

Final Exegesis Paper  
New Testament Class  
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## **Was Paul Trying to Censure the Women Prophets or Wives of Corinth?**

*Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*

1 Corinthians 14: 34-35 (NRSV)

What began as a journey exploring 1 Corinthians 13 has evolved into an exploration of the arc and intent of Paul's letter to the Corinthians as captured in chapters 12 through 14. Most scholars group these three chapters as a complete discussion thread about the key issues at Corinth that are dividing the congregation and failing to build up church community: the improper use of spiritual gifts, with an over emphasis on speaking in tongues instead of Paul's favorite, prophecy.

Paul is also trying to correct quarrelsome, egocentric attitudes in Corinth. He is concerned about the spiritual arrogance of some of the Corinthians, the use of spiritual gifts for self-aggrandizement rather than to foster greater understanding and spiritual growth among the entire congregation, and the absence of mature, others-oriented love and dedicated service to others among the members of the Corinth church.

Paul proposes several answers to address the problems at Corinth, including a call to model the self-sacrificing love demonstrated by God in the crucified Christ, as well as a more orderly approach to their worship style, speaking in tongues and prophesying one at a time in order to allow for interpretation, reflection and revelation for the greater good of the community. (1 Cor 13, 14: 26-31)

But is Paul's ultimate motive for writing this letter to the Corinthians to censure and silence the women prophets, or the married women in the congregation, from active, visible leadership in church worship? The command that forbids women – or certainly, at least the implied married women – from speaking in church in 1 Cor 14: 34-35 might indicate such a motive.

While Paul certainly reprimands the women of Corinth for failing to cover their heads properly when praying and prophesying in church to avoid shaming themselves and their families, (1 Cor 11: 2-16), I am not persuaded that Paul's overall goal in writing 1 Corinthians was to silence the women prophets or wives of Corinth.

Rather, I am in agreement with a number of scholars that Paul most likely did not write verses 34-35, but that they might have been an interpolation of editorial comments written in the margins of chapter 14, copied in soon after Paul wrote First Corinthians. This redacted edit might have been made by the author of 1 Timothy, who asserts, "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit

no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.” (1 Tim 2: 11-12)

### **Is Paul intending to silence the women prophets of Corinth?**

One scholar believes that censoring and silencing the Corinthian women prophets was exactly what Paul intended in his letter to the Corinthian church. Antoinette Clark Wire uses rhetorical analysis of Paul’s writing style throughout First Corinthians to reconstruct what might have been going on in Corinth based on what Paul discusses and how he addresses the issues facing him.

Based on Paul’s arguments on what he sees as broken in Corinth – from women choosing celibacy and separating from their husbands to their praying and prophesying in public with their heads uncovered, to an overemphasis in the community on speaking in tongues and prophesying simultaneously without adequate interpretation -- Wire proposes that it is probable a large group of influential women in the congregation were abandoning traditional marital and sexual relations with men, practicing celibacy in support of very active and visible charismatic spiritual practices such as speaking in tongues and prophecy in public.

Many of these women may have been leading the congregation in a new spiritual direction, away from Paul’s theology, believing they had already achieved an advanced spiritual state with direct access to the resurrected life in Christ through their channeling of the Holy Spirit. For these converted Christian women, the former privilege of male over female had been supplanted by a new order, a single identity in Christ as reflected in the baptismal promise Paul writes in Galatians 3: 27-28, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or Free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” Wire believes Paul is seeking to correct the behavior of some of the women prophets, as he intentionally leaves out the “no longer male and female” phrase when repeating the baptismal promise in 1 Corinthians 12: 13.

For Wire, the placement of verses 34-35 silencing women’s participation in public worship after Paul’s declaration in verse 33: “for God is not a God of disorder but of peace” is an intentional implication that it is the women who speak in tongues and prophesy who are the source of disruption and disorderliness in the public worship space. She states:

...Paul’s forcing a spiritual vote of confidence at exactly this point shows that women’s silencing is not a parenthetical matter but the turning point in his argument concerning the spiritual. Once he has called for their silence he has done all he needs to do. It is as if this move solves his problem concerning tongues and prophecy and now he only needs to ensure obedience.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wire, Antoinette Clark. The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990, pp. 155.

I would argue against this interpretation of Paul's intent because at no point in chapter 14 prior to verses 34-35 is Paul singling out women as the problem with worship in Corinth. In fact, with the exception of verses 34-35, Paul's messages throughout chapters 12, 13 and 14 are speaking about the problematic behavior of *everyone*, male and female alike – from choosing speaking in tongues over prophecy to the need for less self-centeredness and more service-oriented love shown to one another in the Corinth community. Paul would appear to be an equal opportunity blamer in these three chapters leading up to chapter 14: 34-35.

### **Or does Paul intend to silence only married women?**

Other scholars interpret 1 Cor 14: 34-35 that Paul is silencing only married women from speaking in public as a way to reduce chaos and restore order to the worship experience in Corinth. After all, they can ask questions of their husbands in the home to learn more about teachings at church. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, discusses that theory in her book *In Memory of Her*, offering that “the community rule of 1 Cor 14: 34-36 presupposes that, within the Christian worship assembly, wives had dared to question other women's husbands or point out some mistakes of their own during the congregational interpreting of the Scriptures and of prophecy. Such behavior was against all traditional custom and law.”<sup>2</sup>

Fiorenza adds:

1 Cor 14:33-36 is often understood to speak about women in general and therefore to contradict 11: 2-16 which presupposes that women are pneumatics, and as such pray and prophecy within the worship of the community. However, the difficulty is resolved if we recognize that the injunction does not pertain to all women but solely to wives of Christians, since chapter 7 makes it clear that not all women in the community were married or had Christian spouses. They therefore could not ask their husbands at home. 1 Cor 7: 32-35 confirms the interpretation that the prohibition in 14: 33-36 applies only to wives.<sup>3</sup>

And, yet, I believe that there is a line contained within 1 Cor 7: 32-35 that might imply the opposite of Fiorenza's conclusion that Paul is silencing wives in worship. In 1 Cor 7: 32-35, Paul argues in favor of the single life. An unmarried man and unmarried woman or virgin are free to focus on the affairs of the Lord and how to please the Lord, while the married man and married woman have divided interests, as their attention is focused on the affairs of the world and on pleasing their spouses. However, Paul concludes the discussion in 1 Cor 7: 35 by stating the following (my emphasis in bold): “I say this for your own benefit, **not to put any restraint upon you**, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord.” Paul is clearly stating that his favoring a single life of chastity is not intended to put pressure on another person's choice to marry or not. Paul does not intend to

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<sup>2</sup> Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983. p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 230-231.

put constraints on someone based on their marital status. If he intended to ban married women from public worship, 1 Corinthians chapter 7 would seem to be a more likely place for Paul to state so than in chapter 14.

### **Silencing of women at odds with roles women played in Paul's ministry**

Among the reasons I am not persuaded that Paul intended to silence the women of Corinth – either married or single -- is the number of married and single women who are named in his letters, or in the book of Acts of the Apostles, who played important roles in his ministry. In Corinth alone, Paul has been in communication with Chloe's people (1 Cor 1:11) about the quarreling going on in the congregation.

Paul is also a good friend with a couple he first met in Corinth, Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquila, who became active in his ministry. Paul lived with them in Corinth and practiced their shared trade of tent making so he could earn a living while starting and building the church there around 51 CE. Prisca and her husband would have been among the first members of that congregation. Priscilla and Aquila also joined Paul on the road during his mission trips, traveling from Corinth to Syria and Ephesus, where they settled and led the church founded there. (Acts 18: 18-19) In Acts 18: 24-26, Apollos comes to Ephesus and was "teaching the Way of the Lord" in the synagogue there. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took Apollos aside in the synagogue and corrected his understanding of the "Way of God" in that public place of worship – putting Prisca's behavior totally at odds with Paul's wishes, if he in fact really wanted women to be silent in the churches. Paul also credits Aquila and Priscilla for risking their lives numerous times on behalf of Paul and their shared ministry. (Rom 16:3). And he closes 1 Corinthians with greetings to the Corinthians from Prisca and Aquila and their home-based church in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19).

Paul also writes a letter of recommendation for Phoebe to carry as an introduction to the congregation in Rome, describing her as a deacon, or minister, of the church at Cenchreae. (Rom 16: 1-2) In that same letter, Paul names a number of other female church leaders for Phoebe to greet on his behalf, including Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena and Tryphosa ("those workers in the Lord"). (Rom 16: 3, 6, 12) He also mentions Julia, and two unnamed women to greet as well – the mother of Rufus, whom Paul characterizes as a mother to him as well, and the sister of Nereus. (Rom 16: 13, 15). Most importantly, he names a couple imprisoned with him for their beliefs – Andronicus and Junia – and declares them both to be "prominent among the apostles," explaining "they were in Christ before I was." (Rom 16: 7)

Jouette Bassler, writing in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, agrees that the evidence of women co-ministers supporting Paul's missionary work cannot be reckoned with verses 34-35 forbidding women to speak in public worship. I am in agreement with Bassler that the leadership of early Christian women disproves that Paul really held the view that women should be silent in church:

These two verses [1 Cor 14: 34-35]...are strange by any reckoning of the matter. ...How can women exercise their acknowledged right to pray and prophesy (chapter 11) if they must keep absolute silence? How can women like Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4: 2-3), Prisca (Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16: 19), Mary (Rom 16: 6), Junia (Rom 16: 7) and Tryphaena and Tryphosa (Rom 16: 12)

function as co-workers in the churches if they cannot speak in those churches? How can Phoebe fulfill the role of deacon (Rom 16: 1-2) if she cannot speak out in the assembly? Something is seriously amiss here. <sup>4</sup>

### **The command to silence is at odds against instructions on head coverings**

The conflict between Paul's discussion around women's proper attire or hairstyle when praying or prophesying in public (1 Cor 11: 2-16) versus forbidding women to speak in public worship altogether (1 Cor 14: 34-35) makes the latter verses appear suspect to me that Paul was the author and held this view.

Paul, throughout 1 Corinthians, is appealing to the Corinthians to become more orderly, loving and decent in their worship practices and in the way they treat one another. In chapter 11, Paul gets into a lengthy discussion about the importance of a woman covering her head and/or having her hair bound in place rather than loose while praying or prophesying, lest she bring shame upon herself and the men in the congregation.

Several interpret this section to mean that Paul does not want the women of Corinth to wear their hair loose and disheveled during their ecstatic worship, as it was too similar to women's behavior during the ecstatic cult worship of Isis, Dionysos, Cybele, and other pagan practices popular in Corinth at the time. In addition, prostitutes of that day often wore their hair down and loose, in contrast to more proper women who braided and pinned their hair up and adorned it with gold, jewelry, ribbons or gauze. <sup>5</sup>

No matter how you interpret what Paul considers to be a proper head covering or hairstyle for women during charismatic worship, one thing remains clear from the 1 Cor 11: 2-16 discussion. Paul is not restricting women from active participation in worship. To quote Richard Hays: "Paul endorses the freedom of women to pray and prophesy in the assembly; the only question is what sort of headdress is appropriate for them while exercising this freedom." <sup>6</sup>

Put another way, Margaret MacDonald, writing in *Women & Christian Origins*, notes that 1 Cor 11: 2-11 enables us to reconstruct that "there were Corinthian women prophets. There were women whose inspired speech was thought to convey experiences of the divine to the community."<sup>7</sup>

Some scholars attempt to reconcile Paul's affirmation that women can participate in worship with the proper head coverings in chapter 11 with his total censorship of women in chapter 14 by claiming that only married women are being

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<sup>4</sup> Bassler, Jouette M. "1 Corinthians," *The Women's Bible Commentary*. [Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, editors] Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, pp. 327-328.

<sup>5</sup> Fiorenza, pp. 226-228.

<sup>6</sup> Hays, Richard B. *First Corinthians: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1997. p. 183.

<sup>7</sup> MacDonald, Margaret Y. "Chapter 9: Reading Real Women Through the Undisputed Letters of Paul." *Women & Christian Origins* [Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo, editors]. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 215.

banned from talking during worship. The implication is that unmarried women, widows and virgins are allowed to participate in charismatic worship as long as they have their heads covered properly.

However, nowhere in chapter 11 does Paul state or imply that only *single* women are allowed to pray and prophesy in public worship with the correct head coverings. Hays reminds us there are no words in Greek equivalent to the English “husband,” and “wife.” He points out that despite the NRSV translating verse 3 as the “husband” is the head of “his wife,” most translations employ the generic terms “man” and “woman” throughout 1 Cor 11: 2-16, leading Hays to conclude that Paul is referring to rules that apply to everyone in chapter 11:

...it is preferable to understand Paul’s directives here as applying to everyone in the community, married or unmarried: women should have covered heads in worship; men should not.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to recommended head coverings, Paul defines women in chapter 11 as subordinate to men based on the nature of the universe, with the hierarchy starting with God through Christ to men and then finally to women. (1 Cor 11: 3) I believe that if Paul were truly interested in the ultimate complete censure of women, either single or married, during worship, 1 Corinthians 11: 3 would have been another more logical place to initiate that discussion, following his declaration of women’s subordination, rather than where the verses appear so abruptly in chapter 14 after a discussion about “God being a God not of disorder, but of peace.” (1 Cor 14: 33).

### **Public life versus home life?**

In raising the issue of proper head coverings for women to speak in public worship services as a matter of honor and shame, Paul seems to be re-asserting the need for cleanliness or purity practices during worship – establishing what is separate, or holy -- similar to the importance of purity rituals of the Jewish tribes described in the Old Testament in Numbers and Leviticus.

In chapter 11, Paul is drawing a line between what is acceptable for women’s appearance in public worship versus in the home. It occurred to me that since so many churches began meeting initially in people’s homes, where women did not customarily wear veils or cover their heads, that early Christian worship most likely evolved from more relaxed standards typical of a home setting. I would imagine that women played a natural leadership role in these early worship experiences, serving as hostesses, guiding the gathering in their own homes.

Antoinette Wire supports this idea, stating, “women’s behavior may also have been perceived as scandalous for reasons of physical space. The women who uncovered their heads may have brought behavior that they practiced in their own homes into the more public arena of the house-church.”<sup>9</sup>

As the Corinthian congregation has grown large enough at this point to include factions of those who would follow Apollos versus Paul or Cephas (1 Cor 1:

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<sup>8</sup> Hays, p. 185.

<sup>9</sup> Wire, p. 183.

12), it is likely that the church had grown beyond meeting in people's homes. As a Christian Jew, Paul might have been working to establish more formalized ritual worship behavior in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, at least for women, fitting for a more formal place of worship, comparable to a temple. Yet the fact remains that in establishing more formalized purity rituals for women's participation in worship, Paul never silences them throughout chapter 11.

### **Is the real issue everyone speaking at once during worship?**

I propose that Paul's intent arcing through chapters 12, 13 and 14 is to correct problems around the way everyone (men and women) practiced speaking in tongues and prophesying during worship, not to silence females from participation.

As chapter 14 indicates, Paul wants to create order out of the current chaos happening when multiple participants "speak with the tongues of angels" and prophesy simultaneously, without benefit of translation or revelation for those observing. He wants the Corinthians to shift their emphasis away from speaking in tongues towards his preferred spiritual gift – prophesy -- for the teaching value it provides everyone in the congregation. He is concerned that the current form of worship in Corinth could appear to be demented to non-believers and first-time visitors as well as incomprehensible to the congregation of believers. (1 Cor 14: 1-25). Richard Hays concurs, stating:

Some of the Corinthians have placed inordinate emphasis on showy displays of spirituality, especially the gift of speaking in tongues; it seems that some of them are disrupting or dominating the church's meetings by disorderly spirit-inspired utterance that is unintelligible to other members of the community. ...Our reading of the two preliminary chapters [12 and 13] should always keep in mind the particular pastoral goal toward which Paul is working: He is seeking to bring the disorderly and self-centered worship practices of the Corinthians under control so that the church as a whole may be built up.<sup>10</sup>

Paul is advocating for more orderly worship in chapter 14 for greater comprehension and community building. He suggests that only two or three people speak in tongues, one at a time, and to include interpretation as part of their worship or to remain silent in the first place. Prior to verses 34-35, Paul silences those who planned to speak in tongues but were unable or unwilling to interpret – he is encouraging them to remain silent and not share their ecstatic experience altogether if there is no interpretation included. (1 Cor 14: 27-30).

There is no singling out that he means only female ecstasies should be held to this call for self-censorship or silencing in verses 27-30. Rather, Paul is talking about problems being caused at Corinth by *both* male and female charismatics, all talking at once without providing interpretive teachings for others to learn. It is not about who is practicing speaking in tongues, praying or prophesying at worship, it is how these things are being practiced at worship that Paul finds unacceptable.

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<sup>10</sup> Hays, p. 206.

Richard Horsley agrees that Paul's discussion about speaking in tongues and prophecy in chapter 14 includes both males and females. He writes:  
...the "all" in [chapter 14] verses 23-24, 31 and "each one" in verse 26 assume that women pray and prophesy, and the silencing of women contrasts sharply with Paul's more egalitarian formulations about the relative authority and the mutual obligations of husbands and wives (7: 1-16).<sup>11</sup>

### **Did Paul even write verses 34-35?**

I believe it is fair to question the authenticity of Paul's authorship of 1 Cor 14: 34-35 and their initial inclusion in the original letter to the Corinthians. The issue is highly controversial, because the two lines have appeared in all extant copies of First Corinthians, but they appear in two different locations among the documents, indicating that an interpolation of someone's notes written in the margins towards the end of chapter 14 was a likely possibility. That being said, the fact that these verses appear somewhere in every known copy of Paul's letter implies that if interpolation happened, it would have happened very early after First Corinthians was written. Hays references that "at least one ancient manuscript includes markings suggesting that the scribe considered these words to be a gloss inserted into the text."<sup>12</sup> Bassler also agrees that the verses were most likely not Paul's:

In the early New Testament manuscripts, the verses in question do not always appear at the same point in the argument. In most manuscripts they are found as traditionally printed: after the assertion that God is a God of peace. In some manuscripts, however, they appear after the final words of this chapter. The most likely explanation for this is that the words on women's silence were originally marginal gloss – comments added in the margin of a manuscript by a later reader. Following a fairly common practice, copyists of this manuscript, uncertain as to the origin of the gloss, incorporated the words into the text of the letter, some inserting them in one place, others in another. The fact that the attitude expressed in these verses corresponds not to Paul's expressed views but to the views of the later church (1 Tim 2: 11-12; 1 Peter 3: 1-6) supports this hypothesis of a later addition.<sup>13</sup>

One argument in favor of interpolation is that: with versus 34-35 added to Paul's letter, First Corinthians would now track consistently with the messages silencing women found in the Pastoral letters, especially 1 Timothy, one of the deutero-Pauline letters, believed by many to have been pseudepigraphic, written sometime after Paul's death.

In 1 Tim 2: 11-12, the author commands women to silence in absolute terms, in a tone similar to that in verses 34-35 in First Corinthians chapter 14. That being said, 1 Timothy 3: 11-12 does seem to provide criteria for women to qualify to serve

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<sup>11</sup> Horsley, Richard B. First Corinthians: Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1998. p. 189.

<sup>12</sup> Hays, p. 246.

<sup>13</sup> Bassler, p. 328.



as deacons in the church, depending on which translation is read. Verses 11-12 in the NRSV state “Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well. “

Unfortunately, the NRSV translation includes footnotes that indicate that in the place of “women” at the start of verse 11, the Greek can also be translated as “their [the male deacons’] wives” and the referral to deacons only being allowed to marry once, the Greek could also be translated as “the deacons can only be husbands of one wife.” In both of these alternate translations footnoted in the NRSV, women seem to be excluded from serving as deacons, which would be consistent with the earlier silencing of women in chapter 2 of 1 Timothy.

Gordon Fee notes that the phenomenon of glosses making their way into the New Testament is so well documented elsewhere in the New Testament, that there is no reason to reject that it did not happen in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and could have been done by someone familiar with the Pastoral letters. Fee proposes there are good historical reasons that might account for this marginal gloss: “all relating to the known situation of the church at the end of the first century or the beginning of the second (e.g. the attempt to check a rising feminist movement [cf. 1 Tim 2: 9-15; 5: 11-15] to reconcile 1 Cor 14 with 1 Tim 2.)<sup>14</sup>

Another argument that favors verses 34-35 as marginal gloss instead of Paul’s authorship is that the rhetoric of verses 34-35 is inconsistent with Paul’s argument style used in other parts of First Corinthians. For example, Hays objects to verse 34’s appeal to “the Law” requiring female subordination, claiming it as uncharacteristic of Paul’s way of appealing to Scripture as a source of behavior norms.<sup>15</sup> Fee further supports this argument, pointing out that the problems for Pauline authorship lie with the phrase “even as the Law says.” (1 Cor 14: 34)

First, when Paul elsewhere appeals to “the Law,” he always cites the text (e.g., 9: 8; 14: 21), usually to support a point he himself is making. Nowhere else does he appeal to the Law in this absolute way as binding on Christian behavior. More difficult yet is the fact that the Law does *not* say any such thing.<sup>16</sup>

Additional grammar or writing style disputes have also been raised to question the authenticity of Paul’s authorship of the controversial verses silencing women. Hays notes that the command in verse 34 is suddenly addressed to all churches, no longer speaking to specific issues at Corinth. He observes: “Nowhere else in Corinthians does Paul shift in this way to generalized instruction for the churches at large.” He adds:

This makes no sense at all from a rhetorical point of view in a letter written to a specific congregation, but it does make sense rhetorically if the passage

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<sup>14</sup> Fee, Gordon D. The First Epistle to the Corinthians. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987. P. 699.

<sup>15</sup> Hays, p. 247.

<sup>16</sup> Fee, p. 707.

was added at a later time when the letter was being circulated for the guidance of a wider circle of communities.<sup>17</sup>

Yet another argument in favor of redaction at a later date is that the verses commanding women to be silent in church are rather awkward where they are placed after verse 33 or at the end of chapter 14, indicating that perhaps they were not part of Paul's original letter to the Corinthians. When you remove verses 34-35 altogether, plus verse 36 (which includes two sarcastic, rhetorical questions challenging someone's claims to spiritual knowledge – "Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?"), the discussion of Paul's preference for prophesy over speaking in tongues reads smoothly, uninterrupted. Richard Hays concurs that the placement of these two verses in either location seems intrusive to Paul's arguments in chapter 14.<sup>18</sup> Horsley also agrees: "These sentences silencing women intrude into the argument of chapter 14, which compares prophecy and tongues throughout. They also interrupt the conclusion to the arguments in chapters 12-14..."<sup>19</sup>

### **The challenge of framing 1 Corinthians 14: 34-35 in today's cultural context**

The controversy around these verses is vast. My exegesis only captured a small portion of the issues that have been raised concerning Paul's command that women must be silenced in church. Scholars will continue to argue for centuries to come to try to reconcile the contradictions towards women contained in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Based on my research, I am satisfied that these verses were added in later to mirror the teachings that appeared in 1 Timothy, 1 Peter and other later texts to keep women "in their place." I believe that Paul intended a wider vision in First Corinthians where men and women both participated fully in worship and in spreading the mission and reach of the church in the "between time" while waiting for Christ to return, when all would "know fully" even as they are currently "fully known" by God. (1 Cor 13: 12)

Unfortunately, whether Paul wrote verses 34-35 or not, the message to silence women remains a part of the First Corinthians text. Regrettably, these verses have been used to foster misogynist policies that have marginalized women and prevented their full participation in church leadership and worship for centuries. Sadly, these discriminatory policies remain in place today in some of the more fundamental denominations.

How do we reconcile these two verses in First Corinthians with the cultural values of today? I draw hope that change towards female leadership in the church is possible. Some denominations began to ordain women beginning with the Quakers in the early 1800s. The first Universalist female minister was Olympia Brown,

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<sup>17</sup> Hays, p. 246.

<sup>18</sup> Hays, Richard P. "Paul on the Relation Between Men and Women." A Feminist Companion to Paul. (Amy-Jill Levine, editor). London: T&T Clark International, 2004, p. 145.

<sup>19</sup> Horsley, p. 189.

ordained in 1863. Celia Burleigh became the first female Unitarian minister in 1871. Other denominations have followed suit welcoming ordained women to church leadership ever since. But progress crawls forward at a very slow pace. It took yet another century later for some denominations to first name women as bishops, beginning only as recently as 1980.

Richard Hays provides an appropriate analogy that allows us to place 1 Cor 14: 34-35 within the cultural context of the time it was written, and to not allow those verses to overshadow the theological importance of Paul's overall teachings in First Corinthians. He reminds us:

...the church ultimately came to decide that the institution of slavery – though widespread in the ancient world – was incompatible with the New Testament's fundamental vision of the freedom and dignity of human beings; consequently, those New Testament texts that support slavery (such as Eph 6: 5-9; Col 3: 22-4: 1; 1 Tim 6: 1-2; Titus 2:9-10; 1 Peter 2: 18) must be rejected, or understood as provisional adaptations of the gospel message to a particular cultural setting. ...Similarly, with respect to the issue of women's public leadership, there are good theological reasons to insist that we should be guided by Paul's vision of Christian worship in which the gifts of the Spirit are given to *all members of the church men and women alike*, for the building up of the community.<sup>20</sup>

Echoing Hays observation, I hope and pray that all churches come to realize and reject that the silencing and subjugation of women is *also* incompatible with the New Testament's fundamental vision of the freedom and dignity of human beings. *All* human beings. Amen and may it be so.

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<sup>20</sup> Hays, p. 249.