

I. Purpose:

According to Zondervan's Counterpoints, *Two Views on Women in Ministry* offers four essays, with responses, from four contributors (counterpoint authors). The two Egalitarians, *who favor women as being able to occupy any church leadership position regardless of if men were present or not* are Linda Belleville and Craig Keener. The two **Complementarians**(*Traditionalists*), *who oppose women occupying what they perceive as the highest level of leadership positions especially when men are involved* are Craig Blomberg and Tom Schreiner. This paper will summarize the **principal** timeless concerns and **cultural** timebound concerns for each of the two positions, and present some **reflections** on the link between these concerns. The centuries - old debate between egalitarianism and complementarianism comes down to one **basic** question: Is there a prescribed male-headship and female-submission relationship both in marriage and the church?

II. Summary:

Principal Concerns - #1 - Gender Role

First, does the Bible teach a hierarchical structure of male and female relationships? To begin to address this question, let us examine the creative narrative. This question is a major principal concern: *does the Bible describe a hierarchical structure of male and female relationships in both marriage and the church in the creation narrative?* There are two creation narratives, one

found in Genesis 1 and other one found in Genesis 2. In the Old **Testament**, the creation order affirms a time-bound headship of the male over the female. Starting in Genesis 3 the paradigm is a patriarchal hierarchy which runs through the OT with few exceptions where women were in leadership roles. Jewish patriarchy extended beyond the marriage union and shaped the leadership within the Christian church. The **Egalitarians** argued that the creation story and the immediate results of the fall in the Garden of Eden supported or gave rise to “male-headship” and “female-submission” as gender roles. The **Egalitarians further** argued that, “God created two sexually distinct beings (“male and female he created them” [Gen. 1:27]).-This distinction was a deliberate, calculated act on God’s part (“Let us make . . .” [v. 26]). *For what purpose, though?* The propagation of the human race is decidedly one reason (“Be fruitful and increase in number” [v. 28]).” [Belleville, p. 25]. The primary thrust of Genesis 1– 2 is the **sameness** of male and female. Both are formed from the earth and so both are appropriately named ‘Adam’ [Gen 5:2]. Both are created in God’s image (“in the image of God he created them” [1:27]).

Sameness of function. Both male and female are commanded to exercise dominion over the earth—to “rule over” all of it (1:26, 28) and to “subdue” it (v. 28). There is also the sameness of family function. Both male and female are given joint responsibility in the bearing and rearing of children. There is **sameness** in God’s sight. Both male and female are created as spiritual equals. In Genesis 1-2 male and female personally, socially, and spiritually are equals.

[Belleville, p. 26]

On the other hand, the two other **Complementarians** argue that **Genesis 1-2** affirm the male as higher in rank over the female. **Complementarians** typically pointed to four scriptures to support their argument:

(1) First they argue in Genesis **2:18–20** that the wife was created as a “**help**” for the husband. *Traditionalists* argue that to be a helper is to offer “submissive

assistance”. The one who receives help (it is claimed) has a certain authority over the one who gives help. [pg. 27].

(2) Second, the traditionalist indicator of gender hierarchy is the fact that the male names the female, “*She shall be called ‘woman,’*” the male said, “*for she was taken out of man*” (**Gen. 2:23**). It is argued that by naming the female, the male exercises his rightful authority over her and demonstrates his created role as leader of the relationship. [pg. 28].

(3) Third, the traditionalist indicator of gender hierarchy is the use of the name **'ādām** in **Genesis 1:26–27**. They argued that the name **'ādām** implies male-headship. [pg. 29].

(4) Fourth, (and often claimed “definitive”) traditionalist indicator of gender hierarchy is the fact that the male was created before the female [**Genesis 2:7–23**].

Surely, isn't the male's temporal priority God's way of saying the man must take the lead? Schreiner argues that the serpent seduced Eve and not Adam, but God would rebuke Adam first (Schreiner, p. 289-297).

However, a careful reading of Matthew 20:25–26, when James and John came to Jesus asking for positions of power in his future kingdom, Jesus reminded his disciples that Roman leaders “lord it over” (*katakuriuousin*) and “exercise authority over” (*katexousiazousin*) them. But it was not to be so with you (Matt. 20:25–26). Traditionalists claimed Jesus was warning against a misuse or abuse of power, but

neither the Greek terms nor the context suggests this. Jesus was teaching that greatness comes by service in the Kingdom of God not from position [p. 67].

Principal Concerns - #2 - Female Leadership

The second of these questions is do we find women in leadership positions in the Bible? In other words, are women called to function as pastors, elders, or overseers? This question is another major principal concern: a careful examination of the Bible describes many women in leadership roles. Both in the OT and NT, suggesting this is a timeless principle. All four authors support the fact that there were women leaders in the Bible. There is a consensus among the four authors that women served in leadership roles in the OT. For example, in the OT, Miriam was prophetess (Exod 15:20), Deborah was a prophetess, judge and mother of Israel (Judge 4:4-5, 5:7), Huldah was a prophetess (2 Kings 22:14) [Belleville pg. 35-36]. One of the more intriguing OT ministry references is to the women who served at the entrance of the tabernacle(Exodus 38:8; 1 Sam. 2:22) [p. 36]. In the NT, Paul's greetings to the Roman church clearly reflects female roles in ministry; Women were singled out in the early church as apostles (Rom. 16:7), prophetess (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor. 11:5), evangelists(Phil. 4:2-3), patrons (Rom. 16:2), teachers (Acts 18:24-26; Titus 2:3-5), deacons (Rom. 16:1; 1 Tim 3:11), prayer leaders(1 Cor. 11:5), overseers of house churches Acts 12:12; 16:14-15; Col 4:15), prayer warriors (1 Tim 5:5) and those whose were known for their mercy and hospitality (5:10) [p. 36].

Women were also recognized for their *apostolic labors*. **Junia**, for instance, is commended as a woman whom Paul considered "outstanding among the apostles" (Rom. 16:7). **Bellville**, posits that "gifting in leadership" was not gender based [p. 35]. Male leaders may have been more numerous, but virtually every leadership role that names a man also names a woman. In fact, there are more women named as leaders in

the NT than men [p. 54]. **On the other hand, some traditionalists** argue that first-century female prophets were subject to the male leadership of the church. [p. 54] Schreiner stated All believers, including women, are called to ministry but he does not believe women are called to function as pastors, elders, or overseer. [p. 271]

Cultural Concerns - #1

There are three “**problem-passages**” in Paul’s writing that are highly time-bound and specific to that culture at that time:

- **1 Cor. 11:2-16** (“female’s head covering in corporate worship”),

In 1 Corinthians 11:10, Paul states that a female’s head covering is her “authority” (*exousia*) to pray and prophesy in corporate worship. The biblical link between local church leadership and “authority” (*exousia*) does not exist. [pg. 64]. The **Egalitarian’s** argument that Paul’s command to wear head covering in **1 Cor. 11:2-16**, was to address the moral situation in the church. If women’s heads were uncovered it meant that they were sexually-loose. On the other hand, the **Complementarians** argued that heading-covering was a sign of submission to ‘authority’ expressed in the culture [p. 64]. Paul gives three reasons why women should have their heads covered in the church.. In **verse 5**, he says that *a woman who does not have her head covered is like a woman having all her hair cut off*. Next, *a woman should have a head covered because of the order of creation (verse 8)*.

Finally, *a woman should have her head covered because of the presence of angels (verse 10)*. The **Complementarians** argued that a head covering meant that the woman was intrinsically inferior to a man. When Paul says that the *man is the head of the woman* he does not mean that the woman is inferior. Paul asserts the equality of the male and female in verses 11 and 12.

- **1 Cor 14:33-36** ("women should remain silent in the churches"):

In 1 Corinthians 14:33 - 36, Paul states "women should remain silent in the churches" The Egalitarian's argument that Paul's command for women to remain silent in the churches had to do with a situation of disorder that was happening in the Corinthian church. Verse 27 states, "If anyone speaks in a tongue, let it be two or three at the most. This clearly demonstrated the disorderly conduct of Corinthian the church during worship. On the other hand, the Complementarians argued that Paul's command supported male-hardship and female submission. The Apostle Paul imposed a very strict injunction on how that gift of speaking in tongues should operate, but this injunction reveals that there were women prophets in the church.

- **1 Tim 2:8-13** (“I do not permit a woman to teach or assume authority over a man”),

In **1 Tim 2:8-13**, Paul states that, “*I do not permit a woman to teach or assume authority over a man.*” because of false teachers who were targeting gullible women. This supported the **Egalitarian’s** view as being **culturally** time-bound. However, the **Complementarians** argued that Paul’s command supported male-hardship and female - submission because Paul included Adam and Eve, as a timeless principle.

V: Reflections:

The time-bound principal stated in **Joel 2:28** “... *I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, ...*”. The corresponding scripture is found in **Acts 2:17-18**, Luke restates this principle making it timeless. In many churches today, women are prohibited from serving in similar leadership roles as men. Based on this scripture and others, the scripture states that God promises to *pour out His Spirit on all flesh*”. *This timeless truth was evident on the day of Pentecost at the birth of the church.* Similarly, to the Joel and Acts passages, Paul stated in **Galatians 3:28**, “*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” In Christ, there is no male or female; He has made us one. The Gospel has reversed the curse between male and female. I believe that marriage is a partnership at creation and remains so today; it’s more complementarian than egalitarian. Adam was not complete until he was joined to Eve. **Ephesians 5:23** states “*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the*

church, ...” Although this is usually interpreted as the wife being in a subordinate role, I believed that this should be interpreted as a partnership. While I can understand the principles shared by both Egalitarians and Complementarians there are views from both sides that I support.