Chapter 1

THE REFORMED ON MALE RULE IN THE HOME

Historian Steven Ozment summarized the husband's duties as depicted by the moral teachers of the Reformation period as follows: "The basic duties of the husband were to provide for the welfare of his wife and children, to protect his household from any who would harm it, and to rule over his family and servants with a firm but just hand." Ozment added, "Above all, the husband was supposed to *rule*. He alone was master of his house, the one on whom all domestic discipline and order finally depended."[1] However, the wife "was no maid or common servant of her husband," but the husband was "father of the house," and his wife "mother of the house"—"a position of high authority and equal respect."[2] The 16th-century Reformers consistently taught such marital duties based on the following Scripture passages, quoted here for reference:

> 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. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. (1 Cor. 11:7–9)

> . . . submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head

1. Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 50.

2. Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 54.

of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph. 5:21–33)

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. (Col. 3:18–19)

Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:1–7)

THE REFORMERS ON MALE RULE IN THE HOME

Johannes Oecolampadius

Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531) was a German Reformed theologian who pastored in Basel, Switzerland and was a professor at the University of Basel. Beginning on August 7, 1531, he delivered lectures on Genesis, ending at Genesis 16:16 because of his death. Oecolampadius affirmed that woman shares equal worth with man, as rooted in creation: "Granted that he was superior after she had sinned, nevertheless she was created in equal dignity with the man. Just as even now man and wife are one in Christ, neither is this woman inferior to that man."[3] Further, he wrote, "Eve was created in the beginning and was not in any way inferior to Adam, for she too had been given the divine Spirit and also made in the image of God."[4] Oecolampadius added, "Moreover the woman was drawn out from the side of Adam, not from a higher part lest she be deemed more worthy, not from a lower part lest she be able to be regarded as worth less, but from the side so that she would be at his side and so be his helper."[5] (Similar language about the woman being taken from Adam's rib goes back at least to Peter Lombard and Hugh of Saint Victor.[6])

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3. Johannes Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, trans. Mickey L. Mattox (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2013), 95.

4. Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, 141.

5. Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, 153.

6. Similar quotes can be found below by Zanchi, Perkins, and the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, and elsewhere by Matthew Henry and Thomas Aquinas. The origin of such language goes back at least to Peter Lombard (c. 1096–1160) in *Libri Quattuor Sententiarum*, Book 2, Distinction 18, Chapter 2: "she was formed not from just any part of his body, but from his side, so that it should be shown that she was created for the partnership of love, lest, if perhaps she had been made from his head, she should be perceived as set over man in domination; or if from his feet, as if subject to him in servitude. Therefore, since she was made neither to dominate, nor to serve the man, but as his partner, she had to be produced neither from his head, nor from his feet, but from his side, so that he would know that she was to be placed beside himself whom he had learned had been taken from his side." Peter Lombard, *The Sentences – Book 2: On Creation*, trans. Giulio Silano, Mediaeval Sources in Translation 43 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), 77.

A similar quote can be found in Hugh of Saint Victor's (c. 1100–1141) *De Sacramen-*

Yet Oecolampadius also held that woman was created weaker than man: "We know how through weakness Eve, feebler and less intelligent, sinned, which is why the serpent attacked her." Thus, woman "is by nature the weaker vessel."[7] Oecolampadius differed with other Reformed theologians in that he seemed to view male headship as a result of the fall, as seen in his comment on Genesis 3:16—"He says: 'Previously you were equal to your husband, with the same dignity, taken from the side of the man, with equal rank. But now, because you have become the cause of ruin to the man, it will be your penalty that you should be under man.'"[8] He added, "You may be sure that Adam gave the name to the woman after sin and in this way showed himself to the be the lord and head of the woman, she who before sin was a partner with equal worth."[9] However, Oecolampadius also said that Adam was Eve's teacher before the fall: just as "Adam received the command from God when Eve had not yet been created, so Adam was the teacher of Eve."[10] He stated that "Adam was supposed to teach his own wife, and not instead to be taught by her,"[11] and that Adam "should have instructed his wife, but he failed to do it."[12]

Wolfgang Musculus

Wolfgang Musculus (1497–1563), a professor of theology in Bern, Switzerland, also embraced male rule in the home, as seen in his *Common Places of Christian Religion* (*Loci Communes Sacrae Theologiae*).

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tis Christiane fidei, Book 1, Part 6, Section 35: "Now she was made from the side of man that it might be shown that she was created for association in love, lest perhaps, if she had been made from the head, she would seem to be preferred to man unto damnation, or, if from the feet, to be subject unto slavery. Since, therefore, she was furnished to man neither as a mistress nor a handmaid but as a companion, she had to be produced neither from the head nor from the feet but from the side, in order that he might realize that she was to be placed beside him, whom he learned had been taken from his very side." Hugh of Saint Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De Sacramentis)*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951), 117.

7. Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, 187.
8. Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, 189.
9. Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, 195.
10. Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, 167.
11. Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, 177.
12. Oecolampadius, *An Exposition of Genesis*, 188.

As a part of the fall in Genesis 3, he said that Eve was now "under the power" of her husband and that he would "rule." It was by the "strength of a law, whereby the woman is commanded to be subject and obedient unto her husband." Musculus wrote, "The law of the woman is to obey her husband; the man's law, that by honest travail he provide necessaries for his wife, his children, and his family. Thereunto agree all the writings of the Apostles."[13] Musculus also used the language of superior and inferior for husband and wife, respectively. In discussing the Fifth Commandment's requirement that children obey their parents, he said, "Indeed the mother is inferior unto the father, as concerning the law of the subjection of wedlock: besides that, weaker also in nature and kind, so that she is not unworthily called the weaker vessel of the Apostle Peter."[14] Accordingly, Musculus stated, "let the husband require not this only of his wife that she be obedient unto him, but she be subject unto him to a certain reverence and knowledge of the duty of wedlock."[15]

Peter Martyr Vermigli

Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562), an Italian Reformer, said in his *Loci Communes* that when woman is compared "with other creatures she is the image of God, for she has dominion over them and has use of them." However, when compared to man, woman "is not said to be the image of God, because she does not bear rule over the man but rather obeys him." Vermigli then approvingly quoted Augustine (*On the Trinity*, Book 13), who said, "If it is understood of man and woman, insofar as they enjoy mind and reason, it is fitting that they should be according to the image of God; but when the woman is compared to man as to the actions and affairs of this life, she is not the image of God because she was created to be a helper of man."[16]

13. Wolfgang Musculus, *Common Places of Christian Religion* (London, 1563), fol. 33 [English modernized].

14. Musculus, *Common Places of Christian Religion*, fol. 72 [English modernized].

15. Musculus, *Common Places of Christian Religion*, fol. 55 [English modernized].

16. Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Philosophical Works: On the Relation of Philosophy to Theology*, ed. and trans. Joseph C. McLelland, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies 39 (Davenant Institute, 2018), 43.