

Review of *Two Views on Women in Ministry*

Thomas R. Schreiner

*Professor of New Testament,
The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky*

Two Views on Women in Ministry. Edited by James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001, 383 pp., \$16.99.

Introduction

As one of the contributors to this book on women in ministry, I am indulging in the pleasure of responding to the other writers in the book. Many books that present four or five views on controversial issues permit the authors to respond to the arguments of the other contributors. Beck and Blomberg chose not to include this feature. Instead as editors they provide an introduction and a conclusion, comment on both the egalitarian and complementarian essays, and include an appendix by Blomberg. The editors are egalitarian (Beck) and complementarian (Blomberg), and I believe they were fair and equitable in their assessment of the various views and essays. They did choose to use the word “hierarchicalist” in describing the complementarian view, and yet, they titled the historic position as “complementarian” on the cover of the book and in the section introducing the complementarian essays.

I want to begin by making some comments on the book as a whole. The editors chose to include two egalitarians and two complementarians. Craig Keener and Linda Belleville are the egalitarian contributors, and Ann Bowman and I wrote from the complementarian point of view. Including both a male and female to represent both positions gives the book a distinctive twist, guarding against any notion of an androcentric bias. On the other hand, if only two views were included the

contributors could have developed their arguments in more detail. The essays by Keener and Belleville overlap significantly, and perhaps readers would have been served better by one essay from each side. After all, we know that people read less and less today, and the length of the book may scare off some interested in the topic.

I agree with Beck and Blomberg that all of the essays are written with an irenic spirit. Further, they rightly maintain that neither side should be labeled heretical. The issue of women in ministry is important and emotions often run high. Pointed and spirited debate is fitting and even helpful. Nevertheless, we should avoid using the word “heresy” when debating the issue with evangelicals who cherish the inspiration and inerrancy of the scriptures. The debate over women in ministry does not address a non-negotiable issue, such as the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, justification by faith alone, the personal and bodily return of Christ, etc. We must not confuse matters and treat the controversy as if the gospel itself is at stake. We are to show Christian love to those with whom we disagree. On the other hand, most would agree that the issue is also an important one. Churches must order themselves in accord with the word of God. Complementarians, like me, fear that societal pressures rather than the scriptures dictate the outcome on this issue for many. We believe that the church of Jesus Christ will be weakened if we stray from what the scriptures clearly teach. We are persuaded that different roles are prescribed both in the home and the church for men and women. If the church strays from the biblical pattern, both the home and the church will be damaged. The pathway to blessing and happiness for both men and women is submission to the revealed word of God.

Evaluation of Keener and Belleville

I begin my review with a response to the egalitarian essays of Keener and Belleville. It is not the purpose here to summarize their essays as a whole since a summary of the respective essays in the book is included elsewhere in this issue of the journal. Instead, I will respond to the central arguments proposed by Keener and Belleville.

Both Keener and Belleville begin by noting that women functioned as prophets and in other leadership roles, such as apostle and deacon. For instance, in Judges 4-5 Deborah exercises authority as a judge and even tells the commander, Barak, what to do. Junia in Romans 16:7 functioned as an apostle, say both Keener and Belleville, and hence no authoritative ministry role should be denied women today. There is no doubt that women in both the OT and NT functioned as prophets. Deborah received and proclaimed authoritative and inerrant words from the Lord. The NT confirms that women function as prophets of the Lord (Acts 2:17-18; 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5). Egalitarians raise an important question. How does the prophetic role of women, clearly supported throughout the entire canon, square with the prohibition of 1 Tim. 2:12 (cf. also 1 Cor. 14:34) where women are forbidden to teach and to exercise authority over men? Keener argues that women in many churches today are denied positions that are less influential than the prophetic office (31). If women proclaim the word of God via prophecy, claim egalitarians, then every leadership role should be open to them.

The egalitarian argument from prophecy is the strongest one supporting their position, but it fails to persuade for several reasons. First, we should observe the pattern of biblical revelation. Women served as prophets in the OT but never as priests. Similarly, in the NT women served as prophets but never as apostles or elders/overseers/pastors (I understand these three terms to refer to one office). Second, the gift of prophecy should be distinguished from the gift of teaching. Those who prophesy receive revelations from God that are then transmitted to believers (1 Cor. 14:29-33). The gift is therefore, more passive in nature than the gift of teaching. Prophets transmit the word of the Lord; they do not study, prepare, and then deliver the word of the Lord. I am not denying that the prophetic word delivered by women is authoritative, though whether a prophecy is truly from God must be discerned by the church (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:20-21). Third, 1 Cor. 11:2-16 casts important light on the prophetic ministry of women. Women are encouraged to pray and prophesy in the church, but Paul enjoins women to adorn themselves in a certain way because of male headship. Significantly, he begins the section by reminding his readers that “the man is the head of a woman” (1 Cor. 11:3). In other words, women are permitted to pray and prophesy in the assembly, but they are to do so in a way that indicates that they are submissive to male headship. I conclude that women possessing the prophetic gift does not lead to the conclusion that they can serve as pastors and teachers today.

Egalitarians, of course, object to the previous arguments. Belleville thinks that the word “head” (*kephalē*) means “source,” not “authority” in Ephesians 5 (though she maintains it refers to the one who has prominence or “pride of place” in 1 Corinthians 11). She does not interact with the work done by Grudem and Fitzmyer in which they demonstrate that the word regularly means “authority over” in the NT and in extra-biblical literature. Even if the word means “source” in a few texts (which Grudem seriously doubts), the conclusions drawn by Belleville still do not follow. If women are instructed to adorn themselves in a certain way because men function as their head, then, even if the word “head” means “source,” a role differentiation between men and women is established. Belleville is unconvincing in her explanation of “head” in Eph. 5:21-33 (137-139). She alleges there is no contextual support in Ephesians 5 for the notion that “head” means “authority.” But notice Paul’s argument in vv. 22-23. Wives are to submit to husbands because the latter function as the head. So, even if the word “head” means “source” here (which is exceedingly doubtful), wives are to submit to their source. The primary role of leadership (yes, loving and servant leadership!) for the husband is clearly taught here, just as the church is to submit to the lordship of Christ.

Keener raises another objection from 1 Corinthians 11, maintaining that if the text is transcultural then we should require women to wear something on their heads in church (47, 62). I must admit to being puzzled by this objection. Most egalitarians rightly argue that the *principles* of God’s word apply to our culture today. In fact, Keener is helpful in distinguishing between what is cultural and what is transcultural in his essay. We are not trying to reproduce the culture of the Bible in today’s world. We do not believe that we must greet one another with a holy kiss because that is what the Bible literally says (Rom. 16:16). Nor do we demand that those with stomach aches must drink wine in accord with 1 Tim. 5:23. We derive *principles* from these texts, concluding that we are to greet one another warmly and with affection, and that those with stomach problems should take an appropriate remedy for their discomfort. Similarly, most complementarians believe that the point of 1 Cor. 11:2-16 is not the literal issue of head coverings. Head coverings (or hairstyles—scholars do not even agree on what the cultural practice was!) or the lack thereof sent a particular message to those who lived in the Greco-Roman world of the first century. To apply the text to today’s world we seek to discern the principle of the passage. We do not try to reproduce the cultural world addressed. I would argue that the principle is that women should prophesy in a way that supports male leadership since Paul introduces the text by appealing to man as the head of woman (1 Cor. 11:3), and he also proceeds in the argument to refer to the creational differences between men and women (1 Cor. 11:8-9). Hence, it is *rhetorically effective* for egalitarians to say that women must wear head coverings today. But such a comment is *hermeneutically unpersuasive*, for the complementarian

argument from texts like 1 Tim. 2:11-15 is deeper than egalitarians apparently perceive. We are not saying that we must invariably reproduce the customs of the biblical text in our culture. We are arguing that there are *contextual indicators* (the order of creation in 1 Cor. 11:8-9 and 1 Tim. 2:13) that the regulations and prohibitions in these passages are transcultural.

Both Keener and Belleville note that women can serve in many ministries. Complementarians joyfully agree, and I sketch in the evidence in my own essay. Romans 16 is a beautiful passage in which women are praised as co-workers and laborers in the Lord. I also agree that women served as deacons (Rom. 16:1; 1 Tim. 3:11), and Belleville has a helpful discussion on this matter (89-90). Still, the office of deacon should be distinguished from that of elder, for teaching and authority are reserved for the latter (1 Tim. 2:12; 3:2, 4-5, 5:17). The argument between complementarians and egalitarians is not whether women serve in ministry. All agree that women (and all Christians!) have the joyful responsibility of serving in ministry. The question on which egalitarians and complementarians disagree is whether women can serve as pastors/elders. Both Keener and Belleville adduce the example of Junia (Rom. 16:7), claiming that she served as an apostle. Keener thinks that Rom. 16:7 is as hard for the complementarian position as 1 Tim. 2:11-12 is for egalitarians (6). The two texts, however, are not comparable. First Timothy 2:11-14 is *about* the role of women, but Rom 16:7 is a *greeting* to Andronicus and Junia—not a discussion on whether women can serve as apostles. It is now generally accepted that Junia was a woman, but it is unclear whether she is identified as an apostle here. Daniel Wallace and Michael Burer have recently written an article (printed in this issue of *JBMW*) in which they argue that the verse means that Andronicus and Junia were “outstanding in the eyes of the apostles.” If they are correct (and they present some significant evidence supporting their position), Junia is not even called an apostle in this verse. Even if Junia is identified as an apostle, the egalitarian case does not stand. As I point out in my Romans commentary, the term apostle is not invariably a technical term. Whether it refers technically to the authoritative apostles who served as the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) must be discerned from context. It is quite likely that Andronicus and Junia functioned together as a missionary team. Indeed, Ernst Käsemann is probably correct in suggesting that Junia ministered especially to women. The reference to Junia, then, is scarcely clear evidence for the egalitarian position. It is not comparable to 1 Tim. 2:11-14 in which the topic of women teaching and exercising authority is addressed directly.

Belleville presents a number of arguments supporting women in leadership that are unpersuasive. She apparently thinks that because the church met in a woman’s house that the woman in question functioned as a leader (95). She lists Mary, the mother of Mark, whose house was used by the early church (Acts 12:12) in support of her view. Functioning as a patron

does not necessarily indicate that one served as a leader. The leaders named in the Jerusalem church are the male apostles and the elders, not Mary. To claim that women patrons functioned as leaders is an argument from silence, and it is unclear that anything else in the NT suggests such a conclusion. Belleville is also unhelpful regarding teaching. She rules out any idea that some teaching is informal or private over against teaching that is formal and public (99). By doing so she can lift Priscilla up as a teacher since she instructed Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). Belleville falls into a logical error in her presentation. She rightly says that everyone in the NT was expected to teach at some level (Col. 3:16), but it does not follow from this that everyone had the same office as teacher. There is a difference between the instruction and mutual teaching all believers participate in, and public formal teaching. Life is complicated and multifaceted. Belleville in my judgment misconstrues the biblical evidence by lumping together verses such as Col. 3:16 with texts like 1 Tim. 2:11-15. Denying women the role of regular public teaching does not rule out the mutual teaching from the scriptures enjoined in Col 3:16. Complementarians must not fall into the error of failing to listen to wise words from women nurtured in the scriptures. Still, this is not the same thing as giving women the responsibility of teaching and exercising authority over men.

Belleville argues, however, that women functioned as elders, seeing an example of this in 1 Tim. 5:9-10. Her argument here is unconvincing. First, the passage is not about elders serving as leaders but about supporting widows in financial need (1 Tim. 5:3-16). Second, those sixty years old are to be helped because they need financial assistance in their old age, not because this is the age in which one could begin to serve as a leader. One wonders about the energy level of elders if they have to be sixty and over! Third, if Belleville were correct, then only widows could serve as elders, thus any older married woman would be excluded. Finally, v. 16 clarifies that the issue is widows who need financial help.

Belleville also argues that the church possesses authority, not individuals. Her thesis is artificial and divides what should be kept together. Ultimate authority does not reside in individuals but the gospel. Still, Belleville’s attempt to say that the authority of the twelve did not include their preaching (Matt. 10:1-8) wrongly separates their authority to heal from their authority to preach. She is certainly correct in saying that submission to leaders is voluntary in Heb. 13:17, but she does not see that the leaders still possess authority. They are not to coerce submission, but the position of elder does involve leadership (1 Tim. 3:4-5; 5:17; Tit. 1:9). Jesus modeled servant leadership, but he was still a leader.

First Timothy 2:11-15 is one of the central texts in the debate on women leaders. Interestingly, Keener endorses the conclusions of Andreas Köstenberger in his study of 1 Tim. 2:12. Köstenberger demonstrates from parallels in both extra-

biblical Greek and biblical materials that Paul prohibits two activities here—teaching and exercising authority. Both activities, teaching and exercising authority, are legitimate activities, i.e., there is nothing inherently wrong with teaching and exercising authority. Nevertheless, Keener thinks that prohibition against women teaching is not universal because of cultural factors in the text. Belleville, on the other hand, disagrees with Köstenberger, but her own analysis of the grammar is mistaken. She says the two infinitives “teach” and “exercise authority” function as nouns but she does not point out that they function as complementary infinitives to the verb phrase “I do not permit.” Further, she argues that the verb “teach” modifies the noun “woman,” but actually the noun “woman” functions as part of the object clause of the verb “permit” and as the subject of both infinitives in the object clause. Belleville ends up with two unusual proposals for the meaning of the verse: 1) “I do not permit a woman to teach in order to gain mastery over a man,” and 2) “I do not permit a woman to teach with a view to dominating a man” (127). She understands the Greek word *oude* to designate in the correlative clause a related purpose or goal. Such a reading is grammatically problematic and misunderstands the word *oude*, for introducing any notion of purpose here misconstrues the force of the correlative. Since Belleville demonstrates a misunderstanding of the syntax of 1 Tim. 2:12, her attempt to define the word *authentain* (“exercise authority”) must be judged as unconvincing.

Both Keener and Belleville maintain that the prohibition against women teaching is explained by women’s lack of education and promotion of the false teaching. It is not evident from 1 Timothy, however, that women were responsible for the false teaching threatening the church. The only false teachers named are men (1 Tim. 1:20). The sweeping prohibition against women teaching only makes sense if *all* the women were teaching heresy, but it is difficult to believe that this is the case. First Timothy says nothing at all about women spreading false teaching, for in context 1 Tim. 5:13 refers to gossip, not false teaching. Moreover, if egalitarians are correct, and both men and women were spreading false teaching, why does Paul only restrict women from teaching? Focusing only on women, within an egalitarian interpretive framework, seems rather sexist.

Belleville is even more specific than Keener, thinking that the women in Ephesus were influenced by the Artemis cult where the female was considered superior to the male. We can simply say in reply that there is no clear evidence in the letter that the Artemis cult played a role. Paul does not mention the cult, nor is there any specific notion in the text that shows the influence of the cult. Belleville reads such a background into the text and then interprets the text from the alleged historical situation, an example of arbitrary mirror reading. If we think about it for a moment, Paul could have easily written, “I do not permit women to teach or exercise authority over a man, for they are engaged in false teaching.” Or, he could have written,

“I do not permit women to teach or exercise authority over a man, for they are promoting teachings from the Artemis cult.” Instead, the reason Paul gives is rooted in the created order. The reason Paul prohibits women from teaching or exercising authority over men is rooted in God’s intention from creation (1 Tim. 2:13). He does not appeal to the cultural argument promoted by egalitarians. Both Keener and Belleville leap over what the text actually says and substitute their alleged backgrounds instead.

Belleville thinks that the language of Adam being created first simply designates sequence and nothing more (129). She fails to explain persuasively the meaning of the text as it stands. Paul is giving a reason in 1 Tim. 2:13 [for (*gar*)] women are not permitted to teach or exercise authority over men. Some of the other examples Belleville adduces do point to sequence (e.g., Mark 4:28), though even in those contexts the sequence has exegetical significance (cf. 1 Cor. 15:46; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). It is not difficult to see that Paul thought the order of creation was a pointer to God’s intention, but the significance of the sequence is missed by Belleville. Keener, on the other hand, argues that not all proof texts from the OT are transcultural, and that the OT could be used as an analogy, without any notion of a transcultural application. Keener raises an important and complex issue that deserves more discussion than is possible here. It should be said in reply that an argument from the OT based on the created order is almost certainly transcultural. Jesus argued from creation in defending monogamy and God’s intention that husbands and wives should not divorce (Matt. 19:3-9). Paul argued from creation in prohibiting homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-27). There is no reason, in the case of 1 Tim. 2:13, to think Paul is arguing analogically. Paul prohibits women from teaching and exercising authority over men because of God’s intention in creating men and women.

Another difficult text is 1 Cor. 14:33b-36. Keener argues that women are prohibited from learning loudly. Belleville devotes more attention to the text, but she agrees with Keener in thinking that married women were disrupting the public meeting of the church. The situation addressed in these verses is difficult to determine, and both Belleville and Keener rightly disagree with the view that these verses are a later interpolation. Further, I believe they are correct in saying that Paul is not prohibiting women from speaking in tongues, from prophesying, or even from judging prophecies. But both of them also miss a theme in the text that correlates with what we have seen from 1 Tim. 2:11-15. Wives are to quit being disruptive because their disruptive speech shows that they are not being submissive. The principle from the text, therefore, is not that women should be absolutely silent in church (as some conservatives allege). Such an admonition would contradict 1 Cor. 11:5 where women are encouraged to pray and prophesy. It was noted earlier that we must discern the principle in texts addressed to specific cultural situations. The principle in this case is enunciated in 1 Cor. 14:34. The women “are to subject themselves, just as the law

also says.” The transcultural principle, then, is that wives are to be submissive. In this situation their submission manifests itself in how they conduct themselves in worship. Paul locates the principle of submission in the “law.” Belleville argues that “law” (*nomos*) refers here to Roman law (119). Against this, there is no clear example elsewhere in Paul where the term “law” refers to Roman law. Paul uses the term “law” often, however, to refer to the OT. It is quite likely that he has the OT in mind here, and most likely he refers to the creation narratives, especially Genesis 2, where a role differentiation between men and women is implicit in the narrative.

This brings us to the creation narrative in Genesis 1-2. All agree that Gen. 1:26-27 teaches the fundamental equality of males and females. Both are equally created in God’s image. The issue is whether a role differentiation is taught or implied in Genesis 2. Belleville answers “no.” Complementarians reply that woman was made to be man’s helper, but Belleville notes that God often helps Israel and he is not subordinate to Israel! To reply to Belleville here, I will simply cite part of my essay in the same book. “Anyone who has read the OT knows that Yahweh is often portrayed as Israel’s helper, and thus the term ‘helper’ alone does not signify male leadership in Genesis 2. And yet words are assigned their meanings *in context*, and in the narrative context of Genesis 1-3 the word ‘helper’ signifies that Eve is to help Adam in the task of ruling over creation. Indeed, in some contexts in the OT, the word ‘help’ designates those who assist a superior or ruler in accomplishing his task” (cf. 1 Kings 20:16; 1 Chron. 12:22-23; 22:17; 26:13; Ezek. 12:14). “These examples show that context is decisive in determining whether the one who helps has a superior or inferior role. Egalitarians cannot dismiss the complementarian view simply by saying that Yahweh helps Israel, for in other texts it is clear that leaders are helped by those who are under their authority” (204-205.)

Belleville also rejects the idea that the naming of the woman suggests male headship, suggesting that only an act of memorializing or recognition is in view. The significance of naming, as with the word helper, must be discerned in context. In Genesis the naming of the animals is linked with the dominion of Adam over all of creation (Gen. 1:26, 28; 2:15). Therefore, we are justified in detecting a notion of male headship in the naming of the woman.

Finally, Belleville thinks Adam being created first is hardly decisive, for John the Baptist preceded Jesus, and Jesus himself teaches the first would be last, etc. Again, we must read the text in context. No one argues that order *always* signifies dominion. The basic rule of Bible study applies here which says that each text must be interpreted in context. What is clear is that in both 1 Tim. 2:11-13 and 1 Cor. 11:3-9 Adam’s priority in creation signifies a role differentiation between men and women. Many egalitarian interpreters of Genesis proclaim that the order of creation says nothing about role differences, but

such an interpretation slights the importance of reading the scriptures canonically, for Paul clearly understands the order of creation to signify a difference in function.

To sum up, the essays by Keener and Belleville are good examples of egalitarian exegesis. Keener’s work is more restrained than Belleville’s, but neither of them has convincingly made the case for egalitarianism. Role differences between men and women are rooted in the created order. No egalitarian has successfully explained how an argument from the created order can be culturally relative.

Evaluation of Bowman and Blomberg

It is not surprising that I would devote more attention to the egalitarian essays since we disagree profoundly on the interpretation of the biblical text. Therefore, my comments on the essays of Ann Bowman and Craig Blomberg will be briefer. The editors cast his view as neither hierarchicalist or egalitarian, suggesting that he inhabits a middle position. He does hold a position between the egalitarian positions and my own. Still, it is not really accurate to say that he is neither hierarchicalist or egalitarian. Blomberg is still a complementarian, for he believes in role differences between the sexes. His ultimate position does not differ significantly from Ann Bowman who is identified as a complementarian in the book. Blomberg and Bowman are both complementarians, though they would disagree with me on what biblical complementarianism involves.

Ann Bowman’s essay is an excellent description of Christian ministry and reminds us of the many ministry roles that women can fill. Ministry is multifaceted and every Christian is to be involved in ministry. The issue is whether women can serve as pastors/overseers/elders. Bowman’s essay is exceedingly brief in explaining why she draws the line where she does on women in ministry. She rightly celebrates the many ministries roles women can fill, but she does not argue her case exegetically. I must admit that I was surprised that she wrote her essay in the manner she did. There is much to learn from what she says about women in ministry in her chapter, but since the purpose of the book, as I understood it, was to argue exegetically for our respective positions, this essay contributes little to the overall case for complementarianism. Hence, I also wondered why the editors did not ask her to revise her contribution so that it fit the pattern of the other essays. Bowman concludes from 1 Tim. 2:11-15 that women can fill any role but that of the senior pastor. She concedes that the wording of 1 Tim. 2:12 does not clearly point to a senior pastor but maintains that the senior pastor who preaches and has the final responsibility for the affairs of the church suits well the wording of the text. We can delay our evaluation of Bowman’s position until our discussion of Blomberg, for Blomberg supplies the exegetical foundation for Bowman’s view.

Perhaps the editors decided to include Blomberg's essay because it provides exegetical support for Bowman's position. They are hopeful that the senior pastor only position is a modification of complementarianism that will chart a third course between complementarian and egalitarian positions (326). It seems, then, that the editors conceive of Blomberg's essay as the synthesis between the thesis and the antithesis, the middle way that has the potential of bringing harmony to evangelical churches. Before I discuss the matter exegetically, I want to address the issue pragmatically. I believe Beck and Blomberg misread our culture at this point. In Southern Baptist Seminaries the line is drawn specifically on the issue of whether women can be *senior pastors*. Hence, there is freedom to believe that women can inhabit all other ministry positions. I am not saying, of course, that all Southern Baptist professors and pastors *believe* that women can serve in all other ministry positions. The exact ministry roles women should fill is debated. My point is that the line is *officially* drawn at whether women can be senior pastors. Does it follow that Southern Baptists are viewed as charting the middle way in evangelicalism? Do we represent a modified complementarianism that impresses both sides? Hardly. Egalitarians lament the patriarchalism that excludes women from being senior pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention. Further, they are convinced that limiting women from this one office only is a peculiar example of men wanting to hold on to power. If women can teach men publicly and even preach to men in public, as Blomberg argues in his essay, then why are they forbidden to do this on a *regular* basis? Egalitarians think that the issue must be power. Men are not willing to give up the final authority of always preaching and teaching. I am no prophet, but I predict that the alleged middle way of Beck and Blomberg will have no affect at all in our culture, for it will not be perceived as a middle way.

The first thing that strikes one about Blomberg's essay is how much he has read on the topic! The essay is worth reading simply for the footnotes, and I was amazed that Blomberg had consulted so many different books and articles. Most of Blomberg's essay supports the complementarian view. He rejects an egalitarian reading of Genesis 1-3. He sees no examples of women who regularly had authoritative teaching roles. Galatians 3:28 cannot be used to nullify all gender roles. In 1 Cor. 11:2-16 the term "head" conveys the idea of male leadership. He thinks in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 that Paul does not want women to ask questions that disrupt the evaluation of prophecies. He argues that the "law" in this text points to the created order and OT regulations about women. Paul himself did not feel that submission of the wife to the husband contradicted Gal. 3:28 or his programmatic statement in Col. 3:11. The parallel to slavery cannot stand at every point, insists Blomberg, or we would have to abolish marriage and parenthood. Ephesians 5:21 cannot be used to defend mutual submission in marriage. The link between headship and submission in Eph. 5:22-23 shows that Paul sees an authority

structure in marriage and calls upon women to submit themselves to their husbands, though he notes that Paul softens patriarchy in a loving way, and so redefines it in its cultural setting. In terms of 1 Tim. 2:8-15 he rejects the egalitarian view that the prohibition against women teaching and exercising authority can be explained by the cultural situation. Blomberg concludes that only one office is forbidden for women, namely, the office of elder/overseer. He argues that the prohibition is grounded in creation and hence is normative for today. Blomberg does offer a different explanation of 1 Tim. 2:14. He suggests that Paul does not offer a fresh argument for the prohibition in v. 12, and that Paul moves to a new subject, Eve's deception in v. 14. I am not persuaded by Blomberg's exegesis of 1 Tim. 2:14, but what needs to be emphasized here is that at point after point Blomberg basically agrees with complementarian exegesis. Some complementarians will disagree with where he draws the line—only at senior pastor, and there is also one place where Blomberg's exegesis could open the door to an egalitarian reading, which I will address shortly. Nevertheless, I simply want to remark again that it surprises me that Blomberg's view would be touted by the editors as the middle way, for he substantially agrees with complementarian exegesis.

Actually, I can see why Blomberg might see his position as a *via media*, for his position is less restrictive than that of many complementarians. I am surprised that Beck, as a coeditor and an egalitarian, would agree. Blomberg's bottom line is not different from Bowman's, and her view is on the complementarian side of the equation. I feel sure of one thing. Most egalitarians will not see Blomberg's view as a mediating position between the two views. Blomberg is allied too closely with complementarian exegesis for such a vision to become a reality.

And yet it is the case that Blomberg's essay charts a middle way in this particular book. I have two serious reservations about his essay. First, Blomberg (like Bowman) concludes that women cannot be *senior pastors*. In one sense I agree with the conclusion, for one could hardly be a complementarian and disagree. Still, what Blomberg and Bowman say here is problematic. The office of *senior pastor* nowhere exists in the Bible but reflects the practice in many churches today. I would argue that the term "senior pastor" is fundamentally unbiblical, for the NT, does not plot a hierarchy among the elders/overseers/pastors. We have clear evidence that a *plurality* of elders were appointed in every church. Acts 14:23 says that Paul and Barnabas "appointed elders for them *in every church*" (italics mine). James 5:14 also assumes a plurality of elders, for surely the elders visiting the sick are from only *one* local church. The pastoral office in the NT is not to be separated from the office of elder (cf. Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). Hence, the notion that one pastor should be called the *senior pastor* cannot be sustained from the scriptures. I am not denying that there will be a first among equals. Such an arrangement is natural. And yet in every

church there should be a plurality of leadership so that no leader has “the final decision” apart from the other leaders and the church as a whole. Blomberg draws the line at senior pastor because most churches today do not have a plurality of elders. Still, it is not helpful to draw the line at senior pastor since using this terminology, even as a concession to modern practice, confuses the issue.

Another disagreement as to how to work out the biblical teaching on the role of women surfaces at this point. First Timothy 2:12 does prohibit women from serving as elders, for the responsibility to teach and exercise authority belongs especially to the elders (Acts 20:17, 28, 32; 1 Tim. 3:2, 4-5; 5:17; Tit. 1:9; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). It seems to me, however, that 1 Tim. 2:12 cannot be limited to the pastoral office. Here, Paul intentionally specifies that the functions of teaching and exercising authority, and not only serving as elders are denied for women. I would conclude from this that a woman should not teach an adult Sunday School class composed of both men and women. At least she should not teach such a class if the purpose of the class is to teach the scriptures or theology. Where to draw lines on these matters is difficult, but allowing women to teach adult men the scriptures crosses that line in my judgment.

Second, I do have one major exegetical disagreement with Blomberg, one that is actually more important than the difference noted above. Blomberg argues that the gift of prophecy includes the activity of preaching. Hence, he argues that women can preach in church if they do so under male authority (344-345). Now if Blomberg is correct here, Paul’s view seems rather strange. If women can preach to men occasionally, as long as it is under the auspices of male authority, why can’t they preach to men all the time as long as the elders give permission? If women have the gift of preaching and they can preach to men, then what rationale allows women to do such some of the time, but not all of the time. I think egalitarians will press Blomberg to be more consistent and to allow women to preach regularly. What practical difference does it make if women can preach regularly (under male authority) but they are prohibited from the office of elder? Or, if Blomberg were to say they cannot preach regularly but only occasionally, one wonders how this could be justified from 1 Cor. 11:2-16 and from the gift of prophecy in general. We would then be saying that women can sometimes exercise the gift of prophecy but they cannot always exercise that gift. This seems like a strange state of affairs. Furthermore, if Scripture prohibits women from teaching and exercising authority over men (as discussed above from 1 Tim. 2:12-14), then it would be out of line for the male eldership in a church to permit a woman to carry out (e.g., preach to a mixed audience) what God has forbidden.

I have simply raised some practical difficulties with Blomberg’s view in the preceding paragraphs. The fundamental problem with his view is exegetical. He does not provide

convincing evidence that preaching is part and parcel of the gift of prophecy. It is true, of course, that prophets exhort and speak the word of the Lord to people. Still, this should not be equated with preaching. Those who prophesy receive revelations from God and mediate those revelations to God’s people (1 Cor. 14:29-33). This is confirmed in the case of Agabus who receives two revelations in the book of Acts, in which he predicted a famine (Acts 11:27-28) and the arrest of Paul (Acts 21:11). In the early church women who had the gift of prophecy would declare authoritative and inerrant words of the Lord. Such prophecies are not the same as the gift of preaching, which is a combination of the gift of teaching and exhortation (1 Tim. 4:13). Those who prophesy are in a sense passive vehicles who transmit the revealed word of God. Teaching draws upon the apostolic tradition and explains that tradition to those gathered. The whole matter is immensely complicated and needs further explanation, but I would argue that the gift of prophesy (along with the gift of apostleship) has ceased (Eph. 2:20), and hence there are no authoritative and inerrant prophets today. Even if the gift of prophecy still exists, as some argue, the gift is distinct from the gift of teaching, and it is the latter gift that is fundamental to preaching. I conclude that the NT follows the pattern of the OT. In the OT women functioned as prophets but never as priests. So too in the NT women function as prophets but they do not preach or teach God’s word as elders, pastors, or overseers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while this book is helpful in laying out the arguments for the egalitarian and complementarian views, the latter view continues to be more viable exegetically. Bowman’s chapter, as noted earlier, lacks this quality, for all the good it does in discussing areas of women’s ministry. Also, the attempt of the editors to provide a sort of *via media* as a result of this seemingly intransigent dispute does not really succeed. In my judgment, the complementarian view still stands on a much firmer basis exegetically, despite the effort of Keener and Belleville. Much is at stake, and we must pray that God will be merciful to his Church. May we read his word correctly and follow him faithfully. ■