This fine collection of essays draws upon papers presented at a Wheaton College Theology Conference in April 2005. While they all merit reading and pondering, four struck me as particularly noteworthy: those by I. Howard Marshall, Fredrick J. Tong, Mary Stewart Van Teeuwen, and Timothy Larsen. At the same time, with one or two exceptions, the articles break less new ground than the phrase New Paradigms in the subtitle suggests. One purpose of the conference was apparently to work toward some sort of rational, biblical rapprochement or via media between the two evangelical camps (hierarchists and egalitarians), as several invited contributors (e.g., Henri Blocher, Sarah Sumner) were already known for trying to promote a middle way between the more strident claims of partisans on either extreme. What follows, given the space limitations of a review, is a very brief account of each essay with an occasional judgment or two thrown in.

The opening piece by Rebecca G. S. Idestrom examines the case of Deborah. In Judges, where even heroes are flawed, Deborah’s story takes substantial space, yet she is presented without blemish. Deborah combines multiple roles, among them prophet, judge, lyricist, and “mother in Israel,” doing so in a manner that evokes the towering figure of Moses while also foreshadowing the ministry of Samuel. She apparently served as a judge apart from the imminent threat from Sisera and his army (compared to male judges appointed to deal with specific crises), one of several hints that her role was normative, not just a divinely permitted exception due to the failure of male leadership.

James M. Hamilton makes what case he can for limiting what women may do in Christian ministry based on their gender alone—he would say based upon divinely revealed boundaries. He and I would read the same scriptural passages with the same high view of biblical authority, yet differ fairly dramatically in our interpretations of those same texts. A simple example would be our disagreement over the meaning and implications of authentein in 1 Timothy 2:12. The hermeneutic that one brings to the task, including how one weighs different portions by the same author, can make enormous differences, but I...

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