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4.3 WOMEN WERE ALLOWED TO PRAY AND PROPHESY IN THE CHURCH (1 COR 11:5) SO WHY SHOULD THEY BE SILENT?

The text reads: “And every woman who prays and prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head.”

The author who penned these words, a few minutes later, and further down the same scroll or codex, passed on the following universal prohibition which he received:

As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

Has the writer contradicted himself? Has he forgotten what he had just written above? 1 The first thing we should pay attention to is both cases is the context.

In 1 Corinthians 11:5 Paul addresses himself to the disorder beginning to manifest itself in the Christian community where men (so John Chrysostom thought) were coming before God with a covering over their head. Paul informs the Roman men (because Corinth was a Roman colony 2) that whenever they are before God (“praying or prophesying”) they ought to have their heads uncovered. This applies in and outside the church context, at all times and in all countries, the reason being that he is “the image and glory of God.” So it is not just when a man is in church that he should have his head uncovered, since that would


imply that he is only “the image and glory of God” when he is in church. As he is the “image and glory of God” at all times, so he ought to uncover his head at all times when he is before God in worship. Note that the “uncovering” is limited to those times when a man is engaged in religious activities—“praying and prophesying,” as opposed to his secular activities. From this we learn that there is something very special and awesome about worship. We enter the spiritual realm: we are before God our Maker, the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, and the ministering angels. We are in a truly awesome gathering and it befits us, as mortal men, to conform with alacrity to the protocol set for the occasion.

When men leave such a gathering to return to their earthly pursuits they do not dishonour their Head when they wear a covering, since that may be necessary under certain working and climatic conditions. The mention, then, of “praying and prophesying” was to specify that it was in the religious, as opposed to the secular, field that a man should not have a covering on his head. The very nature of the reason given for this—“because he is the image and glory of God”—makes it plain that it applies to the whole of his religious life and not just to the few hours he spends in a special building (“the church”) on a special day of the week (Sunday). It applies to every day of the week, and in every building or market-square where man prays or prophesies.

Most writers who have not understood the cosmological nature of the principles laid down in 1 Corinthians 11:3 are left with no option but to see a contradiction between 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:34-37.

4.3.1. CHATTERING WOMEN

Some scholars assume that the command to the women to keep silent (1 Cor 14:34) and to learn with a quiet disposition (1 Tim 2:11-12) in the church was not intended to cover praying or prophesying in the church, but was directed at the disorderly women who, it is speculated, were interrupting the meetings (or were chattering among themselves, or were contributing unspiritual or uninspired comments). There are a number of difficulties with this scenario. First, Paul’s remedy is inconsistent with the offence. Where there are problems connected with building up the church (as with tongues or prophecy) Paul prescribes with pin-point accuracy rules that will help to resolve the situation (14:27, 29, 31). So here Paul would have forbidden noisy or disorderly speech, [cf. 1 Thess 5:14, “we exhort you, brothers, admonish the disorderly’”] if that had been the problem, but he would not have banned all speech. This would be like taking a sledge-hammer to crack open a peanut, which would be so untypical of Paul.

Second, Paul would be unfair to punish women but not men. Surely not all the disorderly speech was coming only from women. What scenario could account for disorderly speech being confined only and solely to women with not a single man involved in it? If there were also noisy men, why does Paul not forbid disorderly men and women from speaking in church? Surely Paul is not being impartial when he requests all of one sex to be silent, but permits (by implication) disorderly men to speak in church. Paul’s remedy would be inequitable, for he would be punishing all women for the deeds of some. Why tar all women for the deeds of a few? If the problem was a few women being disruptive or

3 See 4.10.3. for a fuller treatment of this point.
4 Gerald L. Almlie suggested that ‘by synecdoche (by which one example is put for all other similar things) the term praying includes all kinds of man’s speaking to God while prophesying includes all kinds of God’s speaking to man’ (“Women’s Church and Communion Participation: Apostolic Practice or Innovative Twist?” Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship 33 [December, 1982] 41-55, esp. p. 49).
5 The phrase “churches of God” is unique to Paul (10x). S. T. Lowrie (“1 Corinthians XI and the Ordination of Women as Ruling Elders,” PTR 19 (1921) 113-130, esp. pp. 127-129) suggested that it was intended to refer to meetings of Jewish Christians as well as non-Jewish Christians. The same intention lies behind his other unique phrase “gospel of God” (Sc plus 2 Tim 1:8-11).
disorderly then he would have pin-pointed his reply and said, “Let the disorderly women keep silent in the church.” Compare the way he handles the disagreement between two women in the Philippian church: “I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord” (Phil 4:2). Here he actually names the women who are creating the problem. Where there are problems Paul is very specific in handling them, unlike the scenario proposed here of a few women being disruptive and Paul reacting to it by placing a blanket ban on all women (pious and impious) and on all forms of speech (tongues, prophesying, interpretations, hymns and revelations).

Third, Paul’s reasons for the silence are connected with Man’s headship not with any wrong that women have done. It cannot be argued that Paul has only disorderly speech in mind here, for there is nothing in the context that would restrict the meaning of τιμαιωσαν (sigato4san) in this way. Also there is nothing in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, or in the rest of the letter, which indicates that the problem was one of noise among the women in Corinth. This is an imposed scenario on the text to try to explain the word “silent.” If we look at the theological reasons, both on the issue of keeping silent in church and on keeping the head covered, we find that these are grounded in the original creation and have nothing to do with contemporary cultural conventions in Corinth. Paul’s solution leads to a different scenario. His solution is that because Man is the head of Woman she is not to speak in church and when she appears before God in worship she is to cover her head.

Is it just possible that God, in His infinite wisdom, excluded women under both Covenants from a direct input into His worship by cutting out all channels of challenge to the way men were worshipping Him, by commanding them to be quiet and silent when in His presence? Is the real difficulty interpreting or accepting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35?

A. C. Wire noted “That he [Paul] demands this silence after he has silenced uninterpreted tongues and simultaneous prophecy shows that it is not a peripheral disturbance he refers to but some kind of spiritual speaking.”

We noted above the theological reason why men are not to cover their heads. Here the same spiritual logic applies in the case of the woman. In her secular life she need not have any covering on her head, but when she appears before God she must observe His protocol and cover her head (see 1.3 above). In 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 she is forbidden to speak in the church, since this is inconsistent with being in submission according to the Law (14:34). From this it is clear that Paul intended that she can speak and prophesy outside the church meeting, and from 11:5 we learn that whenever she does so she must be covered. So Paul intended no contradiction between 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 14:34-35, rather, they complement each other.

Commentators have failed to do justice to the basic difference between the contexts of these two chapters. In 1 Cor 11:2-16 Paul has focused on the cosmological view regarding the headship relations between God, Christ, Man, and Woman. Chapter 14, on the other hand, is dealing with a detail in the headship relationship between the last pair in the cosmological scheme, namely, the Man-Woman relationship as it affects church worship.

The command to be silent is not a concession to local custom, nor to prevailing concepts of propriety, but is founded on theology—on the headship of Man, and on the nature of submission and the stipulations of the Law where no provision was made for women to be priests or sing in the Temple choir, etc. The “silence” was also observed in all the New Testament churches, so it was not something peculiar, or confined, to the church in Corinth. “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches.”

Some try to limit and define the silence as a restriction on women asking questions in the church service. This would allow them to speak if it did not involve asking questions. The objection is twofold. First, between the total ban on speaking in v. 33a and the provision that women ask their questions at home in v. 35a comes v. 34b giving the reason for the total ban on speaking. Verse 34b is a concession to what looks like women being left out of the learning process.

10 See also under 4.10.3.
11 There is some uncertainty in the English Versions whether to put the first half of this sentence with what follows or with what goes before it. See Appendix A for the translations.
Second, v. 35b fits in with the total ban because any speaking of any kind would be a disgrace. The reason for this is that the actual church meeting is primarily a male community in which Christ and the Spirit are present in a teaching capacity through the use of spiritual gifts but especially through prophesying. Every man is capable of prophesying and the gift is given so “that all may learn” (14:31). The women may learn from listening to the male prophets, but they cannot contribute prophecies of their own to the learning process. Men must teach men. It was the duty of the priests to teach the Law of the Lord to the people (Deut 17:11; 33:10). Hence the ban on women teaching in church in 1 Timothy 2:12 (by extension from the home to the church context) is consistent with the position in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

Holmyard made the observation that—

The desire of the women “to learn” (v. 35) corresponds to the desire to learn mentioned in verse 31. Paul’s introduction of questioning by women in verse 35 suggests that Spirit-led questioning was an accepted aspect of church gatherings. For Paul implied that the desire to question was what could tempt the women to speak. If questioning had been inappropriate in the worship service, Paul could simply have said so, without connecting the prohibition with femininity. Rather, Paul barred women from engaging in an activity permitted to men.12

Another way to get round Paul’s total ban is the suggestion that 14:34 disallows all forms of speech to women except divine utterances.13 But Holmyard pointed out that all speaking in 14:1-33 is of this nature (cf. 1 Pet 4:10-11). He also noted that the same verb requesting women to be “silent” in 14:34 is used of the men in vv. 28, 30 to be silent in the use of their spiritual gifts which included tongues and prophesying. He concluded that the plain intent of v. 34 is to exclude women from the speaking mentioned in vv. 1-33.

Another way round the ban on women speaking was to suggest that a wife was to keep silent in the church if she had a question about her husband’s prophecy. Paul tells her to keep her question until she got home.14

There are four objections to this. First, Why should she? If he’s a false prophet and she has been given the gift of discernment to recognise it, does she not have a duty to warn the church?

Second, if Paul were consistent he ought to have told the husband to keep silent in the church if he had a question about his wife’s prophecy. The inconsistency can be taken as proof of his male chauvinism since this alone can explain the motive behind such an unfair ruling.

Third, this solution overlooks Paul theological reason, namely, that under the Law the Spirit made no provision for women to take an active part (vocal/choir or practical/priestly) in the worship of God. Public worship was totally given over to the male members of Yahweh’s community. The women were not permitted to speak then, and Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are still not permitted to speak now. It is God’s will that the men retain their headship duty in the worship of His Son, as had been the case when they worshipped Him in the Temple.

Fourth, Paul uses the verb “to speak,” not the verb “to question” which the solution requires.

Another way to get round the total ban is the suggestion that 14:34 disallows women to speak in connection with “judging” the prophetic messages, that is, they consider 14:34-35 to be “a stricture against women entering into the judgment of the prophets who were often men, and thus violating the divinely ordained structures of authority.”15 The unstated

assumption in this interpretation is that 11:5 implies that women prayed and prophesied in church. \[16\]

There are three difficulties with this view. \[17\] First, it debars women from entering into judgment when the prophet is a woman, if we grant that they are right in their assumption that women were permitted to deliver prophecies in church. No principle of authority is violated if a woman passes “judgment” on another woman’s prophecy.

Second, could women enter into judgment with male prophets who deliver their prophecies outside the confines of the church building? If the answer is Yes, is this not a violation of “the divinely ordained structures of authority”? If the answer is No, where is the command forbidding them? 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 only commands them not to question them in church (granted their presupposition that women could speak in church).

Third, there is nothing to stop a woman, wittingly or unwittingly, using her privilege (“to pray,” or better still, “to prophesy”) to preach to the men and teach them a thing or two, if she judges that they are in the wrong, in her spiritual opinion (and she could be right!). Would this not be a violation of “the divinely ordained structures of authority”? If the answer is Yes, how would the Elders discipline her? Could they command her to be silent? Could they withdraw her God-given right to pray and prophesy in church? If the answer is No, then what happens to the command that she is not permitted “to enter into the judgment of the prophets who were often men”? I presume a man could say all that the example woman said and he could not be censured for it, because he does not come under the rule of keeping quiet during the “entering into judgment” of the prophets (male and female) revelations.

If women are allowed to pray and prophesy in church (but not on the same terms as men, in as much as they must not use the occasion to exhort or teach the men) then the men must listen very carefully to every sentence she utters to see that she has not broken the rule. In other words, the men must “enter into judgment” over every woman’s prayer to safeguard their privilege of being above judgment by a woman. In time would a list of certain judgmental phrases be drawn up which women would be debarred from using lest they give offence to even one man present who hears her prayer or prophecy? Where would this process stop? Would certain areas or topics of church life be banned from comment by every woman in their prayers and prophecies, such as how the men were running the affairs of the church, or not getting on with preaching the Gospel to the heathen? Would there be Church Courts set up in every church to hear men’s complaints, and Appeals Courts to deal with the flood of appeals by indignant women? (See 4.3.8 on what it means to “discern/judge” prophetic messages.)

4.3.2. CHRISTIAN SYNAGOGUES

The origin of the church in Corinth is given in Acts 18:1-17. There was a large Jewish population there and Paul “was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath persuading both Jews and Greeks” that Jesus was the Messiah. \[18\] Only when they became

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\[16\] This assumption is answered more fully under 4.10.3.


violent toward him did he leave off trying to persuade them and, with the ruler of the
synagogue, he set up the first Christian synagogue in the house of Justus which adjoined
the Jewish synagogue. So the first Christian synagogue was composed of Jews and Greeks. For
hermeneutical purposes then, “We must bear in mind also that women probably in
synagogue fashion sat separately in church in Corinth. There would be no opportunity of
whispered asides to husbands during the service.”

When the synagogue emerged it was patterned on the segregation instituted in the
Temple worship. Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC—40 AD) describes a typical synagogue
setting (albeit of a sect of the Jews called Therapeutides):

This common sanctuary in which they meet every seventh day is a double
enclosure, one portion set apart for the use of men, the other for the women. For
women too regularly make part of the audience with the same ardour and the
same sense of their calling. The wall between the two chambers rises up from
the ground to three or four cubits built in the form of a breastwork, while the
space above is left open. This arrangement serves two purposes; the modesty
becoming to the female sex is preserved, while the women sitting within ear-
shot can easily follow what is said since there is nothing to obstruct the voice of
the speaker.

Even in large non-religious public gatherings the men and women were separated.
A third century AD synagogue at Kirbet Shema’ in Upper Galilee had a separate entrance
to the women’s gallery to ensure that men did not come into contact with women to preserve
the men’s ceremonial purity, no doubt.

Men formed the body of the worshippers and women gathered as a group out of line
of sight of the men. Sometimes this resulted in a curtain separating the men from
the women, at other times it meant a gallery was built to accommodate them. At other times
they remained in a side or back lobby, but there is no tradition of them ever contributing
to any part of the synagogue service. Rabbi Hiyya was asked:

Whereby do women earn merit? By making their children go to the synagogue to
learn Scripture and their husbands to the Beth Hamidrash to learn Mishnah,
and waiting for their husbands till they return from the Beth Hamidrash.

Woman was primarily a homemaker and homekeeper and in an age when there
were not the modern cooking facilities that we have today (or no police force to protect your
property) someone had to be at home. In addition, if she spent her time in study of the
Jewish Torah it was feared that her care of the household would suffer. The Talmud
(Kiddushim) states that men are liable to keep, and women are exempt from, “all
affirmative precepts limited to time.” In other words, women were exempt from mandates
which necessitated their leaving home for any period of time. Woman was always destined

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esp. p. 20. By ‘hermeneutical purposes’ is meant the principles and methods for deriving the contemporary
relevance of an ancient text once is original meaning has been established by linguistic exegesis. The evidence for
the separation of the genders in the Temple and synagogue has been challenged by Lee I. Levine, The Ancient

21 See also 4.4.5 and 4.8.4 below.

22 See Baby. Talmud, b. Qidq. 81a [mid.], and Brooten, op. cit., p. 134.


24 Five synagogues dating from the 3rd to 5th cent. AD have been found to contain evidence of a gallery. See B. J.
Brooten, Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 118-121. The
Apostolic Constitutions (Syria, AD 380) indicate that the deaconess supervised the seating and behaviour of the
female section of the worshipping community. She was a keeper of the doors to prevent men from mingling in
the women’s section of the church (Apos. Const. 2: 57f., 2. 26f. 3. 15f., 19). Compare the same duties in the 5th-
7th documents from the Eastern Churches in A. G. Martimort, Deaconesses: An Historical Study (San Francisco:
Ignatius Press, 1986). See also Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry

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to be a homemaker from the moment she was created. So much so that her body came to be perceived as constructed for this role. In the book of ‘Erubin in the Talmud, Rabbi Hisda interprets Genesis 2:22, “and God took man’s rib and he made it into a woman”:

This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, built Eve in the shape of a storehouse. As a storehouse is (made) wide below and narrow above so that it may contain the produce, so was (the womb of) a woman (made) wide below and narrow above so that it may contain the embryo.

The synagogue segregation of the sexes was not a new innovation but something old, something that Yahweh Himself had introduced. That was the precedent for segregating the men from the women. The women remained silent during the synagogue meeting.26 R. Loewe, “. . . the factors already mentioned . . . preclude active participation that goes beyond joining in the prayers.”27 Philo (20 BC—40 AD) describes a typical synagogue Sabbath service:

And indeed they [the men] do always assemble and sit together, most of them in silence except when it is the practice to add something to signify approval of what is read. But some priest who is present or one of the elders reads the holy laws to them and expounds them point by point till about the late afternoon, when they depart having gained both expert knowledge of the holy laws and considerable advance in piety.28

Of the Temple, Flavius Josephus [c. AD 37-95] could write, “There was one large gate, through which such as were pure came in, together with their wives, but the Temple further inward at the gate was not allowed to the women” (Antiq. XV. II. 5).

Given that in New Testament times Jewish men and women worshipped in separate courts around the Temple (the Court of the Women, the Court of Israel, and the Court of the Gentiles)29 and that Jesus and his disciples never mixed with, or sat alongside, women in worship the whole of their lives, we would expect the Apostolic Church to continue the synagogue practice, where women joined in the collective parts of the service (singing and the set prayers)30 with their menfolk, but were not permitted to speak in the synagogue as is the practice still today in orthodox synagogues.

Frere has set out the practice of the church service as it obtained in the Eastern Church (more than in the West) at the end of the fourth century using early sources such as the Apostolic Constitutions, the Ethiopic Church Order, the Arabic Didascalia, The Testament of the Lord, the Syriac Didascalia, and the Canons of Athanasius. Part of his description is as follows:

The church is an oblong building with a court in front and turned to the east. It has two entrances at least, one for men and one for women . . . . Within the sanctuary is also the place of the other clergy, who stand with the bishop at the consecration of the Eucharist in their degrees; sometimes there are included with them those who have special charismata, or spiritual gifts, and even women, in the shape of the Order of Widows.

In the congregation the sexes are divided, either on opposite sides of the church, or with the men in front and the women behind. At the back are the various classes of penitents, and possibly some heathen. The deacons and other officers move about, seeing that all are in their right place, keeping good order, and waking up those who go to sleep. A deacon keeps the men’s door, and a

28 Philo, Hypothetica 7.13.
subdeacon or a deaconess the women’s [there were no women deacons in the West for hundreds of years after the Church was founded]. Late-comers are kept waiting outside until a suitable moment when they can enter without causing disturbance. The [vowed to be] virgins and ascetics sit at the head of the congregation; then the married; the young of either sex sit or stand at the back. . . Then the Liturgy of the Faithful, the second part of the service, begins with further suffrages, a prayer, and the kiss of peace, the bishop kissing the clergy, the laymen the men, and the women the women. . . . At the Communion the clergy receive first, then widows, [vowed] virgins, newly baptized, and children; then the bulk of the laity, the women with their heads covered.

Note the three distinguishing features that characterised the early Eastern Church and which were possibly carried over from the synagogue: (1) separation of the sexes; (2) no cross-gender kissing; and (3) women have their heads covered.31

It was the universal practice of the Early Church for the entire worship service to be borne by the men, and probably for the women to participate in a communal way with them. According to E. R. Goodenough it was customary in Jewish worship for the men to worship on behalf of the household.32 Hooker noted: “According to Paul . . . it is man, and not woman, who is the glory of God, and will therefore naturally play the active role in worship.”33 In the earliest Christian documents laying down church law (4/5th cent. AD) it expressly states that no woman, however learned and holy, is to teach in an assembly of men.34 Another explicit statement excluding women is Canon 44 of the Synod of Laodicea (AD 347-381). Women were never ordained to the ministry for 1900 years in the main branches of the Church. The universality of the practice of the church in early ages is conclusive about its understanding of the teaching both of Paul and the Apostles.35

The separation of the men from the women should be borne in mind when reading the canonical epistles of Paul, Peter, James, and John, because their writings were addressed specifically and directly to men in the first place.36 The reason for this is that when Yahweh set up His own worship in the Tabernacle in the wilderness He deliberately made no provision for the women to appear before Him. The Law was directed specifically with men in mind, as can be seen in the grammatical gender used throughout, although the whole nation, men, women and children, were at times present on three formal occasions (Deut 29:11; 31:12; Josh 8:33). The husband represented the family.37 When the Temple was built in Jerusalem a Court of the Women was set up. This segregated the men from the women in accordance with the way Yahweh expected things to be done in His Church before the coming of His Son.

Now, given that the synagogue was the only model around in the time of the Apostles it does not surprise us to find from the Epistle of James that whole synagogues

31 In Notes and Queries for Readers and Writers, Collectors and Librarians volume 180 [15th Series] Jan—June 1941 (see under 26 April, 1941, p. 298) there is a note on “Separation of Sexes in Church.” It reads: “In certain answers to visitation questions of a bishop in 1638 husbands and wives are reported by name ‘for sitting together,’ and are ordered to be parted, ‘the wife to be placed with the other women.’ In one instance ‘some other men or man’ was ordered to be placed in the pew with the husband, after his wife had been ejected.” The uninterrupted practice of women sitting on one side and men on the other was continued in the Anglican church of All Saints, Margaret Street, London, within living memory of a former member of that church.


33 M. D. Hooker, op. cit., p. 415.


36 For the data see Chart 19. Title: “Paul and the New Testament writers addressed their letters to men.”

37 The representative principle can be seen in Ex 34:7; Lev 4:15; 16:17, 22). Corporate responsibility can be seen in Lev 8:11; Num 8:12; Dt 13:12; Josh 22:18.


39 Origen (AD 254) refers to James as the Lord’s brother, who presided over the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; Gal 1:18-19). He had already inspired the circular epistle mentioned in Acts 15:9-20, this and the position of authority he held in later times (see Josephus, Antiq. XX, ix. 1; Eusebius, H.E. II. 23) all lead to the supposition that this is the same person as the Lord’s brother. There is a verbal connection between his Acts 15:20 directive and this Epistle in 1:29. Oesterley points out six other parallels between the two writings (The Expositor’s Greek New Testament. Editor W. Roberton Nicoll [5 vols.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910] vol. IV, “James” by
converted to Jesus’ teaching and became, in effect, Christian synagogues. “For if there come into your synagogue [συναγωγήν] a man with a gold ring, . . .” (Jas 2:2 RV).

There were Christian synagogues as far away as Rome. An early Christian work was “The Shepherd of Hermas.” The oldest fragment of it is dated to ca. AD 175. The work itself is dated no later than the middle of the second century AD. It was written in Rome. The work circulated in the Eastern and Western churches soon after the middle of the second century. It was soon translated into Latin and quoted by Irenaeus (AD 202) in Gaul, Tertullian (AD 220) in North Africa, and by Clement (AD 215) and Origen (AD 254) in Alexandria. The author is said by Origen to have been the Hermas that Paul greeted in Rom 16:14 (cf. AD 58) and he regarded it as Scripture. Others have suggested Hermas, the brother of pope Pius I (c. AD 140-155). The passage reads: “When then the man who hath the divine spirit cometh into an assembly [or synagogue, τις συναγωγήν] of righteous men . . . then the angel of the prophetic spirit, who is attached to him, filled the man. . . In this way then the Spirit of the deity shall be manifest.” There is some evidence that some Christian churches separated the men and women in synagogue fashion.

The Epistle of James is a general one and addressed to the entire Jewish nation—the Twelve Tribes—scattered throughout the then known world. It was, therefore, read in dozens if not scores of Christian synagogues where the practice of segregating the men from the women was continued, since there was nothing in the Gospel to say they were to discontinue it, and much to commend it, chiefly because, as in the Old Covenant, the burden of worship fell on the men and the women were commanded to keep silent as they had been in all the Jewish synagogues. Consequently the writings of the Apostles to the churches (really Christian synagogues) are addressed to the “brothers.” Paul did not like to use the term “synagogue” for the churches he founded. Likewise he avoided using the term “pious ones” for Christians (οἰκονόμοι; translation of ἁγιός in the LXX) preferring instead the term “holy ones” (ἅγιοι; translation of ἁγίος in the LXX).

Under the Old Covenant, according to rabbinic tradition (cf. Deut 17:1) women did not constitute valid witnesses. Paul lived with this ruling, and so, when he came to list

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44 However, once it became obvious that the ritual and ceremonial laws no longer applied to Christ’s followers it was just a matter of time before mixed congregations arose. But this took considerable time because deaconesses were doorkeepers of the church doors by which women entered, as male deacons were of the men’s entrances. This is shown by the evidence of the Apostolic Constitutions, the Ethnic Didascalia, and the interpolator of the Ignatian Epistles. See The Ministry of Women, A Report by a Committee appointed by His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, with Appendices and Fifteen Collotype Illustrations (London: SPCK, 1919). That it took some time for mixed congregations to develop can be inferred from the ban that Origen (AD 254) put on women entering a church building at the time of their menstrual period (see G. Tavard, Woman in Christian Tradition [Notre Dame, 1973], p. 95). Cf. Lev 15:19-29 for the OT laws on menstruation.

45 The reason for this may have been that in the period leading up to the NT age the συναγωγή Ἀποστόλων (‘Synagogue of the Pious Ones’) denoted a religio-political party which opposed the Hellenisation of Judea (cf. 1 Macc 2:4; 7:13; 2 Macc 14:6), consequently Paul avoided these terms because the Church of Jesus Christ was to be a-political. Christ’s Kingdom was not of this world. In the Psalms the OT saints are called άγιοι 59 times and άσπιλοι 26 times where it is used only six times further outside the Ps and Prv. of the canonical books of the OT.

46 See Siphra Deuteronomy 190 (the oldest Jewish work which disqualifies women from acting as witnesses on the grounds that witnesses are always referred in the OT in the masculine) and Josephus, Antiquities, IV 219; and Moshe Meiselman, Jewish Women in Jewish Law (New York: KTAV, 1978), pp. 73-80. Women and kings were not accepted as witnesses, as well as damaged human beings. He warns of the fallacy that “like results implies like causes.” No one, he concluded, knows why kings and women were excluded. It was just accepted by Jews that this was the law and that was the end of the matter. Cf. also J. M. Baumgarten, “On the Testimony of Women in IQSh,” JBL 76 (1957) 266-69, who shows that women were outside the judicial system in Qumran, as were defective persons according to H. J. Cadbury, “A Qumran Parallel to Paul,” Harvard Theological Review 51 (1958) 1-2. Where a woman was the only witness to an event her testimony, would, in certain cases, be admissible, see Yebamoth 16:7; Ketuboth 2:5; and Eduthy 3:6. For example, men could not enter the women’s quarters and so could not be witnesses to what happened there.
the witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection (and remember he addressing his letter to men) his list does not include a single woman, and yet everyone knew from the Gospels that Mary Magdalene was the first to see him and many other women as well, before He was seen by the apostles. According to Jewish law, Peter was the first witness to Jesus’ resurrection, hence Paul begins his list with Peter/Cephas (1 Cor 15:5).

On the place of women in Roman society we have the account of Cornelius Nepos (end of first century BC) who notes that Greeks would be shocked by some Roman standards such as:

Who among the Romans is ashamed to take his wife to a party (convivium)? In whose household does the mother (materfamilias) not hold the place of honour and circulate in full public view? These things are quite otherwise in Greece. The woman is not invited to a party except with relatives, nor does she sit down anywhere in the house except in the inner part which is called the women’s quarters (gynaeconitis), where no men can approach unless closely connected by family ties (Vitae praef. 6-7).

In Roman and Greek society distinctions between public and private carried gender markings. The forum was a man’s world, also politics, elections, the administration of justice and public speaking, were all activities which women would never dream of getting involved with. The domestic sphere was the sphere that women excelled in, and in which she might display the distinctive female virtues celebrated on so many tombstones: of modesty, chastity, fidelity and woolmaking, all of which are endorsed by the household codes of the New Testament. The entertainment area in the Greek (symposium) home never permitted men external to the household to mix with female members of the household, in contrast to the practice in the Roman (convivium) home. This contrast in etiquettes has implications for the NT practice of house churches, where it is very unlikely that men and women mixed indiscriminately as is the practice today in Western churches. If men and women did meet in this way they would have conformed to the synagogue pattern of segregation.

4.3.3. PAUL ADDRESSES MALES IN HIS CHURCH LETTERS

From the manner in which the Apostles addressed their congregations it is clear that the synagogue model is in view throughout. In the speeches in Acts the men are addressed throughout. Throughout Paul’s nine epistles he constantly addresses the church as “brothers.” Not once in the whole New Testament is a congregation addressed as “brothers and sisters,” as is commonly done today, despite the fact that the NRSV translates 1 Cor 15:1, “Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, . . .” There is no word for “sisters” in the Greek here. So conscious is Paul at times that he is addressing the men

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46 The NRSV, predictably, translates 1 Cor 15:6 as, ‘Then he [Jesus] appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time.’ The Greek has only 500 brothers. The translators of the NRSV, in their mechanical translating of ‘brothers’ into ‘brothers and sisters’ missed the cultural and legal background that determined the composition of Paul’s list, and thereby reduced the number of male witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection to 250.

47 See Diana E. E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (eds.), 1 Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1996), p. 104. On the influence of gender in the architecture of the home in Roman and Greece society see pp. 104-115 and the extensive bibliography there. Separation of the sexes within the home (i.e., reserved zones) was observed for all sorts of reasons, not least, the need for modesty and privacy.


49 F. J. A. Hort, Christian Ecclesia, p. 229, noted that in the apostolic age the Church was ‘apparently the sum of all its male adult members.’

50 See under 4.8.5. and John H. Elliott, A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981) who made the same discovery as the author. The assumption of most scholars is that “brothers” is an inclusive word for men and women, an assumption that regrettably blurred the cultural background against which the epistles ought to be constantly read.

51 The NRSV is not to be trusted as it has a policy of deliberately mistranslating the Greek in the interests of inclusive language. Other instances where ‘brothers’ has been deliberately replaced by ‘brothers and sisters’ are Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 1:10; 11, 26; 15:31, 50; 16:15, 20; and many other instances; or replaced by ‘friends’, see 1 Cor 14:39; or
that he does not speak directly to the women/wives who are clearly there in the congregation. Rather, he speaks to the women through their menfolk: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted to them to speak, but let them be in subjection. . . . And if they. . . let them ask their husbands at home” (1 Cor 14:34-35). We might have expected him to break off addressing the men to speak directly to the women, as he does in the household codes (Eph 5:22—6:9; Col 3:18—4:7).

Column A gives the total occurrences of the word ἀδελφὸς “brother” (in sg. and pl. forms). Column B gives the total times the congregation is addressed as “brothers” or, “my brothers” (plural only) (following the Majority Greek Text).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EPISTLE</th>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>1:10, 11, 26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 7:24, 29; 10:1; 11:2, 33; 12:1; 14:6, 20, 26, 39; 15:1, (31 UBS), 50, 58; 16:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1:8; 8:1; 13:11</td>
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<td>Galatians</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ephesians</td>
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<td>1:12; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 8</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>1:2, 9, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Peter</td>
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<td>2 Peter</td>
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<td>1:10</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 John</td>
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<td>Jude</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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Paul appears to reserve the term “saints” for the whole Christian community of men, women and children including the domestic servants and slaves that made up the household; and to use the term “brothers” to refer only to the male members. Compare Colossians 1:2, “to the saints in Colossae, and the faithful brethren in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” There is no clear cut example anywhere in Paul’s writings of the generic use of “brothers” to include sisters or women in general. 53

In this regard it is interesting that the apostolic writers were addressing men when they said, “Greet one another with a holy kiss” (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14). The grammatical gender is masculine. Given the separation of the male and female worshippers that God introduced into His Old Testament Church, it would have been against proper decorum for men to start kissing women. 54

The fact that the apostolic writers have clearly the men in mind when they are writing to the churches should not surprise us. The same concern dominates and characterises all the Old Testament scriptures because it is directed at the circumcised, Covenant community, who are responsible for carrying out the terms of the Covenant. Even the wording of the Ten Commandments shows that men, not women, are being addressed (see Ex 20:8, 12, 17; cf. 23:26). The purpose behind the laws is stated in Deuteronomy 6:2; 14:23.

 replaced by ‘beloved’, see 1 Cor 15:58.

53 The translation and emphasis is mine following the Majority Greek text. The Alexandrian (or Egyptian) text omits ‘your’. See 4:34.

54 Note that this word study is confined to use of “brothers” in direct address. There may be instances where “brothers” may be put for the principal part of humanity as in Rom 8:29 and Rev 12:10, but this is not evidence that “brothers” means “brothers and sisters.” It means part is put for the whole.

55 For a fuller treatment of this practice, see 4:8.7 below.

56 G. P. Hugenberger (“Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim 2:8-15,” JETS 35 [1992] 360 n. 78) misses the point of the masculine addressees. The principle of headship has determined that God addresses men and not women. The argument then would be that since men are placed
Fathers, not mothers, were responsible for teaching the Law to their sons (Deut 6:7). Priests were given the responsibility to teach God’s Torah to the entire nation (Lev 10:10). The responsibility for teaching males was laid on the shoulders of the men, and not left to the women, and this is in keeping with the headship responsibilities that God gave to Man.

The passing on of the faith fell to the male members. Three times a year every male had to appear before Yahweh with a present in his hand. When his son asked what was the meaning of the Passover he would very probably have been with his father and other male members of his family going up to Jerusalem, because the Passover was not a family affair until after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

In Exodus 12:1-27 Moses gives full directions for the observance of the first Passover which were unique to it: (1) the people killed their own lambs on their own site. Immediately after the Exodus, this aspect was withdrawn in subsequent Passovers, and the killing of the lambs carried out only by the priests and only beside the central sanctuary (Tabernacle or Temple)(Deut 16:5). (2) The people sprinkled the blood on the doorposts and lintels; this was never repeated again as the blood was passed to the priest nearest the altar, and there disposed of.(3) They had to be dressed ready for instant exit from the country (with their loins girded). (4) They had to have their sandals on. (5) They had to have a staff in their hand. (6) They had to eat in haste. And (7), they could not leave the house until the morning. The family setting was due to the exigencies of the occasion. The emphasis on the family gathering under one roof in the first Passover was subordinated in subsequent Passovers to Yahweh’s need to have every male appear before him “at the place where he would place his name.” The form of the second and subsequent Passovers was altered to reflect Yahweh’s desire to establish his control, or headship, of all the circumcised members of his people.

None of the unique features of the first Passover noted above applied in the case of Jesus’ last Passover with his disciples. Here we see a situation where the meal was eaten reclining (not standing with staff in hand), in a leisurely manner (not in haste), and without the family present (the wives and children of the Twelve were absent). In effect, we had twelve possible heads of families coming together, without the distraction of a family setting, to commemorate the Exodus event in a very serious manner. The fact that Jews were coming from all over the world to Jerusalem may have made it difficult to bring their families with them. In any case it was not compulsory for women and children to be present at the three national feasts, and this may account for the all-male gathering in the Upper Room. Even so, many women (including Jesus’ mother) came up with Jesus to the Passover, but the biblical custom of the times prevented mixed gatherings (but see Acts 1:14) and so they, along with Jesus’ mother, would have observed the Feast in their own quarters. We should not put too warm a glow on the modern Jewish custom of observing the Passover in the home. This would not have been the custom until after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

The Passover was never intended to be an exact, annual re-enactment of the first Passover with its practical focus on the family gathering together to move out of Egypt. In the second and subsequent Passovers Yahweh split each family according to gender and all the male members were to converge at “the place the Lord your God shall choose” (Deut 16:2). The males, no doubt, appeared as the representatives of their families. This is in keeping with what we know of the headship of man and his leadership in offering sacrifice to God going back to the time of Adam. The men left the following morning to return to their homes (Deut 16:7). It was in keeping with this strong obligation on the male members to appear before God that kept Jesus’ mother from being present at the Last Supper. Once again we see the need to interpret Scripture against its own divinely created culture. It was a theological culture because every aspect of Israelite life was shaped and dominated by Yahweh’s thinking and Yahweh’s values and Yahweh’s world-view.

directly under Law by man’s Head (God) consequently all under man’s headship are likewise under these Laws (where they are relevant); but the manner in which a man’s family come under these Laws is not simply linguistic, or for brevity’s sake, or because legal laws are commonly put in the masculine form: headship has determined the linguistic form in which Yahweh puts the whole of humanity under His Laws.

56 For a comprehensive survey of women’s contribution to OT worship see Clarence J. Vos, Woman in Old Testament Worship (Delft: N. V. Venenigde Drukkerijen Judels & Brinkman, 1968). Roger Gryson advised that this work ‘should be used cautiously because more than once the author interpreted the Old Testament references in a way that is more favourable to women than the letter of the text allows’ (The Ministry of Women in the Early Church, ET Jean Laporte and Mary Louise Hall. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1976, p. 126 n. 1).

It is interesting that the phrase “brothers and sisters” occurs as an addition to 1 Corinthians 11:2, “I commend you brothers and sisters,” in DFGKLΨ 33 (mainly the Western Text witnesses) and some early translations (Old Latin, Vulgate, Syriac, Gothic and Ethiopian). Paul never uses this form of address in any of his letters, so that it is unlikely that it is original here.

“Paul places Peter first among the witnesses of the resurrection (1 Cor 15:5), because in the document 1 Corinthians 15:1-9, which must be understood as tenable in law, women could not be cited as witnesses according to the understanding of the law at that time.”

This fact exposes the danger of indiscriminately replacing “brothers” globally with “brothers and sisters” as is done in some feminist/inclusive New Testament translations, because the 500 “brothers” in 1 Corinthians 15:5 can only be males. By translating “500 brothers and sisters” the number of male witnesses is reduced to 250 men (cf. NRSV).

4.3.4. 1 CORINTHIANS 14 AND ITS SETTING

Every aspect of the life of the Early Church was shaped and dominated by Christ’s thinking, Christ’s moral values, Christ’s world-view. It was Christocentric; it was a theological culture. God, who was the head of every man from the creation of Adam until the incarnation of His Son, handed over this headship to His Son, so that all men from that time onwards were under an obligation to approach God only through His Son. This was something completely new in the relationship between the Creator and His creation. This change was made in heaven but it had very practical implications for every man living on the earth. The head of every male was God up until the coming of Christ, now the head of every male is Christ, and will be until the end of this age. This revolutionary change in man’s relationship to God dominated Paul’s theology. Having lived in a theological culture all his life under the direct headship of God Paul could appreciate the theological implications of God making His Son the new Head of His creation. The relationship that the theologically shaped Hebrew family had with Yahweh was shifted to the Lord Jesus Christ. But the structure and obligations of the family were not altered by this cosmic shift.

Under God the head of every woman was man, and under Christ the head of every woman is man. Only the head of man was altered. Consequently to understand what is involved in man’s headship over woman the Church can draw on the whole of the Old Testament writings. Peter drew on the life of Sarah when he set her as the model for all Christian women to follow (1 Per 3:6).

If we can understand the theologically conditioned background that Paul grew up in and then appreciate his understanding of what the change in headship for man meant we will be better orientated to understand the correct meaning of his words. We need his theological perspective as an absolute necessity when we come to any part of his writings.

This brings us to the context of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. The whole epistle is addressed to the male members (as are all of Paul’s epistles which are addressed to churches). That he is addressing only the male members throughout is clear from 14:26, “What then, brothers, When you come together . . .” He clearly has a Christian synagogue format in view where the main body of the hall would comprise men only and the women occupied the gallery, and in the synagogues no woman ever took an active part as an individual. Women did not speak in the synagogue services.

We can envisage Paul sitting down to write his letter to Corinth and as he wrote he would have a mental picture of the men gathering together to hear his letter read out to

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59 See 1.2. above.
61 Note the oversight of Timothy J. Harris, “Why did Paul Mention Eve’s Deception? A Critique of P. W. Barnett’s Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” EQ 62 (1990) 344 n. 28, that ‘there is no gender distinction’ in 1 Cor 14:26. He is not alone in making the assumption that this verse includes women (see 4.3.3). See Chart 19. Title: “Paul and the New Testament writers addressed their letters to men.”
62 See also under 4.3.2.
them. Given this background, the context of chapter 14 is concerned with how the male members are to exercise the diverse gifts that each of them has been given by the Holy Spirit. Later on in this chapter Paul will specifically lay down for the female members what their role is in the church services. But for the whole of this chapter (to v. 33) it would be a hermeneutical blunder to assume that Paul is addressing men and women. Everything is addressed to the men only.

Paul lays down the general principle that since the church meeting is a corporate gathering, gifts that have a limited benefit should not take up their time. In this chapter Paul is using the term “tongues” to refer to foreign human languages. This is clear from his statement that if a stranger comes in and finds them all talking in foreign languages when they are clearly all citizens of Corinth, the stranger will think they are mad. Foreign tongues are for the benefit of unbelievers, says Paul, in that the Spirit would be able to speak to them through church members speaking their foreign languages, as happened on the Day of Pentecost.

Paul, therefore, instances foreign tongue-speaking as not being a profitable use of their limited time in church because only the speaker can benefit from it unless there is an interpreter. He then discusses the greater benefit that prophesying in one’s own language has for the whole gathering and encourages that kind of gift to take precedent. He then tells them how many should speak and when they should give way to another speaker. In verses 36-40 he continues the same topic ending with the general rule that everything should be done decently and in order. So much for his detailed instructions on how to conduct their worship services. But in the midst of these detailed instructions he has inserted vv. 34-35 in which he tells the men that they are not to permit women to speak in public. The minimum meaning these men could have taken from his words were that women who have been given the gift of tongues and prophesying by the Holy Spirit are not to exercise those gifts in the church meetings—which is the topic under discussion. This would not have come as a surprise to them since it was the prevailing custom in all the churches for women to keep silent. But the fact that he has to remind the men of it suggests that some women had begun to challenge this ruling, probably not in the church meeting itself, but in their own homes or in a non-church setting.

The fact that Paul gives instructions in 11:5 on the way women are to be attired when praying and prophesying is proof that he and others witnessed them doing so. We have the case of the 84-year old prophetess Anna who spoke about Jesus “to all those looking for redemption in Jerusalem.” And it is said of her that she “did not depart from the Temple [precincts] . . . night and day” (Lk 2:36-38). Now, since women could not exercise their gift in the church meetings they either did so at home or among other gatherings of women, just as men were not confined to the church meetings in the exercise of their gift.

There is, therefore, no contradiction between what Paul said in 14:34-35 (in church) and what he said in 11:5 (out-of-church) as some have tried to maintain in an attempt to discredit the authority of Paul and his writings.

We have before pointed out that women were present in the church meetings and, as is the practice in synagogues to this day, they probably participated in the communal aspects of the worship.

Under the Old Covenant there were only male singers in the Temple, and the entire service of the sacrificial system was borne by men only. Paul has in mind only men.

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63 This popular scenario was challenged over a century ago by G. H. Gilbert, “Women in Public Worship in the Churches of Paul,” Biblical World 2 (1893) 38-47, who argued that what Paul is against is women speaking in a manner which is not consonant with her being in subjection to her husband, or speaking out in church with a view to learning something; but they could speak if they were not speaking in order to learn (i.e., pray and prophesy), since these were not speaking-to-learn activities.

64 See Ismar J. Peritz, “Woman in the Ancient Hebrew Cult,” JBL 17 (1898) 111-148, esp. pp. 147-48. There is some suggestion that the male and female singers mentioned in Neh 7:67 // Ez 2:65 were connected with Temple worship. This is unlikely because the recognised male Temple singers are mentioned separately in 7:44. We do not read of female Asaph or Korah singers. The male and female singers in 7:67 could be for entertainment (cf. male and female secular singers in 2 Sam 19:35) because they are not connected with any tribe. Indeed they are not included in the total of 42,360 Jews who returned. They are included in the total of 7,337 male and female servants and they are followed by a list of animals. Rashi suggested that the singers in Neh 7:67 functioned during the glad procession back from Exile in 536 BC. It seems unlikely that these female singers were connected with the Temple because at the dedication of Nehemiah’s walls only male singers are mentioned (Neh 12:27-47). If so, then we have no evidence for female singers participating in Temple worship. Some have taken the mention of three daughters born to Heman (1 Chr 25:5) as possible Temple singers. But the mention of them is to show how God blessed him with a large family.
leading in the worship with women remaining silent throughout as to individual contributions.\(^6\) In particular she is strongly debarred from teaching the congregation: that is viewed by him as a disgraceful thing, and we have to accept that he had the mind of Christ when he spoke on this matter. Modern practices where women are encouraged to lead the worship service, or the prayers, etc., have no scriptural warrant. Rather, they flout the explicit command of the Lord Jesus in doing so (14:37). One SS officer said to fellow officer outside a gas chamber in Auschwitz: “You can get used to anything in time.” We have got so used to women praying and preaching in the church meetings that it is no longer sensed as “shameful.”

Paul, some argue, may have been combating local customs in that Greek women were converting to Christianity and coming into the ecclesia bareheaded in the manner they had been accustomed to in the temples of their former religion, and expecting to join in on a par with the men.\(^6\) Be that as it may, Paul is very clear that what he is commanding is firmly grounded in Christian theology and sanctioned by an explicit command from the Head of the church and nothing else. The Christian practices he set in place in all the churches he founded were intended to characterise all churches geographically, and therefore, were universal (one common practice and appearance), and were permanent, and therefore in place until the Lord comes again.

In Paul’s clear-headed approach all non-Christian practices and beliefs must give way to a new set of Christian beliefs and practices. Nothing was to be carried over (whether in the form of ceremonies, traditions, or customs) into the ecclesia which was incompatible with what he had set up in all his churches. His was a root and branch approach, and what he set up was to be universal and permanent, because it was founded on, and grounded in the headship of Man.

#### 4.3.5. 1 Corinthians 11 and Its Setting

Because 1 Corinthians 11:5 has become the chief text to justify women speaking in Church, it is important to look at this verse in the light of Paul’s whole argument in vv. 2-16.\(^7\) But before doing so we should be aware of another trend that must be noted, namely, one that sets out to downgrade the authority of Paul as a revealer of the mind of Christ and as being the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps the current attitude is best illustrated in a recent commentary by Richard B. Hays on First Corinthians.\(^8\)

Hays is critical of Paul’s teaching methods. In his commentary on 11:2-16 he sets himself above Paul’s wisdom: “His [Paul’s] reasoning is notoriously obscure partly because we do not know precisely how to interpret some of the key terms in the argument and partly because the line of argument is—by any standard—labored and convoluted.” A similar criticism is made by F. E. Collins, “For contemporary readers 11:2-16 is one of the most

\(^6\) Ben Witherington III (“Rite and Rights for Women—Galatians 3:28,” *New Testament Studies* 27 [1981] 593-604) suggested that given the culture of the time a woman is represented by her husband and /or sons in the public community of faith (p. 595).

\(^7\) Once 11:5 is taken as happening in church then 14:34 cannot forbid what has been granted. Therefore ‘to speak’ must mean either (1) ‘chatter’, or (2) criticise the prophetic contribution of male colleagues. See A. H. Ross, “The Silence of Women in the Churches,” *BibSac* 27 [1870] 336-359, esp. 342. He noted that λαλεῖσθαι, ‘to speak’, occurs 29x in NT and 24x it indicates all kinds of human speaking, and only once (and that is not certain) does it mean ‘chatter’ (1 Cor 13:11, ‘speak as a child’). Paul could not have chosen a more general word, the widest, most comprehensive of all terms, to cover any kind of speech which a woman might use in the church, in order to rule out any contribution she might make as an individual. The latter is also unfair because it rules out women questioning the prophetic contribution of female contributors, which apparently only the males can do. The former is too sweeping and the latter is too narrow to suit the context, as we noted above. The misunderstanding put on the bare head is not helped by rabbinic comments such as the following: ‘Why does a man go out bareheaded while a woman goes out with her head covered?’ (Gen. Mid. XVIII. 8).

\(^8\) For the history of research into 1 Cor 11:2-16 from John Calvin up to 1970’s, see Linda Mercadante, *From Hierarchy to Equality: A Comparison of Past and Present Interpretations of 1 Cor 11:2-16* (Vancouver: Regent College, GMH Books, 1978).

\(^6\) Richard B. Hays, First Corinthians (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997). This commentary belongs to a series entitled: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.
difficult passages in the entire letter . . . the passage is somewhat confusing and difficult to understand. For many contemporary readers the passage is also difficult to accept. On first reading, it appears to advance a Pauline claim that women are inferior and subordinate to men.”

By throwing a cloak of doubt over what Paul is talking about Hays and others can blunt the force of his argument and evade its application. Hays goes on: “In view of the uncertainty surrounding these matters [in 11:2-16], it is impossible to give a fully confident interpretation of the passage.” The implication is that if the commentator cannot understand what Paul is talking about then the reader cannot be blamed for passing over this obscure passage.

On 11:7-8 Hays remarks: “Here, regretably, Paul gets himself into a theological quagmire . . . Paul fails to explain how any of this is directly relevant to the issue of head-coverings.” Readers’ conclusion: Paul is confused and introduces irrelevant material into his argument. Readers’ application: I had better steer clear of this passage in case I make order out of the confusion, and see a relevance where the commentator assures me there is none.

Hays is throughout sceptical that Paul knows what he is talking about. When he comes to 11:16 he remarks: “Perhaps at some level he [Paul] recognizes the weakness of his own rather fragmentated argument. His trump card, then, is to appeal to the custom of “the churches of God.” Readers’ conclusion: Paul’s thoughts are in a quagmire, and his mind in a fog. If his best argument is an appeal to local custom then I can safely skip this passage as our local customs are more civilised and Christian than his were when he penned this passage.

In his “Reflections for teachers and preachers,” Hays advises the next generation of teachers and preachers to be prepared to acknowledge “that we can neither understand it [11:2-16] entirely nor accept it entirely . . . The question that we must ask, then, as we wrestle with this text is whether Paul’s directives are infact persuasive on their own terms.” Here there is an appeal to ignorance. He tells his readers that he does not understand the passage (so neither can they) but what little he does understand of it he cannot accept its authority without question (and neither should they). Take for instance Paul’s teaching on hierarchy, which Hays acknowledges is the only clear teaching to come out of the “fragmented argument” of the passage, he undermines it with the recommendation:

. . . insofar as he posits a hierarchy based on gender, Paul’s argument becomes strained and begins to break down, as shown by his problematical exegesis of Genesis. If Genesis 1:27 provides the overarching framework within which Genesis 2 must be read, then in fact women as well as men are created in the image of God—as Genesis 1:27 indicates. In that case, the hierarchical chain of 1 Corinthians 11:3 and the argument for women’s head coverings in verse 7 lose their validity.

Readers’ conclusion: Hays has exposed the Apostle Paul as a suspect interpreter of Scripture. I had better follow Hays’ superior wisdom than Paul’s suspect handling of Scripture when it comes to exegeting Genesis 1-2.

Because Hays has exposed Paul as untrustworthy (because of the way Paul manipulates Scripture to suppress the freedom of women to go bare-headed and imposes the headship of man over her by a similar misunderstanding of Scripture) he can put down Paul as a revealer of the mind of Christ on the fundamental issue of man’s headship in this passage, and expose him as not being under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Once Paul’s manipulative skills have been exposed for what they are, and his whole argument side-lined as unworthy of Christians to follow today, the reader is vulnerable to Hays’ advocacy of the functional equality of men and women in worship and community leadership. To follow Paul’s argument is to insult Hays:

Anyone who appeals to this passage to silence women or to deny them leadership roles in the church is flagrantlly misusing the text . . . . The churches

in our own time have begun to recover the long-suppressed power of women’s ministry and leadership in proclaiming the word of God. This is a profoundly evangelical development, brought about by the work of the Spirit; if Paul were present with us, he would celebrate it.

Hays claims to know the mind of Paul in his advocacy of feminist theology but not to know Paul’s mind (which is in a quagmire) throughout 11:2-16. He also claims to know the approving mind of the Spirit in the application of feminist theology, but not to see the Spirit speaking through the mind of Paul throughout this passage.

When Hays comes to his reflections for teachers and preachers he turns to Paul’s strong point on patriarchy in 11:3, 7-9 and invites “the class to consider readings [of Genesis 1:27; 2:7] that might stand alongside Paul’s and provide a challenge to it.” In other words, Paul’s words hold no inherent authority—the authority of an Apostle. The reader is encouraged to challenge the authority of an Apostle and provide his own alternative “reading” in place of Paul’s. Rather than encourage respect for the words of the Holy Spirit as conveyed through Paul, Hays advocates that “we must reconsider how the doctrine of creation might lead us to conclusions about the relation between male and female that are not precisely the same as Paul’s.” In other words, lead to feminist conclusions.

In the passage in question Hays has very little respect for Paul as an authority figure. He is constantly undermining his authority as a Spirit-controlled Apostle. One way of doing this is to expose him as ignorant, or in a quagmire. For instance, he is ignorant of the “correct” way to exegesis Genesis 1 and 2 and he had an underdeveloped understanding of theology. “Paul, of course, did not have an explicit doctrine of the Trinity, and he often appears to operate with a subordinationist christology (cf. 15:28).” In other words, Paul’s theology is suspect: we know better today than he did then, is Hays’ underlying inference. Hence, if Paul were with us today and persisted in retaining 1 Corinthians 15:28 in his teaching he would not be considered an inspired Apostle, never mind on a par with the scholars of this generation.

In Hays’ treatment of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 he sides with those who regard these two verses as a gloss because they stand “in glaring contradiction to 11:2-16 in which Paul teaches that women may in fact pray and prophesy in church as long as they keep their heads appropriately covered.” He is apparently unaware of the many works which reconcile 11:5, 13 with 14:34-35. The latter specifically forbids speaking in Church (here is the restriction). 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is “marked” or restricted, whereas 11:5 is “unmarked” or universal apart from the restriction. Hermeneutically, we must read both passages within the known biblical culture of the time when it was received by the Corinthians. The universal practice of all the churches of Christ was for the women to remain silent and covered during the worship service (as was the practice throughout all the synagogues). Christian women exercised their prophetic and spiritual gifts but never in Church, and certainly it was not the practice in Corinth itself where Paul was in residence for eighteen months and he would have established the norm during that time. If 11:5 is read against this set background then it would never have been understood by its first hearers/readers to mean women could speak in Church. It is only when we divest the passage of its hermeneutical or situational context that a Westerner can argue on the basis of the words alone that it gives permission for women to speak in Church. But put the passage back in its first-century context and understand the retiring place of women generally in public life both in Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures (and especially the culture of modesty among women and the set forms this took), and then set this crucial hermeneutical knowledge as the backdrop to Paul’s clear headship teaching both in 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-12, and it will be obvious that Paul never intended 11:5 to refer specifically to the public setting of the Church service. It would have been a shocking, revolutionary overthrow of the universal custom then obtaining among all women both Greeks, Romans and Jews for women to speak in a Greek, Roman or Jewish public assembly. We must not read our easy-going Western culture into 11:5. It is only when the text is isolated from its first-century context and words are the focus, rather the mind of Paul who uttered those words, that a feminist agenda can be sustained and the Apostle’s teaching

70 Did Jesus also operate with a subordinationist christology when he referred to his Father as ‘my God’ (Jn 20:18)?
Reciprocally, could God the Father refer to Jesus as ‘my God’?
overthrown. The key to a correct understanding of 11:5 is to place ourselves back in the actual time when 1 Corinthians 11:5 was written, and to realise that the last 2000 years can have nothing to contribute to its exegesis. It is the 2000 years prior to the writing of 11:5 that have a direct bearing on its exegesis. This we call biblical hermeneutics. 1 Corinthians 11:5 was written within a divinely structured theological culture which recognised the headship of man in every walk of life, and in that religious culture it would have been a shocking thing for women to speak in a public assembly of men. It is against this background that 11:5 must be read and appreciated. Given this background, and Paul’s prohibition statement in 14:34-35, the only way in which 11:5 could have been understood by those women who first read the Epistle was that whenever they pray or prophesy they should do it for theological reasons and also within the culture of modesty that pertained to their gender. That theological culture did not permit them to exercise their gifts in the public assembly of men, because it was a shame for women to speak in such an assembly.

This understanding of 11:5 shows that Paul is not addressing the problem of private versus public exercising of women’s spiritual gifts (that is addressed in 14:34-35), but rather the relation between men and women. Paul’s mind is on the cosmological headship relation between men and women throughout 11:2-16, hence it is misleading to infer from 11:5 that Paul is assuming that women can pray and prophesy in the public assembly. That is not the point of referring to men and women praying and prophesying. Paul sets out to fill in a gap (“I wish you to know”) in their spiritual knowledge concerning the totality of their relations with Christ and God. The hierarchy is: God—Christ—Man—Woman. The maintenance of this hierarchy is essential to good order in the universe and in all human relations. If this order is in any way interfered with or persons within this sequence usurp the position of another within it, then disorder ensues. There is no danger that the first pair in the sequence would be reversed, but there is the real danger that the last pair could be reversed unless care is taken to abide by the principle of Man’s headship. The Gospel is intimately involved in the relationship between the middle pair: here Man is challenged to acknowledge Christ as his Head. This is the heart of the Gospel. It is because every man owes obedience to Christ as his head that Christians can go out into all the world and command men everywhere to repent and accept the headship of Christ. True though this is, this truth is not Paul’s specific concern in 11:2-16. He is working from a superior position of revealed knowledge concerning the crucial relationship between the last pair in the cosmological order of relationships which is essential for good order in the Church and in the family. After first setting out the most comprehensive statement in the New Testament that governs the entire family of God (encompassing God the Father at one end and Woman at the other end) Paul then uses (1) current practices, (2) Scripture, (3) nature, and (4) universal Church tradition, to witness to the headship of Man to Woman. The focus of 11:2-16 is on the relationship of man and woman to God when they are engaged in spiritual activity (praying or prophesying). They must approach him in the dress-code and manner prescribed for their genders. The passage is not addressing the issue whether women can pray and prophesy in public as well as in private. To twist the passage round to address that issue is to hijack the passage in the interests of one’s private concerns.

Paul utilises four “evidences” that Man’s headship sets him in a direct relationship to Christ which is different from that which a woman sustains. If there is no difference between men and women, then why are men commanded not to cover their heads and women commanded to be covered? This is Paul’s first “proof” or “evidence” that Man’s headship “exists” in the physical and spiritual worlds. Here Paul is using the outward accepted expression of gender distinctions given by the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul as an argument for the reality of the cosmological headship between men and women. He points out that men and women are not under a common, direct headship to Christ, i.e., that they are genderless when they come before God. Man, he argues, must appear before God bare-headed, but women must appear before Him with her head covered. This is proof of his revelation in 11:3 (“the head of the woman is the man”) that men and women do not sustain the same common, direct headship to Christ. This difference in physical appearance applies to both men and women whether they appear before God in private or public devotions for the reasons given in 11:7. The point of mentioning “praying and prophesying” is to focus on an occasion when a distinction between the genders takes on a physical form for all to see. This is the “proof” that headship exists. Even those who would argue for women “praying and prophesying” in the public assembly acknowledge
that they should do so with their heads covered, thus acknowledging (without knowing it, in some cases) that thereby God has instituted a physical difference between men and women when they pray and prophesy. The issue uppermost in Paul’s mind in 11:5 is not whether women are covered in the private or public exercise of their spiritual gifts (the distinction is irrelevant to his point), but rather that a visible, physical distinction must be maintained between men and women because of the Headship relation that God has given to Man. It does not follow that because a physical distinction must be maintained between the genders when praying and prophesying that this gives women license to do so in the public assembly of the Church, especially if there is a specific prohibition against women speaking in the Church. It is sufficient for Paul’s purpose in 11:2-16 to point out that the physical difference that God has established between the genders when they appear before Him is due to Christ’s headship to Man, and Man’s headship to Woman. The distinction between private versus public ministry of women is not dealt with here but in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12. It is to those passages we must go if we want to know the mind of Paul on that issue.

That 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 does not have in view the restricted setting of a church meeting is clear from his Paul’s statement: “Every man who prays and prophesies with anything on his head puts his Head to shame” (11:4). The reason given that every man must not cover his head is theological, not cultural. He shames Christ if he covers his head (see 1.2.). But the significance of this practice is that it must apply to man wherever and whenever he turns and addresses God in prayer. It cannot be restricted to a church setting, otherwise the theological argument would not make sense. The principle he is establishing here is universal; it cannot be limited to a church setting.71

Having first of all argued for a difference of powers (as bound up in headship) that God has given to men and women, which he does from the undisputed physical difference in appearance which must be maintained between Christian men and women, Paul seamlessly moves on in 11:8-12 to the functional difference to support the principle of man’s headship in 11:3 (see 1.3 and 2.1-4 above). This too could not be disputed by the Corinthians.

Lastly, he makes an appeal to a striking difference in the Creator’s design in covering woman’s baldness with hair which is her glory, a function He did not give to man’s hair (see 4.4.4). This “glory” of the woman ought to be covered when she is “praying and prophesying” (i.e., when she is operating in the spiritual sphere). This further strengthens Paul’s opening set-piece illustrative argument which was taken from the religious sphere, namely, that women cannot come before God in the same manner as men, i.e., with an uncovered head. If they want to ape men then let them remove their feminine “glory” which the Creator gave to them and not to men. This is the shocking action Paul demands of women in 11:6 if they will insist on coming before God uncovered. So the setting of 11:2-16 has nothing to do with inside versus outside church situations but on the fact that whenever and wherever men and women engage in spiritual activities (public or private) they will follow separate paths—one will be covered and the other will be uncovered. This is all that Paul requires to make his point that men and women are not equal in headship. To hijack the issue into one of making Paul a supporter of women speaking in church, when it is clear from 14:34-15 that he condemned such activity, is to miss the focus of 11:2-16.

What Paul is focused on in 11:3 is the revelation he received of man’s headship in relation to women. The fact that he brings in the physical “covered” versus “uncovered” difference that separates the genders to illustrate his point should not be taken as the main topic of his thoughts. Even if we conceded that women prayed and prophesied in the public assembly of the Church this would not affect Paul’s point, because his mind is on the fact that God has placed a difference between the way men and women come before Him, and that is all Paul requires to sustain the revelation he received that “the head of woman is the man.” They are not equal.

The same applies to the functional difference: “man was not created because of the women, but woman because of the man.”72 This is a teaching illustration and should not be taken as the main topic of his thoughts. Paul is using two undisputed differences to argue for, and illustrate, the existence of man’s headship as a spiritual reality which will have consequences for the correct relation between men and women. The main topic is the

71 See further under 4.10.3.
72 See 2.2. above, and compare Jesus’ revelation: “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”
cosmological revelation he received in 11:3, and in particular the middle relationship—"the head of woman is the man." All of this is lost in Hays’ treatment of Paul’s revelation.

Also Hays presents an unbalanced view of the meagre evidence for regarding 14:34-35 as a gloss. But because it suits his feminist agenda these verses are pitted against Paul’s other writings and, along with 1 Timothy 2:11-12, regarded as the work of later generations or editors. His chief argument for regarding 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 as not the work of Paul is: “Paul never told women to be silent in churches: this order is the work of a subsequent Christian generation.” The fact that these verses are now part of the canon of Scripture is got around by noting that:

The Bible is not a harmonious or systematic body of teachings; there are many points of internal tension. . . . One such point of tension is the unresolved discussion in the early church about the appropriate role of women as public witnesses to the gospel; this discussion has left its marks in the divided teaching of our canonical New Testament.

To lay the charge of “divided teaching” against Scripture must lead to a doctrine of Scripture that few conservative-evangelicals would espouse. If Scripture is “divided” on this issue what issue is it not divided on? And who decides when it is divided? The Reformation churches have always held that Scripture is final, undivided and trustworthy, in all matters relating to faith and morals. There is no “divided teaching” since all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:16), therefore it is a body of harmonious teaching. Internal tensions are compatible with full inspiration and full authority for all its diverse parts. To lay the charge of heresy against Paul over his “subordinationist christology” or low view of Christ’s deity can do nothing to inspire trust in Paul’s teaching on the subject of man’s headship and the way this is worked out in worship and leadership. The uninformed reader of Hays’ commentary will come away with a low view of Apostolic authority and Paul’s guidance by the Holy Spirit, despite the Lord’s promise that He would guide them into all truth. The test of any commentator’s self-appointed elevation to “judge” Paul’s writings is set out by Paul himself: “let him acknowledge that the things that I write to you are the commands of the Lord” (1 Cor 14:37). Paul claims to be the mouthpiece of the Head of the Church on the issue of good order in His Church. The Lord, not Paul, has commanded His female followers “to be silent for it has not been permitted to them to speak, but to be subject . . . and if they wish to learn anything, let them question their own menfolk at home, for it is a shame for females to speak in Church.” The Lord Jesus is not being arbitrary in commanding His female disciples to abide by this command. He is safeguarding the headship of men everywhere to lead their families and to be the spokesmen for their households in His worship. Women are not to speak and not to lead in the public worship. Nothing could be plainer or clearer once the reasons for the command are understood and appreciated within the wider context of God’s headship of Christ and Christ’s headship of every man, as set out in this work.

Many will find Hays’ treatment of God’s Word abhorrent. It reeks of a patronising spirit. To handle the text of an Apostle in this manner shows an arrogance that is shocking to Christian sensibilities. To taint the Apostle’s teaching with heresy and impugn his ability to understand Genesis can only elevate the commentator’s position over that of the Apostle. Evangelical Christians hold Paul’s words in the same regard as they hold Jesus’ words. They do not hold to degrees of inspiration or degrees of authority, or degrees of Truth. They place themselves under the authority of the Word of God: they do not stand above, or to one side, and pick and choose what they want to accept from it. “If you love me keep my commands,” said the Lord and Head of the Church.

1 Corinthians 11:5 does not contradict 14:33-34. It is absurd to suggest that in chapter 11:5 Paul gives guidance for a practice which he will subsequently condemn. These Scriptures must be brought into harmony because they come from the same mind over a matter of a few minutes composition. In both passages there is a common appeal to the uniform practice of the church (11:16 and 14:33). 1 Cor 11:2-16 can be linked with chapter 14 because in 14:34 Paul does not cite the passage of the law to which he was alluding, because shortly before in 11:7-12 he had referred to the law in Gen 1-2. So in 14:34 there was no need
to spell it out again as his readers would refer to the previous teaching. This shows that Paul’s mind was already linking chs 11 and 14 when he made use of the “law” in 14:34.

In any case since the words for “pray” and “prophesy” (one an evidence of spiritual life and the other evidence of supra-spiritual life) are the same in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14; and since women do both, and since Scripture cannot contradict Scripture, the logical conclusion is that the setting in 11:2-16 is different from the setting in 14:1-40. On the one hand, since 14:1-40 is clearly set “in the assembly / ecclesia” which is referred to nine times (cf. 14:4, 5, 12, 19, 23, “[come together” (in one place), 26], 28, 33, 34, 35) the context of chapter 14 is indisputably the “gathered out” community of God’s people. On the other hand, the term assembly / ecclesia does not occur once in 11:2-16. So if these two chapters are to be reconciled then the context of 11:2-16 must be set outside the church meeting.

We noted above that the issue of head-covering was introduced by Paul as part of his “evidence” for the headship of Man. There is no direct suggestion in the text that women were coming into the assembly bare-headed and as a consequence Paul was addressing that issue head-on. Rather, it can be argued that he is using the fact that they come with a covered head as proof in itself of the revelation of Man’s headship. It is more likely that Man’s headship, and not women’s head-covering, is the main issue being established by Paul in 11:2-16. Because Man has been given position of headship, therefore (he argues) the woman is to acknowledge this fact by covering her head when she approaches God.

Another good reason why Paul may have introduced the head-covering issue in 11:2-16 separately from the silence issue in 14:34-35 was because, in the case of the woman, the former (i.e., the head-covering) applies to the individual inside and outside the church, whereas the latter (i.e., the silence), applies to the inside but not to the outside. The headcovering was a universal and omnipresent witness to the headship of man, whereas the silence in church was limited to a specific situation, and so not such a good teaching parallel.

If Paul’s appeal to the practice of all the churches unites 11:16 and 14:33b, 36 this is not because both are in a church setting, but because in both places an appeal to the unity of church tradition should have settled the issue. The Corinthians were becoming a law unto themselves which often happens to untaught Christians both at the individual level and at church and denominational levels also. Looking to the practices of other churches, therefore, should have led them to the right solution, is what Paul is pointing out. (In the late twentieth century women’s ordination was simply a late intrusion which had been pushed through without regard for the universal church practice.)

There is a direct connection between the loss of respect for the mature members of the Church with an attendant distancing of the younger men and women from them, and the loss of the doctrine of headship. The division was and is a mirror of what was and is happening at the secular level and it was carried over into the Church. This generation gap did not exist in the secular or religious spheres in Paul’s day. Older women and men had a central role in ensuring continuity with their past traditions. Individualism has killed off this solidarity with the past, certainly in Western culture.

A number of inconclusive objections have been raised to the out-of-church context given to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16\(^73\) but on the whole commentators have not seriously challenged their own in-church presupposition: it is regarded as a “given.”

It would appear from the topical structure of 1 Corinthians that Paul has followed a logical arrangement of his material. Chapters 1—6 deal with issues in the church which he heard about through Chloe; and Chapters 7—16:12 deal with issues mentioned in a letter they sent to him, where his responses are introduced by the phrase, “Now concerning . . .” (Gk ἔνδογας ναμε in 7:1 (marriage); 7:25 (virgins); 8:1, 4 (food); 12:1 (spiritual gifts); 16:1 (the collection); and 16:12 (Apollos).\(^74\)

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\(^74\) The word ἔνδογας occurs 12 times at 1 Cor 1:14, 11; 7:1, 25, 37; 8:1, 4; 12:1; 16:1, 12; 2 Cor 9:1, 10:8, but only those references in italics take up issues mentioned in their letter to him. Paul also quotes their own words at 1:12;
Paul is aware of things which are done inside the church and things which are done outside the church. Discipline of church members is done in the formal gathering of the church: “When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus . . . and the power of the Lord is present, hand this man over to Satan, . . .” (1 Cor 5:4; cf. 11:17; 1 Thess 5:14). The Christians are to judge those inside the church but leave the judgment of those outside the church to the Judgment Day (5:12-13). He corrects a misunderstanding they had from his previous letter because they applied something he had limited to an “inside” situation to an “outside” one (5:9-10), namely, not associating with an immoral person. But the “inside” situation Paul envisaged in this previous letter was not limited to the formal gathering itself. The “inside” situation covered the whole life of the church members as a community. The church was quite prepared to isolate itself completely from mixing with “the world” in obedience to the Apostle’s word, but he is quick to reassure them that this was not what he meant: he explains that he was thinking of the Christian community. So Paul has three spheres in mind: “this world” (5:10), the formal church gathering, and the Christian community.

The context of Chapter 6:1-11 is the Christian community. In the commercial world Christians cheated and robbed one another which resulted in taking each other into “the world” to have their disputes settled. Paul is shocked by this, and tells them that they ought to have taken their disputes into “the church” which should appoint men as judges to settle the issues.

The context of Chapter 6:12-17 is the relationship of the Christian community to the world itself. They are to avoid having sexual relations with prostitutes.

Beginning at Chapter 7 he then turns to the questions they asked his advice on. The first of these (marriage) has clearly the Christian community as its context. The second—Chapter 8—raised the question whether Christians could eat meat dedicated to idols which was then sold in the market. The context is the Christian community in relationship to the world. In Chapter 9 Paul defends himself against some who were sitting in judgment over him for not working in the world for his living, like the rest of the church had to. In Chapter 10:1-13 he reminds them of the ever-present danger to their faith as they mix with the influences of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, constantly bearing down on their lives. They are to be in the world but not of it. In 10:14-33 he debars them from accepting invitations from their non-Christian friends and neighbours to eat in their temples, but they may accept invitations to have meals with non-Christian neighbours and non-Christian friends in their homes. This chapter has the relation of the Christian to his non-Christian neighbour as its context. He ends on the principle that in all their dealings with their non-Christian environment they must not offend Jewish or Gentile neighbours or those in the Church of God (which would embrace the local and wider Church of God), as he also tried not to offend men everywhere.

The whole tone of 1 Corinthians is pitched at a higher level of male bonding between the Apostle and the men than any of Paul’s other epistles. He uses the term “brothers” twenty times in a very personalised, direct appeal for their attention. It is as if he senses a need to get them on his side. Apart from the opening chapter (3 times) the occurrences of “brothers” as a direct address occurs more frequently as he comes to the end of his letter (four times each in chs 14 and 15). In his second last direct address to them he calls them “my beloved brothers” (15:58). He addresses them as “brothers” in every chapter except 5, 6, 8, 9, 13. This is exceptional. In 2 Corinthians he uses the direct address only three times in the whole epistle instead of the expected thirteen. But there is a correlation between the frequencies. In 2 Corinthians he has just scraped through some sort of ultimatum he sent to the church (2 Cor 2:4; 7:8-11) to which they responded positively. But his tone is distinctly cooler. But in 1 Corinthians Paul adopts a much warmer, brotherly approach to his male colleagues in Corinth. He is confident that he can control the church from a distance by warm brotherly appeals. He praises them at 11:2 for remembering him and his teaching and because they have kept the traditions he delivered to them. Having established a warm personal approach he then gently brings up the subject of Man’s headship: “and I wish you to know that . . . .” He slips imperceptibly from praise to principle to practice. Whether the marked increase in the use of terms of endearment was

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(2:157) 6:12 (=10:23), and possibly 6:13.

75 See 4.3.3. and Chart 19. Title: “Paul and the New Testament writers addressed their letters to men.”
intended to strengthen an already good relationship between the Apostle and his church, or whether it marks a detected hesitancy on their part to commit themselves to him, hence the warmer approach, is difficult to decide. Certainly 2 Corinthians suggests that a sizeable number of the church had decided to follow another leader (2 Cor 7:12) who had found fault with Paul over many matters. But that is another topic. However, the length of the following theological argument for enforcing universal church traditions, and his challenge to those who want to make an issue of this (11:16) suggests that he anticipated strong opposition to his reply, which he notes again in their determination to be a law unto themselves at times (14:36-38).

Chapter 11:1 really belongs to the conclusion of Chapter 10, but nevertheless it also forms a smooth transition to the problem of a few women not conforming to the expected pattern of behaviour that he had taught them or which they should have deduced from the principle in 11:3.

Paul had ended the previous topic, on the note of foregoing his rights in order that he would not create an “offence” to Jew or Gentile or those in the Church. Clearly some in the Christian community were offended over something. The point at issue is whether in their letter to him the Corinthian leadership were referring to the appropriateness of Man’s headship in the light of our oneness in Christ (Gal 3:28), or something that was happening in the formal church gathering, or in the Christian community. It may well be that the prescribed manner of praying and prophesying was being properly observed in the church meetings but not outside it, in the public arena, where it might give offence to Jews and Gentiles. They wanted a ruling on some issue that troubled them. It should be borne in mind that Paul had been resident in Corinth for eighteen months (Acts 18:11) so that the universal Church practices would have been well established. From the fact that Paul raises the issue of Man’s headship in 11:3 this would seem to be the topic of this section. Others have taken the view that the issue was head-covering and Paul begins with first principles to deal with it. We shall see that they are not separate issues but intertwined.

Paul begins each set of twin statements (11:4, 7, 11, 14) with what he expects of the men in order to lay down the corresponding duty of the woman. The first set contrasts how differently men and women should be attired when they pray and prophesy.

If, as 1 Corinthians 14:29 states, only two or three male prophets (note the masculine gender) were permitted to prophesy then the only context in which prophetesses could exercise their gift of prophecy was outside the formal church gathering. We have shown that the Church epistles of all the Apostles are addressed directly to the male members in the first place and through them (as heads and sons) to their womenfolk. Here in 1 Corinthians 14 the persons addressed are called “brothers” (14:6, 20, 26, 39). It will take creative eisegesis to make Paul include women in the term “brothers,” and prophetesses in the term “prophet,” because in v. 34 he addresses the women through the men: “Let [your\textsuperscript{76}] women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted to them to speak . . . . And if they will learn . . . . let them ask their own husbands at home.” Paul does not address the women directly, but he commands each man to undertake the responsibility of seeing that his womenfolk do not speak in the church. This is proof enough that Paul is addressing the men in chapter 14 and that only male prophets could speak in church. The men have this right of responsibility by virtue of their God-given headship status.

The problem in 1 Cor 11.2-16 cannot be set in a church context because women are not permitted to prophesy specifically in a church context. Given that only two or three male prophets could speak in the formal church gathering, and this only on one day in the week, the first day of the week, what happened to the prophecies that were revealed to the other male prophets on the other six days of the week? When and where did they deliver these? Or was prophecy only given on the Sabbath day (and never on a week-day) and only to two or three males? (“For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged” 14:31.) Surely we cannot restrict the giving of prophecies to the Lord’s day and only to males. If, however, 1 Corinthians 14 tells us what happened on the Lord’s day in a church context, then 1 Corinthians 11 tells us what happened in the out-of-church context—on the other weekdays—in the Christian community, where ninety-five per cent of their lives were lived out.

\textsuperscript{76} The reading of the Majority Greek Text.
Walker typifies the anti-Pauline approach to the subject matter of 1 Cor 11:2-16. He first of all accepts the thesis that some of Paul’s writings were not written by him. When he subtracts these writings from the Pauline corpus he then discovers that Paul had no teaching on Headship! His argument is:

If, however, the Pastorals, Ephesians and Colossians are regarded as pseudo-Pauline, and 1 Cor. 14:34-35 as a non-Pauline gloss, there is no other passage in the entire Pauline corpus which might even possibly be interpreted as advocating any form of male priority and female subordination. Surely, this fact, coupled with Paul’s clear statement of equality in Gal. 3:28, his very positive references to female co-workers, and the other indications of his “egalitarian” attitude toward women, carries some weight in determining the authenticity of the verses under consideration [11:3-16]. To carry the point a bit further, however, 1 Cor. 11.3-16 is remarkably similar in subject matter, vocabulary and “tone” to 1 Cor. 14:34-35, which is widely regarded as a non-Pauline interpolation, as well as to Col. 3.18, Eph. 5.22-33, 1 Tim. 2.9-15 and Tit. 2.3-5, all of which are likely pseudo-Pauline. In particular, the closest parallel to the notion that man is the κρατήρ of woman, Christ the κρατήρ of man, and God the κρατήρ of Christ is to be found in the pseudo-Pauline Eph. 5.21-24 (especially v. 22). In short, the attitude towards women expressed in 1 Cor. 11.3-16 appears to be not only non-Pauline (and even anti-Pauline) but also characteristic of the pseudo-Pauline writings.

4.3.6. 1 CORINTHIANS 11 AND ITS OUT-OF-CHURCH CONTEXT

We have already noted the uncritical assumption by many commentators and specialist writers that the context of 1 Cor 11:2-16 is in church. Unfortunately few of them examine the possibility that 1 Cor 11:2-16 might apply to the ninety-five per cent of the time that men and women are not in church.

Others who recognized that the entire Epistle was probably read out to the Corinthians in a church context (cf. Col. 4:16) nevertheless accepted that 11:2-16 and 14:34-35 were intended to be brought together and complement each other. However, there are

28 William O. Walker, Interpolations in the Pauline Letters (JSNTSS 213; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) pp. 113-114. He points out a rabbinic parallel to 11:11-12 in Genesis Rabbah (8.9 and 22.2). This work dates from the late-fifth or early-sixth century, though the quotation is ascribed to Rabbi Simlai (c. AD 250) and Rabbi Akiba (c. AD 135). He notes the possibility that this rabbinic parallel could be based on 1 Cor. 11:11-12, see Madeleine Boucher, “Some Unexplored Parallels to 1 Cor 11:11-12 and Gal 3:28: The New Testament on the Role of Women,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 31 (1969), pp. 50-58.
others who, because of the apparent contradiction between these two passages regarded 11:2-16 as an un-Pauline interpolation.81

Dealing with the section 1 Cor 11—14, F. C. Collins observed:

Because the community’s practice is under consideration in chs 11 and 14 it is tempting to consider 1 Corinthians 11—14 as a single rhetorical demonstration. The two chapters dealing with the practice of the church form an inclusio around chs. 12 and 13, thus establishing an A-B-B'—A' structure. While this approach has some merit it is not entirely clear that chs. 12 and 13 should be considered as analogous units.

Chapters 12—14 are clearly arranged in a chiastic pattern. Both ch. 12 and ch. 14 deal with spiritual gifts. The tightly knit structure of 12—14 suggests that these chapters are a distinct rhetorical demonstration by themselves. Chapter 11 must then be identified as a rhetorical demonstration sandwiched between longer units on food offered to idols (chs. 8—11:1) and on spiritual gifts (chs. 12—14).82

He places chapter 11 outside the subject context of chs. 12—14, for he notes: “That the apostrophic address is absent from 11:2 suggests that the matter to which Paul is about to turn his attention, namely, the covering of the head, is a continuation of the earlier discussion on participation in the eucharistic assembly.”83 In other words it belongs to the “out-of-church” section.

In 11:2-16 Paul tells the women to be covered when they pray and prophesy (which gives the impression that they could pray and prophesy in church provided they covered their heads while doing so) and in 14:34-35 he denies that they can pray or prophesy in church. It seems odd if Paul was misleading his readers into believing that 11:2-16 referred to the church meeting, and left it to 14:34-35 to clarify this misleading impression. On this scenario Calvin remarked:

However it might meet the situation quite well to say that the apostle expects this unassumimg conduct from women, not only in the place where the whole congregation is assembled, but also in any of the more formal gatherings, either of matrons or of men, such as sometimes meet in private houses.84

It is this out-of-church context that Paul is addressing here, and there is nothing in the context which would limit it to an in-church context. Indeed, as we have noted, in the previous chapter Paul deals with invitations from unbelievers to have a meal with them, and 11:1-16 carries on this out-of-church context. It has been pointed out that 8ε in 11:2 makes a distinct connection between 11:2-16 and the previous topic, and the Greek should be translated as follows: “I bid you imitate me . . . but I am glad to know (from your letter) that you do . . . .”85 It is also pointed out that the verb “you have kept (my traditions)” implies maintenance in form as well as in substance. The indecorum in question offends against a foundation principle, viz., that of submission under the Divine government.86

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81 William O. Walker, Interpolations in the Pauline Letters (JSNTSS 213; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) pp. 91-146. For a defence of the Pauline authorship see sources mentioned on page 92 nn. 9-14. The main argument is based on the probability that “the Pauline writings must have undergone some revision at the hands of one or more editors” (ibid. p. 93). Walker acknowledges that there is no MS which omits 11:2-16 but this can be brushed aside as inconsequential. The interpolation is also based on the premise that both passages have to do with public worship (ibid. p. 99). Walker argues that 11:18, “the first point (πρώτος) does not make sense “if he [Paul] had just discussed the attire and /or hairstyle of men and women in Christian worship” (ibid. p. 99).


83 Ibid, p. 404.

84 John Calvin, The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, Calvin’s Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 231. Out of a study of 30 commentaries in 1978 it was found that 12 held that women must be covered in all in-church and out-church public occasions; see Ralph N. V. Schutt, “A History of the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” M.A. research project, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1978, p. 74.


86 Findlay, op. cit., p. 871.
The in-church section only begins at 11:17, “Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, to begin with (πρῶτον) . . .” (RSV), and what follows runs on to the end of ch. 14. Now if 11:2-16 was already dealing with an in-church disorderly situation why does Paul start enumerating the first of their in-church disorderly practices at 11:18? It would appear that he has moved from an out-of-church context (the Christian’s relations to the outside world) to a disorder affecting the church service itself, commencing at 11:17. It has been a common assumption—passed on without critical examination—that 11:2-16 and 14:34-38 have their setting in the public worship service. Not surprisingly, then, this created a conflict in modern studies that never existed in Paul’s mind. It was this misunderstanding that led some to think that 11:2-16 must be a non-Pauline (or pseudo-Pauline) interpolation because it does not logically precede 11:17-34.

In 11:17 Paul says that their meeting together did “more harm than good”—referring to the disorder at the Lord’s Supper. But if 11:2-16 was also an actual in-church situation then meetings where women appeared without a head-covering must also have been meetings that did “more harm than good,” bringing shame on God’s church in the sight of the angels. Paul’s strong disapproval of this internal disorder ought to have produced another “I praise you not.” But at 11:2 he praises them for keeping everything he delivered to them. How can he praise them at 11:2 and not praise them at 11:17 if both are in-church disorders?

A possible answer might be that since 11:17-34 is very clearly set in the church, then 11:2-16 must have an out-of-church setting. Holmyard suggests that: “The fact that Paul could praise the Corinthians (v. 2) even though their coming together was for the worse (v. 17) suggests that his praise in verse 2 was broader than gatherings for worship. Thus the setting of 11:2-16 might not be a church gathering.”

If the women were only going uncovered when praying and prophesying outside the church meetings then Paul could still praise the Corinthians that as far as the actual church meetings themselves were concerned they had kept the Church traditions he had handed down to them, with the exception of the Lord’s Supper, which he deliberately placed after 11:2-16 in order to secure acceptance for his ruling on headship first. In other words they had a “deliverance” already in their possession concerning their appearance in and outside the church meetings, and they expressed in their letter that they were determined to keep it but some were not. Paul then addresses 11:2-16 to those who were determined to be contentious (11:16). In this case the majority were deserving of praise and he did not withhold it from them.

However, it is also possible that the fulsome praise Paul gives them in 11:2 for keeping the “deliverances” did not specifically include a “deliverance” on head-covering at the time of writing, even though it was the universal Church custom (v. 16), so that he first of all praises them for keeping every “deliverance” that he had so far spelled out to them, and then here proceeds to hand on another “deliverance” (which has it source in a revelation to him from Christ): “and I wish you to know that the head of every man is Christ, . . .”

Support for this may come in the use of ἐκ at 11:2. A. T. Robertson quotes, but with disapproval, the observation of D. B. Monro, “The adversative ἐκ properly indicates that the new clause stands in some contrast to what has preceded. Ordinarily, however, it is used in the continuation of a narrative.” As an adversative it signifies “but, however, yet, on the other hand.” Robertson, however, remarks that this was not its original meaning or use. The original was the ordinary narrative use (continuative) because there is in the

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87 See the pertinent evidence in the large footnote in 4.10.3, where this assumption is built into some modern translations.
88 William O. Walker, Interpolations in the Pauline Letters (JSNTSS 213; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001) pp. 91-146. He notes that the use of “the first point (πρῶτον)” in 11:18 does not make sense “if he [Paul] had just discussed the attire and/or hairstyle of men and women in Christian worship” (ibid. p. 99). He concluded that 11:3-16 was a later, non-Pauline interpolation (p. 112) alongside the pseudo-Pauline Pastoral, Ephesians and Colossians. 1 Cor. 14:34-35 is a non-Pauline gloss (p. 113).
etymology of the particle no essential notion of contrast. “What is true is that the addition is something new and not so closely associated in thought as is true of τέ and καί . . . A new topic may be introduced by τέ in entire harmony with the preceding discussion, as the Birth of Jesus in Mt. 1:18 (“Now the birth of Jesus Christ,” etc.).”\textsuperscript{91} The adversative use here would be retrospective in that having commented on many aspects of their out-of-church community relations and having had to make many corrective remarks to keep them on course, nevertheless, looking back over chapters 6-10 he can praise them for—on the whole—being good imitators of him. It is in retrospect that he can issue praise but not in prospect (11:17-34). Between 11:1 and 11:17 he issues a new directive parts of which have relevance both to the out-of-church and the in-church situation and this could explain why he introduced it here and not at 14:34-35.

At 11:23 he spells out another such “deliverance,” this time on what the Lord Jesus delivered personally to Paul concerning the Lord’s Supper. The abrupt transition between 11:22 and 11:23 suggests that the Church had requested clarification from him over the origin of the Lord’s Supper and he prefaces his reply by rebuking them for the disorder they were all guilty of, which he did not learn of from their letter but from a third party (Chloe’s people?). But having given them a “ticking off” he then replies to their request. Note the emphatic, “I—I received from the Lord . . . .” So whatever they learned from other sources (which might have given rise to their request) Paul makes it clear that his knowledge is first-hand. He did not receive the “deliverance” from the hands of one of the Twelve apostles, as the Corinthian Church had received theirs from Paul.

Since 11:17 would appear to mark the division between topics which are out-of-church and topics which are in-church the overall structure of the Epistle should indicate this. I propose the following outline for the letter.

INTRODUCTION 1:1-9

PART ONE: INFORMATION CONVEYED BY LIP FROM CHLOE’S PEOPLE

I. REBUKES FOR IN-CHURCH BEHAVIOUR: 1:10—4:21
   A. Rest only on the Lord; Rely only on God’s Wisdom; Receive only the Spirit of God, 1:10—3:23
   B. Regard us as only your servants; Imitate us do not elevate us, 4:1-16
   C. Receive Timothy who will remind you of our universal church standards, 4:17
   D. Rebuff arrogant dissenters and restore order before I visit you, 4:18-21

II. REBUKES FOR OUT-OF-CHURCH BEHAVIOUR (ethical issues conveyed by lip from Chloe’s people): 5:1—6:20
   A. Collectively expel the immoral brother, 5:1-8
   B. Judicially submit to Church not Civil courts, 6:1-11
   C. Socially avoid all sexual immorality, 6:12-20

PART TWO: INFORMATION CONVEYED BY LETTER FROM CORINTH

III. REPLIES TO OUT-OF-CHURCH SITUATIONS: 7:1—11:16
    A. Contract Marriages, 7:1-40
    B. Contaminated foods offered to idols, 8:1-13
    C. Curtail freedoms for the sake of the Church (as I do), 9:1-27
    D. Control freedoms lest you fall away from the faith, 10:1-13
    E. Christian communion with non-Christians is not permissible, 10:14-22
    F. Curtail freedom in the interests of neighbours, 10:23-26
    G. Control freedom in the interests of the conscience of others (as I do), 10:27—11:1
    H. Covering the head in out-of-Church situations, 11:2-16

IV. REPLIES AND REBUKES TO IN-CHURCH SITUATIONS: 11:17—15:58
   A. First rebuke: disunited fellowship, 11:17-19
   B. Second rebuke: disgrace over the Lord’s Supper, 11:20-34

\textsuperscript{91} A. T. Robertson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 1183-84.
C. Third rebuke: disagreements concerning the worship service, 12:1—14:40
D. Fourth rebuke: disbelief in the resurrection, 15:1-58

V. REPLY TO IN-CHURCH ADVICE (advice sought—conveyed by letter from Corinth): 16:1-4

The Collection for the Churches of God in Jerusalem

VI. PERSONAL PLANS AND REQUESTS
A. A promise to visit them, 16:5-9
B. A request to welcome and help Timothy, 16:10-11
C. A request of theirs he has dealt with (i.e., visit of Apollos), 16:12
D. A warning and exhortation to stand firm, 16:13
E. A plea to submit to their leaders, 16:14-18

CONCLUSION, 16:19-24

It is clear that Paul has two main parts to his letter which are based on what he heard and what he read. And each part is subdivided into an “in-church” section and an “out-of-Church” section. It is this logical division of his letter that separates chapter 11 from chapter 14.

It is common to find writers assuming that out-of-church events, such as the prophesying of men and women on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-18), apply within the church. Great care must be exercised not to confuse the two contexts, otherwise one ends up with the ridiculous situation that Paul directs the women—when they are about to pray or prophesy—how they must be dressed in 11:5, and then he forbids them to speak in 14:34-35! This implausible situation has been well answered. In any case this interpretation violates the rule that “no Scripture may be interpreted so as to contradict or nullify another.”

Paul recognised in 11:5 the right of women to pray and prophesy outside the church, but this should not be used by present-day writers as an excuse to permit them to do the same in church. That is the crucial difference that separated 11:5 from 14:34. The spatial separation of text reflects the spatial separation of place. The important cosmological principle of 11:3 would alone indicate that Paul is thinking of the Christian in relation to the world he or she is living in, especially coming as it does after chap. 10:27—11:1.

It is only when we come to 1 Corinthians 11:17 that Paul takes up issues to do specifically with in-church matters. Up until this point all the issues had to do with the Christian community in its relations to the world, and its duty not to give offence to Jew or Greek, or to the church of God. In relation to the church of God, both at Corinth (10:32) and the wider Church (11:16), offence was being given by women who reversed their respective in-church practices when praying and prophesying outside the church—on week-days, no doubt. This reversal of practices was not a custom in any of the communities of God (referring the “we” of v. 16 to the church of Ephesus from where Paul was writing, and referring to all the other communities of Christians that he founded).

In reply to their reversal of practices Paul sets out by taking the mind of the men back to the controlling principle that governs the whole of the universe: the headship of God, of Christ, and of Man. This principle is supreme and ties the whole of creation in all its parts together from top to bottom in an orderly manner. Paul could have discoursed on the headships of God and Christ for a few chapters, but he obviously takes these as read, and concentrates on the Man-Woman headship. He brings the Corinthian problem under the headship of Man. The headship of Man is not confined to a church context, but covers all Man-Woman relationships wherever they occur; the family and the Christian community being obvious spheres. We noted above that God appointed a set pattern of cover/uncover when His worshippers come before Him, either in an in-church or an out-of-church context.

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94 Ephesus was probably the fourth largest city in the Roman world at that time with about 250,000 inhabitants, coming after Rome, Antioch and Alexandria.
Whenever a man prays to God he must do so with an uncovered head. There is to be a consistency of practice because the theology is consistent: Man is the image and glory of God whether he is in-church or out-of-church.

4.3.7. THE NATURE OF NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

The prophecy of Joel 2 is universal with regard to age (young and old), gender (male and female) and class (slave and free), but it would be wrong to import universal place into the prophecy. The early church gathered in the Temple courts to worship every day (Acts 2:46; 5:42; cf. 5:12, 20, 21, 25). Peter and John went up regularly to pray there. And for the first forty years of the Church’s existence it worshipped (if permitted) in the Temple. But no prophetess could speak to men in the Temple courts (Anna met the people as they went into the Temple). No prophetess could speak in the synagogues. No prophetess could speak in the Church. But, since Joel’s prophecy does not say that women would/should prophesy in the Temple precincts, we should not arbitrarily assume that they did. On the day of Pentecost the phenomenon of prophesying occurred away from the Temple and was fulfilled in the open air, in full view of the nation. And, incidentally, all the prophets on this occasion were men. Women can prophesy outside the formal church gatherings any day of the week, but when they do so they must have their heads covered.

Those who permit women to prophesy in the church are frightened that they might speak with authority and, like the prophetesses of the Old Testament, give a word of rebuke from the Lord (cf. Huldah). Consequently they go to great lengths to diminish and downgrade “prophesying” in 1 Corinthians 14. The watering down is achieved by word studies so as to make what is prophesied in the church anæmic—useful, but without authority.

But according to Peter what happened on the day of Pentecost was the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy, and if females (young, citizen and slave) did receive the Holy Spirit on that day (though we cannot be certain that they did on this particular day but they must have done so soon afterwards to fulfil the prophecy) then the crowd is witness that they were\(^5\) “speaking [\(\lambda\alpha\varepsilon\omega\)] in our tongues the great things of God” (Acts 2:11), and as a result 3,000 persons became members of the Church that day (2:41). In Acts 4:23, 31 all the friends (\(\tau\omega\varsigma\ \iota\lambda\iota\omega\varsigma\), “the(ir) own [friends]”) of the Apostles as well as the Apostles themselves were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and were speaking [\(\lambda\alpha\varepsilon\omega\)] the word of God with freedom.” Probably, though we cannot be certain in the present context, women were among the “friends” of the Apostles on this occasion. There is no distinction made between what the Apostles received and what their friends received.

Prophesying included foretelling future events. There were prophets in every city Paul passed through on his way up to Jerusalem (Acts 20:23; 21:4) foretelling his coming imprisonment. It is in this context that the Holy Spirit used Philip’s four daughters who are mentioned as prophesying, presumably what every other prophet and prophetess had been predicting along his route, namely his coming imprisonment. Agabus was a prophet from Jerusalem who came down to Philip’s house while Paul was staying with him and his four daughters, and enacted a symbolic prophecy with Paul’s belt. This same Agabus predicted that a great famine would spread over the entire Roman world (Acts 11:28) which was fulfilled in the time of Claudius. It just so happens that the Spirit used a man to convey this prediction in this instance, but there was nothing to prevent Him from using a prophetess.

The prophets spoke with authority. “Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them” (Acts 15:32). No doubt the Holy Spirit gave the women the same function with regard to their ministry among women and outside the formal church context. From these examples we would have to conclude that there was nothing anæmic about the gift of “prophesying.”

\(^5\) Grammatically masc. pl. here. Acts 2:7, 14 appears to limit the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the Twelve as the hearers recognised their Galilean accents, but not the Jerusalem accent.
If there is doubt over whether 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is set in a church context or an out-of-church context, there can be no doubt about the practice of the Early Church. Origen (AD 185-254) wrote:

Even if it is granted to a woman to prophesy and show the sign of prophecy, she is nevertheless not permitted to speak in an assembly . . . . For it is improper for a woman to speak in an assembly, no matter what she says, even if she says admirable things, or even saintly things, that is of little consequence, since they come from the mouth of a woman.96

On the specific situation in Corinth some believe97 that “prophesying” today should be considered as something that God may bring to mind, or impress on someone’s heart, in such a way that the person has a sense that it is from God. But, they would argue, such prophesying, in this limited sense, is not equal to God’s Word (the Bible as we have it) in authority. Prophecy is a valuable gift, but it is in Scripture that God speaks to us His very words today. They argue98 that New Testament prophets in 1 Corinthians do not speak divinely authoritative words. Their prophecies can be evaluated, sifted and questioned at every point (14:29); they can be interrupted and forgotten (14:30). In contrast to Paul’s words, they cannot be called words of the Lord (14:36-37). Prophecy is distinguished from teaching because it is based on a “revelation” which comes spontaneously to the prophet during the worship service (14:30). This revelation does not lead to any ecstatic experience, but does come forcefully enough to mind to enable the prophet to distinguish it from his normal thought processes. A “prophecy” is any public report of such a revelation. So a prophet differs from an apostle in that he lacks divine authority, and from a teacher in that his speech must be based on a revelation. New Testament prophecy could include any kind of speech activity which would be helpful to the hearers, but it generally would not include any claims to divine authority (such as “Thus said the Lord”), nor would it be expressed in distinctive speech forms. Paul says that prophecy will continue until the Lord returns (1 Cor 13:10).

This theory includes the idea that the regular, resident “true” prophet in Corinth can give out a mixture of true and false statements in his prophecies and it is the prophecies, and not the man himself, which are judged/sifted by those who hear. If this is so then women who judge the prophecies (and not the man who delivered it) cannot be asserting authority over the man.

In the Didache (chaps 11-13) the prophet, who is grouped with the office of Apostle and teacher, is not to be tested in regard to his utterance lest blasphemy of the Holy Spirit be committed (11.7). This implies that what a prophet says, he says as the vox Dei, and it is not to be questioned much less judged. The test for discerning the true from the false prophet involves examining their behaviour: (1) if one asks “in the spirit” [ἐν θεῷ γινώσκετε] for money or food, then this is a sign of the false prophet; (2) if ones does not practise what one teaches, then this is also a sign. The Shepherd of Hermes, like the Didache, is also concerned about false prophets (Mand. 11). A true prophet is distinguished by the fact that he does not spend his time answering people’s questions about their future, but instead simply proclaims the truth under the impetus of the Holy Spirit (11.5). Again, the way to test a prophet is by his life and character (11.7-12), by the company he keeps (11.13), and by his deeds (11.16). The author’s view of inspiration is that God’s words come to the prophet when God wills, not upon human request, and it comes in the assembly after prayer has been made. The author seems to see prophecy as a function of worship and something which is addressed to the congregation. By contrast, the false prophet tends to shun such an assembly and prefers to speak in a context other than worship.99 Irenaeus

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condemns Marcus, the magician, for thinking he could confer the gift of prophecy on people. It is conferred only to “those to whom God sends His grace . . . and then they speak where and when God pleases, and not when Marcus orders them to do so.”

If these two early Christian documents reflect the high regard that prophesying was held in then I suspect that neither of the two modern understandings of prophesying is correct. The noun “prophet” occurs 149x in the New Testament; 92 of these refer to Old Testament prophets; 17x to Christ; 8x to John the Baptist. The presumption in the vast majority of these cases is that it refers to a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit. The prophecy in Joel 2:28 suggests that prophesying by sons and daughters would be no different to that exercised by Joel himself which will include exhorting, reproving, threatening judgment, as well as in foretelling future events. “For no prophecy recorded in Scripture was ever thought up by the prophet himself. It was the Holy Spirit within these godly men who gave them true messages from God” (2 Pet 1:20-21). It would appear from the writings of those who profess to “prophesy” today that they cannot say this of their “prophecies,” which makes one wonder whether they ought to be called “prophecies” at all. Possibly sincere, spiritual wishful thinking, would be a better term for it.

From his detailed study of the subject of prophecy G. W. Knight concluded—

. . . that the New Testament speaks of this activity as the result of God’s Spirit acting in and through a person to produce that which is God’s revelation and that it is regarded therefore as intrinsically different from and distinguished from what the New Testament means by teaching and preaching."

Yahweh used the medium of a witch and the female voice of Huldah, Miriam and Deborah to convey His messages. Would the contents of those messages have been any different if Yahweh had used a male voice to convey it? Surely not. Whether a male or a female voice conveyed Yahweh’s message in these specific contexts is immaterial to the content itself, and the prophetic voice will convey the full range of Yahweh’s emotions (fury, exasperation, love, encouragement, etc.). Yahweh used the mouth of Balaam (a non-Israelite) and the mouth of his ass to convey His messages. The only difference is that male prophets were sometimes told to go to the male section of the Temple and deliver their prophecies from that spot, but female prophets could not do that, being barred from the men’s court. Yahweh does not entice prophetesses to go against His law of entering His Temple, and neither would we expect Him to entice women into prophesying in His Son’s Church.

Others regarded prophecy as a stop-gap function until the reading of Scripture replaced it. Many in the Reformed churches and Brethren circles have adopted this view. Compare John Heading’s judgment: “the spiritual gift of prophecy has ceased since the New Testament Scriptures are complete.” There is no scriptural warrant for this statement even though some cling to a verse like 1 Corinthians 13:10, “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall become useless.” This verse is not about the canon of Scripture being made complete. If anything it is about it being always incomplete! For Paul is contrasting love with all the other gifts none of which is “complete” whereas love is. All canonical revelation will become useless when we see Christ Jesus face to face.

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102 It was a common anti-Pauline reason to admit women to the ministry to argue that if God could use the mouth of an ass to convey His message He could use the mouth of a woman. This might have sounded clever at the time, but it was misconceived in that it did not take into account the theological reasons given for woman being silent in the church.


The view that the gift of prophesy has dropped out of the Spirit’s list of gifts to enrich the Church is a dogmatic position based on a narrow view of the way God and the Lord Jesus communicate with the Church. Latent in this view is the fear that anything revealed by God outside the written Word may be given the same standing as the written form leading to the latter being laid aside in favour of the newer, fresher “revelation” that modern “prophesying” is said to bring. This fear is justified when women prophets are involved who, first, are uncovered when they deliver their so-called prophecies, and second, do so in Church where the Spirit expressly forbids them to speak. This can be countered or offset by the observation that men may contribute a tongue or a prophesy in church which ought to have been delivered outside the church meeting. The context of what they were revealing was no doubt Spirit-inspired, but the context in which they released it was not. The criterion for content and context is that both should edify the whole church (1 Cor 14).

On the broader issue of prophesy having fallen into abeyance or suspended once the canonical writings were fixed, on the misapplication of 1 Corinthians 13:10, “when that which is complete [meaning the canonical writings of the NT] has come then that which is in part [prophesying, tongues, revelations, etc.] is done away with,” first, it should be noted that the Church has “lost” Paul’s “Letter to the Laodiceans” which is referred to in Colossians 4:16, and two of his four letters to the Corinthians. We have only his second (=1 Cor) and fourth (=2 Cor) letters. Indeed, if we are to go by the large number of churches that Paul founded then the majority of Paul’s letters have been “lost.” Of the twelve Apostles we have writings from only three of them (Peter, James and John) and what has survived cannot be all that they wrote. So we have lost the majority of their inspired writings. We have only four canonical Gospels and the first three of these overlap considerably. Yet John tells us that he has made only a selection of all that Jesus said and did, because if all Jesus said and did were recorded the world itself could not contain the books required (Jn 21:25).

So the early Church was considerably richer than we are today in the sources, both written and live (Apostles and prophets), that it had to guide them into all truth. Yet on top of a more extensive knowledge of Jesus’ words and deeds than we have in the four Gospels, and on top of having twelve authoritative Apostles whom they could consult daily, the Lord Jesus gave His churches prophets through whom He could give day to day guidance. And why should He not do so? He is Head of the Church which is His body. There is nothing to fear in having a “hands on” Head of the Church who can communicate directly in a contemporary situation. The four Gospels were in existence and all the Apostles were probably dead (except John) when Jesus continued to speak directly to the seven churches in Asia.

However, whatever “communication” Jesus is said to give through “prophesy” today must never contradict the written sources. The false prophet can be recognised by his failure to live a godly life in accordance with the written sources. We know the written sources are the pure Word of God; we cannot be sure modern “prophets” are a pure source unless their lives are lived in full obedience to Jesus’ recorded teaching. So, even though the written sources (contained in the NT) are only a fraction of what the Early Church possessed they are sufficient to guide us into all that is necessary for salvation. We have no warrant to conclude that Jesus is not taking an active part in the running of His Church today as he did in John’s day with the seven churches. We have no warrant to conclude that He has lost His voice, therefore He can still speak to His wayward churches today, if they have an ear to hear Him.

Second, written Scriptures are the product of the gift of the Holy Spirit given to men and women in the past. They are not the gift itself. The gift of the Spirit is given to every new born Christian and we know that the Spirit gives gifts to each for profit and He divides to each separately as He intends for the building up of the Body (1 Cor 12:7-11). Ephesians 4:7, “to each one of you was given the grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ . . . and he gave gifts to men . . . and he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for a work of service, for a building up of the body of Christ . . . that we may no more be babes . . . .” We have no warrant to believe that the Spirit has ceased to give each member a gift of some kind because of the analogy of the body parts in Ephesians 4:12-16; Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. While the Twelve Apostles were necessary to replace the presence of the Lord Jesus, once they had delivered His teaching they were
redundant, and therefore there was no necessity to keep up the number twelve as they died off. That gift was not renewed once it had fulfilled its purpose. It was only at the initial stage of setting up the Church that they were crucial. But their apostolic teaching and traditions were delegated and handed on to others before the time came for them to die; thus Paul deliberately chose men to take over from him (Timothy and Titus) to continue to preach his Gospel to the next generation. He encouraged Timothy to do the same (2 Tim 2:2). As transmitters of the Gospel they function in the same way as the original Twelve, and as inheritors of that Apostolic Gospel they function as “apostles” to the next generation.

4.3.8. DISCERNING OR JUDGING THE PROPHETS’ MESSAGES?

In the light of the foregoing understanding of prophecy the “judging/discerning” of the resident prophets in the Corinthian church (14:29) would be an instant, on the spot, judgment, whether what they had just heard in the assembly was profitable, i.e., whether it fitted in with Paul’s idea of things that profit the whole congregation and not just a few (as in foreign tongues). In other words, all that the true prophet says is true (because the Holy Spirit is the revealer), but the control of the Spirit belongs to the speaker who must make a judgment whether to speak or keep quiet. Out of the same mouth cannot come forth false and true prophecies, but all that comes out may not fulfill the criterion of being helpful to all (or the majority) and that has been the chief concern of Paul throughout chapter 14. It is in this sense that the faculty of discerning comes into play and all the congregation can be involved in it. So some kinds of prophesying, like some foreign tongues (the uninterpreted ones) can take up valuable time in the worship service. Paul is advising them to cut out any kind of prophesying and foreign tongue-speaking that benefits only a few, and permit only the use of tongues (i.e., interpreted foreign languages) and prophesying that benefit the majority. It is in this context that someone may be moved, while a prophecy is being delivered which does not benefit all, to stand up and deliver a prophecy that does profit. The first prophet must cease speaking and give way to the second prophet. This does not mean that the first prophet is speaking unspiritual revelations, or that he is not speaking under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Rather, what he has to say may best be delivered in a less public arena, or he started off addressing the whole congregation but got side-tracked into something that was not relevant to all in the congregation. How do you stop someone going on and on for hours? might have been a question in the Corinthian letter to Paul. Paul’s suggestion that one prophet gives way to another rules out the possibility that one individual could monopolise the service for hours. What a wise, Solomonic, judgment this was.

It may not be known until after a foreign language (=tongue) has been exercised or a prophecy delivered that these have not benefited all, but through the congregation’s experience the person with the gift of a particular foreign language and the prophet who does not restrain his use of his gift to edify all will be lovingly guided by the judgment/discernment of the congregation toward a more judicious use of their gift in the worship service, so that their corporate time together is not wasted. All their gifts profit, Paul is saying, but all gifts do not profit all, when all meet together in one place. Some are best exercised in private or in smaller groups while others should be displayed from the housetops, as it were. The congregation, Paul says, must learn to distinguish when and where their gifts can be used most profitably.

If all can prophesy then all can “discern.” Because some Corinthians were eating and drinking but not “discerning” the body of the Lord (11:29), the Lord judged them by killing some of them and leaving others weak and sick. It does not appear that there is a gift of discernment in 14:29 (despite 12:10) that some have and others do not have. So “discern” in this context means that each can learn from the one who speaks a prophecy provided that the speaker has not misjudged in advance that what he is going to say is beneficial to the majority (ὅτι ἀλλὰς) if not all of those present. We have two present imperatives in 14:29, “let two or three speak [=prophesy]” and “let the rest discern/decide [its profit: πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον (12:7)],” not decide whether it is true or false in a show of hands or by some majority decision of those present.
The theory that the congregation was to sift out the “true bits” from the “false bits” in the Spirit-given spiritual gifts is incomprehensible and a drastic downgrading of the presence and quality of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. Either a prophet is false or he is true. There is no instance in the Bible where a prophet like Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel delivered a mixed prophecy to God’s people, which would leave their hearers with an excuse to reject “God’s word,” because they could argue they could not sort out which bits were true and which were false! What God’s prophets delivered were the very words of God Himself, nothing more and nothing less. It was a black or white situation; a true or false message, never a mixture. They did not carefully “compose” their prophecies so that a human element came into it. They were given the exact words to use (2 Pet 1:20-21). There is no reason to think that New Testament prophets were any different because it was the same Spirit that was in them as was in the Old Testament prophets. Now, since the Holy Spirit was poured out on all the believers, young and old, mature and immature, there is a greater need to exercise control of the gifts in the church meeting to fulfill the primary criterion that the use of their gifts must edify all (or the vast majority) because they could all prophesy. But the control is limited only in the context of the formal worship service. The women and girls could exercise their prophetic gifts outside the immediate context of the worship service, in the Christian community (like Anna), as could those men who did not get an opportunity to do so during the worship service, so no restriction is placed on their use in out-of-church situations.

That this interpretation is consistent with 11:5 and 14:34 can be judged from the fact that Paul uses the same criterion when assessing when tongues (=foreign languages) and prophecies can be used to profit all in the worship service. Concerning tongues he advises that unless the gift profits all then they should keep quiet; and concerning prophecies he gives the same ruling (by analogy): if a prophesy does not profit all then it, too, should not be voiced. The congregation are to be the final arbiters in both cases and must exercise strict control over the best use of their time in church. Certain types of prophecies, no less than tongues, may be more profitably exercised in a private or small group setting, and while tongues can be allowed or disallowed on the simple criterion of whether the Spirit has given the gift of interpretation of tongues to someone present, the exercise of the gift of prophecy, which will be in the local language, is not so easily assessed for profitability. It is only after the prophecy has been delivered that the congregation can “discern” whether it profited few or many. So there will be some feedback to the prophet immediately whether he has misjudged the criterion laid down by Paul for profitability. This will reflect on the prophet’s own sense of judgment and maturity, and it will be through these weekly “exercises” of his prophetic gift that he will gain better judgment over what to release in the in-church context and what to release in the out-of-church context, but prophesy he must inside or outside the church.

Lastly, we have an apparent abrupt change of topic in 1 Corinthians 14:36-38, before Paul returns in 14:39-40 to sum up the advice he had given them concerning the most profitable way to use their spiritual gift to the edification of all in the church context.

4.3.9. 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-36

4.3.9.1. PAUL QUOTES HIS OPPONENTS IN 1 COR 14:34-35

Some scholars have tried to account for the abrupt change from giving directions on making the best use of their gifts in the limited worship time to banning all women from speaking in church by speculating that 14:34-36 is a quotation of Paul’s opponents, and they translate the verses: “The women (you say) should keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but should be in subjection, as even the law 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.” This interpretation, it is argued, puts Paul in agreement with his treatment of women in 11:5 and Galatians 3:28. The flaw in this argument is that it sets

106 N. M. Flanagan & Edwina Hunter Snyder, “Did Paul put down women in 1 Cor 14:34-36?” Biblical Theology
Paul against Paul, as if he could not write Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. It should be noted that where Paul quotes his source (the Corinthian letter to him), both the quote and his reply relate to issues in the surrounding verses (e.g., 1 Cor 6:12-13; 7:1). Paul begins a new section with such quotes, not, as here, in the middle of a discourse. Lastly, vv. 36-38 are left stranded without any “commandment of the Lord” in the preceding context to which they could refer.

4.3.9.2. The Transposition of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to Follow V. 40

The abrupt transition to the role of women probably accounted for the transposition of vv. 34-35 following v. 40 in a few (mainly Western) manuscripts. The full evidence consists of: D F G 88* w ub d e l g vg360 Ambrosiaster Sedulius-Scotus. A. C. Wire and C. Niccum have made the most detailed study of the manuscript evidence so far. The earliest evidence is Codex Claromontanus (=D, VI cent.). It contains only the Pauline Epistles. This MS complements Codex Bezae (Gospels & Acts) and both belong to the Western Text. The Western Text, and Codex Bezae, in particular, is not to be trusted. Codex Bezae [i.e., D], in particular, takes liberties with the Greek text. It lacks Jesus’ genealogy in Matthew so we do not know how it arranged that particular genealogy. However, in the case of Luke’s genealogy Bezae omitted the first forty names (i.e., Lk 3:23b-31) and substituted twenty-seven names from Matthew’s list (i.e., from David to Joseph, Mt 1:6-16) in their place. Then it reversed the descending order of these twenty-seven names so as to make them fit into the rest of Luke’s ascending order. MS D then interferes with the twenty-seven names it borrowed from Matthew’s list by introducing the three deliberately omitted kings into it, namely, Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah. It created a unique blunder when it also introduced another deliberately omitted king in Matthew’s list, namely, Jehoiakim, twice (!) under the names Ἰοακημίου and Ἐλιακημίου (Eliakim was an alternative name for Jehoiakim, cf. 2 Chr 36:4). Codex D also omits two names in the section of Luke’s list that it retains, namely Admin and Cainan. By these arbitrary changes Luke’s 77 names are reduced to 66 generations in Codex Bezae. MS D’s deliberate alteration may be linked with his alteration to the divine words (“Today I have begotten you,” taken from Ps 2, a Royal Psalm) in Lk 3:22. Any copyist/self-appointed harmonist/editor who is prepared to interfere with Jesus’ genealogy and transpose verses in this arbitrary manner should be treated with the greatest suspicion and caution.

In addition Codex Bezae has added eleven Greek words at Luke 23:53 (καὶ θεντὸς αὐτοῦ ἐπέθηκε τῷ μνημείῳ λείθον ὑμῖν μοι γινομεν εκλίπουν). J. Rendel Harris noted that D “has deliberately incorporated into his text a verse of Latin poetry, which he has then turned into Greek, following closely the order of the Latin verse.” The Latin verse is: “et posito eo

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107 Fee points out that there is no precedent for such a long quotation that is also full of argumentation (1 Corinthians, p. 705). See also the comments by L. Ann Jervis, “1 Corinthians 14:34-35: A Reconsideration of Paul’s Limitation of the Free Speech of Some Corinthian Women,” JSNT 58 (1995) 51-74, esp. p. 59.


109 It is written colometrically, i.e., the size of the lines are regulated by the sense, not by the number of letters. It represents two MSS. The text belongs to the Gk text behind the Old Latin version. For further information on the DEFG group see: Kirsopp Lake, Earlier Epistles of St. Paul (London: Rivingtons, 111), pp. 414-20.


imposvit in monumento lapidem quem vix viginti movebant.” (“And he placed a stone on the monument which [required] the strength of twenty men to move it.”) which Scrivener has traced back to Homer’s Odyssey (IX. 240). It seems incredible that a copist would “improve” his copy of Luke in this way.

The next two witnesses to the transposition are F (IXth cent.) and G (IXth cent.), also said to be witnesses to the Western text. MS 88 is XIIIth cent. It is worth mentioning that the witness of MS 88* is weakened by the fact that it has a double slash sign to indicate the repositioning of vv. 34-35. It is therefore a witness to the canonical position from which it wants to depart.

The only Church Father to support the transposition is Ambrosiaster (ca. 366-382) but we cannot be sure what his motive was, because, as we have noted, vv. 36-40 seem to follow closely on v. 33. If vv. 34-35 are an important negative caveat inserted by Paul then it could have been omitted if not germane to a writer’s purpose, and this may have been the case with anyone quoting 1 Corinthians 14, including Ambrosiaster. No source is given in UBS5 for Ambrosiaster’s quotation of 1 Cor 14:34-35. It would seem that the development of Ambrosiaster’s text is that it was based on Lucifer’s text, which in turn was based on Cyprian’s text (AD 258). And Claromontanus is Lucifer’s text contaminated with the Vulgate in Paul’s longer epistles. The agreements seem too close for any other explanation. The commentary of Ambrosiaster is the earliest commentary on all of Paul’s epistles that has survived. But there is some doubt whether it really is the work of Ambrosiaster.

There is not a single ancient version that supports the transposition. Besides the four Greek MSS only the following five Old Latin MSS support the transposition: i, f, fde, feg. Their respective dates are IX, V (this is the Latin translation of Codex Claromontanus), IX, IX and IX. All the early versions (Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic and Armenian) retain the verses where they are, which suggests that the transposition occurred (1) only after these versions were made, or (2), and more likely, the transposition was made in a Greek copy which became the exemplar of the Western Text, and the versions were not based on that deviant copy.

Lastly, there is the witness of Sedulius-Scotus, probably a monk of St. Gall about 820. He had lived as a layman in Italy, and afterwards became a monk and wrote his poems in Achaia.

It is typical of many anti-Pauline writers to play down or, more usually, to omit to mention the paucity of the evidence for the transposition (i.e., only four Greek MSS out of 294 collated for the UBS5 edition; and only five [four of them dated IXth cent.] out of 20 Old Latin MSS listed in UBS5. The four oldest Old Latin MSS ibd support the Majority Text reading. Their respective dates are VI, VII, VII, VIII. Also omitted is any mention of the poor quality of the support for the transposition. Many, out of ignorance, play on the footnote in some English versions that “some manuscripts” transpose them, without looking behind the “note.” The NRSV (1989) has the misleading footnote, “Other ancient

113 J. Rendel Harris, Codex Bezae: A Study of the so-called Western Text of the New Testament. Vol. II. Texts and Studies. Edited by J. Armitage Robinson. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1891), p. 47. The inserted material is also found in the Latin Codex Colbertinus (or c), and the Sahidic. Harris gives about 30 examples where the Greek text of Bezae has been altered to suit the Latin, such as the omission of παροξυσμός in Lk 15:28, “apparently because there was nothing to balance it in the Latin” (p. 53; see pp. 52-61).

114 Codex Augiensis, now in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. The Gk text resembles that of G, but the Latin is that of the Vulgate written in a separate column and not between the Greek lines. The Aland classification puts manuscripts F and G among the MT group so they can not be regarded as consistent witnesses to the WT.

115 Codex Boernerianus has an interlinear Latin translation of an Old Latin type. The Latin text belongs to the same type as D, but is inferior in value and has been much more contaminated with the usual type of late text, according to K. Lake, 1911:145.

116 The copyst recognised the displacement as an error and inscribed two short slashes on the line of writing to signify a necessary reversal of order before writing the words about the women (see A. C. Wise, op. cit., p. 151). So that even this witness is ambiguous. The Aland classification puts this ms among the MT group so it is not a true witness to the WT.

117 See Alexander Souter, A Study of Ambrosiaster (Cambridge: University Press, 1905), pp. 215-57, esp. p. 226 where Ambrst. and Cyprian agree in following v. 33 with 36. See also p. 189, “The whole block, verses 34 and 35 of 1 Cor. xiv, with commentary, is transferred to the end of the chapter, after verse 40.’


120 See the anonymous review article II in the Church Quarterly Review 47 (1898/9) 320 n. 5, 319 n. 5.
On the giving, as gradually the clauses, manuscripts, text of the Greek witnesses among the bilinguals, D and Y. Can these two MSS represent the original Greek text? The theory of a single common archetype of these two Greek texts has been suggested (called Z by scholars). It is thought that Z represents a Graeco-Latin edition of the 5th century, written in cola, and that it represents largely the European or Italian type of Latin found in Ambrosiaster (4th cent.) and Victorinus (AD 362). This seems to have support in that the text of D is especially close to that used by Lucifer of Cagliari (AD 370) in Sardinia.

How can the Western text be reconciled with the two other contenders, the Majority Text (=MT) and the Egyptian or Alexandrian Text (=AT)? The Western Text (WT; i.e., D G) disagrees with the Alexandrian Text in so many places (six times departing from the Nestle-Aland 26th edition in 14:34-35). So we have three distinct text types, MT, AT and WT and it is impossible that AT and MT could have developed from an earlier WT text. This means that variants distinct to WT must have developed after it branched off from the text(s) behind AT and MT. It is thus a later and inferior text type.

The evidence in support of the transposition is further weakened by the fact that the Latin texts—d f g—are copies of the bilingual texts D F G (signified by the same lower case letters), so all the witnesses—Dd Ff Gg—go back to a single Greek text called Z.

A. C. Wire has suggested that since the Greek WT is a bilingual development (in G the Latin translation is even interlinear) that oral translations into Latin of the WT were gradually harmonised and this in turn may have influenced the WT to make the bilinguals as parallel as they are. The dominant hypothesis remains that of a distinctive WT giving rise both to the various Old Latin text types in the third century (conjectured, as there is no MS evidence) and to the Greek text behind the bilingual D of the fifth century. On these grounds, Wire concluded, “the late placement of 14:34-35 in all early “Western”

122 Metzger, op. cit., p. xvi.
texts demonstrates that it comes from the Greek ancestor text of this tradition. This makes it credible and highly probably that it originated from a single displacement.\textsuperscript{126}

The most probable explanation is that the displacement in Z was due to a deliberate act. When one considers the character of the WT and the way D, in particular, deliberately took liberties with Jesus’ genealogy in Luke to harmonise the two versions, and that it is ten per cent longer in Acts due to explanatory expansions, etc., this speaks of a free-and-easy approach to the biblical texts. Given such an approach 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 would be a prime target for interference. There are indications of such “improvements” in the vicinity of 14:34-35. Wire, for example, gives the following evidence:

In 14:35 “woman” becomes plural either to follow the previous verse or perhaps in light of the broader plural pattern (Eph 5:22, 24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1; 1 Tim 2:9; 3:11). Verb forms are adjusted (14:31, 35; 15:1, 2 D F G). Most conspicuous is the addition of “I teach” in the phrase “as I teach in all the churches of the saints,” completing 14:33 more clearly with this verb borrowed from the similar sentence in 4:17 (F G a f Ambst and most Vulgate texts). A corrector with such freedom could conceivably, in the interests of clarity, delay the lines on women until after the instruction on prophecy, assuming perhaps, in light of later household codes, that what was said to women concerned household rather than church order.\textsuperscript{127}

There is also clear evidence of deliberate tampering in the Greek text of Z (or whatever it goes back to). Thus there is the pedantic change at 15:5 where Jesus appears to the eleven apostles (D F G a b d f g Vulgate and Ambrosiaster), not twelve as the MT and AT have. “Eleven” is historically accurate due to the death of Judas. But “Twelve” became the term to refer to the “body of apostles” and it was topped up to twelve in number for as long as it was necessary to establish the Church on its feet and in its traditions. Some of the other changes seem innocuous but, given the track record of WT, theological considerations may have played a part. Thus in 14:37 “the command(s) of the Lord” is shortened to “of the Lord” (D* F G b d f g Ambst); in 14:32 “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,” becomes “the spirit . . . .” (D F G a b d g vgR Ambst); and in 15:2 “if you hold on (to the gospel),” becomes “you ought to hold on” (D F G a b d g Ambst).\textsuperscript{128} A tradition reflecting this kind of content editing in a short passage is quite capable of displacing vv. 34-35 to a more “suitable” position.

An alternative, plausible explanation is given by Wire who suggests that the two verses were omitted by haplography as the copyist’s eye skipped from the word “churches” in 14:33 to the same word in 14:35, which we find plural in a number of Greek and Latin texts (F G L d g b) and which could also have stood at the end of a line.\textsuperscript{129} This would mean that the displacement could have only occurred after “church” was altered to “churches” in 14:35.

Against the transposition is the material change that it would make to the context of vv. 36-38 because there would be no obvious “commandment of the Lord” in 14:1-33 to which v. 37 could refer to. Chapter 14 consists of spiritual common-sense advice throughout. It is not until we come to vv. 33b-35 that we come to a clear commandment of the Lord which prohibits women from speaking in church. This commandment may have already been challenged by some “prophets” and “spiritual” men in the church as being “un-Christian.” It is to this commandment, then, that vv. 36-38 refers. We can easily reconstruct the context from his refutation in these verses.

4.3.9.3. 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35 AS AN INTERPOLATION

\textsuperscript{126} A. C. Wire, op. cit., pp. 150-51.
\textsuperscript{127} A. C. Wire, op. cit., pp. 152.
\textsuperscript{128} See A. C. Wire, op. cit., pp. 152.
\textsuperscript{129} A. C. Wire, op. cit., pp. 151.
Some have attempted to remove these verses by arbitrarily declaring them to be an interpolation or gloss.\textsuperscript{130} The same approach has been made to remove 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.\textsuperscript{131} This appears to have been first suggested by a pair of French critics, Henri Delafosse (=Joseph Turmel, 1926) and Alfred Loisy (1933), and taken up by William O. Walker (1975, 2001), Lamar Cope (1978), and G. W. Trompf (1980).\textsuperscript{132}

The manuscript evidence to support this theory is: (1) one late Latin manuscript, Codex Fuldensis (dated AD 546), which retains these two verses in their canonical position (i.e., they follow v. 33), and 36-40 follow it (i.e., the canonical order). But oddly, vv. 36-40 are written out again in full at the bottom of the page and the scribe has put a sign in the margin to indicate that the text in the bottom margin (i.e., vv. 36-40) should be read immediately after v. 33, thereby omitting vv. 34-35; and (2) in Codex Vaticanus there is a text-critical sign that indicates the scribe’s awareness of a textual variant at the beginning of 1 Cor 14:34.

The objections to the former are that the text in the bottom margin was not written at the same time as the main text (even if it can be argued that the same scribe wrote both texts) because the bottom text has to be squeezed into the bottom margin. So, the exemplar that lies behind Fuldensis had the standard Latin (Vulgate) text. The marginal text is a secondary text. It does not belong to the Vulgate tradition. It is a foreign, secondary intrusion in that tradition.

Second, the marginal text has a mark to indicate where it starts (i.e., at the end of v. 33) but no mark to show where the reader should continue after he has come to the end of the marginal text. This would seem to indicate that the marginal text was not read as the main text, but, if the reader is interested, then the inserted scribal mark tells him where he might find an alternative text to the one he has just read. But the priority is clearly given to the main text.

Third, given the 300 copies of the Greek text used in the critical apparatus of UBS\textsuperscript{4} not to mention the many languages into which the Greek was translated, Codex Fuldensis (copied 500 years after the original Greek text) would be unique if it were to omit 14:34-35. But its main text retains these verses in the body of the text and were it to be recopied, no doubt the next抄ist would have to consult other versions to decide between the two rival texts. He would find no support for the marginal reading anywhere and therefore it might well have been dropped.

Fourth, the assumption that Bishop Victor, who revised and corrected Fuldensis (but did not write the original himself), regarded vv. 34-35 as an interpolation has been imposed on the text. Nowhere does Bishop Victor say or imply this. The rewritten marginal text may be a reproduction of the order of the Western Text which, similarly, reads vv. 36-40 after v. 33, but vv. 34-35 are then read after v. 40. It may be that whoever copied the Western text into the bottom margin forgot to put vv. 34-35 after v. 40 in Codex Fuldensis (or, because of the limited space could not do so, and in any case he knew that v. 40 concluded the chapter, which would have facilitated stopping at that point). So there is


\textsuperscript{132} The latest proponent of this approach is P. B. Payne, “Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus and 1 Cor 14:34-35,” \textit{NTS} 41 (1995) 240-262.
the possibility of forgetfulness to account for the missing verses following v. 40, and not that Bishop Victor regarded vv. 34-35 as an interpolation. The most likely explanation, therefore, is that the secondary, marginal text was intended to give the Western order of the verses and in the process vv. 34-35 were accidentally omitted (due to the constraints of space?). To claim that Fuldensis “gives evidence of an original text without vv. 34-35” if by “original text” is meant the original autographs, is surely preposterous, given that there is a 500-year gap between it and the original autographs with not a single witness to the same phenomenon in the intervening centuries.

Fifth, in order to attribute the “interpolation” to an influential Bishop of the Church, and so give the “interpolation theory” some semblance of authority, it has been conjectured that, since the writing of the text is clearly not that of Bishop Victor, whose handwriting can be seen in three notes, one at the end of Acts, and two at the end of the Apocalypse, the original work was commissioned by Victor (for which there is no evidence) and that after it was written, Bishop Victor ordered (another conjecture) the original scribe to write vv. 36-40 in the bottom margin. “... Bishop Victor ordered the end of 1 Cor 14 to be rewritten omitting vv. 34-5,” Why Victor himself, whose revisions and corrections are said to be evident all over the manuscript, chose, on this one occasion, to recall the original scribe to insert what appear to be the Western order of the verses (but incomplete) is hard to account for. In order to give Fuldensis a place in the history of textual criticism its significance is given the following gloss:

Because of Victor’s stature and text-critical interests, his textual choice in the margin, omitting 1 Cor 14:34-35, is far more important for textual criticism than his scribe’s first writing of the text above. Indeed, his manuscript is perhaps the most important witness elucidating the early history of this text.

I think at this point we have entered the fairyland of all obsessed scholars who think that their work has repositioned the magnetic North Pole of Textual Criticism somewhere near the South Pole, and who think that all future text-critical work must be realigned to their “major” discovery.

Sixth, there is another Vulgate manuscript which follows the Western order of the verses, namely Reginensis (8th cent. AD), and here it agrees with the marginal text of Fuldensis, except that it followed v. 40 with vv. 34-35, which, we have suggested was omitted by the scribe of Fuldensis (for whatever reason). The inference from this is that Fuldensis’ marginal text may be an incomplete replication of the Western Text of 1 Cor 14:34-40. That is, the scribe of Fuldensis intended to follow the Western Text, but forgot to put vv. 34-35 after v. 40.

Seventh, the “interpolation theory” relies on another gratuitous conjecture for thinking that Victor was convinced 1 Cor 14:34-35 was an unwarranted interpolation. It reads as follows:

Consequently, we must assume that Victor had sufficient evidence to convince him that the Vulgate text was wrong at 1 Cor 14:34-5. Otherwise there would have been no point in his ordering the rewriting of the entirety of 14:36-40, the largest gloss in his entire manuscript and the only gloss written with care to make the lines perfectly parallel. ... It is safe, therefore, to assume that Victor had what he believed to be sufficient manuscript evidence for making this change as well.

It is very convenient that all of Victor’s “sufficient manuscript evidence” has been lost. So we jump from not a shred of evidence anywhere among the hundreds of copies of the Vulgate before Fuldensis, to Victor’s complete assurance that every copy of the Vulgate

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133 For a photograph of the text of 1 Cor 14:34-40 in Codex Fuldensis see P. B. Payne, op. cit., p. 261.
136 P. B. Payne, op. cit., p. 250.
137 P. B. Payne, op. cit., p. 245.
tradition was wrong all along in having verses 34 and 35 in its text, despite the fact that Victor chose the Vulgate as the base text for his manuscript. This is special pleading.

If it is an interpolation then it must have become an accepted part of the text before the time of Tertullian (AD 160-240) because he quotes these verses in:

> For how credible would it seem, that he who has not permitted a woman even to learn with overboldness, should give a female power of teaching and of baptizing! “Let them be silent,” he says, “and at home consult their husbands.”

We conclude that the “interpolation theory” has overlooked the possibility that the marginal text in Fuldensis points to the only known textual difficulty in 1 Cor 14:34-35, namely, that these verses have been transposed in the erratic Western Text. There is no known extant manuscript on earth that actually omits these verses.

The second line of evidence that 1 Cor 14:34-35 is an interpolation is said to come from Codex Vaticanus where “there is a text-critical sign that indicates the scribe’s awareness of a textual variant at the beginning of 1 Cor 14:34.”

In the case of this acknowledged tangential evidence of Codex Vaticanus the objection is we do not know what the “scribe’s awareness” consists of. It might be an awareness that these verses are transposed after v. 40; and, secondly, in any case, this transposition is found mainly among the witnesses to the Western Text. Thirdly, the Western evidence is all very late, as we have seen above, even if there is evidence that as a text-type it might go back to the second century AD. But what is a decisive fact against the interpolation theory is that there is not a single example anywhere in the New Testament where the Western Text alone is witness to the original text. It is special pleading to ask that in this one place we have a single exception to this stark fact. It is special pleading to ask textual scholars to lay aside all the early papyri and all the early translations in favour of a 6th century Latin text which has no other earlier, extant Latin MS evidence in its support.

It is surely special pleading to argue that because every Greek manuscript begins a new paragraph at v. 34 and again at v. 36, that this constitutes clear evidence that vv. 34-35 are an interpolation.

Next, it is urged that because Codex Vaticanus has 27 cases of a “bar-umlaut” sigla occurring in the NT at points where NA77 likewise notes a textual difficulty (in 23 out of the 27 cases), that this, too, constitutes evidence of an interpolation here. For this argument to have any weight it would have to be shown that in all 27 cases we have interpolations at these points which is clearly not the case.

Another argument used to undermine the authority of 1 Cor 14:34-35 as authoritative Scripture is the argument from silence. “

The interpolation thesis may explain why no citation of 1 Cor 14.34-5 is made by any of the Apostolic Fathers or by Justin Martyr († AD 165), Athenagoras († c. 177), even though he cites both 14.32 and 14.37, Irenaeus († AD 202), The Shepherd of Hermas (ii AD), Tatian († post AD 172), Clement of Alexandria († pre AD 215), even though he cites 1 Cor 14.6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 20, Caius († AD 217), or Hippolytus († 235). Clement of Alexandria does not cite 1 Cor 14.34-5 even though he discusses the behaviour of women n church in paed. 3.11, . . . .

This kind of argument might deceive the unlearned, but the learned know only too well when handling meagre literature belonging to a past age that “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” Arguments from silence seldom catch the learned out, but they may convince the unwary and the inexperienced scholar. When determining whether an Early Church father knew of 1 Cor 14:34-35 one needs to ask whether the specific topic of 1 Cor

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138 Baptism. 15.17, cited from A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers (9 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, reprinted 1989), 3:677. It should be noted that P=6 P=49 and P=99 which all date to around AD 200 have the canonical order, and not the Western order.

139 P. B. Payne, op. cit., p. 240.


141 P. B. Payne, op. cit., p. 248.
14:34-5 (not chap 14 in general, i.e., on prophesying) is ever the specific subject of any Church Father’s extant writings, and also, given the small amount that has survived of any Church Father’s voluminous works, it would be presumptuous to argue from this lack of evidence that no Church Father (apart from Tertullian) knew of these verses. We know from what little has survived of the works of the Early Church fathers that they engaged with the issues of their day—with contemporary issues; and if there was no problem with feminists in their day, then the need to quote 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-12 would probably not have arisen. Can it be shown that the Early Church fathers were concerned with rampant feminism in their day? If not, then the opportunity to quote 14:34-35 does not arise, and the argument from silence is void.

We conclude that the “interpolation theory” has overlooked the possibility that the bar-umlaut in Vaticanus points to the only known textual difficulty in 1 Cor 14:34-35, namely, that these verses have been transposed in the erratic Western Text. There is no known extant manuscript on earth that actually omits these two verses. Therefore, one suspects that the “interpolation theory” has more to do with theological (i.e., feminist) concerns than with objective textual criticism. It is not a coincidence that those who push hard for the “interpolation theory” also push hard to “prove” that 1 Cor 14:34-35 appropriates words and phrases from the context but uses them in a non-Pauline way, or in a way alien to its present context. This would appear to be the real agenda behind the “interpolation theory.” The simple solution is ignored, namely, the only textual problem noted in NA27 is the transposition of these verses to follow v. 40. It is awareness of this textual problem that can account for the marginal text in Fuldensis and the bar-umlaut in Vaticanus. It requires special pleading to argue that it is not this textual problem, but the interpolation of these two verses into the canonical text that lies behind the Fuldensian text and the bar-umlaut in Vaticanus, given that there is not a manuscript in the world which omits these two verses.

4.3.9.4. 1 CORINTHIANS 14:36

The initial sarcastic question in 1 Cor 14:36: “Or from you went out God’s word?” indicates annoyance on Paul’s part which is directed against a claim by a section of the church to have a special revelation (a “word of God”) which he was aware ran counter to what he had just written. He had written: “It is not permitted to them to speak,” but the rival “word of God” may have given women permission to speak in church.

There was only one church in Corinth but the wording of the Lord’s commandment mentions “churches.” This has raised the possibility that what Paul quotes in vv. 34-35 was a directive already in the public domain which had its origin in a directive addressed to the universal church. This directive Paul says came from the Lord Himself. It is not Paul’s directive, newly created to meet the situation in Corinth. If it had been he would have used the singular “church.”

The two questions put by Paul to his opponents were designed to show-up the subjective nature of the so-called “word of God” that gave permission to women to take an active part in the worship service. First, he challenges the view that the universal practice of the Church (which presumably had the authority of all the Apostles behind it) was to be replaced by a new, and contrary practice emanating from Corinth. Because the revolutionary new practice did not come from the Apostles, and was contrary to what Paul had taught them, he knew that it was a false “word of God.”

Second, he challenges the other possible view that Corinth was to be an exception to the universal practice of the Church: that what was not permitted in the universal church was to be permitted by special dispensation (i.e., by a “word of God”) in Corinth. He recognises both claims to be false. He does not spare their bluses. His own authority is at stake. Because if they are right then he is wrong. If he is right then they are wrong.

He publicly challenges his opponents’ credibility as prophets and as spiritual men by calling on them to acknowledge that what he had just written was “a command of the Lord.” This was a very astute challenge. If they rejected his claim this would put them in direct confrontation with an Apostle. If they accepted his claim they would have to back-
down and acknowledge that they were wrong: that they had “received” a bogus “word of God” to permit women to be vocal in the church service.

Some of the versions have captured the showdown in their translations. Thus: “You challenge this rule? Pray, did God’s word start from you? Are you the only people it has reached?” (Moffatt); or, “Tell me, was it from you that God’s word was sent out? Are you the only people it has reached?” (Knox).

The following translation probably reflects Paul’s thoughts in vv. 36-38: “Or from you did a word of God go out [to all the churches contrary to the commandment in 33b-35]? Or for you alone did [a word of God] come in [contrary to this commandment]? If anyone considers [himself] to be a prophet, or a spiritual man, let him [the one who has permitted women to speak in church] approve [the] things which I am writing to you that they are the Lord’s commandment. If he does not acknowledge [that it is the Lord’s commandment], let him not be acknowledged [as a prophet or a spiritual man].” This hits hard at Paul’s opponents. They must either back down and accept his teaching, or openly oppose him.

Paul’s last word on the subject (v. 38b) expresses his impatience with false “words of God.” Referring to “the commandment of the Lord” we have what looks like an attempt to isolate his opponents for public condemnation which is captured in different ways by the versions:143

“Anyone who disregards this will himself be disregarded” (Moffatt; cf. Berkeley; Twentieth Century New Testament); “If he does not recognize it, he himself shall receive no recognition” (Knox; mg. “He himself shall receive no recognition,’ possibly in the congregation, but more probably in the sight of God [cf. 13. 12 above].”). Or, “Unless he recognises this, you should not recognise him” (Jerusalem Bible, cf. RSV, NRSV; Wm Barclay); “But if anyone disregards or does not recognize [that it is a command of the Lord] he is disregarded and not recognized [he is one whom God knows not][Amplified]; “If anyone ignores it, he in turn should be ignored” (NAB, cf. NIV); “If he does not acknowledge this, God does not acknowledge him” (NEB; cf. REB, “If he does not acknowledge this, his own claim cannot be acknowledged”); “But if he does not pay attention to this, pay no attention to him” (Good News Bible; cf. Goodspeed); “If any man takes no notice of this, no notice will be taken of him” (C. W. Williams). Each of the versions retain the same word in the two parts of the sentence in an attempt to reflect the Greek: disregard—disregarded; recognise—not recognised; attention—no attention; notice—no notice; ignore—ignored, and some such reciprocal penalty seems to be in view for those who reject Paul’s authority.

Paul seems to anticipate that his challenge may be shrugged off with the reply: “We don’t know if you’re right.” “But if any man does not know the Lord’s voice when he hears it, he is one of those to whom, on the last day, the Lord will say, ‘I do not know you’” (Weymouth). Paul’s five-word parting shot may contain a fiercesome threat. Is there an echo of the Lord’s words, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know (γνωσθήκας) them, and they follow me” (Jn 10:27)? The threat is that if they do not recognise the Lord’s voice in the commandment Paul has just written to them they are not the Lord’s sheep. Paul seems determined to ostracise his opponents if they do not return to the Lord’s commandment that women are not to speak in the church.

A. C. Wire noted that the concluding threat is given particular weight by being put in the inus illinois form in which divine retribution is implied by the passive of the same verb as the human act: “Whoever does not recognise this, God does not recognise”; meaning

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142 See D. A. Carson’s translation of 14:36 in “Silent in the Churches: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” in John Piper and Wayne Grudem (eds.), Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood (Wheaton, ILL.; Crossway Books, 1991), pp. 140-153, esp. p. 151: ‘Or [if you find it so hard to grant this, then consider:] did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?’

143 Some translations give a weaker ending: “But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant” (Wm Tyndale; AV; Concordant Version; Weymouth; Lamsa’s Peshitta); “But if anyone still disagrees—we will leave him in his ignorance” (The Living Bible Paraphrased; marg; Or, “if he disagrees, ignore his opinion”); and less likely: “But if any disregards it, let him disregard it” (Ferrar Fenton). Alternatively, it might be translated: ‘but if anyone [wants] to [plead] ignorance, let him [plead] ignorance [of the Lord’s universal commandment].’ Paul’s opponents—who probably claimed to be recognised prophets or to have proven spiritual powers or gifts (in 2 Cor 11:13 they even claim to be ‘apostles of Christ’)—would lose face if they had to confess ignorance of what the universal Church practice was. Paul’s challenge may have been to expose either ‘ignorance’ (ἀγνώρια) or ‘knowledge’ (γνώσις) in public in order to isolate the trouble-makers. Once they acknowledged the universal practice was for the women to be silent then they had no option but to re-introduce it. The strength of Paul’s argument lies in his use of the universality of the practice to deny its introduction into a single member of the Body of Christ.
that one who denies that Paul is teaching will not be recognised as a prophet and spiritual. The fact that Paul forces a spiritual vote of confidence at exactly this point shows that the women’s silencing is not a minor issue, but the turning point in his determination to retain his leadership over the church. The issue of women speaking in church will split the church into those whom God will not recognise as His people, and those whom He will recognise.

On the importance Paul attached to the two universal traditions note the space he gives to the head-covering, and note also the force that tradition has both in Jewish and Christian religion. As in rabbinic tradition Paul has handed on (paredokai) to the churches he established sacred traditions (paradosis) which must be held fast (katechete). In this same section of the epistle, Paul will use paradosis-terminology for the narrative of the institution of the Lord’s Supper (11:23). In 15:1-3, he uses the terminology for the basic credo of Christ’s death and resurrection (vv 3-5). Indeed, in 15:2, he uses the same verb for the Corinthians’ faithful adherence (katechete, cf. 1 Cor 11:2). In 1 Cor 11:2-16, therefore, Paul does not think, as Inter Insigniores (i.e., the Vatican Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood) does, that he is dealing with “practical disciplinary questions of only minor importance.” Paul sees in the question of the head-covering a problem which touches the substance of the apostolic tradition, which included both “faith” and “morals” (cf. 1 Cor 11:23; 15:1; 2 Thess 2:15; Rom 6:17; 2 Thes 3:6).

Here, in 1 Corinthians 14:34 the “Lord’s commandment” (i.e., the universal, apostolic tradition) encompasses either (1) the whole Epistle, or (2) the whole of chapter 14 (Paul’s directives for the edification of the congregation and good order in the worship service), or (3) the specific command prohibiting the Lord’s female disciples from speaking in the Church. In favour of (1) is the wording: ἀ γράφω “the things which I write,” and ἐστίν ἐντολή “they are a commandment.” The singular “commandment” may be significant. Many of the oldest Greek manuscripts with the singular ἐστίν ἐντολή did not divide up the Epistle into “commandments” some of which we can discard as no longer relevant, and so out-of-date, and can be ignored; and some which are permanent for all time. Collectively, all that Paul is writing to the Corinthians has the force of a single commandment of the Lord. They must take all of the Epistle on an equal basis—as coming with the authority of the Lord behind each part of it.

In favour of (2) is a ruling which will change the format of the worship service in Corinth. Up until now some, who had only the gift of tongues (i.e., could speak foreign languages) had been able to exercise it without any restriction. Maybe they monopolised the time but at least they were under no restriction. Now comes a restriction from Paul which they are not going to be happy with. It might mean that their “contribution” will be cut down or cut out of the formal service. This would create resentment on their part. “How can Paul cut off the flow of our ‘word of God’ from reaching the church?” they could have argued theologically. Paul lays down a single criterion covering the numerous “spiritual gifts” that the Lord has gifted His people with to build them up. The criterion each must pass is, Does it edify the whole congregation? The operative words are “edify” and “whole.” If it does not pass this dual test then the owner/possession of the gift must remain silent in the church, and exercise it outside the formal church meeting. Paul gives first place to prophesying because this gift, by its very nature (edification, exhortation, comfort, 14:3) is directed to the whole body of believers and is in the common language. He does not forbid tongue-speaking in the formal service but it must pass two tests, first, it must be interpreted into the local language (14:5, 13, 19, 27-28), and second, it must edify the whole church (14:12, 17, 26, 31). If it fails to pass either of these two tests the owner/possession of the gift must remain silent in the church, but not outside the church.

In favour of option (3) is Paul’s reference to: “the law says.” The law was given by God who is frequently called “Lord” (κύριος) in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, the same term that is used in v. 37. Some EVV take it in this sense (cf. Knox [“is God’s commandment” (1945)], Phillips [“by divine command” (1959)], and Taylor [“from God Himself” (1962)]. Also in favour of this view is the fact that vv. 39-40 then resume the topic of how best to exercise their spiritual gifts in the worship service. Something had

345 The Majority Text has the plural ἐστιν ἐντολές.
346 See Appendix A for 38 translations of this text.
entered the mind of Paul as he wrote vv. 34-35 which irritated him making him suddenly break off the flow of his instructions and meet a challenge to what he had just written. What was it? It can only be that women were being permitted to speak in the church meetings, (11:2-16 deals with the situation that they were legitimately prophesying at home [outside the Church service] but with their heads uncovered, and he strongly disapproved of the innovation). In 1 Cor 14:34-35 the ban on speaking in church was not going to be popular with some sections of the Christian community so he reinforces it with the revelation that it was a “commandment from the Lord” Himself (cf. 1 Cor 7:19), and as such must be obeyed. The plural “churches” (as we have seen) suggests that the commandment did not come through Paul to the church at Corinth, but was a universal directive that came to all the churches directly from the Lord. If so, it meant that Paul’s opponents would not be able to say it was his arbitrary rule.

Whichever of these three options we take, the “Lord’s commandment” must include 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and as such it is an act of disobedience for a woman to speak in the church. And those who permit and encourage her to do so are also sinning against the “Lord’s commandment.” Any member of the Church can challenge the recent practice of women preaching/teaching/speaking in church with the question: “Who gave you authority to speak in Church? Is it from heaven or from men?” If s/he says “From heaven,” then s/he must produce the “word of God” that supports the claim. If s/he says “From men,” then the practice must be rejected immediately and decisively as a product of ignorance or wilful disobedience.

Anglo-Catholics and some evangelicals have continued to point out that the Church universal never permitted women to speak in church. The aberration entered the church only recently under pressure from false feminist teaching. One recent member church claimed a “word of God” (just like Corinth 2000 years ago) to introduce the practice against the universal custom, and from that bad example the whole Church today is being gradually infected.

The Church not only has God’s Word, which should be sufficient on its own to settle the matter, but it also has the 2000-year long practice of the Universal Church as a guide to its interpretation (see Part 3 for the evidence). A third witness is the synagogue. For 2000 years the Jews have retained the practice of women being silent. There has never been a time in their history when women (even their most honourable and famous) were permitted to speak in public. The teaching was: “They do not [however] bring a woman to read the Scripture in public.”147 Women were never taught to read the Torah, hence they could never be called upon to be one of the five, six or seven readers (depending on the Holy Day) to read in public, but a minor could (2.8). The custom was that “All are obligated for the reading of the Scroll of Esther . . . Women, slaves, and minors are exempt” (2.7), though these classes could qualify to make up the quorum of seven readers, “And all figure in the number of seven, even a woman, even a minor. They do not [however] bring a woman to read . . . .”

But there is a fourth witness—the practice in the Greco-Roman world. Plutarch (AD 45—125), a contemporary of the Apostles, wrote in his Coniugalia Praecepta:

Whenever the moon is at a distance from the sun we see her conspicuous and brilliant, but she disappears and hides herself when she comes near him. Contrariwise a virtuous woman ought to be most visible in her husband’s company and hide herself when he is away. (139.9)

Cato expelled from the Senate a man who kissed his own wife in the presence of his daughter. This perhaps was a little severe. But if it is a disgrace (as it is) for man and wife to caress and kiss and embrace in the presence of others, is it not more of a disgrace to air their recriminations and disagreements before others, and, granting that his intimacies and pleasures of his wife should be carried on in secret, to indulge in . . . plain speaking in the open and without reserve? (139.13)

Theano, in putting her cloak about her exposed her arm. Somebody exclaimed, “A lovely arm.” “But not for the public,” said she. Not only the arm

147 Tosefta Megillah 3.11. The Tosefta. Maoz—The Order of Appointed Times. Translated from the Hebrew by Jacob Neusner (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1981), p. 290. (The Tosefta is a collection of additions to the Mishnah [made up of tannaitic beraitot], and like the Mishnah it has the same six divisions/orders. However, it is four times larger than the Mishnah and written in Mishnaic Hebrew.)
of the virtuous woman, but her speech as well, ought not to be for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself; for in her talk can be seen her feelings, character, and disposition (142.31).

Pheidias made the Aphrodite of the Eleans with one foot on a tortoise, to typify for womankind keeping at home and keeping silence. For a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband, and she should not feel aggrieved if, like a flute-player, she makes a more impressive sound through a tongue not her own. (142.32)

The dual traits of staying at home and being silent in public were viewed by the non-Christian culture of Paul's day as virtues in a wife. Arising out of an observation on the relationship between the philosopher and the rich classes, Plutarch draws an analogy:

So it is with women also; if they subordinate themselves (ὑποτάττουσαι ἑαυτῶς) to their husbands, they are commended, but if they want to control (κρατεῖν), they cut a sorrier figure than the subjects of their control. And control ought to exercised by the man over the woman, not as the owner has control of a piece of property, but, as the soul controls the body, by entering into her feelings and being knit to her through goodwill. As, therefore, it is possible to exercise care over the body without being a slave to its pleasures and desires, so it is possible to govern a wife, and at the same time to delight and gratify her. (142.33).

There is very little here that Paul would have objected to. Thus, the non-Christian world had standards that were not far off those of Christianity itself, as regards the marriage relationship, and thus the seed of the Gospel fell on fertile soil, in this respect. The modesty and good sense that naturally pertained to women all around the Mediterranean basin was one factor that attracted them to Christianity, when they saw how Christian husbands, through their Founder's teaching, loved their wives as Christ loved the Church.

4.3.10. 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-12

The Pastoral Epistles are addressed to individuals, not to churches. There is nothing in the context of 1 Timothy to suggest that Paul's instructions must all be located in a church context. Some will require a church setting such as Paul's request to Timothy to "instruct the brothers" (4:6) which would require a church setting. The letter is a personal one to Timothy ranging from private, temporary, medical matters (5:23) to public, permanent teachings (2:8-12). Paul is laying out before Timothy his own, ordered pattern of living which he wants him to follow, and to preserve good order in the universal church as much as in the local church at Ephesus where Timothy was staying and may have been the visiting overseer/bishop.

Not too long after this letter was written to Timothy, Jesus wrote a severe letter to this same church in which he expressed His anger for departing from their first love (Rev. 2:4), yet it was outwardly a very successful church, full of people doing good works. He even commended it for its labour, patience, intolerance of false teaching and false apostles, which they were able to expose, for their perseverance and stickability ("you have not become weary"), yet their love for Him evidenced itself in refusing to obey His commands, "If you love me you will keep my commandments." He threatened them that if they did not return to their original, submissive love and acceptance of His commands to govern every aspect of their lives He would close the church down. They refused and it was shut down. It is a ruin today. Paul could already see the trend in his day, "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a pure conscience, and from sincere faith, from

349 1 Tim 2:8-12 is also dealt with under 4.8.
which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk” (1 Tim 1:5-6). This teaches us that there is no substitute for obedience to Christ’s commands. King Saul thought he could substitute expensive, beautiful cattle for obedience and he lost his kingdom as a result.

1 Timothy 2:1-15 has its setting in an out-of-church context but within the Christian community (the “house of God which is the church”150 of the living God,” 3:1515). Paul is thinking of all Christians worldwide in their private lives which they are to live out in a potentially disordered environment. Their prayers and lives are directed toward the establishment of good order in the world, hence the reference to “kings [plural] and all in authority” (1 Tim 2:1) so that they may be effective in their witness “everywhere.” If there is good order in the world this is to the advantage of Christianity and Christian growth and maturity. Christ’s house is a worldwide community and as extensive as Satan’s kingdom.

In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul returns to the topic of prayer with which he began in verse one and requests “that men pray everywhere.” Paul appears to have every Christian man’s home in mind (so he is still thinking globally) because the instructions to the Christian women to busy themselves in good works requires a home-based life.152 The lists of her “good works” are given in 5:10, 14. The adornment is not limited to their appearance in church but rather must cover their everyday lives. Paul’s life does not fall ‘behind the Christian widow who “continues in supplications and prayers night and day” (5:5). It is unlikely that Paul prayed “for all men” only on a Sabbath/Sunday. These instructions are for everyday living. They indicate how Paul lived out his daily life in praying for all men and he instructs Timothy to follow his example.153 “Everywhere” and “everyday” just about sums up the global perspective that Paul has.

The building block of any worldwide community is the home. Throughout vv. 11-15 the home globally is the context.154 Paul does not say “I do not permit a woman . . . to have authority over men,” which he would have written had he been thinking of a church situation. Rather, he says “over a man.” And “man” here refers to her husband, which takes Paul back to the first husband and wife, Adam and Eve. He uses them as the representative husband and wife. In every marriage the husband is Adam and the wife is Eve. The first home was replicated globally. “He has made of one blood all the families of the earth” (Acts 17:26). Paul makes his case for good order in the home knowing that this is the nucleus of the worldwide church (Christ’s house, not Christ’s houses).

The argument from creation focuses on two permanent, theological facts. First, Eve was created after Adam, so that he is prior to her. Second, Eve sinned before Adam, so that she is prior to him.

If we take these points in order, the person God created first was to be His helpmeet (Gen 2:5b); the one created second was to be Man’s helpmeet (Gen 2:18).155 Adam was given headship over God’s creation. Eve came next, and she came into a world already handed over to Adam. The implication is that she, in her perfect, sinless state, is to recognise her place in God’s world and that Adam is her head, consequently, she cannot reverse their roles and become his head. Submission is a built-in feature of her life as his help-meet.

The second permanent teaching Paul draws out of the first married couple’s creation is that the husband, Adam, was not deceived, but his sinless wife, Eve, was deceived by Satan. She was prior to him in being deceived, and prior to him in the experience of sin (“she fell into transgression”). Although Eve was a perfect human being, and made in the same moral image as Adam, she was unable to see that she was being led into sin even with her eyes wide open.156 This inability to discern what was going on as she was being easily

150 Note the singular, “church,” a reminder of the one body of Christ.
151 This should be compared to Moses’ house, meaning the whole national life and not just the Tabernacle/Temple worship services. We are Christ’s house (Heb 3:2-5), which is the totality of all Christ’s followers throughout the world.
152 Compare also the notes under 4.8.1. Men’s Prayer (1 Tim 2:8).
153 Cf. Rom 1:9, “without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;” “continuing steadfastly in prayer” (Rom 12:12).
154 See Appendix B for a selection of translations of these verses.
155 See also under 1.2.1. on their distinct gender-specific functions.
156 See the supplementary comments under 2.3.
led along by the Serpent into sin is still part of her vulnerability even as a born-again Christian woman.

Paul sees Eve alive in every woman, as he sees Adam alive in every man. It is this gender solidarity that gives legitimacy to his contemporary, theological deduction. It was her gender-specific inability to avoid being drawn into sin more easily than Adam, that disqualifies her to be a teacher of her husband. It is also the reason why she is to remain in subjection to her husband. God ordained that her future all-time condition will be, “he will rule over you” (Gen 3:15). He will, hopefully, prevent her from falling into sin because he has (or should have) Adam’s gender-specific ability to discern when he or his family is being tempted to sin. She will always remain vulnerable to sin without meaning to put herself in that position. She should remember that Eve—the representative woman—was without sin (something which no woman has ever been since her time, not even the mother of Jesus) when she was hoodwinked into disobedience. If a sinless Eve could be deceived into sinning against God in a sinless, perfect state what chance does any modem woman have of resisting sin, for all women are born in Eve’s fallen image? And this inability to resist falling into sin is still an element in every Christian woman’s constitution.

Unfallen Adam, by contrast, had the ability to discern what was going on. He had to overcome his own conscience and make the choice to sin. He had the option to sin or not to sin. He chose to sin. He was not deceived by the Serpent. His wife did not have the option to sin. She was rolled over by Satan to do his will.

Because sin entered humanity through the woman’s female constitution it did not bring disaster on Adam. Sin entered into Man only when Adam (the representative of all men) sinned deliberately. He had the option to sin; she didn’t. She seemed blissfully unaware that she had disobeyed God’s command as she shares the fruit with Adam. She retained her innocent state of being naked without being ashamed of that state until after Adam had eaten the forbidden fruit. Adam experienced shame immediately he passed the point of disobedience. It was only then that she experienced shame when “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings” (Gen 3:7).

Scripture does not say so, but we have to presume that Adam would not have allowed his wife to disobey God had he been present with her when the serpent began his temptation. She was in all probability on her own when she was gradually tricked into eating the forbidden fruit. It was only after she had eaten from the fruit that she presented it to her husband, which suggests that they did not eat it together otherwise it would have read, “and they ate it.” Instead it reads, “and she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen 2:6). When Eve came to him with the forbidden fruit Adam must have realised the enormity of what she had just done but he took advantage of her leadership to see what would happen if he ate it, using her as an excuse, no doubt, as it transpired later on when he was questioned by God.

The prohibition on a woman teaching or ruling a man applies whether the woman is a virgin or married, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, an educated professor or an uneducated mill-girl, slave or free, because, biologically and theologically, she is born in the image of Eve from which she can never escape in this life, any more than man can escape from his Adamic image in this life. The prohibition is located in her femininity, in her genes, in nature, in creation theology. Consequently its origin is not to be traced back to local customs or cultures which come and go. This theological truth goes back to Eden not to Corinth or Ephesus. This theological truth goes back to Eve from whom all women in the world have descended. Consequently it applies to all women everywhere and in all ages. It is a global prohibition. It applies in every home on every continent. That is what gives Paul’s theological argument its permanency, abiding status.

Consequently, embedded in her perfect female, Eve-image, is a blind-spot: an inability to recognise when she is being led astray. It was there in her unfallen state; it is there in her fallen state; it is still there in her renewed state in Christ. It is a permanent

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157 Paul uses ἡμετάρθη (aor pass ind 3 sg) with reference to Adam, but uses ἡμεταρθήσεος (aor pass ptc nom sg fem) to refer to Eve’s deception. The first means “was tricked.” The use of the indicative might suggest a single act which might have caught Adam out but didn’t; but the second means “was being completelyfooled, or, was being thoroughly deceived.” The use of the participle denotes a drawn out event which ought to have given Eve time to realise what was happening. It was not a sudden, swift, single act that caught her off guard.

158 Whether the prohibition on teaching and ruling is seen as a permanent punishment (like the thorns and thistles)
feature of being female and it is one of two factors that disqualifies her from teaching men. If she deliberately ignores these two factors, she has cut herself off from Christ and made shipwreck of her faith. Women in public leadership positions over men, such as priests, pastors, presbyters, prebendaries, prelates, pray-ers in public services, and principals of theological colleges, draw their authority from the Serpent (1 Tim 4:1) not from the Spirit.

Paul is digging much deeper than we give him credit for in using these two permanent, theological arguments to warn each husband against permitting his wife to take the lead in his family. Satan has a vested interest in turning this arrangement upside down and unless the wife is aware of his tactics she will be easily rolled over again to disturb God’s good order in the home.

Now if in the home the wife is not allowed to teach her husband or rule him, then, by extension, she cannot teach him in the church, otherwise she could teach him from the pulpit what she could not teach him from the parlour. This means that the husband must do the teaching and ruling in the home and when he does so Paul’s injunction is, let the wife learn with a deeply submissive attitude, aware of the Eve within her who took instructions from someone other than her husband and was deceived by that teaching which led to such catastrophic consequences. She is to fear to let that situation repeat itself both for her own good and for the good of her husband, hence the need for her to adopt a deeply submissive attitude toward her husband (or father in the case of unmarried daughters). Paul puts it very strongly, “Let the wife learn in silence (i.e., a respectful, learner-disposition) with all submission.” The word “all” is significant. There is not to be a single area of her life that is an exception to this deeply submissive attitude. She is to take the place of a respectful learner throughout her life and submit to her teacher-husband with all deference. Her “silence” does not refer to vocal silence, but to a genuine, compliant disposition; a loving, submissive attitude toward her head. Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him her lord (1 Pet 3:6). The reason for this natural order is anchored in creation theology. She is to accept her station in life under her husband’s rule as a providentially ordained one for her spiritual good and it is for all time. Faith is required on the part of the wife to accept this revelation and live by it.

The word for “rule” does not have an inherent evil connotation such as “domineer” has. Man is to “rule” his wife, just as Christ rules the Church because they are both heads. This is the natural order, post-Fall (Gen 3:16) and post-Calvary. The pre-Fall, natural order must not be reversed in Christ’s Kingdom—the Church—Paul is saying.

Paul seems to have thought deeply about the means by which sin entered into God’s “very good” world and destroyed its virgin perfection, because he likened the whole Corinthian church (men and women) to a “chaste virgin bride” which could be deceived as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, into accepting a different Gospel to the one he preached (2 Cor 11:2-3). So the potential for a whole church to go off the rails is always present if they are not vigilant to recognise Satan in the form of external, scathing press and public opinion, frightening the Church to give up its distinctive doctrines and practices in the hope of appeasing public criticism; and also in the form of “savage wolves” who will be Christian leaders (Acts 20:29-30, “from among yourselves”), seeking to destroy them from the inside by substituting false Gospels, false spirits and false Christs for the real thing (2 Cor 11:3-4). The “savage wolves” today are feminist Christian leaders who hate the faithful and shut them up from speaking in the Church and eventually shut them out of

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159 In 1 Cor 14:34-35 vocal silence is imposed on all women in the public services, but here Paul is thinking of the home setting in which the husband is the teacher and ruler of his wife and children. It is in this context that she is to ask her questions and not in the public meeting where men are expected to do so. Jesus, at twelve years of age, was sitting among the teachers in the Temple both asking questions and listening to them. Women and girls would not have had access to the male court of the Temple where the teachers (and Jesus Himself, later on) taught, so they would have had to ask the male members of the family at home if they wanted to learn anything. This divinely ordained procedure Paul was divinely inspired to retain in the church (as it has been in the synagogue).

160 See Appendix G for a fuller treatment on this word.

161 This happened in 1994 when the Church of England passed by a two-thirds majority a law to permit women to teach and rule men in the church on the same terms as men (i.e., with an uncovered head).
their churches (they are theirs, not Christ’s churches). Concerning Paul’s vigilance he says he “did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). A good leader will be recognised by the constancy (“night and day”) of his warnings about the “leaven of feminism” and its destructive power. The false leader will never utter any “night and day” warnings. He never sheds tears, that is how you recognise him. He is also a very popular man because he never corrects or disciplines anyone in his church (because it is his, not Christ’s).

Now just as Eve had no defence against Satan and was easily robbed of her innocent state, so Paul notes that sin easily deceives all natural-born men because they have no defence against sin, having come into the world already robbed of Adam’s innocent state. They start from a very low base, without God and without hope in the world. “For sin . . . deceived (ἐξήγαγεν ἀπ’ ἐμα[466]μοι) me, and by it killed me” (Rom 7:11). Natural-born men may occupy pulpits as priests and pastors, and it is assumed that they are obeying Christ’s commands. Each man must be vigilant to see that such leaders are indeed, born-again men, otherwise they become vulnerable to being deceived as Eve was, and as whole denominations have been in the recent past under the influence of feminist teaching.

Then, still thinking of the home situation, and the individual woman, Paul says that the wife will be saved even though she may have to go through the birthpains that her representative woman (Eve) brought on every woman.162 Because Eve continues to live in every woman, Paul switches in v. 15b from the single wife at home to all wives globally, “if they continue in faith, etc.”

The translation of 1 Timothy 2:15 should read, “But she shall be saved—despite the [curse associated with] childbirth—if they remain in faith, etc.” Or: “She shall be saved [as she goes] through the [cursed] childbirth [and not by avoiding it on theological grounds] if they continue in faith, and love and sanctification with sobriety.” Paul is combating a contemporary view that women who go through the cursed experience of childbirth will not be saved, because they have willingly put themselves under the curse of Genesis 3:15 which Eve brought upon all females. This view took the form of “forbidding [Christian virgins] to marry” (4:3). In 5:14 Paul encourages “the young women to marry, to bear children, to be mistress of the house, to give no occasion to the opposer to revile. . . .” as the prime purpose for their existence, in other words he has the headship of man in view throughout: woman was made for man, not to live apart from him, but to be his helpmeet. The teaching of “forbidding to marry” was a direct challenge to the headship of man because it kept man apart from woman and prevented the natural union of two becoming one flesh.

There can be no suggestion that salvation is by means of childbirth, as if a woman could be saved by works. That would contradict Paul’s teaching that we are saved by faith followed by acts of faith. The background to Paul’s teaching is the divine curse put on childbirth in Genesis 3:16. This curse seems to have been taken seriously to the extent that in order to avoid it marriage was forbidden. Paul repudiates this, “No, go ahead and marry as normal, and, as you enter into childbirth, continue to live a life of faith, love and sanctification with sobriety. This is the Way for women” (paraphrasing Paul’s mind). Verse 15, then, is Paul’s counter to the scare-mongering of some heretical teachers who are forbidding women to marry.164

END OF SECTION

162 Woman is unique in that she is the only being in the world who experiences pain in giving birth to her offspring.
163 Cf. the use of ὁ ἄνδρας in 1 Cor 3:15.
164 For the many ways this verse has been translated see Appendix B.