

*Women in the Church*, Andres Köstenberger and others,

Not 1 Timothy 2 again? Haven't we worked this all over before? Even the evangelical scholars can't agree on either the meaning or application of the text.

*Women in the Church* is a fine collection of integrated essays addressing one of the most important issues regarding the ministry of women facing the Christian church, and deals with a critical passage in the New Testament on the subject — 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Perhaps it is here as nowhere else that the Apostle Paul has received much "bad press".

The the authors of this book have set their work within the context of God's vision for manhood and womanhood. Since he has created human beings male and female for a purpose, it is important to understand this purpose, and this can only be done by searching the Scriptures. To help in this goal the authors specific focus of attention is 1 Timothy 2, a critical passage in which there has been significant differences of opinion among Christians.

All the authors are convinced that 1 Timothy 2 prohibits women from teaching or exercising authority over men in the church, though they recognise that there are differences among them regarding the application of the text. They do not claim to be free from the trappings of their own culture and tradition, but want to be truly open to the Biblical message. Accordingly, they have set out to do their "best to interpret the Scriptures both individually, corporately, as the Spirit of God desires the guide us in our search for authentic gender identities."

This is the most comprehensive volume I have seen on the subject of 1 Timothy 2, it deals with a wide range of hermeneutical and cultural issues. The first essay carefully examines the nature of Ephesus (at the time of Paul), and whether the Ephesian church was threatened by feminism. After exhaustive examination of the place of women in Ephesian society Dr S. Baugh claims that Ephesus was a typical Graeco-Roman society. The "feminist Ephesus" did not exist. And Dr Baugh concludes that Paul's exhortations throughout this passage "are not temporary measures in a unique social setting" (p. 52). The second essay examines the genre of 1 Timothy as a letter. The occasional nature of this New Testament

Epistle does not necessarily mean that particular instructions are irrelevant to other circumstances. Indeed if particular exhortations are grounded in some theological or ethical norm then, it is valid to make further application. This is particularly the case with 1 Timothy where behaviour in the household of God is said to be the purpose for which the letter was sent. The author Dr David Gordon argues that 1 Timothy 2 contains normative arguments based on the creation and fall not simply the context in Ephesus.

One of the fresh contributions that this volume makes to our understanding of this difficult Pauline text is the meaning in this context of the word *authenteo*. This word could mean either "to have authority over" or "to domineer". But Dr Andres Köstenberger has shown that in the structure of this sentence since the word to teach is used positively the parallel must be understood positively. That is meaning to have authority over. Presumably he would need to say this to men as well! Rather he is urging them not to have authority over men in the family context of the congregation.

One of the great values of this book is that it does not simply examine 1 Timothy 2 in isolation but wide ranging hermeneutical questions are treated, for example, How does Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" fit with our problem text? Are we forced to make a choice between one or the other? The author of this article is critical of both K. Stendahl and F. F. Bruce for forcing 1 Timothy 2 into a subordinate position over and against Galatians 3. His own resolution of the dilemma is to suggest that the texts are addressing slightly different issues. The alleged tie between women's subordination and slavery is also examined at length and rejected. An Appendix by Daniel Doriani on the history of interpretation of 1 Timothy 2 is fascinating reading. How this text was treated in the ancient church, middle ages, the Reformation including Luther and Calvin, as well as the Puritans, Wesley and Edwards, along with the 19th Century are all freshly treated. Our generation is inclined to think that this is one of the first occasion when this difficult text was addressed. The issues surrounding it have been tackled many times in Christian history.

Although this volume tackles a wide range of grammatical, linguistical, exegetical, hermeneutical and theological questions in relation to 1 Timothy 2, and presents close knit arguments as well as some lengthy appendices, it is surprisingly readable. It is probably the most comprehensive treatment to date on the subject.

The authors are sensitive to a wide range of opinions but they have tried to fairly represent positions with which they disagree. The volume has worked over a vast and increasing amount of scholarly literature on the subject but the essays are not simply a rehash of old arguments. At significant points they make an original contribution to our knowledge, especially the article on the nature of Ephesus, the meaning of *authentēin* and the structure of the sentence in which it occurs. Fresh research and careful analysis have been based on a wide range of extra Biblical Greek texts that are now available along with high speed computer searches that can be conducted.

The traditional reading of 1 Timothy 2 is supported by powerful arguments over and against the "progressive interpretation". The authors believe that the hard work arising from this passage concerns not the meaning of the text but its application. Perhaps it is in this area that we in Sydney need to do a lot more work.

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