
The Definitive Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:12

A Review of Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds.,
Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15. 2d ed.
Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.

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The role of women in the church is becoming an increasingly explosive issue in American culture, and *Women in the Church* defends a complementarian position that is radically counter-cultural. The book's thesis is that 1 Tim 2:9–15 teaches “that it is not God's will for women to teach or have authority over men in the church” and that the office of elder is “reserved for men” (8). The book's intended audience is scholars more than lay people. The discussion is advanced, complex, and exacting.

Differences from the First Edition

This second edition differs from the first (1995) in at least eight ways:

- (1) It is 48 pages shorter.
- (2) Its subtitle alters the older one (previously *A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*).
- (3) It adds an application essay by Dorothy Kelley Patterson, which is reflected in the new subtitle.
- (4) It omits two essays: T. David Gordon's “A Certain Kind of Letter: The Genre of 1 Timothy” and Harold O. J. Brown's “The New Testament Against Itself: 1 Timothy 2:9–15 and the ‘Breakthrough’ of Galatians 3:28.”
- (5) It omits both appendixes: Daniel Doriani's “History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2” and Henry Scott Baldwin's “ἀθροεντέω in Ancient Greek Literature.”
- (6) It omits sections from the included essays such as Robert W. Yarbrough's summary of *New Testament Abstracts* since 1956 to gauge what scholars have

been writing on 1 Tim 2:9–15.

- (7) It uses endnotes rather than footnotes.
- (8) It updates the included essays in light of scholarly developments by interacting with responses to the first edition and incorporating newer literature such as *Two Views on Women in Ministry*.

Köstenberger and Schreiner explain, “To enhance the work's usefulness, material judged to be less central to the overall argument of the book has been omitted” (7). The material omitted, however, still advances the book's argument in helpful ways, so readers who already own this book's first edition may be wise to keep it. The latter does not replace the former; at several key points in its argument, the second edition references the first edition because the second edition omits significant (though not “central”) material.

Tracing the Argument

This scholarly volume presents six essays on aspects of 1 Tim 2:9–15 in a tightly argued progression:

- (1) Historical context: S. M. Baugh, author of “Paul and Ephesus: The Apostle Among His Contemporaries,” demonstrates in painstaking detail that Ephesus was a normal Greek society, not a unique, feminist one. The egalitarian argument (e.g., Richard and Catherine Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992]) that 1 Tim 2:12 applies only to *Ephesian* women in Paul's day is untenable.

(2) Word study: Henry Scott Baldwin narrows the possible lexical meanings of ἀυθεντέω in 1 Tim 2:12 (a *hapax legomenon*). He approaches word studies with care, recognizing their limitations and avoiding fallacies such as indiscriminately combining a word's verbal, nominal, and adjectival forms. After exhaustively studying ἀυθεντέω in extrabiblical literature, he concludes that four meanings are possible: (1) to control, to dominate; (2) to compel, to influence; (3) to assume authority over; and (4) to flout the authority of.

(3) Syntax: Andreas J. Köstenberger, author of *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), picks up where Baldwin left off. The pattern of 1 Tim 2:12 is "(1) a negated finite verb + (2) infinitive + (3) οὐδέ + infinitive + (4) ἀλλά + infinitive" (55). Using advanced computer technology to explain this syntax, he meticulously examines the only parallel construction in the New Testament (Acts 16:21), fifty-two similar New Testament parallels (οὐδέ or μηδέ links verbals other than infinitives), and forty-eight syntactical parallels in extrabiblical literature. His thesis is that διδάσκειν and ἀυθεντεῖν (two infinitives joined by οὐδέ) both denote either positive or negative activities; since διδάσκειν must be positive, ἀυθεντεῖν is a positive activity and thus must mean "to have or exercise authority" and not "to flout the authority of" or "to domineer." He then interacts with fourteen responses to his essay in the 1995 edition, observing that his syntactical conclusion "has met with virtually unanimous acceptance and has held up very well" (84). (See also my "Interview with Andreas J. Köstenberger on 1 Timothy 2:12," July 30, 2008, available at <http://theologica.blogspot.com/2008/07/interview-with-andreas-j-kostenberger-on.html>.)

(4) Exegesis: Thomas R. Schreiner, author of "Women in Ministry" (in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* [Rev. ed.; ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], 265–322), contributes the book's climactic article, an intensive exegesis of 1 Tim 2:9–15. His thesis is "that the recent interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 in defense of the egalitarian position are exegetically unpersuasive." His subtitle, "A Dialogue with

Scholarship," is accurate: he includes no less than 266 endnotes! He draws two principles from vv. 9–10: Christians must not wear clothing that is (1) "extravagant and ostentatious" nor (2) "seductive and enticing" (95). Verses 11–12 are an inclusio, beginning and ending with ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ ("quietly"); Paul contrasts women learning with teaching and pairs submission with not exercising authority. The created order and Eve's deception are the reasons for v. 12's universal prohibition (vv. 13–14). Christian women are saved through childbearing (v. 15) in the sense that childbearing is a synecdoche for a woman's domestic role and that these good works are a necessary consequence of salvation rather than its basis or means.

(5) Hermeneutics: Robert W. Yarbrough contrasts his historic hermeneutic with the progressive hermeneutic of egalitarians with reference to 1 Tim 2:9–15. He responds to critiques of his 1995 essay (e.g., William J. Webb and Kevin Giles) and explains the relatively recent Western view of women, concluding, "The 'progressive' interpretation of Paul is indebted significantly to the prevailing social climate rather than to the biblical text" (133). He then refutes Krister Stendahl's and F. F. Bruce's egalitarian readings of Gal 3:28 and separates the alleged connection between complementarianism and slavery. Slavery is not in the same category as a woman's role because (1) God did not ordain slavery, (2) God set six-year limits for Israel's slaves, (3) Paul encourages slaves to become free if lawfully possible, and (4) the New Testament does not mandate slavery but instead serves as the foundation that has historically abolished it. Missiologically, the majority of church growth has been occurring in South America, Africa, and Asia, and a progressive hermeneutic that justifies egalitarianism generally brings reproach rather than approval in those cultures.

(6) Application: Dorothy Kelley Patterson provides a unique perspective: on the one hand, she is a woman, wife, mother, and grandmother; on the other hand, she is a professor of theology with a Th.D. She reflects on tensions that she has personally wrestled with, and she shares how submitting to God's revelation in Scripture has satisfyingly resolved them.

Evaluation

This volume has only a few relatively minor limitations. Baldwin's essay might be further strengthened by incorporating insights from John Lee's *A History of New Testament Lexicography* (ed. D. A. Carson; Studies in Biblical Greek 8; New York: Peter Lang, 2003). The book's use of end-notes is irritating and inefficient (especially when the reader must flip back and forth 266 times when reading Schreiner's essay!), and it seems unwarranted for a technical volume. Some items in the bibliography have not been updated to the most recent editions since the 1995 edition.

This book continues to serve the church as the definitive analysis of 1 Tim 2:12. It is a scholarly rebuttal to recent egalitarian arguments about 1 Tim 2:9–15 that run counter to the evidence. Its approach is charitable, evenhanded, calm, fresh, scrupulous, confrontational, courageous, and convincing. Indeed, "we live in a time where being conservative may be the most radical thing of all" (179).