

#5: “Women Are Inferior to Men.”

Stated so blatantly, this lie doesn't seem to qualify as insidious; few would not be aware of its falsity. But it was once deemed to be the obvious truth and the aftereffects of that belief still have negative impacts on the drive to gender equality. The arguments against this lie hardly need repeating here. What follows are quotes from influential people in the past; quotes that may help explain why the idea of female inferiority is taking so long to erase from the public consciousness.

In large measure, the attitudes expressed below were founded on the biblical story of Adam and Eve. The idea being that Eve, having been created as his helpmate, led Adam to disobey God. (For insight into that misunderstanding, see the Most Insidious Lie #2: *Mankind requires salvation*, on this site.)

- ✘ “If a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.” — The apostle Paul, *1 Corinthians* 11:6-8
- ✘ “The women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” — The apostle Paul, *1 Corinthians* 14:34-35
- ✘ “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” — The apostle Paul, *1 Timothy* 2:11-13
- ✘ “For women, the very consciousness of their own nature must evoke feelings of shame.” — Saint Clement of Alexandria, Christian theologian (c150-215) *Pedagogues II*, 33, 2
- ✘ “In pain shall you bring forth children, woman, and you shall turn to your husband and he shall rule over you. And do you not know that you are Eve? God's sentence hangs still over all your sex and His punishment weighs down upon you. You are the devil's gateway; you are she who first violated the forbidden tree and broke the law of God. It was you who coaxed your way around him whom the devil had not the force to attack. ... Woman, you are the gate to hell.” — Tertullian, the “father of Latin Christianity” (c160-225)
- ✘ “Woman is a temple built over a sewer.” — Tertullian
- ✘ “Hurtful are women ... the angel of God told me that women are overcome by the spirit of fornication more than men, and they devise in their heart against men; and by means of their adornment they deceive first their minds, and instill the poison by the glance of their eye. ... Therefore flee fornication, my children, and command your wives and your daughters that they adorn not

their heads and their faces; because every woman who acts deceitfully in these things hath been reserved to everlasting punishment." — *The Testament of Reuben, circa 3rd century*

✘ "Woman does not possess the image of God in herself but only when taken together with the male who is her head, so that the whole substance is one image. But when she is assigned the role as helpmate, a function that pertains to her alone, then she is not the image of God. But as far as the man is concerned, he is by himself alone the image of God just as fully and completely as when he and the woman are joined together into one." — Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo Regius (354-430)

✘ "Woman is a misbegotten man and has a faulty and defective nature in comparison to his. Therefore, she is unsure in herself. What she cannot get, she seeks to obtain through lying and diabolical deceptions. And so, to put it briefly, one must be on one's guard with every woman, as if she were a poisonous snake and the horned devil. ... Thus in evil and perverse doings woman is cleverer, that is, slyer, than man. Her feelings drive woman toward every evil, just as reason impels man toward all good." — Saint Albertus Magnus, Dominican theologian, 13th century

✘ "As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence. — Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church, 13th century

✘ "For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. So

by such a kind of subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominates." — Aquinas

✘ "All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which in women is insatiable." — *Malleus Maleficarum* [the witch-hunters handbook], 1487

✘ "The word and works of God is quite clear, that women were made either to be wives or prostitutes." — *Martin Luther, Reformer (1483-1546)*

✘ "No gown worse becomes a woman than the desire to be wise." — *Martin Luther*

✘ "Men have broad and large chests, and small narrow hips, and more understanding than women, who have but small and narrow breasts, and broad hips, to the end they should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children." — *Martin Luther*

✘ "Woman, who by nature (that is, by the ordinary law of God) is formed to obey. The government of women has always been regarded by all wise persons as a monstrous thing. ... Now Moses shows that the woman was created afterwards, in order that she might be a kind of appendage to the man; and that she was joined to the man on the express condition, that she should be at hand to render obedience to him." — *John Calvin, Reformer (1509-1564)*

✘ "Unquestionably, wherever even natural propriety has been maintained, women have in all ages been excluded from the public management of affairs. It is the dictate of common sense, that female government is improper and unseemly." — *John Calvin, Reformer (1509-1564)*

✘ "Such be all women, compared to man in bearing of authority: For their sight ... is but blindness; their strength, weakness; their

counsel, foolishness; and judgement, fantasy." — John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment [unnatural rule] of Women*, 1558

✘ "The very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage . . . for this reason a man cannot grant anything to his wife or enter into any covenant with her: for the grant would be to presuppose her separate existence, and to covenant with her would be only to covenant with himself." — Sir William Blackstone, 18th century jurist

✘ "The root of masculine is stronger, and of feminine weaker. The sun is a governing planet to certain planets, while the moon borrows her light from the sun, and is less or weaker." — Joseph Smith, founder of LDS movement (1805-1844)

✘ "Women are made to be led, and counseled, and directed." — Heber C. Kimball, LDS apostle (1801-1868)

✘ "A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband, even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ." — Official statement of Southern Baptist Convention, summer 1998

✘ "The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." — Pat Robertson, Southern Baptist leader

✘ The Holiness of God is not evidenced in women when they are brash, brassy, boisterous, brazen, head-strong, strong-willed, loud-mouthed, overly-talkative, having to have the last word, challenging, controlling, manipulative, critical, conceited, arrogant, aggressive, assertive, strident, interruptive, undisciplined, insubordinate, disruptive,

dominating, domineering, or clamoring for power. Rather, women accept God's holy order and character by being humbly and unobtrusively respectful and receptive in functional subordination to God, church leadership, and husbands. — James Fowler, *Women in the Church*, 1999

✘ Women will be saved by going back to that role that God has chosen for them. Ladies, if the hair on the back of your neck stands up it is because you are fighting your role in the scripture. — [Mark Driscoll](#), preacher, circa 2001

In Summary

"To read the early Church Fathers is to feel sometimes that they had never heard of the Nazarene, except as a peg on which to hang their own tortured diabolism, and as a blank scroll upon which to indite their furious misogyny." — John Langdon-Davies, *Short History of Women*, 1927

"Religions are not merely belief systems but social institutions whose leaders have always understood how effectively fear, hate, and the assurance of racial, national, or sexual superiority—and sex—can be used to define and control a society. . . . Some politicians have long understood that regimenting sexuality is a time-tested way of maintaining moral authority." — Francine Prose, "The Original Sin," *Lapham's Quarterly*, undated.

