Once Again: Women Are to Be Silent and Submit

What leads me to take up the short passage of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 once again? The fact that I (like many others) take these two verses seriously. Yet many questions remain open, text-critical as well as theological ones. On top of that comes the immense history of the influence of these two verses. I am approaching the topic once more for my own sake, so as not to follow some false conclusion; I am gathering thoughts and thinking them through again.

This text is not a paper ready for print but a basis for work and discussion. It gathers material on these verses and consists of many quotations, most of which have been rendered from English. The Logos program, various websites, and the excellent translation program www.deepl.com kept the effort of this work manageable. In October 2026 the text was reviewed and corrected.

A Brief Introduction and the Text

There are still preachers, teachers, and leaders who treat Paul's word about the silence of women as absolute: no participation in proclamation/preaching, teaching, or prayer in the gathering for worship. If you want to, you could indeed understand it that way. Many sisters in circles of the Brethren movement above all, from the conservative to the more open wing, accept this. Sometimes—perhaps even more often than one might suppose—despite inner questions and doubts.

So it would be a far-reaching, categorical, and very formative divine ordinance. If you read or understand it that way and practice it, that shows something about how you read the Bible. In this study I presuppose the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God. But even then the question remains how we must, can, or should not interpret it—especially difficult texts.

In this essay I pursue that question. I bring together a number of exegetes, language experts, and theologians or Bible teachers and their explanations, and I quote them. I take the liberty of commenting on these interpretations. For all interpreters and for myself it is true before God that we can be mistaken and, moreover, that our knowledge is partial. For all the humility and objectivity that are called for, this question is nonetheless clear-cut, and the answer is not open. There is only a yes or a no. Absolute silence, yes or no? Speaking, yes or no? The question is still far too important not to think it through once again. Even if many sisters are content in the silent role and believe, as the brothers do, that in this way they are faithful to the Bible. The worship services of such churches do work, after all. It works without the sisters speaking, and it has worked that way for a long time. But that has no bearing on the question of whether this practice is right. Nor is this about practical consequences and effects, although that would be a highly interesting topic.

Here is the text in question, beginning with verse 31 because of the context:

1 Corinthians 14:31-40, according to the Elberfelder translation (German Bible translation), CSV edition; translated here from the German

31 For you can all prophesy one after another, so that all may learn and all may be comforted. 32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints.

34 The women are to be silent in the assemblies, for it is not permitted to them to speak,

but they are to submit, as the law also says.

35 But if they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home;

for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly.

36 Or did the word of God go out from you? Or has it come to you alone? 37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. 38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. 39 Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But let all things be done decently and in order.

The rule: Women must be silent in the gatherings for worship.

The reasons: (1) It is not permitted to them to speak;

(2) but they are to submit, as the law says.

Arrangement: If they wish to learn, they are to ask their own husbands at home.

Justification: It is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly.

Don’t Check Your Brain at the Door

Many brothers who advocate the absolute command of silence defend the Christian faith as something that is not unreasonable, not hostile to science. In other words, you can believe in a Creator and a creation, or in the resurrection and in miracles, without switching off your mind. I share this view completely.

But this attitude applies just as much to reading and understanding the Bible. I must then study biblical texts just as meticulously and at the same time with openness to the outcome. Especially when far-reaching consequences for practical church life are at stake. Let me say this at the outset: criticizing the content of this word is not permissible, because I regard the New Testament, just like the Old, as the inspired, God-breathed Word of God.

That is why I am approaching this highly controversial text once again, a text that has been hotly debated for many decades. That I myself bring a great deal with me—prior decisions, knowledge and lack of knowledge, as well as formative influences—is something I cannot change. Nevertheless, I simply try, to the best of my knowledge and conscience, with the help of the Holy Spirit and of my (enlightened) mind, to understand these two verses.

I reject any insinuation that I have been influenced or manipulated by feminism. Sadly, that is the mantra-like and clichéd accusation made by all those brothers and sisters who insist emphatically on the command of silence whenever someone arrives at a different or even opposite understanding. Their approach and their advice are: The text is simple, clear, and unambiguous and cannot be misunderstood. You just have to obey it.

Then let’s try that. So when I read through 1 Corinthians, in chapter 11:5, as is well known, comes the statement that a woman prays and prophesies. Here, purely hypothetically, allow me the understanding—after all, I haven’t read chapter 14 yet—that a woman does this everywhere: in the church, among friends, or in the family. Then I read chapter 14, in which Paul stresses several times: all, that is, men and women, can and should take part. He does use the term “brothers” and masculine pronouns, but there is general agreement that for the most part both sexes are meant—similar to, or

entirely in the sense of, a generic masculine. That is not always the case, but it often is. So up to verse 33 the gathering for worship sets no restrictions with regard to gender. Then come verses 34 and 35, which categorically—at least at first glance—exclude the participation of the sisters.

It is not permitted to them to speak! A statement that seems to draw on an existing command or on a tradition. Paul cannot be the first to mention or demand such a thing. There were apostles long before him, and Jesus Christ as well. But nowhere, absolutely nowhere at all, is there even a hint of such a command in the New Testament. Neither a clear command nor a situation from which one could infer it. Here we may place a first question mark.

To speak of an exception when all women are to be silent is not quite accurate: it is half of the people present who are to say nothing. Calling this an exception is rather a soothing euphemism that is entirely unsuitable, or inappropriate. Exceptions do not affect 50 percent of those present, but perhaps 10 percent.

Now the justification begins: women are to submit, as the law also says. So submission is equated with being quiet. Submission is, as we know, a Christian virtue. According to the laws of logic, does this mean that men who say something in the worship service are not submitting—or, on the contrary, that they are exalting themselves? Or, to put it another way: if a sister in a humble attitude of submission, which can certainly be perceived, is perhaps even asked by a brother to say something (praying, reading Scripture, a prophetic word), how can that not be in the spirit of submission? Simple, quiet participation, perhaps just the answer to a question, is not the opposite of submission. Equating silence with submission is therefore not plausible. By now at the latest you will be taken aback a second time and may suspect that a specific problem is at hand here. Women are somehow not behaving with an attitude of submission.

This submission is demanded by the law. Below follow many commentaries which show that not even the best exegetes know which law could be meant. The Old Testament taken as a whole knows no such law of submission. Neither a specific one nor one that would be the general tenor of the Old Testament.

This text is not simple. There is also a context, a historical, concrete, and particular situation into which these verses speak. Add to this the fact that the recipients knew very well what was meant. In this case, we today do not know! We have to reconstruct it; we have to try to develop possible explanations that, beyond the specific text, also fit without fail within the framework of the whole of New Testament teaching.

Now the justification for the silence of women continues: But if they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home. So is it not about a rigorous command of silence for women at all? Is it about a learning problem, or ignorance? If they are to ask at home, were they doing so in the assembly, then? Whoever follows the logic of the text can no longer speak of an absolute command of silence. Did the women—probably not all the women, only some, since not all of them had a husband of their own or were married—question any man at all who had spoken up in the assembly? And thereby create a certain chaos? Or only unrest and unease? Did they ask provocatively, too forcefully and insistently, or critically?

Isn’t the assembly the place where we, to this day, may and should learn, women as well as men? And if questions help—and they usually do—then they may and should be part of the worship service. A preacher may invite the congregation to ask questions; the point is not a beautiful sermon but what

reaches people and is understood. Could it be that in verse 31 Paul's concern is that all should learn? In the first century, the church, or rather the gathering for worship, was the place where learning took place—unlike for us today with our highly organized church life. Where else? And asking questions is part of learning, in an appropriate form, of course. And now Paul is supposed to turn right around and forbid women to ask questions and instruct them to do so only at home, with their husbands? Learning at home instead of in the church? Something doesn't fit here. And what about Martha and Mary? Learning at the feet of Jesus in his presence is so often romanticized as the very ideal—then please let it apply to the church as well. Learning, and in a reserved and teachable way asking a quiet question—what would Jesus say to that? Be silent!?

Now, to close this topic, the following is said: for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly. It would fit the train of thought to interpret the speaking as the unseemly questioning of some women. Such behavior is shameful or dishonorable. But for whom? Does it have a meaning similar to the abominations in the Old Testament? Is it a disgrace to/before God, or is it unseemly in a culture of shame and honor such as we know from the Mediterranean world of antiquity and such as still exists today in some countries of the world or in cultures that span national borders? Is shame, then, to be understood culturally? Because women disregard the honor of their husbands—also before outsiders who are evidently present and would perceive this as shameful?

So much up to this point, as an objection to those convictions that oversimplify this text and read an absolute command of silence/prohibition on speaking out of it and thereby, in my view, check their brains at the door. For a plausible understanding of the meaning of these verses, at least the following remains open:

- Is silence to be understood in an absolute sense?
- Is it the assemblies in Corinth, that is, the house gatherings there, or all of them worldwide, in which this is to be practiced?
- Was this already the usual custom before Paul—or what is he appealing to?
- Is simple silence the same as submission?
- Which authoritative law is meant, to which Paul appeals?
- What is meant by the shame that occurs when a sister takes part?
- In addition: Are these two verses perhaps a quotation that Paul cites precisely in order to refute the demand that women should be silent?
- In addition: There is in fact a suspicion that these verses were inserted later.

How I would understand these verses, or which interpreter I could agree with, I will say more about at the end of this entire article. For now we first set out on a journey through the commentaries of theologians, of interpreters faithful to the Bible, on this text about the silence of women.

Interpretations from the Brethren Movement

What follows are some texts that were accessible to me. There will be more from these authors, but the texts quoted give a good overview.

J. N. Darby

Notes of Readings on the Epistles to the Corinthians

Verse 34 is the tenor of the law, if not actually a specific law. The apostle is unmistakable in this regard in Timothy. “I do not permit a woman to teach,” he says. I think it is a little out of place for a woman even to start a hymn; but I have no objection if she does it modestly. If three women were on a desert island, I do not know why they should not break bread together, if they do it privately. If a man and his wife are alone, I see no objection to their breaking bread, if they feel free and are ready to do so. (J. N. Darby, Collected Writings, Expository)

Comment HJR: Which law it is remains open. As an outstanding expert on the Bible, he would surely at least have suggested one. He does not seem to know it either.

I do not accept a woman going out to evangelize. I have never seen a woman meddle in doctrine and church matters without bringing trouble on herself and everyone else. If she sits down in front of a group to teach them, she has left her place entirely. We read of Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labored in the Lord, and also of the beloved Persis—each in her own place of service. In the Gospels all honor is given to women; but the Lord never sent a woman out to preach; nor did a man ever go to anoint Christ for his burial. The prophesying of the women was not preaching. There was inspired teaching on which they spoke. I believe they did it in an extraordinary way, like the daughters of Philip. Women can be used, just as Mary Magdalene was sent by Christ to his disciples. If Christ sent a woman to deliver a message, the best thing she could do would be to go and deliver it. It was a mere message; it is not a place of teaching; no matter what the message says, it is only a message. Suppose it were written down and a special instruction; then the teaching would lie in the message, not in Mary Magdalene’s place. Scripture says: “I do not permit a woman to teach.” She should not teach at all. She can guide those who have been converted without setting herself up as a teacher. Teaching means imparting certain doctrines to people who are placed under you.

Comment HJR: Darby is very much aware of how Jesus treated women and that Paul regards them as his co-workers of equal standing in the service of the kingdom of God (Romans 16:12). It should be mentioned here that “laboring in the Lord” can also mean proclamation, and in some cases must mean it. But Darby lays this one verse from 1 Timothy 2:12, which forbids teaching, over everything, and he interprets it as universally binding. That there is only this one verse with this instruction, and that it by no means applies universally but to a particular woman in Ephesus who was teaching falsehood and doing so in an inappropriately authoritarian manner—this is not brought up, and to my knowledge this thought does not appear in his writings either. It was simply not questioned whether it could really have so general a meaning.

Darby and his contemporaries were children of their time, just as we are. Was their time better? Their time too was shaped by the spirit of the age, which assigned women a subordinate role in society, and in the church anyway—no right to vote, no public speeches, etc. That is different today, and it influences our thinking just as much. Here it must be noted: from a biblical perspective, every spirit of the age can be partly wrong, seductive, and dangerous—the one of 200 years ago as well as today’s.

Jesus did not send women out to preach—except for the Great Commission, which surely applies to every Christian? Otherwise, in my view, there is hardly any commission from Jesus to preach, if at all—apart from the sending out of the Twelve and the Seventy (Luke 9:2; 10:1-9)—which makes this argument against women preaching somewhat far-fetched.

William Kelly

Exposition of 1 Corinthians

This rule is of great importance. Women are forbidden to speak in the assemblies. Those who love discussion might have supposed that there, if anywhere, it might be permitted to them. The holy atmosphere in which man is as nothing, in which God spiritually manifests his presence and power, might have been a fitting place for holy women who undoubtedly have gifts, even that of prophecy, like the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:9). But no; the apostle was inspired to forbid this in the assemblies—not absolutely, of course, for every gift is to be exercised, but the manner must be subject to the Lord's direction. Divine revelation in the Old Testament gave a clear indication of the general subordination of woman; the New Testament is no less unambiguous as far as the assemblies are concerned. The thought that they might come forward in the preaching of the gospel occurred to no one at that time. That was a violation of feminine propriety that would have shocked even the heathen. It was reserved for the corruption of the best, for the spirit of innovation, and for the ways of modern Christendom. The apostle forbade them even to ask a question on these public occasions. If they wished to learn something, they were to ask their own husbands at home, for it was a shame for a woman to speak in an assembly. …

The whole subject is concluded with the question whether the word of God went out from them or only came to them. The Corinthians were the first to depart from the apostolic order that applied everywhere. It was the beginning of ecclesiastical revolt. The church is to be subject. The word of God commands, and it commands all assemblies alike.

On 1 Timothy 2: But Paul pursues his subject a little further. He writes: *Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I do not permit a woman to teach, nor to rule over the man* (vv. 11-12). He even goes somewhat beyond that. A woman may say: I am not abusing my authority at all; I am only exercising it. But that is exactly what is wrong. She is forbidden to exercise any such authority. This therefore applies across the board. It makes no difference whether the woman is strong and the man weak. It would have been better if they had considered this before they became husband and wife. But even in that case there is no excuse. The woman is not to exercise authority over her husband. This of course applies (need I add it?) to all other relationships.[1]

Comment HJR: I have loved Kelly's writings since I was fifteen. I learned a great deal. However, I have pretty much lost confidence in, or interest in, his interpretations, after his merciless and groundless harshness and arrogance toward people with other opinions and convictions increasingly caught my attention and offended me. You can always criticize other opinions, but to place your own and that of the Brethren movement/dispensationalism/cessationism above every other is pitiful, however extraordinary the learning may have been, as in the case of William Kelly.

There will be more texts by Kelly on these two verses, but he too moves within the mainstream of the Brethren movement in its early days.

Regarding the texts quoted here, it must be said that they already indirectly show the harshness mentioned here. For if back then even the heathen would have found it improper for women to evangelize publicly, then surely that may have changed 1,800 years later. In his time it had indeed not yet changed, but in the twentieth century it definitely had. So how can one elevate the spirit of the age to a standard?

His assumption of a general subordination in the Old Testament is an unfounded cliché. Nor does he give reasons for it, perhaps elsewhere. It is a consequence of the Fall that women were held back in Old Testament times, not a consequence of God's will. None of these brothers perceived this fact, which I do not accuse them of but at most lament: they were—I repeat myself, as with Darby—children of their time. As society was shaped in this "women's question," so their exegesis was shaped. God have mercy. And this although there was so much blessing in this Brethren movement and so much blessing went out from it. I myself have benefited from it greatly.

F. W. Grant

The Numerical Bible – 4 (vv. 34-40): The rule in a (fallen) creation.

4 There was to be an exception to this general freedom. In the assemblies, when the saints actually all came together, the women were to be silent. This is not a question of the woman's ability to exhort or edify others, but of the question of order with which the apostle began and which creation establishes. The sphere of the woman's freedom and, one might say, of her sovereignty lies at home; that is, it is private and not public. One must not think that this does not offer wide scope for the exercise of gifts of every kind. If only the woman would cultivate more what truly belongs to her sphere, how fruitful the exercise of the gifts with which God has endowed her would be, and how many places would be open to her that the man, because he is a man, could not fill in the same way! With regard to children, then, it is immediately clear: with younger children the woman is still the best educator and the one provided by nature. God placed the child in the arms of its mother and not in those of the father; and this does not mean that the woman's sphere lies only in her own family. There are countless families into which she is introduced by virtue of her sex and in which she can feel fully at home and find abundant gain and reward for her work. Through the wives, women in this way have access to an endless field of service for manifold blessing. The wife is the heart of the household, and the ability to reach the wife in this way is an immeasurable privilege and a great responsibility entrusted to her, one that goes far beyond what other women can do. If only this were recognized more! One should not think that with this rule, which is obvious, the apostle wanted to reduce the woman to nothing or to withhold from her the use of the gifts with which God has endowed her. As has been said, if we take the men themselves, how many of them have their proper sphere in any kind of public ministry? In this sense women are no more disqualified than the great number of men. God has assigned each his place, and it needs only the spirit of love to find the wisdom that enables each one to recognize the doors that God will always open to those who seek to serve him among people.

Thus, while the apostle's words are prohibitive in one respect, in another they only open up to us the true sphere in which the woman can be blessed and always has been blessed. But he permits no dispute about it. "Did the word of God," he says, "go out from you, or did it only come to you? If anyone thinks himself a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I write to you are the commands of the Lord." How important this is here, where people, especially in the present day, as can be seen, tend to ignore or resist what he gives us here! Indeed, as we can easily see, the whole chapter is largely pushed aside because it deals with extraordinary gifts that have ceased, and in whose place there steps, all in all, perhaps a single preacher who is assumed to unite everything else in his person, and to whom the church is for the most part restricted. In this way a narrowness is indeed reached that never existed in the Jewish synagogue, as can easily be seen from the events in Acts. People were willing to invite various speakers and give them room, even in the midst of the strict rules and rigidity of rabbinism. At present, things are no doubt working toward greater freedom; unfortunately,

however, they tend at the same time, in equal measure, toward laxity and disregard for the apostle's word here. He is brief and decisive. "If anyone is ignorant," he says, "let him be ignorant." If what I have already said is not enough for his enlightenment, then let him go without such enlightenment. On the other hand, there is certainly need today for an exhortation in his manner here: "So, brothers, be eager to prophesy." Sadly, it is hardly known what such words mean; and yet the responsibility remains as great as ever, and the cause for which we are all responsible, to serve. He closes with the simple words, so simple and so practical: "Let all things be done decently and in order."[2]

Comment HJR: After Kelly and Darby I read F. W. Grant. The Numerical Bible was a constant and helpful companion in my Bible study. A masterpiece, available in Logos. This text is quoted and translated from it.

Since Grant was probably younger than I am now when he wrote this work, I may venture to comment on it. "But test everything" also applies to the so-called "good" Brethren literature, which has given me so much myself. In his interpretation of verses 34 and 35, you can really sense that he himself seems a little surprised by the rigor of these words, that is, by the absolute exclusion from speaking, prophesying, and praying. He calls it an "exception." No, an exception would be if—just to explain the word—let's say the widows had to be silent, or women under twenty. That would be an exception. But excluding the entire female sex is not an exception; it is an inexplicable and incomprehensible instruction within the overall context of 1 Corinthians 14.

That is why he devotes so much text to all the other things women can and should do. But he too falls into the trap of the spirit of his age: women do not work in public, just as in the New York of his day. That the woman's sphere is the home corresponds to the thinking of the spirit of the age, both of the first century, when the writings of the New Testament came into being, and of the spirit of the age up into the twentieth century. But that is not a creation order; it is a social order. It has changed a great deal in the last fifty years. Women are no longer active only in the home. They may be, and as good mothers they should spend a lot of time with their children. But the children grow older, are at home less, and at some point not at all. So linking the silence of women with these ideas of domestic work, as a kind of justification to make the silence somehow plausible—that might still have convinced me ten years ago, but not anymore. It doesn't add up in any way.

He too, like everyone or most, appeals to a creation order. But what is it, this order? Male and female in their specific qualities and strengths, complementing each other as equals, without a hierarchical, one-sided subordination that God never intended but that came only with the Fall. Hence my question: Does the man need the woman's help for his life—just not in the gathering for worship? Why does he not need to be complemented there as well by the women who pray and prophesy? Rather one-sided and patriarchal is the understanding of a creation order that forbids women to open their mouths where Jesus is in the midst. And Jesus never commanded women to be silent—this too must be mentioned in this connection, even though gathering together as an assembly in this way did not yet exist in his lifetime.

F. B. Hole

Verses 34 and 35 deal with the silence of women in the assembly. The instruction is very clear, and the word used for "speak" is the ordinary one and does not mean, say, "chatter," as some have claimed. This rule undoubtedly runs counter to the spirit of the age. But if that is a reason to disregard Scripture, there will soon be not much left in Scripture that is still heeded.

The Spirit of God knew in advance how these instructions would be disregarded and attacked. This tendency was already showing itself in some at Corinth. Verses 36 and 37 suggest as much. The word of God had gone out from the Lord himself and from his apostles, not from the Corinthians. It came to them. They themselves might imagine that they were spiritual people. If they really were spiritual, they would prove it by recognizing that the principles of order laid down by Paul were not his own ideas but commands of the Lord that he was passing on. The touchstone of spiritual insight today is the same.

Let us note well that God's word does not go out from the church. It comes to the church.[3]

Comment HJR: If Paul calls this a command of the Lord, why do we not find it anywhere else? With the Lord himself? Or with the apostles? Well, the simple-minded spirit says one verse is enough for us to obey it. That sounds very pious. I learned among the Brethren, and have practiced from then until today, to compare Scripture with Scripture. But in this case of silence that is not possible. There is no comparable text that confirms this text.

It is a clichéd pessimism to believe that whoever gives women the opportunity to speak will soon, as a result, pass over or deny even more of the word of God. That is simply nonsense.

W. W. Fereday

From the Bible Treasury, vol. 20, p. 378, answer to a reader's question.

As regards women speaking in the assembly, Scripture is clear—it is not to be. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 cannot be misunderstood by those who only want to do the Lord's will. The whole chapter gives the saints the greatest freedom when they gather; the only rule is that everything must be done for edification, which, I need hardly say, requires the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, without whom nothing can be for the profit or the glory of the Lord. Then comes the exception: "Let your women keep silent in the assemblies; for it is not permitted to them to speak," etc.

Essentially the same thing is found in 1 Timothy 2. In verse 8 it says that "the men (for the definite article should stand there) should pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." Then comes the word to the women: "Likewise also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel," etc., followed by "Let the women learn in all quietness and in all submission. But I do not permit a woman to teach, ***nor to usurp the authority of the man,*** but she is to keep quiet." I do not doubt that these words refer to the assembly, like 1 Corinthians 14, for the great aim of the first epistle to Timothy is to show how one ought to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth (for that is how the verse should read; it is not merely a personal instruction to Timothy, as the Authorized Version (King James Bible) would lead one to conclude).

Two reasons are given why women should not lead:

(1) the place God assigned to her at her first creation;

(2) her part in the Fall.

(1) God created Adam first, then Eve, and, as 1 Corinthians 11:3 says, "the head of the woman is the man," never the other way around. Since God has given her the second place, it becomes her never to seek the first.

(2) “Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression.” Satan introduced sin through the weaker vessel (Adam’s fall is not thereby better or more excusable, rather worse: since he was not deceived, he sinned with his eyes open): God therefore excludes her from leadership.

A further reason for her submission or her silence seems to be given in 1 Corinthians 14:36. “Did the word of God go out from you, or has it come to you alone?” Now weigh this word well and see what it implies. The word of God comes to the church (the woman), not out of her, as the Roman church would teach us; the Christian woman is to learn the great principle and act on it; she is to learn from the man and not presume to be the man’s teacher.

It is striking that Holy Scripture nowhere forbids a woman to preach; but that is easily explained. A woman of the East (and we must not forget that the Bible was first placed in the hands of people of the East) had too secluded a place ever to have dreamed of such a thing. But in the assembly of God, where all present are members of the one body and saints of God, she might take a certain degree of liberty; hence the instructions we have considered here.

But that is hardly the point occupying some souls at the moment; I come to that now. Is it permissible for sisters to take part in a prayer meeting or a Bible reading? I readily admit that such meetings are not meetings of the assembly as such, unless at some point they are specially convened from the Lord’s Table; but may sisters take part in them? I am convinced that at a meeting whose doors are open to the general public, their participation is not in order. I know of no passage of Scripture that permits a woman to appear in public. Although such gatherings are not, in the strict sense, meetings of the assembly, I am of the opinion that the principles apply; and in a time like the present, when women in the world and to some extent in the church as well are completely changing in their conduct (even in their dress), those very people who by God’s grace stand up for God’s order in the assembly—in many cases at no small cost to themselves—should remain steadfast in a matter such as this. Surely Christian sisters want to do the Lord’s will and not follow the spirit of the age, although it is easiest to let oneself be infected by it.

The instructions in 1 Corinthians 11 are, in my judgment, of a different character. There women are unquestionably permitted to pray and to prophesy, provided they do so with covered head, “because of the angels.” Now this is clearly not happening in the public assembly, for the same epistle, as we have seen, expressly forbids it (and no reverent reader of Scripture believes that Scripture contradicts itself); so it must be in meetings of a private nature. In the early days, even more than today, believers often met informally in private homes and elsewhere to pray and to edify one another. It is to such gatherings, which are not meetings of the assembly in the proper sense and have no public character, that the exhortations in 1 Corinthians 11 refer, in my judgment. Some, I may remark, have recently resisted this.

I trust that I have written clearly and have conveyed the mind of the Lord as it has been revealed. I believe so, but if there are errors of any kind, I shall be thankful to be corrected by whomever the Lord may choose to do so. W. W. F.

Comment HJR: In this answer to a question on the topic of silence, the whole arsenal of arguments is once again stirred together, as often still happens today.

For one thing, 1 Corinthians 14 is casually mixed together with 1 Timothy 2. The latter passage, too, is said to refer to the assembly. That is probably not the case, for “in every place” means the places

where men encounter one another and quarrel instead of praying. The assembly may be included. But then it says: “Likewise the women”—which means that they too are to pray in every place, only they are to take care not to dress ostentatiously in order to attract attention. Then it is about learning, in this case at home, not in the assembly. And a woman who has not learned should of course not teach either, because without learning she cannot. And she is not to seize authority. The text says nothing about the authority “of the man.” What is meant is an abusive, harmful, coercive way of teaching—and, as is the theme of the whole letter, the spreading of false teaching.

Although leading and teaching or speaking in the assembly have nothing directly to do with one another, he justifies the claim that women should not lead by the fact that Adam, not Eve, was created first. But a chronological order is never a reason not to lead. Gifting is always decisive. If a man leads badly, then surely a woman who can do it well should do so. The man is the head, not the other way around, he says, and therefore the leader. Unfortunately, that is an explanation of “head” that cannot be substantiated in this way. Head means rather origin and source. In Ephesians 5 the head is the provider and savior, not the authority or the leader. That a husband goes ahead of his wife and is her protector and provider is a good thing. But depending on type, character, and gifting, the roles may be different. One-sided submission as a creation order is still a fairy tale that many believe, even when they do not live by it and the women wear the pants and the pious image is only kept up outwardly.

That the woman was deceived is then supposed to be the reason why no woman in the world may lead. That is how the Timothy text is explained. It lacks all logic. The whole letter also speaks of men who are deceived by false teaching. Is the woman more easily deceived and therefore not allowed to lead? Of course there are women who are easily deceived, but they are not marked by being leaders or wanting to be. Did Eve take the lead in Eden? Can that be called that? Is passing on a fruit an act of leadership? And to derive from this supposed act of leadership a prohibition on leading and teaching? For every woman in the world, no less! No, this line of argument would need at least one biblical parallel, which I am still waiting for to this day.

Hamilton Smith

(vv. 34, 35). The freedom for all to prophesy one by one in the assembly does not apply to women. They are to be silent in the assemblies. Whether they are capable of it or not is not in question. The silence of women in public is in keeping with both the creation order and the law. The sphere of the woman’s freedom lies in the home. To speak in public is to cover oneself with shame.

Comment HJR: I learned a great deal from Smith and liked his style. But here he manages, in brief, to bring together everything I have discussed and questioned several times above.

William MacDonald

14:33 “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.” In other words, if a meeting is a hopeless muddle, you can be *sure* that it is not the Spirit of God at work here!

14:34 It is generally known that the verse divisions and even the punctuation of the New Testament were inserted only many centuries after the original manuscripts were written. The last clause of verse 33 makes more sense when it is regarded as a qualification of verse 34 rather than as a general truth about the omnipresent God (some Greek texts and several German Bible editions use this punctuation). That is why our translation reads: “As it is in all the churches of the saints, let your women be silent in the churches, for it is not permitted to them to speak, but they are to submit, as

the law also says." The instructions Paul gives to the Corinthians do not apply to them alone. The same teachings have been given to "all the churches of the saints." The New Testament testifies in numerous places that although women can perform many valuable services, they are not to hold a leading position in the church as a whole in a given place. To them have been given the immensely important tasks in the family and in raising children. But it is not permitted to them to speak publicly in the church. Their position is marked by submission to the man.

We believe that the added expression ("as the law also says") refers to the submission of the woman to the man. This submission is expressly taught in the law, by which here are probably meant essentially the five books of Moses. Genesis 3:16, for example, says: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you!"

It is often claimed that in this verse Paul is forbidding women to chatter among themselves during the worship service and exchange the latest gossip. But such an interpretation is untenable. The word translated here as "speak" (laleo) does not mean "chatter" in Koine Greek. The same word is used of God in verse 21 of the same chapter and in Hebrews 1:1. It means: "to speak with authority." (HJR: ??)

14:35 Women are also not permitted to ask questions publicly in the church. "But if they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home." Some women may have wanted to evade the previous prohibition by asking questions. It is possible to teach others through such simple questions. That is why this verse closes this loophole too.

If one now asks how this is to be applied to an unmarried woman or a widow, the answer is that Scripture does not take up every individual case but only lays down general principles. If a woman has no husband, she can ask her father, her brother, or one of the elders of the church. This could also be translated: "Let them ask their menfolk at home." The basic rule to keep in mind is: "It is shameful for a woman to speak in the church."

14:36 The apostle Paul evidently realized that his teaching here would provoke considerable opposition. How right he was! To meet such counterarguments, he asks ironically in verse 36: "Or did the word of God go out from you? Or has it come to you alone?" In other words: Did the Corinthians want to claim that they understood more about this matter than the apostle? Then he asked them whether they as a church had written "the word of God," or whether they were the only ones who had received it. By their attitude they were setting themselves up as the authority in this matter. But the fact remains that no church wrote the word of God by itself, and no church possesses an exclusive right to it.

14:37 In connection with all the preceding instructions, the apostle stresses here that they do not go back to his own notions or interpretations but are "a command of the Lord." And everyone who is a "prophet" of the Lord or truly "spiritually gifted" will acknowledge this too. This verse is a sufficient answer to those who think that some of Paul's teachings (especially his instructions concerning women) reflect his own prejudices. These instructions are not Paul's private views but the "command of the Lord."[4]

Andreas Steinmeister

Quoted from: "Das Schweigen der Frauen. Eine Studie über 1. Korinther 14,34" (The Silence of Women: A Study of 1 Corinthians 14:34, in German), www.soundwords.de

6. In 1 Corinthians 14:26 “brothers” are addressed, and in verse 34 it says: “The women are to be silent” (1 Corinthians 14:34). If “brothers” here meant “brothers and sisters,” that would contradict verse 34. How could Paul encourage “brothers” and “sisters” to do the things in verse 26 and at the same time say in verse 34 that the women are to be silent in the assemblies, and order in 1 Timothy 2:12 that women are not to teach?

“For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the assembly.” The same word appears here as in 1 Corinthians 11:6, where it says that it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut short or shaved off. For many women the latter has not been a disgrace for decades, because they were taught that this was a cultural custom of that time. Who can be surprised, then, that by now it is no longer a disgrace either for women to speak in the assemblies? For some women it is also no longer an issue not to cover their heads when praying and prophesying in private and when gathering “because of the angels” (not because of some culture or some brothers and sisters). If people finished with all that long ago, then of course they are not surprised when the word “be silent” in 1 Corinthians 14:34 no longer has any meaning and therefore no spiritual power.

Comment HJR: Andreas went home to the Lord far too early and too suddenly. Sadly, I was therefore no longer able to contradict him—with the same vehemence for which he was known.

Peter Streitenberger

Greek Majority Text	German translation	Commentary
14:34 Αἱ γυναῖκες ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτέτραπται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλ᾽ ὑποτάσσεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει.	Your women are to be silent in the assemblies. For it is not permitted to them to speak, but they are to submit, as the law also says.	With λαλέω (“speak”) a different word is used than for “say,” so the question is not whether women may say “good morning” or “amen”; it is speaking in the sense of contributions in the gatherings, or, as Paul makes clear in 1 Timothy, directive speech such as teaching, prayer, exposition, suggesting hymns, prophesying (or, according to verse 35, asking questions), since all of this is already assigned to the brothers. The infinitive ὑποτάσσεσθαι (“they are to submit”) is used as an imperative.
14:35 Εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναιξὶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ λαλεῖν.	But if they want to learn, let them ask their own husbands at home. For it is shameful for women to speak in the assembly.	The phrase of place ἐν οἴκῳ (“in the house, at home”) is placed first for emphasis and forms the contrast to the earlier “in the assembly.” Paul gives as the reason why women are not to speak but to be silent that it is shameful, that is, it is unfitting, since the creation order has appointed the man as head, from whom authority proceeds (cf. 1 Corinthians 11).
14:36 Ἢ ἀφ᾽ ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν; Ἢ εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους κατήντησεν;	Or did the word of God go out from you? Or did it reach you alone?	Paul has ordered the silence of women in all the assemblies, so he now asks the rhetorical questions whether the Corinthians alone passed on or received God’s word, which of course is not the case. God’s word went out to all the others too, so no assembly can hold views different from another.

Link to the whole letter: (1) Der erste Korintherbrief Text und Übersetzung mit Kommentar | Peter Streitenberger - Academia.edu

Comment HJR: In this connection Peter represents the well-known Brethren teaching without questioning it, though there would be many reasons to do so. Unfortunately, a good to very good knowledge of ancient Greek does not by itself make a good interpreter of the Bible.

Anyone who already works with the Greek texts and manuscripts should not keep from their readers that in the Western manuscripts these two verses do not come after verse 33 but at the end of the chapter. That raises the suspicion of a later, non-Pauline insertion.

Arno Hohage (Open Brethren)

Both of the following authors are quoted in places from the book:

Frau sein, Mann sein in der Gemeinde, Brennpunkt Frauenfrage, 2012

c. Why be silent?

First of all, then, the creation order applies: the women are to be silent in the churches (1 Corinthians 14:34). This applies not only to wives but to all women. For it does not say “your women.” The possessive adjective “your,” which appears in some manuscripts, cannot be regarded as original but as an addition that the Textus Receptus followed (cf. Metzger, p. 500). The creation order presupposed here goes beyond the family and points in principle to the differences between man and woman.

Besides this there are two further reasons for the command of silence for the woman. They are stated with emphasis:

1. “It is not permitted to her to speak” (1 Corinthians 14:34). The passive does not name the one who permits, but no higher authority, above all not the Lord, has given her the authority to speak. An explicit permission would be necessary!
2. It is “shameful for a woman to speak in the church.” That is a very sharp word. It denotes dishonor, disgrace, what is reprehensible … The woman’s speaking provokes revulsion. This judgment seems harsh and inappropriate, so people simply ignore it. But may we ignore God’s word?

If one calls chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians a contradiction of chapter 14, one accuses the apostle Paul of inconsistent thinking. It seems absurd to suggest that a learned rabbi flatly contradicted himself within a few pages, quite apart from the fact that we assume we are dealing with God’s word. The authority of the writer, who is commissioned by the Lord (14:37), applies equally to both chapters. So both also make sense without contradiction. In fact, the older commentaries (e.g., Zahn, Hodge) already pointed to the solution, namely that chapter 11 addresses the woman in private and chapter 14 the woman in the church. For reasons of expediency this view has been abandoned today, and people now face a dilemma that has to be resolved exegetically. The result, however, is often inappropriate.

Although Paul does not come to speak of gathering as a church until 1 Corinthians 11:17, people sometimes act as if the first part of the chapter belonged to it as well. If the word “church” already appears in v. 16, it is only to point out that “anyone” who belongs to the church should not be contentious and should therefore conform to the customs of the church.

Comment HJR: From the ranks of the Open Brethren it was not to be expected that sisters would suddenly be allowed to take part. They hold to the absolute command of silence with the same emphasis as the Exclusive Brethren.

Hohage grounds this instruction in the creation order, without making clear what it consists of, apart from the difference between the sexes. But this assumed creation order applies in the whole of creation. Why is there no comparable instruction for other occasions under the sun at which men and women are gathered? A difference between the sexes as such is not yet a reason. One could also argue —and in my view this is biblical too—that the difference between the sexes makes up the richness God wants to give to his church.

For Hohage an explicit permission for women to take part is necessary. In my view it is not necessary. Against the background of the whole NT it is so self-evident that women take part that no explicit permission is needed.

Finally: it is shameful! Picture a sister with a visibly humble attitude, thanking God aloud in simple words for redemption. To call that a disgrace must surely raise the gravest concerns. If there really were a command of silence, and with it a prohibition on praying in the assembly, then failing to observe this command on one occasion would be a misstep—but never a disgrace.

Ulrich Pletsch (Open Brethren)

On the so-called tension between 1 Corinthians 11:5 and 14:34-35

What can be gathered from these statements of Paul?

1. He evidently sees an opposition between speaking and submission; that is, he sees the command of submission violated by the woman's speaking in the church.
2. Evidently a woman is not permitted to ask questions or to speak in the church.
3. Paul here clearly makes several statements on the question of whether a woman should speak or be silent in the church.
4. Paul here leaves no doubt that his statements refer to the worship services of the church.
5. Paul here formulates three commands and one prohibition regarding the woman's being silent or speaking in the church.
6. The formal aspects alone (command, prohibition, choice of words) make clear that Paul is formulating a clear doctrinal statement here. But above all the content of the statements underlines that these are clearly doctrinal statements concerning the question of whether a woman may speak in the church or should be silent.

Observations, conclusions, and further questions Observations 1. Doctrinal statements on the question of whether a woman may speak or should be silent in the church are found only in 1 Corinthians 14, but not in 1 Corinthians 11.

2. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul mentions that women pray or prophesy. Whether they do so in the church or not, he does not mention in 1 Corinthians 11. (That is exactly the cause and core of the tension between the two texts!) 3. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul forbids the woman's speaking and commands her silence in the church. In 1 Corinthians 11 there is no statement that weakens or even invalidates these prohibitions or this command.

Conclusions

1. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul is not at all concerned with the question of whether women pray in the church or not. He is concerned with what women should observe when praying or prophesying. Whether this takes place in the church or not is not his topic here.

2. Doctrinal statements on our question regarding the participation of women in our church meetings are found only in 1 Corinthians 14.

3. As regards our question concerning the participation of women in our church meetings, 1 Corinthians 14 is clearly the clearer passage. Therefore 1 Corinthians 11 is to be explained from 1 Corinthians 14 and not the other way around!

4. The demand that any preference for 1 Corinthians 14 must explain how it relates to 1 Corinthians 11 is justified, but at this point plays no role at all. To weigh the passages with respect to what they say on the question above, one does not have to explain how 1 Corinthians 11 might be understood in the light of 1 Corinthians 14. Here it must first be established that 1 Corinthians 14 clearly makes the clearer and weightier statements on our question. What conclusions follow from this for practice, and what auxiliary constructions may have to be resorted to, is not relevant at this point. It is at this point that it is decided whether one weighs and evaluates the statements of the two passages on the basis of a comparison of the texts or on the basis of a preconception.

Further questions

1. How is the command of silence or the prohibition on speaking in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to be understood in the context of the whole chapter?

It must be stated at the outset that the approach of “conditional silence” results from the attempt to explain 1 Corinthians 14 from 1 Corinthians 11. But since 1 Corinthians 14 makes the clearer and weightier statements on the question, this approach is the product of a preconception, or an auxiliary construction placed above what the text actually says.

2. Does the command of silence or the prohibition on speaking in 1 Corinthians 14 include the praying or prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11?

If 1 Corinthians 14 is the weightier passage—and it clearly is (!)—then the command of silence or prohibition on speaking must include the praying or prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11 when it comes to gathering as a church.

The question here is not whether the command of silence or the prohibition on speaking in 1 Corinthians 14 is to be understood as limited in the light of 1 Corinthians 11! 1 Corinthians 14 is not interpreted in the light of 1 Corinthians 11, but the other way around: 1 Corinthians 11 is to be interpreted in the light of 1 Corinthians 14.

[…] 4. Anyone who claims that the command of silence and the prohibition on speaking are not to be understood as absolute must make clear from the biblical texts, and without resorting to auxiliary constructions,

- that 1 Corinthians 11 addresses the context of the church meeting just as clearly and plainly as 1 Corinthians 14,

- that 1 Corinthians 11, just like 1 Corinthians 14, makes doctrinal statements on the question of whether the woman should be silent or may speak in the church,

- that and how 1 Corinthians 11 relativizes the extraordinarily clear instructions in 1 Corinthians 14,
- that there is a clear connection between 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Corinthians 14:29, that is, that the command of silence and the prohibition on speaking refer to the weighing of prophetic speech,
- that the woman's silence is just as much a "conditional silence" as in verses 28 and 30,
- that the weighing of prophetic speech is to be understood in the sense of public discussion or commentary

and that the whole church present takes part in weighing prophetic speech,

- that the questions of the women who want to learn something likewise relate to the weighing of prophetic speech, and how a mere question for understanding is to be regarded as weighing prophetic speech.

5. The statement in 1 Corinthians 11:5 is neither relativized nor altered in its meaning when it is interpreted in the light of 1 Corinthians 14. That women pray and prophesy is not in question at all. If the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14 now shows that the woman does not pray or prophesy in the church meeting, this in no way contradicts the statement in 1 Corinthians 11. The statement in 1 Corinthians 11 remains unchanged.
6. If, however, 1 Corinthians 14 is interpreted in the light of 1 Corinthians 11, the statements in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 must be relativized in their meaning.

C. Concluding Summary

1. If—in order to exclude the influence of differing preconceptions as far as possible—one starts from a comparison of what the two passages say, one inevitably comes to the result that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is the passage that makes explicit doctrinal statements on the subject of the woman's speaking or being silent in the church.
2. On the basis of the comparison of texts it is clear that 1 Corinthians 11 must be interpreted in the light of 1 Corinthians 14. That means that clarifying the question regarding the ministry of the woman in the church begins with an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14.
3. The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14 yields the clear instruction that the woman is to be silent in the church and not speak. The command of silence and the prohibition on speaking cover every verbal utterance of an individual before the whole church.

Ulrich Pletsch, born 1956, married, one daughter and two grandchildren, is the head of a Christian elementary school and a co-elder in a Brethren church.

Comment HJR: Pletsch's essay is the strongest argument in German for an absolute command of silence that I know. The command of silence is advocated with fire and with many arguments. The tension between the two texts—I would call it a contradiction—is resolved in this way: the later text in the letter is given interpretive authority. Reason: greater clarity. If we had only these two texts, one could follow this argument. But there is a cardinal error: the greater clarity of verses 34 and 35 only comes about if one completely leaves aside the rest of chapter 14—and also all the other texts of the NT that, as I assume, must tacitly presuppose the vocal participation of the sisters.

Church Fathers

Charles J. Ellicott

C. J. Ellicott points to this text:

Verse 34. αἱ γυναῖκες κ.τ.λ.] The women are to be silent in the churches, that is, in the larger and public assemblies of the church, which alone are the subject of this chapter: cf. vv. 4, 5, 12, 16, 19, 23, 26, and see the notes on ch. 11:5. It is probable that the apostle was thinking here especially of the public teaching office: cf. 1 Timothy 2:12, διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω. This rule was carefully maintained in the early church: see Const. Apost. III. 6, and Conc. Carthag. IV. 99. Among the Jews it was a disgrace to the synagogue if a woman read the law in public; see Lightfoot, Hor. in h. l., Schoettg. Hor. p. 658.

Apostolic Constitutions (Book III)

That women should not teach, because it is unseemly; and which women followed our Lord.

VI. We do not permit our women to teach in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34), but only to pray and to listen to those who teach; for our Master and Lord Jesus himself, when he sent us the Twelve to make disciples of the people and the nations, nowhere sent out women to preach, although he did not lack such. For with us were the mother of our Lord and his sisters, also Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Martha and Mary the sisters of Lazarus, Salome, and some others. For if it had been necessary for women to teach, he himself would first have commanded them to teach the people with us. For if the head of the woman is the man (1 Corinthians 11:3), it is not reasonable that the rest of the body should rule over the head.

Strack and Billerbeck

14:34 A: Let the women keep silent in the assemblies.

The ancient synagogue did not forbid women in principle to speak publicly in the gatherings for worship, but it did so in practice. They were to attend the worship services in order to listen and to learn the commandments from the Targum reading.[5]

14:34 B: They are to submit, as the law also says.

Presumably the apostle had Gen 3:16 in view with these words. But one must not press the expression νόμος. Traditional custom was also regarded as Torah; cf., e.g., RH 19a: Words of tradition are like words of the Torah.

14:35 A: If they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home.

There was no unanimity on the question of whether women should be instructed in the Torah. The general conviction was probably that a father was at least under no obligation to have his daughters instructed in Scripture.

14:35 B: It is disgraceful for a woman to speak in an assembly. Cf. the saying of Samuel († 254): The voice in a woman is something shameful (indecent) קול באשה ערוה; see Berakh 24a on Matt 5:28, p. 299.[6]

Interpretations and Explanations from the Protestant World

Katharine C. Bushnell

Katharine C. Bushnell: Wach auf, Eva! (first published 1908, German edition 2020)

Recognize the biblical truth of God's original and unchanged purpose of the full equality of women

Excerpt, section by section

Moreover, he uses the phrase "it is not permitted to them," which clearly means that others before Paul had forbidden this thing, but no trace of such a prohibition can be found anywhere in the Bible except in these very words of Paul. That raises the important question: Where, and by whom, was it not permitted? Genesis 3:16 is the only reference to "the law" given in the footnotes, and that does not fit, for two reasons. (1) If husbands command their wives to speak in public, then they must speak, if Genesis 3:16 means: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." (2) But few of the Corinthian church members, if any at all, would have known this reading of Genesis 3:16, since they used the Septuagint version. Paul quotes this translation almost exclusively in this letter; in his seventeen references to the OT he quotes the Hebrew text clearly only once. The Corinthians would therefore have read the verse like this: "You turn away to your husband, and he will rule over you."

Next, ask yourselves: If this one single statement of Paul is to be set up as a biblical "law" to silence women, what then is to become of the hundred and one other "laws" in the OT that command women to open their mouths, such as "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so," "Praise God in his sanctuary!" (repeated about a hundred times in the Psalms alone), "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth! Be glad and shout for joy!", "Make known among the nations what he has done," "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!", "Tell of all his wonderful acts!"? For it is simply impossible for men to make an effective case that all these exhortations and summons in the OT were meant for them alone. It was not understood or taught that way for thousands of years. This exaggerated zeal of certain religious teachers for such an interpretation of a single sentence of Scripture, which calls into question a hundred or two hundred other biblical statements (without any attempt to reconcile the one sentence with the others), should warn us against adopting their interpretation too hastily. Why, for example, have such advocates of a literal and universal application of a single sentence here not been equally advocates of a literal and universal application of Paul's authority where he says that it is good for unmarried women to remain unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:8, 34-35)? But no! These are usually the very people who insist that marriage and domestic duties are the one and only calling for women. Why do they not say that the sentence "Let all the earth be silent before him!" (Habakkuk 2:20) should close not only the mouths of women but those of the whole congregation?

In the words "It is not permitted," Paul is referring here to a rule outside Scripture, not in it. The question is, where are we to find this rule of silence? The great German lexicographer Schleusner explains in his Greek-Latin lexicon that the expression "as the law also says" refers to the oral tradition of the Jews. Here are his words: "The oral laws of the Jews, or Jewish traditions … In the Old Testament no commandment exists on this matter," and he cites Vitringa to the effect that "it was forbidden by the Jewish traditions for women to speak in the synagogue." But just think about it! It is surely unlikely that the apostle Paul would quote the traditions of the Jews and call them "the law," representing final authority in a disputed matter in the church. He spent a great deal of his energy fighting against those very "traditions," the handed-down teachings of the Jews, just as his Lord Jesus Christ did. Paul urged

them “not to pay attention to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth!” (Titus 1:14). No, the apostle Paul is quoting here what the Judaizers in the Corinthian church were teaching, who said that women “must be silent” because the Jewish law teaches so.

That the Talmud, unlike the Old Testament, silenced women is beyond doubt. “Out of respect for the congregation, a woman should not read in the law herself.” “It is a disgrace for a woman to let her voice be heard among men.” “A woman’s voice is filthy nakedness.” These are a few of its many sayings. As for asking questions: a wealthy Jewish woman once dared to ask the great R. Eliezer, “Why should the sin of the golden calf, though it was only one, be punished with a threefold death?” I imagine the question went beyond his store of knowledge, for he answered: “A woman should not be wise beyond her distaff.” A certain Hyrcanus pointed out to R. Eleazer, aside, that the lady so rebuked could withhold her tithe in retaliation, and it amounted to considerable sums. But R. Eleazer replied: “Let the words of the law rather be burned than handed over to a woman.” This saying was adopted as a kind of legal maxim for future generations among the Jews.

I repeat: I feel compelled to believe that in verses 34 and 35 of 1 Corinthians 14 the apostle was not expressing his own views when he wrote: “Let the women keep silent in the churches, for it is not permitted to them to speak, but they are to submit, as the law also says. But if they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church.” I believe that this is the language of the Judaizers at Corinth, which had been reported to Paul and which Paul quotes in order to answer with the words: “Did the word of God go out from you? Or has it come to you alone?” and with everything that follows at the end of the chapter.

Our case passes all these tests. Let us follow this guide and apply the three points of Prof. Ramsay’s guidelines: (1) “Every time Paul alludes to their knowledge.”—Paul alludes to their knowledge in verse 37; and in verse 38 he declares: “But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized by God either.” (2) “When a statement stands in clear contrast to the immediate context.”—Verses 34 and 35 stand in clear contrast to verse 31 and to verse 39, for it would be impossible to maintain that Paul uses the term “brothers” here only for the male sex. (3) “When a statement stands in clear contrast to Paul’s known views.”—If the apostle commands women “to be silent,” that would stand in direct contrast to what must be concluded from his remarks in chapter 11 about the veiling of women.

Paul’s answer to all this carping by Judaizers, and to their efforts to bolster their arguments by citing the oral tradition of the Jews, is: “Did the word of God go out from you? Or has it come to you alone?” Then in verses 37-40 he expresses his own opinion on this subject, which is the opinion of the Holy Spirit.

Then the apostle declares: “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or otherwise spiritually gifted, let him recognize that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord.” Here he sets “the command of the Lord” in contrast to the “commands of men” that the orally transmitted law of the Jews taught. In other words, Paul asserts that a true prophet or a spiritual person would perceive that his ruling on this matter was in accordance with Scripture, whereas the ruling of the Jewish rabbis was not.

Matthew Henry

Verses 34-35

Here the apostle 1. commands women to be silent in public assemblies, and that so strictly that they may not ask questions in the church for their own instruction, but are to ask their husbands at home.

They are to learn in all quietness and submission; but, says the apostle, I do not permit them to teach, 1 Timothy 2:11-12. There is indeed a hint (ch. 11:5) as if women sometimes prayed and prophesied in their assemblies, which the apostle in that passage does not simply condemn, but rather the manner in which they did it, namely praying or prophesying with the head uncovered, which in that time and in that country erased the distinction between the sexes and put women on a level with men. But here he seems to forbid all public appearances on their part. It is not permitted to them to speak in the church (v. 34), neither in praying nor in prophesying. The context seems clearly to include the latter, and that in the limited sense in which it is understood in this chapter, namely for preaching or the exposition of Scripture by inspiration. And indeed, for a woman to prophesy in this sense would be to teach, which does not fit so well with her state of submission. Whoever teaches others has in that respect a superiority over them that is not permitted to the woman over the man, nor may she therefore teach in a church: I do not permit them to teach. But praying and uttering inspired songs are not teaching. And since in that age of the church there were women who had spiritual gifts of this kind (see Acts 21:9) and could be under this impulse in the assembly, must they suppress it altogether? Or why should they have this gift if it may never be exercised in public? For these reasons some think that these general prohibitions are to be understood only of ordinary cases, but that on extraordinary occasions, when women are under a divine influence and this is known, freedom of speech may be granted them. Ordinarily they were not to teach, nor to debate and ask questions in the church, but to learn there in silence and, if difficulties arose, to ask their own husbands at home. Note: As it is the wife's duty to learn in submission, so it is the husband's duty to maintain his superiority by being able to instruct her; if it is her duty to ask her husband at home, it is his concern and duty at least to strive to be able to answer her questions; if it is a shame for her to speak in the church, where she should be silent, it is a shame for him to be silent when he should speak, and to be unable to give an answer when she asks him at home. 2. We have here the reason for this command: it is God's law and commandment that they are to be obedient (v. 34); they are subordinate to the man, and it is a shame for them to do anything that looks like a presumptuous change of station, which speaking in public seemed to signify, at least in that age and among that people, as public teaching did all the more: so that the apostle concludes it is a shame for women to speak in the church, in the assembly. Shame is the unpleasant reflection of the mind on having done something indecent. And what is more indecent than for a woman to abandon her rank, to renounce the subordination of her sex, or to do something that by common consent looks and appears that way? Note: Our spirit and our conduct should be fitting to our station. We should observe the natural distinctions God has made. Those whom he has placed under others should not put themselves on a level with them, nor claim a superiority. The woman was made subordinate to the man, and she should keep her place and be content with it. For this reason women must be silent in the churches and must not set themselves up as teachers; for that would be a claim to superiority over the man.[7]

Comment HJR: It is strange, and I do not find it in Scripture, that teaching implies superiority. This is another example of all the arguments people resort to in order to explain this text. Teaching is serving with the corresponding gift that God has given someone for the benefit of others, not as an end in itself.

Warren W. Wiersbe

Second, women were not to speak in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). Paul had already permitted women to pray and to prophesy (1 Corinthians 11:5), so this instruction must refer to the

immediate context of evaluating the prophetic messages. It appears that the main responsibility for doctrinal purity in the early church rested on the shoulders of the men, especially the elders (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

The context of this prohibition suggests that some of the women were causing problems in the assembly by asking questions and perhaps even stirring up arguments. Paul reminded the married women to submit to their husbands and to have their questions answered at home. (We assume that the unmarried women could consult the elders or other men in their own families.) Sadly, in too many Christian homes today it is the wife who has to answer the husband's questions, because she is better taught in the word of God.

To which "law" was Paul referring in 1 Corinthians 14:34? Probably to Genesis 3:16. (The word law was a synonym for the Old Testament Scriptures, especially the first five books.) In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul had discussed the relationship of men and women in the church, so there was no need to go into detail.

Frédéric Godet

The apostle regards public speaking as an act of exercising authority over the listening assembly (cf. 1 Timothy 2:12). And since the attitude of authority over the man stands in opposition to the attitude of obedience [...], he concludes that the woman's speaking in public contradicts the position given by the divine will as expressed in the law. … The silence of women in worship is merely one form of expression of the general condition of submission imposed on them in relation to the man. … Paul sees in the woman's public speaking an action against the attitude assigned to her by nature and by the command of the Creator (cf. 11:1-16). … Women should do nothing that impairs the bond of dependence that unites each of them with her own husband.

(German translation: Thomas Jettel.)

Adolf Schlatter

14:34-35: *The women are to be silent in the gatherings of the church. For it is not permitted to them to speak, but they are to subject themselves, as the law also says. But if they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the gathering*. Given the great, confident freedom that marked the gatherings of Christendom at that time, through which all the powers present in the church were put to use for them, the question also arose whether this freedom applied to the woman in the same way as to the man. On this point too, as on many others, the church first had to find its way and recognize for itself what was to become its custom. From what Paul said in chapter 11 about the woman's conduct in prayer, we already know that he opposes making the two sexes equal. The boundary established between them by nature is to remain inviolate in Christendom. This is achieved by not granting the woman the right to speak in the gatherings. In chapter 11 Paul had not yet said this, because there he was not speaking of the rights due to women at the gatherings but of how they conduct themselves before God in prayer or in prophesying. Prophesying was not necessarily tied to the gathering, and the way the woman conducts herself in prayer is entirely a matter of its own, with which the question of whether she too should speak does not coincide. Paul did not say that no woman could receive a prophetic calling. But if, at God's special commission, she has a divine word to speak, she can also do so in other ways than by a public address. But since Paul said in chapter 11 that even in her highest spiritual abilities, when she

prays or prophesies, the woman is to conduct herself as a woman, so that she can never make herself equal to the man and never cast off or forget her connection with him, we also easily understand that he felt it disgraceful for a woman to wish to speak in the gatherings before the men and in their place. In that way too she acts as if she were not a woman but a man. Paul gladly gives every help to her desire for knowledge; but for her to arrive at a clear and deep knowledge of the divine word, it is not the only means that she ask questions or give speeches publicly in the gatherings. Rather, let her discuss what she wants to have explained with her husband. He is the one nearest to her who is to help her in all the concerns of her inner life, including her desire for the knowledge of God.

14:36: *Or did the word of God go out from you, or did it come to you alone?* In the question of women too, it was important that no single church should high-handedly do what seemed right to it, but that each should preserve harmony with the other churches and help form a general custom of Christendom valid everywhere. The Corinthians could refuse with some plausibility to take others into consideration if they were the first church, from which all the others had received the gospel, or if they were the only church. But now, since they are neither the first nor the only church, what the other churches observe as right and fitting applies to them as well.[8]

William Barclay

In all likelihood Paul had above all the lax moral condition of Corinth in mind and the feeling that absolutely nothing must be done that could bring the young church under even the slightest suspicion of immorality. It would certainly be very wrong to tear these words out of their context and make them a general rule for the church.

Paul goes on to speak with a certain sternness. He is quite sure that a person, even if he has spiritual gifts, has no right to rebel against authority. He is aware that the counsel he has given and the rules he has laid down come from Jesus Christ and his Spirit, and if a person refuses to understand them, he must remain in his willful ignorance.

Leon Morris

Morris, L., *1 Corinthians: an introduction and commentary*, VII, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

34-35. If “as in all the churches of the saints” (cf. 4:17) belongs to this verse, Paul is calling on the Corinthians to conform to recognized Christian practice. If women had taken on the role of teachers, Christianity would have been discredited in the eyes of most people. Among the Greeks women were even forbidden to say anything in public. Plutarch says that the virtuous woman “should be modest and guard against saying anything before outsiders” (Advice to Bride and Groom, 31); furthermore, “a woman should speak either to her husband or through her husband” (ibid., 32). Paul calls on them to observe the customs. But he does more. He appeals to the law to remind them that they are to submit (he does not add “to their husbands”; it is a general status he is speaking of, cf. Ephesians 5:21). Most think he has Genesis 3:16 in mind (though he could also be thinking of Gen 1:26ff. and 2:21ff.). The silence of women in the churches is something of a problem. Since Paul has approved of their praying or prophesying (11:5), the rule against their speaking is not absolute (cf. Acts 2:18f.; 21:9). Moffatt holds that Paul “never forbade a devout woman to exercise, even in public worship, the prophetic gift that so many women in the early church possessed.” He understands this prohibition as referring to “women taking part in the discussion or interpretation of what had been said by a prophet or teacher

during the service" (Grudem, pp. 249-251, essentially agrees, as do Thrall and others). Héring finds "a clear distinction between a woman who preaches … and a woman who is merely present at worship as an ordinary member of the congregation." G. Delling sees here "the prevention of self-willed speaking" (TDNT, viii, p. 43). Calvin understood Paul to mean that a woman may indeed speak in public but may not speak in a regular worship service. We must bear in mind that women in the first century were uneducated. The Jews regarded it as a sin to teach a woman, and elsewhere the situation was not much better. The Corinthian women were to be silent in church, if only because they would have had little or nothing meaningful to say. It is not noticed as often as it should be that from the beginning Christianity assumed that women learn just as freely as men (cf. Luke 10:39-42). Paul is concerned here with the manner in which women are to learn. He does not argue for it; he takes it for granted. He simply says that they should put their questions to their husbands at home and not disturb the assembly. That would offend against propriety; it would be shameful (the same word as in 11:6), which Bultmann understands as "what is shameful in the judgment of people" (TDNT, i, p. 190).

36. This seems to suggest that this practice had actually taken place in Corinth. More than once Paul had occasion to complain about the pride of the Corinthians. Evidently they felt free to strike out on new paths, justified only by their own understanding of Christian matters. Faced with such an attitude, Paul asks ironically whether the word of God had its earthly origin with the Corinthians or whether it had come to them alone. They must not think that they alone know what is Christian. They must pay attention to the customs and thinking of "all the churches of the saints" (v. 33).[9]

Ben Witherington III

Conflict *and* Community *in* Corinth: *A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*

During the weighing of the prophecies, some women, probably married women, who were perhaps prophetesses themselves and thus had the right to weigh what was said, asked questions, perhaps inappropriate questions, and the worship service was disrupted. In vv. 34f. Paul urges them not to turn Christian worship into a question-and-answer session. In view of the discussion of pagan prophecy above, it is very likely that these women assumed that Christian prophets or prophetesses functioned much like the oracle at Delphi, which prophesied only in response to questions, including questions about purely personal matters. Paul argues that Christian prophecy is different: prophets and prophetesses speak in response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, without any human being prompting or provoking things. Paul then restricts such questions to another place, namely the home. He may be suggesting that the husband or man to be asked was either a prophet or at least able to answer such questions at a more suitable time.

Keener may be right when he says that this is a pedagogical problem. The questioners were not yet educated enough in the school of Christ to know what is appropriate in Christian worship and what is not. Paul affirms their right to learn but points them to another context. In any case, Paul is correcting the abuse of a privilege and is not taking back a woman's right to speak in the assembly, which he had already granted in ch. 11.

Craig L. Blomberg

The NIV Application Commentary: *From Biblical Text … to Contemporary Life*

As in 11:2-16, the women Paul silences can only be wives. That would explain why they may not publicly question the church's prophecies but must consult "their own husbands" at home (v. 35,

surely a reference to husbands, as in the NIV). Otherwise they might challenge their husbands in church in a way that would contradict their God-ordained submission to them (v. 34). The "law" cannot refer to a particular Old Testament passage instructing women to be silent in public worship, since there is no such passage. Probably it does not refer to Genesis 3:16 either, since nowhere else does Paul cite the consequences of the Fall as the basis for desirable Christian behavior. Rather, he is probably alluding to the order and purpose of creation in Genesis 2, as he did in 11:8-9 with regard to women's deference to their head.

Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner (in: G. K. Beale / D. A. Carson [eds.])

Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament

Kommentar zum neutestamentlichen Gebrauch des Alten Testaments (German rendering of the title)

14:33-35 Paul says that women (or wives) are to be silent during the church gathering; they are not permitted to speak, and they are to submit, "as the law says" (on the textual problems see Niccum 1997; Thiselton 2000: 1148-50). Paul cannot mean that women may not speak at all, since in chapter 11 he discusses their authority to pray and prophesy in worship (for evidence that the kind of silence is likely to depend on the context, see Grudem 1982: 242-44). He probably means either that women are not to take part in judging/evaluating the prophetic messages of others (so Grudem 1982; Carson 1987: 129 [cf. 14:29]; or perhaps especially the messages spoken by their own husbands? (cf. 14:35)), or that they must refrain from disruptive chatter or inappropriate conversation (so Paige 2002), perhaps especially with other men (cf. 14:35: "They are to ask their own husbands [tous idious andras]").

Paul's reference to the teaching of the "law" probably has in view the creation narratives of Genesis with their implications for order and propriety in the relationships between man and woman (cf. Thiselton 2000: 1153-54; Bruce 1980: 136; Carson 1987: 129; Keener 1992: 86-87; see also the commentary on 1 Cor 11:2-16 above). Some think Paul is alluding to Gen 3:16 and the statement there to the woman that her husband will rule over her (cf. 4Q416 2 IV, 1-8). That text, however, is about a rule that results from the curse of the Fall (but see Grudem [1982: 253-54], who thinks the source is Gen 3:16 in connection with Gen 2:18-23). Many understand this text as forbidding women (then and now) to attain "a teaching authority over men recognized by the church" (e.g., Carson 1987: 130). Others believe that Paul means to say that Scripture teaches the importance of maintaining respect and order in the setting of worship (here above all the respect of wives for their husbands), but that this principle could be applied quite differently in cultures where the social expectations of husbands and wives differ markedly from those in Paul's world.[10]

Anthony C. Thiselton

The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text

33b-34 A judgment about translation becomes enormously difficult, because it is inseparably bound up with Paul's assumption that the Corinthian readers would interpret and understand such words as σιγάτωσαν (let them be silent; let them be quiet; let them stop talking; let them not interrupt) and λαλεῖν (to speak, to speak in the way just described, to speak in the manner in which they are doing it) in accordance with the situational context known to both the author and the addressees. Here an "abstracted" rendering based solely on lexical choice of words could actually violate the contextual understanding.

Many argue that vv. 34-35 represent a Corinthian slogan or a piece of Corinthian theology that Paul quotes in order then to reject it. Such a view is not far-fetched, for Paul seems to do exactly this in 6:12; 7:1; 10:23, and perhaps elsewhere as well (e.g., in 8:1-6).

Is Paul quoting a Corinthian view that he rejects?

D. W. Odell-Scott is perhaps most associated with this view, both in an article of 1983 and in a further reply to Jerome Murphy-O'Connor of 1987. Manus, Flanagan and Snyder, and Allison, however, also offer variants of this view (see below). Odell-Scott sees in the key particle ἤ ("or") at the beginning of v. 36 a decisive rhetorical rejoinder to the conservative patriarchal rule expressed by a group in Corinth in the words of vv. 34-35: "Or did the word of God go out from you?" (v. 36). According to Odell-Scott, this can be understood as a strong refutation of vv. 34-35, so that the text emphatically supports women's authority to speak in the public assembly.

(d) With Witherington, we are of the opinion that the speaking addressed denotes the activity of testing or weighing the words of prophets, especially by asking probing questions about the prophet's theology or even lifestyle in public. This would be especially delicate and problematic if wives were cross-examining their husbands about the speech and conduct that supported or undermined the genuineness of the claim to be proclaiming a prophetic message, and it would readily explain why Paul reserves questions of a certain kind for the home. In this case the women would (i) be acting as judges over their husbands in public; (ii) risk turning the worship service into an extended discussion session with perhaps private interests; (iii) be working against the ethic of controlled and restrained speech within which the congregation was to listen quietly to God rather than eagerly address one another; and (iv) disturb the sense of reverence for the order of God's working in creation and in the world over against the confusion that preceded the creative activity of God's Spirit.

Paul Ellis

Die schweigende Königin (The Silent Queen) (Kindle locations 1319-1323).

10. Should women be silent in church?

I picture a church where the women are silent. They do not sing, they do not read from the Bible, and they do not take part in public prayer. They do not greet their friends, nor do they turn to their neighbor and say hello. When the pastor asks, "Can I get an 'amen'?", they do not give him one. Instead they remain mute. I know of no church like that, and yet this seems to be the ideal of the apostle Paul, who said: "Women are to be silent in the churches."

The Greeks liked their women to be silent, and so did the Jewish rabbis and sages.

But what about Paul? Did the apostle not say, "You can all prophesy," and "I wish you would all speak in tongues"? Did he not say to the Corinthians, "When you come together, each of you can bring a song, a word, a tongue, an interpretation"? How can each of you contribute a song and a word if half of you must be silent? How can all prophesy if the women must be silent?

On this question Holy Scripture is crystal clear:

Bible passages indicating that women can speak in church:

Acts 1:14; 2:4, 17-18; 4:31; 21:9; Romans 12:6; 16:1, 3, 6, 12; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11, 27; 14:5, 26-27, 29, 31, 39; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 2:9; 4:10-11

Bible passages suggesting that they cannot: 1 Corinthians 14:34

The New Testament is full of encouragement for women to speak up and take full part in the communal life of the church, and no one beat this drum louder than Paul. So why does he suddenly change his tone and tell the women in Corinth to be silent? He doesn't. Read his words in context, and you will find that he says nothing of the kind.

Clarifying the context

This is one of those passages of Scripture where the context makes everything clear. There were two kinds of women in the Corinthian church: some were Greek, others were Jewish. Thanks to Aristotle and others, Greek women were forbidden by civil law to speak in public assemblies, and it was precisely this law that Paul was referring to. It was the Greek authorities, not he, who said that women had to be silent. But there were also Jewish women in the Corinthian church, so it is possible that Paul was alluding to a Jewish law. He might have been referring to rabbinic teachings later codified in the Talmud: Paul: It is shameful for women to speak in the assembly. The Talmud: It is shameful for a woman to let her voice be heard among men. According to the rabbis, the ideal woman was quiet and inconspicuous. In the synagogue she sat quietly while the men did the talking. Who said that women must be silent? The Jews and the Greeks said so. But Paul never said it.

Paul never said that women should be silent in the churches; the Corinthians did. The passage above is a quotation. It ought to be in quotation marks, because Paul is quoting it. He repeats what they had said—that women should not be permitted to speak, as the Greek and Jewish laws prescribe—before giving his answer: "What? Did the word of God go out from you? Or has it come only to you?" In other words: "Are you crazy? Do you think you are speaking from the Father's heart when you order women to be silent? Do you believe you have heard from God?" The crazy suggestion that half the church should be silent made Paul angry. You can almost hear him shouting his answer. At least you could, if the English Bibles rendered him correctly. Notice how Paul's answer appears in various Bibles:

NIV: Or did the word of God go out from you?

AKJV: What? Did the word of God go out from you?

Paul explodes with a "What?!", yet some Bibles leave out this important word. We need to feel the heat of Paul's indignation. He cannot believe what he is hearing. The Corinthians have collectively lost their minds if they think women should be silent.

Paul's indignation is perfectly expressed in the translation "The Source New Testament" (Ann Nyland): Utter rubbish! Did the word of God originate with you? Utter nonsense! Are you the only ones it has reached?

Thomas Schirrmacher

The verses in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, traditionally understood as a command of silence for women in church gatherings,[11] have also been understood as a quotation or presentation of the Corinthian position, because on the one hand they do not seem to fit the statement shortly before, "*you can all prophesy one by one*" (1 Corinthians 14:31), and elsewhere women are permitted to prophesy and pray (1 Corinthians 11:13; cf. 11:5); and secondly, the following verse could then be understood as a refutation and admonition to the men: "*Or did the word of God perhaps go out from you, or come to you alone?*" (1 Corinthians 14:36) The complete text would then have to be translated as follows:

"*For God is not* [a God] *of disorder but* [a God] *of peace, as* [is the case] *in all the churches of the saints*.

Your women are to be silent in the churches, for it is not permitted to them [by you] *to speak, but they are to submit, as the law also says. But if they want to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church.*

Or did the word of God perhaps go out from you [men, or Corinthians], *or come to you alone?*" (1 Corinthians 14:33-36)

[I have attached 1 Corinthians 14:33b "as in all the churches of the saints" to 1 Corinthians 14:33a. With Daniel C. Arichea and others, I assume that 1 Corinthians 14:33b must in any case belong to the preceding sentence and not to 14:34a, since otherwise the expressions 'in all the churches' and 'in the church' (14:33b; 14:34a) would occur twice in the same sentence.[12] He points out that many Bible translations have seen it this way, including the English King James Version (KJV), which is 'above suspicion' of the influence of the modern spirit of the age.]

Some proponents of the quotation theory may be briefly introduced.[13] For Neal M. Flanagan and Edwina Hunter Snyder, an essential role is played by the fact ***that Paul writes in the masculine form in this verse. If Paul had really been addressing the women in 1 Corinthians 14:36, would he not have had to address them in the feminine form?***[14]

Daniel C. Arichea and Chris Ukachukwu Manus have shown that the 'e' (ἤ) in 1 Corinthians 14:36 introduces a strong contradiction of what precedes (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:22).[15]

Robert W. Allison has also dealt with the question of the appeal to the law in 1 Corinthians 14:34. He comes to the conclusion that the Old Testament law contains no call for women to be silent, but that the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 14:34 corresponds entirely to the rabbinic exegesis of Genesis 3:16,[16] which we have already encountered at the outset from the Talmud and which is also reflected in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, but which contradicts the teaching that Jesus and Paul drew from the Old Testament.

Joyce Harper and John A. Anderson assume that the appeal to the law corresponds to the complete prohibition on women's speaking in the Talmud, and that here it is not Paul appealing to the law, but Jewish teachers wrongly appealing to their interpretation of the law[17]. They quote the Talmud with the words:

"It is a disgrace for a woman to let her voice be heard among men."[18]

S. Aalen sought to support the same view by pointing out that the phrase 'it is not permitted' is a rabbinic formula[19] with which rabbis permitted and forbade things.

Gilbert Bilezikian names, among others, the following arguments for 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 being a quotation of the Corinthians[20]: 1) the abrupt change of subject[21]; 2) the contradiction to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 that would otherwise arise[22]; 3) the context, according to which all are to take part in worship (1 Corinthians 14:31) and all are to strive for gifts (1 Corinthians 14:39)[23]; 4) that Paul never appeals to the law[24] —a statement that certainly cannot stand as it is and cannot be reconciled with the next argument; 5) that there are no Old Testament statements on the silence of women[25]; 6) that the Greek 'e' in 1 Corinthians 14:36 introduces a strong contradiction[26] and that there are many examples of this in 1 Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:1-2; 6:9; 6:16; 6:19; 9:6; 9:8; 10:22; 11:13; 14:36)[27]; 7) the abrupt change from the feminine in 1 Corinthians 14:35 to the masculine

second person in 1 Corinthians 14:36[28] ***and finally 8) the existence of many similar quotations in 1 Corinthians (for him: 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:4; 6:12=10:23; 6:13; 6:18; 7:1; 8:1; 8:4; 8:8)***[29]***.***

C. H. Talbert summarizes the reasons for the quotation theory[30] in 1 Corinthians 14 similarly:

"Two arguments make this understanding probable. First, the term translated 'only' (*monous*) in v. 36 is masculine plural. This requires a paraphrase such as 'you men alone.' If 14:34-35 is Paul's command, the masculine address is out of place. But if 14:34-35 is the argument of a male group in the Corinthian community, the masculine address makes sense. Second, 14:34-35 stands in such strong contradiction to Paul's position in Gal 3:27-28 and 1 Cor 11:2-16 that every attempt to harmonize them must lead to distortions and usually leads to the theory of interpolation in order to get rid of the contradiction. But if one understands 14:34-35 as a Corinthian assertion and 14:36 as Paul's indignant reply, one obtains an intelligible coherence ..."[31]

Because of these difficulties, other authors have simply regarded 1 Corinthians 14:34-36, or parts of it, as non-Pauline, as a later insertion[32]**. Unlike the situation in the case of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, the assumption of an interpolation has an actual historical basis,**[33] even if in my view this is not sufficient to justify the interpolation thesis, which is why, for example, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor in a study rejects all the proposed interpolations in 1 Corinthians (namely in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 4:6; 6:14; 11:3-16; 15:31-32; 15:44-48), but unfortunately does accept one in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

For the interpolation in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is justified by the fact that in some older manuscripts of the New Testament, above all in 'D' (Codex Bezae [what is meant is Codex Claromontanus]) **and in the whole Western manuscript tradition generally, the command of silence vv. 34-35 is inserted after v. 40**[34]**.** Gordon D. Fee points out that nowhere else in the New Testament—with the exception of the much longer texts in John 8 and Mark 16—is such a section simply found in several places, which can only be explained if the text first stood in the margin.[35]

In my view, however, a number of the reasons advanced 'against' 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 need not argue for a non-Pauline character in the sense of a later addition, but can also be explained by a 'non-Pauline' character in the sense that Paul is quoting the Corinthians or presenting their view. It is no accident that Jerome Murphy-O'Connor sets quotation and gloss side by side as two solutions before deciding in favor of the gloss.[36]

Even if 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is taken as an unambiguous command and not as a presentation of the Corinthians' opinion, the "being silent" probably refers, as in the whole chapter, to speaking in tongues and prophecy, or to the weighing of prophecy, but not to speaking in general[37]**. When Paul calls on the prophets to be silent (1 Corinthians 14:30), no one understands this as a general prohibition on speaking either, but as the ending of his prophecy.**

Terran Williams

How God Sees Women: The End of Patriarchy (p. 124). Kindle edition of the English original. The German edition, "Wie Gott Frauen sieht," was published in 2026 as a paperback and Kindle e-book.

An unclear passage of Scripture

While the church must continue to question our interpretations of Holy Scripture and arrive at ever greater clarity and conviction, it is important to acknowledge that this passage still raises more questions than answers. Even the most convincing views are uncertain. Humility is therefore called for.

If, out of fear of disregarding God's word, we opt for the most conservative interpretation (view 1), then the complete silencing of women would also have to mean that they may not sing, since singing is mentioned by Paul as a kind of speaking. To take one's stand on conservatism but then merely forbid women to weigh prophecies or to preach seems to me rather arbitrary and inconsistent. Speaking of consistency: if we follow the conservative approach, we should be truly consistent and instruct all women to have their head coverings ready for the next church gathering! Since respected scholars land on so many different positions in their study of this passage, we can surely all agree that this passage is unclear. Consequently—according to any good method of interpretation—it should not form the basis for a doctrinal conclusion or a universal command in the practice of every church worldwide.

Neither 1 Corinthians 11 nor 1 Corinthians 14 rules out the possibility that women can take on a leadership role in the church and in society, stand alongside their husbands as partners, or preach a sermon to men. And that despite the fact that these same verses have been cited by complementarians in defense of their position.

Cynthia Long Westfall

Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ (p. 239). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle edition.

7.3.4 Women in the first century and their conversational style

Why did Paul hold the women in particular responsible for violating the principle? Why did he not also address the men, who, as we know, also talk while others are speaking? The answer lies in the typical behavior of women in a culture that was in many respects segregated by sex, when they came together not only at home but also in other settings. Remember that Christians met in small, intimate house churches organized around shared meals, in which women, regardless of their spiritual gifting, were busy preparing food, serving it, and cleaning up. That alone creates an environment in which women naturally tend to be loud and to talk with one another to make their work easier and to enjoy themselves while working. But beyond this too, women could be disruptive when they came together in public. Chrysostom addressed the women and went into precisely this problem:

Back then, after such teaching, the women kept silent; but now there is great noise among them, much shouting and chatter, and nowhere so much as in this place [the cathedral]. Here one sees them all talking more than in the marketplace or at the baths. For as if they came here for recreation, they are all busy conversing about unprofitable things. So everything is in confusion, and they do not seem to grasp that they can learn nothing useful unless they are quiet. For when our discourse [sermon] has to contend against the chatter and no one pays attention to what is being said, what good can it do them?

Kenneth Bailey describes similar experiences that he had during the forty years he lived in Egypt, Lebanon, Jerusalem, and Cyprus, both with regard to the behavior of women in public worship and with regard to his personal experiences teaching women in small groups. He describes several factors […].

7.3.5 The function of 1 Corinthians 14:36-40 as the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 12–14 Paul abruptly switches to a more polemical tone with pointed rhetorical questions, which many assume are addressed to women and serve as the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Two things, however, must be noted here: verses 36-40 form a unit, and the unit clearly closes chapter 14 with a summary that

refers to speaking in tongues, prophecy, and doing things decently and in order (vv. 37, 39-40). The preceding theme of spiritual gifts and love forms the context for all the discussions in chapter 14, so this section also serves as the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 12–14.

In chapter 14 Paul has sharply confronted and corrected a number of groups, and in verse 36 he addresses them all with the masculine plural "you" (ὑμῶν, ὑμᾶς). His sharp rhetorical questions in verse 36 are therefore not directed only at the women; rather, he is speaking to all the Corinthians whom he has just corrected. He expects that there may be objections to everything he has said about speaking in tongues, prophecy, and not everyone speaking at the same time.

7.3.6 Summary

Paul's instruction to women not to speak during the worship service (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) is often regarded as a serious challenge for all who advocate women in ministry and leadership. Few scholars, however, hold that the silence for women is to be understood as absolute. The question is this: In what context is the kind of silence to be understood, or what did Paul mean when he said that women were not to speak?

Rather, the context of the worship situation in the house churches, the context within the letter, and the context of women's culture are most important for determining the meaning of the text. The contexts suggest that Paul expects women to take part in prayer and in the legitimate exercise of spiritual gifts. But then he addresses specific problems that lead to disorder and confusion during the worship service. As with his instructions to those speaking in tongues and to the prophets, Paul instructs the women not to talk at the same time as others during the worship service, but to be quiet and self-controlled, which in all traditions of speech ethics is the rule of conduct. Paul instructs the men to teach their wives at home so that they do not depend on getting their questions answered by talking among themselves or by whispering with their husbands during the worship service.

Philip B. Payne

On Twitter, October 17, 2022

Today I want to talk about some additional manuscript evidence that 1 Cor 14:34-35 is a post-Pauline addition, and to explain HOW, in my opinion, it was added to the text. One peculiarity of these verses is that they appear in two different places in the early manuscripts. 1/12

In most manuscripts this section follows verse 33, as it probably does in your Bible as well. In EVERY surviving manuscript of the Western churches, however, the section 34-35 follows verse 40. Except for two non-Western manuscripts, this section stands after 33. 2/12

This is an important reason why Gordon Fee, perhaps the most famous textual scholar of evangelicalism, holds that verses 34-35 are a non-Pauline addition. How could the Western church for 300 years unanimously place verses 34-35 after verse 40, while the rest of the church placed them after verse 33? 3/12

Three possibilities:

1. It originally followed v. 33 but was moved after v. 40.
2. It originally followed v. 40 but was moved after v. 33.

3. Someone wrote it in the margin, and later scribes inserted it into the text where they thought it belonged, either after v. 33 or after v. 40. 4/12

In no manuscript of any of Paul's letters is there a case in which such a long section was moved to such a distant location for no apparent reason. This makes possibilities 1 and 2 unprecedented and consequently highly unlikely. 5/12

Scribes did, however, sometimes insert into the main text words they found in the margin. To reconstruct the original correctly, scholars must sift this evidence and compare very early manuscripts. (That is why early manuscripts are so important!) 6/12

There is only one explanation for why verses 34-35 occur in two different places that fits known scribal practice: at an early stage of the text's transmission, someone (probably influenced by the vocabulary of 1 Tim 2) inserted this text in the margin as an explanatory note. 7/12

Perhaps he wanted to make clear what he took to be Paul's obvious, true meaning—so that readers would not assume from the rest of the letter that women may speak in church. 8/12

Later scribes who copied this manuscript assumed that these sentences had originally been omitted by mistake and that the manuscript had been corrected by writing the sentences in the margin: the only place where they could be inserted once the page was finished. 9/12

One scribe, noticing the commands to be silent in vv. 28 and 30, inserted the gloss at the first place where the new command of silence fit (after v. 33). This manuscript was copied by non-Western scribes. 10/12

Another scribe thought it fit better after v. 40, at a logical break in the text. This manuscript was copied by Western scribes. These are the only two sensible insertion points in this section. 11/12

Important note: since this is a unique case, found in no other manuscript of Paul's letters, it does not undermine the authenticity of the other texts. 12/12

The train of thought and the structure of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 14 give us indications (together with the manuscript evidence and other internal evidence) that 1 Cor 14:34-35 does not come from Paul. The same applies to two atypical phrases in v. 34: "as the law also says" and "in the churches." 1/13

As you read the text, you may notice that verses 34-35 seem to come out of nowhere and that the text intuitively flows better without these verses. But the structural problems that verses 34-35 bring with them go even deeper than that. 2/13

1 Cor 14:1-25 is a continuous argument that prophecy is more edifying than speaking in tongues, unless the tongues are interpreted. 26-40 is a coherent structural unit that builds on 1-25 by listing a series of instructions on tongues/prophecy for the sake of edification. 3/13

The unifying principle of these instructions is the need for order, not confusion, in gatherings for worship. The literary structure of 26-40 is chiastic. A chiasm is a symmetrical literary form. 4/13

In a chiastic structure, the first statement parallels the last, the second statement parallels the second-to-last, and so on. Importantly, the climax lies in the middle of such a passage. 5/13

In 1 Cor 14:26-40 the climax reads: "God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." The theme of this climax is closely tied to the beginning and the end of the literary structure. The symmetry of the text is interrupted by 34-35. 6/13

The introduction of unrestricted silence for women in 34-35 is irrelevant to the literary structure, since it introduces a new element after the climax instead of recapitulating the previous theme of prophecy, as verses 37-39a do. 7/13

34-35 are not a climax and mention no themes connected with the introduction or conclusion of the section, nor do they have any corresponding text in the chiastic structure of the section. They are not only out of place in Paul's logical train of thought but also break up the otherwise consistent structure. 8/13

In addition, the grammar of 34 sounds un-Pauline on two essential points:

- "They are not permitted to speak, but must submit, as the law says" does not sound like Paul at all. The only times Paul uses "as the law says," he quotes the law in question. 9/13
- But not only does Paul not explicitly quote the Old Testament here; there is also no Old Testament law that commands the silence or submission of women. This passage could refer to the oral Jewish law that prescribes silence/submission for women, or to the Greek laws that required women to be silent in public assemblies. 10/13

But Paul never refers to the oral Jewish law or to Greco-Roman law as "the law," and he certainly does not make such regulations into rules for Christian worship. He does not even appeal to Old Testament law to establish rules for Christian worship. 11/13

2) Finally, in no other command in 1 or 2 Corinthians is a category of people addressed "in the churches." This phrase fits better with a later time, when the letter was distributed to all the churches and not only to its original audience. 12/13

Tomorrow I will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a common egalitarian reading of 1 Cor 14:34-35—namely, that Paul is quoting someone else in order to refute them in 36-38. 13/13

Is Paul quoting someone else in 1 Cor 14:34-35 so that he can refute them in 14:36-38? This is a common egalitarian reading held by many people I respect. This interpretation has a number of strengths, but I think the evidence speaks against it. 1/7

Strengths:

- resolves the contradiction between 14:34-35 and the rest of 1 Corinthians (especially chapter 11 and the rest of 14)
- explains why the reference to "the law" comes across as unmistakably non-Pauline
- the text of 14:36-38 lends itself well to refuting a false prophecy. 2/7

Weaknesses:

- other Corinthian quotations that Paul refutes are nowhere near as long
- nothing in 36-38 requires him to be refuting 34-35
- does not explain why every Western manuscript of the text places 34-35 after 40
- still interrupts the flow/structure of Paul's argument 3/7

One version of this interpretation holds that Paul himself (or rather his assistant) wrote 34-35 in the margin next to 36-38 to show that his words refute the saying that women should be silent. Later the

copyists thought this belonged in the main text. 4/7

This adequately answers some objections, above all with regard to the flow or structure and the fact that the verses appear in two places in the manuscripts. I think the evidence indicates that 34-35 is an interpolation written in the margin by an early scribe. 5/7

But of all the interpretations that regard 34-35 as part of Paul's original letter to the Corinthians, the most credible is that Paul wrote a false prophecy of the Corinthians in the margin to show that 36-38 refutes it. 6/7

In any case, these readings are far more credible than the idea that Paul radically contradicts himself within a very short space in the same letter, or that we can perform enough interpretive gymnastics to make sense of 1 Cor 11 while at the same time believing that 14:34-35 is a command of Paul. 7/7

Gordon D. Fee

c. On the silence of women (14:34-35)

In this commentary the treatment of these verses is deliberately placed after v. 40, for reasons I will explain here. Most manuscripts (including P46 A B K Ψ 0243 33 81 1739 Maj) include these verses here; they are found after v. 40 in D F G 88* a b d f g Ambrosiaster Sedulius-Scotus, that is, in the whole Western tradition (i.e., west of Greece). If these sentences really come from Paul in this letter, then we are dealing with the only displacement of this magnitude in the roughly twelve-hundred-year copying tradition of the entire NT; there is simply nothing even remotely comparable anywhere else in this history of transmission, either in the Greek or in other versions. Indeed, the only other "displacement" of this kind in the entire NT is the reversal of the first two Beatitudes in Matthew 5:4-5 in some early manuscripts. This fact in itself should cause any NT scholar to entertain serious doubts about the authenticity of the text, all the more so when one adds the strikingly un-Pauline language that occurs in this section. In addition to the discussion below, see especially the thorough and balanced presentation of this matter in P. B. Payne, Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters (Grand Rapids, 2009), 217-67, which, as E. J. Epp has noted, is "meticulously formulated, convincingly argued, and of lasting significance." Those who hold a different view must now respond in like manner and abandon their often defensive and dismissive attitude.

Thus the exegesis of the text itself, in keeping with the textual questions, leads to the conclusion that it is not authentic, especially since so much of it stands in contradiction to what Paul has argued for in the larger context! If so, then it is certainly not binding on later Christians. If not, the considerable doubts about its authenticity should serve as a warning against using it as a perpetual prohibition in a culture in which such speaking by women in the assembly would be no disgrace, all the more so in the light of the matter-of-fact earlier statement about "every woman who prays or prophesies" (11:5)—which can only mean "aloud" and in the context of the gathered people of God.

What seems hermeneutically questionable, and yet is the unspoken subtext of so much literature, is the implicit denial, on overriding hermeneutical grounds, that the whole surrounding section on prophecy and speaking in tongues applies to the contemporary (usually Western) church, while this single and probably inauthentic passage is singled out as a word for all times and in all situations. Spontaneous praying or prophesying aloud is in fact completely forbidden in most churches in "polite" Western culture. All of us, fallen people that we are, are easily inclined to do such things. [38]

Philip J. Abbott

Master's thesis (Master of Arts) by Philip J. Abbott, Pepperdine University, May 2015

In full here: Bringing Order to 1 Cor 14:34-35 | Philip Abbott - Academia.edu

BRINGING ORDER TO 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35

CONCLUSION

Although many claim that 1 Cor 14:34-35 is a non-Pauline interpolation into the text of Paul's letters to the Corinthians, this theory is unlikely; the verses do not show a chauvinistic attitude foreign to Paul, as some scholars claim. On the contrary, in these verses Paul calls on the women in Corinth to submit to the principle of order that underlies the Torah. This argument is supported by Paul's instruction that wives are not to accuse their husbands before the church; such behavior undermines the orderly atmosphere that should prevail in worship.

The passage, however, has been misunderstood for centuries because it presupposes knowledge of the specific situation Paul was addressing. In these verses Paul was not giving instructions for worldwide, timeless church practice but was trying to solve a particular problem that was disrupting the orderly worship of a small group of Christians in Corinth. It is regrettable, however, that many do not understand what Ben Witherington has observed: "What an individual says to correct an error cannot be regarded as a complete or final statement of his view on a particular subject."

Despite what some regard as clear misogyny in these verses, it is significant that the Apostolic Fathers (even chauvinists such as Clement of Rome) did not cite the passage to silence women (or cite it at all). This fact has led some to conclude wrongly that the passage was a later textual insertion; they argue that the absence of references to the verses by early Christians is proof that the verses were inserted later. Clement of Alexandria, however, knew the passage and understood it as an instruction on order in worship for both sexes. The Apostolic Fathers probably thought similarly. Moreover, it is extremely unlikely that an insertion that entered the text only after the time of the Apostolic Fathers would appear in every surviving manuscript of 1 Corinthians.

The first known appeal to 1 Cor 14:34-35 to silence women in the church comes from the Latin Church Father Tertullian (AD 160-220). It is significant that he and later Western Church Fathers who cite this passage to silence women use the Western text type, in which the passage has been moved. This is hardly a coincidence.

The displacement of the text probably took place in the second century, when manuscripts were being freely manipulated and the church was trying to establish itself in the Roman world. Western Christians sought to bring the Christian ekklesia into line with the Greco-Roman ekklesia; they wanted the church to imitate the state in its practices and its social life. In addition, Christians were influenced by the critical approach to texts of Roman philosophers such as Galen. This led many to interpret and alter texts to support their ecclesiastical agenda; they tried to change writings to fit their own ideas instead of conforming to the teachings of the texts.

The displacement of 1 Cor 14:34-35 probably took place in the second half of the second century AD, when Western Christians were trying to persuade Bishop Eleutherus of Rome (who was an Eastern Christian) to condemn Montanism.

At first Eleutherus tolerated the Montanist movement and issued an epistle giving the sect his blessing. Because of the Montanists' unorthodox claims to authority and their improper behavior, however, the bishop was eventually persuaded by Christians from the West to revoke his blessing and condemn the sect. It is likely that in the midst of this controversy over the Montanist movement, the scribes of the Western text altered the Western text in order to gain apostolic support for condemning female prophesying, which played a large role in Montanism because of its well-known prophetesses. To achieve their goal, the Western copyists probably moved 1 Cor 14:34-35 a few verses further on in the text in order to remove it from the context of orderly worship. This subtle displacement of the verses made it more likely that readers would take the passage as a universal decree that women must be silent in church.

A clarification is needed here: it is not that the passage has to be moved in order to be understood in a misogynistic way. But the displacement takes the text out of the context of orderly worship and underlines the seemingly misogynistic tone of the text. The potentially anti-feminine message of the displaced passage may have helped Western Christians in their fight against Montanism.

The Montanist controversy and the "largely corrupt basis" of textual transmission in second-century Rome form the background of the Western text. This very fluid form of the text is known for its paraphrases, numerous departures from the original readings, and its textual reshapings. Particularly striking in the Western text are the misogynistic changes, which reveal a clearly misogynistic agenda. It is evident that the authors of the Western text wanted to manipulate the New Testament to promote their chauvinistic vision of the church. Unfortunately they were largely successful, even with people such as Origen, who rejected many of their readings but let himself be persuaded by their misogynistic rhetoric.

In summary, the Montanist controversy and the development of the Western text with its misogynistic readings both took place in the second century; these simultaneous factors must have influenced each other. It seems very likely that the misogynistic readings of the Western texts were a reaction to a movement (Montanism) that threatened the Christian ideology of the West. In defending their position, these Western Christians found it very advantageous, especially in view of the Montanists' deviant claims to authority, to make sure that the authoritative apostolic texts supported their philosophies. Unfortunately, both the unprovocative Pauline appeal for order in 1 Cor 14:34-35 and Christian women fell victim to their editorial machinations; once the passage had been moved, it became an obstacle and a command of silence for Christian women and their spiritual gifts.

An attempt to bring order

An astonishing amount of literature has been written about 1 Cor 14:34-35. Above all, because this passage deals with gender-specific questions, many have a great interest in its message and in the textual situation surrounding it. For many who try to understand the potentially misogynistic character of the command in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, the question of the role of women in Christianity today is at stake.

Despite the extent and variety of the literature dealing with 1 Cor 14:34-35, it is astonishing how little attention has been paid to the manuscripts that contain this displacement. Interpreters rarely examine the nature or origin of the texts in which 1 Cor 14:34-35 is displaced. Instead, many simply mention that the section is displaced in some manuscripts and claim that 14:34-35 is probably an interpolation.

The title of this thesis is “Bringing Order to 1 Cor 14:34-35.” Its aim is to bring to light the social setting that led to the writing of 1 Cor 14:34-35, its literary context, its relocation in the Western texts, and its later use as a command of silence for women. The present disordered state of research on 1 Cor 14:34-35 is largely due to the neglect of these factors.

While the present study has tried to uncover the message and the history of 1 Cor 14:34-35, it has also raised some new topics and questions that could lead to new approaches in research. First: What church practices other than the suppression of women were also influenced by manipulated texts? The relocation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 is certainly not the only editorial intervention meant to justify a particular church practice. Textual criticism usually serves to shed light on the original texts of the New Testament. But what can it tell us about the social goals that have shaped modern Christianity? Second: This study joins the already widespread movement that seeks to discover the silenced voices of women in ancient Christianity. Who were these early believers, and what did they have to say? Third, this study is meant to encourage readers to examine his or her own hermeneutical practice. In what ways do we too, like the Western Fathers in their fight against Montanism, distort Scripture? While physical manipulation of sacred texts is unlikely in our modern world, almost every Christian is guilty to some degree of tearing Scripture out of context and using it to legitimize his or her personal goals. Ultimately, as readers of the New Testament, we must evaluate our own interpretations by taking off the blinders of personal agenda and letting Scripture speak for itself.

Don Carson

The whole text can be downloaded at this link; only excerpts are quoted:

6. “Silent in the Churches”: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 | Bible.org

The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 is by no means simple. The heart of the difficulty is that in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Paul is quite prepared to let women pray and prophesy, albeit with certain restrictions; but here a first reading of the text seems to make the silence he orders absolute. The solutions put forward are, like the devils in certain cases of demon possession, legion. I can do no more than list some of them and mention one or two of my reservations before turning to the interpretation I find contextually and exegetically most secure.

HJR: In the text that follows, Carson goes into text-critical and other questions, which I do not reproduce here because of their length. I quote only his explanation at the end.

IV. An interpretation (Carson’s) determined by the context

Another interpretation has been set out by various authors and meets the objections raised against it. It has been defended at length elsewhere; I can only sketch it here. Paul has just called on the church in Corinth to weigh carefully the prophecies presented to it. Women may of course take part in such prophesying; that was established in chapter 11. What Paul wants to say here, however, is that they may not take part in the oral judging of such prophecies. That is not permitted in any of the churches. In this connection they may not speak—“as the law says.” Apparently in line with the view that makes this appeal to the “law” a feature of the Corinthian position, Evans thinks it sounds “strangely uncharacteristic” of Paul to take this as his appeal to the law. That is a rather strange assessment, since Paul has already appealed once to “the law” in this chapter (cf. 14:21), by which he means the Old Testament Scriptures. With this phrase Paul is probably not referring to Genesis 3:16, as many think, but to the creation order in Genesis 2:20b-24, for Paul refers explicitly to these verses on two other

occasions when he discusses the role of women (1 Corinthians 11:8-9; 1 Timothy 2:13). The passage from Genesis 2 of course does not command silence, but it suggests that, because the man was created first and the woman was created for the man, a kind of pattern was set for the roles the two take. From this creation order Paul infers that the woman is to be subordinate to the man—or at least that the wife is to be subordinate to her husband. In the context of judging prophecies in Corinth, such submission could not be maintained if the wives took part: the first husband to utter a prophecy would trigger the problem.

More broadly, one can hold the view that Paul rejected a woman's exercising a church-recognized teaching office over men (1 Timothy 2:11ff.), and the careful weighing of prophecies falls under this teaching function. That does not mean that women should not learn: they are to ask their husbands about various aspects of these prophecies when they get home. Why should the Corinthians set aside not only the practice of all the churches (v. 33b) but also Holy Scripture itself (v. 34)? Are they so enthusiastic about the revelations they have received that they dare to play them off against the authentic tradition in Holy Scripture and in the apostolic tradition? And if they think they are merely interpreting this tradition under the promptings of the Spirit, are they not troubled to see that all the churches have translated the same texts and the same gospel into an entirely different church practice from theirs? Are you the only ones the word of God has reached (cf. v. 36b)?

A few concluding remarks on this interpretation may prove helpful. First, this interpretation fits the flow of chapter 14. Although the emphasis in the second part of the chapter is still on speaking in tongues and prophecy, it is even more closely tied to the order the church must observe in using these gifts of grace. Verses 33b-36 fit this description well. The verses immediately preceding deal with the judging of prophets; these verses (vv. 33b-36) refine that discussion further. The general theme of 1 Corinthians 12–14 has not been abandoned, as the closing verses of chapter 14 show. There is no other interpretation of these disputed verses that fits the flow of the argument so well.

Second, this interpretation makes sense not only with regard to the course of the text but also with regard to its structure. Chapter 14 is dominated by a discussion of the significance of speaking in tongues and prophecy. Most of the chapter does not concern us here. Verses 26 and following, however, clearly deal with practical guidelines for ordering these two gifts in the assembly. Verse 26 is quite general. Verses 27-28 deal with practical restrictions for those who speak in tongues. In verse 29 Paul turns to prophecy and writes: "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said." The two parts of this verse are then treated separately: the first part ("Two or three prophets should speak") is treated in verses 30-33a, which concern the restrictions on uttering prophecies; the second part ("and the others should weigh carefully what is said") is treated in verses 33b-36, which concern the restrictions on judging prophecies.

Third, the main objection raised against this is that it seems inconsistent for Paul to permit women to prophesy and then forbid them to evaluate prophecies. This objection, however, carries little weight when one considers that such prophecy does not have the same status of authority as the great scriptural prophets of the Old Testament (regardless of whether that authority was recognized immediately or not). Elsewhere I have argued at length that "prophecy" in the New Testament is an extraordinarily broad category, ranging from the work of pagan prophets (Titus 1:12) to the canonical prophecy of the Old Testament. In ordinary church life it was recognized as Spirit-prompted utterance, which, however, offered no guarantee of divine authority in every detail and therefore not only needed to be judged (1 Corinthians 14:29) but also necessarily had less authority than the body of truth

represented by the apostle Paul (14:37-38). In a certain respect, then, it is entirely fitting that Paul places teaching above prophecy, especially when teaching is regarded as part of the non-negotiable apostolic deposit, which serves in part as one of the touchstones that enable the church to weigh the prophecies granted to the church, and especially when the prophecies themselves, unlike the apostolic treasure, are subject to the church's judgment. Of course this does not mean that the utterances of a particular teacher need not be examined; I am not saying that prophecy must be judged but teaching need not be. The New Testament contains too many passages encouraging the church to take responsibility for judging teachers and teaching (1 Timothy 1:3; 6:3-5; Titus 1:9-14; Hebrews 13:9; 2 Peter 2:1, etc.). But it does mean that prophecy cannot escape such judgment, and it presupposes that there is a body of apostolic teaching, a definite content, which is non-negotiable and which can serve as a criterion for both further teaching and prophecy.

Fourth: this is not all the Bible has to say about relationships between men and women in Christ. For example, I have said nothing about the command to husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church—an extraordinarily high standard marked by unreserved self-giving. Nor have I listed the many things Paul expects of Christian women. Above all, I have devoted no space to the fact that women were not permitted to speak at all in a Greek ekklesia, that is, a public assembly. By contrast, in the Christian ekklesia women, carried by the Spirit, were encouraged to do so. In this sense Paul was not captive to the social customs of Corinth: in his own view the gospel really did free women from certain cultural restrictions. But that does not mean that all differences in roles are thereby abolished. I would be prepared to argue on a broader New Testament basis that the different roles that remain are, for Paul, part of life in this created order, in the tension between the "already" and the "not yet"—in the time between the gift of the eschatological Spirit and the consummation of all things, when people will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

And fifth, if this interpretation is correct and there are some role differences between men and women to be observed, it is important to recognize that this teaching is for our good, not for our enslavement. That is a topic I would gladly go into further, but I will not pursue it here.

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Comment HJR: When I discovered Carson's books more than 10 years ago, it was like finding a treasure. His sharpness of thought, combined with faithfulness to God's word, and his depth of thought still impress me. I like to compare him with William Kelly, whom I mentioned at the beginning. In fact, for whatever reason, he also shares Kelly's weaknesses.

In his interpretation of the two verses in their context, Carson manages to do entirely without any cultural background to which Paul might be referring. He does in fact provide a coherent interpretation, which, however, does not make the silence absolute but (like Witherington, for example) limits it to the judging of prophecies. His main argument is the creation order. The law, he says, refers to the fact that the man was created first and the woman as a help for him. This, he says, created a structural, hierarchical order and distribution of roles in which the woman is subordinate to the man. That is the reason she is not to teach the man. The judging of a prophecy takes place on the basis of, and by means of, the known apostolic teaching. (A question arises here: Carson concedes that a woman may prophesy. May she then judge her own prophecy? In that case she would not be "teaching" a man, but a woman.)

Although the interpretation seems very coherent, I would point out the following, or rather I have the following objections:

Verse 34 can be understood as an absolute command of silence, even though that contradicts 1 Corinthians 11:5 and the whole of chapter 14 and so makes no sense.

Carson's interpretation rests on a presupposition without which he would not arrive at it: that there is a submission of the woman to the man grounded in creation, and thus willed by God. If that were not the case, he could not interpret these two verses as he does.

This is where opinions part ways. From Genesis 2 no such difference in position between man and woman can be discerned, either directly or indirectly. Rather the opposite!

Nor can it be derived from 1 Corinthians 11; here too, the opposite. The core statement of this chapter is (1 Corinthians 11:11-12):

11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not without man, nor man without woman. 12 For just as the woman is from the man, so also the man is through the woman; but all things are from God.

The man's being head does not show his authority, but the fact stated in this verse: the woman was taken from the man, or came into being from him; she is assigned to him as a helper, not subservient, but equal, on the same level.

From 1 Timothy 2 one could derive inequality. If Carson calls the two verses from 1 Corinthians 14 by no means simple, this applies all the more to this text.

11 Let a woman learn in quietness with all submission. 12 But I do not permit a woman to teach or to rule over the man, but to be quiet, 13 for Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and fell into transgression.

Evidently, as 1 Timothy shows, there were massive problems in the church at Ephesus. Among other things, there was apparently a particular woman there who was doing exactly the opposite of what is required here. She did not learn first, but taught in a presumptuous way, and probably false teaching at that.

So she was no help to her husband or to any other man whom she taught. Ruling here is not teaching authority, nor is it healthy or God-willed authority. It means rather seizing authority for oneself, as can by now also be found in English Bible translations.

That Adam was created first does not create authority. The animals too were created before him. As an example for this woman in Ephesus, Paul cites Eve, who was deceived. In doing so he describes what happened to this woman and what can ultimately happen to every woman and every man. Anyone can be led astray.

Adam received the commandment when Eve was not yet there. He should have taught her better, and she perhaps should have let herself be taught better.

To derive from this a general prohibition on women teaching is, to put it mildly, not plausible and contradicts other texts that imply that women taught (Priscilla and others).

Finally: how Carson explains the word "shameful" remains open. Would it, then, be shameful for a woman to judge a man's prophecy? And also if she judges a woman's prophecy? Shameful before God, or for the cultural context?

Eckhard J. Schnabel

Schnabel, E. J., *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*

Historisch-Theologische Auslegung Neues Testament, SCM R. Brockhaus/Brunnen Verlag, Witten/Gießen, 4th ed. 2018

34 The instruction **The women are to be silent in the church gatherings** is understood by some to mean that women may not take part in public worship services through spoken contributions at all. Others consider the statement so problematic that they do not believe Paul capable of this instruction, with the result that vv. 34-35 are eliminated as a non-Pauline gloss.

The **first position** was held from the early church to the Reformers, though Luther, Spener, Zinzendorf, and others allowed exceptions, for example in situations where no men are present. Some Christian groups and denominations hold this position to this day and exclude women, for example, from taking part in the reading of Scripture or in the Lord's Supper. Some interpreters, male and female, who consider vv. 34-35 authentic, see in these statements proof of Paul's misogynistic attitude and of the male chauvinism of the Bible in general.

Many interpreters eliminate the so-called *mulier-taceat* passage as a non-Pauline gloss or interpolation —either vv. 34-35, or vv. 33b-35, or vv. 33b-36. Text-critical and literary-critical reasons are put forward for this source-critical operation. For discussion of the manuscript evidence, see above under Text-critical notes: if one applies the usual criteria, there can be no doubt that these verses belonged to the original text of the letter. The literary-critical reasons concern 1. the argument that vv. 34-35 interrupt the train of thought; 2. the reference to the context, which speaks of glossolalia and prophecy and their contribution to the edification of the church, whereas vv. 34-35 supposedly say nothing of all this; 3. allegedly un-Pauline expressions; 4. **the contradiction between vv. 34-35 and 11:5, which is regarded as the decisive argument, is described as "obvious," and is often linked with the judgment that it "cannot be resolved in any case."** Revealing is the assertion that the statement of vv. 34-35, even if it went back to Paul, would have no "theological legitimacy," because it lacks an intelligible justification, which a concrete paraenetic instruction requires. These objections will be answered in the course of the exegesis.

It is always an act of desperation to eliminate as a gloss a text that evidently belongs to the original text of an extant document. Neither theological positions nor political correctness are criteria that can answer questions of literary authenticity with sufficient reliability. Exegetes do not produce the text they have to interpret themselves; they find the text before them and must explain it as well as they can. The search for solutions, which one hopes to find through comparison with similar statements of the author and through careful analysis of the context, is a matter of course for historians. **With difficult texts one must sometimes be content with explanations that are plausible but perhaps not entirely satisfying. *The elimination of a difficult text is an ultima ratio which, in the judgment of many (and not only conservative) exegetes, is unnecessary in the case of vv. 34-35.***

Some proposals that try to explain vv. 34-35 as a Pauline text are not plausible.

1. The statements in 11:5 and in 14:34-35 reflect different stages of the Corinthian correspondence; the command of silence belongs to a later letter, in which Paul, on the basis of more recent information, saw himself compelled to take sharper measures to dampen the enthusiasm in

Corinth. Apart from the problematic partition hypothesis, this explanation founders on the appeal to the other churches in 11:16 and in 14:33b.

2. The text of vv. 34-35 was written by Paul, but not as his opinion; rather, **as a quotation** from the Corinthians' letter, in which male chauvinists wanted to forbid women to speak; in v. 36 he rejects this position. ***There are no indications in the wording of the text that tell the reader that vv. 34-35 are a quotation and v. 36 is Paul's comment.***

3. In 11:5 Paul makes a concession regarding the participation of women, though only reluctantly, and in connection with the question of head covering or hairstyle; in 14:34-35 we hear his real opinion. That 11:5 is a concession, however, can be verified neither from the wording nor from the context.

4. 11:5 is about private house devotions, 14:34-35 about public worship. Chapter 11, however, is throughout about the gatherings of the church, which at that time met in houses; that is, there was no difference between house gatherings and church gatherings.

5. 11:5 speaks of single women, who may prophesy in public, whereas 14:34-35 speaks of married women. Both are assumptions that do not necessarily follow from the text and are not plausible, especially with regard to 11:5.

6. Among the Reformers and Pietists one frequently finds the explanation that 11:5 speaks of women holding office, who may pray and prophesy in public, and 14:34-35 of women without a church office. Such a distinction can neither be discerned in the text nor is it plausible for the Christian churches of the first century.

7. Paul follows the rabbinic tradition according to which women performed no official functions in worship and were not allowed to ask questions in the house of study. Apart from the problem of dating the relevant rabbinic texts, this explanation is not sound either: nowhere in 1 Corinthians does Paul distinguish between official and non-official functions.

8. In 14:34-35 Paul puts a stop to disruptive **interjecting or interrupting with questions** by women, not to women's Spirit-wrought praying and prophesying. This explanation presupposes that from v. 33b on a different problem of order in worship is being dealt with, which is not indicated in the text. ***Nor is it clear why Paul speaks only of women who interrupt, since one can very well imagine men who interrupt too.***

9. More plausible is the proposal that Paul is speaking of different roles of women in the church, reflecting two social experiences: 11:5 is about praying and prophesying in worship, 14:34-35 about deliberations and teaching discussions among the men. This explanation by E. and W. Stegemann rightly recognizes **that cultural conventions play a part, in which men's notions of honor and the woman's shame play a part**; the distinction between "worship observances" and "deliberations" is not convincing; moreover, these "deliberations," which are described as "teaching discussions," remain just as vague as the occasion for the shame. **The key to understanding vv. 34-35 in the context of chapter 11 is the reference 1. to authority: in v. 34 Paul speaks of submission, in 11:2-12 of the man as the "head" of the woman; 2. to the relationship of women to men whom they can ask "at home" (v. 35); 3. to shame (αἰσχρός, v. 35). Vv. 34-35 evidently concern matters in which cultural questions play a part, in which the relationship of a woman to the man responsible for her—the husband, or the father, or a guardian—and the**

difference between public conduct and conduct "at home" were decisive. The immediately preceding context concerns the judging of prophetic speech (vv. 29-33), and in the following context prophets are likewise mentioned in v. 37. ***Therefore the following explanation is the most plausible. In the Corinthian church women took part in the process by which prophecies were tested and judged (v. 29).*** Whether they themselves had the charisma of prophetic speech is possible but not necessary for the reconstruction. In the course of these judgments there were cases in which women passed judgment on prophecies that had been communicated by their husbands, fathers, or guardians. **A critical questioning of the *pater familias* would have been perceived as an affront (αἰσχρός) to the authority of the husband or father and as undermining the order of the household, and thus also of the church. Paul instructs the women to ask the questions they have regarding the prophecies of their husbands, fathers, or guardians at home, in order to preserve propriety both for the household and for the church.**

A popular objection to this interpretation consists in pointing out *that all this is not stated quite so precisely in the text*. That is true, but **the assumptions presupposed have clear points of reference in the text (women, man, home, shame) and are historically and culturally plausible.** The only objection of W. Schrage, that it is "hardly possible to justify why precisely v. 29b should be in view and why competence to prophesy should not also include competence to judge prophecy," is not sound; it disregards the criteria for women's public conduct, which were of decisive importance in contemporary society.[39]

The women **are to submit** (ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν). The adversative conjunction ἀλλά makes clear ***that the silence of the women has to do with the submission of wives to their husbands, and is therefore not meant "categorically" or "generally"***.

The phrase **as the law also says** (καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει) is related by many to Gen 3:16 ("your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you"), which is difficult, however, because that passage speaks neither of the silence of the woman nor of the submission of the woman. Num 12:1-15 has also been proposed as the reference text: Miriam, who was prophetically gifted, was punished by God when she questioned Moses' authority, whereas Aaron, who also questioned Moses, was not punished. For the fact that women did not speak in the public gatherings for worship, rabbinic exegesis appealed to Deut 22:16 ("and the girl's father shall say to the elders"); Sifre Deut 22:16 §235 (117b) says: "From this it follows that the woman has no right to speak in the place of the man (or: instead of the man)." More plausible is the explanation that Paul is referring in general to the creation order (Gen 2).

It is not a matter of speaking (λαλεῖν) in general, but of such speaking as brings "shame" (αἰσχρόν ἐστιν), that is, speaking that is unseemly, shameful, scandalous. In 11:5 Paul spoke of women who pray with uncovered heads and thereby dishonor their "head," that is, bring shame on their husband. The same cultural context is present here: in the public setting of the church gathering, the wife is not to violate the honor of her husband and so bring shame on him.

When a woman prays or prophesies in the worship service, she brings no shame on her husband. But if she tests the genuineness of his prophetic speech with critical questions, she certainly does bring shame on him—a cross-examination is always an embarrassing and humiliating affair, especially when it has a negative outcome, and therefore wives are not to take part in this process.

Comment HJR: One can rarely add anything to Schnabel's work that he has not already mentioned or thought through. His commentaries are a great gain. For all the experts named here there are different weightings of arguments and therefore also different conclusions. His explanation is plausible but, as he himself admits, does not emerge quite so directly from the text. It is perhaps the best of all the attempts at explanation. He dismisses the possibility that this text is a quotation—like some other passages in this letter—without plausible justification. The contradiction between the verses and their surroundings, and the doubts about their authenticity, receive too little attention in my view. In any case, it is clear to him that it cannot be a total command of silence, however one turns it.

Summary and Personal Conclusions

There are four main positions (with variants) on the interpretation of these two verses:

- Absolute silence of women in the worship service
- Conditional or situational silence, or appropriate participation (just as is required of men)—with a restriction in some cases: no teaching and therefore no weighing of prophecies
- It is a quotation that Paul cites in order to refute it.
- It is a later insertion and not genuinely Pauline.

None of these variants is 100 % certain or free of problems! As far as content goes, I cannot add anything to the preceding contributions. I lean toward a quotation or a gloss, that is, a non-Pauline insertion. My main reason:

Verse 34 is, in my view, an absolute command of silence. The women were not even allowed to ask questions (verse 35). If they were not even allowed to ask questions, to me that means: absolute silence.

But in the context of chapter 14 and of the whole letter, that is not possible. Above all, 1 Corinthians 11:5 is a fundamental statement. It describes the general practice, inside and outside the gathering. The background is the gifts of the Spirit, which men and women alike receive, and the priesthood of all believers (which, admittedly, the letter to the Corinthians does not explicitly address). Nor is it possible in the New Testament as a whole. The way Jesus dealt with women speaks against it. So does the fact that Paul had women as coworkers, and the way he describes their ministries.

The law that is mentioned cannot be found—the references to Genesis 2 or 3 are very vague and are themselves already an interpretation in a patriarchal direction. In this way the relationship of the sexes is defined not symmetrically but asymmetrically and hierarchically, and submission and silence are grounded in this. If you interpret the relationship of the first human beings as equality, these justifications collapse. Submission in the NT is always mutual, and in God's kingdom and in his church it is never grounded in hierarchical differences. In Christ these are abolished—not in the world and its relationships, but certainly in the church, which already represents the new creation. So whoever gets Genesis 2 and 3 wrong will not be able to interpret Paul's texts well.

- If it is an insertion, then it seems to me like the false seed, the weeds sown among the good seed, which grow until the end. The history of influence of these two verses is, in my view, a catastrophe. Silent women are exactly what the old serpent wants—just like the millions of hours of study and quarreling spent trying to figure out what these words might mean. Can God allow that? He allows much more that we do not understand!

- As a quotation it does make sense, because these are not Paul's words and thoughts. But even then, in my view, this quotation does not fit well in this place.
- If these are Paul's words, he cannot have meant absolute silence. In that case I would regard a prohibition on weighing the prophecies (of one's husband) as the best explanation in the immediate context.

"Our time is up, and all look on dismayed,

the curtain's closed, the questions still unweighed." (Freely after Bertolt Brecht, "Der gute Mensch von Sezuan" [The Good Person of Szechwan]; found in Erwin Schmidt on the same topic.)

Once More on the Brethren Movement

Anyone who has read the individual excerpts will notice that it is precisely the Brethren movement that has held, practiced, and defended an absolute command of silence. I myself grew up in this movement, in the branch of the so-called "Exclusives." Only at the age of 40, after a move, did I switch to a moderate Christian church (Kempten). Until then I myself held this Brethren version. Admittedly, though, for as long as I can remember it always seemed suspect to me. Not because I am a feminist. My heart could never find a full yes to it. And I was never really able to justify it convincingly to Christians outside the "Brethren." If you read other exegetes whom I know to be faithful to the Bible and who love God's word, you find: they do not hold this view. Why not? Put differently: what do the brothers of the Brethren movement find so special, so worth defending, about this command of silence? I think one must examine extremely thoroughly why this should apply to the sisters, that is, to 50 % of those present. All the more so when two short sentences are interpreted so far-reachingly and to the detriment of the church. And when this movement treats them almost as one of its distinctive features and even uses them to justify its separation.

Now it is true that there is no positive command, no instruction for the sisters to pray and prophesy in the gathering for worship. This argument from silence[40] can be interpreted that way for oneself. But I could just as well say: it was so self-evidently the rule and so clearly covered by the apostolic writings (that, too, is an argument from silence) that there was no need at all for such an instruction.

If you are unbiased, you cannot imagine the following persons with their gifts and ministries, and the following events, without public speaking—nor without speaking in the assembly:

Acts 2:17-18: And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams. 18 And even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Acts 21:8-9: On the following day we left and came to Caesarea; and we went into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, and stayed with him. 9 He had four daughters, virgins, who prophesied.

Prophecy (that is, speaking from God and on his behalf) is for Paul an essential part of the church's gathering: "Therefore, my brothers, be eager to **prophesy**, and do not forbid speaking in tongues" (1 Corinthians 14:39). Acts 2 is, after all, precisely the beginning of this assembly/congregation/church. For it and in it prophesying takes place—something foretold even in the OT. The four daughters—I ask—where did they prophesy? At home? But for whom? Were people visiting them like an oracle?

Hardly. In the marketplace? Probably not. In the gathering? Most likely, because that is where Paul locates prophesying.

Romans 16:1: I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, who is also a servant (diakonos) of the assembly in Cenchreae.

How can you imagine being a servant of an assembly without being allowed to say anything when the church gathers?

Romans 16:12: Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Greet Persis, the beloved, who has labored much in the Lord.

How can you naturally imagine laboring in the Lord without saying anything when the church gathers?

Philippians 4:2-3: I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, I ask you too, my true companion, help these women, who have contended at my side in the gospel …

How can someone contend for the gospel without being allowed to say anything in the worship service? Both women seem to have been leaders in the church in Philippi. Why else would precisely their disagreement be regarded as a danger to the whole church? None of this is comprehensible or conceivable if they never said anything in the gathered church.

Colossians 4:15: Greet the brothers in Laodicea, and Nympha and the assembly that is in her house.

Nympha had the assembly in her house. She made it available as hostess, perhaps because she or her husband was wealthy. Without bias, is it conceivable that she never raised her voice in the worship service?

Now one can explain all these texts—and there would be more—solely through the lens of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Then you come to different conclusions. In this way you would give these two verses interpretive sovereignty over all the other texts listed here. But this decision is wrong, because it overrules the greater weight of all the other texts. It is not careful weighing and comparing but, unfortunately, an arbitrary determination. Above all because this command of silence is not clearly supported by a single other Bible passage.

And yet it was precisely the Brethren movement that defended the priesthood of all believers. That was its hallmark and also its strength. But how the sisters could be forgotten when the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving were offered is, precisely because of the Brethren's great knowledge of Scripture, incomprehensible to me. That the sisters also offer spiritual sacrifices by singing along and by praying along inwardly and silently is a makeshift appeasement. The Spirit is free to work through women and men. Or does the Spirit work in the assembly only in men?

Hans-Jörg Ronsdorf, Augsburg, November 1, 2022

In the meantime, new facts from textual research have come to my attention. They seem to strongly confirm my conjecture stated above: these two verses do not come from Paul and are therefore not valid. I am taking over the relevant texts from the 4th edition of my book *Women, Forgive Us!* (*Frauen, vergebt uns!*):

As indicated in the preface to the 4th edition, this section 6.2.8 of the book was expanded because there are (at least for me) new insights that have to do with old manuscripts. Philip Barton Payne has worked intensively on this topic and, like a number of other textual scholars, has recognized the

following peculiarities: in some manuscripts verses 34 and 35 stand where they stand in our Bibles, but in other manuscripts they stand after verse 40. A relatively long text was moved. That is very unusual and allows the following conjecture: these verses were inserted later. They were written in the margin, and the next copyist would usually insert them, because they had perhaps been forgotten before. He decided where they were inserted.

This thesis is strengthened by a discovery in Codex Vaticanus, one of the most extensive and most important codices from the 4th century. There these verses are in fact marked as an insertion:

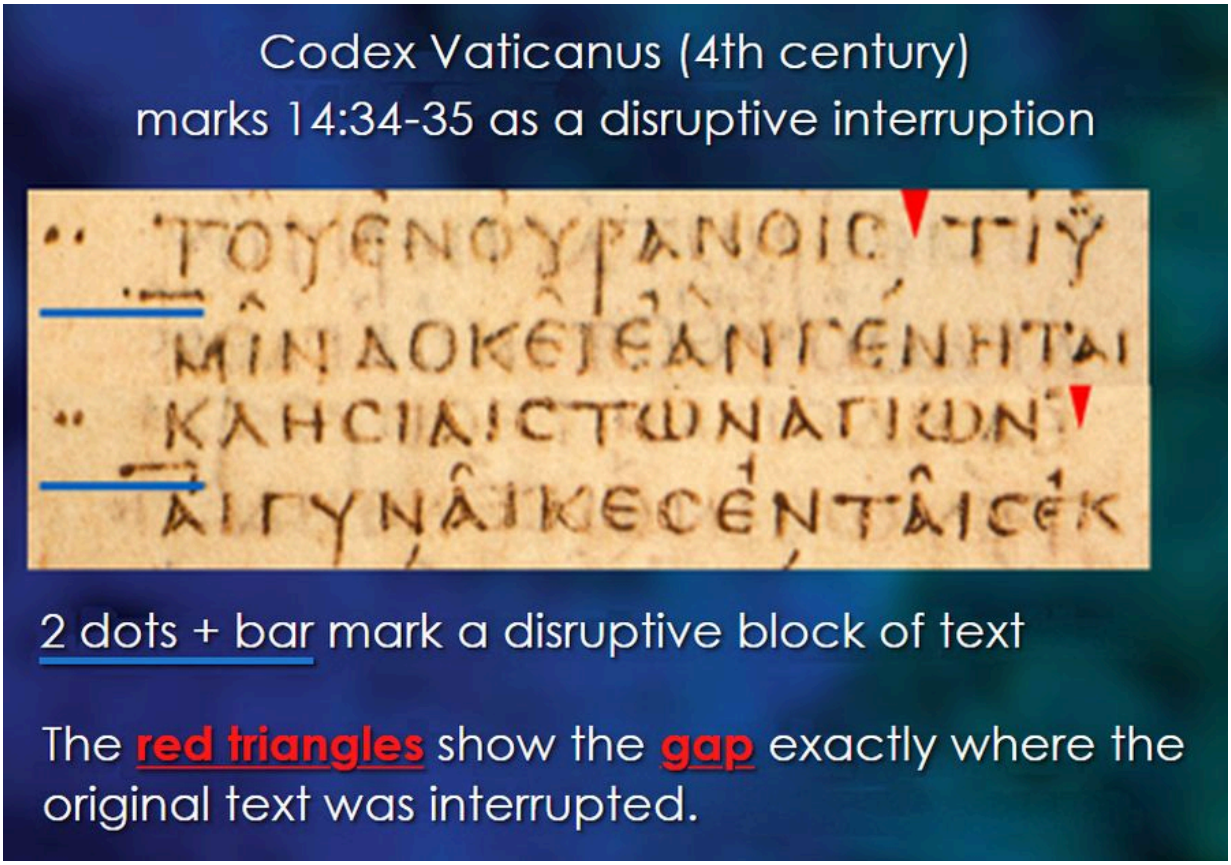


Image source: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

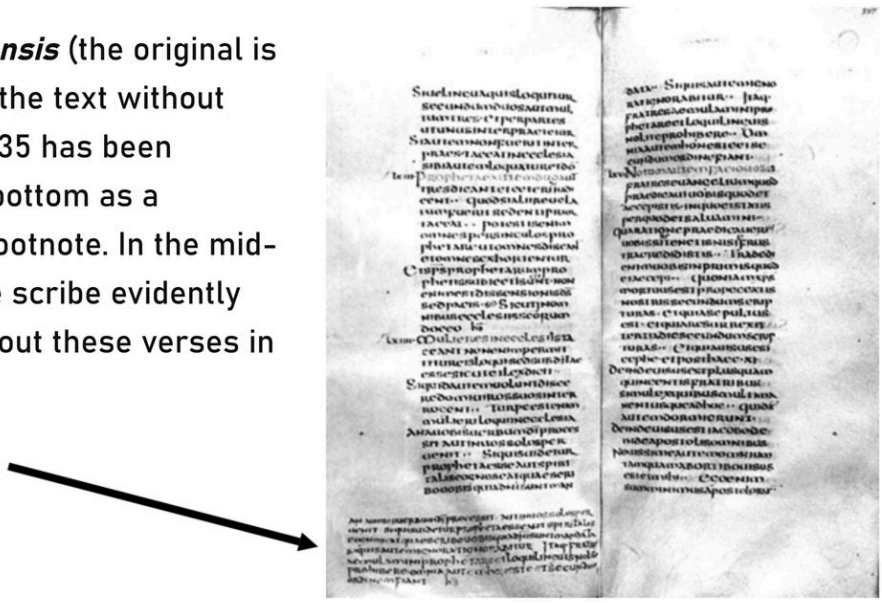
I quote on this Philip B. Payne, who has done groundbreaking research on it: “Seven reasons arising from the manuscripts and nine reasons arising from the words in these verses convince me and many others that they were not in Paul’s original letter but were added later. I will summarize only three now. First, the obvious meaning of these verses contradicts the statements in this chapter that ‘all’ may teach and prophesy, and the statement in chapter 11:5 that women prophesy. Second, in the manuscripts of Paul’s letters there is no other passage of text nearly as long that stands (in different manuscripts) in two different places so far apart from each other without any obvious reason for it.

Third, the oldest Bible marks these verses as a later, inauthentic addition. First, these verses contradict many other statements in this chapter. To avoid contradictions, many say that Paul is only silencing disruptive chatter or, as first proposed in 1962, only the weighing of prophecies. But these interpretations do not fit the unrestricted demand for silence that is emphatically repeated three times in this passage. If verse 34 forbids only the weighing of prophecies, then it also permits speech that verse 35 forbids. After all, asking questions out of a desire to learn something is something completely different from weighing prophecies, and it is rarely disruptive. These interpretations lead to Paul

contradicting what he has just written. Second, in all 'Western' Greek manuscripts these verses follow verse 40, but in most other manuscripts they follow verse 33. Here is the famous 'Western' Codex D from the 6th century. The first complete paragraph of this image is the end of chapter 14. The next paragraph is verses 34 and 35. Chapter 15 begins with the last section. The two different places where verses 34 and 35 stand suggest that someone wrote them in the margin and later copyists inserted them either after verse 33 or after verse 40. Let me explain:

The basic principle for determining the original text of Holy Scripture is: 'The text that best explains the origin of other texts is most probably the original text.' No manuscript of a letter of Paul moves any large block of text nearly this far without an evident reason, and no early reader criticized the position of this text. But it was common for scribes to copy text from the margin into the main text. Codex Vaticanus from the fourth century, for example, contains 20 places with ancient text in the margin of the text of Matthew. All but 3 are contained in the main text of virtually all subsequent manuscripts. The Greeks firmly believed that women should be silent in public assemblies. So it is hardly surprising that a reader at some point before AD 200 added in the margin the 'well-known or common wisdom' that these verses express. The only explanation for the two places where these verses stand that fits the known practices of scribes is that someone first wrote these two verses in the margin of a manuscript and later copyists inserted them either after verse 33 or after verse 40. Common sense says: something ordinary—inserting marginal text into the main text—is more likely than something so extraordinary that no other case of it is known—moving so much text so far without an obvious reason. Third, our oldest Bible, Codex Vaticanus, which is widely praised for its accuracy, marks these verses that silence women in the church as an inauthentic, false interruption. It is true, however, that verses 34-35 occur somewhere (that is, after verse 33 or 40) in all surviving manuscripts, which requires an extraordinarily early insertion. But it is not only Vaticanus that marks them as inauthentic. Bishop Victor had a corrected text written in the lower margin of Codex Fuldensis that omits these verses, and the non-Western text MS 88 omits them after verse 33 but inserts them after verse 40 with symbols indicating that they should follow verse 33. Since these verses do not occur in Victor's textual witnesses to 1 Corinthians, Dan Wallace's claim 'that these verses occur in all witnesses to 1 Corinthians' is not true (https://bible.org/article/textual-problem-1-corinthians-1434-35). Textual scholars assign different manuscript sigla to different texts within one and the same manuscript. The passage 14:34-35 does not occur in all the texts distinguished by these separate manuscript symbols. ***It is not true that the text of 14:34-35 is 'supported' by all manuscripts."***

In ***Codex Fuldensis*** (the original is kept in Fulda), the text without verses 34 and 35 has been written at the bottom as a correction or footnote. In the mid-6th century the scribe evidently had a text without these verses in front of him.



Codex Fuldensis (F) is a Vulgate manuscript that contains the text of the 23 canonical books of the NT as well as the Diatessaron and the Letter to the Laodiceans. It is one of the oldest dated manuscripts of the New Testament and the only early NT manuscript known to have been edited by a significant scholar, Bishop Victor of Capua. It is the second important witness to the text of the Vulgate and the most important and oldest witness to the complete text of the Diatessaron. The codex is an important, if not the most important, piece of evidence in the discussion about the authenticity of the text of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. It was written in the years 541-546 in Capua on behalf of Bishop Victor and personally checked and corrected by him. At the end of the Apocalypse stands the date May 2, 546, written by Victor himself. Victor checked the text of the codex a second time, and therefore there is also a second date—April 12, 547.

"The famous Roman Catholic scholar Joseph A. Fitzmyer notes that 'the majority of today's interpreters' conclude that this text [14:34-35] is a later addition. The textual scholar Kim Haines-Eitzen states this for 'almost all scholars today.' Gordon Fee, probably the most renowned evangelical textual scholar, argues that these verses were not in Paul's letter but were added in the margin of a manuscript and inserted by later copyists either after verse 33 or after verse 40. My book Man and Woman, One in Christ, 226-227, lists fifty-five studies that conclude that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 was not in Paul's original letter. On pages 227-53 seven external reasons, and on pages 253-65 nine internal reasons, are given why the text does not come from Paul, and on pages 265-67 objections to a gloss are answered. All in all, in my opinion, the text-critical evidence speaks strongly for this being a gloss, probably written by a reader before AD 197."

Final Assessment

I quote another author, Andrew Bartlett, who has worked on this topic very intensively, from his book Men and Women in Christ: "Some readers may feel that deleting verses 34-35 is simply too convenient. That is understandable. We are rightly taught to be extremely skeptical of proposals to remove difficult texts from the Bible. It is important to stress that we are not dealing here with arguments for inauthenticity that rest on internal evidence alone. If the problem with these verses were limited to the fact that they do not agree with their context, that they contain an obvious error regarding the content of the Old Testament, and that no interpretive solution has been found that

gives them a satisfactory sense, we would leave them in the text, acknowledge our limits, and hope for new light in the future. Here the external indications must also be explained. How is it that these words are found in different places in different manuscripts? Something went wrong, but what? As we have seen, the most likely solution for this feature of the external evidence is that verses 34-35 do not come from Paul but from an early marginal comment that was taken into the main text.

“This is further confirmed by Bishop Victor’s notes in Codex Fuldensis, which point to the existence of a text in which these two verses are missing entirely. And if Payne’s view of the evidence from Codex Vaticanus is correct, that is a further confirmation. When we add up the external and internal evidence, the case for rejecting these two verses is clear. Deleting them is not an ideological maneuver; it is a matter of following the evidence. In principle this is no different from the rejection of other additions (such as the longer ending of Mark, John 5:3-4, or Acts 24:6-7), which appeared in the text, were included in our Bibles for a time, and were then removed when examination of the available evidence led to the conclusion that they were probably not authentic after all. At the very least our Bibles should contain a footnote, something along the lines of: Manuscript evidence suggests that verses 34 and 35 may be a later addition that does not come from Paul, and should therefore be omitted. It would be better to set verses 34-35 in italics or to place them in a footnote, together with an explanation that the nature of the discrepancies in the manuscripts suggests that their authenticity is doubtful. ‘The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul’ (Psalm 19:7). I do not propose this here as a criterion of authenticity. But if some readers have felt guilty that their souls have not received much refreshment from 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, they can perhaps breathe a sigh of relief now: these verses may not belong in the Bible at all.”

Let me close this chapter as follows: I already knew this view when I wrote this book, but I did not dare to call this text into question. Now, however, the facts are such that it is hardly possible any longer to understand these two verses as God’s inspired word. That makes a glaring difference. Why? Because all attempts at explanation (except the quotation thesis) founder on the fact that it is an absolute command of silence. In all interpretations the attempts at explanation collide with the clarity of this demand. But this demand does not come from Paul; it corresponds to worldly thinking. How tragic! After all, those who stand up for women are accused of feminism and of conforming to the world. Can it be that the enemy, the adversary and the one who throws everything into confusion, has succeeded in smuggling something into the Bible that has had fatal consequences for the women of the church and for the church as a whole throughout all the centuries? How can we get out of such a tragic situation? How serious is this false assumption, to this day?

Here it is necessary to take a clear position once and for all and to face the facts.

May God be gracious to us!

To conclude this chapter, read the Corinthian text without verses 34 and 35 and see how coherent and meaningful it stands that way:

“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or has it come to you alone? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. Therefore, my brothers, be eager

to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:31-33, 36-40)

There was and is no command of silence for women in the assemblies of Jesus' church! You can arrive at this without any knowledge of Greek and without the quotation thesis. Can it really be that the apostle who had many women as coworkers, whom he names, on whom he relied, who contended at his side in the gospel, forbade them to open their mouths?

In conclusion I ask: Who has the greatest interest in the sisters being silent? In half of the body of Christ falling silent? In the women not complementing the men in the gathering? It is the old serpent, the adversary and destroyer, the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. Only his enmity toward the woman can be the reason for such blindness. For this, the men in leadership and teaching will one day have to bear the responsibility.

Hans-Jörg Ronsdorf

Augsburg, September 22, 2023

Notes

1. Kelly, W., *Einführende Vorträge zum Neuen Testament*, XV, Faithlife, Bellingham, WA 2022, 11.
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3. Hole, F. B., *Grundzüge des Neuen Testaments*, Christliche Schriftenverbreitung, Hückeswagen 1989, 972–973.
4. MacDonald, W., *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung, Bielefeld 2018, 7th ed., 761–762.
5. Strack, H. L. - Billerbeck, P., Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Oskar Beck, Munich 1922–1926, vol. 3, 467.
6. Strack, H. L. - Billerbeck, P., Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Oskar Beck, Munich 1922–1926, vol. 3, 469.
7. Henry, M., *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*, Hendrickson, Peabody 1994, 2271.
8. Schlatter, A., *Die Korintherbriefe: Ausgelegt für Bibelleser*, VI, Schlatters Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Berlin 1954 (2nd ed.), 154–155.
9. Morris, L., *1 Corinthians: an introduction and commentary*, VII, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 1985, 192–194.
10. Ciampa, R. E. - Rosner, B. S., "1 Corinthians," in *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*, Baker Academic; Apollos, Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK 2007, 743.
11. A thorough defense of the traditional view can be found in Archibald Robertson, Alfred Plummer. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians. op. cit. pp. 324-328 and—also against the quotation theory—in Arthur Rowe. "Silence and the Christian Women of Corinth: An Examination of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36." Communio viatorum (Ecumenical Institute of the Comenius Faculty, Prague) 33 (1990) 1-2: 41-84.
12. Daniel C. Arichea. "The Silence of Women in the Church." Bible Translator 46 (1995) 101-112, here pp. 102-104.
13. In chronological order, the following are to be named as proponents of the quotation theory in 1 Corinthians 14:34-36—as far as I know: Jessie Penn-Lewis. The Magna Charta of Woman. The Overcomer Book Room: Bournemouth (UK), 1919 (see the 1975 reprint below); Katharine Bushnell. God's Word to Women. Self-published: Oakland (CA, USA), n.d. (ca. 1918); ibid. 1930, paragraphs 189-215; Katharine Bushnell. 101 Questions Answered: A Woman's Catechism - God's Word to Women. Lowes Ltd.: Southport (UK), n.d. (ca. 1930; 72 pp.). pp. 23-26; John A. Anderson. Women's Warfare and Ministry: What Saith the Scriptures? David Waldie: Stonehaven (UK), 1933. pp. 20-26; Katharine Bushnell. Was sagt Gott der Frau. Berlin, 1936. ca. 130 pp.; Katharine Bushnell. The Badge of Guilt and Shame. Southport (UK) n.d.; Ernestine von Trott zu Solz. Die Stellung der Frau nach der Bibel. Landheim Salem e. V.: Asendorf, n.d. 47 pp. pp. 33-37; J. C. Hurd. The Origin of I Corinthians. Seabury: New York, 1965. pp. 186-195; Joyce Harper. Women and the Gospel. C.

B. R. F. Occasional Paper 5. Christian Brethren Research Fellowship: Pinner (UK), 1974. pp. 14-19+8-9; Jessie Penn-Lewis. The Magna Charta of Woman. Bethany House Publ.: Minneapolis, 1975 (reprint of 1919). 103 pp. 21-34; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. "Paul, Women, and the Church." Worldwide Challenge 3 (1976) Sept: 9-12; Neal M. Flanagan, Edwina Hunter Snyder. "Did Paul put down women in 1Cor 14: 34-36?" Biblical Theology Bulletin (New York) 11 (1981) 10-12; David W. Odell-Scott. "Let the Women Speak in Church: An Egalitarian Interpretation of I Cor. 14.33b-36." Biblical Theology Bulletin 13 (1983) 90-93; C. H. Talbert. "Paul's Understanding of the Holy Spirit: The Evidence of 1 Corinthians 12-14." Perspectives in Religious Studies 11 (1984) 95-108, here pp. 105-107; Chris Ukachukwu Manus. "The Subordination of the Women in the Church: 1 Co 14:33b-36 Reconsidered." Revue Africaine de Théologie 8 (1984) 16 (Oct) 183-195; David W. Odell-Scott. "In Defense of an Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor 14.34-36." Biblical Theology Bulletin 17 (1987) 3: 100-103; Robert W. Allison. "Let Women be Silent in the Churches (1Cor. 14. 33b-36) What Did Paul Really Say, and What Did it Mean." Journal for the Study of the NT 32 (1988) 27-60; Gilbert Bilezikian. Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids (MI), 2nd ed. 1989. pp. 144-153; Daniel C. Arichea. "The Silence of Women in the Church." Bible Translator 46 (1995) 101-112; considering the quotation theory as one possibility: Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians." Catholic Biblical Quarterly 48 (1986) 81-94, here p. 91.

14. Neal M. Flanagan, Edwina Hunter Snyder. "Did Paul put down women in 1Cor 14: 34-36?" op. cit. pp. 10+12.
15. Daniel C. Arichea. "The Silence of Women in the Church." op. cit. p. 109 and Chris Ukachukwu Manus. "The Subordination of the Women in the Church: 1 Co 14:33b-36 Reconsidered." op. cit. p. 189.
16. Robert W. Allison. "Let Women be Silent in the Churches (1Cor. 14. 33b-36)." op. cit. pp. 44-45. Archibald Robertson, Alfred Plummer. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians. op. cit. p. 325 and Daniel C. Arichea. "The Silence of Women in the Church." op. cit. also relate the text to Genesis 3:16, but assume that Paul understood (or rather misunderstood) Genesis 3:16 in this way.
17. Joyce Harper. Women and the Gospel. C. B. R. F. Occasional Paper 5. Christian Brethren Research Fellowship: Pinner (UK), 1974. pp. 14-15; John A. Anderson. Women's Warfare and Ministry: What Saith the Scriptures? David Waldie: Stonehaven (UK), 1933. pp. 20-26.
18. Joyce Harper. Women and the Gospel. op. cit. p. 14 (from Megillah, a tractate of the Talmud).
19. S. Aalen. "A Rabbinic Formula in I Cor. 14,34." pp. 513-525 in: F. L. Cross (ed.). Studia Evangelica II. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 87. Akademie-Verlag: (East) Berlin, 1964.
20. Gilbert Bilezikian. Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids (MI), 2nd ed. 1989. pp. 144-153.
21. Ibid. p. 145.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid. p. 147.
24. Ibid. p. 149.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid. p. 151.
27. Ibid. pp. 248-249.
28. Ibid. pp. 151-152.
29. Ibid. p. 248.
30. C. H. Talbert. "Paul's Understanding of the Holy Spirit." op. cit. p. 105, appealing to the "Montgomery translation of the New Testament, early in the century," as well as to David W. Odell-Scott. "Let the Women Speak in Church." op. cit. and Neal M. Flanagan, Edwina Hunter Snyder. "Did Paul put down women in 1Cor 14: 34-36?" op. cit.
31. C. H. Talbert. "Paul's Understanding of the Holy Spirit." op. cit. p. 106.
32. Most extensively Gottfried Fitzer. 'Das Weib schweige in der Gemeinde': Über den unpaulinischen Charakter der mulier-taceat-Verse in 1. Korinther 14. Theologische Existenz Heute 110. C. Kaiser: Munich, 1963; in the evangelical sphere: Gordon D. Fee. The First Epistle to the Corinthians. op. cit. pp. 699-707 (against this, D. A. Carson. "'Silent in the Churches': On the Role of Women in 1Corinthians 14:33b-36." pp. 140-153 in: John Piper, Wayne Grudem (eds.). Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Crossway Books: Wheaton (IL), 1991. pp. 141-145); otherwise: Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians." Catholic Biblical Quarterly 48 (1986) 81-94, here pp. 90-92; Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Zu ihrem Gedächtnis. Chr. Kaiser: Munich, Grünewald: Mainz, 1988. pp. 287-291; G. W. Trompf. "On Attitudes Toward Women in Paul and Paulinist Literature: 1 Corinthians 11: 3-16 and Its Context." The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 42 (1980) 196-215; Karl Hermann Schelkle. "'Denn wie das Weib aus dem Mann ist, so auch

der Mann aus dem Weib' (1Kor 11,12): Zur Gleichberechtigung der Frau im Neuen Testament." Diakonia 15 (1984) 85-90, here p. 87; Hans Conzelmann. Der erste Brief an die Korinther. Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament 5. 12th ed. 1981 (2nd ed. 1981 of the revised version). on this passage; (arguing against Conzelmann: C. K. Barrett. A Commentary on The First Epistle to the Corinthians. A & C Black: London, 1968. p. 333 and Mary Evans. Women in the Bible. The Paternoster Press: Exeter, 1983. pp. 95-96).

33. In all the important witnesses of the Western text, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is found after 1 Corinthians 14:40, which, in the view of the conservative evangelical interpreter Gordon D. Fee as well (The First Epistle to the Corinthians. op. cit. pp. 699-707), can only be explained by their having been added later. Further text-critical reasons for the late origin of vv. 34-35 have recently been given by Philip B. Payne. "Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor 14.34-5." New Testament Studies 41 (1995) 240-262; cf. also the discussion that arose from it in this journal, e.g., the opposing position in Curt Niccum. "The Voice of the Manuscripts on the Silence of Women: The External Evidence for 1Cor 14.34-5." New Testament Studies 43 (1997) 242-255, and also in D. W. Bryce. "As in All the Churches of the Saints." Lutheran Theological Journal 31 (1997) 31-39.
34. Gottfried Fitzer. 'Das Weib schweige in der Gemeinde'. op. cit. pp. 6-7; Gordon D. Fee. The First Epistle to the Corinthians. op. cit. pp. 699-701.
35. Ibid. p. 700.
36. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians." Catholic Biblical Quarterly 48 (1986) 81-94, here pp. 90-92; similarly in Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. 1 Corinthians. New Testament Message 10. M. Glazier: Wilmington (DE), 1979. p. 133.
37. So, e.g., Robert W. Allison. "Let Women be Silent in the Churches (1Cor. 14. 33b-36): What Did Paul Really Say, and What Did it Mean." Journal for the Study of the NT 32 (1988) 27-60, here pp. 35-39.
38. Fee, G. D., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, edd. N. B. Stonehouse - F. F. Bruce - G. D. Fee - J. B. Green, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K. 2014, Revised Edition, 780.
39. Schnabel, E. J., *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, edd. G. Maier - H.-W. Neudorfer - R. Riesner - E. J. Schnabel, Historisch-Theologische Auslegung Neues Testament, SCM R. Brockhaus/Brunnen Verlag, Witten/Gießen 2018, 4th ed., 842–845.
40. In logic and in historical scholarship, an argumentum e silentio (Latin) is a conclusion drawn from silence. The non-reality of a fact or an event is inferred from the fact that it is not mentioned in a context in which its mention would otherwise certainly be expected.