

Spring 5-10-2014

To Hell... And Back? An Examination Feminism and Its Consequences

Kaylee Mahaffey

University of South Carolina - Columbia

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior_theses

 Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mahaffey, Kaylee, "To Hell... And Back? An Examination Feminism and Its Consequences" (2014). *Senior Theses*. 14.
https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior_theses/14

This Thesis is brought to you by the Honors College at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.

TO HELL...AND BACK? AN EXAMINATION OF FEMINISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

By

Kaylee Mahaffey

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
Graduation with Honors from the
South Carolina Honors College

May, 2014

Approved:

Dr. James Cutsinger
Director of Thesis

Dr. Randy Akers
Second Reader

Steve Lynn, Dean
For South Carolina Honors College

Table of Contents

Summary	2
Introduction	3
The Roots	5
The Categories	11
The Ideology	16
The Mistakes	20
The Ramifications	23
The True Feminine	33
The Scriptural Support	39
Conclusion	43

Summary

The goal of this thesis is to give an in depth analysis of the feminist movement and the effects it has had on society and the family unit. The first portion of the thesis will be allotted to a historical account of the feminist movement and the various feminist theories that it spawned throughout the three waves of the movement. After the account of the movement itself, a description of the four categories of feminist ideologies will be explained and mildly critiqued. Once the historical stage has been set, a thorough criticism feminism will be performed and particular emphasis will be devoted to the faults within the current phase of feminism: post-modern feminism. Through this examination, the various societal ramifications borne of the feminist movement will be listed and scrutinized. This will include a discussion of how feminism has affected marriage, respect for women, gender roles, careerism, morality, artificial methods of contraception, and childrearing. After the negative consequences of feminist ideology have been discussed, the Biblical renderings of traditional gender roles will be given and considered at length. This will include discussions about how weakness and dependency are viewed in the New Testament and the Biblical depiction of the creation of man and woman in the Book of Genesis, as well as the implications that it maintains for gender roles. A comparison between traditional and feminist ideals will be made that will be evidence of the superiority of traditional gender roles rather than those endorsed post-modern feminism. Ending the body of the thesis will be a discussion entailing a rendering of how facets of society and the family would appear if the teachings of the Church had influenced them rather than feminism. A brief passage that describes how society may return to the traditional gender roles is also included.

Introduction

An excellent way to explain the state of modern feminism would be the old adage, “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions,” because while the intent of the first feminists was honorable in hoping to rectify the status of women in society, it has only resulted in the hellish state in which society now resides. Feminists throughout the three formal waves of the feminist movement have raised laudable questions regarding how men treat women. Feminism, however, has not resulted in garnering more respect for women and womanhood; on the contrary, the traditional womanhood and the feminine are treated with even less respect than it was before the feminist movement. Instead of acquiring the due respect and prestige for womanhood, as well as for domesticity, feminist ideals have merely coerced society into the attitude that women should fulfill traditional masculine roles to the neglect of their own femininity.

Feminism has morphed through the decades from a movement that encouraged the accrual of rights for women so that they could participate in society and provide for themselves into an ideology that is merely about pushing the boundaries around sex and gender past their breaking points. Post-modern feminism is about self-entitlement and careerism, two things that have not been beneficial for anyone, especially not for the traditional family that has all but disappeared. Women are encouraged to be as successful as possible in their careers to the neglect of the home and the family, because feminism only seeks material prestige for women. For this reason there are many negative results of the feminist movement including, but not limited to, broken families, materialism, and even obesity. Mothers are no longer at home to keep their family together or provide healthy meals for their family because they are in the workforce trying to make more money to buy more material goods. That is not to say that all women must stay within their home all day cooking and cleaning, but the feminist mindset lends itself to the quick

and easy rather than the traditional and more simplistic lifestyle that promotes solid relationships and quality time spent together as a family.

Since the dawn of the feminist age, the domestic sphere of the home and childrearing have been given increasingly little respect. Women who do choose to stay home with their children are looked down upon as lazy and unsuccessful, even though being a good mother to children who are the future of society has a greater impact on the world than any other one “career.” If feminist ideology was sincerely concerned about women receiving the respect that is due to them, then it would be encouraging women and men to cherish the traditional feminine traits and role rather than teaching that women should be career and success oriented.

The Roots

The development of feminism has taken place over many centuries beginning as early as ancient Greece when writers began advocating for women’s rights. Authors and

philosophers continued in this way sporadically throughout the centuries. There was no formal group that advocated for the ideals that became feminism until the late nineteenth century and it was not until the early twentieth century that those beliefs were even given the title of feminism. Throughout history there have been various abuses toward women and the original feminists leapt to the defense of womankind, but in doing so more heinous actions have become commonplace. However, at its most basic level, the defense of the rights of women was an honorable pursuit, although advocates have become lost along the way. The feminist movements since the twentieth century can be categorized into three specific waves of thought. These distinctions are made for the ease of differentiating the specific beliefs and events that were specific to each of the three time periods.

The first wave of feminism is distinguishable from the earliest beginnings of feminism because it was more than a few feminist writers putting their thoughts in writing. This movement coalesced with urban industrialism as well as the political ideas of liberal and socialist thinkers during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. As a result of the industrial revolution there was a general push in society for people to provide for their families by being employed by businesses rather than the more traditional and agrarian way of provision. There was also an increase in the number of women in the workforce due to the necessity of women having to work during the war. The goal of the first wave feminists was to gain opportunities for women, such as equal wages, opportunities for higher education, a wider range of career options, property rights, marriage reform, temperance, and women's suffrage.¹

¹ Mary Kassain, *The Feminist Mistake*, p. 17-18

This wave of feminism was characterized by white, middle class women organizing feminist conventions and advocating for rights that they believed were being denied to them. These women were pursuing “meaning, wholeness, and equality for women.”² This wave officially began when a group of women met in Seneca Falls, New York for the first women’s rights convention in 1848. There were also several other national women’s rights conventions that followed the first. This wave of feminism ended in the early 1930s after the ratification of the twentieth amendment in 1920, which legalized women’s right to vote. As a result of this period of feminism, there was an increase in women’s rights such as property and inheritance rights as well as better career opportunities. Feminists during this wave were reacting against the cult of domesticity and women balking against their traditional role in the home. This wave fed into the second; because the increase in women’s rights caused both men and women to consider the differences between the sexes, gender roles, and how society portrayed each of them.

After the first wave of feminism passed, there was a short-lived return to the traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity for approximately two decades. During this recession, the feminist movement was not as actively propagated. It is disputed about whether this was because the feminist movement achieved the goals that it originally endorsed or if it was because the children of the feminists did not like being raised with their mothers working outside of the home. The latter is a common interpretation of the lack of feminist action during the 1940s and 1950s because the women of this time period returned to the more traditional female role of homemaker rather than becoming career women as their predecessors had advocated. To an extent the goals of the first wave of

² Mary Kassain, *The Feminist Mistake*, p. 17

feminism was either abandoned or accomplished depending on perspective, because the subsequent two waves of feminism were very different from the first.

The second wave of feminist thought when began in the 1960s had a more radical bent than the previous wave. Similar to the first, it was influenced by the political ideology of the time period. The growing awareness of minority groups also impacted the beliefs of this wave of feminism as well as the anti-war and civil rights sentiments. Feminists related to the African Americans and the civil rights activists because they too were a “minority” group that had been denied rights by white men. This wave of feminism focused more heavily on the disparities between men and women and what that implied for equality for each of the sexes. Rather than advocating rights for women as the first wave did, this wave of feminist ideologies sought to ascertain whether or not men should have supremacy, that women should be the dominant sex, or that the two sexes were equal and that an equilibrium in the workforce needed be discovered. The Equal Rights Amendment was passed during this phase of the feminist movement as a result of feminists seeking to gain equality in the workforce. The amendment ensures that all people are treated equally regardless of their sex. Other contentious issues during the second wave of feminism focused on sexuality and women’s rights in respect to reproductive health. One of the effects of the feminist movement was the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court case, which legalized abortion. There was also a rise in the use of artificial contraceptives during this time period.

The second wave was characterized by large feminist protests, in contrast to the more docile conventions that were held by feminists during the first wave. These feminists believed that women were kept in a domestic prison and only relegated to menial jobs that lacked prestige if they were allowed out of the home. During this era,

women began discarding items, such as girdles, bras, high-heels, and makeup, that feminist ideology taught were oppressive tools created by men to make them in to sex images. Feminists also believed that women were the more docile of the two sexes because men for had subjugated them centuries and not that submissiveness was the inherent female nature. Feminists balked that women should be meek and compliant to the wishes of men, and encouraged their proponents to be brazen and independent instead. This more drastic phase of feminist history also resulted in the formation of many groups that only allowed female members. These groups more antagonistic than the feminist groups of the past, for example, one group published a document entitled, “The BITCH Manifesto.”³ The first wave consisted of women who wanted to be respected and treated with equal human dignity in respect to men, but the second wave was comprised of women who were on a vendetta to take the world from the men.

This movement was characterized by a more radical form of feminism that advocated that women deserved authority in the world because men had been featured in history for long enough and it was women’s turn. It was during this wave of feminist thought that the idea of sex and gender were separated from one another, the former a result of biology and the latter merely a result of social constructions. However, it was not until the third wave that this theory was expanded upon more fully. The second wave was also different from the first in that the demographics of the proponents were quite different. This movement attracted a more diverse population of minority men and women since it was aligned with the ideologies of the civil rights movement. This wave was also associated with class equality as well as sex equality and that served to attract a broader range of people. This phase of thought not only criticized the patriarchy, but also

³ Martha Rampton, “The Three Waves of Feminism”

capitalism, normative heterosexuality, and the traditional female role of wife and mother. For this reason, this movement is thought to have been much more aggressive than the previous phase of feminism.

Between the second and third waves, there was a smaller gap than between the first two. This can be attributed to the fewer distinctions between the ideologies of the second and third waves of feminist thought. There was still a small return of women to more traditional roles, but unlike the first, it was not a whole generation of women returning to domesticity and was instead more sporadic in nature. The third wave of feminism began in the mid-1990s. Just as with the previous two waves, this phase of feminist thought was fueled by current political and societal thought: post-modernism. Proponents of this wave of feminist thought have discarded constructs from the past, such as those related to the body, gender, sexuality, and hetero-normativity. This wave of feminism is a minor reversal of the movement of the sixties because feminists re-embraced items that were believed to be oppressive only years previously. Makeup, bras, and high heels became items of female empowerment rather than objects that men used to oppress the female sex. In the 1960s, women felt oppressed by the objects that were thought to make them into sex images for the pleasure of men, whereas in the third wave, the items gave women control and power over their own sexuality.

This wave of feminism is characterized by women portraying themselves as empowered and strong rather than victims of the patriarchy of the past. Derogatory terms even became part of the vernacular of women in order to mimic sexist culture for the purpose of making it powerless against them. During this era of feminist thought, even the idea of gender has become difficult to understand because it is considered to be a social construct and fluid depending on a person's circumstances and past experiences.

The attitude of this newest conceptualization of feminism is that ambiguity is something to be desired and feminism is no longer as black and white as it once was. The third wave embraces beauty, whereas the feminism of the second wave did not. The beauty that is embraced is a distortion of the traditional feminine though, because it is no longer innocent and demure, but caked with sex appeal. This feminism is multicultural in a way that even the second wave of feminism was not. Differences between ethnicities, classes, and sexual orientations are celebrated, but also seen as extremely circumstantial. Due to the influence of post-modern philosophies, nothing can be clearly defined or allotted to specific categories, especially not gender and sex. Therefore, the last wave of feminist ideology is fundamentally about breaking down boundaries and no longer focused upon establishing equality between men and women at all.

The Categories

There are various feminist theories and a single person could endorse many specific ideas from each without directly belonging to any one camp. However, all feminist theories can be sorted into four broad categories. These categories are feminism of equality, feminism of difference, anti-essentialist feminism, and deconstructionist feminism.⁴ Feminism of equality maintains that women and men are exactly the same and

⁴ Pia de Solenni, "Christian Feminism: A Fuller View of Woman"

therefore, they are absolute equals. This line of thought was developed from Plato's idea that the body is only the vessel for each person's gender-neutral soul. Each person has a soul and since every soul is essentially the same, at least from the outset, then each person is the same. During the eighteenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the primary advocates for this branch of feminism and John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor continued this ideology into the nineteenth century. With the influx of post-modern thinking in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this branch of feminism has morphed into theories of androgyny. This is currently the most common form of feminism and is best represented in the third wave of feminism.

Feminism of difference is the second category of feminist thought and is a progression from that of equality. This form of feminism recognizes that there are inherent differences between the natures of men and women, but there are two subcategories, polarity and complementarity, that apply the distinctions very differently. Polarity is the notion that one of the sexes has superior to the other due to the innate differences, based on the assumption that there is only one nature that can be the best. Contrarily, the subcategory of complementarity endorses the mentality that both of the sexes are equal directly because of the innate differences between the two.⁵

Complementarity is the theory of feminism most broadly developed by Pope John Paul II and is advocated by the Roman Catholic Church. Although complementarity is considered to be a feminist ideal because it advocates equality between the sexes, it is not stance maintained by modern feminists, but instead is labeled as an anti-feminist theory. Polarity is more frequently supported and identified as feminist.

⁵ Pia de Solenni, "Christian Feminism: A Fuller View of Woman"

The third classification of feminist thought is anti-essentialist. The general idea of this form is that “the essence of something is created from experience”⁶ and that nothing is definite. All concepts of gender and sex are social constructs and are privy to various interpretations depending on an individual’s previous experience. This category of feminism originated during the mid-nineteenth century when existentialist thought was prominent. It has been buoyed by the ever-increasing sensitivity to differences between men and women as well as between ethnicities. Regardless of what the differences are, this branch of feminism endorses that the differences are taught rather than biological. This ideology also pushes boundaries more so than any of the other branches because it supports the destruction of societal norms and expectations. Sex and gender are merely social constructs and should not place limitations on any person. The focus of this category is that women should not be limited emotionally or professionally by a patriarchal society that teaches that women should live and act a certain way.

The final category of feminism is deconstructionist feminism. This classification of feminism is a compilation of the three previous categories. Deconstructionists maintain that even things that seem as if they are true or absolute are actually circumstantial and vary from person to person. A feminist who agrees with bits and pieces of all the classifications of feminism would be considered a deconstructionist since the ideas are taken from the other categories and compiled to form a more individualized belief. The other categories of feminism would maintain that there is a “right” feminist theory, whereas, a deconstructionist would not. This is the most loosely defined category since there are essentially no rules as to what this type of feminist would believe, other than being a combination of all the other types of feminism.

⁶ Pia de Solenni, “Christian Feminism: A Fuller View of Woman”

These categories of feminism exist on a spectrum. The current state of feminist thought is no longer strictly black and white as it was for the people who participated in the first wave of the feminist movement. Early in the movement feminists agreed with one another about the issues that were important for the well-being of women and the course of action to rectify them (or at least that is how it is presented historically), but that cannot be said for modern feminists. A person could be a feminist, but also extremely conservative and would likely be labeled as “anti-feminist” even if he agreed with the theory of complementarity and that women should be granted equal human dignity as men have been. Many feminists disagree with one another in this post-modern era of thought since there are so many different branches of feminism even within the loosely defined categories. For these reasons, feminism is better thought of as a spectrum of thought because there is a broad range of opinions that are still considered to be feminist.

One extreme of the spectrum is liberal feminism, which is primarily the fight for equality between the sexes.⁷ For many feminists who are attributed to this branch of feminism, there is a fight for equality in an almost literal sense complete with an “us versus them” mentality. Men are portrayed as the domineering and oppressive, having restricted the advancement and success of women for thousands of years. Liberal feminism endorses the belief that men and women are completely the same and that there should be no distinction between the two sexes. It also maintains that gender and sexual norms are constructs of society meant to repress portions of society. Although children are born with a specific biological sex according to their genitalia, no one is born with a specific gender and should not be required to behave in a certain way because of their

⁷ “Feminism,” *Catholic Stuff You Should Know*

genitalia. Gender is merely taught to children during their childhood by their family, teachers, and friends, and that is what dictates the course of their sexual orientation and gender associations. According to liberal feminism, there should be no societal norms for sex or gender and children should not be encouraged to play or dress in a certain way that encourages them towards any particular gender.

The opposite extreme of liberal feminism is radical feminism. Constituents of this ideology believe that there is absolutely no equality between the sexes because they are too different to justify comparison.⁸ This extreme's issue with society's treatment of women is that men have all the power and that the power should belong to women. It holds that the current world order is a patriarchy when it should be a matriarchy, however, they believe that men are correct in fighting back because society should be in a constant power struggle. This feminism is based upon the drive for power and the constant competition that it inspires between the two sexes. Feminists that adhere to this ideology are committed to wresting the power from their male counterparts, regardless of any bad effects on society because all that matters to them is gaining power.

As with Aristotle's analysis of the virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he states that the best form of any virtue is found in the middle of its spectrum and not at either of the two extremes, the form of feminism that should be advocated for is found in the middle of the feminist spectrum. Complementarity is the feminism found in the center of the spectrum and it is the only form of feminism that truly supports traditional femininity. Sadly, this is not the dominant form of feminism even though conservative religious adherents to the dominant religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, etc.) endorse this ideal. Pope John Paul II expanded upon the theory of complementarity in his

⁸ "Feminism," *Catholic Stuff You Should Know*

Theology of the Body. Complementarity is a combination of the two extremes of the feminist spectrum because it argues that there should be equality between the two sexes, but that there are very important distinctions between them that should not and cannot be ignored for the sake of the family and society as a whole. Both sexes are respected and in control of different aspects of society. Gender is not considered to be a social construct, but is intricately related to the sex a person is at birth. That does not mean that all women are exactly alike in their mannerisms, nor are men, but it does mean that men and women do have their specific roles to fulfill.

The Ideology

Although there are many different types and branches of feminism, with the exception of complementarity feminism, there is one thing that is common to each. Traditional feminine traits are downplayed and frowned upon by each theory of feminism and traditionally masculine characteristics are admired and imitated. It has become taboo to be considered weak in any way. Women are no longer taught to be meek and docile, but rather dominatrices set on taking over the world by taking down one man at a time. Men are depicted as competitors, rather than partners in life. The seed that grew into the tree of female discontent was the belief that women are weak and that weakness is to be detested and rooted out from society. It is no longer desirable for women to be soft and caring, rather they are to be crass and unfeeling. Their lack of compassion allows them to

climb the corporate ladder early in life while ignoring their instinctive desire to settle down and raise a family. The corporate world was traditionally reserved for men not because women were unworthy to work, but because the environment is too harsh and callous for a woman's natural gentility. This hatred and fear of all things "soft" has contributed to the destruction of femininity and is contradictory to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. The result of this feminist propaganda is that women are ignoring their instinctive receptivity and natural inclinations to care about relationships more than their own selfish ambitions. This reinforcement of selfish ambition has resulted in a myriad of issues that can all be tied to feminism's lack of reverence for the home and family.

Opponents of weakness have a poorly developed understanding of what it means to be weak and often misinterpret the language and meaning of the Bible when weakness is spoken of. When St. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:7 that women were the weaker of the two sexes, he did not mean that women were lesser than men. It was a praise that they were more in touch with their weaknesses and that made them more susceptible to God's infinite grace. And St. Paul wrote to the Church of Corinth, "'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong."⁹ To acknowledge that a person is not independently sufficient for his own survival is an acceptance of weakness. This realization gives him the opportunity to unite with God and other people and be stronger because of that union. Women are physically weaker than men and this makes them more

⁹ 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NRSV)

susceptible to frustration, but when they accept their own failings and rely on God, they are fully compensated by His strength. This more innate reliance on God and men for strength allows them greater opportunities to be humble and pious, opportunities that are not granted as completely to men. Acknowledging dependence is not a weakness, but strength and that is the most inherent flaw to feminism. Feminism believes that to be fully empowered, women must be entirely independent. They should not lean upon a man or any other relationship to support them, but should be able to support themselves economically, physically, and spiritually.

Because of women's natural weakness, women are able to admit more easily that they cannot survive on their own without the help of God, or even without the help of men. It is much more difficult for men to accept that their own salvation is out of their hands and that they have to rely on a greater power to save their souls. Alice von Hildebrand states, "To accept her state of creature-hood is easier for a woman than for a man, who is always tempted to be in command."¹⁰ A woman is more naturally a vessel for the supernatural because she is willing to accept her lack of control over her own life more readily than a man is able to do so. When Jesus told His disciples in the New Testament to let the little children come to him, for all should come to Him as children, He meant that all people should be weak as children are weak. Children have to depend entirely upon their parents to provide for their every need. In the same manner, men and women are supposed to rely on God for their every need, but this is not possible since feminism has established a firm hatred of weakness throughout society. If a woman does not allow herself to be weak and dependent, then she has no use for God, and then creation truly is in a deplorable situation.

¹⁰ Alice von Hildebrand, *The Privilege of Being a Woman* p. 64

In this modern state of affairs, people who are not competitive for professional prestige are deemed to be failures because their lack of career suggests that they are lazy, unintelligent, or lacking in another capacity. Women who decide to be homemakers rather than pursue a high-powered career are assumed by many people to be taking the easy way out of life. Feminism only seeks for women to gain power and prominence in society instead of cultivating virtue and basic life skills. This pursuit of selfish ambitions is counterintuitive to that which men and women should be striving. They should seek to raise a healthy family and to improve their communities by doing so. Women are taught through feminist ideas that they have something to prove by living in a man's world, but true feminism would embrace women's natural characteristics and teach that domesticity and the feminine are just as worthy as a professional career. This inclination of feminism to teach that women should participate in the professional sphere has encouraged women to become more masculine in character and essentially discredits femininity. Women who are seeking to prove something have not only forsaken their own womanhood, but they have forgotten what Jesus told his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, "So the last will be first, and the first will be last"¹¹ in the Kingdom of Heaven. It should not be the goal of women to prove that they are capable by striving to be successful, but by serving their families and communities with small acts of compassion and kindness. A feminist who embraced that idea would be a true champion of womanhood and femininity.

Feminists tend to forget that everyone cannot be dominant because communities cannot comprise of purely individualists. This is why the only feminism that has any applicability to society is complementarity. However, as previously mentioned, this is not the feminism that is most widely endorsed. Because of this, there have been severe

¹¹ Matthew 20:16 (NRSV)

repercussions evidenced in society due to feminist beliefs. For most proponents of feminism, either men or women have to be dominant. Feminists have never comprehended that men are meant to be the rulers of the political and economic sphere of the world while women are to be the rulers of the domestic sphere, including the education of children. The post-modern world is characterized by a competition between men and women and the traditional family is what suffers a loss. The world cannot continue to exist in this way, for there must be complementarity between the sexes. Society has to accept that men and women are meant to work together to provide for the home in different capacities, even if there are not children at stake.

The Mistakes

As previously stated, only one form of feminism endorses that men and women are equal precisely because they are distinct from one another and that is complementarity. The other mainstream forms of feminism support that men and women are equal because they are indistinct from one another. This form of feminism endorses an androgynous perspective of men and women. In the latter feminism, women are encouraged to be more involved in careers and politics because they should be empowered just as men do. It is a mistake to believe that men and women are completely the same because aside from their genitalia, their genetic makeup different in various ways. They react to stimuli differently whether that stimulus is a particular virus that reacts with their genes or it is an emotional stimulus that incites an entirely different reaction from a woman than it would from a man. Men and women are not only different from one another physically and emotionally, but also intellectually. As has been established earlier, women are relational creatures. They do not integrate knowledge in the same way that men do and for this reason they conceptualize differently than men.

Feminists mistakenly assume that for men and women to be equal, they must be compared based on the same standards, but that does not take into account that they were created by God to fulfill vastly different purposes. The feminist concept of equality assumes that women should be able to do all that men do, but this is inherently mistaken since men cannot do everything that women can do. Men cannot carry and give birth to a child, nor can they naturally provide sustenance for that child. Therefore, it is a mistake to set up the scale of equality based upon whether women are allowed to do everything that men do. Equality should be concerned with giving each sex equal human dignity. Femininity was once honored and exalted, but now women are expected to ignore natural feminine inclinations in favor of those traditionally allotted to men. Feminism has not lifted the women to a higher status, but has degraded her and taught her to be more masculine. Equating men and women without regard to their individualities dishonors both sexes, because it deprives each of their greatest strengths. Equality of this nature results in androgyny, which is disastrous for society as a whole because then neither the feminine nor the masculine roles are fulfilled. Men have facets of life in which they are innately better prepared for and women have theirs. Women are better prepared for parenthood than men because that is their particular gift from God, while men are naturally inclined to physical labor in a way that women can never be. For a woman to be equated to a man would assume that women are not privy to any special talents in life and that women truly are attempting to succeed in a world created for men. Androgenizing archetypal male and female roles abolishes the intrinsic value of the creation of the male and female. Due to feminism, women have rejected their feminine domain in favor of the domain designated for men. Essentially, feminism agrees with the chauvinist attitude that it so ardently profanes and encourages women to take on the masculine.

One of the greatest mistakes feminism makes is that it imitates the very entity that feminists have always said oppressed them: men. Feminists attempted to emerge with a new identity when they initiated the first wave of feminist thought, but they only recreated the masculine to include women and despised the feminine. Feminist thinkers decided that women did not want to be cooped up at home while their male counterparts were adventuring in their chosen professions. By forcing women into the masculine sphere, they robbed future generations of feminine uniqueness and essentially became the masculine women who mimicked the men that feminism taught has been oppressors for hundreds of years. Feminists assumed that what men had was better than what women had and decided to base their demands upon what men had. For the feminists, it appeared as if men had all the power in the world and they felt that they deserved some, or even all of that power. And in order to get it, they had to act the part of the empowered. Radical feminism is, by definition, the competition between the sexes for power. This is a grave mistake because femininity and partnership is lost during this power struggle. No feminist is fighting for respect for the feminine, but is saluting the masculine and conforming to that ideal. A true advocate for the feminine would advocate for honor for receptivity, motherhood, and the family. For this reason, feminism is the greatest misnomer known to mankind.

The Ramifications

The one disastrous ramification on society from feminism that influences all the other effects is the way that feminists attempt to mimic the masculine role of provision through careerism. It is a cruel caricature of how a man should provide for his family because it leaves them with a lack of maternal nurture. One of the most important facets of masculinity is that a man should provide for his wife and their family, but when feminists decided to become professionals, this honorable fulfillment of responsibility was distorted into selfish ambition. Careerism is obsessive and ranks one's mechanism for provision above God and family. It is the "half-conscious ideology that holds that the most important thing in life is the prestige conferred by one's employment."¹² This new focus on the career itself rather than provision for the family is extremely detrimental both to the family and to one's own psyche, for men and women alike. But for women this is particularly harmful because it leads to their heart not being on their spouse and children, but on the workplace and their own ego. Women decide to put off marrying and raising children indefinitely for the sake of their careers and even after they have children, other caregivers essentially raise the children instead of the mother herself so that she can continue in her profession. This ideology places careers at the forefront of

¹² Frederica Matthewes-Greene, "What Women Need"

women's lives and implies that a career is more fulfilling than family and a spiritual life. The traditional way of life would be for the man to provide for his family financially and for his wife to provide for the family emotionally and intellectually, but feminism will have nothing of tradition. Feminists did not take into account a woman's innate characteristics, but simply decided that if a career was important to men, then it should be important to women when really provision was that which was important to men and not the career at all.

Another one of the issues with feminism is that it has emasculated men and caused the loss of chivalry and all that it entailed, which was highly important to previous generations. Men are no longer allowed to be the sole providers for their families. Women have taken over the traditional roles that belonged to men and now men are left dazed and confused as to what they should be doing with their lives. The results who this are men who are childlike and immature into the middle of their lives because they have no reason to fully embrace their masculinity because women no longer need them. Feminists have so disparaged the idea of man being a woman's knight in shining armor, that there are very few modern men worthy of that title. Men have been robbed of their divine purpose of being the provider and protector of their families. Providing for the wellbeing of their wives and children satisfies men in a way that no other earthly thing can because it fulfills the commission that God cursed Adam with in Genesis. God told Adam after he ate of the forbidden fruit, "in toil you shall eat of [the ground] all the days of your life." The droves of women who have committed themselves to the workforce silently communicate to men that they were not good enough as provision and that women can do it better. This has resulted in an ever-escalating divorce rate as women begin to feel that they are more important than the men in their marriages because do

everything within the family, from supporting the family financially to emotionally and the father is no longer necessary for the family to function. Men want to be indispensable to their women just as women desire to be cherished by their men. When a woman is capable of doing all that a man can do, she robs a man of his worldly fulfillment.

As a result of feminism's devotion to careerism, children rarely raised by their mothers, but by transitional caretakers preventing children from forming permanent attachments that they desperately need during their formational years. This is particularly true for families that have suffered divorce, but even in families that have not been ravaged by divorce, children spend most of their waking hours away from their mother either in school or with a makeshift caretaker. As a result, generations of children have been raised and taught by people other than their parents. Conservative ideals and traditions are not passed down from mother to child anymore, but the pseudo importance of a career and materialism is taught through the absence of the mother. Children have very little exposure to their mothers and fathers, but instead are molded by government-approved curriculum. The consequence of the feminist ideals that are driving mothers into the workforce is an increase of artificial experiences for children. It begins with the child not being breastfed as nature intended, then escalates into mediocre attention from an overworked educator who has been taught mechanisms to give the expected results on standardized tests. The individuality of education is lost when a mother, who knows her child best, is not allowed to give her child an education that is tailored to his specific needs. Instead, society is mass-producing children with a set education that does not care about qualitative results so much as quantitative ones.

Another terrible result of feminist propaganda has been the increase in the number of abortions performed annually. This is also related to careerism and its importance to

the ideal feminist woman. Feminist ideology continually emphasizes the notion that women should have complete control over what happens to their bodies whether that is aborting an infant or using methods of artificial contraception because no woman should be “inconvenienced” by an unplanned pregnancy. Feminists downplay that all actions have consequences, but instead imply that women should be free from anything that disrupts their life, including a newly created soul living within them. Feminists are entranced with abortion because it was one of the practical and measurable ways to further their cause in the twentieth century. This is similar to how feminists felt about women’s suffrage when they were rallying to have the twentieth amendment ratified in 1920. Due to *Roe v. Wade*, millions of infants have been legally murdered under the false banner of providing women with the freedom that they deserve to live their lives with as few encumbrances as possible. Society has made the terrible transition from viewing children as the greatest blessings that a couple could be given to burdens that can be discarded quickly and efficiently. This efficiency is to allow women to return to their career driven lives quickly in order to not fall behind their male counterparts. The careerist has no time or need for a family, because she is an independent woman.

In today’s society, it is often the case that women who become pregnant have no spouse, family, or friends to rely on, and for this reason, they are encouraged to abort their pregnancy because they have no way to support a child even when they want to keep him. Or in other situations, a woman does have a support system, but even that system views the pregnancy as a disappointment that has interrupted the life goals of the woman in question. The option of abortion is thought to be the best and easiest solution to the problem because the pregnant woman’s life will then return to its previous state of normalcy. No consideration is given to the psychological effects, such as depression and

guilt that abortion has on a woman. The lifestyle that is recommended by feminism is one that allows women the greatest access to a public life as well as more sexual freedom, a lifestyle that was considered too scandalous for women by generations past. The behaviors associated with this lifestyle are conducive to a surplus of inconvenient pregnancies and abortion is the only way to allow women to continue to live a base and career oriented life. In truth, when a woman aborts her child she is committing not only a heinous sin against God, but also against herself by betraying her mission on earth in such a violent manner. This is a vicious cycle of irresponsible behavior with many consequences, even though feminists continue to ignore them.

Because of the ideals endorsed by the feminist movement, pregnancy has become one of the greatest inconveniences for womankind. This is partially due to the careerism that is so heavily endorsed by feminism, but it is also because feminism promotes a promiscuous lifestyle. This is yet another belief that was adopted from the chauvinist men, because men were promiscuous, it must be a good thing and so the feminists endorsed promiscuity as well. Men did not escape the consequences of their promiscuity since women were the ones with the tangible evidence of pregnancy, but now women can escape the consequences as well. Pregnancies are no longer celebrated, but viewed as an obstacle for women to overcome. It is a burden because it is viewed as a mistake or a failure of contraception rather than a miracle of Godly marital union. There has also been a significant increase in the number of men who do not want to support the child of an uncommitted relationship that was the result of a promiscuous series of one night stands. Society has lost respect for reproduction being an intrinsically important facet of human life. Society has wrongly disassociated sex from reproduction and this has been detrimental to meaningful, marital sex. Pregnancy is merely a side effect of the

pleasure seeking behavior that is a result of the materialism, which is yet another negative result of careerism. Each repercussion from the feminist mindset has a domino effect upon the next issue. Many women think that pregnancy is disastrous to their plan for life and for their career, again because of the pervading feminist ideal that work and a successful career is more important and more fulfilling than childrearing and the home.

Another result of feminism and the belief that women should be “free” from domestic tyranny is the inundation methods of artificial contraception and their usage. Contraceptives have caused disastrous moral repercussions because they decrease the likelihood of consequences of immoral behavior. As predicted by the *Humanae Vitae* Encyclical, there has been an upsurge in marital infidelity, low moral standards, and a lack of consequences for people behaving immorally, particularly among the young. There has also been a disturbing rise in the irreverent attitudes that men maintain towards women by disregarding their emotional and physical equilibrium. This reduces women to instruments of satisfaction for physical desires and men cease to view women as the partners that God made them to be.¹³ This contradicts the original motive of the original feminist ideals, which sought to gain respect for women. Men’s attitudes towards women during this post-modern age of feminism are extremely ironic considering that the feminist movement intended to rectify the disparity between the sexes and force men to see women as their equals. Respect for women has actually reached an all time low, evidenced by the latest radio hits, television programs (including the news), and personal interactions in everyday life. Original feminists had no idea that their actions would lead society into this hellish predicament, but their successors ignore the consequences and continue with vigilance upon the same catastrophic path. Feminism has not improved the

¹³ Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI (17)

circumstances for women, but has merely forced women to become more like men without even the respect and honor that they once commanded as innocent domestic goddesses.

Artificial methods of contraception have removed nearly all the consequences from fornication, premarital, and extramarital sex. This lack of consequences has caused men and women to lose respect for the sanctity of the marital union. There is a lack of thought and commitment in casual sex that God did not intend there to be. Sexual relations were intended to a sacred joining of two people into one flesh, as in Genesis when God gave Eve to Adam, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”¹⁴ This lack of respect for the sacredness of the marital sacrament is detrimental to the psyches of both men and women. Not only have men lost respect for women due to the fact that artificial contraceptive methods make it easier for them to treat women as if they were disposable objects, but women have lost respect for the natural processes of their bodies as well. Women no longer understand the cycle of menstruation and the wonder of the natural process that God created to space the births of siblings and maintain the health of the mother. Chastity is thought to be too archaic and inconvenient for the modern feminist and therefore, has been discarded. This lack of respect for the sexual union had become an even greater disrespect for God as the omniscient Creator who created a perfect union for man and women.

Feminism is the blatant refusal of women to live their lives as God intended. Artificial methods of contraception and abortion are crucial examples of this because they are the manifestations of how women are refusing to let childrearing “interfere” with

¹⁴ Genesis 2:24 (NRSV)

their career goals. Women were meant to have children, this can be seen in Genesis by what God said to Eve when He told her the consequence of her part of the Fall, “I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.”¹⁵ The only command that women are given is to go forth and multiply and even though that commandment is shared with man, men are also told to toil all the days of their lives to provide for themselves and their families. That is not to say that women do not have obligations other than birthing children, but raising children is their primary charge and feminists recoil away from this. Feminism is also a refusal to accept the laws of God in respect to how children are conceived. As Pope Paul VI stated, “But to experience the gift of married love while respecting the laws of conception is to acknowledge that one is not the master of the sources of life but rather the minister of the design established by the creator.”¹⁶ It is intrinsically a control issue on the part of women and modern feminism is entirely about women’s control over their own lives. This is an utter dereliction of God’s commands to relinquish all control to Him. A modern, feminist woman does not want to feel as if she is told by God, society, or her husband that her place is within the home and that her purpose on earth is to rear children. She wants command of her life, to the absolute ruin of the family and society as a whole. Feminism is ultimately a selfish movement that does not take into consideration the ramifications of women snubbing their noses at their divine purpose in life.

The deterioration of the family is another serious ramification of feminism. As mothers have become more involved outside of the home with their social lives and professions, the family has become less of a cohesive unit. The age of the fast food moguls has arrived because mothers no longer have time to cook full dinners at home and

¹⁵ Genesis 3:16a (NRSV)

¹⁶ Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI (13)

feminism teaches that they should not be expected to do so. But with this comes a variety of ills that are at first seemingly unrelated, but are correlated to the lack of a true mother figure in the home. For one, obesity has been on the rise. This is because of the aforementioned lack of healthy and unprocessed meals provided at home, but also because the family never sits down to eat a meal together but is only running from one time filler to another throughout the day. Children do not learn how to eat healthy because it is not modeled for them at their own dinner table. These lessons are left to educators at schools who can only tell the kids what they should be eating, but cannot provide it for them after they leave the school building. Another negative response to feminism is that there is a greater amount of problem behaviors among youth, such as drinking, drug use, and petty crimes, but also seemingly less dangerous behaviors such as a lack of respect for adults. If mothers were not consumed with their careers, they would be home with their children teaching them how to be respectful citizens. Youth would not be lashing out with bad behaviors because they would not feel emotionally abandoned or merely bored and left to entertain themselves. Without the mother at home to impart morality to children, it is left up to educators who may or may not have any concern for the morality of the children that they teach. The increase in the number of divorces is also the fault of feminism as well. The constant rivalry between men and women that feminism encourages is not conducive to a marriage based on traditional, Biblical roles of husband and wife. Men and women cannot both be at the head of a family, because then a family begins to go in two different directions, which leads to an unhappy marriage or divorce. There are various evils that contribute to the deterioration of the family, but feminism is ultimately the most reprehensible.

The True Feminine

Feminists who want to advocate for respect for women should not endorse the post-modern ideas that are represented as feminism, but instead support a

complementarity between the sexes. This embraces the myriad of differences between men and women, but also represents men and women as equals that serve the community and family in different capacities. The more common feminist ideal is for women to conform themselves to fit into the male's role, and that does not represent femininity well. The feminine role is best characterized by receptivity and is best represented through motherhood. Being a mother is the most selfless and loving role that is given to mankind and women are capable of it, not men. It encompasses all of the innately feminine traits that a woman has, especially receptivity. With a true feminism lived out in society, there would be no abortion because men and women alike would realize that "the woman has received the costly privilege of suffering so that another child made to God's image and likeness can enter into the world."¹⁷ Women would no longer fight to be accepted into a man's sphere of influence because they would realize that "nothing can ever overcome that one enormous sex superiority, that even the male child is born closer to his mother than to his father."¹⁸ Because women would comprehend what an honor it is that God himself reaches into the female womb and creates another immortal soul within a woman. No man will ever be capable of housing two precious souls at one time, not to mention those women who are blessed enough to be the mothers of multiples!

"All women, without exception, are called upon to be mothers"¹⁹ because this calling is about more than just being a caretaker for the children that come from a woman's womb. Women, who are not blessed to be biological mothers of children, are still called to love the community with a maternal compassion. As Gertrud von le Fort explains, "to be a mother, to feel maternally, means to turn especially to the helpless, to

¹⁷ Alice von Hildebrand, *The Privilege of Being a Woman*, p. 87

¹⁸ G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*

¹⁹ Alice von Hildebrand, *The Privilege of Being a Woman*, p. 95-96

incline lovingly and helpfully to every small and weak thing upon the earth.”²⁰ Women are to be the caretakers of the world; it is in their very nature to be maternal and compassionate towards all living things. Feminism essentially seeks to unsex women and to make them less relational as men are, but that is a sin against God to undermine His creation of woman as she is. A true feminism would do nothing of the sort, but cherish the maternal nature and make use of it in caring for the misfortunes of society’s poorest creatures through works of love and charity.

Throughout the decades that feminism has been most prevalent as a political ideal, proponents of the belief have established that women should be allowed to work and develop careers for themselves as men are capable of doing. This is one of the most basic arguments for equality that feminism fights for, equal pay for equal work and women being considered as equals to men in the professional sphere. The home is considered oppressive and the work of the home is thought to be drudgery by feminists. But women are not meant to join the workforce, particularly if they are already mothers. G.K. Chesterton argues that “women were not kept at home in order to keep them narrow; on the contrary, they were kept at home in order to keep them broad.”²¹ For mothers who stay home with their children become their children’s entire world and directly impact their world more than any other single person can or ever will. Chesterton also makes this profound remark, “How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone?” Feminism endorses the idea that working outside of the home broadens a woman’s horizons and makes her life more adventurous, but in the home it is necessary for a woman to be capable of an innumerable amount of tasks whereas at the office, a man is only required to be efficient at a finite set of skills.

²⁰ Gertrud von le Fort, *The Eternal Woman*

²¹ G.K. Chesterton, *G.K. Chesterton Collected Works: Volume IV*, p. 116

Chesterton also said, “But of all the modern notions generated by mere wealth the worst is this: the notion that domesticity is dull and tame. Inside the home (they say) is dead decorum and routine; outside is adventure and variety.”²² A domestic goddess is a cook, a maid, an educator, an explorer, a caretaker, and any other number of things because “babies do not need to be taught a trade, but to be introduced to a world”²³ and women are given the responsibility of showing it to them. A mother is not locked into one career, but can choose her responsibilities based on the day of the week. And although the feminist ideals have given these titles negative and lowly connotations, it is not meant for them to be viewed this way. It does not make sense for a woman to want to be outside of her own domestic haven, for it is the one place that she has dominion over because it is her domain and no one else’s.

The general feminist argument against a woman remaining a domestic empress would be that a woman should be independent of her husband, but this is not the Christian perspective that the Bible and Tradition have established for marriage. A marriage between man and woman is an equal partnership that was established by God in the Garden of Eden, but that partnership does consist of different roles. Chesterton gives an excellent response to the question of “Why should a woman be economically dependent upon man?” “The answer is that among poor and practical people she isn’t; except in the sense in which he is dependent upon her.”²⁴ In his response, he is critiquing modern idleness that has been the result of too much wealth for many families within developed countries. Historically, it was the case that women of middle to upper class families were the ones who initiated the feminist movement in the nineteenth century.

²² G.K. Chesterton, *G.K. Chesterton Collected Works: Volume IV*, p. 72

²³ G.K. Chesterton, *G.K. Chesterton Collected Works: Volume IV*, p. 118

²⁴ G.K. Chesterton, *G.K. Chesterton Collected Works: Volume IV*, p. 71

These were the women who became bored with their idleness because they were able to afford to pay other people to clean their house, do their laundry, educate their children, cook for their family, and do any other task that was traditionally delegated to the mother of the family. The result was a generation of bored women who were resentful that they were stuck at home all day while their husband was having an adventure at work. Oh, the havoc that the world could have been spared from if only privileged women had filled their idle hands with their own laundry or charitable works! When a man and woman are both sharing the marital load equally, by the husband providing economically for the family and the wife keeping the home hospitable and educating the children, there is no time for resentment to form or a place for it to reside. But this requires an acknowledgement by both parties that each role is of equal importance, even though they influence the family and society in different ways. When the middle and upper class women revolted against the chains of domesticity, they were actually already free of domesticity. What they were actually revolting against was their own idleness and boredom and this is why the feminist movement has failed.

There would be no artificial methods of contraception in an idyllic, feminine endorsing society because “to sever love from its fruitfulness is to sow the seed that will ultimately destroy it.”²⁵ Contraceptives allow men and women to remove love from the sexual equation and it encourages a lack of commitment and connection. By allowing people to take advantage of pleasure without having consequences, there is a lack of respect and honor given to the process of reproduction. Without contraceptives, both men and women have to learn about the natural bodily processes that were gifted to mankind in creation and as a result, they gain a greater respect for each other’s bodies. The sexual

²⁵ Alice von Hildebrand, *The Privilege of Being a Woman*, p. 94

union is something to be cherished and not merely bandied about at whim. It is to be saved for the sacramental matrimony between two people so that children are created from a union of love and treasured as the blessings that they are. Without artificial contraceptives, there is a heightened sense of familial connection within the family unit because each member is valued.

In a world with true feminism, women would not be taught that promiscuity was their right, but that “when women are pure, men will respect, nay, venerate them; they will also hear the call challenging them to chastity.”²⁶ The female body would be protected and honored as the precious vessel that it is rather than taken advantage of by men and women for the sake of pleasure. A pure woman inspires and chastises men to being more virtuous in their own right so that they can be worthy of her purity. Immodesty only serves to create a conduit for men’s disrespect. When a woman lives a lifestyle of purity, men treat her with reverence rather than a tool of satisfaction. When all of society is base, there is no beacon of light to light the path for those who have fallen. As the “weaker” sex, women are to keep husbands and children on the path to morality and cannot concede defeat to darkness as well.

The family unit would not be falling apart at the seams if there were a true feminism propagated by feminists because mothers would be at home to care for and teach their children rather than pursuing prestigious careers for themselves. The number of divorces would be drastically lower because husbands and wives would respect one another and the roles that they were created to fulfill. Women would allow men to be the providers for the family and women would accept and honor their role as caretakers, both of their spouse and their children. Just as with the Holy Trinity where each person of the

²⁶ Alice von Hildebrand, *The Privilege of Being a Woman*, p. 90

Trinity has his own specific role, so too men and women have their own individualized roles to fulfill within the family and society. Children would learn how to respect themselves and their elders from the teachings that their mother provided them. And traditional and conservative perspectives would be passed from mother to child because morality would be taught in the home, rather than at a government institution.

The Scriptural Support

A second creation story is given in the second chapter of Genesis and this is where the specifics of woman's creation are revealed. God decided that Adam needed a helpmate because it was not good that was to rule over the other creatures of the earth alone. None of the animals that God had already created were worthy partners for him because as a rational soul, Adam was far above them. This necessitated that God form a creature that would be Adam's equal, his counterpart. Therefore, God created a woman from Adam's rib. She was not created from his skull because she was not to rule over him, nor was she created from a bone of his foot because she was not to be governed by him. She was created from Adam's rib to symbolize their partnership with one another to

govern all of God creation. God created the world in a very specific manner in order to convey how the world was to be viewed in the eyes of man. This is particularly relevant for the creation of man and woman. God first created Adam, and in the creation story in the second chapter of Genesis the reader can see that God then created Eve second because it was not good that Adam was alone in the world. God very specifically said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.”²⁷ Eve was specifically created *for* Adam. She was to be his helpmate, his *ezer*. Not only was she to be his partner in being another rational soul to rule over the animals with Adam, she was to be his helpmate. This speaks volumes for the role that women have in the world. They are to help. They are not to domineer, they are not to be self-interested and career oriented, but are to help people, particularly their male counterparts.

God created this partnership to be one of complementarity. If either Adam or Eve’s sole characteristics were all that were needed to govern creation, God would not have needed to create both of them, but He did. Therefore, each partner has something important to bring to the marriage that cannot be ignored for the sake of lifting one’s characteristics above that of the other. This is why the individualized roles of men and women are so intrinsically important and when ignored are the source of societal deterioration. If it were the case that God foresaw that man would need an economic partner, someone to toil with him to provide, he would have made another man and future generations would be begotten in an asexual fashion, but as it was, God foresaw that man was not complete as he was and God created Adam’s female counterpart to provide traits in the partnership that Adam did not already possess. Man and woman were created to be partners, to complement one other, to literally complete each other in a way that would

²⁷ Genesis 2:18 (NRSV)

not have been possible if there were only men in the world. This ideal of complementarity is ruined when women refuse the traditional role of womanhood and decide to be independent from men. As the Bible is written, it was not good for Adam to be independent, so why would God have created Eve to be independent? Even more so than Adam, she was created to be relational because she was created in response to Adam existence.

It is of great import that Eve was created second after Adam. She was created within the safe haven of the Garden of Eden, after Adam had been told not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. She was the last of God's creations, and this foreshadows Mary as the most perfect creation when she becomes the living Ark of the Covenant. Although Eve fell to the temptation of Satan first, God had already planned that a woman would play an integral role in the redemption of the world, for it was through a woman's labor pains that the Savior of the world became Incarnate. This is an implication for the sanctity of motherhood and for each woman's womb. That is why women's reproductive organs are hidden, whereas men's are not. The womb of the woman is veiled just as the Holy of Holies was veiled because although not every woman's womb has sheltered the Savior, every woman's womb is a symbol of that perfect motherhood and the protection of that which is sacred. For this reason, woman's weakness should not have been degraded, because it was through a woman's weakness and humility that the Incarnation was brought into the world.

Men were created to be the leaders of the world and this was more firmly established after the Fall. Man was created first and given the responsibility of naming all of creation, including Eve. Although Adam and Eve were created to be partners, Adam was still given the role of leader. Encompassed into his responsibility was for him to be

Eve's along with protecting all of God's other creations. Because woman was God's last creation, and God's intent was for her to be cherished and protected for her entire life. God's design for marriage was that "a man [should leave] his father and his mother and [cling] to his wife, and they become one flesh."²⁸ This ensures that a woman is protected in her adolescence by her parents and leaves that protection only for the safety of the home that her bridegroom has prepared for her. It is a fallacy of the feminist movement that women should be independent in the world before they settle down to get married. This opens women up to many dangers, both of physical and moral natures. Women are to be consistently provided for and protected throughout their lives. If men and women were living according to the blueprint for the care of women that was given to them by God, then widow's rights and the laws influencing women's inheritance would not have been a driving force for the initial feminist movement. As it was, the movement pointed out valid concerns for how women were being provided for, but the solutions that the feminist movement provided did not solve the issues, but created many more. The feminists should have turned to the Bible and Tradition for the solution for society's issues.

²⁸ Genesis 2:24 (NRSV)

Conclusion

The feminist movement was initiated as a result of women being disrespected and to that end; feminism was honorable at its outset. But the way in which the movement set out to rectify the mistreatment of women was not honorable because femininity was forsaken by feminist ideology, particularly in the second and third waves of feminism. It was only necessary for feminists to take a stand for women rights because the relationship between men and women as God intended it had first been ignored and then forgotten. Women would not have needed the right to vote if they were respected and listened to by their husbands as their partners in marriage that they were intended to be. Women would not have needed inheritance rights if their fathers and husbands were protecting and providing for them as they were supposed to do. Although the first wave of feminism did point the finger in the right direction, bringing attention to the flaws in society, it did not implement change in the manner that was most beneficial to femininity or the family. For the feminist movement to be successful, it would have had to embrace Biblical teachings and the Tradition of the Church.

The post-modern phase of feminism is no longer about gaining rights for women, but it is about ignoring the institutions of marriage and family, pushing boundaries by making gender androgynous, and endorsing materialism and careerism. The path to post-modern feminism has been paved with good intentions but now society is in a hellish predicament in regards to femininity, family, and the home. Yes, changes needed to be made, but now an entire societal upheaval is necessary in order to regain the lost art of domesticity and femininity because the solutions provided by feminism have not rectified the issues facing womankind but have worsened the situation nearly beyond hope. Although a complete revolution of modern society is unlikely, it is still possible for individuals to make changes in their own lives and families. Women can choose to model their lives based on the tenets of the Church and the Bible and embrace their feminine roles with passion and in turn inspire their children to do the same. This will engender respect for the traditional roles of men and women. Within individual families there is hope that motherhood can receive the respect and dignity that it deserves, and perhaps one day it will be reflected throughout society once again.