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BOOK REVIEW

Philip B. Payne. *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 512 pp. Pbk. ISBN 9780310219880.

Although Payne is a well-qualified New Testament scholar and textual critic, his accessible style indicates that this book is aimed at more than just the specialist. His thesis is that Paul consistently upheld the equality of men and women, both in the church and in marriage. Payne states his own commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture, and begins the book with the story of how his views on the relations of men and women in the church changed as he studied the biblical evidence.

The first chapters discuss Paul's background, especially the views of his teacher Gamaliel, against the background of prevailing Greco-Roman and Jewish ideas about women, and examines how the Genesis creation account and the teaching of Jesus support a primal equality of the sexes. There is also a discussion of Paul's female co-workers, supporting the identification of Phoebe as a deacon and Junia as a female apostle.

The rest of the book consists of exegesis of Paul's writings and is divided into two parts: Earlier Letters (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 7; 1 Cor 11:2–16; 1 Cor 14:34–35) and Later Letters (Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:8–10; 1 Tim 2:8–15; 1 Tim 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9). Most chapters are short, each dealing with a particular exegetical issue, making it is easy to find discussion of any verse or part of a verse. For long passages with many issues, one chapter introduces all the discussion and another summarizes at the end. Payne lays out the issues and evidence carefully and clearly, using the Greek extensively but explaining everything for those who are not familiar with it.

One of the features of exegesis that has sometimes been neglected is the understanding of the earliest commentators, the Early Fathers who spoke Greek as their mother tongue. Payne demonstrates that many of his conclusions were also the views of some of these early commentators.

PAYNE *Man and Woman, One in Christ*

In the treatment of 1 Corinthians 7, Payne shows clearly that Paul gives equal rights to husband and wife in the marriage relationship. In discussing 1 Cor 11:2–16, Payne ably demonstrates that Greek speakers of Paul’s day would have understood the word *kephalē* (translated “head”) as a metaphor to mean “source” not “leader.” Thus male and female were to show respect to their source (man from Christ, woman from man). Payne concludes that Paul was not advocating the veiling of women, but rather wanted the Corinthian women to do their hair up respectably rather than let it flow free. Such uncontrolled hair was typical of the Dionysiac cult, as was long effeminate hair for men. The worship of Dionysius was common in Corinth, and was characterized by great sexual laxity. Thus, in Corinthian church meetings, believers should not occasion any hint of sexual immorality by their hairstyles.

Payne deals with 1 Cor 14:34–35 by arguing that these verses were not written by Paul and were not originally part of the letter. He uses evidence from textual criticism, such as the fact that in Western texts these verses are in a different location, and in Codex Vaticanus there appears to be a mark in the margin indicating that the scribe regarded these verses as an interpolation (later insertion). Payne’s argument here would have been more secure if we actually had some early manuscript that did not have these verses, but he brings to light interesting evidence that has not been presented before.

Payne’s treatment of Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 includes his conclusions on the meaning of “head” above, to show that Paul did not envision a hierarchy of authority in marriage but mutual love and submission.

First Timothy 2 receives extensive treatment (eight chapters). Payne argues that the passage must be interpreted in the context of the whole epistle’s focus on false teaching, and that a number of women at Ephesus had embraced false doctrine and had set themselves up as teachers. A lengthy discussion of the meaning of the word *authentēin*, often translated “to have authority,” concludes that in Paul’s day, the word meant not to have but only to assume authority without being properly authorized. Payne also demonstrates that this verb and “to teach” should be

McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry 12

taken as a unit, so that what Paul is forbidding is that women who have assumed authority over the men should teach them. Thus Paul was not forbidding all teaching by women, only unauthorized teaching. If women were really inherently susceptible to error, Paul would not have commanded them to teach in Titus 2:3. Payne also argues that the “childbirth” that saves women in 2 Tim 2:15 is the birth of Christ.

The final exegetical chapter, on 1 Tim 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9, concludes that the lists of qualifications for elders and deacons do not bar women from these offices. Rather, the qualifications in 1 Timothy 2 and 5 for “widows” and “women” deacons are so similar that these must be general qualifications for both male and female church workers. The book ends with a conclusion summarizing the findings and reaffirming that Paul’s view is consistently egalitarian.

Payne has gone out of his way with this volume to invite comments and discussion from readers. He gives a website (www.bppayne.com) where he can be reached, where comments are posted and discussion continues. The book has 20 pages of bibliography, but much more is available on this website.

Although Payne’s arguments will not convince everyone, this is a book full of evidence that cannot be ignored by anyone thinking about the Bible’s teaching on men and women. As the fruit of 37 years of research, it is a valuable resource. Payne’s commitment to interact with readers is a great benefit to any student of these matters.

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