

The Building of Woman

ONE of the stories which have excited the ridicule of the critics of the Bible is the account of the creation of woman. If a rib was taken out of man to form a woman, why, we are asked, is not one still missing? Foolish as such an objection seems on the surface (for the loss of more important members of the body are not transmitted by generation) it challenges us to a look into the Scriptures more carefully. It is difficult to see any particular reason why a rib should be chosen for this purpose. Was it really a rib, or may the word be understood of some other part of Adam's body?

The Hebrew word here rendered "rib," though it occurs over forty times, is nowhere else so translated. It is not the Hebrew equivalent of the Chaldee *galag* (Dan.7:5), the only other word which may be rendered "rib."

Our translators have sometimes given it as *side* or *side chambers*, in the walls (Eze.41:5-26), as well as *corner*, *board*, *plank*, *leaves*. Their size, *halting*. Many of these, it must be conceded, have some semblance to a rib.

The word is almost always used in connection with the temple or the tabernacle. A knowledge of the structure of these buildings will help us to discover its true meaning.

Ezekiel describes the millennial temple as having *side chambers* in the walls (Ezek.41:5-26). Their size and how they increased in width as the walls of the building decreased, their number and how they were connected—all these architectural details leave us in no doubt that the word here means a *cell*, or *vault*, an enclosed space.

When we transfer this meaning to the tabernacle structure, it seems to fail utterly. But this is because the tabernacle walls themselves are not correctly described.

Of the four Hebrew words translated *board*, one is used exclusively of the “boards” of the tabernacle except a single occurrence, where it is rendered “benches” (Ezek.27:6). It is not at all likely, however, that *benches* were made of ivory. Rather the *pro* of the ship was made of this precious substance. The word has the meaning of a taper, and the “boards” of the tabernacle were in shape like an inverted V. Every detail of measurement and design confirms this fact. The walls of the tabernacle were hollow.

Coming back to the Hebrew word *tzehlag*, which is here found to mean a *cell* or *vault*, we now have no difficulty in applying it to the “sides” of the tabernacle, for these enclosed a tapered vault. The bars which ran through from end to end were inside of this tapered vault, as well as the rings through which they passed.

These two examples are sufficient to establish the basic signification of the word. It is a *hollow cell*. There is no reason for calling it a rib, unless we slavishly follow the Septuagint, which is not consistent in its renderings.

Having arrived at the conclusion that it was not a rib, but a cell of some kind, it behooves us to inquire from the Scriptures themselves what its nature was, and also to seek corroboration for our position in the facts found in our physical frames. We need not fear any disagreement between Scriptural truth and physical fact. They must and do agree. If they do not we are wrong. If they coincide in our interpretation of their testimony we are probably in possession of the truth.

It is a notable fact which is usually overlooked that humanity was *created male and female* (Gen.1:27). The sexes were combined in one individual. Adam was first formed, then Eve. There was an interval between the

creation of the man and the building of the woman. *After* the creation of Adam, God planted a garden eastward in Eden. He put the man in the garden to dress it and keep it. He commanded the man as to what he was and was not to eat, and He brought every animal of the field to Adam, who gave them their names.

Let us press the fact, which is repeated in the fifth chapter that "In the day that God created man . . . male and female created He them . . . and called their name Adam in the day when they are created" (Gen.5:1,2). It is evident that the Scriptures are true in a much stricter sense than many suppose, that the woman was taken out of man. Nothing new was *created* when the woman was built. The man permanently lost part of his structure which God removed when He created his helpmeet. In other words, the sexes were separated and Adam retained only masculine functions and Eve was builded from the feminine. And do not the facts of the physical world perfectly confirm this interpretation? How could the removal of a rib change Adam from an hermaphrodite to the exclusively masculine structure of his descendants? Such a combination of the sexes is true today of most plants and some worms and mollusks.

It seems most reasonable then, to believe, on the evidence of Scripture as well as nature, that woman was not a separate creation from man, but was built from that part of his original structure which he now lacks.

This is fraught with much beautiful material for reflection. Man, once complete in himself, is now but a part of his original self. The primal perfection can only be attained by the union of the two. They are in very deed one flesh. The One who severed them from one another in that deep sleep which fell upon Adam is the One who yokes them together in holy wedlock. And is not this the key to our Lord's discourse against divorce? He is very emphatic.

“From the *beginning* of creation God makes them male and female” (Mark 10:6). This can refer only to the time when both were included in the one human being Adam. Hence, “*On this account* a man will be leaving his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh, so that no longer are they two, but one flesh. What God, then, yokes together, let no man be separating” (Mark 19:5,6).

In order to picture the great truths that all is out of God, and that all was created in Christ, it was necessary to show how all humanity was in one human, Adam. For this revelation it would not do to create two, one of each sex, for that would spoil the picture. What a help it is to see all humanity in the first human! This we can comprehend. Without such an example, it would be almost impossible for us to apprehend how all could have been in God, or created in His Son. On the other hand, it is also essential for the revelation of God’s love that there be two distinct sexes. By creating mankind in one human, and then by making or building the woman out of a part of him, God has wisely provided us with illustrations which reveal His love as well as His power.

And here, indeed, we have the divine illustration of our union with Christ. Though it seems beyond belief, He is incomplete without us. We were chosen *in Him* before the disruption and now we become one with Him in redemption. Here there is no divorce possible. The ecclesia is His *complement* or fullness. It takes both to make a perfect body for the Christ. The transcendent nature of this grace can only be absorbed by mature meditation. May we have grace to enjoy it fully!

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