

## **FEMINISM PART ONE.**

The study of feminism is by its nature a substantial undertaking therefore this brief work will in no way touch all the bases or philosophies that feminism embraces and teaches. What I will endeavour to do in this series is touch on some of the theories that have been propounded by feminism and try to tie it together with the Biblical view of woman and her role in family and church.

To begin with the feminist mindset appears to believe at least as far as the Bible is concerned that women are given nothing more than a *borrowed identity*. This in turn can only lead to an uncomfortable identity crisis as well as a mindset based on confusion. This must only lead to a psyche that has in it an innate anger the type of anger we see in the militant feminist groups. I would add to this also that when the Biblical account of woman is ignored or written out of feminine history it necessarily forces them to look for a *different past* which in turn forces them to look for and try to form a different future than scripture has for them.

As Christians, at the outset, this highlights for us the problem with all such philosophies and that is this. When God is deleted by either philosophy or science then of necessity the human soul is also deleted. When this occurs what are we left with? Surely it can be nothing other than a harsh, cold, and hostile environment which has neither purpose nor goal. This raises another question: what happens to moral and ethical responsibility in this type of climate? Surely we can see that when reason is relegated to mere self interest devoid of Biblical empathy, and appropriate emotional response then the proper use of reason is necessarily destroyed.

Feminist thinking as with all other thinking of this type uses past concepts. This is especially the case when it deals with text based traditional concepts like the Bible. This is why critical feminism engages in a *re-interpretation* of scripture. This is a war with God and Christians and like any war of this sort the first casualty is always truth and Biblical truth here is relegated in order to accommodate alternative feminist thought.

What then has this really done for women? I would suggest that it has not been helpful at all. Why? Because by simply rearranging ideas to suit such a mindset and then removing Biblical truth regarding woman, feminism has done nothing other than obliterate the truth about women. What they have done is to engage in attempting to write kinds of *Biblical sequels to the given truths*. These, however, do not in any way create a new or different beginning for women. In reality they have only created setbacks that women must overcome; and the ultimate prize that is lost is the eternal home in heaven for any woman who follows such thinking. Therefore as Christians when we confront feminism we must ever be “people of the book” giving the true view from God’s perspective on such matters.

Part of that truth is the fact that whether we be man or woman we are all tripartite beings consisting of body, soul, and spirit (I Thessalonians 5:23). Within this framework there is contained the mind and the mind was designed by the creator to interact with other minds; including that of the creator Himself through His word. From this we can see that we come to know Him by the renewing of our own “mindsets” (Romans 12:1-2). Thus it is not a

product of blind evolutionary chance, natural selection, human philosophy, or suchlike. It is God ordained creation law as is male and female. Feminism, however, is not so based it seems to me to be based rather on the principle of “survival of the loudest” but, to be fair, it came also as a response against those men who have themselves abandoned the spiritual mindset and Biblical truth; and who use women as mere playthings and slaves. Even though this is true it does not give one the right to change what God has put in place.

Many feminists have the mindset that they must absolutely break what they call the “*virtues*” of misogyny. Yet if you really think about that as a Christian you find that there are no virtues to misogyny and the Bible in no way endorses it (Ephesians 5:28, Titus 2:3-6, I Peter 3:7). Yet from this mindset we can see that feminism is about challenge and rebellion against any and all power structures, conventions and laws (including of course Biblical law). These laws are perceived by feminists as keeping women enslaved, subjugated, and subordinate to male power. This type of feminism is seen by such women as women consciously working as a group for their “*rights*” as well as challenging all structures (the church included) which put men in charge in any public way.

From such a standpoint feminism could be said to have started as soon as women becoming conscious of this problem organised themselves on a scale that was effective enough to help them change their *perceived situation*. This mindset also seems to carry with it another implication that being that women with very little power can understand the past better than those who have power. If this is true then we must ask where then do men with little power fit in to this? The Bible actually says that it was Eve who was deceived (II Corinthians 11:3) in fact in (I Timothy 2:15) it states that Eve was “quite deceived.” Which raises another question, what was the effect that this had on both men and women?

It would appear then that too many feminist philosophers have made too many illegitimate moves away from the true intent of the Biblical record by trying to make it just another philosophy and history book at best or a pseudoscience at worst rather than taking it for what it is, the creation of, fall, and salvation or the way back for humankind. This type of thinking only leads one into epistemological uncertainty and thus insecurity. In short it is simply epistemological nihilism. This is always the end result of deleting Biblical truth, knowledge, and history. Therefore as Christians we must prepare ourselves through study to answer these feminist sceptics, as well as science, and evolution, all of which claim to preserve knowledge and defend truth. Never before in history is this as imperative as it is now in our post-modern post Christian era. The feminist mindset in some ways can be likened to a mirror that reflects; but one that reflects only its own imperfections, and thus by doing so it actually is distorting reality. This is a mirror that can only be adjusted by the truth of scripture so that it can give a clear view of the objects it reflects. As we have said earlier this is the scriptural objective (Romans 12:1-2).

One of the first modern women to challenge the masculine worldview was Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97). She faced the obstacles of being an independent woman who was struggling to earn her own living and educate herself. In 1783 she raised enough money to open a girl’s school in London. Her main opposition came from the neighbouring Baptists, Presbyterian, and Independents who had been banned from either civil or municipal government as well as the universities. These had formed their own dissenting academies.

At this time the Enlightenment philosophy was flourishing this was a philosophy which challenged feudal society and its ideas. These ideas were based around the inherited privileges of church, kings, and nobles. The Enlightenment thinkers came up with “The Rights of Man” which was in opposition to “The Divine Right of Kings.”

One of the enlightenment philosophers Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) attacked social injustices in this period but he overlooked one and that was the one Mary Wollstonecraft latched on to. In his book “Emile” written in 1762 Rousseau said this: “Men and women are made for each other, but their mutual dependence is **not equal**. We (men) could survive better without them (women) than they could without us. They are dependent on **our feelings**, on the price **we put on their merits**, on the value **we set on their attractions and on their virtues**. Thus women’s entire education should be planned in relation to men, to please men, to be useful to them, to win their love and respect, to raise them as children, to care for them as adults, counsel and console them, and make their lives sweet and present.”

Now that is patronising and arrogant and I can see why a woman would rail against such an attitude but as we have said that is not how the Bible instructs a man to look at a woman at all. However, it was against such a mindset that Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her book “A vindication of the rights of women” in 1792. She was the first one to apply Enlightenment ideas to a woman’s situation and it was this work that was the foundation of modern feminism. She identified in her work the chief point that had denied women from taking action which would in her view achieve equality. This was in her view “*domestic tyranny*,” denial of political rights, education, and equal work opportunities. She also described woman’s financial dependence on a man in marriage as “**legalised prostitution**.”

This of course not only demeans the Biblical concept of marriage it is also a very false view but one that has persisted right up to the present day in some feminist thinking. The basic tenet of her book is a demand for the end of the double standards of male and female behaviour and for women’s right to independent work, education, civil and political life. All of these still form the basis for modern feminism. They are not wrong per se but the ideology behind them is flawed and unbiblical.

Wollstonecraft also argued that femininity was a *construct*. Women are actually born equal but are then subsequently taught to be subordinate, weak and unintelligent. “She is brought up to be the toy of a man and must rattle and jingle in his ears whenever by dismissing reason he chooses to be amused confined in cages like a feathered race. It is true that they are provided with food and raiment for which they neither toil nor spin; but health, liberty, and virtue are given in exchange.” She also declared: “I do earnestly wish to see the distinction of sex abolished altogether save where love is concerned.”

Now I can see why Mary was “ticked off” and rightly so but as I said her logic is flawed and worldly and it is this that has led so many feminists into the rabbit warrens of speculative unbiblical philosophical and epistemological nihilism not to mention the loss of so many of our women’s souls.

By the time of the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the British Empire had accumulated a lot of wealth and that coupled with the height of the industrial revolution had made many classes of working

women. These included farm workers or land girls, servant women, mill workers, seamstresses, governesses, and many more like classes. It was during this period from around 1850-1914 that the groundswell of the British Women's Movement became prevalent. The factory girls of the then newly formed mill towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire were probably the most independent of all the working girls of that time. They got their own pay in their own hands, they all worked and often lodged together, and they were now free from the restrictive parental hands that they were formerly tied to. Even so they were in the minority since most working women of that time were in fact domestic servants who were rigidly controlled by their employers. They also worked longer hours for less pay than their factory women counterparts.

On the other side of this, married women were virtual prisoners and whatever money they had saved or property they owned was forfeited when they married and became the property of the husbands alone. So since Mary Wollstonecraft's time, feminists had believed that it was neither lawful, natural, nor inevitable that women should be subordinate to men. However, they did not have any evidence to argue against the prevailing religious view of the day (however wrongly used) which was that God had created women as an inferior and therefore secondary creature out of the rib of Adam.

Enter Charles Darwin. Now if you think that evolutionary theory simply touched on our animal ancestry then think again. Feminists used it plus the fledgling science of anthropology to glean some other implications from Darwin's theory. When they did this they had what they thought explained for the first time *how* women had become subordinate to men. Of course it had nothing to do with creation law, the fall, or gender roles as the Bible laid them down. It was about power structures, constructs, history. Survival of the fittest and suchlike.

These ideas led some feminists to embrace Marxism and Historical Materialism to further their cause. The Marxist theory of politics offered the Marxist feminists an analysis of class that promised to liberate them from those forces (including God, Bible, and church) that oppressed them. The idea was that women should first declare themselves as a *separate class of people* or a constituted class and then makes the transition from capitalism to socialism and finally to become communists which was equal to full community and complete freedom (*from all restraints*).

This gave Marxist feminists the freedom to not only do what they wished but also the power to *be whatever they wanted* and this was because according to Marx that they now had the power to structure the system that would shape them and their thought or philosophy.

So then we see that Darwinism, Anthropology, and Marxism were three of the forces that helped to shape modern feminist thought. Darwin got women away from the Bible and creation. Anthropology when combined with Darwinism gave them the *how* of women's subjugation, and Marx gave them the idea of a class war that would liberate them from God, Bible, church, and men since women now had the power to structure their thought and therefore reshape the systems that had previously held them captive.

One of the manuals for this type of feminism was written by Marx's cohort Friedrich Engels for in 1845 he wrote "The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State." In this work he

claimed to use historical evidence that showed that women's social status had not always been inferior to men's. Notably, however, he never used the Bible as a resource for his thesis. Rather he says that women's subjugation to men had become "enforced with the origins of private property." Engles also mooted the idea that marriage was merely a *social institution had nothing to do with love* (or God) but everything to do with private property. Thus he endorsed Mary Wollstonecraft's view that marriage was legalised prostitution and not God ordained. Therefore as far as Engles was concerned if wives were to be emancipated from their husbands then they must first become *economically independent from them*. Thus his first presupposition for the so-called emancipation for women was the re-introduction of ***the entire female sex into public industry***. This has happened to a great extent in our times with many women having corporate careers and suchlike.

However women have suffered to some extent in that it is they who must work longer hours and have to balance families and careers. Engles did anticipate this by saying that childrearing and housework should be *socialised*. Well it did create crèche work and such and put children into the hands of others but the question must be asked: how has any of this actually enhanced women, children, and modern marriage let alone honoured God? Rather all it has done is contravene God's purpose for the home and cheapened His ideal of marriage as well as contravening creation law and God's explicit role for both men and women.