

Masculine Christianity – Lesson 3

The Rise of Feminism – Part 2

Read Chapter 1 (pgs. 4-10)

1. (a) From pg. 4, briefly summarize the three “waves” of feminism in America. What were some of the specific *characteristics* of each wave?

First-wave feminism was of the 1830s to about 1920, and it sought to make the economic, political, and social status of women equal to that of men, with its chief goal being universal suffrage. Second-wave feminism came later, in the 1960s, and its chief goal was to make women legally and socially equal to men, to establish a woman’s right to initiate a divorce, the establishment of no-fault divorce, the absolute right to abortion, and equitable wages. Third-wave feminism is a recent endeavor, from the 1990s, with its chief goal to expand the victories of second-wave feminism in raw individualism and the overthrow of perceived (continuing) oppressions. A *theoretical* “fourth-wave” began in the 2010s, with a focus on the empowerment of women, the use of technology to advance women’s causes, and the advance of gender “norms,” including intersectionality.

- (b) List some of the *efforts* that first-wave feminists undertook to accomplish their goals (pgs. 4-5)? What does Garris identify as the *broader* goals these efforts were ultimately trying to usher in?

The primary goal of first-wave feminism was to establish the legal right for women to vote in America. Its proponents established various “gatherings” where the leaders of these movements could push for this, and included discussions on equal wages, property rights, and marriage rights. But, they also included focuses on the abolition of slavery and temperance, the banning of alcohol throughout all of society. The Thirteenth and Eighteenth Amendments to the Bill of Rights (abolishing slavery and Prohibition) were the results of these movements. However, Garris argues that the *real* (and *broader*) goals of these movements were *actually* trying to usher in a state of “progressivism”: a movement to abolish (overturn?) the “old” order of society in which women held a unique place and replace it with a society “moving” in the direction of greater equality for women, including establishing them in positions of power.

2. (a) On pg. 6, why does Garris contend that the *temperance* movement was unbiblical? Why was the *women’s suffrage* movement also “problematic?”

The temperance movement was based on the simple assumption that alcohol, *in and of itself*, is sinful, and that a “decent” society would want to eliminate it *and its effects*. First-wave feminists used this movement to help usher in their “progressive” utopia, but the effort was, Garris contends, utterly unbiblical. Certainly Scripture prohibits drunkenness, but there is *no prohibition* against its *consumption* anywhere in the Bible. While an individual Christian may choose to abstain from the use of alcohol, any *extra-biblical* prohibition of it, *especially by government*, is antithetical to its revelation as a “good gift from God”. In other words, prohibition punished the godly for the sins (excesses) of the wicked. The suffrage movement was also problematic: the original view of the Founding Fathers was *not* to grant everyone a voice in the democratic process (i.e., as a republic), because they were afraid of the dangers of the “tyranny of the majority” (i.e., the idea that majorities of people can be swayed in dangerous ways, thus “moving” a society by a large group of *uninformed* or *ignorant* people).

(b) What was B.B. Warfield's view of the universal suffrage movement, *biblically* (see pg. 7)? What does Garris mean by "chronological snobbery," and what was the thinking of men *in that day*?

Warfield argued that universal suffrage was unbiblical because it was *detached* from the family unit, and suffered from a mindset of radical individualism. Feminism is based on the elevation of the individual, whereas biblical Christianity is based on the most fundamental unit of society being the *family*. Family was the "first government," established between Adam and Eve *prior* to the Fall, with men leading their households *as a unit*. Thus, as the family was engaged in the *lower* levels of society (i.e., government), the "representative" of the household (i.e., the man) would "speak" on behalf of that organization. In other words, the view of wives and daughters in the home would be represented in the civil sphere by their husbands. But, feminists considered this to be a form of "suppressing" women, and sought to *undermine* male headship in advocating for universal suffrage. The assumption in this system, that men did not care about women or their opinions, is a form of *chronological snobbery*: just because it "looks" bad to us in *this* generation doesn't make it bad *then*. Men often made their decisions based on what was *best* for their wives and daughters (in the context of the family), and it is *wrong* to assume that giving women their own "individual" right to vote *improved* their standing.

3. (a) Briefly describe *Jacobin* enlightenment thinking, from pg. 8. How does Garris *connect* it to feminism? What part of Jacobin thinking is *inherent* in feminism?

Jacobin thinking was the most radical wing of Enlightenment politics in France in the late 18th C. The Jacobin party was distinguished for its left-wing, revolutionary politics, including creating a strong central government, able to deal with all matters of political, social, and military needs that would arise. They were strongly *secular*, and were convinced that all religion should be eliminated in favor of one run by the state. While British and American systems of law treat "equality" as equal treatment under the law, Jacobins "flatten" the definition to simply mean sameness. This is simply a "mechanical equality" where all parties are utterly equal *in every sphere of life*. This, of course, is the *essence* of the feminist movement: an *absolute* egalitarianism where men and women are not only *legally* the same, but they then become *functionally* the same in every endeavor, both publicly and privately.

(b) What is the egalitarian view of *authority* and *hierarchy*? What does Garris see as the *biblical* view of authority and hierarchy? What is the *root* of biblical authority?

Egalitarians utterly *oppose* all forms of authority and hierarchy. They believe that authority is utterly *individualistic*, meaning that all authority is derived from the desires of each person, rather than from a source "above" them. Thus, if there is no *transcendent* authority (including that of either God or men), then there can be no hierarchy. They reject all authority structures, *especially those of the Bible*. However, as Garris points out, the Bible is clear about *both* authority and hierarchy: historic Christianity affirms *God's authority*, and, by extension, *whatever authority structures he has ordained*. Since *he* holds authority over all things, and *he* has set certain authority structures in his created world, it stands to reason that those systems produce hierarchies, where individuals are ordained by his decree to operate within them. Obviously, social and governmental structures (and movements) that *deny* the existence of a creator, and (thus) a *transcendent* authority above them, will (by necessity) attempt to "flatten" out all authority to the individual and eliminate all "oppressive" forms of hierarchy.

4. From pgs. 9-10, briefly outline Garris' *history* of the Quakers and Unitarians. How do these groups view *orthodox* Christianity? What are some of their *differences* with it?

Quakers were established in 17th C England, and were also known as the *Religious Society of Friends*. They emigrated to the Colonies in 1656 and were characterized by a "non-conformist" ideal, notably women, who detracted from cultural norms, embracing early forms of egalitarianism. The Quakers were recognized in the 17th C as having rejected much of Protestant orthodoxy, embracing the idea that revelation could come directly from God himself (thus abandoning *sola Scriptura*), an insistence on obedience to "the inner light" (i.e., an early form of *individualism* that would arise in American Christianity), rejecting of the ordinances of the church, and forms of pacifism. Unitarians, as a different sect, rejected the Nicene idea of the Trinity, embracing (instead) the view that God exists as *both* one nature *and* one person (or manifestation). Unitarians also reject the doctrines of original sin, predestination and the infallibility of the Bible (also, in abandoning *sola Scriptura*). Both of these groups would be instrumental in the American feminist movement; the staunch defense of individualism, combined with an abandonment of biblical categories of authority, and the elevation of women in the home and society spawned from these groups some of the first leaders of first-wave feminism.

Read Chapter 1 (pgs. 10-15)

5. (a) According to Garris, what was Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *true goal* flowing out of the temperance movement of the late 19th century (pgs. 10-13)?

Stanton's *stated* goal was the adoption of universal suffrage, but she fomented the elevation of women over against "mankind", which she argued limited their rights in the church. Her true goal, then, was *not* to confine the movement to the subject of temperance, but to "push" that agenda *first* so as to "bring in" the further topic of women's inclusion in every aspect of the church and state. Stanton desired for the church *and government* to be *utterly egalitarian*, with women allowed to participate in every aspect and to "be present in all the councils of Church and State." In other words, she used *temperance* as the "cover" to begin a conversation about one matter, eventually ending up in an argument about *everything related to the role of women*.

- (b) What was Stanton's thinking regarding *the church*? What did she do *against* it, specifically?

Stanton fundamentally believed that the church was "suppressing" the role of women, failing to allow women *specifically* into church leadership positions. Her activities *in the secular world*, were designed (by extension) to become realities in the church. For example, her push for "lighter" divorce requirements was actually a swipe at the church in her desire to see women "released" from "marital subordination," which she believed the church fostered in not allowing women to "rise" into leadership positions.

- (c) What was Anna Howard Shaw's *primary goal* in her push of women's suffrage (pgs. 13-15)?

Shaw, a Methodist ministry in the late 18th-early 19th C, worked to push women's suffrage as a *pretext* for a larger agenda: her goal was to overthrow male headship and male protection of women. She argued that women no longer "needed" men to protect them, and (thus) with the overthrow of male hierarchy, women would be able to rise to all positions of political power.

6. What is the *point* of Garris' quote of Alexis de Tocqueville on pg. 15? How does it *indict* first-wave feminism?

Although Tocqueville readily admitted that the culture of the United States in the 1830s held women to a “narrow circle of domestic life ... and one of extreme dependence”, he nonetheless also recognized that this did not constrain women to the life of a second-class citizen, but (rather) elevated them to a “loftier position” and to a certain “superiority.” In other words, although first-wave feminists argued that women were being “oppressed” and, thus, treated unfairly and poorly, Tocqueville’s observation was quite the opposite: in this position in the home and society they actually were treated *exceptionally* honorably by those who were in a position of authority over them. Tocqueville saw no *contradiction* between women serving in a “subordinate” position and yet being elevated in honor. In fact, he argued (by inference) that it is only *in this position* that women can be truly honored. The goal of first-wave feminists to “elevate” women in the home, church, and society *actually stripped them of this honor*, by forcing them to “become men” and *earn* that honor through the means given to *men*.