

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## The Place of Women

John Knox

### *The Treason of the Clergy*

Wonder it is that among so many pregnant wits as the Isle of Great Brittany has produced, so many godly and zealous preachers as England did sometime nourish, and so many learned men of grave judgment as this day by Jezebel are exiled, none is found so stout of courage, so faithful to God, nor loving to their native country, that they dare not admonish the inhabitants of that Isle how abominable before God is the Empire or Rule of a wicked woman, yea of a traitoress and bastard....

I fear that this universal negligence of such as sometimes were esteemed watchmen shall rather aggravate our former ingratitude than excuse this our universal and ungodly silence in so weighty a matter....

Israel did universally decline from God by embracing idolatry under Jereboam.... And Judah with Jerusalem did follow the vile superstition and open iniquity of Samaria. But yet ceased not the prophets of God to admonish the one and the other; yea, even after that God had poured further his plagues upon them....

We in this our miserable age are bound to admonish the world and the tyrants thereof, of their sudden destruction to assure them, and to cry unto them whether they wish to hear or not.... And further it is our duty to open the truth revealed unto us unto the ignorant and blind world, unless to our own

condemnation we wish to wrap up and hide the talent committed to our charge. I am assured that God has revealed to some in this our age that it is more than a monster in nature that a woman shall reign and have empire above man. And yet with us all there is such silence, as if God therewith were nothing offended.

The natural man, enemy to God, shall find, I know, many causes why no such doctrine ought to be published in these our dangerous days. First, for that it may seem to tend to sedition; secondarily, it shall be dangerous not only to the writer or publisher, but also to all such as shall read the writings, or favor this truth spoken; and last, it shall not amend the chief offenders, partly because it shall never come to their ears, and partly because they will not be admonished in such cases.

I answer, if any of these be a sufficient reason that a truth known shall be concealed, then were the ancient prophets of God very fools, who did not better provide for their own quietness than to hazard their lives for rebuking of vices, and for the opening of such crimes as were not known to the world. And Christ Jesus did injury to his Apostles commanding them to preach repentance and remission of sin his name to every realm and nation. And Paul did not understand his own liberty when he cried, Woe be to me, if I preach not the Gospel.

If fear, I say, of persecution, of slander, or of any inconvenience before named might have excused

and discharged the servants of God from plainly rebuking the sins of the world, just cause had every one of them to have ceased from their office. For suddenly their doctrine was accused by terms of sedition, of new learning, and of treason; persecution and vehement trouble did shortly come upon the professors with the preachers: Kings, princes, and worldly rulers did conspire against God and against his anointed Christ Jesus. But what? Did any of these move the prophets and Apostles to faint in their vocation? No. But by the resistance which the devil made to them by his supporters, were they more inflamed to publish the truth revealed unto them and to witness with their blood that grievous condemnation and God's heavy vengeance should follow the proud contempt of graces offered. The fidelity, bold courage, and constancy of those that are passed before us ought to provoke us to follow their footsteps, unless we look for another kingdom than Christ has promised to such as persevere in profession of his name to the end.

If any think that the empire of women is not of such importance that for the suppressing of the same any man is bound to hazard his life, I answer, that to suppress it is in the hand of God alone. But to utter the impiety and abomination of the same, I say, it is the duty of every true messenger of God to whom the truth is revealed in that behalf. For the especial duty of God's messengers is to preach repentance, to admonish the offenders of their offenses, and to say to the wicked, Thou shalt die the death, except thou repent. This, I trust, will no man deny to be the proper office of all God's messengers to preach (as I have said) repentance and remission of sins. But neither of both can be done, except the conscience of the offenders be accused and convicted of transgression....

And therefore I say that of necessity it is that this monstrous empire of women (which among all enormities that this day do abound upon the face of the whole earth is most detestable and damnable) be openly revealed and plainly declared to the world, to the end that some may repent and be saved....

## *The Subjection of Women*

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature, contumelious to God, a thing most contrary to his revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally it is the subversion of good order, and of all equity and justice....

... The revealed will and perfect ordinance of God ...do manifestly oppose that any woman shall reign or bear dominion over man. For God first by order of his creation, and after by the curse and malediction pronounced against the woman by the reason of her rebellion, has pronounced the contrary.

First, I say, that woman in her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey man, not to rule and command him. As Saint Paul does reason in these words: Man is not of the woman but the woman of the man. And man was not created for the cause of the woman, but the woman for the cause of the man, and therefore ought the woman to have a power upon her head (that is a cover in sign of subjection).

Of which words it is plain that the Apostle means that woman in her greatest perfection should have known that man was lord above her; and therefore that she should never have pretended any kind of superiority above him, no more than do the angels above God the creator, or above Christ Jesus their head. So, I say, that in her greatest perfection woman was created to be subject to man. But after her fall and rebellion committed against God, there was put upon her a new necessity, and she was made subject to man by the irrevocable sentence of God, pronounced in these words: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. With sorrow shalt thou bear children, and thy will shall be subject to thy man: and he shall bear dominion over thee. Hereby may such as altogether be not blinded plainly see that God, by his sentence, has ejected all women from empire and dominion above man....

But (alas) ignorance of God, ambition, and tyranny have studied to abolish and destroy the second part of God's punishment. For women are lifted up to be heads over realms and to rule above men at their pleasure and appetites. But horrible is the

vengeance which is prepared for the one and for the other, for the promoters, and for the persons promoted, except they speedily repent....

I am not ignorant that the most part of men do understand this malediction of the subjection of the wife to her husband and of the dominion which he beareth above her; but the Holy Ghost gives to us another interpretation of this place, taking from all women all kind of superiority, authority, and power over man, speaking as follows by the mouth of Saint Paul: I suffer not a woman to teach, neither yet to usurp authority above man.

Here he names women in general, excepting none, affirming that she may usurp authority above no man. And that he speaks more plainly in another place in these words: Let women keep silence in the congregation, for it is not permitted to them to speak, but to be subject as the law says.

These two testimonies of the Holy Ghost be sufficient to prove whatsoever we have affirmed before and to repress the inordinate pride of women, as also to correct the foolishness of those that have studied to exalt women in authority above man, against God, and against his sentence pronounced....

For she that is made subject to one, may never be preferred to many, and that the Holy Ghost does manifestly express, saying: I suffer not that woman should usurp authority above her husband, but he nameth man in general, taking from her all power and authority to speak, to reason, to interpret, or to teach, but principally to rule or to judge in the assembly of men. So that woman by the law of God and by the interpretation of the Holy Ghost is utterly forbidden to occupy the place of God in the offices aforesaid which he has assigned to man, whom he has appointed and ordained his lieutenant in Earth....

The Apostle takes power from all women to speak in the assembly. Ergo, he permits no woman to rule above man. The former part is evident, whereupon does the conclusion of necessity follow. For he that takes from woman the least part of authority, dominion, or rule will not permit unto her that which is greatest. But greater it is to reign above realms and nations, to publish and make laws, and

to command men of all estates, and finally to appoint judges and ministers, than to speak in the congregation....

## *Objections to the Doctrine*

And now I think it expedient to answer such objections as carnal and worldly men, yea, men ignorant of God, use to make for maintenance of this tyranny (authority it is not worthy to be called) and most unjust empire of women.

First they do object the examples of Deborah and of Hulda the prophetess of whom the one judged Israel, and the other, by all appearance, did teach and exhort....

To the first I answer that particular examples do establish no common law. The causes were known to God alone why he took the spirit of wisdom and force from all men of those ages and did so mightily assist women against nature, and against his ordinary course.... With these women, I say, did God work potently, and miraculously, yea to them he gave most singular grace and privilege. But who has commanded that a public, yea, a tyrannical and most wicked law be established upon these examples?

The men that object the same are not altogether ignorant that examples have no strength when the question is of law. As if I should ask, what marriage is lawful? and it should be answered that lawful it is to man, not only to have many wives at once, but also it is lawful to marry two sisters, and to enjoy them both living at once, because that David, Jacob, and Solomon, servants of God, did the same. I trust that no man would justify the vanity of this reason. Or if the question were demanded, if a Christian with good conscience may defraud, steal, or deceive: and answer were made that so he might by the example of the Israelites, who at God's commandment deceived the Egyptians and spoiled them of their garments, gold, and silver. I think likewise this should be mocked.

And what greater force, I pray you, has the former argument? Deborah did rule in Israel, and Hulda spoke prophecy in Judah; ergo, it is lawful for women to reign above realms and nations, or to

teach in the presence of men. The consequent is vain and of none effect. For of examples, as is before declared, we may establish no law, but we are always bound to the law written and to the commandment expressed in the same. And the law written and pronounced by God forbids no less than any woman reign over man than it forbids man to take plurality of wives, to marry two sisters living at once, to steal, to rob, to murder, or to lie. If any of these has been transgressed, and yet God has not imputed the same, it makes not the like fact or deed lawful unto us. For God, being free, may for such causes as be approved by his inscrutable wisdom, dispense with the rigor of his law and may use his creatures at his pleasure. But the same power is not permitted to man, whom he has made subject to his law, and not to the examples of fathers....