

1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35

A Continuing Conundrum for Textual Critics

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Introduction

One of the traditional arguments against the admission of women to the priesthood in the Catholic Church is St. Paul's declaration that women must keep silent in church. Paul states:

As in all the churches of the saints, 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 Cor 14:33b-35 NRSV).

Hence, how could a woman preside at the reading of the Word and at the Eucharist if she ought to keep silent in church gatherings? Certainly, this is what this assertion may suggest when 1 Cor 14:34-35 is taken out of context in defense of an ideology that would silence women today. To incessantly employ this problematic text to discriminate and marginalize women in taking "active roles in the building up of the Christian faith especially in base communities and in women's associations"¹ is to overlook one of the fundamental principles of biblical interpretation, i.e., every text must be interpreted in its context. Abstracting a text from its context runs the risk of

1. Judette Gallares, "And She Will Speak: Junia, The Voice of a Silenced Woman Apostle", in *Ecclesia of Women in Asia: Gathering the Voices of the Silenced*, eds. Evelyn Monteiro, S.C. and Antoinette Gutzler, M.M. (Delhi: Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2005), 89-107, esp. 105.

distorting its meaning. This short paper focuses on a careful textual reading of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Is this text Pauline or an interpolation? If it is Pauline, what is Paul's real position and attitude regarding women in this periscope?

The Occasional Nature of First Corinthians

It must be made clear that Paul's genuine letters are 'occasional' or 'situational' in nature. Paul's letters, notes Bart E. Ehrman, "are not essays written on themes or systematic treatises that discuss important issues of theology."² The so-called genuine Pauline letters were written to address specific problems that arose in the Christian communities. 1 Corinthians, written in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8) about 54 C.E., is no exception to this. This was a letter occasioned by concrete situations that Paul felt compelled to address. The Corinthian church founded by Paul was relatively young and small. It was estimated at about fifty persons at the time of the correspondence, yet it was a highly polarized church.³ This factious spirit, which was threatening the unity of the church, is reflected in three texts: 1 Cor 1:10-12; 3:4-5; and 11:18-19. However, this internal division is not only seen in the 'party' labels (1:12 – "What I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ"), but also in the style of argumentation that permeates chapters 7-12. In addition, it is clear from the letter that one of its principal foci is the conduct of the church when it is assembled together. This is true especially from chapter 11 onwards. Apparently the Corinthian Christians were more bent on emphasizing a hyper-individualistic approach to worship (see 1 Cor 11:20-22). The use of the word *ekasto*-⁴ in 1 Cor 14:26 makes this evident.

2. Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 265.

3. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), 156-157.

4. *ekasto*- ("each one") always stresses the individual, and not the community (e.g., 3:13; 7:2, 24; 11:21; 12:7).

Each one has his or her own way of doing things. *Each one* goes ahead with his/her own meal not thinking of others. This is the backdrop for the proper understanding of 1 Cor 14:34-35.

1 Cor 14:34-35 – A *Crux Interpretum*

No bible scholar would deny that the controversial “mulier taceat in ecclesia” in 1 Cor 14:34-35 is a *crux interpretum*.⁵ The uncompromising tone of 1 Cor 14:34-35, together with the difficulty of harmonizing it with Paul’s teaching of prayer and prophecy for women in 1 Cor 11:2-16, have led some commentators to conclude that both are actually contradictory. Moreover, scholars have noted that 1 Cor 14:34-35 interrupts the topic under discussion (i.e., prophecy). After Paul emphasized the superiority of the gift of prophecy over the gift of tongues from verses (vv.) 26 onwards, he then gave specific instructions on how the Corinthians should proceed and behave when they participate in the community worship. Paul’s intention was obviously to put order in the Corinthian church worship. In verse (v.) 33, Paul reminded the Corinthians that “God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” He ended his exhortations with an appeal that “all things should be done decently and in order” (v. 40). Apparently, this is the underlying motive of vv. 26-40. Included in these practical instructions are specific guidelines regarding the exercise of the gifts of speaking in tongues and prophecy (vv. 29-33). They are told to exercise their gifts in succession rather than simultaneously. It is presupposed that every member has something to contribute, as a manifestation of one’s particular gift: “When you come together, *each one* has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation...” (v. 26). Hence, the sudden irruption of the injunction imposing silence on the women in vv. 34-35 comes as a surprise. It is believed to have spoiled Paul’s flow of thought. Indeed,

5. Arnold T. Monera, “Glossolalia and Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14: A Survey of Exegetical Literature” (Unpublished licentiate thesis, Catholic University of Leuven, 1994), 60-77. See also his “The Silence of Women in 1 Cor 14:34-35,” *Religious Studies Journal* 18 (1995-1996): 35-62.

this passage has presented problems on two fronts: for the textual critic and for the interpreter of Paul's theology.

1 Cor 14:34-35 – A Text-Critical Problem

Applying the discipline of textual criticism, let us examine the passage in question.

1. **External Evidence:** this involves the manuscripts themselves and considers the date, character, and geographical distribution of the witnesses.

There is no ancient manuscript of 1 Corinthians that omits 14:34-35. In most of the manuscripts, they are found in their numerical order, i.e., between vv. 33 and 36. The text in this numerical order is attested in these ancient manuscripts:

- a. ξ ⁴⁶ (ca. 200 C.E.; primary Alexandrian)
- b. Uncials
 - **a² 02** (Sinaiticus; 4th c.; primary Alexandrian)
 - **B 03** (Vaticanus; 4th c.; primary Alexandrian)
 - **Y 044** (Athous Lavrensis; 8th-9th c.; secondary Alexandrian)
 - **0243** (10th c.; contains 1 Cor 13:4 - 2 Cor 13:13)
 - Uncials with a Byzantine text [**K 018**(Mosquensis; 9th c.); **L 020** (Angelicus; 9th c.)]
- c. ÷ (Majority Text)
- d. minuscules⁶ **33** (9th c) **81** (1044 C.E.) **104** (1087 C.E.) **256** (12th-13th c.) **263** (13th c.) **365** (13th c.) **424** (12th-13th c.?) **436** (11th c.) **459** (1092 C.E.) **1175** (11th c.) **1241** (12th c.) **1319** (12th c.) **1573** (12th-13th c.) **1739** (10th c.) **1852** (13th c.) **1881** (14th c.) **1912** (10th c.) **1962** (11th-12th c.) **2127**

6. New Testament minuscule manuscripts began to appear in the ninth century.

- (12th c.) **2200** (14th c.) **2464** (9th c.).
- e. versions **vg** (4th-5th c.) **cop**^{sa}(4th c.)^{bo}(9th c.)^{fav}(4th c.); **arm** (1805 / 1984) **eth** (6th c.) *al.*
 - f. Church Fathers: Origen (3rd c.), Chrysostom (4th c.), Theodoret (5th c.), Pelagius (5th c.)
 - g. Printed editions all contain vv. 34-35 between vv. 33 and 36.

Note: (1) In general, earlier manuscripts are more likely to be free from those errors that arise from repeated copying. (2) The Alexandrian text is usually considered to be the best text and the most faithful in preserving the original.

There are some manuscripts, however, mostly “Western” witnesses (Greek-Latin Bilinguals or Latin texts) which transposed vv. 34-35 after 14:40. This variant reading is attested by:

- a. The three bilingual Western manuscripts
 - Codex **D 06** (Claromontanus; 6th c.)
 - Codex **F 010** (Augiensis; 9th c.)
 - Codex **G 012** (Boernerianus; 9th c.)
- b. The first hand of Codex **88** (12th c.; a “Western” cursive)
- c. Two other Old Latin MSS:
 - **Sangermanensis** (e/76; 9th c.)
 - **Armachanus** (ar/61; 9th c. [although this manuscript also omits vv. 36-39, so that its text reads vv. 33, 40, 34-35, in this order])
- d. Two Latin Fathers:
 - Ambrosiaster (4th c.)
 - Sedulius-Scotus (9th c.)

In Codex Fuldensis (ca. 545 C.E.), they were inserted by Victor Capua “in the margin after verse 33, without, however, removing them from their place further down.”⁷ These “Western” witnesses

7. B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Corrected Edition* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1975), 565. In the second edition of *Textual Commentary* (1994), Metzger adds that the evidence of the 6th century Codex Fuldensis is ambiguous.

do not appear to be great; they are of narrow geographical distribution and of a later date.⁸

To sum up: Based on external evidence alone, the **age**, **quality**, **quantity**, and **geographical distribution** of the manuscripts which included vv 34-35 after v. 33 plead in favor of the authenticity of the verses in this sequence.

2. Internal Evidence: this involves transcriptional and intrinsic probabilities.

a. **Transcriptional Probability** (i.e., scribal habits and paleographical features in the manuscripts)

What did the scribe do with the text? How do we explain the other variant readings? When the original text presents a difficulty for the scribe, one is tempted to make an emendation. Sometimes a copyist introduces a secondary passage, perhaps as a gloss⁹ in the margin, and later inserted in several places. Sometimes a scribe may omit a material that was considered “superfluous, harsh, or contrary to pious belief, liturgical usage, or ascetical practice.”¹⁰ Copyists sometimes replace unfamiliar word with a more familiar synonym. Accordingly, textual critics have been guided by some sound rules: (1) “the more difficult reading is to be preferred” (*lectio difficilior*) and (2) “the shorter reading is to be preferred” (*lectio brevior*).

In the case of 1 Cor 14:34-35, we have some witnesses where vv. 34-35 have been transposed after v. 40. The 6th century Codex Fuldensis has vv. 34-35 in the margin after v. 33, without removing them from their place after v. 40. But *why* transpose a passage or add

8. The so-called “Western” witnesses are almost confined to North Africa, Gaul and Italy. “The chief characteristic of ‘Western’ readings is fondness for paraphrase. Words, clauses, and even whole sentences are freely changed, omitted, or inserted. ...‘Western’ witnesses omit words and passages that are present in other forms of texts, including the Alexandrian.” B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 2nd edition* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1994), 6.

9. A gloss is usually written in the margin of manuscripts and serves as a brief explanation of difficult words or phrases by a later scribe.

10. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (1994), 13.

a gloss and then insert it in several places? By transposing the passage after v. 40, certain scribes or copyists were attempting to find a more appropriate location for these verses. Perhaps to these scribes, the passage is out of context between vv. 33 and 36. In other words, the transposition was intentional in the direction of coherence, i.e., to produce a smoother text and as a way to correct the crux.

One textual critic attempted, although unconvincingly, to demonstrate that there are some evidences for an early text lacking 1 Cor 14:34-35.¹¹ His four arguments¹² are along these lines:

1. Ancient witnesses to the text consistently separate vv. 34-35 from v. 33 by intervals or paragraph markings.
2. Codex Vaticanus (fourth century) has a 'bar-umlaut' *siglum* between vv. 33 and 34 similar to *sigla* that elsewhere in Vaticanus appear to indicate awareness of a textual variant.
3. The Latin Codex Fuldensis (sixth century) contains a marginal gloss, apparently intended to replace vv. 34-40, that lacks vv. 34-35.
4. The minuscule Manuscript 88* (twelfth century), which has vv. 34-35 after v. 40 rather than after v. 33, appears to have been copied from a manuscript that did not contain vv. 34-35 at all.

This hypothetical suggestion is interesting but not sufficient to establish the probability of an early text lacking 1 Cor 14:34-35.

- b. **Intrinsic Probability** (i.e., it considers what the author was more likely to have written)

In this level, the textual critic takes into consideration the following: (1) the style and vocabulary of the author through-

11. See Philip B. Payne, "Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor. 14:34-35," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 240-262; and his other article "MS. 88 as Evidence for a Text without 1 Cor. 14:34-35," *New Testament Studies* 44 (1998): 152-158; and most recently, Philip B. Payne and Paul Canart, "The Originality of Text-Critical Symbols in Codex Vaticanus," *Novum Testamentum* 42 (2000): 105-113.

12. Cited in William O. Walker, Jr., *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 213 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 68.

out the book; (2) the immediate context; (3) harmony with the usage of the author elsewhere. Bruce Metzger reminds us that “[s]ince textual criticism is an art as well as a science, it is inevitable that in some cases different scholars will come to different evaluations of the significance of the evidence.”¹³ Let us now apply it to our passage.

1 Cor 14:34-35 is genuinely Pauline. Based on the strength of the textual evidence, the pericope is maintained to be authentically Pauline. Several reasons are offered:

(1) The verses are not lacking in any manuscript and are found in majority of witnesses after v. 33. As E. Earle Ellis rightly points out, “It is difficult if not impossible to suppose that a pericope found in all extant manuscripts was a later interpolation.”¹⁴

(2) Verses 34-35 are asserted to be fitting in context. They are consistent with Paul’s concern. A careful reading of the 1 Cor 14 shows that vv. 34-35 are placed in the general context of order in the gatherings of the faithful. From vv. 26 onwards Paul was emphasizing practical rules of order in the church. In v. 28 the Apostle silenced the glossolalists, if there was no one to interpret; while in v. 30 he silenced the prophets. In the same manner, women (or better ‘wives?’), along with the rest, must keep silent when they have nothing constructive to say. Hence, Paul’s regulation on women was close in structure, language and concern to his previous regulations for glossolalists and prophets.

(3) It would be unthinkable for Paul to purposely contradict himself in the same letter and in his other genuine letters. Hence, there is no contradiction between 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 1 Cor 14:34-35 as commonly argued. In the former, Paul explicitly recognizes women’s right and privilege to speak and prophesy in church meetings, how then would he deny this right three chapters later? Moreover,

13. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 14.

14. E. Earle Ellis, *Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 67-68.

in Gal 3:28 Paul affirms that in Christ there is no longer male or female.

Granted that 1 Cor 14:34-35 is indeed Pauline (that is, it represents the very mind of the Apostle Paul), yet it is not free from difficulties. There are “textual, exegetical, and discourse considerations which can lessen or temper the rather sweeping impact of these two verses.”¹⁵

The first question is related to the positioning of v. 33b (“As in all the churches of the saints”). What is its relation to v. 33a (“for God is a God not of order but of peace”)? Since the 19th century, scholars have debated whether 1 Cor 14:33 forms a unit and the conclusion of a paragraph, or whether it should be divided into two, the second part forming a new paragraph.¹⁶ These two positions are reflected in the NASV (New American Standard Version) and the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version):

³³For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

³⁴Let the women keep silence in the churches ... (NASV; followed by AV, NKJV and Phillips)

³³For God is a God not of disorder but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴women should be silent in the churches ... (NRSV)

Although most English translations agree with the NRSV, “scholarly commentaries,” according to Graham Clarke, “are much more evenly divided.”¹⁷

In favor of v. 33 as a unit. English translations before 1900, especially the King James Version (1611 and revised 1881) considered v. 33 as a complete sentence.¹⁸ The first concern is *textual*. It must be noted

15. Daniel C. Arichea, Jr., “The Silence of Women in the Church: Theology and Translation in 1 Corinthians 14.33b-36,” *The Bible Translator* 46 (1995): 101-112, esp. 102.

16. Graham Clarke, “As in All the Churches of the Saints,” *The Bible Translator* 52 (2001): 144-147, esp. 144.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Arichea, “The Silence of Women in the Church,” 103. The first significant change took place with the publication of the American Standard Version in 1902, where verse 33a was treated as a separate sentence, and verse 33b was linked to verse 34.

that the Greek manuscripts in the ‘Western’ tradition place v. 34-35 (but not the words “as in all the churches of the saints” – v. 33b) after v. 40. This only shows that many ancient scribes considered v. 33 as a self-contained unit, and vv. 34-35 as a separate unit. The second consideration is *stylistic*. If v. 33b is joined with v. 34 as a unit, there is a very awkward repetition of *tai~ ekkhhsiai~*: “As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches.” It is hard to believe that Paul could have written such an ugly sentence. If the phrase, *W~ ej pasai~ tai~ ekkhhsiai~ tw abjwn* (“as in all the churches of the saints”) were the beginning of a new paragraph, one would expect *outw~ ej tai~ ekkhhsiai~ uhwn* (so too in your churches) to follow. Stylistically speaking, it should have been, “As in all the churches of the saints, so too in your churches let the women be silent.” Moreover, in the Corinthian correspondence, Paul appeals to the general church practice at the conclusion of his argument (e.g. 1 Cor 4:17; 11:16).¹⁹ It seems to be Pauline style to place the main subject /theme of a new sentence first (here: “the women”).²⁰ Hence, it is awkward to start the sentence with, “As in all the churches of the saints” (14:33b). If we appeal to the Church Fathers, Chrysostom supports the traditional arrangement of v. 33 as a single unit. If v. 33 is taken as a unit, the immediately following two verses become “a specific and timely admonition rather than a generic and timeless rule.”²¹ What Paul is writing here is not meant to be a rule for all the churches. It is meant for the Corinthian church.

In favor of v. 33b as a new section. The idea of ending the paragraph with v. 33a and starting a new section with v. 33b was first proposed in the 19th century. The argument for this “is not so much a matter of grammar but of discourse.”²² In the verses preceding v. 33, Paul

19. See Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987), 91; David Odell-Scott, “In Defense of an Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor 14.34-36,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17 (1987): 100-103, esp. 101.

20. H. Alford, *The Greek New Testament. An Exegetical and Critical Commentary* Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1980), 599-600.

21. Arichea, “The Silence of Women in the Church,” 104.

22. *Ibid.*, 102.

had been discussing the problem of order in the worship service, and now he ends his appeal by the summary statement, “For God is a God not of disorder but of peace.” It is claimed that this is an appropriate way to end the discussion on orderliness during worship time. Hence, it is better to take v. 33b as relating to what follows. The connection between v. 33b with vv. 34-35 validates Paul’s injunction to silence as a general rule of wide application not only for the Corinthian Christians, but for other Christian communities during Paul’s time as well.

In brief, reading of v. 33 as a unit should be included as a workable option in order to lessen or temper the rather sweeping impact of vv. 34-35. In doing so, the command to women’s silence in vv. 34-35 becomes context-specific to the Corinthian church (and not applicable to every Christian community).

The second question is what to do with v. 36. The positioning of this verse plays a decisive role in the interpretation of vv. 34-35. If v. 36 is placed in the same paragraph with vv. 34-35, then it becomes a summary statement functioning as a condemnation of the Corinthians for their violation of allowing the women to interrupt during church services. If, however, v. 36 marks the beginning of a new paragraph, separated from vv. 34-35, then it is possible to relate it to the whole chapter rather than simply to the matter of women speaking in church meetings.²³

The third question is whether Paul’s injunction to silence is addressed to all women in the Corinthian church or simply to a specific group, namely wives. This concern is valid because of the mention of “husbands” (ajndra~) in v. 35, which seems to suggest that *aii gunaike~* in v. 34 should be taken not as a term referring to women in general, but as referring specifically only to *married* women. If *aii gunaike~* is understood as married women, then the scope of Paul’s injunction to silence becomes limited. It is no longer a generic rule supporting the subordination of women to men, but as a context-specific admonition for wives to have greater respect for their

23. *Ibid.*, 105.

husbands.²⁴ In this case, 1 Cor 14:34-35 does not, contradict 1 Cor 11 where it is presumed that women could legitimately pray and prophesy in public worship.

The fourth question is to identify the context and how this influences the exegesis of vv. 34-35. I maintain that Paul's injunction to silence was regulative probably aimed only at correcting real abuses of pneumatic wives in the corporate worship. It was intended as "an ordering of the ministry of wives in accord with their obligations to their husbands."²⁵ Could it be that there were some wives who were engaged in unwarranted evaluation and asking questions during their husbands' message in the worship service? These wives were disrupting worship when they should be listening. In this sense, it is possible to interpret *laiei`n* in vv. 34-35 as referring not to formal prophesying or proclamation but to making comments and asking questions. This understanding of the injunction seems to fit well Paul's overriding concern for order during corporate worship. But this explanation is only one of the many ways to interpret this controversial text.

1 Cor 14:34-35 is non-Pauline. A growing number of critical bible scholars maintain that 1 Cor 14:34-35 was not written by Paul but was inserted by a later copyist into the text between vv. 33 and 36.²⁶ These scholars, however, disagree on the extent of the

24. See William F. Orr & James Arthur Walther, *1 Corinthians, A New Translation* Anchor Bible 32 (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1976), 312, who opine that "Paul probably is thinking of marital subordination rather than some kind of subordination of all females to all males."

25. E.E. Ellis, "The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor 14,34-35)," in E. J. Epp & G. D. Fee (eds.), *New Testament Textual Criticism. Festschrift for B. M. Metzger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), esp. 217.

26. Among those supporting the interpolation hypothesis include Hans Conzelmann (1975), Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (1980) and Gordon Fee (1987). The most recent material is William O. Walker, Jr., *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, Journal for Studies of the New Testament Supplement Series 213 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 63-90. The interpolation hypothesis has been a long-standing viewpoint among German commentators. D. W. Odell-Scott contends that in the last twenty-five years, the assessment that verses 34 and 35 are a post-Pauline addition is held by a majority of *critical* biblical scholars. See his "Editorial Dilemma: The Interpolation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in the Western Manuscripts of D, G and 88," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 30 (2000): 68-74.

interpolation. Some would include vv. 34-35 as the insertion since these were the verses transposed by “Western” manuscripts D, G and 88 after verse 40.²⁷ Others took 33b-36 as a self-contained section.²⁸ The appearance of 1 Cor 14:34-35 at different locations in some witnesses “constitutes evidence, inconclusive though it be, that the passage may be an interpolation.”²⁹ Arguments usually raised favoring interpolation are the following:

1. In some ‘Western’ manuscripts, vv. 34-35 are found after v. 40. This could suggest that they may have originated as a marginal note and were later incorporated into the text at different places. The displacement of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in some manuscripts is secondary, but it shows that certain scribes were sensitive to the strangeness of the pericope in its present context.
2. 1 Cor 14:34-35 (or 36) interrupts this section of the letter, which can be read easily without these verses. Verse 37 more easily follows 14:33a. Hence, its excision leaves a smoother-flowing text.
3. The claim made in vv. 34-35, that women should keep silent in the churches as a sign of their subordination to the husbands conflicts, and in some cases, contradicts what Paul has said in 1 Cor 11:2-16 and in other canonical Pauline

27. See C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary 7 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1968), 330 and J. Murphy-O’Connor, “Interpolations in 1 Corinthians,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 81-94, esp. 90.

28. Brendan Byrne, *Paul and the Christian Woman* (Homebush: St. Paul Publications, 1988), 65, note 5; R. W. Allison, “Let women be silent in the churches (1 Cor 14,33b-36): What did Paul really say, and what did it mean?” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32 (1988): 27-60, esp. 29-31; B. E. Reid, “Problematic Paul on Women” *New Testament Review* 5 (1992): 40-51, esp. 45; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 246.

29. Walker, *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, 71.

epistles (Gal 3:28) regarding the status of women.³⁰

4. 1 Cor 14:34-35 includes linguistic and theological peculiarities. For instance, the phrase, ‘churches of the saints’ is found only here in Paul.
5. The way Paul appeals to the *law* as basis for Christian action in verse 34 is not typical of his style of argumentation. “Paul generally expresses a somewhat negative view of the law” (cf. 1 Cor 15:56) and “when he wants to develop a scriptural argument he cites the pertinent passage of Scripture (cf. 9:9; 14:21), rather than making a merely general reference under the rubric of ‘the law’.”³¹
6. Verses 34-35 are parallel to 1 Tim 2:11-15 both in content and vocabulary. Hence, it is believed by a number of scholars that 1 Cor 14:34-35 represents the work of an interpolator who sought to bring Paul’s teaching in harmony with the more restrictive teaching in the Pastoral epistles.³² For instance, the term *ejpitrepesqai* (“to be permitted”) appears in the NT only in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2:12. The terms *sigah* / *hsucia* (“silence”) and *manqavnein* (“to learn”) are also found in 1 Tim 2:11-15.
7. 1 Cor 14:34-35 is cited by none of the Apostolic Fathers and by no early ecclesiastical writer prior

30. In the various lists of greetings found in the Pauline letters, a number of women are named who are workers and leaders in the church. As Robin Scroggs rightly observed, “Nothing is said to distinguish the kind of work they are doing from that of men. Absolutely nothing in the texts would suggest a subordination of roles. Paul must have accepted them as equal to male leaders.” See his “Paul and the Eschatological Woman: Revisited,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42 (1974): 532-537, esp. 533.

31. Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina 7 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press) 515.

32. If this is the case, 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:8-15 should probably be read in the light of a growing preoccupation in some groups to control women’s speech in the form of teaching and prophecy as early Christianity moved into the second century.

to Tertullian (160-240 C.E.). The inexplicable failure of an early Christian writer to cite a passage when there is demonstrable familiarity with the letter in which the passage appears is a type of text-critical evidence for interpolation.³³ The inference is that the passage was not included in the text known by this writer.

Considering all the above factors, William O. Walker, Jr.³⁴ has catalogued the different possible types of text-critical evidences for interpolation as follows: (1) the absence of a passage from one or more of the ancient witnesses; (2) the appearance of a passage at different locations in various of the witnesses; (3) the failure of an early Christian writer to cite a passage when demonstrable familiarity with the letter in which the passage now appears and congruence of subject matter would lead one to expect such a citation; and (4) contextual and linguistic evidences. In short, the cumulative weight of the evidence appears to support the view that 1 Cor 14:34-35 is a non-Pauline and particularly post-Pauline interpolation.³⁵

By way of critique, those who maintain that the verses were later additions must argue that they occurred too early in the text's history to leave evidence, i.e., before subsequent manuscripts were copied from the original. However, that is not easy to defend. It becomes quite clear that the main evidence advanced to prove that the passage is a later addition is not so much *textual*, but rather *contextual*, i.e., it awkwardly fits the context. Yet, we have to accept that Paul frequently digressed and digressions were a normal part of ancient writing. As C. S. Keener noted, digressions and parenthetical

33. Walker, *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, 71. This is an indirect evidence for interpretation, one that is based upon an argument from silence, which must be used with caution.

34. *Ibid.*, 66.

35. Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), 86-89, argues that the author of the pastoral epistles wrote under Paul's name to counteract the feminist tendencies in Asia Minor at a time when good order was thought to be more important than the freedom of the Spirit. In other words, the views expressed in 1 Cor 14:34-35 corresponded to the views of the later church.

notes could easily become “interpolations” by “late editors”.³⁶ Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza also thought that the grounds for exclusion of the two verses are more theological than textual.³⁷

Conclusion

That 1 Cor 14:34-35 has evoked differing interpretations show how scholars have grappled with these puzzling verses. Both those who maintain that the passage is Pauline or a later interpolation employ text-critical evidences for their arguments. Even the traditional view that 1 Cor 14:34-35 is Pauline is not without difficulties. In spite of the strength of text-critical evidences favoring the genuineness of the passage, an increasingly growing number of critical and credible bible scholars defend that 1 Cor 14:34-35 was not written by Paul. But even those who defend interpolation hypothesis must satisfy themselves with probabilities not certainties. Sometimes the interpretation arrived at is not on the basis of purely text-critical and exegetical analyses, but rather a “political” or “ideological” one. Yet, purely ideological motivations can likewise hamper an objective analysis of the text. Indeed, 1 Cor 14:34-35 has become a continuing conundrum for text critics. One good thing becomes clear though that the different interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34-35 have sharpened our awareness of the immensity of the problem of the role of women in the church.

36. Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 74.

37. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1983), 230.

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