

3 RARE EVANGELICALS UNDER EQUALITY

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Over the last several decades a new chapter has been written in the history of the evangelical egalitarian movement in North America and Great Britain.¹ With its roots in the writings and ministries of Christians from previous centuries,² it has revived the message that "the prejudice of the past has obscured the teachings of God's Word."³

A review of the literature reveals a progression in the movement as evangelical egalitarians discovered their roots in the 1970s, defined the parameters of their position in the 1980s, and refined their theology, while making it more accessible for the church, from the 1990s to the present. They affirmed the essentials of their theologically conservative background, especially the inspiration and authority of Scripture, while arguing that restrictive roles for women do not reflect an accurate interpretation of the texts.

Evangelicals during this time were united in their opposition to the more radical religious and secular forms of feminism, yet they remained divided on the "evangelical feminist" question. Books were published, position statements written, and organizations formed, distinguishing those who emphasized male leadership from those advocating gender equality.

¹This chapter focuses primarily on books and national debates in the United States, although important work was also being done abroad during this time. Certain contributions from the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada are mentioned below where appropriate.

²Ruth A. Tucker argues, "Well-reasoned books articulating Christian feminism have appeared since the Reformation" (*Women in the Mass: Questions and Answers on Biblical Equality* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992], p. 216). See chapters one and two above.

³Lee Anna Starr, *The Bible Status of Woman* (1926; reprint Zarephath, NJ: Pillar of Fire, 1955), p. 7.

Biblical Equality Movement: The 1970s

Although it followed in the wake of modern secular feminism, the biblical equality movement that emerged in the mid-1970s was, in fact, a resurgence or "second wave" of the women's movement of the previous century. Evangelical egalitarians are ideologically much more closely aligned with the evangelical activists and women preachers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than with the various non-Christian and liberal forms of feminism that developed in the latter half of the past century.⁴

In 1963 Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*⁵ exposed the "Victorian stereotype" imposed on women during the mid-twentieth century. By this time fundamentalists like Charles Ryrie in *The Place of Women in the Church* (1958)⁶ were defending this stereotype as "the biblical view." It was against this backdrop that Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty published their popular volume *All We're Meant to Be* (1974),⁷ presenting their understanding of an egalitarian Christian woman "made in a multifaceted way and drawn from life itself."⁸

The following year, as the Evangelical Women's Caucus was being organized,⁹ Paul Jewett's *Man as Male and Female*¹⁰ hit the market. Virginia Mollenkott proclaimed him "the first male evangelical" to argue from "all the Scriptures" that the idea of female subordination is incompatible with the creation accounts, Jesus' teaching and Paul in *Galatians*.¹¹ Though contributing some helpful work on these texts, Jew-

⁴See Rebecca Merrill Grootuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1994; reprint Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1997), chaps. 3-4, esp. pp. 44-47.

⁵Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963). She also helped establish the National Organization for Women (NOW).

⁶Charles C. Ryrie, *The Place of Women in the Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1958).

⁷Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1974).

⁸Quoted in Ruth A. Tucker and Walter L. Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan/Academie, 1987), p. 411.

⁹Originally one of six task forces within Evangelicals for Social Action, it first consisted of a few women who were concerned about gender issues in church and society. They addressed such topics as the Equal Rights Amendment, inclusive language, ordination of women and discriminatory hiring policies in Christian institutions. Their first national conference in 1975 was called "Women in Transition: A Biblical Approach to Feminism." In 1990 the organization changed its name to Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus.

¹⁰Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975).

¹¹Virginia Mollenkott, foreword to *ibid.*, p. 9 (italics mine).

ett contended that the apostle's practice "did not always match his profound and revolutionary insight"¹² and that his restrictions on women were based on an "incorrect rabbinic understanding of the second creation account alone."¹³ Though Jewett's work was otherwise important to the movement,¹⁴ in his treatment of the bulk of Paul's letters he placed himself outside the boundaries of mainstream evangelicalism.

Thus Patricia Gundry's *Woman Be Free!* (1977)¹⁵ should be hailed as the first unambiguous expression of contemporary evangelical egalitarianism. In it she exposed three traditionalist threats designed to hold women down: that gender equality will lead to (1) loss of femininity, (2) destruction of home, family and society, and (3) denial of the inspiration of the Bible.¹⁶ Following the exegetical work of Lee Anna Starr, she argued, in contrast to Jewett, that the seemingly restrictive passages had been misinterpreted. Though others echoed Gundry's concerns,¹⁷ no other publication at this time had quite the same impact on the evangelical community.

In 1978 the gender issue was given a platform at the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), in a debate between E. Margaret Howe and Robert Saucy over the question of ordination. Howe's argument for ordaining women announced a new position in a society whose doctrinal statement was then focused primarily on the inerrancy of Scripture.

Throughout the 1970s "biblical feminism" was regarded as an oxymoron by most evangelicals, as well as by liberal and secular feminists. Few from the conservative camp dared to follow Gundry and Howe into these dangerous waters. During this time neo-evangelicals like Jewett provided both a bridge by which mainstream evangelicals could relate to the gender debate and a foil against which they would struggle. Many saw the need for a more scholarly defense of gender equality that remained consistent with all of Scripture.

¹² Publisher's back-cover summary of *Man as Male and Female*.

¹³ Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, p. 119.

¹⁴ For example, Jewett's emphasis on Galatians 3:28 as the "Magna Carta of Humanity" and his understanding of the image of God in Genesis 1 were adopted and developed by many evangelicals. Nevertheless, his assessment of Paul as a Christian with an "uneasy conscience" and his rejection of the bulk of Paul's teaching regarding gender were ultimately self-defeating.

¹⁵ Patricia Gundry, *Woman Be Free! The Clear Message of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1977).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-39.

¹⁷ E.g., see the collection of materials edited by Roberta Hestenes and Lois Curley in *Women and the Ministries of Christ* (Pasadena, Calif.: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979).

Dialogue and Division Within Evangelicalism: The 1980s

The next decade can be divided by the annual ETS meeting in the winter of 1986 in Atlanta. Prior to that, the dynamics of the debate seemed to be leading toward a dialogue between the opposing camps; after this meeting, face-to-face dialogue and debate began to diminish, although forceful written debate continued.

Moving toward dialogue: 1980-1986. With the 1980s came a conservative backlash to feminism in the culture at large,¹⁸ which also took its toll on evangelical egalitarians toward the end of the decade. By 1980 Jewett had written his second book, *The Ordination of Women*,¹⁹ as had Gundry with *Heirs Together*.²⁰ In her work Gundry developed and refined her methodology and applied it to the subject of marriage. During the same year Susan Foh responded to the emerging "biblical feminist threat" with *Women and the Word of God*,²¹ as did Stephen B. Clark with *Man and Woman in Christ*.²² James Hurley followed in 1981 with *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*.²³ The debate was clearly under way.

At the 1981 national meeting, Frank Gaebelein challenged the ETS when he said, "Another piece of unfinished business relates . . . to the place of women in our society. . . . There are areas in which they need greater freedom and more support and recognition. An attitude of male domination rather than mutual submission in Christ still persists among us, and we need to do more about it."²⁴

Meanwhile a steady stream of books signaled the emerging civil war within evangelicalism. A few seemed committed to reconciliation,²⁵ but most saw no way through the impasse.

In 1982 Margaret Howe published *Women in Church Leadership*,²⁶ in which she examined the pertinent texts, distinguishing between "scriptural principles" and "cultural influences," and provided a historical analysis of Orthodox, Catholic and

¹⁸ See the penetrating analysis by Susan Faludi in *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991).

¹⁹ Paul K. Jewett, *The Ordination of Women* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980).

²⁰ Patricia Gundry, *Heirs Together: Mutual Submission in Marriage* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1980).

²¹ Susan Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1980).

²² Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant, 1980).

²³ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1981).

²⁴ Quoted on the dedication page of Alvera Mickelsen, ed., *Women, Authority and the Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

²⁵ Such as Kari Torjesen Malcolm, *Women at the Crossroads: A Path Beyond Feminism and Traditionalism* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1982).

²⁶ E. Margaret Howe, *Women in Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982).

ing of the tide in the gender debate in the mid-1980s (although the tide would later turn back again).

In 1985 Aida Besançon Spencer's *Beyond the Curse*³² and Gilbert Bilezikian's *Beyond Sex Roles*³³ also provided thorough treatments of the texts and extensive bibliographies reflecting the formative years of the movement. Spencer included a discussion of background material from first-century rabbinical sources, as well as a consideration of the feminine images of God, two topics not well explored until this time. She argued from Genesis that the design at creation was distorted by sin and the curse. God's responses both in Eden and at the cross were "models and effective agents to show and empower us to go *beyond the curse*, to live lives affected by redemption."³⁴

Bilezikian's book was laid out in a Bible study format emphasizing the direct involvement of his readers with the "authoritative text." He dedicated it "to men and women in quest of obedience to Holy Writ" who are "desirous of complying with the dictates of the Word of God."³⁵ He too gave careful attention to Old Testament law and provided a lengthy treatment of "head" (Greek *kephalē*) as conveying the notion of "source." His paradigm was God's design in creation corrupted by sin, followed by an "Old Covenant Compromise" leading to "New Covenant Redemption."³⁶

Ronald and Beverly Allen's *Liberated Traditionalism: Men and Women in Balance* also appeared during this year.³⁷ It marked a softening of the traditional position, reflecting the inroads made by egalitarians. Appearing at the height of the civil war within evangelicalism, it was a way out for many traditionalists.

The following year Alvera Mickelsen's *Women, Authority and the Bible* and Janette Hassey's *No Time for Silence*³⁸ came to press. In Mickelsen's edited volume the essays from the 1984 colloquium were made available as the first published collection of evangelical egalitarian writings. Critics had contended that one could not hold to

³²Aida Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985); reprint Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989).

³³Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1985).

³⁴Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, p. 133 (italics mine).

³⁵Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, pp. 5, 207.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

³⁷Ronald and Beverly Allen, *Liberated Traditionalism: Men and Women in Balance* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah, 1985).

³⁸Janette Hassey, *No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry Around the Turn of the Century* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan/Academie, 1986); reprint Minneapolis: Christians for Biblical Equality, n.d.).

Protestant traditions. She also exposed the difficulties of women in evangelical seminaries and church ministries, thus drawing attention to an important phase in the movement as the number of women seeking "higher levels" of ministry increased.

In the following year a British contribution appeared: Mary Evans's *Woman in the Bible*,²⁷ which addressed a more comprehensive list of texts, including the Mosaic law. Her work called evangelicals to reexamine the Bible—not to alter or ignore it, nor to fit it into modern ideas, but to make sure the ideas and practices of biblical equality were indeed biblical.²⁸ Evans understood the Scripture to teach "diversity, equality and complementarity"²⁹ without hierarchy. She also provided extensive footnotes and bibliography that were important to the movement at this stage.

Also during this year Willard Swartley published *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women*.³⁰ Although his section on the gender question was relatively short (forty pages), it was important by virtue of his objective critiques of the hermeneutics employed by both sides. This would lay a foundation for what would become a major emphasis two decades later.

Twenty-six evangelical leaders gathered to discuss the matter in the Evangelical Colloquium on Women and the Bible in Oak Brook, Illinois, in 1984. As J. I. Packer observed, the colloquium suffered from the "awkwardness of a double-barreled agenda" that included (1) helping women who had been hurt by the "restrictions and put-downs of pseudo-Christian legalism" and (2) exploring critically the biblical passages and issues. However, Packer also correctly acknowledged that after this colloquium "the burden of proof regarding the exclusion of women from the office of teaching and ruling within the congregation now lies on those who maintain the exclusion rather than on those who challenge it."³¹ Such an observation from a leading evangelical supporter of male leadership bespoke a significant turn-

²⁷Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1983; published in the U.S. in 1984 by InterVarsity Press).

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 132. The concept of "complementarity" carries with it a wide range of connotations. In some instances simply conveys the idea of "beneficial difference" (without implying male authority), as in this instance; at other times it is used as a euphemism for a very traditional view of male authority and in yet other writings it represents a significantly softened male-leadership position that is quite similar in practice to an egalitarian model.

³⁰Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Cases in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald, 1983).

³¹J. I. Packer, "Understanding the Differences," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 298.

advocating biblical equality were going to press. In 1987 Patricia Gundry added a third title to her list with *Neither Slave nor Free*,⁴⁴ and Gretchen Gaebelein Hull joined the discussion with *Equal to Serve*.⁴⁵ Hull's work was in part an autobiography of her journey in thinking and writing on the gender question. In addition, it provided two important appendices on the meaning of "head" by Catherine Clark Kroeger and an outline of views and sources on the debate by Sanford Douglas Hull.⁴⁶

Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld's *Daughters of the Church* also appeared that year,⁴⁷ presenting little-known facts regarding women in church history. Though their investigation sought to be objective, the impact of their findings regarding the number and significance of women in leadership and the differing and changing attitudes toward women could be read only as an apologetic for gender equality.

Also appearing in 1987 was an anthology edited by Kathy Keay titled *Men, Women and God*,⁴⁸ which represented the developing discussion among British evangelicals on the gender issue. Its contributors addressed questions of men and women in both church and society as well as related topics such as family, bread-winning, singleness, abuse, homosexuality and the image of God.

In 1988 John Bristow's *What Paul Really Said About Women* appeared as an important treatise for anyone who "reverses Scripture but who struggles with traditional interpretations . . . and who fears that a desire for equality between the sexes is a violation of biblical principles."⁴⁹

⁴⁴Patricia Gundry, *Neither Slave nor Free: Helping Women Answer the Call to Church Leadership* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

⁴⁵Gretchen Gaebelein Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1987).

⁴⁶Other contributions in 1987 include Linda Raney Wright, *A Cord of Three Strands: Exploring Women's and Men's Roles in Marriage, Family and Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1987); Mary Hayter, *The New Eve in Christ: The Use and Abuse of the Bible in the Debate About Women in the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987); and Miriam Adeney, *A Time for Risking: Priorities for Women* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1987).

⁴⁷Ruth A. Tucker and Walter L. Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan/Academie, 1987). On pp. 410-34 in the final chapter they offer a review of people and publications influential in the gender debate from the 1970s through the mid-1980s.

⁴⁸Kathy Keay, ed., *Men, Women and God: Evangelicals on Feminism* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1987). Contributors include Elaine Storkey, Andrew Kirk, Faith and Roger Forster, Dave Tomlinson, Valerie Griffiths, Veronica Zundel, Roger Hurding.

⁴⁹John I. Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women: The Apostle's Liberating Views on Equality in Marriage, Leadership and Love* (San Francisco: Harper, 1988).

⁵⁰Back-cover endorsement by Letha Dawson Scanzoni, *ibid.*

the authority of Scripture and at the same time argue for a functional equality of the sexes. This publication insisted with many unified voices that "the crux is not biblical authority but rather biblical interpretation and application."³⁹

Hassey's analysis of the turn-of-the-century women's movement brought historical perspective to the debate by showing that its roots were in the early Bible institutes and ecclesiastical organizations, thus dispelling the myth that evangelical feminism was simply "a misguided effort to emulate the secular feminism which [had] gained ground since the 1950s."⁴⁰

Formalizing the Division: 1986-1989. By 1986 the time had come to address the "unfinished business" identified earlier by Gaebelein. In October a *Christianity Today* "institute" called "Women in Leadership" put the debate before the church, with Walter Kaiser and Bruce Waltke presenting the opposing views as "Shared Leadership vs. Male Headship."⁴¹ Shortly thereafter the ETS came together for its national meeting in Atlanta with the theme of the entire conference being "Men and Women in Biblical and Theological Perspective." This historic event marked a milestone in the development of evangelical egalitarian thinking: the society was not merely allowing a presentation on the question, but was sponsoring the largest dialogue and debate among evangelicals in the history of the movement. Presentations representing both sides were published the following spring in the ETS journal.⁴²

As noted above, face-to-face dialogue seemed to diminish after the Atlanta ETS conference, though the reasons for this are not entirely clear. The conference itself may have contributed to the quenching of productive academic exchange. The ETS dialogue made it clear that egalitarianism was taking root in rich evangelical soil and was here to stay. Traditionalists discovered (as Packer had noted) that the tables had turned and the burden of proof was now resting on them.⁴³ Both sides seemed painfully aware that their opponents would not be easily swayed by their respective arguments. Each side became more firmly entrenched in its own position.

As the evangelical public was responding to the ETS conference, more books

³⁹From the back cover of Mickelsen, ed., *Women, Authority and the Bible*. Main contributors were Patricia Gundry, Robert K. Johnston, Roger Nicole, Clark H. Pinnock, Richard N. Longenecker, Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, Walter L. Liefeld, Klyne R. Snodgrass, David M. Scholer, Catherine Clark Kroeger, Joan D. Fikkert, Nicholas Wolterstorff, J. I. Packer and Jeannette F. Scholer.

⁴⁰Roger Nicole's endorsement on the back cover of Hassey, *No Time for Silence*.

⁴¹*Christianity Today*, October 3, 1986.

⁴²*ETS 30*, no. 1 (March 1987).

⁴³J. I. Packer, "Understanding the Differences," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 298.

In the midst of these heated debates evangelicals began to realize that much of the church was not being addressed at a personal, practical level. Faith McBurney Martin answered this challenge in *Call Me Blessed* (1988).⁵¹ Although clearly advocating biblical equality, her work was done in a spirit of reconciliation, expressing both "fulfillment and yearning." It wove a tapestry of personal narrative with discussions of biblical texts and theology and thus served as a bridge for those who shared the author's pain, as well as her hope.

Unfortunately, the time for reconciliation had not come. Instead a deeper entrenchment took place in 1987 with the founding of both Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) and the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW). In its Danvers Statement the CBMW argued for "equality in personhood and value, but difference in roles."⁵² Though the newly termed "complementarians" shunned the older terminology of "traditionalism" and "hierarchy," their defense of male authority in marriage and ministry was as adamant as ever, even if it was now being applied with greater levels of respect and fairness for women.⁵³ In response, CBE's 1989 "Statement on Men, Women and Biblical Equality" insisted on the full "biblical equality of men and women of all races, ages, and economic classes."⁵⁴

As the chasm widened, Bonnidell and Robert Clouse's edited volume *Women in Ministry: Four Views* (1989)⁵⁵ sought to present a one-volume literary dialogue between the two sides. Although tending to obfuscate the issues by forcing the debate into a predetermined structure of "four views," the book did represent a change that was taking place within the traditionalist camp by distinguishing the older "traditional" view from the newer "male leadership" view. The former (espoused by Robert Culver) emphasized church tradition expressed in long-established stereotypical roles; the latter (espoused by Susan Foh) allowed for greater ministry and decision-making opportunities for women but retained ultimate male leadership. The distinction was less clear between the two views on the biblical equality side (Walter Liefeld, Alvera Mickelsen). Unfortunately, as the next

⁵¹Faith McBurney Martin, *Call Me Blessed: The Emerging Christian Woman* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1988).

⁵²Danvers Statement published in *Christianity Today*, January 13, 1989.

⁵³<www.cbmw.org>.

⁵⁴<www.cbeinternational.org>.

⁵⁵Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse, eds., *Women in Ministry: Four Views* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1989).

decade began even the appearance of this sort of friendly debate faded. It became a dialogue of the deaf.

By the end of the 1980s the matter had come strongly before the evangelical public. Some were hopeful that this promised a time of "open conversation" leading to an increasing awareness of the reasons and research behind the differing viewpoints.⁵⁶ Others sensed a growing polarization between the two sides. By consensus, there was a realization that the biblical equality movement was not going away.

Refining the Biblical Equality Position: The 1990s to the Present

Having established the credibility of their view in the 1980s, biblical egalitarians seemed to be working toward three goals in the 1990s and on into the twenty-first century: (1) deepening the research supporting their arguments, (2) exploring related topics and (3) taking their message to the church.

On the other side, John Piper and Wayne Grudem's edited volume *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* appeared early in the decade (1991)⁵⁷ as an important restatement of the traditional view couched in the euphemistic language of "complementarity."⁵⁸ As such, it exemplified a growing inconsistency in the application of the hierarchical model. In theory its proponents argued for male authority, while in practice many of them bore a striking resemblance to their egalitarian counterparts. In other words, while "authority" was theoretically at the center of their argument, in actual practice it was often at the margins. At the beginning of the next decade a collection of essays edited by Robert Saucy and Judith TenElshof, *Women and Men in Ministry*, took this important change of emphasis even further, underscoring what a woman *could* do within the bounds of male leadership.⁵⁹

Deepening the research. In 1992 Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger's *I Suffer Not*

⁵⁶Jucker and Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, p. 433.

⁵⁷John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1991). Wayne Grudem later edited a similar collection, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002), and more recently published a monograph, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 2004).

⁵⁸The present volume seeks to clarify this important point by insisting that to the extent dialogue is possible, complementarity without hierarchy must be distinguished from complementarity meaning hierarchy.

⁵⁹Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof, eds., *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001).

⁶⁷Andrew Perriman sought to move the debate toward what he believed could be a biblical consensus between the two sides. Following the work of Richard Cervin, he argued for "prominence" or "pre-eminence" as the meaning of male "headship," rather than "authority" or "source." Though he presented a fair treatment of the traditional view, in the end his conclusions fit clearly within the egalitarian camp.

Linda Belleville's *Women Leaders and the Church* (2000)⁶⁹ responded to three key issues in the debate: (1) In which ministries can women be involved? (2) What roles can women assume in the family and society? (3) What if any positions of authority can women hold in the church? She concluded that (1) God gifts and calls women and men equally, (2) God intends the male-female relationship to be mutual, and (3) in the church "there is not . . . male and female."⁷⁰ Her work combined significant exegetical skill with an extensive knowledge of the cultural background to Paul's time and writings.

In 2001 another important contribution appeared by British scholar Elaine Storkey. In a concise but thorough treatment titled *Origins of Difference*,⁷¹ she revisited the gender debate from the academic disciplines of sociology, philosophy, psychology and theology, in relation to the cultural shift from premodernism to modernism to postmodernism.

Also this year a second literary dialogue⁷² was offered in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, edited by James Beck and Craig Blomberg,⁷³ with contributions by Linda Belleville and Craig Keener (egalitarians), Ann Bowman and Thomas Schreiner (complementarians). The book included interaction and observations by the editors, as well as an appendix by Blomberg.

An Australian contribution by Kevin Giles appeared the next year. *The Trinity and Subordinationism*⁷⁴ delves deeply into historical theology to refute the claim of today's

⁶⁷Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* (Leicester, U.K.: Inter-Varsity Press/Apollos, 1998).

⁶⁸Richard S. Cervin, "Does *Kephalai* Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal," *TrinJ* 10 (1989): 85-112.

⁶⁹Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000).

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁷¹Elaine Storkey, *Origins of Difference: The Gender Debate Revisited* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2001).

⁷²See note 55.

⁷³James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, eds., *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, Counterpoint, gen. ed. Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001).

⁷⁴Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate*

a *Woman*⁶⁰ and Craig Keener's *Paul, Women and Wives*⁶¹ were published. The Kroegers' examination of the life and language of the Greco-Roman world provided a useful resource for the interpretation of I Timothy 2.⁶² Keener likewise made a valuable contribution with his examination of ancient sources, especially regarding the household codes for wives, children and slaves. In addition, he addressed the restrictive texts in Paul's letters and included a comprehensive bibliography and literature review that helped bring the discussion up to date.

In 1995 Stanley Grenz and Denise Kjesbo published *Women in the Church*,⁶³ also including an extensive bibliography. They surveyed the key theological issues and biblical passages, along with the state of affairs regarding the debate, in a more irenic and dialogical tone than many earlier works had done.

In the same year Elaine Storkey's *Contributions to Christian Feminism*⁶⁴ brought together a collection of talks given and articles written over a ten-year period. Storkey addressed what she perceived to be a serious imbalance in the way God's "masculine" authority has been emphasized through the centuries, rather than the relational aspects of the Trinity.

These works were followed in 1997 by Rebecca Merrill Groothuis's *Good News for Women*,⁶⁵ which set forth the case for gender equality from the perspectives of sound logic, theology and biblical exegesis. She argued against the traditionalist claim that men and women are "equal in being but unequal in function."⁶⁶ An extensive annotated bibliography was included.

In an insightful study that appeared in 1998 in Great Britain, titled *Speaking of*

⁶⁰Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1992). An important response to this came in Andreas J. Köstenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner and H. Scott Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1995).

⁶¹Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992).

⁶²Whether the Kroegers' translation of these verses emphasizing the Gnostic heresy at Ephesus is correct has been debated by many evangelical egalitarians. Regardless, their study was quickly recognized as an important contribution to the debate.

⁶³Stanley J. Grenz with Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995).

⁶⁴Elaine Storkey, *Contributions to Christian Feminism* (London: Christian Impact, 1995). See also her *What's Right with Feminism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985), which is being updated in a new edition.

⁶⁵Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1997).

⁶⁶See Groothuis's further development of this argument in chapter eighteen below.

patriarchalists that God the Son is eternally subordinate to God the Father and that this is analogous to the subordination of women. The book is unusual in being primarily theological rather than exegetical in approach. Moreover, it reflects a developing trend toward some common ground in that it (like the present volume) insists that the notion of "complementarity" should be applied to both sides of the debate—hierarchical and egalitarian. It also addressed related issues of slavery and homosexuality (though not in detail).

In this same year (2002) a book of a quite different kind appeared, *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary*.⁷⁵ Written almost entirely by women scholars, this volume has commentary on each biblical book that seeks to engage the concerns and experiences of women. Also included are some important essays on various theological and practical issues.

Exploring related areas. The 1990s began with the appearance of Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen's *Gender and Grace* (1990),⁷⁶ written by a psychologist in consultation with scholars in theology, history, biology and sociology. In her section on "nature versus nurture" she contended that regarding "genes, hormones and hemispheres . . . the differences [between male and female], when they occur, are both smaller and more complex than we thought. In most cases they are impossible to separate from the effects of learning."⁷⁷ In short, her book argued that a God-given "complementarity," to the extent that it can be objectively defined, does not necessarily predetermine "gender roles."⁷⁸

In 1993 Van Leeuwen joined with a team of scholars, students and staff who lived together for one year while writing and editing *After Eden*.⁷⁹ This volume ad-

(Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002). See a version of Giles's argument in chapter nineteen below.

⁷⁵Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans, eds., *The IVP Women's Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002). Also to be noted in this regard is the earlier *Study Bible for Women: The New Testament*, ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger, Mary Evans and Elaine Storkey (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1995).

⁷⁶Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace: Love, Work and Parenting in a Changing World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1990). Also appearing in the same year was June Steffensen Hagen's edited volume *Gender Matters: Women's Studies for the Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1990).

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁷⁸Her section "Parents and Partners" is also helpful, as well as the chapters "Gender, Work and Christian Vocation" and "Sexual Values in a Secular Age."

⁷⁹Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, ed., *After Eden: Facing the Challenge of Gender Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993). Other contributors included Annelies Knoppers, Margaret L. Koch, Douglas J. Schuurman and Helen M. Sterk.

dressed historical, crosscultural, theological and rhetorical issues. It showed that evangelical egalitarians were able to critically examine the growth of the movement in the broader context of the world around them.

Also during this time Rebecca Merrill Groothuis's *Women Caught in the Conflict* (1994)⁸⁰ focused on the "culture war between traditionalism and feminism." While developing strategies for an egalitarian hermeneutic, she analyzed the historical and contemporary cultural influences on both sides of the debate.⁸¹

In the wake of the 1993 conference of the World Council of Churches called "Re-imagining God, Community and the Church," *The Goddess Revival* (1995)⁸² was published. This collaborative work by Aida and William Spencer, Donna Hailson and Catherine Kroeger critiqued the burgeoning goddess spirituality by comparing and contrasting the God of the Bible with the gods and goddesses of pagan religions, both past and present.

Since the publication of Jewett's *Man as Male and Female*, the question had been raised whether the same arguments used for gender equality extend to "other gender questions," especially that of homosexual practice. The turn of the millennium saw two important contributions to this issue. In 1998 Stanley Grenz faced the growing challenge of alternative sexual lifestyles in *Welcoming but Not Affirming*.⁸³ He reasserted the historic Christian position with exegetical support but did so with more love and compassion than the church was accustomed to doing.

In 2001 William Webb's *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*⁸⁴ built on the earlier work

⁸⁰Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1994; reprint Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1997).

⁸¹In the same year John Stratton Hawley published his edited volume *Fundamentalism and Gender* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). Though Hawley is not an evangelical, his conclusions strongly supported those published for the previous two decades by evangelical feminists. While it is a valuable assessment of fundamentalism's place in the history of the movement, no mention is made of the fact that evangelical feminism survived and thrived past 1930.

⁸²Aida Besançon Spencer, Donna F. Hailson, Catherine Clark Kroeger and William David Spencer, *The Goddess Revival* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1995). Also addressing the "gender" of God during this time was Paul R. Smith, *Is It Okay to Call God "Mother"? Considering the Feminine Face of God* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), which advocated going beyond the biblical language by calling God "Mother" as well as "Father."

⁸³Stanley J. Grenz, *Welcoming but Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1998). The most valuable endorsement of this book came from James B. Nelson, who, though strongly opposing Grenz's "non-inclusive" conclusions, viewed it as "the clearest, fairest presentation of the non-affirming position" (back cover).

⁸⁴William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

model for ministry that included not only women but also ethnic minorities, youth and the poor. In 1999 Sanders was a plenary speaker for the CBE international conference in San Diego, California, where she called for, and symbolized, a renewed commitment by CBE to counter the pervasive effects of racism, sexism and elitism.⁹³

In a similar manner, Ruth Haley Barton's 1998 publication *Equal to the Task*⁹⁴ took the message for the Christian woman beyond the church. Arguing in an egalitarian yet "complementary" fashion, she asserted that God created men and women for life together, "a mutuality in teamwork" that enables them to work together in the office and in marriage, parenting and friendship. Her work was informed by interviews with others in ministry and personal experiences in Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois.

Published by Youth with a Mission (YWAM), Loren Cunningham and David Hamilton's *Why Not Women?* (2000)⁹⁵ brought the message of biblical equality to the mission field. Although women in missionary leadership had long been a reality (though an inconsistency in the traditionalist view), YWAM now endorsed this practice with a strong biblical argument.

Two books by Lee Grady, *Is the Church Tells Women* (2000)⁹⁶ and *Twenty-five Tough Questions About Women and the Church* (2003),⁹⁷ have also had a significant impact at the popular level. Grady, a keynote speaker at the 2003 international CBE conference in Orlando, Florida, has a straightforward, charismatic style that wins many converts at the lay level but sometimes tends to minimize the complexity of the issues.

Also during 2003 a lay-oriented series titled *Think Again*⁹⁸ appeared, dividing

⁹³ See her comments on how she views her ministry in *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁹⁴ Ruth Haley Barton, *Equal to the Task: Men and Women in Partnership* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

⁹⁵ Loren Cunningham and David J. Hamilton, *Why Not Women? A Biblical Study of Women in Missions, Ministry and Leadership* (Seattle: YWAM, 2000).

⁹⁶ J. Lee Grady, *Is the Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Charisma House, 2000).

⁹⁷ J. Lee Grady, *Twenty-five Tough Questions About Women and the Church* (Lake Mary, Fla.: Charisma House, 2003).

⁹⁸ Joy Eliaasy Fleming, *Think Again About Eve* (Genesis 3:1-6); *Think Again About Adam and the Tempter* (Genesis 3:1-19); Bruce C. E. Fleming, *Think Again About Church Leaders* (1 Timothy 2:8-3:16); *Think Again About the Weaker Spouse* (1 Peter 3:1-7); *Think Again About Submission* (Ephesians 5:1-5-6-9); *Think Again About Women and Authority* (1 Corinthians 11:2-16); *Think Again About Women and Silence* (1 Corinthians 14:34-40); and *Think Again About the Bible (the Four Principles)*. The entire series, totaling 461 pp., appeared at the same time (Minneapolis: Think Again, 2003).

of Swartley⁸⁵ and at the same time began an important contemporary discussion on the issue of what Webb has labeled a "redemptive hermeneutic."⁸⁶ This hermeneutic is illustrated by the church's rejection of slavery and is then applied to the issues of women and homosexuals to show that women's subordination is not transcultural but the biblical ban on homosexual practice is. Though sometimes controversial, his original, fair and well-crafted argument should continue to influence the gender debate for the foreseeable future.

Taking the message to the church. Having focused on the academy in the 1980s, advocates of biblical equality expanded their influence in the 1990s by taking their message to the street with a number of academically sound yet intentionally practical books. Three of these spanned the decade in the writings of Alice Mathews. Her first volume, *A Woman God Can Use*,⁸⁷ was published in 1990, followed the next year with *A Woman Jesus Can Teach*⁸⁸ and a third in 1998, *A Woman God Can Lead*.⁸⁹ In these Mathews explored a host of themes in the Old and New Testaments regarding prominent women, presenting them as didactic models for women in the modern world. She addressed such topics as decision making, difficult marriages, modern culture, depression, leadership, spirituality, priorities and evangelism.⁹⁰

In Ruth Tucker's second volume on the gender issue, *Women in the Maze* (1992),⁹¹ she condensed the exhaustive work done earlier with Liefeld in *Daughters of the Church*, making it more accessible for the average reader. She also added her own analysis of the texts and addressed contemporary issues such as inclusive language, ordination, feminism's effect on men, the status of women in the church, family life and reconciliation within evangelicalism.

Cheryl Sanders's *Ministry at the Margins* (1997)⁹² widened the scope of evangelical egalitarianism. Writing as a pastor, professor, spouse and parent, she proposed a

⁸⁵ See note 30.

⁸⁶ See his chapters twenty-two and twenty-three below.

⁸⁷ Alice P. Mathews, *A Woman God Can Use: Lessons from Old Testament Women Help You Make Today's Choices* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Discovery House, 1990).

⁸⁸ Alice P. Mathews, *A Woman Jesus Can Teach: Lessons from New Testament Women Help You Make Today's Choices* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Discovery House, 1991).

⁸⁹ Alice P. Mathews, *A Woman God Can Lead: Lessons from Women of the Bible Help You Make Today's Choices* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Discovery House, 1998).

⁹⁰ A similar contribution was made by Mary Ellen Ashcroft's *Balancing Act: How Women Can Lose Their Roles and Find Their Callings* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

⁹¹ Ruth A. Tucker, *Women in the Maze: Questions and Answers on Biblical Equality* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

⁹² Cheryl J. Sanders, *Ministry at the Margins* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

a discussion of the key texts among eight booklets, two by Joy Elasky Fleming and six by Bruce Fleming. Each is designed to present an exegetical argument for biblical equality to the layperson in a popular format.

Sarah Sumner's *Men and Women in the Church* (2003)⁹⁹ is a difficult work to place in the present survey for two reasons. First, as it interweaves her theology of women with the narrative of her personal journey, its style vacillates between the academic and the personal. Second, and more important, she attempts to avoid taking sides on the issue while seeking to encourage dialogue and build a consensus among evangelicals. While her goal is admirable, the reader is left somewhat in the dark as to the substance of and basis for her conclusions.¹⁰⁰

In summary, the 1990s into the beginning of the twenty-first century found biblical equality advocates functioning as a mature force within evangelicalism rather than fighting for a right to survive as in the preceding decades. Their literature reinforced their theological heritage, while at the same time developing it and expanding its influence in both theoretical and practical terms.

Concluding Observations

The following observations are warranted by a representative survey of evangelical egalitarian literature over the past thirty years. First, a theology of gender equality has been recovered from its nineteenth-century roots. Though undoubtedly influenced by the modern feminist movement, it was not the result of it; rather, the secular served as a catalyst to awaken the sacred.

Second, the struggles within evangelicalism in the 1980s had the long-term effect of strengthening the resolve of biblical egalitarians, forcing them to move to a greater level of maturity as the result of a vigorous self-defense.

Third, although the initial backlash of the late 1980s is past, the resultant polarity of the two sides presents an ongoing challenge for evangelicals. The need to get beyond this impasse in order to demonstrate unity with diversity in the body of Christ is greater than ever. Thus another matter of unfinished business is resuming dialogue with a spirit of reconciliation.

Fourth, the rise of the biblical equality movement has effected a change of prac-

tice, if not of mind, for many traditionalists. Not only have scores changed to an egalitarian position,¹⁰¹ but many others have modified their traditionalism into a position that ends up being virtually egalitarian in practice. The result is that things seem to be generally better for evangelical women in marriage and ministry at the beginning of the twenty-first century, even in many so-called complementarian circles.

Fifth, a high view of Scripture has been an explicit part of evangelical egalitarian theology from the beginning. Despite some accusations to the contrary, these conservatives have not dismissed the teaching of the Bible as "merely cultural," nor have they developed a special hermeneutic to get around it, nor have they simply refused to submit to its authority. The evidence for this can be found in the chapters that follow in this volume.

⁹⁹ Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church: Building a Consensus on Christian Leadership* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ E.g., through four chapters (*ibid.*, pp. 139-90) she asserts that "head" in I Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5 does not mean "authority," "source" or "covering" (she does not acknowledge the "preeminence" view) but should simply be left as a "mystery" and a "picture."

¹⁰¹ E.g., my own journey, recounted in Ronald W. Pierce, "Evangelicals and Gender Roles in the 1990s: I Timothy 2:8-15, a Test Case," *JETS* 36 (1993): 343-56.