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Feminism is riding high these days, and when faced with topical issues such as this, we start by seeking out from God's Word the underlying spiritual realities of the situation. God has given us His Word for our well-being - we are wise to follow it, and foolish to spurn it.

First of all, we never forget that God is our Creator, our loving Father who desires fellowship with us and His blessing upon us. He has made male and female in His image (Genesis 1.27), who are spiritually equal in His sight (eg., Galatians 3.26-29). "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him (Genesis 2.18, AV) but there was not found an help meet for him (v 20b) And Adam said, this is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (v 23). Clearly Adam and Eve provide the core foundation for us in regard to male-female relationships, both within marriage and outside it, a foundation which is duly built upon in later Scripture.

In Ephesians 5.17-33 and other New Testament passages we are taught that within their spiritual equality male and female are entrusted with differing roles, for the blessing of all. We read, applying both to the wider Christian community and to the marriage relationship which immediately follows – "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5.21). In marriage this submission is mutual, but distinct: the husband and father takes his lead from Christ's example of His love for His Church; and the wife and mother takes her lead from the Church's loving response to Christ (vv 22-33, a key passage that merits very careful study).

Arising from such Scriptures we see that the husband is provider, protector and father, and the one appointed to exercise the role of "spiritual headship" within the family. This "headship" role is much misunderstood these days, because Scripture has been "re-interpreted", notably early Genesis, due to the Church's desperate desire to keep up with current ideas. (We see for example in I Timothy 2.11-15 how the Holy Spirit's teaching through Paul is based here entirely on Genesis Chapters 1-3). Spiritual headship is about the male, husband and father carrying responsibility and accountability before God for the spiritual state of his wife and family, and as such he is to be the main provider of teaching and discipline in the home.

Scripturally we note that expressive little phrase "help meet" as God's description of Eve's role alongside Adam (Genesis 2.18 and 20b, AV) – the giving of help, support, a listening ear and wise advice for her husband; and crucially of course, she is the mother of the family as distinct from being the father.

This is the beautiful scriptural setting on which the marriage vows in the Book of Common Prayer are based. The groom promises to love, cherish and (at the giving of the ring) to worship his bride – no man can promise anything higher than that to

his girl! – “worship” here meaning that his top priority below his primary duty before God Himself is to ensure his wife’s utter well-being. This is the context enabling the bride to respond, promising to love, cherish and obey her husband. “Obey” here – arousing an instant refusal by most brides to speak such a dreadful word until they understand what is going on here! - means her willing acceptance of her husband’s love, provision and protection, her recognition that his role is different from hers, and her allowance for him to be husband and father just as he is allowing her to be wife and mother.

We see that there is no whiff here of competition between husband and wife, or of domination by either of the other: putting it another way, neither masculinist nor feminist attitudes have a place here! Rather it is about the mutual love, joy and support of true soul-mates, with each party given the space by the other to fulfil his or her God-given role, that thereby all will be blessed. It is into such a solid, God-wrought marriage relationship that the children are to be born and reared - the “nuclear family” created by God to be the normal, basic unit on which human society is built and depends.

In the light of all these solid glories divinely given for our benefit, we can see how feminism is one aberration, among others, that has arisen from the foolish departure from Scripture. Next time we can see how feminism fares in the light of the male-female principles we are given in Scripture, both inside and outside marriage, and then suggest an appropriate Christian response to counteract feminism’s damaging effects within our society.

Thanks be to God, in Christ all shall be well, but meanwhile there is work to be done!

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