

POSITIVE COMPLEMENTARIANISM: The Key Biblical Texts**Ben Cooper**

London: The Latimer Trust, 2014 43pp £5.50pb ISBN: 97819063272107

This concise study seeks to transpose the debate about gender and ministry from an overly negative and defensive focus on what women are not permitted to do, to a vision of true human flourishing in conformity to God's design for men and women in creation and redemption as revealed in the Scriptures.

After some careful definitions, Dr Cooper argues that Genesis chapters 1-3 present men and women sharing equally in the divine image and occupying a common rôle in God's plan to bless the world, but expressed in an asymmetric, distinctly male and female way, with the man given responsible authority and the woman providing essential help to him in the task with which he has been entrusted, a pattern which the primordial sin attempted to reverse. He demonstrates that this pattern pertains both in the ensuing narrative in Genesis and in New Testament directions regarding the ordering of households in the community of the redeemed. Through close textual analysis of 1 Timothy 2 in light of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, which develop a model of church oversight or eldership by analogy with leadership of households, he makes a compelling case for the abiding principle that women should not teach or exercise authority over the household of God as a whole, an office reserved to male overseers or elders.

Dr Cooper deftly dispatches the canard that the first human being was initially a sexually-undifferentiated 'dustling', identifying the use of the same word *adam* before and after the creation of Eve; in the latter instances it is clearly male. He expertly reclaims from egalitarians texts such as Galatians 3:28 and passages about women in the Gospels and Acts, exulting in the unity of men and women in Christ and their partnership in ministry, whilst showing that it is a false move to adduce them in support of the exercise of that ministry in an identical way. He helpfully steps back from the question of gender to survey the servant nature of Christian leadership, demonstrating that any approach which equates authority with status proceeds on a wrong footing from the outset. For a book of this title, however, Cooper's case remains rather abstract; without concrete examples, those who have had little experience of this way of ordering the life of the local church may find it hard to see its beauty.

DANIEL NEWMAN
St John's, Weymouth

