

*Text in a Whirlwind: A Critique of Four Exegetical Devices at 1 Timothy 2.9–15*, by J. M. Holmes. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 196. *Studies in New Testament Greek* 7. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000. Pp. 400. N. p.

This work was originally a doctoral dissertation submitted in March 1995. Interaction with some later works has been incorporated, though it appears that the major argument of the volume essentially predates 1995. It is the author's thesis that "several contextual, linguistic, grammatical and literary components in 1 Tim. 2.9–15 have universally been either ignored or misunderstood" (18). Three main approaches are catalogued, but each is found to be problematic.

First, over against those who believe that Paul prohibits women generally from teaching and taking authority over men in the church, Holmes takes issue with the "circularity" of interpreting the present passage in relation to 1 Cor 11:3–16 (the subject of the author's MA thesis) and 14:34–35; their understanding of 1 Tim 2:13–14; and the denial or minimization of the implications for "total equality" in Gal 3:28.

Second, over against feminist interpretations, Holmes contends that the author's primary concern is with unity, not equality, in Christ in light of existing social, racial, and sexual divisions, so that his goals should not be assumed to be identical with those of modern egalitarianism.

Third, Holmes objects over against those who seek to limit Paul's instruction to particular women or circumstances that 1 Tim 2:11–12 may have "stricter or broader applications" (21).

Holmes isolates four major factors in the interpretation of the present passage: immediate context (1 Tim 1:18–3:15); broader context (1 Tim 1:3–4); parallel teaching (1 Cor 14:34–35); and theological foundation (1 Tim 2:13–14). The book consists of an interpretation of 1 Tim 2:9–15 following these four lines of pursuit.

Holmes's overall conclusion is that 1 Tim 2:12 does not prohibit women in the gathered assembly from teaching and having authority over men. Rather, the author seeks to regulate everyday behavior, instructing women in general "who proclaim godliness to dress appropriately, learn obediently and tranquilly, and not constantly to go on and on (at anyone?) or to play the dictator over a man" (300).

Concerning the immediate context, Holmes concludes that the prohibition of v. 12 concerns "life in general," not merely congregational life.

Concerning the broader context, Holmes finds no evidence that the author of 1 Timothy believes that "significant numbers of Christian women specifically at that place are rejecting traditional female roles," nor does she find evidence that he believes "women are in general unsuited to teaching or characteristically prone to deception" (186). She therefore concludes (contra "Group 2") that 1 Tim 2:11–12 was intended by the author to be normative.

As to parallel teaching, Holmes concludes that 1 Cor 14:34–35 constitutes an opposing (rather than congruous) viewpoint. She regards the passage as "a citation from the Corinthian letter which is rejected at v. 36" (239). If so, this "forcefully contradicts the traditional interpretation of 1 Tim. 2.9–15" (240).

On theological foundations, vv. 13–15 (identified as a "trustworthy saying," cf. 3:1a) are seen to provide a conclusion for vv. 1–12 (with the force of *gar* being minimized) and thus to focus on both genders rather than being limited to the women addressed in vv. 9–12.

Two speculative matters, the relationship between 1 Cor 11 and 14 and the present passage, and the question of why subsequent Christian writers missed the kinds of connections found by Holmes in the text, are briefly taken up as well.

Is Holmes's interpretation valid? Her thesis is certainly original. However, there are several difficulties with her argument. First, the qualifications for church officers in 3:1–12 militate decisively against Holmes's contention that chs. 2–3 do not presuppose a congregational setting but merely contain general regulations of everyday behavior.

Second, Holmes's quotation position on 1 Cor 14:34–35 hardly overturns the overall force of Carson's argument against taking v. 36 as disjunctive. Merely to cast doubt on the latter's interpretation of 1 Cor 6:1 fails to raise Holmes's view to the level of probability.

Third, Holmes's finding that 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:9–15 are at odds unduly presupposes a non-congregational setting for the latter. If this is not the case, however, the two passages may well be complementary, with 1 Cor 14 addressing women's participation in evaluating prophecy and 1 Tim 2 speaking to women's teaching or having authority over men. Rather than being inconsistent, both passages would then deny women's exercise of authority over the entire congregation.

Fourth, Holmes's view that vv. 13–15 constitute a "trustworthy saying" that encompasses both men and women (which is the way she takes "they" in v. 15) is problematic as well. For this interpretation unduly blunts the chiasmic movement from "women" (in the plural) in vv. 9–10 to "a woman" (in the singular) in vv. 11–12 to "Eve" in v. 13 back to "the woman" in v. 14 and then from "she" (v. 15a) back to "they" (v. 15b) at the end of the passage.

Holmes's reading, fifth, also fails adequately to account for the connection between the author's prohibition of women teaching and having authority in v. 12 and vv. 13–14. Undeniably, both assertions, that Adam was created first (v. 13) and that it was not Adam who was deceived but "the woman" (v. 14; note the move from Eve to the generic phrase "the woman") support the author's prohibition of "a woman's" teaching or exercising authority over "a man" in v. 12. Holmes's effort to sever this connection must therefore be judged unsuccessful.

Even apart from the force of *gar* in v. 13, vv. 11–12 and vv. 13–14 are tied together rhetorically by a strong internal coherence. Moreover, Holmes's "non-congregational reading" fails to square with the fact that 1 Tim 2:9–15 is immediately followed by requirements for overseers (including "faithful husband" in 3:2, which presupposes that overseers were to be male). Clearly, here "Group 1" has the virtue of providing the best explanation for the internal coherence of 2:9–15 and its connection with 3:1ff.

For these reasons I reaffirm the congregational setting for 2:9–15; concur that the passage is intended to be normative rather than limited to the presence of false teachers in the original Ephesian context; continue to uphold that 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:9–15 are congruous; and emphatically contend that vv. 13–14 (supplemented by v. 15) serve to support the prohibition of women's teaching or having authority "over a man" in v. 12 rather than merely underscoring a general injunction for men and women to behave properly.

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