

## Bathsheba Bathed in Grace: How 8 Scandalous Women Changed the World

**Carol Cook**

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Dramatized accounts from the Bible attract faithful practitioners dedicated to greater understanding of religious documents through interpretation, and this work of Carol Cook is another fictional innovation based on popular stories from the Old Testament. *Bathsheba Bathed in Grace* is a compilation of eight scandalous women from the biblical past who profoundly influenced contemporary culture. Cook believes biblical figures such as Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel, and Tamar offered insight and guidance.

Though presented in a series of enlightening dramatizations intended to encourage thoughtful, open-minded discussion, the book remains rooted in Judeo-Christian theology. Without question, Cook's characterizations are modernized, palatable to a twenty-first-century reader, yet the underlying principle is one of a woman's subservience and secondary place in society, emphasizing her traditional roles as wife and mother, as opposed to an individual with hopes, dreams, and aspirations. This stratification detracts from the quality of a creative work meant to uplift and inspire, rather than to subjugate and commiserate.

In a passage about Eve, not only is the biological beauty of giving birth reduced to punishment, God is portrayed as a sexist slave driver. Stereotypical phrasing destroys the spiritual element of the story. "'Woman.' The Creator looked into my tear-filled eyes. 'I will multiply the pain of your childbearing, and you'll give birth to your young in pain. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.'"

Despite a tendency to instruct and manipulate, while subtly infusing the material with religious doctrine and resorting to a literal, rather than a symbolical storytelling technique, this collection is finely tuned to a reader's need for action-oriented entertainment. For those who do not mind old-fashioned Christian perspective, Cook has done an exemplary job developing realistic characters from the dusty pages of antiquity. Her ability to pull these maligned women from the annals of time and allow us to see them from an educated standpoint sets her work at a higher level than similar endeavors written by pedantic preachers.

This is an author dedicated to historical portrayal who elicits empathy, evident in the following excerpt from Sarah's story: "Without the rains, life had become unbearable. No fruit, no vegetables, and no grain supply left. Even our animals looked gaunt. Spirits sank even lower. The severe famine had stripped the faces around me of health and, even worse, of joy."

Carol Cook is an author, teacher, and mentor of younger women. Published by WestBow Press, a Thomas Nelson imprint, the slick commercial packaging will enhance this book's marketability to an established audience seeking an intriguing slant on the so-called fallen women of a patriarchal mind frame.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (May 9, 2013)

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