

GLEANINGS — June 19, A.D. 2016  
Male and Female, Part One

Masculinism is not an every day word. Feminism is more so, and the ideology identified by that word has many champions. But where are the spokesmen for masculinism? Perhaps Father's Day is a good day to discuss masculinity ("male-ness") in the light of God's word. What is it? What does the Bible say about it, and about femininity ("female-ness")?

Thus says the LORD: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27)

"Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female..." (Deuteronomy 4:15-16)

We rightly infer a couple of precepts from these and other portions of the whole counsel of God in Scripture. The first concerns the natural dignity of men and women as persons made in the image of their personal Creator, Whose uncreated dignity is infinitely greater than that of any created person, and Whose infinite being cannot be depicted by the artistry of any finite human being.

A rock is inferior to a tree, a tree is inferior to a horse, and a horse or any other animal is inferior to any man, woman, or child. And though human individuals are diverse in characteristics and abilities, we all share in that majestic and unique honor: we are like God. We are living self portraits of the great Painter.

Next, though the second Person of the Trinity became incarnate as a male human being, God in Himself transcends human sexuality. The commandment in Deuteronomy underscores this. So we must look elsewhere for the reason that God the Father is not called God the Mother, and why masculine pronouns are used consistently in Scripture for the Holy Spirit and for each of the three Persons of the Trinity. Here is another key verse:

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man." (1 Corinthians 11:7)

The issue of literal head coverings in worship assemblies is a matter to be discussed some other time! However, with these Holy Spirit inspired words about the respective glories of man and woman, the apostle has regard to what is taught from Genesis 2:18 onward in Scripture: God has given distinct roles (we might say assignments) to man and woman according to His good and perfect will.

This does not contradict the first precept. The Holy Spirit's use of masculine terms with reference to the transcendent God throughout the Bible is itself a testimony to the proper roles of male and female. The First Corinthians verse does not contradict the Bible's insistence on the essential equality of man and woman. It does show that masculinity represents divine authority.

The old covenant priests and levites all were male; in new covenant communities their heirs (elders and deacons) are to be men as well, per the qualifications given in the pastoral epistles which include the requirement that an elder or a deacon be the husband of one wife. Neither Anna (Luke 2:36) nor Priscilla (Acts 18, Romans 16) held ordained office. Although Phoebe was a servant of the church (Romans 16:1), she was not an ordained deacon. All those chosen in Acts 6 to serve in that capacity were men.

*to be continued...*