

# The Divine Right of Women

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HomeMakers for America Conference  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
September 19, 2015*

I would like to begin my thoughts today with a question was once asked by a prominent leader of this community working as both as an ecclesiastical leader and political science professor at the University of Utah, Neal A. Maxwell:

“When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies? The great armistice made by military men or the peacemaking of women in homes and neighborhoods. Will what happened in the cradles and kitchens prove to be more controlling than what happened in congresses?”<sup>i</sup>

Another prominent leader in the early Christian world said this about his mother. "It is to my mother that I owe everything. If I am Thy child, O my God, it is because though gavest me such a mother. If I perceive the truth to all other things, it is the point of my mother's teaching. If I did not long ago perish in sin and misery, it is because of the long and faithful tears with which she pleaded for me.”

## Story of Monica

I would like to tell you more about this exemplary woman. She had been taught and was converted to the teachings of Jesus Christ. But she lived among those who believed differently. Paganism was the predominant religion of her day. This religion was

polytheistic and rather than uniting people in one indivisible religion under God, it brought together many different worldviews and practices. Many of those practices were directly opposite of the teachings of the Christian religion. “The dissension of Christians were so great and their morals were so largely impregnated with heathenism, it seemed as if the salt of Christ's church had lost its savor and the light and sweetness of Jesus had deserted his professed disciples.”

This is the world that a woman by the name of Monica found herself as she toiled to serve and strengthen the members of her family in the Christian faith. Monica was born in the year 382 AD. As a young woman she reluctantly, but from a sense of filial obedience, gave her hand to the heathen freeman Patricius, a native of the ancient Rome city of Tagaste.

Early in the marriage, Monica's mother in law “did all she could to prejudice the pagan husband against his nonoffending Christian wife. But Monica returned good for evil and when her mother in law and servants whispered against her she overcame by persevering endurance and meekness that in the end these whispering tongues were silenced and the wife and mother of Patricius lived together with a remarkable sweetness of mutual kindness.”

Monica's son later describes her character, "Such was she with God, her most inward instructor, teaching her in the school of the heart. Finally, her own husband, toward the end of his earthly life, did she gain."

“It was a great consolation to Monica that her husband had become a Christian before his

death, and the last few years of their union had been peaceful and affectionate. It had not always been so. Patricius was a man of violent temper, who had abused, though he did not beat her, had impeded her religious doctrines, mocked her high standard of virtue, and when the sorrow stricken Monica learned that her son had given himself to immorality and became the father of an illegitimate child, Patricius only laughed as though his sowing of wild oats were only a matter of course". For many years, Monica was alone in the higher standards she wanted for her family.

Just as we do today, Monica and Patricius sent their son was away to receive a higher education.

"In modern time, we hear much about the dangers and temptations of college life. Undoubtedly, if a youth be naturally inclined to low pleasures and intellectual dissipation, he will find plenty of opportunity when he is away from home and among unformed characters his own age." Monica's heart was deeply troubled by the behavior of her son during these years.

Carthage, now a part of the Roman empire, was the seat of the best learning of the time and this is where Monica sent her son in the year 371. Here he studied rhetoric, heathen literature, and philosophy. The scriptures seemed trivial to him when compared to the heathen classics. He studied at Carthage for a few years at Monica expense.

Monica continued for years to pray and plead for the conversion of her son. She sought the counsel of a bishop who recommended that she

trust to prayers and time for the long sought for change, and cheered her with these words "It cannot be that the son of such tears should perish." Before this happy change was consummated there was a hard period of sorrow and probation.

Slowly and silently the change was wrought as friendships were formed with others who had shared Monica beliefs. After one such friend died, her son gave himself to deeper reflection and pondering. He traveled from Carthage to Rome. He became sick on his arrival in Rome, and while sick studied the scriptures with more attention. Her was now 30 years old in 385 AD. Monica's concern for her son continued to grow especially as she read the despondent tone of his letters.

She resolved that she would join her son in Rome. "In those days the journey was a difficult one especially for a woman. To meet the expenses of the trip she sold all her valuables. Hardly had the vessel sailed when a violent storm set in. The hearts of all on board sank with apprehension, and even the captain and sailors gave up hope, but the faith which had enabled Paul to tranquilize the ships company when he too was traveling toward Rome inspired poor Monica with courage. She told them that though the waves of the sea were mighty and raged horribly, the Lord who ruled them was mighty and could still their raging. And so it was. Monica hastened to Rome only to find that her son had left for Milan. The city was 200 leagues from Rome and to reach it one must cross the Apennine Mountains. This did not scare her. The mountain passes had no more terrors than the stormy sea. So after one days rest she set out for

Milan where the long desire of her soul was to be accomplished, and her son after all his wanderings in the far country of sin and disbelief was to be converted to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

“Except for St. Paul, Christianity had never gained a greater convert than Augustine, *the son of Monica*. Augustine stayed the sceptic process that was fast destroying the life of the western church. His marvelous gifts were transferred at once from the vain babbling of false philosophy to the service of absolute truth. His natural characteristics became sanctified and consecrated to higher uses.

“Monica may well stand as a model of the Christian wife. By meekness, charity, silence, and obedience in things lawful, she gained her husband Patricius, and was an example of St. Paul's saying, ‘The believing wife sanctifieth her husband.’ By prayer and patience she won her son Augustine from unbelief and sensuality to that faith and self-consecration which made him a burning and shining light to all ages of the church and of the world. His influence upon all Christian civilization can hardly be over estimated, and even to the present time he still bears a splendid reputation as an interpreter of scripture.

“Even secular historians cannot write the history of western civilization without frequent reference to the great Father of the Latin church. For although the episcopal labors of St. Augustine were located in Africa, his writings were in the Latin tongue, his mission came from Rome, the seat of Latin Christianity, and his influence was one of the great forces of Western civilization in Europe. His sermons,

his "confessions", and his commentaries on the scriptures are among the noblest classics of the Christian church.”<sup>ii</sup>

### **History of the Divine Right of Kings**

St. Augustine lived in the latter part of the 4th century. This period of time is referred to as Late Antiquity by historians. It was a period of decline of the Roman Empire, when it had failed to enforce its rule, and its vast empire was divided. This was a time of transition to what is referred to now as the middle ages. Germanic kings ruled in the region of modern day Europe. The Germanic monarchies were originally pre-Christianized, but their contact with the Roman Empire and the Christian church greatly altered their structure which developed into the feudal Monarchs of the middle ages.

The title of king is in origin that of an elected sacral and military leader from a noble family. Over the years, the tradition developed of selecting the leader from the same family for they were considered to have a "divine ancestry" and a permeating philosophy developed into the "Divine Right of Kings". This doctrine suggests that Kings have a God-given right to rule and that rebellion against them is a sin. The King was not accountable to his subjects. An individual's tenure as monarch was considered to be an act of God, and thus the king can set the law, or ignore the law, or change the law.

As kings established laws and influenced tradition to preserve the royal blood line, the rights of the individual were lost. Reading of the Bible was limited to those who understood

the Latin tongue. The light of true Christianity was lost and the people of Europe sank into a period of history called the dark ages.

### **The age of enlightenment**

It took many, many years to overcome the traditions and beliefs of the dark ages. A period of enlightenment was ushered in as the Bible became more accessible to the common people. There was a heavy price to pay by many martyrs to bring truth and light back into the world. John Wycliff and William Tyndall were among those who were persecuted for their efforts to translate the Bible into English. William Tyndall was strangled and his body burned for his determination to translate and print the bible.

His final words were a prayer: "Lord, Open the King of England's eyes". The King at that time was King Henry VIII and his eyes were eventually opened to the importance of the Bible. Because of a disagreement with the church in Rome, King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the church in England and required that copies of the English Bible be placed in every parish church. Hungry for the gospel, people flocked to these churches, reading scriptures to one another until their voices gave out.

The opportunity to read the Bible was a major influence over emerging political philosophy. Algernon Sydney was among the first to challenge the divine right of kings. He dared to suggest that the "liberties of nations are from God and nature, not from Kings." . And that . . "God having given the government of the world to no one man, nor declared how it should

be divided, left it to the will of man. He also shared a familiar Bible story: "Samuel did not describe to the Israelites the glory of a free monarchy; but the evils the people should suffer, that he might divert them from desiring a king." A few years later, a man by the name of John Locke suggested that "all men are in a state of political equality in which there is no natural superior or inferior."

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Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were both influenced by the writings of John Locke and Algernon Sydney. Their ideas can be seen in the Declaration of Independence and again in the Constitution of the United States.

Thomas Jefferson penned the words: "All men have been endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." With this declaration, mankind made a giant leap forward and upward. The philosophy of the divine right of kings crumbled and made way for the divine right of the individual. When Thomas Jefferson wrote the phrase "among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, he suggested that these three rights were a few among many. Men and women could discover more rights and responsibilities by reading the bible. For God did not give any responsibility to men without also giving them the right to perform that responsibility.

Brave men and women worked side by side to throw off the shackles of the false tradition of the divine right of kings and ushered in a new era where the divine rights of both men and women would be honored. A new country was born with a written constitution to protect the rights of individuals.

## **The divine right of women**

Today, I would like to speak for a moment on the divine rights of women. One of the rights that has been given specifically to women is the right of influence. Monica is a wonderful example of someone who exercised this right in ancient times. As we read the stories of many influential women throughout the ages we discover that women have a special quality, a divine gift if you will, that makes them adept at instilling character traits and ideals in the rising generation. Qualities like faith, courage, empathy, and refinement.

Many of you are familiar with the writings of Alex de Toqueville, a French political thinker and historian in the 1800s who was best known for his work: Democracy in America. He was intrigued by the success of America, so he came here to investigate the reason. He noted, "I have nowhere seen women occupying a loftier position; and if I were asked to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed, I should reply, to the superiority of their women."

Not only did Alex DE Toqueville recognize the influence of women, he witnessed a political system that protected this right of influence. But he was not the first to write about a woman's influence for good. Many ancient stories give praise and recognition to women. The Apostle Paul wrote about a couple of women in his letters to Timothy. In the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, we read how Paul encouraged Timothy to remember the influence of his mother and grandmother.

"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned

faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother, Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."<sup>iii</sup>

## **The divine right of women under attack**

Unfortunately, and to the great detriment of society, we live in a time when the woman's right of influence has been threatened and openly attacked. We are watching history repeat itself. Just as political, social, and religious influence, brought about a false tradition in the establishment of the divine right of kings, there are forces today that are would weaken and even eliminate the rights of the individual. We are a witnessing a movement that places the decision making power and influence in the hands of a few select individuals. A woman's divine right of influence and a man's divine right as guardian and protector of the family are caught in the cross hairs of this movement.

One of those threats is found in the devaluation of marriage, motherhood, and homemaking. "A woman's influence is nowhere more powerfully felt or more beneficially employed than in the home."<sup>iv</sup> It is in the home that a mother is intimately involved in the education and nurture of her family. Education reforms over the past several decades have diminished her influence by suggesting that children need professional teachers, they need to spend more time away from home to participate in academic instruction, and when they are home, children should spend more time with homework to be college ready. These new developments in education have been a powerful force to eliminate the woman's right of influence within her own home.

We must remember the stories of history that have taught us the grave mistake this will be for society at large. "For it is in the home that a mother's love and high expectations will lead her children to act responsibly and to be serious about education and personal development. It is a mother's example of service that will lead her children to make on-going contributions to families, neighbors, and communities."<sup>v</sup> It was Monica who had the greatest influence on her son Augustine, and it is mother's today who can have the greatest influence on the rising generation if we are willing to protect that right.

A second threat is found in attitudes about human sexuality. No greater power or influence has been given to mankind, than to be instrumental in giving life to another human being. For this, women have been honored and revered for generations. She has been considered as the guardian of the well springs of life and by her teachings and example she has passed on the importance of virtue to the next generation. For many years, the honorable man would defend the virtue of women at all costs. This male instinct and attribute was depicted in a popular movie about 30 years ago. Perhaps you remember the Karate Kid and Daniel LaRusso when he said: "I am the man who will fight for your honor."

But current attitudes about human sexuality have removed women from that pedestal. Abortion for personal or social convenience strikes at the heart of a woman's moral influence. Revealing dress has been demeaning to her character. Where once a woman's higher standards have demanded commitment and responsibility from men, now promiscuity has robbed a woman of the

influence she could have had. The equal rights movement now seeks to erase the difference between men and women, between masculine and feminine. In this movement, the standard bearers for society have been reduced in rank and all of society has been degraded.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far greater than rubies."<sup>vi</sup> We need virtuous women today to stand up as a prominent standard bearer. To accomplish this goal, we need women to simply show those character traits that are instinctive and natural to her femininity. Margaret Nadauld, another prominent leader in this community, once said: "The world has enough women who are tough; we need women who are tender. There are enough women who are coarse; we need women who are kind. There are enough women who are rude; we need women who are refined. We have enough women of fame and fortune, we need more women of faith. We have enough greed; we need more goodness. We have enough vanity; we need more virtue. We have enough popularity; we need more purity."<sup>vii</sup>

When women are held in high esteem, their influence is great. I have stood in awe as I watch men honor the women they care about. I first witnessed this respect as I watched my father care for his mother and protect her from the abuses of men who were intoxicated with alcohol. I have been grateful for the many times my husband has both honored and cared for me, even when I am ornery or undeserving. Now I am inspired by the actions of my son's and sons in law as I watch them care for, and show concern and respect and offer protection for their wives. A woman holds a tremendous amount of influence over a man who loves

her. An example of this influence is in another popular movie from about 30 years ago. Perhaps you remember the movie Rocky, and the scene from the second movie when Rocky just did not have his heart in the fight, his training was not going so well and the prospect of winning looked bleak until his wife Adrianne confronted him. The turning point occurred when Adrianne looked rocky in the eye and told him to win. A new energy and commitment infused Rocky's soul and he trained with deep fervor and commitment. Ladies, we need to exercise our right of influence and encourage the men in our lives to win the battle for freedom.

Just as the divine rights of women have been threatened and attacked, so have the divine rights of men. It is both the right and instinctive nature of man to serve as guardian and protector of the family. We need more men to wake up to this critical right and responsibility. In asking more men to join the fight for freedom, may I offer this one caution. Emotionalism without principle will undermine our success. This is so important, I will repeat it again. Emotionalism without principle will undermine our success. We need families – both men and women to understand the principles upon which true liberty is based. Senator Al Jackson spoke earlier of four things we need to focus on. I would like to repeat those four things once again:

1. Our rights come from God and not government.
2. Make quality family life our highest priority.
3. Study and understand the Constitution from the viewpoint of the Founding Fathers.

4. Elect virtuous and moral leaders. Get involved and be one of those leaders when possible

The U.S. Constitution is the document designed to preserve liberty. We invite you to explore the resources on the HomeMakers for America website that will help you study and understand this great freedom document.

Ladies, who knows but that we have been born for such a time as this.<sup>viii</sup> Where men and women can work side by side, in separate yet equally important roles in defending and preserving our liberties.

I will conclude with the question that I asked in the beginning: “When the real history of mankind is fully disclosed, will it feature the echoes of gunfire or the shaping sound of lullabies?” Let us work together in making the shaping sound of lullabies, and the lessons in the cradles and kitchens to be the primary influence in the rising generation. Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> Maxwell, Neal A. “The Women of God”. Ensign Magazine, May 1978.

<sup>ii</sup> The story of Monica, Mother of St. Augustine can be found in “Stories of Great Wives and Mothers”. Libraries of Hope, 2015.

<sup>iii</sup> 2 Timothy 1:5

<sup>iv</sup> Christofferson, D. Todd, “The Moral Force of Women”, Ensign Magazine, November 2013.

<sup>v</sup> Christofferson, D. Todd.

<sup>vi</sup> Proverbs 31:10

<sup>vii</sup> Nadauld, Margaret, “The Joy of Womanhood”, Ensign Magazine, November 2000.

<sup>viii</sup> Esther 4:14