The Feminism Cudgel

Hans-Jörg Ronsdorf · April 2021 · revised in October 2026

The insinuations about my book and my views on the role of women came as expected: anyone who wants to see women in pulpits has been hijacked by (anti-Christian) feminism.

“It is anti-Christian feminism that is determined to push through the women’s quota, both in the boardrooms and in the pulpits. Strangely enough, it is not least men who want to break a lance for women in this.”

Many Christians of a strictly conservative way of thinking and acting regard feminism as a fundamentally wrong, even diabolical or anti-Christian movement. I did much the same for many years. But this way of thinking makes things too easy. ***A simple black-and-white logic is an escape from reality. For those who think this way unconsciously make use of all the achievements of feminism gladly (almost opportunistically)*** and cannot even imagine living without them (comparable to what trade unions have achieved for workers). Do we have any idea at all what the image of women in society looked like 100 or even 200 years ago, and how lacking in rights women were compared with men?

Here are a few examples, in case you do not want to research for yourself what has changed in women’s favor, ***triggered by feminist movements*** – that is, without the efforts of the women’s movements these changes would not have come about:

1878	An amendment to the Trade Regulation Act (Gewerbeordnung) regulates **maternity protection** for the first time. Under it, an unpaid ban on employment applies for three weeks after giving birth.
1882	Founding of the first **health and burial fund** for women and girls.
1891	First **Female Workers Protection Act** in the Reichstag; women’s work underground is banned, and the 11-hour day for women as well as four weeks of paid rest after childbirth are introduced. On March 12, at a session of the Reichstag, the admission of women to university studies is refused.
1900	The **Civil Code** (Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, BGB) comes into force. *With its provisions on marriage and family, it anchors the legal position of the woman in the sense of patriarchal tradition, i.e., the husband has the right to decide in all questions of married and family life.*
1918	On November 30, women receive the **right to vote and to stand for election**. This right is anchored in Article 109, Paragraph 2 of the Weimar Constitution of August 11, 1919: “Men and women have fundamentally the same civic rights and duties.”
1949	On May 23, the **Basic Law (Grundgesetz) of the Federal Republic of Germany** is promulgated. Since then, Article 3, Paragraph 2, Sentence 1 of the new constitution has stated briefly and clearly: **“Men and women have equal rights.”**
1952	**Maternity Protection Act** – law for the protection of working mothers.
1957	The Act on Equal Rights for Men and Women in the Field of Civil Law (**Equal Rights Act**) above all changes family law. The provisions come into force on July 1, 1958.
1961	**Family Law Amendment Act** – improvement of the legal position of the wife when the husband seeks divorce on grounds of breakdown of the marriage. The maintenance obligation of the father of a child born out of wedlock lasts until the child turns 18 (previously until the child turned 16).

1968	**Extension of the Maternity Protection Act** – the protection period before childbirth is six weeks. The protection period after childbirth has been increased to eight weeks; for premature and multiple births this period is extended to twelve weeks.
1975	**Act on Supplementary Measures to the Fifth Criminal Law Reform Act** – women insured under statutory health insurance are entitled to individual medical counseling on questions of contraception.
1977	**First Act Reforming Marriage and Family Law** – partnership principle: no division of tasks in marriage prescribed by law. Change from the principle of fault to the principle of breakdown. The spouse who cannot provide for himself or herself after the divorce receives a right to maintenance.
1980	At the United Nations World Conference on Women in Copenhagen, the Federal Government signs the **Convention** of December 18, 1979, **on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.**
1985	The **Act** on the United Nations Convention of December 18, 1979, **on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** comes into force.
1994	The **equal rights clause** in Article 3, Paragraph 2 of the Basic Law is supplemented: **"The state promotes the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and works toward eliminating existing disadvantages."**

Selection based on: Zeittafel zur Geschichte der Gleichstellung (in German), Bielefeld University

The changes described here are not Christian achievements, even though Christians with their convictions probably contributed to them. But they benefit all Christian women – and thus their husbands as well.

Feminism is, first of all and fundamentally, committed to the equality of all people and against any discrimination against women. Can anyone object to that in principle? For, contrary to what is often wrongly assumed, feminism does not always mean the one-sided strengthening of women's rights, but also meeting one another as equals.

Feminist movements and waves, as well as the women's rights movement beginning in the nineteenth century, were certainly not holy movements. No one claims that. But their motivation stemmed from being disadvantaged in many areas of life and having fewer rights than men. ***My question to Christian men: Does God, the Creator, want women not to have all the human rights that men have?***

The fact that this movement also demands the legalization of abortion, and has largely achieved it, must not obscure the fact that women defended themselves against wrong and injustice, and had to, so that the course of history would not simply continue as before.

As a movement and a phenomenon of its time, feminism, like any other movement, is complex, multilayered, and many-sided, a huge field in which I am not really an expert. And neither, I believe, are most Christians who use the word (pejoratively). Whoever wields the "feminism cudgel" uses the term one-sidedly and turns it into a tool – mostly combined with naive ignorance.

I do not need any feminist theses to speak out in favor of equal rights for women and men. The fact that equal rights had to be fought for anew is proof of what the Fall brought about. "The man will dominate the woman" (cf. Genesis 3:16) – he will keep her small, oppress her and exploit her. This can be demonstrated in many cultures of all ages and is therefore deeply ingrained, anchored, as it were, in the DNA of being male. ***This attitude is practically inherited. It is now well documented that families and cultures pass on not only biological traits, but also deep imprints. It is also present in the thinking of many Christian men, who read the Bible through precisely this lens and read their***

hierarchical view of man and woman into the Bible. Shaped by the culture in which they live, permeated by the spirit of the age.

The gospel is the transforming and newly creating power that can break open and change these old patterns of thought. In their day the apostles could not simply dissolve these old, sinful patriarchal structures, for that would have been the end of the gospel. It would have been an attack on the social structure of that time, which held the Roman Empire together and was, so to speak, its foundation. That is why some of the apostles' words sound as if they supported these old, sinful structures. But they do not (see their words about slaves). Rather, these structures are undermined. Anyone who reads carefully, against the background of the creation account, against the background of how Jesus treated women, will recognize ***how they point to a way that means the end of sinful hierarchy: unconditional, self-sacrificing love and mutual submission and respect. That is the end of patriarchy and of one-sided subjection.***

Feminism has certainly, in part, fallen off the horse on the other side. It is fundamentally wrong for women now to strive for what they accuse men of. Merely swapping the wrong roles remains wrong and brings no healing to the world. Everything stays the same, except that the ruling sex would now be female.

None of this was what the Creator had in mind. He had a very good idea: man and woman who complement each other, without any difference in hierarchy. Each person and each sex has particular qualities that are less present in the other. ***Hence complementing each other, hence facing one another as equals.***

According to God's creation order, this principle applies to marriage, family, church, and society. A breath of the new creation blows through these areas when this is put into practice and striven for.

Hans-Jörg Ronsdorf, Sulzberg, April 12, 2021