

Men Aren't the Problem

I. The Radical Woman: Why feminine faith in a feminist world is a radical act

A Brief History of Feminism (and its three waves):

- First-wave feminism (women's suffrage), roughly 1848 to 1920
- Second-wave feminism (women's liberation), roughly 1963-1983
- Third-wave feminism (girl power and the raunch culture), mid-1990s to present

Feminism did not arise in a vacuum. As theologian Richard Ganz says, men share the responsibility:

When you realize that men have subjugated women for thousands of years, you can only wonder how it took so long for the feminist movement to form. It is unfortunately rare to find a marriage in which the husband recognizes that he bears the responsibility of headship and exercises it in humility and love rather than force and authoritarianism. While I too am against so much of what the feminist movement advocates, I understand why it has emerged. I believe that if Christian men had been the servant leaders in the home, rather than conceited chauvinists, the feminist movement would have died a quick and easy death. If men had sought ways to see the gifts and talents of their wives developed and utilized rather than taking a beautiful person and making her into little more than a personal slave, if men had not twisted this doctrine of headship, we would not have the current problems between men and women in our society. ... I am tired of hearing that feminists are responsible for the breakdown of the family. We need to put the responsibility where it belongs—on the heads of homes.¹

- The seeds of feminism reside in us all—it's not an "us vs. them" problem.
- Observation vs. Interpretation or why Christians have different solutions

¹Ganz, Richard L. *20 Controversies That Almost Killed a Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing) 2003, p. 155.

II. Republican Ideals and the First Wave

In a letter to her husband, John Adams, on March 31, 1776, Abigail Adams made this plea:

"I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.

"That your sex are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute; but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of master for the more tender and endearing one of friend. Why, then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity? Men of sense in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your sex; regard us then as being placed by Providence under your protection, and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness."²

- From its inception, feminism posited that men were the enemy.
- Issues for women in the 19th-century:
 - ☞ Coverture
 - ☞ Suffrage
- Republican Motherhood vs. First-Wave Feminism
- The example of Elizabeth Cady Stanton (married for nearly 50 years, the mother of 7)
 - ☞ Her exposure to evangelist Charles Finney
 - ☞ Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls, NY in 1848
 - ☞ Her partnership with Susan B. Anthony
 - ☞ The publication of *The Woman's Bible*

² *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution*, Charles Francis Adams (New York: Hurd and Houghton), pp. 149-50.

Stanton on the Bible and women: "The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection, she was to play the role of a dependent on man's bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, she was commanded to ask her husband at home. Here is the Bible position of woman briefly summed up."³

- The ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 - suffrage achieved

III. Second-wave feminism and the link to socialism

- Jean-Paul Sartres and Simone de Beauvoir

- ☞ Beauvoir's 1949 French publication, *Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex)*

Beauvoir wrote that woman "is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other."⁴ Because of this secondary status, Beauvoir argued that women were "imprisoned" by the roles of wife, mother, and sweetheart; therefore, she maintained that "all forms of socialism, wresting woman away from the family, favor her liberation."⁵

- ☞ Beauvoir's publicly scandalous relationship with Sartres

- Betty Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)

- ☞ Co-founder and first president of the National Organization for Women (NOW)

- ☞ Co-founder of NARAL, the pro-abortion political action group

- ☞ Co-founder of the National Women's Political Caucus.

- The brief, shining moment when Christians and feminists were allied against pornography.

- Friedan's "main regret"

³ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, 1898, as posted on the Sacred Texts website (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/wmn/wb/index.htm>).

⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books Edition), 1989, p. xix.

⁵ Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake* (Crossway Books, 2005), p. 22.

IV. The third-wave and the rise of raunch culture

- Gay, lesbian, and transgendered issues
- “Porn-positive” feminism
- Gay marriage and the obliteration of family

V. The Lens of Wisdom

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

(James 3:13-18 ESV)

- Three important “s” words:
 - ☞ Sin
 - ☞ Submission
 - ☞ Servant-leadership

John Ensor provides this portrait of unity:

“In matters of the heart, it is right that men should lead and women welcome and guide that leadership. She is his helpmate (Genesis 2:18). Her goal is to give her man all the help he needs to lead well. His goal is to humbly accept the responsibility to lead and not to run from it or wield it like a club. The guidance that she provides him comes mainly in two forms: in helping him think clearly and in encouraging him to act confidently. What comes from this is a shared victory. If it proves a mistake, it is borne together. Either way, what is fostered is true unity of spirit which is the heart of the matter, where the two become one. We have to work at it, but if we do, true unity is fostered and preserved in the complementary exchange of male leadership and female guidance.”⁶

⁶John Ensor, *Doing Things Right in Matters of the Heart* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books), 2007, pp. 97-98.