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THE WOMAN'S BIBLE.

PART I.

Comments on Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

In every soul there is bound up some truth and some error, and each gives to the world of thought what no other one possesses. "--Cousin.

NEW YORK:

EUROPEAN PUBLISHING COMPANY,

68 BROAD STREET.

1898.

{p. 2}

Copyright 1895.

By

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

{p. 3}

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"We took sweet counsel together."--Ps. Iv., 14.

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file:///I:/mythology/women/5/5.html (1 of 162) [01/28/2004 5:00:25 PM]

[*Deceased.]

{p. 4}

COMMENTS

ON

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy,

BY

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON,
LILLIE DEVEREUX BLAKE,
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{p. 5}

PREFACE.

So many letters are daily received asking questions about the Woman's Bible,--as to the extent of the revision, and the standpoint from which it will be conducted--that it seems best, though every detail is not as yet matured, to state the plan, as concisely as possible, upon which those who have been in consultation during the summer, propose to do the work.

I. The object is to revise only those texts and chapters directly referring to women, and those also in which women are made prominent by exclusion. As all such passages combined form but one-tenth of the Scriptures, the undertaking will not be so laborious as, at the first thought, one would imagine. These texts, with the commentaries, can easily be compressed into a duodecimo volume of about four hundred pages.

II. The commentaries will be of a threefold character, the writers in the different branches being selected according to their special aptitude for the work:

1. Two or three Greek and Hebrew scholars will devote themselves to the translation and the meaning of particular words and texts in the original.

2. Others will devote themselves to Biblical history, old manuscripts, to the new version, and to the latest theories as to the occult meaning of certain texts and parables.

3. For the commentaries on the plain English version a committee of some thirty members has been formed. These are women of earnestness and liberal ideas, quick to see the real purport of the Bible as regards their sex. Among them the various books of the Old and New Testament will be distributed for comment.

III. There will be two or more editors to bring the work of the various committees into one consistent whole.

{p. 6}

IV. The completed work will be submitted to an advisory committee assembled at some central point, as London, New York, or Chicago, to sit in final judgment on "The Woman's Bible."

As to the manner of doing the practical work:

Those who have been engaged this summer have adopted the following plan, which may be suggestive to new members of the committee. Each person purchased two Bibles, ran through them from Genesis to Revelations, marking all the texts that concerned women. The passages were cut out, and pasted in a blank book, and the commentaries then written underneath.

Those not having time to read all the books can confine their labors to the particular ones they propose to review.

It is thought best to publish the different parts as soon as prepared so that the Committee may have all in print in a compact form before the final revision.

E. C. S.

AUGUST 1ST, 1895.

{p. 7}

file:///I:/mythology/women/5/5.html (2 of 162) [01/28/2004 5:00:25 PM]

INTRODUCTION.

FROM the inauguration of the movement for woman's emancipation the Bible has been used to hold her in the "divinely ordained sphere," prescribed in the Old and New Testaments.

The canon and civil law; church and state; priests and legislators; all political parties and religious denominations have alike taught that woman was made after man, of man, and for man, an inferior being, subject to man. Creeds, codes, Scriptures and statutes, are all based on this idea. The fashions, forms, ceremonies and customs of society, church ordinances and discipline all grow out of this idea.

Of the old English common law, responsible for woman's civil and political status, Lord Brougham said, "it is a disgrace to the civilization and Christianity of the Nineteenth Century." Of the canon law, which is responsible for woman's status in the church, Charles Kingsley said, "this will never be a good world for women until the last remnant of the canon law is swept from the face of the earth."

The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection, she was to play the role of a dependent on man's bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, she was commanded to ask her husband at home. Here is the Bible position of woman briefly summed up.

Those who have the divine insight to translate, transpose and transfigure this mournful object of pity into an exalted, dignified

{p. 8}

personage, worthy our worship as the mother of the race, are to be congratulated as having a share of the occult mystic power of the eastern Mahatmas.

The plain English to the ordinary mind admits of no such liberal interpretation. The unvarnished texts speak for themselves. The canon law, church ordinances and Scriptures, are homogeneous, and all reflect the same spirit and sentiments.

These familiar texts are quoted by clergymen in their pulpits, by statesmen in the halls of legislation, by lawyers in the courts, and are echoed by the press of all civilized nations, and accepted by woman herself as "The Word of God." So perverted is the religious element in her nature, that with faith and works she is the chief support of the church and clergy; the very powers that make her emancipation impossible. When, in the early part of the Nineteenth Century, women began to protest against their civil and political degradation, they were referred to the Bible for an answer. When they protested against their unequal position in the church, they were referred to the Bible for an answer.

This led to a general and critical study of the Scriptures. Some, having made a fetish of these books and believing them to be the veritable "Word of God," with liberal translations, interpretations, allegories and symbols, glossed over the most objectionable features of the various books and clung to them as divinely inspired. Others, seeing the family resemblance between the Mosaic code, the canon law, and the old English common law, came to the conclusion that all alike emanated from the same source; wholly human in their origin and inspired by the natural love of domination in the historians. Others, bewildered with their doubts and fears, came to no conclusion. While their clergymen told them on the one hand, that they owed all the blessings and freedom they enjoyed to the Bible, on the other, they said it clearly marked out their circumscribed sphere of action: that the demands for political and civil rights were irreligious, dangerous to the stability of the home, the state and the church. Clerical appeals were circulated from

{p. 90}

time to time, conjuring members of their churches to take no part in the anti-slavery or woman suffrage movements, as they were infidel in their tendencies, undermining the very foundations of society. No wonder the majority of women stood still, and with bowed heads, accepted the situation.

Listening to the varied opinions of women, I have long thought it would be interesting and profitable to get them clearly stated in book form. To this end six years ago I proposed to a committee of women to issue a Woman's Bible, that we might have women's commentaries on women's position in the Old and New Testaments. It was agreed on by several leading women in England and America and the work was begun, but from various causes it has been delayed, until now the idea is received with renewed enthusiasm, and a large committee has been formed, and we hope to complete the work within a year.

Those who have undertaken the labor are desirous to have some Hebrew and Greek scholars, versed in Biblical criticism, to gild our pages with their learning. Several distinguished women have been urged to do so, but they are afraid that their high reputation and scholarly attainments might be compromised by taking part in an enterprise that for a time may prove very unpopular. Hence we may not be able to get help from that class.

Others fear that they might compromise their evangelical faith by affiliating with those of more liberal views, who do not regard the Bible as the "Word of God," but like any other book, to be judged by its merits. If the Bible teaches the equality of Woman, why does the church refuse to ordain women to preach the gospel, to fill the offices of deacons and elders, and to administer the Sacraments, or to admit them as

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- [INTRODUCTION](#)
- [THE BOOK OF GENESIS](#)
- [CHAPTER II](#)
- [CHAPTER III](#)
- [CHAPTER IV](#)
- [CHAPTER V](#)
- [CHAPTER VII](#)
- [CHAPTER VIII](#)
- [CHAPTER IX](#)
- [CHAPTER X](#)
- [CHAPTER XI](#)
- [CHAPTER XII](#)
- [THE BOOK OF EXODUS](#)
- [THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS](#)
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- [CHAPTER VI](#)
- [APPENDIX](#)
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