

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-39988-3 - John Knox: On Rebellion
Edited by Roger A. Mason
Excerpt
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PART I
THE 1558 TRACTS

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THE FIRST BLAST OF THE
 TRUMPET
 against the Monstrous Regiment of Women

Veritas temporis filia

M.D.LVIII

[THE PREFACE]

THE KINGDOM APPERTAINETH TO OUR GOD.

Wonder it is that amongst so many pregnant wits as the Isle of Great Britanny hath produced, so many godly and zealous preachers as England did sometime nourish, and amongst so many learned and men of grave judgement 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 admonish the inhabitants of that Isle how abominable before God is the empire or rule of a wicked woman, yea, of a traitress and bastard, and what may a people or nation, left destitute of a lawful head, do by the authority of God's Word in electing and appointing common rulers and magistrates. That Isle, alas, for the contempt and horrible abuse of God's mercies offered, and for the shameful revolting to Satan from Christ Jesus and from His Gospel once professed, doth justly merit to be left in the hands of their own counsel and so to come to confusion and bondage of strangers.

But yet 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. We see our country set forth for a prey to foreign nations; we hear the blood of our brethren, the members of Christ Jesus, most cruelly to be shed; and the monstrous empire of a cruel woman

*Negligence of
 watchmen.*

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(the secret counsel of God excepted) we know to be the only occasion of all these miseries; and yet, with silence we pass the time as though the matter did nothing appertain to us. But the contrary examples of the ancient Prophets move me to doubt of this our fact. For Israel did universally decline from God by embracing idolatry under Jero-boam, in which they did continue even unto the destruction of their commonwealth. 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 forth His plagues upon them. For Jeremiah did write to the captives in Babylon, and did correct their errors, plainly instructing them who did remain in the midst of that idolatrous nation. Ezekiel, from the midst of his brethren, prisoners in Chaldea, did write his vision to those that were in Jerusalem and, sharply rebuking their vices, assured them that they should not escape the vengeance of God by reason of their abominations committed. The same Prophets, for comfort of the afflicted and chosen saints of God, who did lie hid amongst the reprobate of that age (as commonly doth the corn amongst the chaff), did prophesy and before-speak the changes of kingdoms, the punishments of tyrants, and the vengeance which God would execute upon the oppressors of His people. The same did Daniel and the rest of the Prophets every one in their season. By whose examples, and by the plain precept which is given to Ezekiel, commanding him that he shall say to the wicked: 'Thou shalt die the death', 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 list to hear or not: 'that the blood of the saints, which by them is shed, continually crieth and craveth vengeance in the presence of the Lord of Hosts'. And further it is our duty to open the truth revealed unto us unto the ignorant and blind world, unless that to our own condemnation we list to wrap up and hide the talent committed to our charge.

I am assured that God hath 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

*The diligence
of the old
Prophets of
God.
1 Kgs. 12.
Ezek. 16.*

Jer. 29.

Ezek. 7, 8, 9.

*God always
had his people
amongst the
wicked, who
never lacked
their Prophets
and teachers.
Isa. 13. Jer.
46. Ezek. 36.*

[Ezek. 33.8.]

*Examples
what teachers
ought to do in
this time.
Ezek. 2.
Rev. 6.*

*Three chief
reasons that do
stay man from
speaking the
truth.*

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writer or publisher, but also to all such as shall read the writings or favour 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 known to the world. And Christ Jesus did injury to His Apostles, commanding them to preach repentance and remission of sins in 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 Evangel.'

1 Cor. 9.16.

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 supposts were they the 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 hath promised to such as persevere in profession of His name to the end.

*Matt. 26.
Acts 18, 21.*

Ps. 2. Acts 4.

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 offences, 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

*It is necessary
for every man
to open the
impiety which
he knoweth to
hurt his
commonwealth*

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*No man can
 repent except
 he know his
 sin.*

neither of both can be done, except the conscience of the offenders be accused and convicted of transgression. For how shall any man repent not knowing wherein he hath offended? And where no repentance is found, there can be no entry to grace. And therefore I say that of necessity it is that this monstriferous empire of women (which amongst 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. And thus far to the first sort.

*The property
 of God's
 truth.*

To such as think that it will be long before such doctrine come to the ears of the chief offenders, I answer that the verity of God is of that nature that, at one time or at other, it will purchase to itself audience. It is an odour and smell that cannot be suppressed, yea, it is a trumpet that will sound in despite of the adversary. It will compel the very enemies to their own confusion to testify and bear witness of it. For I find that the prophecy and preaching of Elisha was declared in the hall of the king of Syria by the servants and flatterers of the same wicked king, making mention that Elisha declared to the king of Israel whatsoever the said king of Syria spoke in his most secret chamber. And the wondrous works of Jesus Christ were notified to Herod, not in any great praise or commendation of His doctrine, but rather to signify that Christ called that tyrant a fox, and that He did no more regard his authority than did John the Baptist, whom Herod before had beheaded for the liberty of his tongue. But whether the bearers of the rumours and tidings were favourers of Christ or flatterers of the tyrant, certain it is that the same, as well of Christ's doctrines as of His works, came to the ears of Herod. Even so may the sound of our weak trumpet, by the support of some wind (blow it from the south or blow it from the north, it is no matter), come to the ears of the chief offenders. But whether it do or not, yet dare we not cease to blow as God will give strength. For we are debtors to more than to princes: to wit, to the multitude of our brethren, of whom no doubt a great number have heretofore offended by error and ignorance, giving their suffrages, consent and help to establish women in their kingdoms and empires, not understanding how abominable, odious and detestable is all such usurped authority in the presence of God. And therefore must the truth be plainly spoken that the simple and rude multitude may be admonished.

2 Kgs. 6.

*Matt. 14.
 [Luke
 13.32.]*

Rom. 1.

*The ignorant
 multitude
 hath set up
 the authority
 of women not
 knowing the
 danger.*

And as concerning the danger which may hereof ensue, I am not

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altogether so brutish and insensible but that I have laid mine account what the finishing of the work may cost me for mine own part. First, I am not ignorant how difficult and dangerous it is to speak against a common error, especially when that the ambitious minds of men and women are called to the obedience of God's simple commandment. For to the most part of men, lawful and godly appeareth whatsoever antiquity hath received. And secondarily, I look to have mine adversaries not only of the ignorant multitude, but also of the wise, politic and quiet spirits of this world, so that as well shall such as ought to maintain the truth and verity of God become enemies to me in this case as shall the princes and ambitious persons who to maintain their unjust tyranny do always study to suppress the same. And thus I am most certainly persuaded that my labour shall not escape reprehension of many. But because I remember that accounts of the talents received must be made to Him who neither respecteth the multitude neither yet approveth the wisdom, policy, peace nor antiquity concluding or determining anything against His eternal will revealed to us in His most blessed Word, I am compelled to cover mine eyes and shut up mine ears that I neither see the multitude that shall withstand me in this matter, neither that I shall hear the opprobries nor consider the dangers which I may incur for uttering the same. I shall be called foolish, curious, spiteful and a sower of sedition. And one day perchance (although now I be nameless) I may be attainted of treason. But seeing that impossible it is but that either I shall offend God, daily calling to my conscience that I ought to manifest the verity known, or else that I shall displease the world for doing the same, I have determined to obey God, notwithstanding that the world shall rage thereat.

I know that the world offended (by God's permission) may kill the body, but God's majesty offended hath power to punish body and soul forever. His majesty is offended when that His precepts are contemned and His threatenings esteemed to be of none effect. And amongst His manifold precepts given to His Prophets, and amongst His threatenings, none is more vehement than is that which is pronounced to Ezekiel in these words: 'Son of man, I have appointed thee a watchman to the house of Israel that thou shouldst hear from my mouth the word and that thou mayest admonish them plainly when I shall say to the wicked man: O wicked, thou shalt assuredly die. Then if thou shalt not speak that thou mayest plainly admonish

A very dangerous thing to speak against old errors.

Accounts will be had of God's gifts.

The cause moving the author to write.

Ezek. 33:7-9

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him that he may leave his wicked way, the wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require of thy hand. But and if thou shalt plainly admonish the wicked man, and yet he shall not turn from his way, such a one shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.'

This precept, I say, with the threatening annexed, together with the rest that is spoken in the same chapter, not to Ezekiel only, but to every one whom God placeth watchman over His people and flock (and watchmen are they whose eyes He doth open and whose conscience He pricketh to admonish the ungodly), compelleth me to utter my conscience in this matter notwithstanding that the whole world should be offended with me for so doing. If any wonder why I do conceal my name, let him be assured that the fear of corporal punishment is neither the only neither the chief cause. My purpose is thrice to blow the trumpet in the same matter if God so permit. Twice I intend to do it without name, but at the last blast to take the blame upon myself that all others may be purged.

*For the
 author's
 name.*

THE FIRST BLAST TO AWAKE
 WOMEN DEGENERATE.

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

In the probation of this proposition, I will not be so curious as to gather whatsoever may amplify, set forth or decore the same, but I am purposed, even as I have spoken my conscience in most plain and few words, so to stand content with a simple proof of every member, bringing in for my witness God's ordinance in nature, His plain will revealed in His Word, and the minds of such as be most ancient amongst godly writers.

And first, where that I affirm the empire of a woman to be a thing repugnant to nature, I mean not only that God by the order of His creation hath spoiled woman of authority and dominion, but also that man hath seen, proved and pronounced just causes why that it so should be. Man, I say, in many other cases blind, doth in this behalf see very clearly. For the causes be so manifest that they cannot be

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hid. For who can deny but it repugneth to nature that the blind shall be appointed to lead and conduct such as do see; that the weak, the sick and impotent persons shall nourish and keep the whole and strong; and finally, that the foolish, mad and frenetic shall govern the discreet and give counsel to such as be sober of mind? And such be all women compared unto man in bearing of authority. For their sight in civil regiment is but blindness, their strength weakness, their counsel foolishness, and judgement frenzy, if it be rightly considered.

Causes why women should not have pre-eminence over men.

I except such as God, by singular privilege and for certain causes known only to Himself, hath exempted from the common rank of women, and do speak of women as nature and experience do this day declare them. Nature, I say, doth paint them forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble and foolish; and experience hath declared them to be inconstant, variable, cruel and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment. And these notable faults have men in all ages espied in that kind, for the which not only they have removed women from rule and authority, but also some have thought that men subject to the counsel or empire of their wives were unworthy of all public office. For thus writeth Aristotle in the second [book] of his *Politics*: 'What difference shall we put', saith he, 'whether that women bear authority or the husbands that obey the empire of their wives be appointed to be magistrates? For what ensueth the one must needs follow the other: to wit, injustice, confusion and disorder.' The same author further reasoneth that the policy or regiment of the Lacedaemonians (who other ways amongst the Grecians were most excellent) was not worthy to be reputed nor accounted amongst the number of commonwealths that were well governed because the magistrates and rulers of the same were too much given to please and obey their wives. What would this writer (I pray you) have said to that realm or nation where a woman sitteth crowned in parliament amongst the midst of men? O fearful and terrible are thy judgements (O Lord) which thus hast abased man for his iniquity!

Private examples do not break the general ordinance.

Aristotle, Politics, 2.9.9.

[Aristotle, Politics, 2.9.9-13.]

Read Isaiah the third chapter.

I am assuredly persuaded that if any of those men which, illuminated only by the light of nature, did see and pronounce causes sufficient why women ought not to bear rule nor authority, should this day live and see a woman sitting in judgement or riding from parliament in the midst of men, having the royal crown upon her head, the sword and sceptre borne before her in sign that the administration of justice was in her power; I am assuredly persuaded, I say, that

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Amazons were monstrous women that could not abide the regiment of men and therefore killed their husbands. Read Justin.¹

Aristotle, Politics, 2.9.13.

Digest, 50.17.2: De diversis regulis iuris antiqui. What women may not be. Digest, 3.1.1–5; De postulando. 16.1.pr.: Ad senatus consultum Velleianum.

Calpurnia. [Digest, 3.1.5.]

De statu hominum. Digest, 1.5.9.² From women power is taken away by the civil law over their own children. Digest, 24.1:

such a sight should so astonish them that they should judge the whole world to be transformed into Amazons, and that such a metamorphosis and change was made of all the men of that country as poets do feign was made of the companions of Ulysses; or at least that, albeit the outward form of men remained, yet should they judge that their hearts were changed from the wisdom, understanding and courage of men to the foolish fondness and cowardice of women. Yea, they further should pronounce that, where women reign or be in authority, that there must needs vanity be preferred to virtue, ambition and pride to temperance and modesty, and finally, that avarice the mother of all mischief must needs devour equity and justice.

But lest that we shall seem to be of this opinion alone, let us hear what others have seen and decreed in this matter. In the rules of the law thus it is written: 'Women are removed from all civil and public office, so that they neither may be judges, neither may they occupy the place of the magistrate, neither yet may they be speakers for others.' The same is repeated in the third and in the sixteenth books of the *Digests* where certain persons are forbidden, *ne pro aliis postulent*; that is, that they be no speakers nor advocates for others. And among the rest are women forbidden; and this cause is added, that they do not against shamefastness intermeddle themselves with the causes of others, neither yet that women presume to use the offices due to men. The law in the same place doth further declare that a natural shamefastness ought to be in womankind which most certainly she loseth whensoever she taketh upon her the office and estate of man. As in Calpurnia was evidently declared, who having licence to speak before the senate, at length became so impudent and importune that by her babbling she troubled the whole assembly, and so gave occasion that this law was established.

In the first book of the *Digests*, it is pronounced that the condition of the woman in many cases is worse than of the man. As in jurisdiction (saith the law), in receiving of cure and tuition, in adoption, in public accusation, in delation, in all popular action, and in motherly power which she hath not upon her own sons. The law further will not permit that the woman give anything to her husband because it is against the nature of her kind, being the inferior member, to pre-

¹ Apparently a reference to Justin Martyr's *Discourse to the Greeks*, cap. 1, though Knox is embroidering his source.

² The original sidenote refers erroneously to 'Titul. 8'.

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sume to give anything to her head. The law doth moreover pronounce womankind to be most avaricious (which is a vice intolerable in those that should rule or minister justice). And Aristotle, as before is touched, doth plainly affirm that, wheresoever women bear dominion, there must needs the people be disordered, living and abounding in all intemperance, given to pride, excess and vanity. And finally, in the end, that they must needs come to confusion and ruin.

Would to God the examples were not so manifest to the further declaration of the imperfections of women, of their natural weakness and inordinate appetites. I might adduce histories proving some women to have died for sudden joy; some for unpacience to have murdered themselves; some to have burned with such inordinate lust that for the quenching of the same they have betrayed to strangers their country and city; and some to have been so desirous of dominion that for the obtaining of the same they have murdered the children of their own sons. Yea, and some have killed with cruelty their own husbands and children. But to me it is sufficient (because this part of nature is not my most sure foundation) to have proved that men illuminated only by the light of nature have seen and have determined that it is a thing most repugnant to nature that women rule and govern over men. For those that will not permit a woman to have power over her own sons will not permit her (I am assured) to have rule over a realm; and those that will not suffer her to speak in defence of those that be accused, neither that will admit her accusation intended against man, will not approve her that she shall sit in judgement, crowned with the royal crown, usurping authority in the midst of men.

But now to the second part of nature in the which I include the revealed will and perfect ordinance of God. And against this part of nature, I say that it doth manifestly repugn that any woman shall reign or bear dominion over man. For God, first by the order of His creation, and after by the curse and malediction pronounced against

De donationibus inter virum & uxorem. Women be covetous, therefore unmeet governors. Digest, 1.3: De legibus senatusque consultis.³ Aristotle, Politics, 2.9.13. England and Scotland beware. Great imperfections of women. Romilda the wife of Gisulphus betrayed to Cacanus the dukedom of Friuli in Italy. Jane queen of Naples hanged her husband.⁴ Athaliah, 2 Kgs. 11. Irene, Anton. Sabellicus.⁵ If the less things be denied to women, the greater cannot be granted.

³ The relevance of this citation is far from clear: there is nothing in *Digest*, 1.3 to support Knox's argument in the text. Likewise, the previous sentences place an interpretation on *Digest*, 24.1 which it cannot bear.

⁴ For these references to Romilda, the wife of Gisulf II, duke of Friuli, and Joan I, queen of Naples, see the biographical notes.

⁵ The story of the Byzantine empress, Irene, is in Sabellicus, *Opera omnia*, vol. 11, pp. 446–7, 451–2. For further details, see the biographical notes. It is possible that Knox drew his references to Romilda and Joan I from the same source; vol. 11, pp. 398, 609.