he

asserts that God will make “kings their nursing fathers and their *queens* their nursing mothers” (49:23).

Can a woman’s tender care  
Cease towards the child she bare?  
Yes, she may forgetful be  
Yet will I remember thee.

### MOTHERS WHO COMFORT

Isaiah 66:13

Because God created both man and woman, father and mother, He combines in His own nature the highest and noblest attributes or virtues of the male and female part of His creation. It is thus that He manifests a fatherly pity toward His children (Psalm 103:13), and in the tender smile before us, the comfort of a mother for her dear ones. “Like as a mother comforteth her children.” How does a mother exhibit her comfort when her child is in trouble or pain? Is it not by her love, sympathy, consoling words, and willingness to go to the limit in helping her needy off-spring? What consolation the loving heart and warm breast of a good mother affords her troubled child! As God is the God of *all* comfort, the Source of all effective consolation, there is no comfort comparable to that which He offers His grief-stricken children (II Corinthians 1:3-7).

### QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19

Attention has been drawn to this heathen goddess (see ASHERAH). We pause here to show how Assyrian cult practices invaded God’s own precincts and by Jeremiah’s time became a flood. Even within the temple area the worship of heavenly bodies — sun, moon, planets and constellations—had been established. Ishtar, the planet Venus, appeared as the queen of heaven, who as morning star was goddess of war and as evening star was goddess of love and harlotry. This supposed queen was worshiped on the housetops of the city, and the whole family in every household was employed in the ritual of her worship—children would gather fuel, fathers would kindle the fires, and the women would knead the

dough and make cakes to her honor. How deeply rooted this system of false worship was can be gathered from what the exiled Judeans in Egypt said to the prophet: “When we worshiped the queen of heaven we were prosperous, and when we turned to Jehovah he destroyed our nation, henceforth the good old queen for us!” How explicit is the second commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me”! (Exodus 20:4, 5).

Is there a thing beneath the sun  
That strives with Thee my heart to share?  
Ah, tear it thence and reign alone,  
The Lord of every motion there:  
Then shall my heart from earth be free,  
When it hath found repose in Thee.

#### WOMEN THAT SEW PILLOWS Ezekiel 13:17, 18

The prophet was commanded to expose and testify against the women of his nation who were false prophetesses who made cushions to recline on assuming, thereby, the semblance of perfect serenity as they foretold to the people consulting them, their pretended inspired utterances. The pillows and magic wrist bands they made and sold were supposed to give the users a sense of security. These women who prophesied out of their own mouths and deceived people by the charms they fashioned and traded with, were threatened with deserved judgment. Akin to this supposed transference of protection and peace by means of handkerchiefs is the deceptive practice by some religious healers in their prayed-over and offered for sale, linen cloths. What days of religious deception these are!

#### CORRUPTED DAUGHTER OF WOMEN Daniel 11:17

The language Daniel uses here, and also in a previous passage, in which he speaks of the king’s daughter (11:6), must be taken in a symbolic and general sense. While efforts have been made to identify “the daughter” as a historical female, the context in both cases seem to suggest that by “her” the

southern kingdom is meant. Does not God liken the city of Zion unto a daughter (Jeremiah 6:2)? (See NAMELESS WOMEN.)

WOMAN AND HER MEAL  
Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:21

For a full treatment of this parable of the housewife using her leaven and meal in baking, as well as an exposition of the symbolism of all Bible parables, the reader is referred to the author's work on *All the Parables of the Bible*. Briefly stated, the Parable of the Leaven represents degeneracy in power, a breaking in upon divinely ordered fellowship, and the corrupting influence of apostasy. Many women, like Mary Baker Eddy, founderess of Christian, Science, were guilty of mixing leaven, which in the Bible symbolizes evil, with the meal.

WOMAN WITH SEVEN HUSBANDS  
Matthew 22:25-32; Luke 20:27-38

The Sadducees, who consisted largely of the upper class of the Priesthood (Acts 5:17), were dead set against the doctrine of resurrection, arguing that it was not mentioned in the law — their only rule of faith. When they stated their case to Jesus it is most improbable that they knew of an actual female who had buried seven husbands, but thought up such an absurd illustration to press home their point. "Stress is laid on the childlessness of the woman in all seven marriages," comments Ellicott, "in order to guard against the possible answer that she would be counted in the resurrection as the wife of him to whom she had borne issue."

In His stern reproof of these rejectors of the Resurrection our Lord exposed the cause of their error. First, they had an imperfect knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures in which they professed to believe. They were blind to its advocacy of the future state. Second, they had an imperfect conception of divine attributes, and so were ignorant of the limit of God's power before which a thousand difficulties disappear (Mark 12:24). Marriage was ordained to perpetuate the human family on earth, but in heaven this ordinance ceases and the redeemed are like unto angels in respect of the immortality of their nature. They are called "the children of God," not only because of their character but also because of their nature,

seeing that they share the Father's immortality (I Timothy 6:16). As "the children of the resurrection" theirs is an undecaying existence (Romans 8:21-23).

### WOMEN AT THE MILL

Matthew 24:41

In this solemn message of His Second Coming in glory and judgment, our Lord not only describes the diversity of character existing in the midst of the closest relationship of life, but also the inevitable separation experienced when He returns. Using a scene He had often witnessed of two women engaged in the lowest form of female labor at that time, Jesus enforces His warning of separation based on character. Here were two poor peasant women grinding corn with their small hand-mill with its upper and lower stones. Week after week, year after year, these two females continued their monotonous routine of hard and irksome labor. They looked alike and worked alike but what opposite characters they were. One saw nothing but a grindstone, while the other had an inner hope enabling her to see beyond her treadmill existence to the glory beyond. Hers was a noble soul, and by grace she saw the mill transfigured as she sought to do her menial task as unto the Lord. When He returns, the woman whose drudgery imprisoned her, and made her insensible to eternal things is left behind to judgment, but the other woman who, although she endured the same prison-like experience yet could "soar like a bird into the blue of heaven's thoughts," was taken to be with the Lord forever. Relationship to Christ is not only a great determining factor of human life, it is also the guarantee of translation into His presence at His return.

### THE TEN VIRGINS

Matthew 25:1-7

Introducing his chapter on this portion, Alexander Whyte says, "Everything that our Lord saw on the earth immediately made Him think of the kingdom of heaven." He had known of an actual marriage to which prepared bridesmaids were ready to participate on such a joyous occasion, and other bridesmaids who, although invited, failed to join in the marriage because of their thoughtless neglect, and used such an incident to typify



what will happen when He returns. With this parable, as with all others, we must try not to spiritualize every detail given, but discover the true key of the parable and be satisfied with it. Broadly speaking, this Parable of the Ten Virgins teaches the necessity of readiness for the coming of Christ as the Bridegroom, and also the *inclusion* and *exclusion* that glad hour will manifest. (See page 237, *All the Parables of the Bible*.) What remorse will be for those who find a shut door and hear the dread word, “Ye cannot enter now!”

### SPIRITUAL MOTHERHOOD

Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21

Our Lord’s natural mother and brothers, concerned about the antagonism He was facing and of the efforts to take His life, came to advise Him to control and check His public ministry. In His somewhat stern reply, Jesus, who always acknowledged the duties of natural relationships, revealed that spiritual relationship supersedes them; that devotion to God and the fulfillment of His will comes before the wishes of those nearest to Him. All who know and obey the will of God are bound by spiritual ties to Jesus — who delighted to do that will — as His brothers, sisters and mother. These are the members of a family transcending and surviving an earthly family and represent the indissoluble bond of union between Christ and those related to Him by grace.

### WOMAN WHO LOST HER SILVER COIN

Luke 15:8-10

The key to the three incomparable parables Jesus tells in this chapter is to be found hanging on the door: “This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (15:2). While the characters He portrayed are representative as well as figurative, He doubtless recalled, as He told these parables, actual cases He came to know of as He lived out His life for thirty years in His Nazareth home. Many a time He had seen a tired yet happy shepherd returning from his search, carrying the lost sheep on his shoulder. Perhaps He remembered the day His own poor mother had lost a precious silver piece in the house, and how relieved she was to recover it. Then there was that fast, gay young fellow who wanted to see life, and whose prodigal

ways were well-known in the town. Thus, from actual life, Jesus took these three figures and clothed them in appealing parabolic form.

Common to each parable is the thought of something or someone lost but whose recovery brought much rejoicing. How the women who were among our Lord's listeners must have appreciated this parable of one of their sex who, having to live frugally and eke out her housekeeping money, was so concerned about finding the lost coin! They would also understand her emotions when discovering the piece of silver she called in her friends to rejoice with her; and likewise understand our Lord's application of the story that He had every right to ask us to rejoice with Him and with the angels over lost souls repenting of their sin and being reconciled to God.

Unlike the shepherd and the prodigal, what the woman lost, was lost at home. Are there not many, living in Christian homes, or who seek to worship and serve in a Christian church who are lost? Those nearest to us have hearts destitute of grace. They may not be as conspicuously sinful and degraded as the prodigal son, yet they are just as lost and need to be recovered by the same Saviour who came to seek and to save the lost. Further, the woman found her coin, and how God is pleased to use consecrated women for the rescue of those around them who are perishing in their sin.

## IMPORTUNATE WIDOW

Luke 18:1-8

In this parable in which Jesus teaches us that we ought always to pray and not give up, He vividly portrays a determined widow who brought an ungodly and unjust judge to his senses. The three figures Jesus sketches so admirably are the Importunate Widow, the Unjust Judge, the Divine and Righteous Judge. The object of the parable was to teach patience and perseverance in prayer. There may come occasions when it seems as if God disregards our petitions. We pray, and pray, but the heavens seem as brass. But we must pray *always*, that is, continually, just as the widow did not give up asking. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Ask is in the continuous tense, "keep on asking." We must pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). Further, we are "not to faint." Sometimes delay produces discouragement. If prayer is not answered we have the tendency

to lose heart, and hope sinks. But all prayer which the Spirit inspires must be answered in the Lord's own way and time. He is not like the reluctant judge, unwilling to help the widow, but He is ever ready to hear and answer our petitions if they are in accordance with His will (I John 5:14, 15).

DAUGHTER OF SION  
John 12:15; Matthew 21:5

Here our Lord uses "daughter" in a representative sense, and quoted from memory the prophecy of Zechariah, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem" (9:9). Daughter implies parents who brought her into being, and surrounded her with loving care and provision. God brought Jerusalem and her inhabitants into being, and blessed them with His favor, and raised them up a king, even His own Son, who will yet exercise a wider dominion than David or Solomon had (Zechariah 9:10). With Jerusalem as His seat of government, He will reign, "where'er the sun doth its successive journeys run."

WOMAN IN TRAVAIL  
John 16:20, 21

The figure of a woman in birth pangs is frequently used in the Bible to express divine truth (Isaiah 23:4; 54:1; 66:7, 8; Galatians 4:19, 27; Revelation 12:2, etc.). In our Lord's use of this delicate simile, He explains that the sorrow of the disciples over His departure from them would result in the birth pangs of joy. For as with a mother, the joy of maternity swallows up the pangs of childbirth. The pangs cease, but the joy continues. She forgets the one in the fullness of the other. The cross was at hand with its travail pangs, both for the Saviour and His disciples, but they would pass away and fullness of joy would come in the realization of the abiding presence of their Lord. Anguish over His being taken from them would only be temporary. When risen from the dead, their joy of His constant nearness would know no bounds. Many mystical expositors have interpreted our Lord's use of the woman in travail as signifying His death as the birth pang of a perfect humanity. Paul's use of the illustration indicates his heart pang for the sanctification of those Galatian believers (Galatians 4:19).

## UNBELIEVING WIFE I Corinthians 7:10-14

Among his various admonitions to the married, Paul has explicit instructions as to the matter of the unbelieving wives of Christian husbands, and vice versa. How is the unbelieving, non-Christian wife sanctified by her Christian husband? The sanctification or holiness Paul speaks of here is not that inward sanctification springing from the action of the Holy Spirit in the individual heart of the believer, but the consecration which arises from being in the body of Christ — the true church (Romans 11:6). Jamieson explains Paul's considered advice to imply that —

Those inseparably connected with the people of God are *hallowed* thereby, so that the latter may retain the connection without impairing their own sanctity (I Timothy 4:5); nay, rather imparting to the former externally some degree of their own hallowed character, and so preparing the way for the unbeliever becoming at last sanctified inwardly by faith.

## DIANA OF THE EPHESIANS Acts 19:24-41

This heathen goddess is not merely referred to as “great” because of the praise and admiration she received. The same was a standing epithet, a proper name, distinguishing her from other inferior deities bearing the same name of Diana or Artemis. The great goddess Diana resembled the attributes of Ashtoreth (which see). She symbolized the generative and nutritive powers of nature, and so was represented with many breasts. Her original temple was founded 580 B.C., and burned by Erostratus in 356 B.C. The second temple, built in the reign of Alexander the Great in Ephesus, the capital of Asia, became a renowned center of the worship of Diana and was the idol “whom all Asia and the world worshipped.” A lucrative trade was developed by the silversmiths in silver replicas of Diana. As the result of Paul's powerful ministry in Ephesus, not only were curious arts and books of divination burned, but the silver shrine of Diana trade also received its death blow. Through the intervention of the town clerk of Ephesus, Paul was saved from rough handling by the enraged silversmiths.

## WOMEN SILENT IN CHURCHES I Corinthians 14:33-35

There are differing and confusing interpretations of Paul's rules regulating the exercise of spiritual gifts. What the Apostle emphasized was that as God is the God of peace, and not of confusion, order must reign in the church (I Corinthians 11:1-22). Regarding the women keeping silence in churches, their ministry in public would be an act of independence, as if they were not subject to their husbands (I Corinthians 11:2-6; Ephesians 5:21-26; I Timothy 2:11, 12; Titus 2:5; I Peter 3:1). Wives were subject or "under obedience" to their husbands, and it was to them they must look for knowledge. They might have argued that if they did not understand some spoken message why could they not ask a question publicly so as to learn. Paul said "No! If you want information, ask not in public, addressing your questions to any enlightened brother, but ask their own particular husbands at home." What must not be forgotten about the imposition of female silence in the church is that the whole context is taken up with speaking and prophesying in tongues, and of questions being asked to the interpretation of same. The church owes a great deal to the effective public ministry of consecrated women.

## WOMEN PROFESSING GODLINESS I Timothy 2:9-15

Professed godliness had to be practiced godliness. Inner belief must express itself in outward behavior. When attending the church, the women, as worshipers, had to be "adorned with neatness of apparel and modesty of demeanour, and the holy reputation of kind deeds." They had to avoid anything that would attract attention, such as showy ornaments or conspicuous dress or an unusual hair-do. As devout Christian women, they had to practice sobriety and shy away from anything unbecoming about their apparel which would distract the thoughts of the assembled worshipers. Their dress and demeanor had to be in the Spirit. In this modern age when in our affluent society we seem to be fashion-crazy, we certainly have need to think anew about this question of seemly, quiet apparel, in our gatherings for divine worship.

## IDLE WOMEN I Timothy 5:11-13

Dealing with dangers and faults to be guarded against in the church, Paul has some pertinent things to say about young widows who after their grief become restive, and lose their love for Him who promised to be as a Husband to the widow, and expose themselves to God's corrective judgment for casting off their vows to Him.

As they go about from house to house they learn to be idlers, and not only idlers but gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say *and* talking of things they should not mention (*Amplified Bible*).

Instead of using their widowhood for the highest purpose, and as "widows indeed" visiting needy homes, with their object of consoling the sorrowful and instructing those who desire a fuller knowledge of the truth, these backsliding young widows wasted their precious hours in indulging in frivolous and harmful conversation. Paul did not want these widows to withdraw from public service and live an ascetic life. Rather than waste their time and influence wandering from house to house, it would be better for them to remarry and have a home life glorifying to Christ. Remarriage is recommended as an antidote to idleness and to other evils (I Timothy 5:11-13).

## SILLY WOMEN II Timothy 3:6

In his exposure of the evil purposes of false teachers, Paul speaks of the stealthy way they worm their way into homes where weak women with consciences burdened with sin, are a ready prey to those who promise ease of conscience if they will but follow their erroneous teachings. These hypocritical professors of the Christian faith must have been numerous in the Apostle's day and renowned for the power they acquired over some of the women in the church at Ephesus. As these women lived in a state of comparative exclusion, fraud and deceit were necessary for the false teachers to enter their apartments. The term Paul used to describe these women whose good home life was often disrupted by the crafty teachers is one expressing contempt. "Silly" has come to mean lacking in sense, stupid,

weakness of mind. It was employed contemptuously by the Apostle to describe the spiritual immaturity of those women who in name were Christians, but who were impulsive and emotional, and lacking depth of character, became an easy prey to the lying doctrines and the false peace offered by those who had a form of godliness but who were destitute of its power. Christian women today have need to constantly pray for spiritual intuition enabling them to turn immediately from voices alien to the clearly revealed Word of truth.

## AGED AND YOUNG WOMEN

Titus 2:3-5

Among the charges to both sexes which Paul sent to Titus for him to deliver to the church at Crete, were those for aged women and the younger women in the Christian community there. The aged women received both positive and negative exhortations. Positively, their behavior had to be holy, and they had to be teachers of good things among young women. Negatively, they were not to be false accusers, and not given to much wine. Those elderly women of the flock, as with the aged men, must understand their grave responsibility and live as unto Christ. The word for “behavior” included an outward deportment arising from an internal relationship to a thrice holy God. In dress, appearance, conversation and manner, those aged women were urged to manifest the inner beauty of Jesus. In all things they had to foster a sacred demeanor. In their old age they must not be guilty of slander and backbiting, or of interference, but be examples to their younger sisters in the faith of truth, faith, sobriety and love.

As spiritual instructresses they had to teach the young women in the following ways —

*To be sober*, that meant, to practice self-discipline and control.

*To love their husbands*, and *love their children*. As women of Christ their first duty was to make their home life beautiful by the sacrificial love resulting in the forgetfulness of self.

*To be discreet*. Prudence and discretion were the jewels they should wear. What treasured virtues they are!

*To be chaste*. Although young, they must be modest, immaculate, pure from carnality.

*To be keepers at home*, or workers at home. They must not be gadabouts, but look upon their home duties, cares and sacrifices as God's will for their lives.

*To be good*. Because the God whom they served is good, then, like Him, they must be gracious, kind, considerate of others.

*To be obedient to their husbands*. Loving Christ their Master, they must recognize the law of subordination to the rightful head of the family. If all of these exhortations were carried out then the word of God would not be blasphemed. There would be nothing about their personal and home life to contradict their testimony, or bring shame upon the name of Christ. By their good life and corresponding good deeds they would so shine in their home as to bring glory to the Father in heaven whom they professed to serve. Never forgetting they were Christians, their lives would reflect the beauty of the Lord.

We can couple with Paul's charges to Titus what Peter had to say about the true marks of *holy women* who trust in God (I Peter 3:1-7). Along with decorum and the value of spiritual adornment, as against personal adornment, we have a further reference to the subjection of wives to their husbands. As to this obedience, Leighton says —

The Christian wife hath love to God though her husband be not so comely, or wise, or any way so amiable, as many other, yet because he is her *own husband*, and because of the Lord's command in the general, and His providence in the particular disposal of His own, therefore she loves and obeys.

## ELECT LADY

### THE WOMAN WHO WAS AN ELECT LADY

#### II John 1-13

The reality and names of the two women John mentions in his brief epistle — “The elect lady” (verse 1), and “thy elect sister” (verse 13), have given rise to endless discussion. Did he write to a particular, prominent woman in the local church or was his precious letter addressed to the church itself that John represented as a lady? As the Bible was written by plain men for plain people, that they might understand it in the most common-sense way, the explicit language John uses implies that the woman he



addressed was prominent in the vicinity of Ephesus, and being of a most worthy Christian character, she was worthy to receive an exhortatory epistle from him. We concur with the statement of Dean Farrar in his commentary —

I take the letter in its natural sense, as having been addressed to a Christian lady and her children. Some of the children the Apostle seems to have met in one of his visits of supervision of the churches of Asia. They may have been on a visit to some of their cousins in a neighbouring city.

There are several features of this Christian woman, who was well known, and well-loved in the local church.

### *She Was a Lady*

This is by no means an unscriptural term. It occurs four times (Isaiah 47:5, 7; II John 1, 5), and the plural, “ladies” appears twice (Judges 5:29; Esther 1:18); and is a word implying a higher grade of a woman — one possessing more dignity than others. Ladies means “princesses.” A bad woman is one having proprietary rights, rule or authority — the feminine correlative of “lord.” This is why the Roman Catholic Church refers to the Virgin Mary as “Our Lady.” In Britain, a lady is the wife of one who has received a title or honor from the Crown, or a woman of social distinction or position — the correlative of gentleman. The word John uses for “lady” is *kuria*, and as Bengel the commentator expresses it, “A title so lofty as *kuria* was rarely used even to queens.” The margin of the RV turns *Kuria* into a proper name, “Kyria” or “Cyria,” in use in John’s day.

As to the explicit absence of the matron’s real name, Ellicott observes that “it is not absurd to suppose that the dangers of the times, or family persecutions, may have made it advisable that both her name and that of the writer should be withheld.”

### *She Was an Elect Lady*

Paul uses “elect” in the same way when he speaks of Rufus, “chosen in the Lord” (Romans 16:13. See I Peter 1:1, 2). Not only was the lady elect in the sense of being of excellent character, but also as being with her children and her sister elect or chosen of God according to His eternal purpose, to

the inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away. Probably this elect lady was a convert of John's ministry and through him had come to know what it was to repose by faith in the bosom of the Father, and in this epistle standing "as a tall, white, graceful monument, erected to her memory, John extols her for her devotion to the One in whom she was safe and secure."

### *She Was a Hospitable Lady*

It is evident that she was well-known to the Apostle John, who most likely had been graciously entertained in her spacious home. As no husband is mentioned she was probably a rich widow with ample means to care for the saints of God who came her way. All around her, those who knew the truth (verse 1) shared John's expressed hope that he might have the joy of visiting the lady's home again to share with her the glorious truths he had discovered. It was because she was given to hospitality that John forewarned her about welcoming false teachers.

### *She Was an Exemplary Lady*

Milton wrote of "Ladies whose bright eyes rain influence." The elect lady, bearing her divine commission in her looks, not only had a countenance radiating an inner peace as one in Christ, but also a sweet influence upon those around. Her children, following her faith, walked in the truth, and because of pious witness and their godly conversation, were praised by John for their walk in love, walk circumspectly and worthily of their vocation. The Apostle knew that the correct Christian walk and witness came as the result of early training in truth and in love. No wonder John warmly congratulated the godly mother for having children proving their adherence to the Word of God by their daily conduct. They not only believed the truth but also *walked* in it.

### *She Was a Privileged Lady*

Further, this elect lady was highly privileged to have the veteran apostle, who called himself, "the elder" or "aged man" as her guide in spiritual matters, not only instructing her in the many facets of truth but also warning her against the nature and evil work of false prophets in sheep's clothing.

Safeguarding her against the peril of these deceivers who were guilty of deception, both of heart and life, John did not mince his words. These commissaries of an anti-christ were not only guilty of intellectual errors, but also of leading people astray in conduct. Their wrong thinking resulted in wrong living, and thus their whole influence was anti-christian (I John 2:26).

Their manifest error was related to the fact and reality of Christ's Incarnation. They denied that Christ had come as God manifest in flesh — which truth is the heart of Christianity. Of all errors Satan is responsible for, this is the most destructive. The crucial test of the orthodoxy of any person is the place he or she gives to Jesus Christ in the economy of God. So John urged the lady and her children not to be led away but, to guard themselves in a twofold way. First, by taking care not to lose what they already possessed; second, by the shunning of error have the satisfaction of a full reward. Because of their stability and firmness in the truth there was the present reward of an inner peace passing all understanding, and beyond the witness on earth, the overcomer's reward (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17).

In somewhat harsh language for John, the Apostle of Love, to use, he told the lady that as a sincere Christian she must not stretch out the hand of fellowship to deceivers, or entertain them in her home. Their presence would be dangerous in the family circle (II Timothy 3:6). The Roman Church, regarding herself as the "lady," seized upon this passage about the exclusion of those notable for their evil doctrine and deeds, to pronounce their anathemas, excommunications, and cruel inquisitions. "Receive him not into your house" may sound unchristian, but as Ellicott puts it —

These are no terms of ordinary politeness, which the Apostle does not forbid, but terms of close Christian intimacy and spiritual communion, the deliberate cultivation of personal acquaintance, fraternal intercourse. The highest sort of Christian brotherly love — love, that is, in its fulness and truth — can only find reciprocity in the same atmosphere of Christ, on the same basis, and in the same characteristics (II Corinthians 6:16).

To accommodate those who deprave the doctrine of Christ injures our own orthodox witness. To bid them Godspeed is to be a partaker of their corrupt deeds. Thus, John warns the matron that the only safeguard against terror is the ever-expanding knowledge of the truth, and obedience to it. The ground

of the Apostle's love for the lady and her family was that they cleave to the truth. "Truth" occurs 5 times; "Commandment," 4 times; and "Doctrine," three, and so making the whole truth of God as our home (verse 9) "abideth in the doctrine" is the adequate provision against all error.

We have every confidence that the elect lady valued the spiritual advice of her aged friend and teacher and followed his practical counsel of keeping close to Christ by keeping close to His truth. How appropriate and necessary is the apostolic exhortation for the saints in our own apostate age! Alone on the Patmos isle, John, the old man, thinks of his dear friend at Ephesus, and thinks of all the blessed seasons of fellowship he had had in her lovely Christian home, and taking his pen sent the elect lady an expression so full of tenderness: "I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full." John's heart was full of things to write about, but he hopes for a time of unlimited conversation, and to experience the deep satisfaction of the interchange of spiritual thoughts and aspirations and experiences, writing materials were not able to supply. Living near the elect lady's sister, John would tell her of his letter, and so includes her family's best wishes, just as we express our love and greetings when we send a letter to a loved one away from us. Thus, "in transmitting this familiar message, John had a most instructive finish to what is throughout a beautiful picture."

## WOMEN IN THE APOCALYPSE

The last book of the Bible, being highly symbolic, perplexes a good many people. When they reach the Revelation in their Bible reading they skip it, and go back to other portions which they can more readily understand. But this should not be our attitude for the Book of Revelation is not wrapped in mystery but is a *Revelation* as it declares itself to be. We thoroughly disagree with Edith Deen in her most excellent work, *All the Women of the Bible*, that "the key has been lost to its apocalyptic symbolism." Surely the opening verse is explicit enough —  
The Revelation of Jesus, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified (or sign-ified) it by his angel unto his servant John.

As the book, then, is the unveiling of Jesus Christ in respect to:

*Time* — past, present and future (1:4);

*Relationship*—to the churches (1:9-3:22), to tribulation (4-19), to the kingdom 20-22);

*Offices*—High Priest (8:3-6), Bridegroom (19:7-9), King-Judge (20:1-15) —

He is the key or central theme of this dramatic book in which all events move toward a sublime consummation, “The world kingdom of our Lord and His Christ has come.”

We recognize how varied symbols crowd the pages of this book, which is a prophecy (1:3). But a simple guide to help us in an understanding of Revelation is the fact that whatever symbol you come across is explained for you in some other part of the Bible — which is its own interpreter. Thus, all you need is a good, serviceable Bible Concordance so that when you come to a symbol you can trace its usage throughout Scripture and thereby discover what truth the symbol or metaphor clothes. Gerhardt says that John, the writer, clothed his thoughts “in reverential and only suitable drapery of ancient sacred language and symbolism, in the conviction that the reader would penetrate the veil and reach the sense.” Concluding this section of our study let us consider the symbolic and representative women in the book which was not written without tears, and without tears cannot be fully understood.

## JEZEBEL

### Revelation 2:20-23

As we have already dealt with this woman in the portion dealing with named women of the Bible (see JEZEBEL 2), all we need to do at this point is to briefly remind the reader of the way this sinister female is dealt with. Some writers adopt the reading, “thy wife Jezebel” and so regard her as an actual person, a false prophetess who sought to seduce the saints in the church in Thyatira. Other commentators regard the name Jezebel not as one belonging to an individual, but one representative of an apostate faction in the church. “It seems best to view the name as symbolical,” says Ellicott, “always remembering that the Jezebel spirit of proud, self-constituted authority, vaunting claims of superior holiness, or higher knowledge, linked with a disregard of — and perhaps a proud contempt for — ‘legalism’ and

followed by open immorality, has again and again run riot in the churches of God.”

In this longest of the letters to the seven churches, Christ utters a solemn warning to those who persistently indulge in spiritual harlotry. If they refuse to repent, then they must share the condemnation of Jezebel. How gracious the Lord is, even to the worst of evil-doers — “I gave her space to repent.”

To those in Thyatira who had not been influenced by Jezebel and her fornications and demoniac depths (verse 24) there was promised a share in the rule of Christ (verse 26). Works based on love play a prominent part in this letter (2:19, 26). Deeds and depths belong to Satan (2:22, 24). The Morning Star is Christ and all overcomers are fully to possess Him. What a future awaits all those who shun Jezebel and her evil ways and who have Christ in the heart as the Harbinger of the coming glorious day!

## THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

Revelation 12:1-17

Evidently there are those who have difficulty in identifying “the woman clothed with the sun.” The Roman Catholic Church says it is the Virgin Mary. Christian Scientists make the woman out to be Mary Baker Eddy, founder of this false cult. There are conservative expositors who identify the sun-clothed woman as the church, the Mother of us all. But the woman, we hold, is Israel. It is true that both Israel and the church stand closely related to Christ — Israel as the mother, the church as the wife. It was Israel, however, who became the mother of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2; Romans 9:5, etc.). A passage like Isaiah 54:1 is very expressive, “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.”

### *Clothed With the Sun!*

Here Israel is represented as the bearer of divine, supernatural light. She has supreme authority. Or the Sun can stand for Christ whom Israel will yet recognize as the Sun of Righteousness and who will surround her with glory.

### *The Moon Under Her Feet!*

As the moon is subordinate to the sun and derives its light from the sun, all Israel's glory and influence are derived from the One who brought her into being. The moon shines at night and Israel is to give a light, a bright witness, amid the world's gathering darkness.

### *A Crown of Twelve Stars on Her Head*

By the twelve stars we understand the twelve tribes of Israel. In Joseph's dream (Genesis 37:9) the future glory of these tribes is symbolized in the same way. Israel's future glory and rule, therefore, are here portrayed. She is yet to be invested with the splendor and fullness of governmental authority on earth. Twelve, as we know, is the governmental number.

### *She Travailed in Pain!*

The metaphor of childbirth is common enough in Scripture (John 16:21; Galatians 4:19). With a passage like Isaiah 66:7 before us, we have difficulty in reconciling maternal anguish as applicable to Israel. "The travailing and pain refer to Israel's coming hour of trial," says Walter Scott. "But *before* the Great Tribulation the Messiah, the Man-Child, is born. The prophet Micah confirms this in a clear and unmistakable passage. After referring to the birth of the Messiah (5:2) he adds, 'Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel' (verse 3). The travail of the woman is at least 2,000 years subsequent to the birth of the Messiah and refers to her sorrow in the coming Tribulation. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came she was delivered of a Man-Child."

It only remains to inquire: Why then is the travail of the woman put in juxtaposition to the birth of the Messiah?

*First*, notice that the present lengthened period of Israel's rejection, coming in as it does between the birth and the travail, is passed over in silence in the chapter before us; it is a parenthesis, the history of which is not given in prophecy but found else-where, of course.

*Second*, it shows the deep interest the Messiah takes in His people. He thought of the tribulation, and made certain a conditional provision as to lightening it many centuries ago (Matthew 24:15-28).

*Third*, at the time in which our chapter has its place, the nation is about to pass into its awful sorrow, and the object of going back in this history to the birth of Christ is to connect Him with them in it.

The travail, then, indicates Israel's sufferings during the Tribulation. At present the Jews are being persecuted, but still darker days are ahead for God's chosen people. The last half of the Tribulation is referred to as "the time of Jacob's trouble."

#### THE RED DRAGON (12:3, 4)

Another tableau follows upon the first and is inseparable from it. We now witness the remarkable sign of "a great, red dragon." Without doubt this is a presentation of Satan in his worst character. John expressly identified the devil as the dragon in 20:2. Both Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar are spoken of as great dragons because of their cruelty and haughty independence (Ezekiel 29:3, 6; Jeremiah 51:34). It may be that the Old Testament crocodile or leviathan is the reptile depicted. The term is used of Satan only, in the Revelation, and suggests the hideousness and horror of his rule (verse 9).

Red, being a blood color, indicates the devil's murderous nature, who has been a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). Once the most beautiful of angelic beings, Satan is now and always will be the object of abhorrence.

As the ape of Christ, who, as the Conqueror, will wear many diadems, Satan is adorned with his crown of diadems. The seven crowned heads signify the cruel and despotic exercise of earthly power and authority, while the ten uncrowned horns stand for the future limits of the empire as distributed into ten kingdoms, and the rule of Satan is a ten-kingdom form. Satan delegates power and authority to the first beast who is similarly described in 13:1.

The tail, representing the most dangerous part of a dragon, is like a great comet in this monster (Daniel 8:10). As a lying prophet is likened unto a tail



by Isaiah (9:15), Satan's malignant influence as a liar and deceiver is herewith described.

The terrible spectacle of the dragon standing before the woman waiting to devour her newborn child is easily interpreted. It was not the woman but *her seed* the monster wanted to destroy, just as Pharaoh tried to devour all the male children of Israel (Exodus 1:15-22).

#### THE MAN CHILD (12:5, 6)

The man child or "male child," a son, a male, as the original expresses it, surely represents Christ who was born to rule (Genesis 3:15; Psalm 2:9 with Revelation 12:5; Psalm 110:1, 5; Daniel 4:26). Yet there are teachers who see in the man child a group out of Israel. The 144,000, for example, are identified with Christ in a special way and because of their relation to persecution, may well be treated as the child here. But the following prophecy of universal rule nullifies such an interpretation.

It was the Virgin Mary who brought forth the promised man child (Galatians 4:4, 5), and whom Herod tried to kill while He was under two years of age. Born as a king, Christ came into the world having universal dominion which He will yet exercise (Psalm 8).

The iron rule of the nations will be broken by Him who comes to shepherd them with an iron rod. Here the world "rule" means to "tend as a shepherd," and in this role Christ will break up the consolidated powers of the earth gathered against Himself and His people. With irresistible might He will mete out judgment to guilty kings and peoples in the West (Revelation 19), and then deal with those of the North and East (Isaiah 10). Further, this ruling with a rod for long-continued obstinacy until submission results in obedience, reveals the nature of His reign. The revolt at the end of the Millennium reveals what forced submission characterized the peoples of the earth.

The Ascension of Christ is before us in "her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9; 7:56). Nothing is here said of the death of the man child, seeing that He is connected with Israel and the rule of all nations, both of which are dependent upon His birth and Ascension to His throne. And yet, in that shepherd-hand grasping the rod will be the marks of the nails. In passing,

we discredit altogether the interpretation that we here have the rapture of those who are sufficiently holy when Jesus comes. Those who hold the “partial rapture” theory sometimes employ the last part of this fifth verse to enforce the erroneous doctrine of a selected rapture. All who are Christ’s, irrespective of their state, will be caught up to meet the Lord. If unfit, they will suffer in respect to their reward.

Between verses 5 and 6 we have the entire stretch of history from Christ’s Ascension to the Tribulation or the time of Jacob’s trouble.

By the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, a place of safety and sustenance is provided for the remnant. The rapid flight and journey of the persecuted woman is likewise aided by God. Between the interrupted statement of verse 6 and the resumption of it in verse 14 we have the episode of the war in heaven and the rejoicing consequent upon its success. The careful numbering of days, 1,260 in all, testifies to the Lord’s tender interest in His afflicted people. This last half of Israel’s week of prophetic sorrow will elicit constant care and provision on the Lord’s part.

The wilderness, of course, is sometimes used as a condition destitute of natural resources, a place of isolation. In Ezekiel 20:35, 36, we find the wilderness used, not literally and locally, but spiritually, as a state of discipline and trial among the Gentile peoples.

#### MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS (12:7-12)

After the complete picture of the first six verses given under the two “signs,” we come to the climax of age-long antagonisms. The Book of Revelation is a book of wars, and here in the war in heaven we have one of the most dramatic battles. At last the prophetic word of Isaiah is about to be fulfilled. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth” (24:21). The most significant of battles in all history is now to be staged. What a spectacle! Forces heavenly and hellish are to clash. In World War II we had the Allies and the Axis. Opposing ideologies are grouped together in this twofold way. Well, John represents the Allies — Michael and his angels; the foes — Satan and his angels! Of the issue there is no doubt. The declaration of final victory against Satan was given by Christ in

Luke 10:18 and John 12:31. Surely such a hope should nerve us to soul-saving activity.

#### THE WOMAN AND HER SEED (12:13-17)

Fiercely persecuted, the woman is forced to flee (verses 6 and 14), and is wonderfully assisted in her flight. She receives “*the two wings of the great eagle.*” We cannot agree with those who interpret these eagle wings as world powers of Babylon and Egypt (Ezekiel 17:3, 7). The eagle symbolizes God’s protection of His own. His past care and deliverance from impending danger are indicated in this way in Exodus 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:11, 12: “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.” “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.”

Fleeing from “the face of the serpent” (verse 14) offers a strong contrast to earth and heaven fleeing from the face of Him sitting on the Great White Throne (20:11). The crafty nature of Satan is emphasized in the effort of the serpent to destroy the woman by a flood. Earth swallowing the flood may represent those friendly nations willing to befriend the Jew, neutralizing and circumventing Satan’s wily method to energize other nations against the Jew. Such overruling providential frustrations will raise the ire of the dragon, causing him in his baffled rage to make war with the godly remnant in Palestine. Keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus Christ always “excites the. wrath” of the devil. “To make war” can imply every form of attack upon the saints, whether by persecution or war. Physical harm and evil of every kind of which the devil is capable is referred to under this technical expression (11:7; 16:14; 17:14; 19:19). But both the man child and God-fearing Jews are delivered from the murderous hate of the devil. What a chapter! No wonder Walter Scott concludes with these words: “In it are grouped perhaps the greatest events in this marvellous book. It is a chapter second to none in its range of subjects, and goes further back in its historical grasp than any other portion of the book. Who but God could have furnished such a connected grouping of events?”

## THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS Revelation 17:1-24

Chapters 17 through 20 are highly dramatic. In this section Christ, as the Conqueror, moves swiftly in the subjugation of all His foes. What fast moving action these chapters present! How majestic is the scene of the Omnipotent Lord taking unto Himself His power and reigning supreme! Once He rises to deal with all antagonistic elements, none can withstand His might. With a rod of iron, He breaks the strongest. Proud, arrogant rulers, both hellish and human, are dashed to pieces as a potter's vessel. Whether it be systems, cities, or citizens, everything and everyone contrary to His will and rule fall before His withering look and lash.

In this fascinating yet fearful portion we have the following sevenfold doom:

- The Doom of Mystical Babylon — Chapter 17
- The Doom of Material Babylon — Chapter 18-19:19
- The Doom of the Beast — Chapter 19:20
- The Doom of the False Prophet — Chapter 19:20
- The Doom of the Nations — Chapter 19:21-20:9
- The Doom of Satan — Chapter 20:1-3, 10
- The Doom of the Lost—Chapter 20:11-15

An introductory word on the close relationship existing between chapters 17 and 18 is necessary, seeing that both deal with Babylon, withal from different angles. Scant notices of Babylon's destruction are given in 14:8 and 16:19. What we have in Chapters 17 to 19 fills in all the details on God's judgment upon a guilty system. It is essential to take all these passages together, and read them as one, since they synchronize.

In Chapter 17 we have:

- Mystical Babylon
- A Corrupt System
- Judgment on Papacy
- Apostate Christendom
- The Whore and Beast
- Religious Pretension

Delight of the kings of the earth over the drunken harlot, mystery Babylon.

In Chapter 18 we have:

Material Babylon

A Doomed City

Judgment on Paganism

Godless Commercialism

God and Babylon

Worldly Pride

Rulers of the earth will wail and lament over the destruction of actual Babylon.

Other opposites can be traced by comparing these two chapters.

The twofold development of the chapter before us is clearly evident:

The Great Whore Dominates the Beast (1-6)

The Beast Destroys the Great Whore (7-18)

#### I. THE GREAT WHORE DOMINATES THE BEAST (1-6)

As a woman and a city are both used as symbols of the church (I Corinthians 11:12; Revelation 21:9, 10), so both figures are before us in this descriptive portion of apostate Christendom. In verse 18 the woman is identified as the city: "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."

The scarlet woman, one of the profound marvels of Scripture, is Satan's masterpiece of counterfeiting. What a travesty the mother of harlots is of the true church! The dream of some religious leaders, presently laboring for church unity, will be realized in the coming universal church controlled by the Papacy.

Believing as we do, that the chapter before us sets forth Romanism in its most powerful and pernicious form, the dominant force in apostate Christendom, let us seek to classify our material under convenient sections.

#### *Her Domination*

Pictured as "sitting," we note the woman's seat. She "sitteth upon many waters" (17:1); "I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast" (verse 3); "Seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" (verse 9). "Sitting upon

many waters” receives the following exposition by John in verse 15: “And he saith unto me, “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” The “many waters” therefore typify the vast multitudes of the human race over whom the woman had cast her spell. Ancient Babylon got its wealth by means of the Euphrates and its numerous canals for irrigation. And the Roman Church fattens on the nations she governs. “Sitting upon the waters” (Jeremiah 51:13), indicates that the great whore rules and dominates the nations religiously, just as the Beast does politically. Representing a vast religious system, the woman’s following is a universal one. And that the Roman Catholic Church is on the road to world-wide supremacy is a fact that none can at present gainsay.

“Sitting upon the beast” means that the harlot sits astride the Beast. She not only exercises religious dominion over the multitudes, but is also able to manage and guide the Beast. All vassal kings and human rulers, especially within the revived Roman Empire, are under her sway. Civil and political power are subservient to her rule and supremacy. And such thorough and complete subjugation over the vast imperial and apostate power headed up in the Beast is already in the making. Two distinct ideas are represented by the woman and the Beast. We can express the opposites thus —

The woman personifies corruption of truth,  
The Beast personifies open defiance of God;  
The woman embodies all that is licentious,  
The Beast embodies all that is cruel and ruthless.

Thus corruption and violence, which brought about the Flood (Genesis 6:11), are to reach their climax in the woman and the Beast. Seated on the back of the Beast, is a prophecy that the apostate church will be carried and supported by the nations, and will rule and reign with temporal power. As we shall see more fully when we come to the portion on “Romanism,” as a religious and political dictator, Rome’s influence will extend far and wide. Already Rome is working for that hour, when once more seated on the back of human government, she will seek to rule the earth.

“Seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.” This third aspect of the woman’s posture is capable of a twofold interpretation, which “the mind

which hath wisdom” will recognize.

First of all, the seven heads represent seven mountains or hills. Both Christian and pagan refer to literal Rome as the “seven-hilled city.” It is this fact that identifies the city and the woman as Rome, “The woman which thou sawest is that great city” (verse 18). Rome alone was the ruling power in John’s day. Therefore, the present tense “*hath* a kingdom” must signify Rome. Rome is fast becoming the seat and center of universal authority and influence, as is evidenced by the visit of the pope to the UNO, and by the fraternal meetings between the pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury which envisages a united church with the pope as its head.

In the next place, the seven mountains are the seven kings or successive forms of political government. Of seven Roman emperors, five “fell,” which can mean death by violent means, before John’s day. The five are listed as Julius Caesar, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. The sixth, who reigned as John wrote the Revelation, was blasphemous Domitian, who also was assassinated. He can be looked upon as the “one is.” The other, who had not yet come in John’s day, will be the seventh Roman head. The Beast will be the eighth, out of the seventh. While the Beast is distinctive in character and work, yet he continues the form of autocratic rule of the seventh head. And it is the woman who dominates this last sovereign expression of every anti-Christian movement and sect then in evidence, consolidated and controlled by Satan. The following contrasts might prove helpful:

*The True Church*

Chaste Virgin

Subject to Christ

Out of Heaven

God adorned (19:8)

Preserved by Christ

Eternal glory ahead

True Bride

Has heavenly calling

Christ’s Masterpiece

Indwelt by Holy Spirit

Mystery hid from ages  
Caught up in the air  
Exercises spiritual power  
Exhibits glory of Christ  
Comes out of the Cross  
Believes in direct access  
A called-out body

*The Mother of Harlots*

Great Whore  
Subject to Satan  
Out of the Earth  
Satan adorned (17:4)  
Destroyed by the Beast  
Eternal ruin  
Counterfeit Church  
Covets earthly possessions  
Satan's masterpiece  
Possessed by evil spirit  
Mystery of Iniquity  
Cast down to perdition  
Seeks secular power  
Glories in sensuous things  
Bows before a Crucifix  
Stresses human priesthood  
Apostate Christendom

As “the great whore,” Romanism represents a frightful system, hypocrisy and lust over the souls and bodies of men. It is also a term unfolding the licentious character of the apostate church in her last days.

*“Mystery”*

Such a word implies a spiritual fact hitherto hidden and incapable of discovery by mere reason, but now revealed. The union between Christ and



His church is a mystery. Likewise the union between the apostate church and the world will be the mystery of iniquity.

### *“Babylon the Great”*

This appellation of the woman suggests a widespread system of spiritual evil, which represents the culmination of all evils operating against the true church while it was on the earth. What we have before us in this seventeenth chapter is mystic Babylon. The next chapter presents us with commercial Babylon. In the seventeenth chapter the word “Babylon” is used for “Rome,” while in the eighteenth chapter we have actual Babylon. And that there is nothing forced or unusual in such a transfer of names is evident from Chapter 11, verse 9, where Sodom and Egypt are given as equivalents for Jerusalem.

### *“The Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth”*

The harlot’s name on her forehead is another sample of Satan’s mimicry. Rome is the mother of harlotry and of the world’s idolatries. The offspring of this mother of harlots will be numerous. Apostate Christendom will be the parent of all kinds of religions, idolatries and arts used by Satan to turn men from God. Under the figure of the mother of harlots we have religion at its worst and the source of all that is morally loathesome.

### *Her Fornication*

Two phrases describe the abominable nature of “the great whore,” namely “the wine of her fornication,” and “the filthiness of her fornication” (verses 2, 4). Fornication is illicit intercourse, and spiritual fornication is tantamount to idolatry. “With their idols have they committed adultery” (Ezekiel 23:37).

### *Her Ornamentation*

In the description John gives us of the luxurious attire of the harlot, Dr. A. T. Robertson says that the Apostle applies the finery of the temple prostitutes in Asia Minor. As the distinctive color of the woman is scarlet, it is not hard to identify the Roman Catholic Church whose official and

distinguishing color is scarlet. Scarlet is everywhere in this scarlet-colored church — scarlet bands, scarlet cardinal hats, scarlet robes for pontiff and priests. Altogether Rome has five different articles of dress of scarlet colors.

### *Her Persecution*

A bloody as well as a morally licentious system is indicated by the phrase, “I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs (or witnesses) of Jesus” (verse 6). What caused John to wonder was not the Beast’s cruelty (13:7), but that the woman inspired such diabolical persecution. That papal Rome has far exceeded pagan Rome in bloodshed and the killing of saints is a fact that cannot be disputed. It was secular power in the hands of the Romish Church that devised the unspeakable, hellish cruelties of the Middle Ages.

## II. THE BEAST DESTROYS THE GREAT WHORE (7-18)

The “I will show thee” now passes to “I will tell thee” (verses 1, 7). Explanation is now offered of the Revelation. John is given the divine interpretation of the mystery of the woman and of the Beast carrying her. The Apostle had wondered with the amazement of a horrible surprise. Now the earth is to wonder and admire outpoured judgment upon the woman and the Beast (verse 8).

A double mystery is revealed:

The Mystery of the Beast (7-14)

The Mystery of the Whore (15-18)

a travesty of the New Testament mystery “concerning Christ *and* the Church.”

### *The Mystery of the Beast (7-14)*

The woman and the Beast are treated separately, seeing they are distinct, although companions in wickedness and apostasy. With the woman we have ecclesiastical power. The Beast personifies civil power. Four phases of the Beast’s history are explained to John. In four, brief, crisp sentences John learns of the course and consummation of the greatest empire of the world:

“Was”

“Is not”

“Out of the abyss”

“Go into perdition”

### *The Mystery of the Whore (15-18)*

In the waters on which the whore sitteth there may be an impious parody of Jehovah sitting upon the flood. The waters which the Seer saw (verse 1) are explained as typifying “peoples and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” Here we have the immense moral influence of Romanism over vast masses of mankind.

“These shall hate the whore.” What abject desolation awaits the Romish Church! Determined to rid himself and his empire of the subtle and impoverishing influences of the harlot, the Beast turns and dismounts her from her exalted seat. The rulers of the federated empire strip the harlot of all her seductive, gaudy ornaments. The combined nations with their masterful head combine in hatred of the whore. The downfall of the great whore comes because of a sudden change in subject peoples. “Rome’s greatest danger lay in the multitudes which were under her sway.” And as it was when Rome fell, so will it be when Rome is revived! Not only is there loathing and disquiet for the harlot, and plunder of all her wealth and finery, but also her flesh is eaten. Flesh here is in the plural, and signifies masses of flesh, earthly possessions, the fullness of carnality. But the Beast and the ten kings, once the harlot’s admirers and slaves, are now her bitterest foes, and gorge themselves on her gathered possessions.

Further, she is burned with fire. In this step of graduated punishment there may be a reference to the legal punishment of abominable fornication. Harlots were sometimes burned.

Who or what the woman is, is revealed in the last verse of this chapter. The unfolding of the mystery of the great whore is given to John: “The woman which thou sawest is that great city which *hath a kingdom* over the kings of the earth” (RV),

Within recent years the Vatican and its area have been proclaimed a kingdom, and the pope is a ruler as well as the titular head of a religious system. Like surrounding kingdoms, Rome has her court to which nations

send their ambassadors and envoys. Papacy and Rome cannot be separated. Rome will ever remain the seat and center of the scarlet woman's authority. Strange, is it not, that in those days of terrible destruction from the air, during World War II, sacred shrines in many national centers were destroyed? St. Paul's in London was bombed and partially destroyed, but all during the late war, the Vatican in Rome was carefully preserved. But Rome's day will come, and such a delegate of Satan in religious corruption (16:19), will be forced to endure the hatred of God and man. Thus, the mystic Babylon of chapter 17 is Rome. And that Rome is before us is proved by the mention of the scarlet, color of imperial and papal Rome — by the topographical situation of the seven hills — by the reference to a golden cup, which is traced on medals with the self-condemning inscription — *Sedet super universum*\* — by the fact that when John wrote, Rome was the mistress of the world — by the fact that the false and corrupt system of Romanism has its capital in Rome.

### BABYLON THE QUEEN

Revelation 18:7, 8

In chapters 17 and 18 John reveals the character of Babylon, her relation to the Beast, and to the kings of earth in general, with details of her judgment. In chapter 17, the Seer is awed by the contemplation of Babylon's splendor and guilt. Here, the harlot is Babylon the great. But in chapter 18 she is Babylon the queen — a combination of worldly pride and religious pretension, and in her union with a world at enmity with God, is guilty of whoredom. The language describing the lamentation of the world over her gate is of unparalleled sublimity and pathos. Pride came before destruction for in the midst of her plagues she said, "I sit a queen, and I am no widow" (see Isaiah 47:7, 8). "Degraded from her exalted position by the kings of the Roman world," says Walter Scott, "she yet maintains her pride. Her spirit is unbroken. Her haughtiness is asserted in spite of the fact that she sits in the dust of her former grandeur, and that her final end is at hand." She still boasts, "I sit a queen," and with the vain hope that her queenly state and fortunes may be retrieved she exclaims, *I am not a widow*.

### THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE

Revelation 19:7, 8; 21:2, 9; 22:17

In present day Christian circles much confusion exists as to who or what constitutes the Bride. A year or so ago the writer heard a fundamental believer boast that he would give a thousand dollars to the person proving from Scripture that the church is ever identified as the Bride of Christ. This friend claimed that Israel was the Bride. The church, he argued, could not be the Body and the Bride at the same time.

There are still others, orthodox Christians, who believe that only those in their denomination are the Bride, and that all believers not in their close communion are simply friends of the Bridegroom. Evidently theirs is a spiritual aristocracy none can share unless they are prepared to enter their exclusive entrance into the privileged intimacy such as exists between a bride and her groom.

Israel was certainly espoused to God (note, *God*) and became His wife. Because of her rejection of His Word and will, Israel was abandoned as an *adulterous* wife. Later on she will become Jehovah's restored wife (Isaiah 54:6, 7; 62:4, 5). Those who advocate that Israel is the Bride erroneously teach that "wife" is her earthly title and "bride" her heavenly designation. But a study of the following Scriptures proves that God cast Israel off as a wife, and that it is impossible for Him to marry her as a "virgin" (Jeremiah 3:1-18; Ezekiel 16; Hosea 2; 3:1-5). Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, in their renowned commentary, remark, "On the emblem of the heavenly Bridegroom and Bride cf. Matthew 22:2; 25:6, 10; II Corinthians 11:2. Perfect union with Him personally and participation in His holiness, joy, glory and kingdom are included in this symbol of 'marriage'; cf. Song of Solomon everywhere. Besides the *heavenly* Bride, the transfigured, translated, and risen Church, reigning *over* the earth with Christ, there is also the *earthly* bride, Israel, in the flesh, never yet *divorced*, though for a time separated, from her divine husband, who shall then be reunited to the Lord and be mother Church of the millennial earth, Christianized through her. Note, we ought, as Scripture does, restrict the language drawn from marriage — love to *the Bride*, the Church *as a whole*; not use it as *individuals* in our relation to Christ, as Rome does in the case of her nuns."

*The Church as the Bride*

The portion in Revelation 19:7-10 describing the marriage scene in which the Bridegroom makes His Bride His wife, is worthy of full consideration. A woman, of course, only becomes a wife on the completion of her marriage to the man to whom she has been engaged or espoused. In this age of Grace, the church is the *affianced Bride* of Christ. At the marriage of the Lamb, she becomes His wedded *wife* (Ephesians 5:22, 23; II Corinthians 11:2).

The joy over such a blessed union will be mutual. It will be Christ's highest occasion of joy when His redeemed church, complete, is by His side forever. Then the completion of this union will also be the source of rejoicing and unending joy.

Evidently the church has to be made ready for this occasion. Now the earthly part of her is not ready. The militant church on earth is not without spot or blemish. But the Judgment Seat of Christ will bring about all necessary readiness, for there all adjustments and rectifications will be executed. Then she can don her beautiful wedding garments, described by John in no uncertain terms — fine linen, bright and pure.

This adornment is described as “being given unto her” (19:8). All we have comes from God (see 13:5). But the arraying is a double process. God donates the garments and the Bride must wear them. Fine linen implies that there is no mixture of human merit. The bridal array is white, emblematic of holiness. It is pure, that is, free from all earthly impurity. This adornment is also referred to as “the righteousness of the saints,” or, as the RV expresses it, the “righteous acts of the saints.” Thus it is clear that we have here, not Christ's imputed and imparted righteousness, which must be ours if we are to be included in the Bride, but the righteous acts, or works, of the saints themselves (Zechariah 3:4; Luke 15:22). Each saint must have righteousness, not merely be justified, as if he belonged to the Church in the aggregate. The saints together have righteousness. Christ is accounted “The Lord our Righteousness” to each believing one, the robe being made white in the blood of the Lamb. The righteousness of the saint is not inherent but “imputed.”

*The Church as a City*

Among the many marvelous scenes John witnessed was that of “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). In verse 9 this glorious city is identified as the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. The glorified church, then, is both a *city* and a *bride*. She is “the city of God” in that she represents the sum of perfected individuals. In her love and unity she is the “Bride.”

The Bride and the city are identical, thus the New Jerusalem is to be the home and residence of the Bride. She is to be the prominent center of the city and saved nations are to partake of her blessedness (verse 24). Her brightness is to supply the light they will walk in. Indwelt by her Lord, she will be the medium of blessings to the new earth (see Luke 19:17, 19). The church is to stand out as the most magnificent of all created works.

In the description John gives us of perfect unity, the church’s governmental relationship to the Lamb is noted. God’s eternal home is to be in the capital city of the new creation. Here is the center of divine presence and the government of all in the universe of God and the Lamb. With each view of the city the Lamb is named and the sevenfold reference (21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1-3) indicates that although Christ delivers up the kingdom of God, He yet shares it with the redeemed.

### *The Spirit and the Bride*

A brief word is all that is necessary on this last glimpse of the church in Holy Writ. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come” or “Come Thou” (Revelation 22:17). The combined call is addressed to Christ to come for His church, not for Israel, although she also will participate in the blessings of His return.

After granting John a panorama of coming events, Christ returns to His church with a final exhortation. “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the *churches*” (22:16). But in how many churches is the Book of Revelation testified to? Generally speaking, they are guilty of sinful silence when it comes to this closing book of the Bible.

The church collectively is before us in the “Bride.” Then the individual’s yearning for Christ’s appearing is expressed in the second “Come.” “Let him that heareth say, Come.” The appeal for the sinner to

partake of the water of life is based upon the return of Christ (22:17). Three times over in the chapter we have the promise of Christ to come again, and so the Holy Spirit and all true believers in the church call upon the Lord to fulfill His promise to return. John's reply to Christ expresses the desire of the Bride all down the ages, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Among the similes used of the church we have these three—*The Bride*, in which there is the thought of loving union; *The Body* (Ephesians 1:23; 4:4, 12, 16) implying the idea of a living organism; *The Building* (II Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21, 22) or *City* (Revelation 21:2; Philippians 3:20, RV) conveying the truth of an ordered unity.

Long ago John Milton, the blind poet, wrote, "Come forth out of Thy royal chamber, O Prince of all the kings of the earth, put on the visible robes of Thy imperial majesty; take up that unlimited sceptre which Thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed Thee. For now the voice of Thy bride calls Thee, and all creation's sight be renewed." It is to be hoped that this meditation has intensified your longing to see the blessed face of the Bridegroom, who, at His coming, will transform all His own into His likeness.

The Bride eyes not her garment,  
    But her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory,  
    But on my King of Grace:  
Not at the crown He giveth,  
    But on His piercèd hand;  
The Lamb is all the glory  
    Of Immanuel's land.

\* He sits above the universe.



## 5

### The Ideal Woman Among Bible Women

Among the many women whose imperishable records the Bible possesses there are a few who are conspicuous for their chaste and commendable characters. They are examples of womanhood at its best, and as nothing is said of any failure they might have had, it would seem as if theirs was “the white flower of a blameless life.” In fact, by way of comparison, the women of the Bible come out better than its men. It is satisfying to find very few despicable female characters portrayed in the pages of Holy Writ. In the last days and death of the Saviour, not one woman among those mentioned, acted in any harsh way, hurtful to Him who was born of a woman. Accustomed as they were to pain and sorrow they wept for Him.

In the “Foreword” of his *Studies of Famous Women*, H. T. Sell remarks that —

The *best* Bible women are well worth the most careful study as they are the acknowledged trail-blazers for the larger freedom of thought and action.

Then in his study of 21 of the most typical women, Dr. Sell considers aspects of their lives and careers which bring out in clear light their important contributions to the present high status, destined to go higher, of womanhood. Of the *worst* Bible women the same writer says that “human nature does not change — save to mark the dangerous shoals, quicksands and rocks of life, where their lives are wrecked, and which still exist as death traps.”

No man has ever lived who has had as much experience with women as King Solomon, who “loved many strange women.” Having 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines, all of whom it would seem were idolaters, we can readily understand how they turned away his heart from God (I

Kings 11:1-8). It was because of Solomon's gross adultery and idolatry that the kingdom he had raised to illustrious heights was so tragically rent in twain. Cleaving unto his hundreds of heathen wives in love (none of whom are named, apart from Naamah, mother of Rehoboam), Solomon could be expected to say something about the vices and virtues of women, as he does, particularly in the Book of Proverbs.

The strange women Solomon loved were "foreign" women, or women who were not Israelites. When men of Israel took wives out of lands not their own, they trespassed against the Lord. In Proverbs, however, the strange women Solomon writes about were actually harlots. "The son of a strange [RV 'another'] woman" (Judges 11:1, 12) is parallel to "the son of a harlot." In no other book in the Bible do we find so many references to loose women and grim warnings against any association with them, as in Proverbs (2:16; 5:3, 5, 20; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27, 33). Solomon knew to his own cost that "the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil."

Cognizant that woman was bone of Adam's bone and flesh of his flesh (Genesis 2:23), Israel's spiritual leaders always advocated respect for women, and were ready to praise their diligence, piety and qualities, which they valued more highly than their beauty. It is to be regretted that a notorious polygamist like Solomon did not illustrate his own proverb in his own life that, "He who finds a wife, finds a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22). Had he found a godly wife out of Israel, and remained the husband of one wife, he would have been more signally favored of the Lord. But because of the multiplicity of wives, his reign ended in tragedy and the forfeiture of divine favor. What a mightier spiritual force Solomon would have been had he had one prudent wife from the Lord! (Proverbs 19:14). It is interesting to trace Solomon's references to women in Proverbs. Having hundreds of women around him he learned a great deal about their influence for good or evil.

A man should always rejoice in the wife of his youth (5:18).

A man should not be enticed by an evil woman's beauty (6:25).

A man should never tamper with his neighbor's wife (6:29).

A man should never waste his substance on a harlot (7:10, 11, 12; 29:3. See Luke 15:30).

Clamorous, foolish women are empty-headed (9:13).

Gracious women retain their honor (11:16).

Lovely women without discretion are like jewels in a swine's snout (11:22).

Wise women build substantial homes (14:1).

Foolish women destroy a home (14:1).

Contentious women are like a continual dropping on a rainy day (19:13; 27:15).

Brawling women are not easy to live with (21:9; 25:24).

Angry women are never good company (21:19).

Adulterous women can be self-righteous (30:20).

Odious women ruin the peace of a home (30:21, 23),

Loose women are like snares and nets (Ecclesiastes 7:26; Proverbs 7:10).

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband (12:4).

The chapter on a virtuous woman (Proverbs 31) whose price is far above rubies, is a eulogy unsurpassed in classical or religious literature. In the original form it appears in acrostic form to render the portion more easy for committal to memory. Such a method is characteristic of some of the Psalms didactic in character (25; 36; 37; 119). Mystical interpretations of the virtuous woman have been made to signify the law, the church, the Holy Spirit. Here is Dr. Richard Moulton's arrangement of the delineation which Lemuel, king of Massa, gives us of a good wife —

*The Virtuous Woman: An Anonymous Acrostic*

- A. A virtuous woman who can find? For her price is above rubies.
- B. The heart of her husband trusteth in her. And he shall have no lack of gain.
- C. She doeth him good and not evil, All the days of her life.
- D. She seeketh wool and flax, And worketh willingly with her hands.
- E. She is like the merchant-ship, She bringeth her food from afar.
- F. She riseth also while it is yet night, And giveth meat to her household, And their tasks to her maidens.

- G. She considereth a field and buyeth it: With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
- H. She girdeth her loins with strength, And maketh strong her arms.
- I. She perceiveth that her merchandise is profitable; Her lamp goeth not out by night.
- K. She layeth her hands to the distaff, And her hands hold the spindle.
- L. She spreadeth out her hand to the poor: Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
- M. She is not afraid of the snow for her household; For all her household are clothed with scarlet.
- N. She maketh for herself carpets of tapestry; Her clothing is fine linen and purple.
- O. Her husband is known in the gates, When he sitteth among the elders of the land.
- P. She maketh linen garments, and selleth them, And delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
- R. Strength and dignity are her clothing; And she laugheth at the time to come.
- S. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; And the law of kindness is on her tongue.
- T. She looketh well to the ways of her household, And eateth not the bread of idleness.
- U. Her children rise up, and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praiseth her.
- W. Many daughters have done virtuously, But thou excellest them all.
- Y. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: But a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.
- Z. Give her of the fruit of her hands; And let her works praise her in the gates.

— Proverbs 31:10-30

From the above picture of a queen among women these prominent features of her character are noticeable and could be expanded by the preacher or teacher.

1. She is a commendable wife and mother.

2. She lives for her home and family.
3. She is constantly industrious.
4. She is self-disciplined and orderly.
5. She is a sharp business woman.
6. She has good, refined tastes.
7. She manifests the grace of hospitality.
8. She is charitable in time of need.
9. She is virtuous because she is spiritually-minded.

Some time ago the following excellent paraphrase of this portion in Proverbs by William J. Krutza was used in *The Sunday Times*. We acknowledge our indebtedness to such a strong, evangelical weekly for the reappearance of Krutza's most unique treatment.

### *They Call Her MOTHER*

Who can find a virtuous woman? for the value of her life is beyond monetary calculations. Her husband has absolute trust in her so that he has no need of satisfaction from other women. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

She keeps his clothing up-to-date, clean and tidy. She willingly works around the house. She provides variety at mealtime by wise selection and nutritious and delicious foods. She gets up early each morning to make his breakfast and sees that her children also eat properly.

She knows a bargain when she sees one and is always concerned about the future stability and supply of her home. The strength of her character is shown in her attitude toward her household tasks. She takes pride in a job well done even if she must work late hours to accomplish it.

She knows how to use a sewing machine and needle. She has a compassionate heart and hand toward those who have great needs. Those in her home especially benefit from her domestic talents. Her own clothing shows good taste and modesty. Even her husband is known by her concern for his wearing apparel. She often uses her household talents to provide extra income for her family.

She is known as a woman of honorable character. The humble expression of this character gives her an inner joy.

She is wise in her speech and especially knows how to say kind words. She is concerned about the interests and problems of all in her house. She is not a gossip or kaffeeklatscher. Her children are happy to talk about her to their friends. Her husband also praises her to others.

Other women have done great deeds, but this type of a mother and wife ranks highest.

Popularity is deceitful and glamor is shallow, but a woman who has personal contact with the holy God, she shall be praised. She shall receive great satisfaction from her labors and others shall talk about her good deeds wherever they go.

Matthew Henry in his comments on Proverbs 31:10-31 says that “this description of the *virtuous woman* is designed to show what wives the women should make and what wives the men should choose. . . . We have the abridgement of it in the New Testament (I Timothy 2:9, 10; I Peter 3:1-6), where the duty prescribed to wives agrees with this description of a good wife.” We heartily agree with Dwight M. Pratt in his article on “Women” in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* that, “Literature contains no finer tribute to the domestic virtues and spiritual qualities of women than in the beautiful poem dedicated to the gifted mother by King Lemmuel,” who some writers affirm is but another name for King Solomon.

The *Apocrypha* at greater length praises feminine virtues and beauty as the writer of Proverbs does.

Happy is the husband of a virtuous wife,  
The number of his days is doubled.  
A worthy wife is the joy of her husband,  
And he passes his years in peace.  
The virtuous wife is a good gift;  
She shall be given to those who fear the Lord.  
Rich or poor, her husband has a joyful heart  
And gaiety shines from his face at all times.

And again from Ecclesiasticus —  
Happy is the husband of a virtuous wife,  
And her understanding fatteneth his bones.  
A silent woman is a gift from the Lord  
And a well instructed woman is above worth.  
Grace upon grace is a modest wife  
And there is no price of a chaste woman.

—26:17-19

The inner and outer beauty of a good woman is praised thus —  
As the sun arising in the highest places of the heavens,  
So the beauty of a good wife shines in her well-ordered home;  
As the lamp shining on the holy candlestick,  
So is the beauty of a face on a stately figure.  
Like golden pillars upon silver bases,  
So are elegant feet upon firm heels.

—26:20-22

From the Jewish *Mishnah* we have similar tributes —  
A man owes great respect to his wife, for it is only through his wife that prosperity comes to a man.  
The death of a good wife is for him who loves her a misfortune as great as the rain of Jerusalem.  
A man should love his wife as himself and honor her more than himself.

J. R. Green, in his *History of the English People*, in the section dealing with “The Puritans” speaks of how the meanest peasant felt himself ennobled as a child of God. Green cites the portrait of a John Wallington, a turner of Eastcheap, who has left us this comment of his mother, a London housewife around A.D. 1600.

She was very loving and obedient to her parents, loving and kind to her husband, very tender-hearted to her children, loving all that were godly, much misliking the wicked and profane. She was a pattern of sobriety unto many, very seldom seen abroad except at church; when others recreated themselves at holidays and others times, she would take her

needle-work, and say, "Here is my recreation." . . . God had given her a pregnant wit and an excellent memory. She was very ripe and perfect in all the stories of the Bible, likewise in all the stories of the Martyrs, and could easily turn to them; she was also perfect and well seen in the English Chronicles and descents of the Kings of England. She lived in holy wedlock with her husband twenty years, wanting but four days.

Much as the Puritanism of the sixteenth century is scorned by many in our age of loose morals, society today could do worse than return to some of the Puritan principles, the adoption of which would make for a better world.

Praising as it does the value and virtues of noble womanhood, the Bible is not silent as to its condemnation of a debased womanhood. Judgment against unworthy women is most severe because of the influence they exert. Thus: *Amos* vigorously attacks the dissolute women of Samaria (4:1); *Isaiah* mocks and threatens the coquettes of Jerusalem (3:16); *Ecclesiasticus* strongly condemns wicked women —

There is no poison worse than the poison of a snake,  
And there is no wrath greater than the wrath of a woman.  
I would rather dwell with a lion and a dragon,  
Than keep house with a wicked woman . . .  
Grief of heart and sorrow is a jealous wife,  
And the whip of tongue that tells its grief to all the world.  
An evil wife is like a yoke of oxen in disaccord;  
He that takes hold of her has seized a scorpion.

—25:15, 16; 26:6, 7

In this sex-mad twentieth century, when women, generally, are sacrificing their characteristic femininity and nobility and are as nicotine-doped as men, it is encouraging to know that there are those Christian women—spinsters, wives and mothers—who strive to keep themselves unspotted from the world. Books are not written about their true love, loyalty, sacrifice and uncomplaining days. These precious women are writing their history in the lives of those around them whom they love and serve. Although often weary *in* their task — for theirs is no forty-hour week job — they are never weary *of* their task. They spend their lives unknown by the world in the narrow circle of their home within which they labor



unceasingly for God and others, but they will not lose their reward. God's eye is upon them as they live out their lives in the orbit of His will amid all the cares, trials and sorrows of the home. One day, when the books are opened, their devotion will be commended by Him who sees and knows all. We can apply to them the expressive verses of Alfred Tennyson on Mary of Bethany in *In Memoriam* —

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,  
Nor other thought her mind admits  
But, he was dead, and there he sits.  
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede  
All other, when her ardent gaze  
Roves from the living brother's face  
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,  
Borne down by gladness so complete,  
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet  
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,  
Whose loves in higher love endure;  
What souls possess themselves so pure,  
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

In keeping with all we have said regarding the characteristics of "The Ideal Woman," how apropos are the verses of Wordsworth on —

#### *A Perfect Woman*

I saw her upon nearer view,  
A spirit, yet a woman too!  
Her household motions light and free,  
And step of virgin liberty;  
A countenance in which did meet

Sweet records, promises as sweet;  
A creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food,  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles.  
And now I see with eyes serene  
The very pulse of the machine;  
A being breathing thoughtful breath,  
A traveller 'twixt life and death;  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength and skill;  
A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort and command;  
And yet a spirit still, and bright  
With something of angelic light.

## 6

# Aids for Women's Groups and Meetings

The design of this chapter is to assist leaders and speakers of women's groups and meetings to make Bible and Christian female characters applicable to women of today. To these weekly gatherings of women come wives, mothers and widows whose lives are shadowed with grief and for whom life has many cares, problems and heartaches. Many among them do not know the Saviour who, as He died, was solicitous about the future welfare of His own mother. For all such, the devotional, fellowship hour spent with kindred spirits is an oasis in the desert. It is also a season presenting the consecrated leader or speaker with magnificent opportunity of imparting spiritual uplift for many a trouble-laden woman.

Because of the heavy responsibilities of home life, and the influence of a woman's influence therein, gatherings for women should be of a bright and inspiring character and calculated to send them back home to live for God amid all their trials and tasks so that they can experience the sentiment expressed by Alfred Tennyson that —

The path of duty was the way to glory:  
He that ever following her commands,  
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,  
Through the long gorge to the far light has won  
His path upward, and prevailed,  
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled  
Are close upon the shining table-lands  
To which our God Himself is moon and sun!

Most suitable and suggestive literature for leaders of women's groups and mother's meetings has been prepared by the Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. First of all there are the volumes by Al

Bryant under the title of *Encyclopedia of Devotional Programs for Women's Groups*. Volume One, for instance, contains completely planned programs on a variety of themes. Then there are the three volumes by Lora Lee Parrot on *Programs for Women's Groups* and her companion volume on *Missionary Devotional Programs for Women's Groups* containing eighteen programs with the missionary slant. All of these most commendable aids follow a similar pattern of

Hymns to Sing,  
Scripture to Read,  
Meditation to Preach,  
Prayer to Offer.

With the publishers' gracious permission we herewith include a sample from each of the above programs.

From Al Bryant's most helpful collection we cite the following program for a Thanksgiving Day women's meeting —

#### GRATITUDE

Preparatory note: When planning this devotional period, prepare slips of paper with the following Biblical quotations. These should be distributed to be read at given intervals: Psalm 92:1; Daniel 6:10; Matthew 26:27; Mark 8:6; John 11:41; I Thessalonians 1:2; Philippians 4:6; II Corinthians 9:15; Colossians 4:2.

Song: "May Jesus Christ Be Praised"

Prayer: We thank Thee for bringing us here to praise Thee, O Father, for Thou art worthy above all others to be praised. Thou hast made us, O God, and hast given us a home on the earth. Thou hast given each one of us a work to do. Thou hast restored us in Thy fellowship and hast given us the blessed privilege of being co-workers with Thee. Instruct us in the art of gratitude. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Scripture: Luke 17:11-18

Devotional Talk: *The Art of Gratitude*

At the time of Jesus' ministry on earth, leper colonies as we know them today were unheard of. Unfortunates suffering from that dread disease dwelt in caves or huts outside the walls of city or village, usually in squalor

and misery. Even their shadow must not cross a wayfarer, and the cry that branded them was the one terrifying word, “Unclean!”

One day Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem and were traversing the road which was the shortest route from Galilee. It led them through Samaritan territory. Prejudiced Jews often preferred the longer, Trans-Jordan route rather than have any dealings with the Samaritans. But Jesus very often travelled the shorter route. This day as He and His disciples no doubt conversed together while they walked, they were conscious of the hush of the great out-of-doors, with only perhaps the soft pad-pad of passing mules or camels, or perhaps the far-off cry of an eagle. Then suddenly as they neared a Samaritan village a piercing cry rent the air as ten lepers emerged in the distance and the pleading wail met their ears: “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” It may be that someone had told them that Jesus was coming that way. If only they could reach the road as He passed they might feel the power of His healing. Jesus never refused a plea. When Jesus met them, He gave them a first lesson in faith in the form of an act of obedience: “Go into the village and show yourselves to the priest,” was His command. And as they went, the surge of healing within them quickened their pace. The nine sped on to health and liberty; the one, a Samaritan, halted to praise, and with the praise came the desire to retrace his steps to say thank you.

It took time to come back. It always takes time to be grateful. But gratitude is a virtue, for it helps the one who is thanked, and sends unconscious rays of healing into the mind and heart of the one who gives it.

Let us now search God’s Word, and in it we will find that here is much to be said about gratitude, and that it is usually linked with petition and praise.

*(Ask for the reading of Psalm 92:1.)*

The Psalmist knew the value of gratitude and calls it good.

*(Ask for the reading of Daniel 6:10.)*

It was a trying time for the statesman Daniel. Jealous nobles had formed a conspiracy against him which ended in a decree going out from King Darius that any person in the kingdom who made petition to any god or man save the King would be cast into a den of lions. All eyes were on Daniel, but “when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his

house . . . and prayed, and gave thanks before his God,” His petition linked with gratitude proved his key to protection, freedom and honor.

Not only the Old Testament, but the New Testament as well is full of testimonies to the value of gratitude. Let us hear some of them.

*(Ask for the reading of Matthew 26:27.)*

*(Ask for the reading of Mark 8:6.)*

*(Ask for the reading of John 11:41.)*

The whole life of Jesus showed forth gratitude. A thank you to God seemed the natural preliminary to every act. And it was the same grateful spirit that dominated the lives of His followers. Let us hear their testimonies.

*(Ask for the reading of I Thessalonians 1:2.)*

*(Ask for the reading of Philippians 4:6.)*

*(Ask for the reading of II Corinthians 9:15.)*

*(Ask for the reading of Colossians 4:2.)*

It was once said of an old saint that thanksgiving was the aria which interpreted the harmony of his whole life.

The return of the one grateful leper must have warmed the heart of Jesus, for by his gratitude the leper glorified God the Father. Moreover, the leper's gratitude brought upon himself further blessing when Jesus remarked, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

Song: "Oh, It Is Wonderful!"

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, we pause today in the midst of our busy lives to look up with heartfelt praise and deep gratitude for Thy manifold love toward us. We thank Thee for the wonderful universe in which we live, for life itself with the opportunities it affords. We thank Thee for Thyself — our Father, for Jesus Thy dear Son who died for us, and for Thy Holy Spirit who guides us. We petition Thee on behalf of those whose hearts are too deep in sorrow, or darkened by sin to be able to praise. May the reflection of Thy love through our lives bring hope and comfort to them, that they too might know the joy of praising Thee. Amen.

Then from the most popular *Devotional Programs for Women's Groups* we have selected this one on

## UNCONSCIOUS RADIATION

Suggested Music:

“Holy Ghost With Light Divine” (Reed)

“Yield Not to Temptation” (Palmer)

Scripture:

Psalm 131

Text:

“Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone as he talked with him” (Exodus 34:29).

Meditation:

The American Medical Association recently gave advice for people caught in an atomic raid. If you see an unusual brilliant flash of light in the sky, you are to immediately fall flat on your face and count slowly to five. If you are able to count to five, you may consider yourself safe from the radiation of an atomic bomb. Radiation can be lethal; but it also can be a blessing Let me explain:

Moses had been on Mount Sinai in conference with God. A great cloud separated him from his waiting people below. Finally as Moses came down the mountain to speak to his followers, they looked upon him and immediately saw a most unusual glow on his countenance. Moses did not realize it for the Scripture says, “Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone as he talked with him” (Exodus 34:29).

Whether we realize it or not, there is a definite radiation through our personalities. We cannot hide a display of the spirit which we have within our hearts.

Abraham Lincoln said that he would hire a man simply on his looks. Someone told Mr. Lincoln that this was not fair since a man was not accountable for his face. However, Lincoln answered, “Any man forty years of age is the maker of his own face.” Your face may radiate the goodness, kindness and gentleness within your soul; or it can radiate the hard lines of a soul marred by evil thoughts and acts.

Let me illustrate. Outside Stephen's Gate in the City of Jerusalem, down the hillside only a few yards is a stony area where we are told that Stephen knelt while he was made the first Christian martyr. The mob pelted him with stones until his poor body was black and blue. There were gushes of blood and groans that came forth. While they were stoning this man Stephen, nearby stood a young Hebrew man who held the coats of those who did this awful thing. Everyone of those new groans or new gushes of blood brought joy to this young persecutor, known as Saul of Tarsus. Saul was enthusiastic in persecuting the Christians.

Soon after, he received letters of authority that he might go to Jerusalem and other places to further the acts of persecution. But as Saul was on his way to Damascus he kept thinking about the face of Stephen. Stephen's face shone like that of an angel. Even in his dying moments, he lifted up his face and prayed, "Lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). Even though Saul of Tarsus was unmoved by the sermon which Stephen had preached, he could never forget that face which radiated love: Stephen never realized that his face was radiant, that there was an unconscious influence about him that shone out on Saul.

And so we must remember that each of us has a radiation through our personality. If we are filled with the love of Christ and have His spirit in us, it can shine through our lives. What you are is more important than what you do or what you say. For what you are radiates through your eyes and the lines of your face; it cannot be hid.

By discipline we may adhere to the Ten Commandments. However, radiation of a Christlike spirit is not governed by law. It cannot be put on. It comes only when a heart is filled with the love of Christ. It is the greatest single testimony we have, so we must guard it carefully.

Unfortunately, this Christian radiation can be dissolved. You can even lose it and not know it. The Scripture says, "And [Samson] wist not that the Lord was departed from him" (Judges 16:20). Samson was a handsome man who radiated faith and power everywhere he went. But he lost his power when he fell into the ruthless hands of a young temptress. We pick up the story in Judges 16:16, "And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon



mine head . . . if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like other men.

“And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent for the lords of the Philistines saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. . . . And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. . . . And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as other times before and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord had departed from him.”

The cruel Philistines bound Samson and took him off to Gaza where they gouged out his eyes and made him a slave. He ground the corn and furnished the power in the prison mills.

Many a person who one day had the power of Christ radiating through his personality is today grinding in the mill of Satan because he has allowed the Spirit of Christ to go from him.

Prayer:

We pray, our Heavenly Father, that we may realize the importance of our unconscious influence. Help us to realize our personality radiates what we are inside. May we never, Lord, be filled with bitterness or resentment which would reflect itself in our expressions to others, but keep us filled always with Thy divine love. In Thy Name we pray. Amen.

As a guide to an impressive missionary service for women we have chosen the following from Lora Lee Parrott’s book on *Missionary Programs for Women’s Groups*—

#### GOD’S WILL AND OURS

Suggested Music:

“Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life”

(By Frank Mason North)

“Work, for the Night Is Coming”

(By Annie L. Coghill)

Scripture:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

Poem:

*Thy Will*

To know Thy will, Lord of the seeking mind,  
To learn Thy way for me, Thy purpose kind,  
Thy path to follow and Thy guide find —  
For this I pray.

To do Thy will, Lord of the eager soul,  
To bring my restlessness 'neath Thy control,  
To give Thee, not a part, but all — the whole —  
For this I pray.

To love Thy will, Lord of the ardent heart,  
To bid all selfishness, all sloth depart,  
To share with gladness all Thou dost and art—  
For this I pray.

—ALICE M. KYLE

Meditation:

When David Livingstone was 16 years of age, he became obsessed with the dream of being a medical missionary to China. Through his long years of study which prepared him for the practice of medicine, he never forgot that vision.

But after David Livingstone had finished all his preparations and was ready to begin active service abroad, God stepped in to take a hand in weaving his destiny. An opium war had broken out in China which dissolved every dream of working in that land. During the dark days which followed the shattering of this dream for entering China, David Livingstone

went to hear Robert Moffat, missionary to Kuruman in Africa. At a great London church Livingstone heard Moffat tell of seeing the smoke from a thousand villages where missionaries or white men had never been. In one evening a new dream was born in the heart of David Livingstone. He now dreamed of those whiffs of smoke which streaked Africa's jungle skyline, and a passion came over Livingstone to invest his life in that dark land.

In private conversation, Robert Moffat told young David Livingstone, "Do not sit down in lazy contentment. Do not choose an old station. Push on to the vast unoccupied and unknown district to the north. In that direction, on a clear morning I have seen the smoke of a thousand villages. There no missionary has ever been. There, sir, is your field."

Knowing God's will for our lives is an important part of Christian living for each of us. Certainly this story from the experience of David Livingstone should give us new insight into the ways which God uses to direct our paths. Often what seems to be our shattered dream is actually the closed door which God uses to direct our feet in other paths. The Scripture says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Psalm 37:23).

But knowing God's will is not the problem for missionaries alone. Each of us faces this problem every time a new decision must be made. It is comforting to know that God's Word says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally . . ." (James 1:5). Besides the reliability of the Scriptures there are three ways in which we may assist ourselves in learning God's will for our lives:

1. We must learn to rely on our best spiritually illuminated judgment, and all the common sense we can muster. Thoughtless decisions and blind stabs in the dark are frustrating but spiritual common sense is like eyesight. The Scripture says, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but, understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). Also, ". . . for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8). In seeking God's will for our lives on major decisions, every Christian should learn the significance of seeking counsel from godly pastors, elderly Christians who have proved themselves by their own successful living, and other sources of help which illuminate our own best judgment.

2. We must learn to recognize providential circumstances as coming from God. Although it is difficult, we should learn the lesson that a closed

door may be God's will for us as definitely as an open door. Paul had this experience at Troas when it seemed every door which he himself had planned to open was abruptly closed by the inner check of the Holy Spirit. But God had purpose in closing these doors to Paul for in a vision the missionary heard the voice out of Macedonia which eventually took him across the Aegean Sea to be the first preacher of the Gospel in Europe.

3. We often learn God's will by an inner compulsion of His Spirit. Someone suggested that when a thing is right there seems to be a ring from within. Perhaps all of us have experienced times when the checks of the Spirit have directed us away from a dangerous path. If we are going to be directed by this inner compulsion, we must will to do His will. The Scripture says, "Not with eye service as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6).

One final consolation is this—that even when we miss God's best will in our lives, He does not forsake us. If God only loved us in times when we were at our best, certainly He would not have sent His Son to die on Calvary nor have planned the free gift of salvation, not conditioned by works. God's plan is one of co-operation between ourselves and Him. And this spirit manifested within ourselves day in and day out is the greatest assurance we can have for trusting God's purposes.

Prayer:

Our Father in Heaven, we pray that Thou wilt help us in all instances to overcome any tendencies to self-pity because of injustice which we have suffered. May we always remember that there shall be no temptation but such as is common to man and that Thou art able to deliver us from every trial and tribulation. Let us not take our blessings for granted and may we always be sympathetic toward those who are less fortunate than ourselves. In Thy Holy name we pray. Amen.

Following a similar plan of service, much of the material we have given in the volume before you can be adapted for women's meetings. Let us cite an example or two from the Bible's world of women. For instance, the story of Ruth could be used under the caption —

RUTH THE GLEANER

Opening Hymn: “O Worship the King”

Invocation: Gracious Father, we praise Thee for another opportunity of gathering ourselves together in the name and merits of Thy beloved Son our Saviour. Prepare our hearts for the further and fuller revelation of Thyself through Thy Word. Because Thou knowest all about our sins, sorrows and circumstances may this hour bring to us the succor and support, the grace and guidance we need. For Jesus’ sake. Amen!  
(The Lord’s Prayer could follow with all participating.)

Reading: Ruth 2:1-12

Hymn: “Simply Trusting Every Day”

Message: Use material found under the cameo of RUTH.

Hymn: “Loved With Everlasting Love”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we do thank Thee because in Thy portrait gallery of women there is one like Ruth who shone only by heart, and who, although she was poor, was yet conspicuous for her domestic affection. May grace be ours to serve Thee devotedly as Ruth came to do! If there be any among us who know Thee not, may the decision Ruth made be theirs — “Thy God shall be my God.” Enable us to emulate her noble example in coming to trust under Thy wings. May her God be our God forever and ever! Bless us in the name above every name, even in the peerless name of Jesus. Amen!

#### HANNAH THE PRAYERFUL

Hymn: “Sweet the Moments, Rich in Blessing”

Invocation: “Heavenly Father, we do thank Thee for Thy goodness in sparing us to meet together again in the name of Thy dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Enable us for the brief hour we have together for mutual worship and fellowship, to remember that Thou art in our midst. We commend to Thee our sisters who are not able to be with us. Break unto them the portion of the children’s bread, and bless them as Thou art to bless us. For Christ’s sake. Amen!

(Repeat the Lord’s Prayer if desired.)

Reading: I Samuel 1:9-19

Message: Use material found under HANNAH.

Hymn: “Father Before Thy Throne, My Soul Would Bow”

Prayer: We thank Thee, O Lord, for revealing Thyself as the God who hears and answers prayer. We have been meditating upon Hannah who waited upon Thee, and who did not wait in vain. By the aid of the Spirit enable us to reflect her reverence and manifest her utter dependence upon Thee. As Thou didst hear her heart’s cry and answer her prayer, so bow Thine ear and listen to the desires and longings of each heart before Thee. Teach us how to persist in prayer, and praise Thee. Thou dost grant those petitions in accordance with Thy will. For the sake of Him whose prayers were heard because He feared Thee. Overshadow us as we part and go our separate ways. Amen!

## THE GLORY OF MOTHERHOOD

(Mother’s Day)

Hymn: “O God Our Help in Ages Past”

Invocation: Gracious Lord, we magnify Thee for all that Thou hast been to Thy saints through succeeding ages. How unfailing Thou hast proved Thyself to be in the lives and experiences of those who trusted in Thee. Today as we think of those to whom we owe our life, and all that we have come to know through their faith and example, especially the love, devotion and sacrifice of our mothers, may our remembrance result in praise and gratitude for all that our mothers have meant to us. Make us conscious of Thy presence as we tarry together, and think not only of the glory and influence of godly motherhood, but also of Thyself who didst create the world’s first woman, and who didst give to the world a Saviour who was born of a woman. In His name. Amen! (If suitable, use “The Lord’s Prayer” known as “The Family Prayer.”)

Reading: Proverbs 31:10-31

Hymn: “Tell Mother, I’ll Be There”

Message: Choose any of the outlines or messages given in [Chapter 8](#) of this volume.

Hymn: “I’ve Found a Friend, Oh, Such a Friend”

Prayer: We thank Thee, Heavenly Father, because the perfection of noble fatherhood and sacrificial motherhood is found in Thee. Hast Thou not said that as a father pities his children, so Thou dost pity us; and that like as a mother comforts her children, so Thou dost comfort our hearts? We thank Thee for our mothers who, as daughters of the King, were the means of bringing many of us into His palace of Grace. For those of us who have mothers in heaven, prepare us for the glorious reunion above. But for the mothers still with us, may we ever remember our duty toward them. For those who are aged and infirm may there be increasing light for them in the eventide of their life. May Thy favor continue to rest upon them — and upon our hearts! The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen!

We trust these guideposts may prove helpful. For speakers who may prefer to work out their own form of message on a Bible character for use in women's groups or meetings, the hints given in [Chapter 7](#) on "How to Prepare a Biographical Study" may be of assistance.

Advantage should also be taken to adapt and apply the lessons women can learn from the faith and witness of noble-hearted and courageous women through the centuries. What a wealth of material in the numerous biographies of female saints and martyrs is at hand for a leader of women to use! A fascinating volume of this order published by Nelson and Sons, in 1882, but long out of print, is *Stories of the Lives of Noble Women*. The object of the eleven biographical sketches making up this book was "to fix upon women who have not been less distinguished by their domestic than by their public virtues; upon women who have been Christians 'faithful to the end,' and patriots firm in their loyalty to their country, as well as upon women illustrious as wives, mothers, daughters or sisters. . . . It is well that these examples should be kept before the eyes of the younger female members of our families; and that they should be encouraged to aspire to a high standard of duty, while not forgetting that their true happiness will always lie with the home circle." W. H. Davenport Adams, author of these stories uses as a preface, the lines of Tennyson —

The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink  
Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free;

For she that out of Lethe scales with man  
The shining steps of Nature, shares with man  
His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,  
Stays all the fair your planet in her hands.  
. . . O we will walk this world.  
Yoked in all exercise of noble end.

1. *The Steadfastness of Truth* — Story of Anne Askew.

In his *History of England From the Fall of Wolsey*, Froude says of Anne Askew that her name is written among those who serve heaven in their deaths rather than their lives. Perhaps it would have been truer to say that she was faithful in her brutal death at the earthly age of 28 because she strove to be faithful to heaven in life. With thousands of other martyrs the subject of this sketch is numbered among those who —

Have made an offering of their days,  
For truth, for heaven, for freedom's sake,  
Resigned the bitter cup to take,  
And silently, in fearless faith,  
Bowing their noble souls to death.

Born in 1520, at Kelsey, Lincolnshire, the second daughter of Sir William Askew, Anne became a young lady of great beauty, gentle manners, warm imagination and poetical ability. While particulars of her early life, education and history have not been preserved, we do know that an unhappy marriage forced upon her by a stern father, resulted in a loveless, cold and dreary home. During 1525-26, a copy of Tyndale's translation into English, which had just been completed, fell into the hands of Anne, and such was her thirst for the Word that she quickly discerned the falsehood of the doctrines of the Romish Church of which she had been a devout member. Conscious of what would happen if she renounced the creed of papacy, she took the step and identified herself with the Wycliffites. She separated from her ungodly husband, dropped his name of Kyme, and resumed her original name of Anne Askew.

When the day of her martyrdom came the shocking conditions of imprisonment and constant torture had so exhausted her that her foes were compelled to carry her to the place of execution, where Anne was burned to



death along with three noble male martyrs. As these burnings drew large crowds, an excited multitude rolled to and fro, like a wind-driven sea to witness a frail, pain-ridden saint die well. Just as the fire was about to be kindled, a pardon from King Henry VIII was handed her, but she refused it, saying: "I came not hither to deny my Lord and Master." The fagots were set ablaze, and Anne Askew, with "an angel's countenance and a smiling face," became another noble martyr to seal her testimony with her life's blood. Before she perished, like the Master she dearly loved, she prayed for her enemies —

Lord, I heartily desire of Thee that Thou wilt of Thy most goodness forgive them that violence which they do, and have done unto me. Open Thou also their blind hearts, that they may hereafter do that thing in Thy sight which is only acceptable before Thee, and to set forth Thy verity aright, without any fantasy of sinful men. So be it, Lord, so be it.

While languishing in the most horrible and dreary solitude of Newgate Prison, she wrote the following poem, so expressive of her faith and hope in God in spite of all she was being made to suffer —

*Anne Askew's Prison Song*

Like as the armed knight,  
Appointed to the field,  
With this world will I fight,  
And faith shall be my shield.  
Faith is that weapon strong  
Which will not fail at need:  
My foes, therefore, among,  
Therewith will I proceed.  
As it is had in strength  
And force of Christ's own way,  
It will prevail at length  
Though all the devils say nay.  
Faith in the fathers old

Obtained righteousness;  
Which make me very bold  
To fear no world's distress.

I now rejoice in heart,  
And hope bids me do so;  
For Christ will take my part,  
And ease me of my woe.

Thou say'st, Lord, whoso knock  
To them wilt Thou attend;  
Undo, therefore, the lock,  
And Thy strong power send.

More enemies now I have  
Than hairs upon my head;  
Let them not me deprave,  
But fight Thou in my stead.

On Thee my care I cast,  
For all their cruel spite;  
I set not by their haste,  
For Thou art my delight.

I am not she that list  
My anchor to let fall,  
For every drizzling mist,  
My ship substantial.

Not oft use I to write  
In prose, nor yet in rhyme;  
Yet I will show one sight  
That I saw in my time.

I saw a royal throne,  
Where Justice should have sit,  
But in her stead was one  
Of moody, cruel wit.

Absorbed was righteousness,  
As of the raging flood;  
Satan, in his excess,  
Sucked up the guiltless blood.

Then thought I, Jesus, Lord,  
When thou shalt judge us all,  
Hard is it to record  
On these men what will fall;

Yet, Lord, I Thee desire  
For that they do to me,  
Let them not taste the hire  
Of their iniquity.

In 1539 parliament agreed on six fundamental tenets, papal in character, to be used in the English Church. Failure to comply with these tenets meant death by burning. This Act of Six Articles became known as “the whip with the six strings; a whip which, wherever it fell, drew blood.” Anne Askew was one of those who refused to recognize the Articles and became a heretic in the eyes of popery. A clerk from the Court of Chancery, Wadloe by name, and a Roman Catholic, was sent to spy on Anne so that there would be sufficient evidence to imprison her. But Wadloe returned to his superiors with the testimony that she was the most devout woman he had ever known. “At midnight,” said he, “she begins to pray, and ceases not for hours, when I and others are addressing ourselves to sleep or to work.”

Ultimately, however, through the determined hostility of her own Catholic, estranged husband and the Romish priests, Anne Askew was arrested for having publicly said that she would rather read five lines of the Bible than hear five masses in the chapel. There followed examinations and persecutions as Davenport Adams fully records in his *Story of Anne Askew*. Opportunities to recant and save her life were scorned. Extreme torture was inflicted in order to change her faith, and reveal the names of others like herself whose only crime was to serve and obey God. In an age of horrors, the terrible cruelty she endured upon the rack was deemed unusual. But in spite of brutal inhumanity she steadfastly refused to renounce her faith. To

her callous-hearted tormentor she said, “My Lord God, I thank His everlasting goodness, will give me grace to persevere, and I will do so, to the very end.”

## 2. *Hospitality* — The Story of Lady Alicia Lisle.

Here is the record of another admirable lady who was burned to ashes, not because she defied popish doctrines, although she was a pronounced Protestant, but because of her untiring benevolence and generous charity. To be in need was the only passport required to the sympathetic heart of Alicia Lisle, who was born Alicia Beconsaw. The daughter of Sir White Beconsaw, a knight of illustrious lineage and unblemished character, Alicia married the son of Sir William Lisle, of the Isle of Wight. John Lisle was a man of outstanding courage, clear intellect and ambition. He became one of the judges of the High Court of Justice which condemned Charles I. Knighted, it fell to his lot as the President of the Court to sentence royal conspirators. After the restoration of Charles, Sir John Lisle fled to the continent. His home estates were confiscated, and he himself was shot to death on August 21, 1664 as he was entering the Protestant Church at Lausanne. His murder was at the instigation of Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, daughter of Charles I, in revenge of her father’s death.

Left a widow, Lady Alicia Lisle, with her three children, retired to Hampshire, and living in seclusion, devoted herself to acts of charity and munificence. Esteemed even by the Royalists of her country, she had a large heart, protecting Royalists and Cavaliers alike when in distress. When James II, with great cruelty, hunted down the rebels to his reign, two of these unfortunate men, John Hicks, a Protestant minister, and Richard Melthorpe, a lawyer, knowing of Lady Lisle’s reputation for hospitality, sought refuge in her ever open home. Had she known that her guests had been connected with the insurrection she would have been guilty of a capital crime. It is questionable, however, whether she knew that the needy men she sheltered were rebels. But the savage and implacable James II had no qualms of conscience about consenting to the cruel and shameful death of such a benevolent lady for so venial and amiable a transgression. When the soldiers broke into her home and condemned her for harboring the king’s enemies, Lady Lisle’s reply was, “I know nothing of them. I am a stranger to it, that is to the report which you make of them.” Searching the

house, the soldiers found Melthorpe concealed in a chimney. Lady Lisle was arrested on August 27, 1685 and had the misfortune to be arraigned before that callous monster in British history, the infamous Judge Jeffreys, whose name became the synonym for brutal cruelty and lust of blood.

In spite of her age and infirmities, no respect was shown Lady Lisle by Jeffreys, the cruel-hearted judge, at the tribunal. The jury felt that the noble woman was innocent of the charges leveled against her, and told Jeffreys so. With wrath that became uncontrollable he threatened the jury with dire consequences if they did not bring in a verdict of "guilty." Menaced and browbeaten, the jury at length, with evident reluctance, yielded to his threats and returned the verdict Jeffreys wanted. Throughout her severe trial Lady Lisle exhibited the courage and composure of a Christian martyr. Her only crime was her fulfillment of the apostolic exhortation about being "given to hospitality." On the day she was sentenced to be burned alive, she remained calm, and on September 2, 1685 met her terrible fate with resignation in the city marketplace at Winchester. Thus was completed the most barbarous murder of a barbarous age at the instigation of one of the most barbarous judges England has ever known. As Lady Lisle was about to die she handed the sheriff a parchment containing her innocence of the crime laid against her, and also of her eternal hope. Sentences from her long statement read —

My parents instructed me in the fear of God, and I now die of the reformed Protestant religion; that if ever popery should return into this nation it would be a very great and severe judgment; that I die in the expectation of all the pardon of all my sins, and of acceptance with God the Father, by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, He being the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes. . . . I forgive all the world, and therein all those that have done me wrong.

When Melthorpe came to be executed, he completely cleared Lady Lisle from the crime of which she had been falsely accused, and when William III came to the throne in 1689, he reversed the charge against her. Thus not a shadow rested upon the fair fame of a noble, generous and Christian lady whose remains lie buried in Ellingham Churchyard, Ringwood, Hampshire. Of Lady Alicia Lisle the lines of Donne were so expressively true —

Courage was cast about her like a dress  
Of solemn comeliness;  
A gathered mind and an untroubled face  
Did give her dangers grace.

### 3. *The Patience of Genius* — The Story of Charlotte Brontë.

Author Evans opens his last chapter with the paragraph, “Among the women of letters who lend so much lustre to the records of English literature, a foremost place will always be allotted to Charlotte Brontë, the author of *Jane Eyre*. As her life and works have been written about so often, and the latter popularized by stage plays and films, it is not necessary to linger long over Charlotte’s story. Her father was the Rev. Patrick Brontë from the County of Down, Ireland; and her mother, Maria, a woman of considerable mental power and much gentleness of disposition. Two daughters, Maria and Elisabeth died in childhood. Charlotte, her brother Patrick, and her sisters Emily and Anne were born in the vicarage at Thornton. Charlotte was only five years old when her mother died in 1821.

Left alone with his family, the bereaved husband, a godly minister, surrounded the motherless children with deep affection, all of whom became bound together with more than average love. They lived within themselves, and for one another. Endowed with more than average ability, the children grew up to appreciate the arts. They read all the books they could procure and between them would try to write plays, poems and romances. Charlotte became conspicuous as the guide, philosopher and friend to the rest. In spite of the frugal life and monotony of Haworth parsonage, Charlotte read widely and cultivated that faculty of close, keen observation and criticism, to which her brilliant novels owe so much of their power. All lovers of the gifted Brontë family are familiar with the many hardships Charlotte and her two sisters, Emily and Anne, endured not only at home but when away from the parsonage earning a meager livelihood as governesses and teachers.

It was the publication of *Jane Eyre*, one of the most powerful works of fiction given to the world, that brought Charlotte universal fame, and because of this great literary achievement and her works that followed, her name will endure as long as English literature itself endures. The death of

her revered father, then her brother and sisters left its mark upon Charlotte whose cup of bitterness was full to the brim. Those who knew her as she passed through the furnace of affliction, admired her self-restraint, sublime patience and sweet resignation to the will of God. To look at her calm, intelligent face indicating the control and firmness of a lofty nature and deep faith, the fine description of Wordsworth came to mind of —

A being breathing thoughtful breath,  
A traveller betwixt life and death;  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength and skill,  
A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command;  
And yet a spirit still, and bright,  
With something of angelic light.

It was in the spring of 1853 that Charlotte was united in marriage to a curate at Haworth, the Rev. Nicholls, and after a honeymoon in Ireland returned to Haworth to the quiet of a home life that was unspeakably happy while it lasted. Toward the end of the year Charlotte caught a severe cold which lingered through the winter, and the decline of physical strength alarmed her seeing there was the prospect of coming motherhood. In March, 1854, her end drew near, and she whispered in her husband's ear, "Oh, I am not going to die, am I? God will not separate us, we have been so happy." But, alas, the separation came speedily on Saturday morning, March 31st, and the solemn chime of the bell of Haworth announced that Charlotte Brontë, endowed with "the deep intuitions of a gifted woman, the strength of a man, the patience of a hero, and the conscientiousness of a saint," had entered the realms of eternal bliss. Dead, however, she still speaks through her inspiring and admirable works. The story of her life enables all women who learn the lesson of duty and the nobility of self-sacrifice.

The other *Noble Lives of Women* which Davenport Adams deals with in an absorbing manner are —

The Story of Lady Vere — *Matronly Excellence*

The Story of Elizabeth Gaunt — *The Charity That Endures*

The Story of Elizabeth Inchbald — *Mental Energy and Self-Reliance*

The Story of Lady Arabella Stuart — *Faithful to the End*

The Story of Lady Jane Grey — *Womanly Virtues in an Exalted Position*

The Story of Mary, Countess of Pembroke — *A Noble English Mother*

The Story of Queen Jeanne D'Albert — *A Heroic Life*

The Story of Madame Roland — *Woman the Enthusiast*

While not exactly Biblical studies, the lives of these famous women exhibit many Christian virtues, and their stories can be used with great effect in speaking to women. It will not be found hard to accompany any of these historical sketches, as well as the records of early female martyrs and also ladies among the Scottish Covenanters, with appropriate Scriptures, hymns and prayers.



## 7

# Biographical Study of a Bible Woman

That Scripture female biography ever proves a fascinating and fruitful aspect of meditation, is evident from the fact that books on the women of the Bible abound, as can be seen in the exhaustive Index which Edith Deen cites at the end of her own volume on all the named and nameless women of the Bible. A perusal of some 30 volumes which the writer possesses on such a theme, revealed that the majority of authors deal with 25 to 50 characters at the most, and in the majority of cases, the same women. But as we have already indicated, there are almost 200 named women in the Bible, and almost the same number who are unnamed. Thus the preacher or teacher has a wide field to work when it comes to biographical material.

The Bible revolves around personalities, and is the biography of humanity. Sometimes the biographies of men and women outside the Bible leave us cold. The characters portrayed seem to be too ideal. Theirs are heights we cannot reach. Nothing is said about their faults, weaknesses and sins. But with the Bible it is different for here are men and women of like passions as ourselves; and as Augustine expressed it, “The Sacred Record, like a faithful mirror, has no flattery in its portraits.” In an arrestive chapter in his volume on *The Joy of Bible Study*, dealing with “Composite Portraits,” Dr. Harrington Lees reminds us that —

The lives of men and women who speak to us from the pages of Scripture may be a veritable gold-mine of experience to us if we can remember the fact that they lived similar lives, and triumphed by faith, as the writer to the Hebrews reminds us — or, if they entered not into their land of promise, failed through disobedience or unbelief. All good biography is fruitful, but Scripture biography is singularly so.

Endeavoring to deal with any Bible character in a biographical way there are several principles to bear in mind.

First of all, it is essential to gather together all references to the person studied. This can be easily done with the aid of a Bible concordance. For instance, if Eve is taken, the Scriptures in which she is mentioned are Genesis 3:20; 4:1; II Corinthians 11:3; I Timothy 2:13. If these are written out in full on a slip of paper, and carefully scanned, all pertinent facts concerning the world's first woman can be noted.

Secondly, with all listed passages before you, check elements of power or weakness, success or failure, privileges or limited advantages and disadvantages; mistakes made and perils to be avoided, as well as help and pardon obtained from God. It will be found that the lights and shadows stand out in bold relief. Character and conduct are set forth in no uncertain terms. Angel heights and devil depths are displayed causing one to confess with Carlyle that, "Biography is the only true history."

Thirdly, the gaps must be covered as well as the wealth of detail given. It will be seen that some lives are more fully described than others. Where facts are meager, imagination or history of the times can provide expansion. Not much is said of Lot's wife, but a knowledge of Sodom enables us to understand why she was destroyed as she looked back to Sodom as the family fled from it. She left Sodom as a place, but Sodom was ever in her heart and she was loathe to leave it.

Fourthly, characters may be studied in a variety of ways. One can follow them consecutively, marking how strong yet vulnerable they were. Causes of success and failure can also be traced. Persons can be treated in a typical fashion as Jezebel is when John does so in connection with the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:20). What one must guard against is the tendency to over-spiritualize a Bible character. As Harrington Lees says in this connection, "It may be overdone, but sanity and spirituality taken for granted, it cannot well be denied that both our Lord and His apostles read the Old Testament, to some extent, in this way. The lives of individuals may be outlined and filled in by holy meditation and wise inference." As demonstration is worth more than description, let us take one or two illustrations of female biography.

*Mary of Bethany*, who is among the most renowned in God's portrait gallery, comes before us in Mark 14:3-9; Luke 10:39, 42; John 11:1-45; 12:3, all of which references must be carefully examined for a complete

cameo of one of the best among Bible women. She belonged to Bethany, a favorite haunt of our Lord. She was a member of a close-knit family, and along with her sister and brother, was loved of the Lord. She was of a deep, meditative frame of mind — devoutly religious with an intuitive insight into the mission of her Lord. She was extravagant in her preparation of Jesus for His death. Dealing with these and other traits in her character, the teacher could use Tennyson’s poem which we have quoted at the end of [Chapter 5](#). A dual keynote can be stressed. On the human side Mary was misunderstood, but on the divine side she was at the place of blessing when sitting at the feet of Jesus. Here is an outline combining this double trait —

1. Her misunderstood *stillness*—Luke 10:40 — understanding at Christ’s feet — Luke 10:39, 42; Isaiah 60:13.
2. Her misunderstood *search* — John 11:31, 32 — understanding at Christ’s feet —John 11:31.
3. Her misunderstood *service* — John 12:2-8 — understanding at Christ’s feet — John 12:3, 7, 8.

For a perfect example of how to deal with a female character, we go to *Biblical Character Sketches*, published by James Nisbet and Co., London, in 1896. This rare volume, long out of print, is made up of 13 male characters and 7 female characters of the Bible. Among the latter is a contribution from Dr. F. B. Meyer on Mary Magdalene, which one feels should be recovered for the benefit of Bible lovers today. Here it is in full —

“There is nothing to attract the modern traveller to the site of Magdala save the fragrance of this woman’s name. A squalid Arab village looks out from the south of the plain of Gennesaret on the same sapphire lake, with its encircling hills, but the joyous stir of life, the gleam of thickly-populated cities, familiar to her girlish eyes, are gone. How marvellous is the interest with which a human life can invest scenes in which it was nurtured!

“Thither, probably, the Saviour came, in the course of His itineracy of Galilee, and there expelled from her the seven devils, who had held her nature as a gang of pirates might seize a man and employ a vessel which they had torn from its legitimate use. Her case was one of those many unrecorded miracles which are concealed beneath the general statements of the Gospels, as when we are told, ‘They brought unto Him all that were

sick, and holden with divers diseases and torments, and *possessed with devils*, and He healed them.’ The miracles of the Gospels are but a fraction of those which He wrought, as He went about doing good and healing those oppressed with the devil.

“Tradition has been more than usually busy with her name, and has woven many a legend into the simple statements of the Gospels. With the majority of these we have nothing now to do; most of them were dictated by the desire of the enemies of Christ to load His name with contempt.

“There is that, however, which identifies her with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, whom, we are told, Jesus loved. But this is surely in direct collision with the Lord’s own statement that she came beforehand to anoint Him for His burying. This interpretation, placed by Jesus on her act of love, indicates that she had a closer sympathy with His intentions, and a deeper insight into his predictions concerning Himself, than any other human being. She probably realized all the tragedy of His death and burial as no one else of the little band which surrounded Him, and she would not have been likely to overlook His express anticipation of resurrection.

“The only other legend to which we need refer is one which has obtained great currency in the Western Church, and has discerned Mary of Magdala in the unnamed woman who anointed Jesus in the earlier days of His ministry at the house of Simon the Pharisee, who wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Some color is given to this tradition by the statement that out of Mary Magdalene Christ cast seven demons. Whatever that expression may mean — and there is no reason to dispute its literal accuracy—there had been, not improbably, some collusion between her and those foul spirits, both in disposition and habit, before they had been able to make her nature their home. Such are the barriers that the Creator has reared between us and the evil spirits which haunt even the heavenly places, that they cannot enter us unless we unbar the door and open it from within. And thus we infer from the possession of Mary Magdalene by so foul a crew that she had yielded to the solicitation of sense, had allowed her nature to be swept to unlawful indulgence before the current of unrestrained and unholy passion, and that on the wings of this wild hurricane the spirits of evil had entered her.

“Beneath the influence of Jesus these unhallowed passions had been succeeded by holy love. ‘She loved much.’ Her tears, her tender ministry to the beloved feet, the shattered box of ointment, all attested the strength and earnestness of her devotion. But, after all, there was a good deal of the merely human element in this. She ministered to His physical needs, waited by His cross keeping watch with Him till He expired, and hurried to anoint the cold, stiffened body with all a woman’s tenderness to a reverend and beloved teacher. And Christ sought to lift this love to a higher level, from the human to the divine, from sense to spirit, from earth to heaven. ‘Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended.’

“What a gracious development of character awaited that warm-hearted woman, who was destined to pass from passionate gratitude for deliverance, to the ‘Rabboni’ of the Easter morning, and finally to the reception of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost! ‘These all with one accord continued stedfastly in prayer, *with the women . . .*’ ‘And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.’

“There were, therefore, three stages in the development of her character. In the first place, *passion was replaced by love*. These two are too often confused in thought and ordinary talk; but they are essentially distinct — as distinct as the orgies of the groves of Astarte and the shrine of Aphrodite from the courtship of Miles Standish. Passion is always selfish, and brooks no obstacle in the way of personal gratification. It will tear up the very planks out of its home to feed its fires. Love, on the other hand, is full of reverence and respect and consideration. It will suffer the uttermost of pain rather than seek its own at the expense of another. It looks not on its own, but on the interests of the beloved objects of its solicitude. It is strong and self-restrained, and lives with the girded loin.

“Thus these two are mutually destructive. Let passion have its way, and love shows signs of consumption. It pines and withers. It cannot live in the poisonous air, like that which lurks in the tropic jungle or beside the fatal Congo.

“Jesus Christ comes to extinguish the lurid glow of passion. But His work does not stay with this, great and blessed as it is. A mere negation will not save. It is not enough to extinguish the unhallowed fires of passion from the altar by emptying on it barrels of water: a fire is still needed for the

sacrifice. And the true Prophet of Heaven must furnish the latter as well as accomplish the former, or He will fail to meet man's most urgent need. Thus the glory of our Master lies in this — He replaces the fires of hell by live coals from heaven's altar. He readjusts us with human relationships. He drives out the pirate crew, and fills the vessel with a heavenly one. Mary not only is delivered from the frenzy of wild passion, but clad in the white robes of stainless purity. 'She loved much.'

"But, in addition to this, *human love was lifted to the divine*. The love of Mary Magdalene to Jesus exhibits all those traits which we are accustomed to associate with woman's love when it reaches its ideal.

"It was so faithful. Men dread to fail in life, not for themselves so much as for the anguish which it will bring on those that love them. Often a man reasons with himself that to fail will alienate from him precious friends. This is true of some. They are hollow and superficial. Like the nautilus, they swim on the surface in all their glory and beauty in fair weather, but disappear at the first overcasting of the sun. But no man ever lost a true woman's love when he failed. Failure and loss and trouble only bring out a woman's noblest traits, and principally her tenacity of affection, which strong waters cannot drown. So Mary clung to the cross, the grave, the mangled body. 'There was standing by the cross of Jesus . . . Mary Magdalene.' 'Mary Magdalene was there, sitting over against the sepulchre.'

"A woman's love must always find something to do for its beloved. As long as a woman can nurse or minister, or get ointments ready, or come to anoint, she can endure her sorrow. She will put away the thought of what may come afterwards of blankness and despair by her occupation in doing something practical in the present. This saves her from entire collapse. It was this that made Mary so eager to anoint the dear body, and so agonized when it was not where she had left it. To her, that ministry was more than she realized, as a salvation from heart-break.

"And how brave it made her! She was indifferent to the perils of an Eastern city, not a fit place for defenseless woman while it was yet dark. She beheld with steadfast gaze the glorious forms of the angels, that else had filled her with panic. She did not hesitate to assure the gardener that she, lonely and weak, would carry off the body unaided, if only he would

show her where it was. Ah, woman's love, what will it not dare and do? The mother for her babe! The wife for the husband! The girl for her lover!

“Of course there was mistake — gross and palpable mistake — mistake that was almost culpable, for He had so often tried to explain each of these scenes, that His friends might not be surprised when they arrived! And yet through all there shines that blessed love, which, like the river in the prophet's vision, has done so much to sweeten the marshes and dead seas of our world.

“Ah, sisters, compete with us if you will in literature and science and business, but never let anything rob you of this marvellous faculty of holy love, the divinest gift of any that lingers amid the wreck and ruin of our fall — like the Virgin's Well amid the ruins of the Roman Forum, as old as Rome, but fresh and beautiful today.

“But this love could not satisfy. It clung to the Man, the Brother, the Flesh, rather than to the Word who had assumed it. Christ loved her too well to be willing to pass over this incompleteness. He is the true Gardener of souls, and when He finds a plant capable of the best He will not let it come short. If the highest ideal can only be realized through the use of the knife, He will not scruple to employ it. And so the sepulchre was vacated, the body was gone; those loving hands must not ever touch Him. Thwarted, frustrated, deprived of its object, the Magdalene's love was first stunned, benumbed, struck dumb with grief, then suddenly it saw

‘Gleaming on high, diviner things.’

She reached up towards the risen Christ; addressed Him in her mother-tongue, ‘Rabboni’; realized that though He were essentially unchanged, yet she must no longer know Him after the flesh, but enter into a spiritual relationship, which would give her deeper draughts of throne-water higher up the stream, satisfying divine capacities with the divine.

“So still does the Gardener of souls deal with us. He will not let His white flowers trail on the earth, lest they become soiled. He lifts them sunwards on trelliswork, but the process is sorely painful and against nature. The earthly objects to which we had clung are taken away. We cry out. We think we must die. We ask what there is to live for. Then He speaks about His ascension to the Father. Slowly we take in His meaning. We too begin to ascend. We set our affections on things above. We seek the things

where He sits at the right hand of God. As time goes slowly, very slowly by, we find that we have gained, not lost. The mould is destroyed, but the casting is left; the scaffolding is taken down, but the house is finished; the earthly and human are gone, but the heavenly and divine are ours for ever. All our love is permitted to entwine around some human object then all suddenly it is removed; but the wrenched tendrils are taken by a man's hand and gently taught to grasp the unseen and eternal. The sap ebbs for a moment, and then begins to return, and pulse and throb with an intenser energy than ever. Such things worketh God oftentimes with men and women.

*“But when the training is complete, the gains are great. Mary Magdalene came to anoint the dead; she found the living already anointed of the Holy Ghost. All His garments smelt of aloes and cassia, the perfumes of heaven, with which His Father had made Him glad.*

“She came to a Victim; but lo, a Priest, who was on the point of entering the presence of God for her, and all mankind.

“She came to the Vanquished; but a Victor over the principalities and powers of hell stood radiant there, the keys of Hades and the grave hanging at His girdle, the devil bruised beneath His feet.

“She thought she had come to put the final touch to a life of sad and irremediable failure; but she discovered that on that morning a life had been inaugurated which was destined to be endless and incorruptible.

“With what better response could she greet her risen Lord than by the cry, ‘Rabboni,’ He is Brother, but He is also King? Through the door of service we enter the temple of fellowship. The slaves of Jesus alone become nobles and friends. To obey is to be His mother, sister, and brother. Then we consort with His brethren and disciples, and wait in prayer and supplication, and tarry expectant in the upper room, until the heavens open, the coronet of flame encircles our brow, we are baptized in the fire of celestial love, whilst the power of the Holy Ghost enters to fill and flood the inner shrine of the spirit.

“When souls are thus baptized, they are proud to become the patron-saints and beacon-lights for other souls as low down as they once were. Do you not think that even if Mary Magdalene never fell so low as the fallen of our streets, that she is proud to be identified with efforts for their



deliverance? This is the only light in which we can find comfort from our past sins, that by them we have learned the steppingstones across the Stygian log, and have learned to point the way for those who are almost in despair.”

Biographical study convinces one that Scripture was not given merely to satisfy the intellect, but to enrich one’s own life, to quicken the conscience, correct judgment, reinforce the will and direct the feet. Allowing for differences of time and place, the temptations and possibilities coming to Bible women meet the daughters of Eve today. Their God is the God of modern women, who have a spiritual armory Bible saints did not possess. Women on this side of the cross and of Pentecost need not know shame and defeat in life. Christianity has supplied women with a full emancipation.

## 8

# Messages for Mother's Day

An annual celebration of the work and worth of mothers has become both a religious observance and a most profitable commercial occasion particularly in America where this day originated. As it approaches, the stores will be filled with eager shoppers, striving to find something unique, or accustomed gifts and cards and flowers, to bring a quick smile of appreciation to old lips, to light up old eyes. Gifts will be sent to mothers in distant parts.

While we can justify the observance of a Mother's Day on the grounds that the Bible is so full of admonitions regarding motherhood, and of the influence of godly mothers as they endeavor to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord, thereby making a wholesome and substantial contribution to human society, we must guard against the sickly sentimentalism and shallow eulogism and emotionalism frequently characterizing such a day. As the one great commission of the church is the glorification of God and the proclamation of His Word for the salvation and sanctification of souls, the mere eulogy of pure human virtues is outside her message. Extolling human qualities, as humanism does, is to contradict the teaching of the Word regarding the glorification of the flesh.

The aspect that must be stressed on Mother's Day is that God created woman to "multiply and replenish the earth." To mothers, then, is "the privilege of populating God's perfect creation with beings whose hearts were to be in full harmony with the thoughts of God who would in all their activities reflect the glory of their Creator, and who would in perfect bliss and holiness live on forever." Alas, when the first mother yielded to the seductive voice of Satan, motherhood came under the blight of God's curse! Yet immediately after the fall of Eve, there came the first prophecy and promise of an event which would again hallow motherhood. Through grace,

every woman bearing a child can rejoice in the fact that the babe of her heart is a manifestation of divine mercy and privilege. As the result of Calvary, motherhood has been sanctified and through the acceptances of the merits of Christ, the Son of Mary, women can bring into the world those over whom God has yearned from all eternity, and whose salvation He planned.

Further, mothers do not exist solely to satisfy maternal instincts and to have children they can nurse and fondle, but the bringing into the world of eternal entities—males and females — which are to live on for weal or for woe forever and ever.

One of the most magnificent features of God's work of Creation was the power He gave to all creatures and plants to reproduce after their own kind, a fact adverse to the theory of evolution. It was so with our first parents, Adam and Eve, to whom God gave the command, "Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Parenthood, then, is God's plan for a constantly growing and developing world, and every time a new life is brought into being, God as the Creator, is magnified. In Bible times barrenness was the saddest plight of women, particularly in Old Testament days when any given Jewish woman nursed the hope that she might become the mother of Israel's Messiah. Today an alarming number of marriages are childless both through natural and unnatural reasons. Manufacturers of contraceptive materials, and traders in illegal abortion, are growing rich over the desire of women to remain childless. Yet, it is still true that children are a gracious gift from God, as the psalmist reminds us —

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them (Psalm 127:3-5).

True, God uses mothers for the establishment and maintenance of human institutions in government and state, but primarily Christian mothers are for the purpose of sending forth into a sinful world those who will become the salt of the earth and permeate the world with Christian idealism. Mothers are, or were meant to be, the chief soul-molders, character-constructors, God's recruiting agents for the eternal realms of heaven. Both mothers and fathers are richly blessed of the Lord when they can approach the throne of grace praying in true sincerity —

With joy we bring them, Lord,  
Devoting them to Thee,  
Imploring, that, as we are Thine,  
Thine may our offspring be.

A store, providing suitable gifts for those who love the best, put out this acrostic of Mother —

**M** is for the million things she gave you. (Today's your chance to give something to her.)

**O** is only that she's growing old. (That's what happens to Mother. One never notices it until one day, she's a little old lady.)

**T** is for the tears she shed to save you. (Many's the tear. Don't make her cry today.)

**H** is for her heart of purest gold. (That heart has ever been filled with love for you.)

**E** is for her eyes, with love-light burning. (Have you ever seen them when deep down inside you, they weren't filled with love for you?)

**R** is right — and right she'll always be. (Who dares to say differently?)

For those who do not know the story behind the origin of Mother's Day, now observed by all English speaking peoples, we retell its humble beginning —

That fame often is fleeting—and the memories of most men and women short — has been brought home once more by the pathetic story of Anna M. Jarvis, who is the founder of Mother's Day.

If it hadn't been for the philanthropic spirit of a few Philadelphians who came to her rescue recently, the blind and penniless 83-year old woman would have been doomed to spend the last months of her life alone in a charity hospital.

It was over 60 years ago that Miss Jarvis got the idea of having a day set aside when men and women throughout the nation would pay special honors to their mothers.

Anna Jarvis' own mother, Mrs. Ann Reeves Jarvis, had died on the second Sunday in May, 1905, and that is why this particular Sunday has

been designated as Mother's Day. It was first celebrated in a tiny church in Grafton, West Virginia, the town where Anna was born.

Anna Jarvis was 10 at the time and attended the church with her parents and brothers and sisters. At the age of 20 she was graduated from Augusta Female Seminary at Staunton, Virginia, and returned home to teach in the public schools.

She also taught with her mother in the Sunday school of Andrews Methodist Church. During that time her mother laid plans to set aside a day in honor of the mothers of the world but never lived to see her work completed.

### *Move to Philadelphia*

On December 31, 1902, the father died and Mrs. Jarvis and her children moved to Philadelphia to live with a son, Claude. Three years later on May 9, 1905, Mrs. Jarvis died.

In 1907, Miss Jarvis invited some friends to her home in Philadelphia to commemorate the anniversary of her mother's death and announced plans to make Mother's Day a national observance on the second Sunday in May.

Next, Miss Jarvis wrote L. L. Lear, superintendent of Andrews Sunday school, with the suggestion the church celebrate a Mother's Day in honor of her mother.

On Sunday, May 10, 1908, the first Mother's Day church service was held at Andrews Church. Two years later, Governor William E. Glasscock of West Virginia officially proclaimed the first Mother's Day.

Although a sincere devotion and a deep realization of her loss undoubtedly were behind the movement, the real beginning of Mother's Day might be said to go back to the time just after the Civil War when Anna's own mother organized the Union and Confederate mothers of her little community in an effort to get the boys in blue and the boys in gray to be friends again.

Anna carried this memory on.

In those early days in Philadelphia, Anna Jarvis paid out of her own pocket to have carriages take old people and those who were invalids to church on Mother's Day. She bought and gave away hundreds of carnations — the emblem she herself had designated.

There were expensive trips abroad to spread the custom of Mother's Day in Europe. Anna wrote personally to editors, ministers, presidents and even to kings.

Gradually, as she got more and more wrapped up in the thing she'd created she lost contact with most of her friends and her only close companion was Elsa, the blind sister with whom she lived alone in a rambling Philadelphia house. There the two aging women kept the furnishings as they had been during their mother's lifetime.

The years went by and Anna's money dwindled. It was all spent on the cause that seemed to have become her one interest in life.

Claude Jarvis, a bachelor brother and a shrewd business man, thought that he had left both of his sisters well provided for in his will when he died in 1926. But as a result of various legal and technical complications, the Jarvis sisters failed to receive the inheritance the brother had intended for them.

They struggled along as best they could until the day when Anna Jarvis' eyes began to get dim. Finally she was nearly as sightless as her sister. By this time few people remembered that this shriveling little old lady once had been an internationally known figure.

No one paid any heed to the comings or goings of the woman anymore. But the doctor she finally consulted about her eyes was worried after he'd sent her home without hope of ever regaining the full use of her sight.

He asked a welfare worker to go around to find out if Miss Jarvis was getting proper care — not realizing that it was her responsibility to do the caring for someone who was worse off than herself.

There, in a big, chilly house the investigator found a true case of the blind leading the blind. And the two invalid sisters were near starvation when found. Anna Jarvis, the spinster who founded Mother's Day over 60 years ago, seemed doomed to a lonely and penniless old age.

Miss Anna had suffered a nervous collapse and was sent to the city hospital. Elsa was cared for by social service until her death in 1941.

And there the story might have ended with the woman who had devoted so many years of her life to honoring the world's mothers eventually dying alone and friendless.

But word of Miss Jarvis' unhappy situation finally came to a lawyer who had known her from the time when he was a little boy.

He called together the few men and women who still felt a friendly regard for the now helpless old lady and digging down into their own pockets they built up a fund large enough to move her to a luxurious private room in a sanitarium where her every whim would be provided for for the rest of her days.

When word got around about the way these sons and daughters of Philadelphia had rallied to help the founder of Mother's Day other people started sending contributions for her welfare.

Florists from every state in the nation, and from Hawaii, made voluntary gifts of money.

The makers of Mother's Day cards also contributed to the cause.

Some of the money donated was used to erect a memorial to Mother's Day and its founder. So widespread became the observance of Mother's Day that in 1934 the government issued a stamp bearing Whistler's portrait of his mother.

It is indeed appropriate to have a day set aside as one on which we can pay tributes of love and reverence to the mother who brought us into the world and nursed us through childhood and who loves us even unto old age. Mothers are honored because their children are their first thought and care. They are the ones to cheer us in our successes and console us in our defeats. We think of millions of mothers who saw their sons march out to war, many of whom never came back— others returned maimed for life. True, the sacrifice of the boys was great; equally so were the sacrifices, heartaches and tears of mothers left at home to pray and wait. Who can measure the pain of the mother's anxiety as she awaits news of a son or husband when war engulfs the world?

The observer of this day who has a living mother to honor is truly fortunate, for the opportunity still remains to him to speak the word of endearment and appreciation and pride which is the only thing she covets.

The observer of this day who has only the memory of a mother can know the richness and beauty and comfort of it by calling back the memory and cherishing it, which fulfills the faith of the one who gave him life.

Let Mother's Day bring happiness where it can, and let it turn the key of loving remembrance upon the cherished days of the past where that is our only recourse, and we will have observed the day in keeping with its high and lovely purpose.

Yes, we welcome the institution of Mother's Day, but is it not more commendable to remember our mothers every day, and not reserve our roses, gifts and candies for one day in the year? There are many lonely, almost forgotten mothers, finding it hard to make ends meet, whose long days would be considerably brightened if only thoughtless, ungrateful children would remember their obligations to those who gave them life.

As pastors and leaders of women's groups are ever on the lookout for suitable material for messages and programs, we include a few appropriate poems we have gathered by the way. On May 11, 1946, Harry H. Schlacht wrote the following unique poem for *The New York Journal American* entitled "Mother's Day — Honor Her." The last part of Schlacht's moving lyric awaits fulfillment.

### MOTHER'S DAY — HONOR HER

**M**other.

It is the sweetest word in the language.

It is the first word that springs from the heart.

It is the first word we learn to lisp as we begin life.

It is the last word we gasp as we depart from life.

It is the golden cord which binds the earth to heaven.

It is the love that changes the poorest cottage into a paradise.

It is the greatest of all loves.

It is the eternal love.

**O** wondrous word mother.

We bow our heads at your shrine.

We kneel at the altar of sacred memories.

We venerate your sacred name.

We are transported upon the wings of imagination back to the scenes of our childhood.



We recall your tender caresses, your loving embrace, and your sweet lullaby at twilight.

We hear again your soft voice which once made our infant hearts rejoice.

The songs and poems inspired by the love we hear, the touching eulogies delivered, the flowers we wear in her honor, the trees we plant in her memory, all these are tributes to her sublime influence.

The story is told of an angel that was sent from heaven to return with the three most beautiful things on earth.

As he pursued his mission, he beheld a beautiful rose, that, he thought, he would bring back.

He then saw a baby's smile; that, too, he must bring back.

He looked and looked until he finally saw the sacrifice a mother's love was making for her son, and that, he concluded, was the third.

He proceeded back to heaven, and when he returned, the rose had withered away, the baby's smile had been gone, and nothing remained but a mother's love.

**H**er love is the nearest approach to divine love that God grants to man.

She walks unafraid into the valley of the shadow and emerges forth with new life.

She showers her tenderest devotion on that bud of life.

She is the keystone to the home.

She is the guiding star of man.

She is the fountain of inspiration that thrills the hearts of men.

She is the true heroine of the war.

Ere the fragile threads which sustain her part, while she can still hear words of honor and praise, and feel the warm embrace of your love, take her to your heart and give her your devotion.

Blessed are the children that can still have the benediction of her fading eyes and the caress of her trembling lips.

For many of us she is a hallowed memory.

Her hands touch us only in our dreams.  
There has never been an act of heroism that could compare with the  
life's work of the humblest mother.  
To the soldier who falls on the battlefield, we give bronze and tablet.  
*But to the MOTHER it is a battle without glory.*  
She wears no medals of a nation.  
Her badge is the furrowed lines upon her face.  
No bugle sounds taps over her — only the purling of the placid  
streams, the birds in the air.

**Remember mothers.**

We will see that never again shall the forces of evil sacrifice your  
handiwork upon the field of war.

We will see that mothers of every race and clime shall witness their  
children born in freedom, reared in peace, matured in homes that  
shall be free.

We shall see America, historic mother of the world's oppressed, lead  
the way.

We shall see mother's love find its full expression in the world of  
tomorrow.

We build monuments to generals, admirals and statesmen.

LET US BUILD A MEMORIAL TO MOTHERHOOD IN WASHINGTON — FOR THE  
GREATEST SOLDIER OF THEM ALL.

Let us dedicate it to:

*The uprooting of all causes of war.*

*The ending of prejudice of race and nation.*

*The strengthening of all peacemakers.*

THAT IS WHAT EVERY MOTHER SEEKS,

THAT IS WHAT EVERY MOTHER SHALL HAVE.

For we know:

*“Behind the dim unknown*

*Standeth God, within the shadows,*

*Keeping watch over His own.”*

## THE MOTHER

A book unheeded in her lap, she sits with dreaming eyes  
And looks from out the window at the distant hills that rise —  
Yet soon she crosses all the hills and finds a pathway straight  
To where the children clamber on the fence beside the gate;  
To where the children hail her with their shouts of wondrous glee,  
Yet still the book, unheeded, lies half-open on her knee.

And far from out the window bends the sky in hazy blue,  
And she fares forth upon a road that leads the meadows through,  
That hurries down the city streets until she finds a door  
Which opens to her gentle knock; and then, as oft of yore,  
She hears the laughter of her boy, she sorrows when he grieves.  
Yet still the book is lying with her hand between the leaves.

And now she goes another way, where mountains touch the sky;  
She threads the forest fastness until she draws anigh  
The little cottage where her girl has helped to make a home,  
Where, in the distance on the sea, are gleams of upflung foam;  
And for a while they speak of all the joys that used to be —  
Yet still the book, unheeded, lies half-open on her knee.

And so she fares till sunset, she goes far and far away,  
But always finds her haven at the ending of the day;  
And takes her book and idly at the opened pages peers  
With eyes that have the softness that is caused by unshed tears,  
And sometimes she will murmur low, and sometimes she will smile,  
For out and over all the land her heart has been the while.

— *Wilbur D. Nesbit*

## THE WATCHER — MOTHER

She always leaned to watch for us,  
    Anxious if we were late,  
In winter by the window,  
    In summer by the gate.  
And though we mocked her tenderly,

Who had such foolish care,  
The long way home would seem more safe  
Because she waited there.  
Her thoughts were all so full of us —  
She never could forget!  
And so I think that where she is  
She must be watching yet.  
Waiting till we come home to her,  
Anxious if we are late —  
Watching from heaven's window,  
Leaning from heaven's gate.

— *Margaret Widdemer* Beaver, W. Va.

#### MOTHER FOREVER

If I could live ten thousand years,  
I still would think of Mother,  
Remembering her smiles and tears,  
And how we loved each other.  
Years cannot dim that vision bright,  
I count my dearest treasure;  
They only seem to shed more light  
Upon her worth and measure.  
The Christian faith that through her shone  
Is still my inspiration;  
The wisdom of her ways I own  
With more appreciation.  
If I could live ten thousand years,  
How think you, friend and brother,  
Could I forget that dream that cheers  
And oft brings back my Mother?

—*Ralph T. Nordlund*

#### A TRIBUTE TO MOTHERHOOD

God made the streams that gurgle down the purple mountain-side —  
He made the gorgeous coloring with which the sunset's dyed.  
He made the hills and covered them with glory; and He made  
The sparkle on the dewdrop and the flecks of light and shade;  
Then knowing all earth needed was a climax for her charms,  
He made a little woman with a baby in her arms.  
He made the arching rainbow that is thrown across the sky,  
He made the blessed flowers that nod and smile as we pass by;  
He made the gladsome beauty as she bows with queenly grace,  
But sweetest of them all, He made the love light in the face  
That bends above a baby, warding off the world's alarms —  
That dainty little woman with a baby in her arms.  
A soft pink wrap embellished with a vine in silken thread —  
A flimsy, snow-white cap upon a downy little head —  
A dress 'twould make the winter drift look dusty by its side —  
Two cheeks with pure rose-petal tint, two blue eyes wonder wide,  
And bending o'er — the mother face imbued with heaven's own  
charms,  
God bless the little woman with a baby in her arms.

— *Author Unknown*

### A CHRISTIAN BECAUSE OF MOTHER

Because someone prayed, and to be sure it was Mother.

For I remember in the evening when the fire was burning bright she would call me to her side and say, "Be brave, my boy, and faithful; and never be ashamed of the teaching that you learned in your dear Mother's name."

Though years have gone I can't forget, those words of love I hear them yet,  
I see her by the old arm chair, my Mother dear in humble prayer.

But one day the scene changed, and how sad and how strange, too,  
Now over there's the old fireplace, and the old arm chair, and there lies  
Mother's dear little sun bonnet she used to wear.

There's the pictures on the wall and the vases on the mantel, I am sure can  
see,

That in sweet remembrance Mother gave them to me.

There's the candles and the old lamp, and the rag carpet on the floor,

And over there sits Mother's dear little soft slippers, her tender feet will  
wear no more.

There's the old spinning wheel, and the balls of yarn you can see,

And Mother's dear old tear-stained Bible that she read so much to me.

It was there we bowed our heads together, as Mother began to call on  
heaven;

My heart was young, and tender, and true, as the Lord well knew and  
Mother too.

And as Mother prayed both night and day, those golden threads were mixed  
with gray,

Then Providence came our way one day that made me sad and sad to say.

I'm standing by your grave, Mother, and the winds are soaring high as the  
winter stars look dimly down upon your orphan child.

Dark clouds, they wreath along the skies as many a time before, and the  
moonlight on the frosty grass looks very pale and cold.

We had a happy home with Mother upon the mountain side,

And the summer birds sang all day long before dear Father died.

And Mother dear, her cheeks grew pale and paler every day Until at last the  
angels came and bore her, too, away.

I had a gentle sister then; she is not with me now, but the gloomy shadow of  
her grave lay on my baby brow.

And strangers gather around the old fireplace, upon the old hearth stone.

Oh, Mother, in this cold wide world I'm all alone, alone.

I'm kneeling by your grave, Mother; no human form is near

And the pitiful murmuring of the wind is the only sound I hear.

And I tremble when the old tree sways its branches to and fro,

As I close my eyes and say my prayers you taught my baby lips long ago.

Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep,  
And if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.  
Then Mother would say, as she placed her hand upon my brow,  
I thank You, Lord, and good-night, Dear.

— *Composed and arranged by the Rev. G. W. Hartman*

### THE MOTHERS

So linked are all the mothers of the earth,  
Though white or black or yellow they may be,  
Not only through the suffering of birth,  
But through the sterner, graver agony  
Of world-wide need, of hunger of the soul  
And of the body in this crucial hour;  
The need of Christ to make a sick world whole;  
The desperate need of His sustaining power.  
O Mothers, on your knees! Prevailing prayer  
Is often wrought by women as they pray  
For their own sons — it reaches out to share  
With other mothers' sons along the way.  
Women of earth, within your lifted hands  
May lie the sure salvation of all lands.

— *Grace Noll Crowell*

### SO LITTLE AND SO MUCH

Mother, Mother! You remember the lunch I took today?  
Five little loaves and two dried fish? I gave it *all* away!  
They gave me back some bread He blessed, and some, too, of the fish.  
Mother, Mother, all five thousand ate all they could wish.  
Yes, and there were little children and their mothers, too.  
Oh, but they had all they wanted, I brought some back to you.  
No, no, Mother— I'm not crazy, they had naught to eat;

One called Andrew told the Master, “Here are bread and meat.”  
In His strong, firm hands He took them, (How His face did shine!)  
Blessed and broke, and fed them all with MY food, Mother, MINE!  
I was frightened — all those people! Such a little bit!  
Mother, Mother, just suppose I HAD NOT GIVEN IT!

— *Mrs. S. May Wyburn*

## THE CHRISTIAN HOME

(For Family Week)

The most sacred place on earth  
Originated, ordained, and blessed of God  
The world’s first institution  
The cradle of civilization  
The child’s first university  
The most influential of all institutions  
Typical of all that is best and most enduring in civilization  
The greatest teachers of all ages have sought to magnify it  
Men have sacrificed and died for it  
Women have toiled and suffered for it  
Now the world’s greatest need.

Planners of devotional programs for women’s groups may find in the cameos of the women of the Word we have given, material that can be profitably used in a series of messages on female characters. For the required message for a Mother’s Day program choice can be made from the following which we have taken from our personal file.

## GOD AND OUR MOTHERS

Christianity is adverse to the exaltation of a mere mortal. Extolling purely human virtues or qualities is contrary to the clear revelation of Scripture. God alone must be glorified.



The observance of Mother's Day, however, has Biblical warrant, seeing that the Bible is full of exhortations regarding the rightful honor of parents. It is for this reason that the church does not sanction "the sickly sentimentalism and shallow emotionalism which so frequently characterizes" Mother's Day.

Christian mothers are the world's greatest asset. The greatest human influence, and the most wholesome and substantial contribution to human society, comes from our mothers. Joaquin Miller has expressed it —

The bravest battle that ever was fought;  
Shall I tell you where and when?  
On the maps of the world you will not find it,  
It was fought by the mothers of men.

Much has been written as to how God uses mothers physiologically. The marvelous mystery of human propagation causes us to reverence motherhood. It was God's purpose to use woman for the populating of his perfect creation with beings who would live in full harmony with himself, but the first mother of the world wrecked the holy plan of God. Thus, under the blight of sin's curse, motherhood became a calamity. In grace, however, God came to the help of condemned motherhood. At Calvary, the Son of a mother took upon Himself the curse pronounced upon woman, making possible thereby God's original intention of hallowed motherhood.

### *God's Purpose in Motherhood*

God uses mothers for the development of the soul-life of their children. What a different generation of children we would have if only all mothers, as they fondle their babies, could realize that they have brought into existence "not sublimated animals, not mere physical organisms which live and breathe for awhile then pass away, but through the power of God . . . immortality." Any child resting on a mother's breast is "an eternal entity, something that shall never cease to exist, but live on for weal or for woe forever and ever."

The influence of mothers is without comparison or competition. The church, nations, governments, society depend upon our mothers for their stability. Within the home, mother is the reigning queen. Thus, when home life is decadent, every phase of life lacks wholesomeness. D'Aubigne, the historian, claims that the Reformation was born in the early years of Martin

Luther's childhood. Behind the monk who shook the world was the influence of a mother.

Faith of our mothers, Christian faith,  
In truth beyond our stumbling creeds,  
Still serve the home and save the church,  
And breathe thy spirit through our deeds:  
Faith of our mothers, Christian faith,  
We will be true to thee 'til death.

Yes, we do well to honor mothers, who are the prime kingdom-builders, chief soul-moulders, conspicuous character-constructors, and the foremost recruiting agents for the eternal realms above.

As Mother's Day comes around, it is fitting to express our gratitude and honorable esteem to the one who gave us birth and through whose sacrificial love we owe our place in the world. She it was who cheered us in our successes and consoled us in our defeats. Mother is a sacred name, and children who fail to pay their tribute of love and reverence to their mother are unworthy of a mother's love.

Perhaps one of the sweetest sentiments concerning motherhood is the sentence of Henry W. Longfellow: "Even as Christ died for us upon the cross, in the last hour in the unutterable agony of death, he was mindful of his mother, as if to teach us that this holy love should be our last worldly thought."

God offers to comfort us as a divine, eternal mother. Tenderly He draws near and gathers us to His bosom.

The watchful mother tarries nigh  
Though sleep has closed her infant's eye;  
For should he wake and find her gone,  
She knows she could not bear his moan;  
But I am weaker than a child,  
And Thou art more than mother dear,  
Without Thee, heaven were but a wild,  
Without Thee, earth a desert drear.

THE HOLIEST THING ALIVE

Mother's Day is nationally observed during the month of May. The inspiration and influence of "motherhood" is world-wide. For us sons and daughters it is worthwhile to think for a moment or two about what this means to us. Here, then, is a fresh appreciation of a mother's value.

Although scores of mothers are grateful for the remembrance of their love and sacrifice Mother's Day brings with it, doubtless they would like to have a little more thoughtfulness shown them on the other days of the year. A bouquet of flowers is certainly pleasing when sent to mother, as the nation seeks to remember its mothers, but it may be that the rest of the year witnesses a heartless forgetfulness of the kindly thought mother ought to have.

Volumes could be compiled of all the beautiful things said and written concerning mothers. A loving mother is God's tenderest image in humanity. As Coleridge expressed it,

A mother is a mother still  
The holiest thing alive.

Washington Irving wrote, "The love of a mother is never exhausted. It never changes — it never tires — it endures through all, in good repute, in bad repute, in the face of the world's condemnation, a mother's love still lives on."

Of the virtue of a good mother, Lowell says,  
Blessing she is, God made her so  
And deeds of weekly holiness  
Fall from her noiseless as the snow.

Amid multitudinous friends a man has only one mother, who in the majority of cases can never be replaced.

Maurice Maeterlinck would have us know that "all mothers are rich when they love their own. There are no poor mothers, no ugly ones, no old ones. Their love is always the most beautiful of the joys. And when they seem most sad it needs but a kiss which they receive or give to turn all their tears into stars in the depth of their eyes."

N. P. Willis has reminded us that "one lamp, thy mother's love, amid the stars shall lift its pure flame, changeless and before the throne of God burn through eternity."

And that mothers are moulders of character is evidenced from the testimony of those who attribute their greatness to a mother's patience, training and love.

Emerson once remarked that "men are what their mothers make them." Phillips Brooks, the renowned preacher, confessed that "the happiest part of my happy life has been my mother and, with God's help, she will be more than ever." John Quincy Adams adds his tribute of praise in the phrase, "All that I am my mother made me."

Charles Lamb believed that at the Judgment Day the Recording Angel will forgive much to him who can say, "I never knew my mother." Blessed is the man whose mother is his first heroine.

What unsung heroism is behind the stories of mothers like Jochebed, the mother of Moses; Hannah, the mother of Samuel; the Shunammite mother; Eunice, the mother of Timothy; Mary, the mother of our Lord; Susannah, the mother of John and Charles Wesley. The great work of D. L. Moody was ushered into being by the prayers of a woman. Almost every notable achievement has come through a woman's fervent prayers.

Once in North Africa there was a mother named Monica who had prayed through the years for her wayward son. Before her son left for Italy she prayed through the night that he might not go, but with the light of morning the ship sailed. Later on the son wrote: "That night I stole away and she was left behind in weeping and prayer. And what, O Lord, was she with so many tears asking of Thee but that Thou wouldst not suffer me to sail? But Thou, in the depth of Thy counsels, knowing the main point of her desire, regardest not what she then asked that Thou mightest accomplish the greater thing for which she was ever imploring Thee." Yet, though long delayed, the mother's prayers were answered. And her boy became Saint Augustine.

Further, what fuller or more charming revelation of God's nature can we find than the description in which God likens Himself to a devoted mother? "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Isaiah 66:13). A mother is a ministering angel in times of pain and sorrow. She has the art to comfort better than a man. And this mother love, inexpressibly beautiful and tender, is planted in her breast by the mother heart of God. The mother love of earth, however, is but a pale reflection of the feeling

within the heart of God as with unfailing tenderness He comforts the weary, wounded spirit of His child.

What can surpass the love of a noble woman, especially the love of a devoted wife or the self-sacrificing love of a mother! What a power a mother has to live in others, which power is “her gracious prerogative and happiest attribute” and yet her keenest agony! It is the woman who suffers most, and who can hide her feelings more effectively than a man. She it is who struggles against much heartache, bleeding sorrow and even sin, and who in the hour of approaching death strives to arrest the inevitable demon creeping over some loved treasure. And how like God this is! How silently He suffers! How He strives in a thousand ways to avert the eternal doom facing souls, and win them to Himself! The woman may forget her child, but God’s promise is that He will never forget His own (Isaiah 49:15, 16).

God offers Himself as a divine, eternal Mother. Tenderly He draws near and gathers us in His bosom and by His very nearness consoles and comforts us. “I will not leave thee comfortless, I will come to thee.”

The truth, then, regarding the mother love of God, is that He strives to soothe, relieve, cleanse, emancipate. And what fools we are to cut ourselves adrift from the God who made all mothers and who waits to do far more for us than the best and holiest mother is capable of doing!

### THE MOTHERHOOD OF GOD

As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you (Isaiah 66:13).

In these homely words we have one of the sweetest and tenderest pictures of the character of God. And that revelation is not in the New Testament, but in the Old! In the New Testament, Jesus teaches us to think of God as our Father. But here in the Old Testament, God is likened unto a comforting mother.

The Jews have a sweet saying to the effect that “God could not be everywhere, so He made mothers.” And this is true, for a loving mother is God’s tenderest image in humanity.

A mother is a mother still,  
The holiest thing alive.

Mother love on earth, however, is but a pale reflection of the feeling within the heart of God, as with unfailing tenderness He comforts the

weary, wounded spirit of His child.

God combines in Himself all the virtues of a perfect character. The best are usually lacking in one or more graces. God possesses them all. Manly virtues and womanly graces meet in Him. All that is best, holiest, sweetest, and most gracious in a noble man, and also in purehearted women, can be found in the Lord, who is the source of all. Male and female created He them, and the characteristic feature of both are resident in His loving heart. He fuses together in His own adorable Person the strong, protective love of the man, and the patient, tender, brooding, comforting, sacrificial love of the woman. John Oxenham expresses this beautifully in his *The Father-Motherhood*:

Father and mother, Thou  
In Thy full being art —  
Justice with mercy intertwined,  
Judgment exact with love combined,  
Neither complete apart.  
And so we know that when  
Our service is weak and vain,  
The Father-justice would condemn,  
The Mother-love Thy wrath will stem  
And our reprieval gain.

It is the woman who suffers most and who can hide her feelings more effectively than a man. She it is who struggles against much heartache, bleeding sorrow, and even sin, and who in the hour of approaching death strives to arrest the inevitable doom creeping over some loved treasure. And how like God this is who created true motherhood! How silently He suffers, bearing the pain of rejection and desertion! How He strives in a thousand ways to avert the eternal doom facing souls and win them to Himself! Truly, His is a love that will not let us go. Later in this same prophecy, Isaiah again speaks of the manner in which the love of God transcends all human love: “Can a woman forget her sucking child? . . . Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee” (Isaiah 49:15). Doubtless it was this tender verse Robert Burns had in mind as he closed his lament for James, Earl of Glencairn:

The bridegroom may forget his bride  
    Who made his wedded life yestreen;  
The monarch may forget his crown  
    That on his head an hour has been;  
The mother may forget the child  
    That smiles sae sweetly on her knee,  
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,  
    And a' that thou has done for me!

### *A Mother's Presence*

Mother is the queen of her home. The house is dull and cold when she is absent. Her presence therein means comfort, joy, help and love. It is worse still to have a heart and home without God. And yet this "God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3, 4) is not so very far away from any one of us. Ever near to soothe and to sympathize, He lifts His troubled child into His everlasting arms, and silently folds around him the deep sense of Himself, and so the heart is comforted.

Of course, this aspect of God's character bids us remember that the very grace we seek from Him depends upon our thoughts of Him and of His care. So many treat Him as a kind of convenience. He is a tower they run to for safety when the storms of life appear. The tragedy is, however, that as soon as the storms blow by, many depart from the tower, and forget God until the storms break afresh.

How different in turning to God as our Mother! And mark, the prophet is not thinking of a little child, but of a grown man heartsore and broken, fleeing back for the comfort of his mother's presence. "As a man whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Many a man weary and broken by a pitiless world, with things against him, and fortunes ruined, or with dear ones gone, or faith almost giving way, or entangled in the net of sin, has retreated in such dark, lone hours to the mother who gave him being. Many a man has crept back home like a wounded animal and has cast himself upon the mother love that warmed his heart in childhood days.

And here is God, the source of our being, the ancient home to which all belong, offering Himself to us as the divine, eternal Mother.

The watchful mother tarries nigh  
    Though sleep has closed her infant's eye;

For should he wake, and find her gone,  
She knows she could not bear his moan.  
But I am weaker than a child,  
And Thou art more than mother dear;  
Without Thee, heaven were but a wild;  
Without Thee, earth a desert drear.

### *A Mother's Counsel*

The child's first teacher is his mother. From her lips he receives his earliest and most sacred lessons of God and life and duty. When discouraged, mother's words comfort and inspire. When disobedient, her remonstrance brings penitence. When in doubt, her counsel leads to firm resolve. Think of the young men who, amid the strong temptations of city life, have been encouraged to keep straight by the remembrance of prayers and words they learned at mother's knee!

Yes, and is it not true that to a mother's heart her child never seems to grow up? To her, he is always the child who nestled near to her side. He may pass out into the world and meet honor or disgrace, but in her imagination he is always the little form that clung to her knee and ran to her for comfort, and whose little aches and pains she soothed away.

The grown man, broken in the battle of life or by his own sin, may return to his mother, but it is not the grown man she sees, only her child! Thus it is with God. To Him, we can never be anything else but children — weak, foolish, inexperienced and erring. God comforts as a mother by His gracious words. He utters “comfortable words.” He exercises a mother's pity over our sin and folly, makes every allowance for our circumstances, and then, with His own heart, pleads for us. What a pathetic scene that was when, as Jesus watched the retreating forms of those who were unwilling to face the cost of discipleship, He said to His own, “Will ye also go away?” How touching was the reply: “To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

### *A Mother's Silence*

When in trouble, the mother receives her child without asking many questions. A mother's intuition tells her what is wrong. It is enough for her to know that her child is in distress. She may guess much, and fear more, but comfort is her first consideration. Explanations can wait.



How like the motherhood of God! God does not probe the wound when there is power to heal. How beautifully tender is the mother comfort of God! He asks no questions, utters no reproach, demands no explanation. He has not the scrutiny of a detective, but the sympathy of a devoted parent.

One phase of this silent comfort is what Dr. Carroll calls the mother's "inarticulation." When a child flees to his mother for consolation, with what or how does mother comfort her distressed one? Not with many words which often increase the child's grief. Mother is wiser, and catching up the child bends over him and smothers him with kisses of love. And in the silence, his poignant pain is healed. Silent sympathy is a soothing balm. It was not anything mother said, but simply her own soothing touch and presence that brought relief.

Thus it is with God who with a strange, inarticulate comfort calms the troubled breast. He asks no question, strikes no wounds. We carry to Him our torturing doubt, worldly loss, stab of heart, deep gashes of disappointment, ruin of sin within the soul, and He comforts us with His forgiving presence. What we weep over may remain, yet, in carrying all to the mother-heart of God, we are comforted. We kneel before Him but we cannot see His radiant form; we speak to Him but receive no articulate answer. Yet we leave His presence calmed and consoled as a child folded within the breast in the silence of love.

### *A Mother's Sympathy*

A wise child speaks out all his joys, sorrows and burdens without reserve into that most sacred confessional box, his mother's ear. And the need of a confidant is not only characteristic of childhood: it belongs to us all. This is why those heartbroken men came back from the grave and "went and told Jesus."

But to return to the child. Think of him as he scampers home from school and places his books in mother's hands, finding the chief award for his diligence in mother's approving smile! And, further, it is because of her gift of sympathy that he turns to her in pain and sorrow.

And God offers us the same motherly tenderness and sympathy. He heals, gladdens, sympathizes, loves, cares as no mother could. Does He not give Himself the attractive name of Comforter? Yet is it not strange to think that men will seek for comfort almost anywhere else than in the love of

God? Can we not detect the sob of unwanted love in the lament over Jerusalem, where the sympathizing Jesus uses the figure of the mother bird? “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”

Men try to escape from sorrow by drowning it in drink, in seeking a change of circumstances or surroundings, in harder work, in eager pursuits, in the distractions of sin and pleasure. And all the while God stands open to every sufferer. This truth regarding His motherhood means that He strives to soothe, relieve, cleanse, emancipate. What fools we are to cut ourselves adrift from the God who made all mothers, and who waits to do far more for us than the best and holiest mother is capable of doing!

### *A Mother's Discipline*

When we come to manhood and womanhood, and, it may be, have children of our own, how often we have cause to remember what mother said to us: “But mother *must* punish you”! That surely is the sorest test of mother love. Above everything else, she wants her children to be good men and women when they grow up; and, though it causes her a sore heart, she will not shrink from correcting the willfulness and disobedience of those she loves so dearly. When Moses tried to interpret to the children of Israel the meaning of their trials and wanderings “through that great and terrible wilderness,” this is what he said: “Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee” (Deuteronomy 8:5).

This “chastisement” is not necessarily punishment; at least, it is, as we are learning to say today, “corrective punishment.” “My son,” says the writer to the Hebrews, in the language of the King James Version, “despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him, for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. ... If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons” (Hebrews 12:5-7).

This makes sense of life, for character, life's choicest gift, is not to be won any other way. “We glory in tribulations also,” says Paul the Apostle, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts” (Romans 5:3-5). That is Christian character.

In a troubled chapter in England's checkered history, Samuel Rutherford learned that secret, and Mrs. Cousin captured it in her immortal hymn, *The Sands of Time*.

With mercy and with judgment  
My web of time He wove,  
And aye the dews of sorrow  
Were lustered by His love;  
I'll bless the hand that guided,  
I'll bless the heart that planned,  
When throned where glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

#### SWEET MINISTRY OF MOTHERHOOD

As the month of May brings us our national Mother's Day, it is but fitting that we should pay tribute to our dear mothers who nourished us at their breasts and hushed us to sleep in warm security of their arms.

Many there are, who, as they remember the mothers who gave them birth, have a Mother's Day every day. Tireless love, uttered and voiceless prayers, agony which followed them through their sins and won them back, and the Christlike power of sacrifice are never forgotten. And in honoring their mothers they are giving honor whenever it is due.

The eloquence of saintly motherhood is beautifully expressed in the following unidentified lines —

Her love outlasts all human love,  
Her faith endures the conquest's hardest test;  
Her grace and patience through a lifetime prove,  
That she's a friend, the noblest and best.

There are two ways in which we can honor our mothers to whom we owe our homes, and whose mother love gave us a glimpse into the heart of God. First of all, we can express our love and gratitude in some tangible way. While, of course, we can never repay mother for her love, sacrifice, tears and patience, we can certainly use an occasion like Mother's Day for cheering her heart. May God have mercy upon you if you have a forgotten mother somewhere in the world!

In the next place, we can resolve to be the men and women our mothers want us to be. Are you a child of many prayers? Has a mother yearned over you and striven to lead you to the feet of the crucified Saviour? As yet, however, her prayers and pleadings have been in vain. What a load it would lift from her loving heart if only you would turn to the Master she dearly loves!

If your beloved mother has journeyed beyond the shadows of earth, rest assured that even in the glory land her heart can be made to rejoice over the tidings of your salvation, carried to her by divine messengers.

Oh, Mother, when I think of thee,  
'Tis but a step to Calvary!  
Thy gentle hand upon my brow  
Is leading me to Jesus now.

#### LEGEND FOR MOTHER'S DAY

Once long ago, so legend tells, there was a mother in a faraway land who had a son in whom, as mothers ever have and ever will, she centered all her dreams and ambitions. Early she determined that this her lad should become a great and splendid person, that he should be successful, that when he became a man his fellow men should look upon him and say, "This was a goodly lad, and now he is a man. How well he has grown and prospered, and what a credit he is to his mother."

But, as some sons ever have and ever will, the boy did not grow as his mother willed he should. True, he was an obedient son, and never did he bring dishonor or shame or reproach upon his mother. He listened quietly but without much enthusiasm to her dreams so lavishly poured out for him and his inspiration, and agreed that he would do his best to justify her faith in him and efforts for him to become the great and successful man she desired. Many a glowing tale did he hear of how such a one had achieved success and grown to greatness because of a mother's will and his own efforts. And he would smile quietly and agree.

And so the boy grew and approached manhood. But often in his growing his mother was assailed by doubts as to how deeply this puzzling son of hers was affected by her ambitions for him. True, he was not a failure, nor would he likely be. But neither was he a glowing success.

Quietly smiling and undisturbed, he observed men about him growing in possessions and in stature in the eyes of their fellowmen. Undismayed, he saw his mother's version of success passing him by for lesser men.

Then, because this mother had somewhere in her more wisdom than many mothers, she began slowly to realize that her son might have chosen the better part. Dimly at first, she began to understand that his serenity, his quietness, his way of looking at himself and his fellow men calmly and without envy — that these things might be of more true value than the tangible successes she had so desperately desired for him. Bit by bit there came to her the knowledge that from some unknown, inner source her son had been drawing deepening assurance that the only realities were those that could not be seen, that life was a river and not a pool.

Slow was this realization in coming to her, and difficult to accept. This man her son had become — this quiet, calm being who looked upon the world so clearly — this was not the son she had willed. But because she had in her somewhere more wisdom than many mothers, finally she understood and accepted the truth that her son was doing what all men must do if they are to remain men — fulfilling his own destiny after his own fashion. With this understanding came ultimately the assurance that his success was deeper and higher than any she had ever dreamed for him.

Further suggestive sermonic aids on Bible mothers can be gathered from [Chapter 2](#) of this volume. See under these named mothers: Eve, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Jochebed, Ruth, Hannah, Bath-sheba, Mary, Elisabeth, Salome, Eunice, Lois. Reference can also be made to mothers in the section on unnamed women.

Our painstaking, yet pleasurable task is completed, and as one bids adieu! to all the women found in God's ancient portrait gallery, it is with a sense of gratitude to Him for giving us so many who shine as bright illustrations of all that is so noble in woman. A goodly company of them "look like a queen in a book." My own life has been enriched through a closer acquaintance with them. Alas, there are those like Delilah the destroyer, and Jezebel the murderess we shall not meet in heaven unless in their last moments they lifted up their hearts in penitence to Him who said, "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

But what rapture will thrill our soul when in a fairer paradise we gaze upon —

The glorified body of *Eve*, the first woman who ever cast her smile over the lonely path of man.

*Sarah*, “the mother of the faithful,” the central jewel in Abraham’s glorified bosom.

*Rebekah*, crowned with celestial beauty.

*Rachel*, no longer weeping over her children, but rejoicing in their eternal bliss.

*Ruth*, her arms full of golden sheaves.

*Deborah*, standing under the celestial palm-tree.

*Jephthah’s Daughter*, enshrined in glory for her willing sacrifice.

*Hannah*, bowing before the eternal throne with her famous son, Samuel.

*Abigail*, the noble-hearted in queenly robes.

*The Woman of Shunem*, rejoicing in the hospitality of her heavenly mansion.

*Esther*, bending before the golden rod of the Almighty.

*Elisabeth and Mary*, blessed above women, engaged in sweet and holy conversation and worshiping Him to whom they were related on earth.

*Mary of Bethany*, scattering the perfume of love and adoration.

*The Elect Lady*, with her children around her, lost in wonder as they constantly look upon Him who came as “The Truth.”

Bible female saints, and women of all ages who loved the Saviour and ministered unto Him of their substance, will form a large part of the ever-expanding circle of the redeemed and join in the song which the angels cannot sing —

Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen!

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