

Men and Women: EQUAL YET DIFFERENT: A brief Study of the Biblical Passages on Gender by Alexander Strauch. Lewis & Roth Publishers, P.O. Box 469, Littleton, CO. Pb 126 pp. Copies available at Bethel Books, 274 McNaughton Ave. East, Chatham, Ont. N7L 2G8.
Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

It was not until the 1950s that Protestantism as a whole began to explore the place of women in ordained ministry. Since then the number of denominations ordaining women has mushroomed. But the greater acceptance of ordaining women is primarily the result of our society's changed attitude toward the role of women rather than the outcome of a theology-driven agenda. In this case, churches have the tendency to follow public opinion rather than shape it. To be led by the latest fad in society is tempting. The church has always been prone to surrender to the spirit of the age. Church history provides ample proof.

There are two major viewpoints in this debate. One is the evangelical feminist view (egalitarian view); the other is the complementarian view, (the non-feminist view). Evangelical feminists conclude that true equality requires equal ministry opportunities for both sexes. And they claim that if experience shows that women are qualified for serving as office bearers, it must be right. Therefore, Strauch wants his readers to listen to what God has once-for-all said in Scripture and once-for-all revealed in Jesus Christ. He warns that the fundamental issue and danger of evangelical feminism lie in its methods of interpreting the Bible. He notes that these methods seriously undermine the credibility, and authority of God's written Word. They make the Bible an utterly confusing book.

In his book Strauch states and defends the complementarian view. He lets the Bible speak for itself. Written in outline form, he presents solid biblical evidence that Jesus Christ taught that men and women are equal but different. He practiced role distinctions between the sexes by designing male leadership for the church. But the principles of male headship do not diminish the significance and necessity of a woman's active involvement in the Lord's work. Furthermore, since the family is the fundamental social unit and the man is the established family leader, we should not be surprised that men would be leaders of the local church family. Biblical submission in marriage doesn't eliminate the biblical principles of justice, fairness, love, kindness, and compassion that every Christian -both female and male- should practice in every aspect of life and marriage. Therefore when it is properly understood, the role differences between men and women enrich family life as well as local church life.

This book is written for Christians who are unfamiliar with the Biblical passages on gender and probably don't have the time nor the inclination to read huge tomes on the subject. It introduces the key terms and arguments commonly used in the gender debate, and provides an easy-to-read summary of all the key Scripture passages. It is a valuable resource for refuting the arguments feminists use to redefine the role of women in the church and home. It is especially suited not only for personal, but also for group Bible study.