

**JESUS and the Feminists. Who Do They Say That He Is?**  
Margaret E. Kostenberger. Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill. Pb. 253pp.  
Reviewed by Johan D. Tangelder.

Feminist theologies begin with human experience, specifically the experience of women. They left their indelible mark on the study of Scripture and, in particular, on the reading of the Gospels' portrait of Jesus and His approach to women. Today's feminist theologians are significantly diversified into a variety of ideologies. Over time some feminists began a mainly literary or narrative approach to Scriptural interpretation, bringing their feminist outlook to the text in an effort to *reread* Scripture in the light of their concerns and interests. They give the impression that they are the first ones in the history of the Church, who understand the role of women in Scripture and Jesus' attitude towards them. Evangelical feminists argue that the Bible teaches egalitarianism, the complete gender equality in personhood, worth, and role. But both cannot be right. Either Scripture teaches egalitarianism, or it does not.

Both radical and reformist feminists, contend that Scripture is characterized by a patriarchal bias and must therefore be subjected to a rigorous critique in light of feminist beliefs. They claim that women are taking God back for themselves today. Leadership in the Church is viewed as a justice and a human rights issue. The feminists demand acceptance and inclusiveness, their right to believe, to speak, and act as they will. This means the rejection and exclusion of whomever questions or opposes them. But the notion that Jesus affirmed male leadership is offensive only to those who hold to feminism as a foundational article of faith.

Dr. Kostenberger, Professor of Women's Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, chronicles the *feminist* quest of the historical Jesus. She shows that feminist scholarship furnishes not *one version* of the true Jesus but many different accounts of who feminists perceive Jesus to be. She begins her study with a survey of the rise of feminism. It is followed by an explanation of some of the most important issues impacting the feminist interpretation of Scripture. The remainder of the book focuses on and evaluates each of the major schools of feminist thought on the topic of Jesus and women. And Kostenberger subjects their arguments to critical scrutiny, showing that they fail to measure up with the teaching of Scripture. She dismantles the feminists' distortions of Jesus. She shows conclusively that the attempts of a long series of scholars to find Jesus affirming women's leadership failed entirely. Jesus was not feminist and he did not pursue a radically egalitarian agenda, nor did He establish an egalitarian community. Kostenberger points out that Scripture presents men's authority in the home and the church not as autocratic or grounded in male superiority or merit but in the mysterious, sovereign divine will under the supreme lordship and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Living within the boundaries of God's created male and female order allows for a genuine experience of fulfilment and freedom for everyone.

Kostenberger's study is a rich resource work for pastors and theological students. It provides a thorough exposition of past and current literature on the subject. Highly recommended!