

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are very confusing verses for me. They say that women are to stay silent in the assembly, yet women at our Messianic congregation speak freely to the group. Also, where in the Torah does it say anything about women being silent?

“The women are to keep silent in the [assemblies]; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in [assembly]” (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, NASU).

The remarks of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, have certainly been among those which have stimulated a wide amount of controversy and abuse throughout Christian history. Within the wider context of 1 Corinthians 14, the statement prohibiting women speaking in the assembly appears among instruction encouraging all to participate with a psalm, teaching, or revelation (14:26), the proper usage of tongues (14:27-28) and the gift of prophecy among those in the assembly (14:29-32), the need for there to be order (14:33), an acknowledgment from prophets that Paul’s word is from God (14:36-38), and that prophecy and tongues in the right order are not to be prohibited (14:39-40). Sandwiched between the need for there to be order for the gift of prophecy (14:33), and an acknowledgement from prophets that Paul’s instruction is from God (14:36-38), is the admonition about women not being permitted to speak in the assembly (14:34-35).

Significant controversies have been caused, from both professional scholars and lay readers alike, with how to view 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in light of other statements within the letter of 1 Corinthians, which clearly do permit, even with some restrictions, females to speak in the assembly:

“But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved” (1 Corinthians 11:5, NASU).¹

“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted” (1 Corinthians 14:31, NASU).

Recognizing that the Holy Spirit was to be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:18; 21:9), the moving of the Holy Spirit, as asserted in 1 Corinthians 12:11 is universal: “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (NASU). There is no gender restriction to either males or females exclusively, then, to when a person is moved by the Holy Spirit to having “a psalm...a teaching...a revelation...a tongue...[or] an interpretation” (1 Corinthians 14:26, NASU). And so, given the universal availability and gender blindness of the Holy Spirit, why would it be prohibited for women to speak in the assembly, when it is to be anticipated that both men and women equally will speak (14:6, 31)?

Among examiners of **1 Corinthians 14:34-35**, there have been three major ways of approaching this instruction:

1. 14:34-35 are universal instructions, for all places and all times, forbidding women from speaking to the assembly
2. 14:34-35 are localized instructions forbidding First Century Corinthian women from speaking to the assembly

¹ Consult the FAQ, “Headcovering Garments,” for an evaluation of what “covered” and “uncovered” means not in terms of some form of garment on a man or woman’s head, but rather in terms of ancient hairstyles communicating either dignity or lewdness.

3. 14:34-35 are a non-Pauline interpolation, and are verses not authentic to Paul's original letter

While we will principally be examining the various views and positions of Christian examiners of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in the following analysis, there are Messianic people who may be found to adhere to all three of the above views.

1. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are universal instructions, for all places and all times, forbidding women from speaking to the assembly

With few exceptions—those exceptions likely being found in the fringe, highly patriarchal sectors of the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement—most Messianic people are actually not going to adhere to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 being universal instructions for all places and all times. Most Messianic congregations, be they in Messianic Judaism or in the more independent sectors of the broad Messianic world, actually do have females participate in congregational services and teaching, even if it might be limited to various degrees. This might range from women making congregational announcements, to there being public teaching to children during the *Shabbat* service, to there even being actual teaching to the general assembly of people.

2. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are localized instructions forbidding First Century Corinthian women from speaking to the assembly

The sizeable majority of both complementarian and egalitarian readers, of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, are going to advocate some kind of localized situation for the prohibition issued. Concurrent with this are various voices who urge caution in how to apply 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in a modern setting, including complementarians, or those who do not believe in ordination of female clergy.

One popular view of the word, “The women are to keep silent in the [assembly]; for they are not permitted to speak...” (v. 34a, NASU), is that talking in general or in public is not really the issue, but rather some kind of interfering chatter, perhaps even tied up via the influence of ancient mystery cults.² Some of this would be afforded by available lexical definitions of the verb *laleō* (λαλέω), “to talk, chat, prattle, babble” (LS),³ with BDAG further explaining, “In older Gk. usu. of informal communication ranging from engagement in small talk to chattering and babbling, hence opp. of λέγω [legō].”⁴

Concurrent with this, the closing statement in v. 35b, “for it is improper for a woman to speak in [assembly]” (NASU), employs the word *aischros* (αἰσχρός), which is “A term esp. significant in honor-shame oriented society; gener. in ref. to that which fails to meet expected moral and cultural standards [opp. καλός {kalos}]” **pert. to being socially or morally unacceptable, shameful, base**” (BDAG).⁵ Various interpreters are convinced that the main issue in view, for disorderly conduct, are the various negative, social impressions that the Corinthian assembly of Believers would have given to outside Greeks and Romans, if women were frequently speaking aloud in various functions.⁶ As is witnessed in the works of Plutarch, “[a woman] ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself...womankind [must be] keeping at home and keeping silence. For a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband” (*Advice to the Bride and Groom* 31, 32).⁷

Recognizing that there is a range of views on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which notably start by proposing that the talking being prohibited is some kind of gossip or chatter, and/or that First Century Mediterranean cultural taboos are being upheld for the sake of the greater good, is important—as there are other positions represented,

² Cf. Norman Hillyer, “1 Corinthians,” in D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 1070; “The Role of Women in Religious Life in the Greco-Roman World,” in Duane A. Garrett, ed., et. al., *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 1879.

³ LS, 463.

⁴ BDAG, 582.

⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁶ Cf. David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), pp 251-252; David E. Garland, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), pp 668-669.

⁷ Plutarch: *Advice to Bride and Groom*, Loeb Classical Library edition (1928). Accessible online at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Coniugalia_praecepta*.html>.

or at least nuanced views taken, regarding 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 across the spectrum of those both unfavorable and favorable to women in ministry.

F.F. Bruce issues some rather general remarks on the direction of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, in that if these verses are authentic to the letter, that there must be a balance in reading these verses in light of previous direction of women praying and prophesying in public. He directs readers more in the direction of the Corinthian women speaking about things for which they have little knowledge or information, things that they should speak about at home to their husbands:

“After the recognition in 11.5ff. of women’s ‘authority’ to pray and prophesy, the imposition of silence on them here is strange. We must, of course, beware of accommodating Paul’s views to ours, but here the difficulty lies in accommodating the views expressed in these two verses to Paul’s clear teaching earlier in this letter. Some commentators have solved the problem by serving that verses 34-35 come after verse 40 in the Western text, and concluding therefore that they are in origin a marginal gloss...If we regard these two verses as integral to the text...the imposition of **silence** on women may be explained by verse 35 as forbidding them to interrupt proceedings by asking questions which could more properly be put to **their husbands at home**, or by taking part with more ardour than intelligence in the discussion of prophetic messages.”⁸

In a general sense, the rationale for 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is proposed by David E. Garland as being required on the basis of First Century Mediterranean social norms. He details,

“I conclude that Paul’s instructions are conditioned by the social realities of his age and a desire to prevent a serious breach in decorum. The negative effect that wives publicly interrupting or contradicting their husbands might have on outsiders (let alone the bruising it would cause to sensitive male egos) could not be far from his mind.”⁹

The perspective of David H. Stern in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* is also fairly close to this, but also advises readers of 1 Corinthians to consider the perspective that its author is dealing with localized questions and circumstances with which they were familiar:

“Sha’ul places his instruction precisely here in the letter because it is here that he is dealing with matters of decorum and public order in congregational meetings; his advice seems curt and abrupt if one ignores that he has already discussed the applicable general principles and that (by my assumption) his questioners are already familiar with the context of the problem, since they brought it up in the first place. If we could not supply such a framework for these verses, we might have to conclude, as some do, that Sha’ul demeans women.”¹⁰

Another perspective which has been offered, especially in view of the wider context and its themes regarding prophetic words and tongues, is that the prohibition regarding women speaking in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 actually pertains to the evaluation of prophecies issued to the assembly. This view is offered by Craig Blomberg:

“Perhaps the best perspective...is to take Paul’s commands as prohibiting women from participating in the final church decisions about the legitimacy of any given prophecy. To begin with, ‘speak,’ in twenty of the twenty-one appearances of this verb in this chapter outside of vv 34-35, refers either directly or by analogy to one of four very particular kinds of speech: tongues, their interpretation, prophecy or its evaluation. But the first three of these are spiritual gifts, distributed regardless of gender. An authoritative evaluation of prophecy, however, while requiring input from the whole congregation, would ultimately have been the responsibility of the church leadership...who, at least in the first century, seem to have been exclusively male. The sequence of topics from verses 27-33 has been precisely: tongues, their interpretation, prophecy, and its evaluation, in that order.”¹¹

⁸ F.F. Bruce, *New Century Bible: 1 and 2 Corinthians* (London: Oliphants, 1971), 135.

⁹ Garland, 673.

¹⁰ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, 484.

¹¹ Craig Blomberg, *NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 281.

This is a view that is also repeated to a wide extent by Ben Witherington III, although he adds the thought that with prophecies perhaps being evaluated, what would have occurred would have been similar to what took place at the pagan oracle of Delphi:

“During the time of the weighing of the prophecies some women, probably married women, who themselves may have been prophetesses and thus entitled to weigh what was said, were asking questions, perhaps inappropriate questions, and the worship service was being disrupted. Paul urges in vv. 34f. that Christian worship not be turned into a question-and-answer session...[I]t is very believable that these women assumed that Christian prophets or prophetesses function much like the oracle at Delphi, who only prophesied in response to questions, including questions about purely personal matters. Paul argues that Christian prophecy is different: Prophets and prophetesses speak in response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, without any human priming of the pump. Paul then limits such questions to another location, namely home. He may imply that the husband or man who was to be asked was either a prophet or at least able to answer such questions at a more appropriate time.”¹²

In some ways, it may be thought that a wife-prophetess cross-examining various prophecies issued to the assembly, corresponds to how Moses’ sister Miriam contradicted her brother as the designated leader of Israel (Numbers 12:1-15).

Evangelical Christian voices which would be regarded as more complementarian than not in terms of gender roles, have tended to issue some caution in how 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is read and applied in modern circumstances. Leon Morris describes how the situation presented in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 depicts circumstances which are not necessarily the same as encountered today in contemporary Christianity:

“We must exercise due caution in applying his principle to our own very different situation. For example, in recent discussions this passage is often cited as deciding the question of the ordination of women. But it should be applied to that question only with reserve. Paul is not discussing whether and how qualified women may minister, but how women should learn (v. 35).”¹³

Roy C. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner describe the challenges of implementing what 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 communicates in a modern Western setting, taking these verses in the obvious direction of them having been written against a First Century backdrop:

“In applying such a text to other contexts and cultures we must be aware of the extent to which Paul and other biblical authors are sensitive to the social norms of proper decorum in the places where they ministered...[I]n the modern (or postmodern) West it would be more scandalous to prohibit women from speaking with men than it is to allow men and women to speak freely with each other as long as our own sense of propriety is not offended. For a married man or woman to meet privately with a person of the opposite sex on a regular basis for prayer, study, and the like would be likely to raise questions. A married person who spends significant time discussing issues in private with a person of the opposite spouse other than their spouse might raise some concerns. In some cultures and contexts one could still suggest that a wife should ask their question of their own husbands at home (as was considered most appropriate in the Roman world) without blushing. In much of the world today such a recommendation would only discredit the person making such a statement, given the fact that the husband is hardly more likely to understand the issues better than his wife.”¹⁴

On the whole for today’s wide Messianic community, which is firmly complementarian and tends to oppose females as ordained clergy or leaders in the assembly, it is still to be observed that some localized First Century Corinthian or Mediterranean issue will be concluded for the rationale behind 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. These verses

¹² Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 287; also D.A. Carson, “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 and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 152-153 who seems to favor such a view.

Craig S. Keener, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: 1&2 Corinthians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 119 offers a similar proposal in terms of women being allowed to learn, but only at home, in a Greco-Roman culture where women were largely disparaged from learning at all.

¹³ Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp 196-197.

¹⁴ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), pp 729-730.

will not often be interpreted as a universal moratorium on women speaking in the assembly in all places and all times, but will be employed to limit the participation on women speaking in the assembly for certain.

3. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are a non-Pauline interpolation, and are verses not authentic to Paul's original letter

A growing number of examiners, understandably egalitarian and favorable to females as ordained clergy and leaders in the assembly, feel that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are a later, non-Pauline interpolation or gloss of some kind. This does notably involve those who lean toward later letters, which include some kind of restrictive instruction on women (1 Timothy 2:11-12), as being Deutero-Pauline and the product of a later generation.¹⁵ Yet, there are evangelical interpreters who hold to genuine Pauline authorship of all of Paul's attributed letters, who do not believe that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 were verses written by Paul.

Those arguing that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are inauthentic to this letter will appeal to the previous instruction of 1 Corinthians 11:2-26, which portrays women as being able to prophesy, and in the surrounding text of ch. 14, each being able to contribute (14:26) or prophesy (14:24, 31), all speaking in tongues (14:5, 18, 23, 39). In the wider scope of Paul's letters, the place of various female leaders in the assembly is to be acknowledged, including: Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2), Prisca (Romans 16:3-4; cf. Acts 18:18-28), Junia (Romans 16:7), and Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2-3). It is widely thought that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 interrupt Paul's flow of thought among the wider selection of subjects addressed in ch. 14, with vs. 34-35 notably placed in parentheses () in the NRSV:

"What should be done then, my friends? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. **(As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?)** Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. Anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized. So, my friends, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; but all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:26-40, NRSV).

In determining the intention of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, a significant challenge is presented to all readers, but most especially Messianic readers, per the statement made "as the Law also says" (NASU) or "as also the *Torah* says" (CJB/TLV). The specific instruction of the Pentateuch is appealed to as support for the silence and subordination of females in the assembly. This presents a serious hermeneutical dilemma, as the statement *ho nomos legei* (ὁ νόμος λέγει) appears elsewhere (Romans 3:19¹⁶; 1 Corinthians 9:8¹⁷; 14:21¹⁸) with some form of quotation or significant allusion to a Torah or Tanach passage. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, no such quotation or significant allusion is made.

¹⁵ Jouette M. Bassler, "1 Corinthians," in Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp 327-328; Richard B. Hays, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 247; J. Paul Sampley, "The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians," in Walter J. Harrelson, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, NRSV (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 2056; Stephen C. Barton, "1 Corinthians," in *ECB*, 1345; Laurence W. Welborn, "The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians," in Michael D. Coogan, ed. et. al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Fully Revised Fourth Edition*, NRSV (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2019.

¹⁶ Romans 3:10-18 includes a long litany of quotations from the Tanach, including: **Romans 3:10-12**: Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; **Romans 3:13**: Psalm 5:9; 140:3; **Romans 3:14**: Psalm 10:7; **Romans 3:15-17**: Isaiah 59:7-8; Proverbs 1:6; **Romans 3:18**: Psalm 36:1.

¹⁷ Cf. Kurt Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998), pp 525-526.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 9:9 following quotes from Deuteronomy 25:4.

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 14:21 quotes from Isaiah 28:11-12; Deuteronomy 28:49.

Even with no direct Torah or Tanach quote present in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, this does not mean there have not been various thoughts issued regarding whether or not some aspect of the Torah or Tanach is being referenced. The most common thought issued about “they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says” (v. 34, NASU), is that Genesis 3:16 is probably being alluded to. This verse details, “Yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (NASU), and is taken by many to involve some kind of Creation order of men leading women. But this view of Genesis 3:16 and the *teshuqah* (תְּשׁוּקָה) or “urge” (NJPS) women will have for men has been challenged by far too many, including complementarians, especially per its later usage in Genesis 4:7 in God’s word to Cain: “sin is crouching at the door; and its desire [*teshuqah*; urge, NJPS] is for you, but you must master it” (NASU). Genesis 3:16 does not at all pertain to some kind of Creation order of women being ruled by men, but rather is a part of the curse incurred by the Fall involving women having a domineering urge to master men, and then men mastering women—the proverbial battle of the sexes.¹⁹ Such a curse, as implied by a passage like Galatians 3:28, is supposed to have been decisively broken via the work of Yeshua the Messiah.²⁰

Other suggestions might be based on complementarian readings of Genesis 1:26-27 or 2:20-21, of the male being created before the female—but egalitarians would rightly counter this with noting that there is no hint of Adam and Eve being created as anything less than equals, and aside from their anatomical differences, both were created to rule over the Creation together.

Another suggestion can be made that “the Law” being referred to in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is not actually the Torah or Tanach, but instead direction witnessed in the Oral Torah. It is actually witnessed in the Talmud, that women were supposed to be silent in the assembly:

“They said to him, ‘It was the week of R. Eleazar b. Azariah.’ He said to them, ‘And what was the topic of the narrative today?’ They said to him, ‘It was the passage that begins, *Assemble the people, the men and the women and the children* (Deu. 31:12).’ He said to them, ‘And what did he expound in that connection?’ They said to him, ‘This is how he interpreted it. “The men come to learn, the women to listen, but why do the children come? It is to provide the occasion for the gaining of a reward for those who bring them.”’ He said to them, ‘You had a good pearl in your hands, and you wanted to make me lose it! If you had come only to let me hear this one thing, it would have been enough for me’ [Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan XVIII.II.1]” (b.Chagigah 3a).²¹

The real challenge to “the Law” being referred to in v. 34, involving the Oral Torah, is that normally—except for cases like Ephesians 2:15, *ton nomon tōn entolōn en dogmasin* (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν) or “the religious Law of commandments in dogmas” (author’s rendering from *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic*),²² or other places where “the Law” being referred to either involves “the Law of the Jews” (Acts 25:8, NASU) or the Romans speaking ambiguously of “your own law” (Acts 18:15, NASU)—most references to *nomos* (νόμος) in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures are to the Torah and/or Tanach, and do not involve some kind of Jewish oral instruction or *halachah*.

Some, not believing that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 represents the view or instruction of the Apostle Paul, have actually proposed that v. 36 following, “Was it from you that the word of God *first* went forth? Or has it come to you only?” (NASU), is intended to be a refutation of what vs. 34-35 communicate.²³ Here, Paul would be quoting an errant Corinthian slogan, and then providing his own response to it. While there are certainly other places in 1 Corinthians (i.e., 6:12; 7:1; 8:1, 4, 8; 10:13; 15:15) which bear signs of being a Corinthian slogan refuted or countered by Paul, none of them are as long as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

Egalitarians, who would argue for the full inclusion of women within the leadership structure of the Body of Messiah, including ordination of females as clergy, would certainly benefit from the view that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are a later interpolation, and are not authentic to Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians. One of the main areas of

¹⁹ For a further discussion, consult the relevant sections of the article “Addressing the Frequently Avoided Issues Messianics Encounter in the Torah” by J.K. McKee, appearing in the *Messianic Torah Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

²⁰ Consult the exegesis paper on Galatians 3:28, “Biblical Equality and Today’s Messianic Movement” by J.K. McKee, appearing in the commentary *Galatians for the Practical Messianic*.

²¹ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*.

²² “the law code of *mitzvot* contained in regulations” (TLV).

²³ Cf. A. Nyland, trans., *The Source New Testament* (Australia: Smith and Stirling Publishing, 2007), 330.

support for this view is seen in how a variety of 1 Corinthians manuscripts, vs. 34-35 have actually been transposed to follow v. 40. Bruce M. Metzger catalogues this in his *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*:

“Several witnesses, chiefly Western, transpose verses 34-35 to follow v. 40 (D F G 88* it^d.^s Ambrosiaster Sedulius Scotus); in codex Fuldensis they were inserted by Victor of Capua in the margin after ver. 33, without, however, removing them from their place farther down. Such scribal alterations represent attempts to find a more appropriate location in the context for Paul’s directive concerning women.”²⁴

The 1987 1 Corinthians commentary of Gordon D. Fee, appearing in the *New International Commentary on the New Testament* series, may have been the first major evangelical Christian resource to deny 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as authentic to the letter.²⁵ One of the most recent and substantial evangelical Christian arguments, against the authenticity of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, was offered in Philip B. Payne’s 2009 book *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters*.²⁶ Payne has argued that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 appeared early as an interpolation sometime subsequent to the composition of 1 Timothy 2:11-15,²⁷ and thusly before the collection of the Pauline corpus:

[Various] Manuscripts, do...attest to the omission [of 1 Cor 14:34-35], including the distigme-obelus in Vaticanus, Fuldensis^{Victor mg}, MS 88, and Clement of Alexandria.

The verbal parallels between 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-15 favor an interpolation date after the writing of 1 Timothy. It is unlikely, however, to have been made after the collected letters of Paul were being distributed in codex form since that should have resulted in more MSS without 14:34-35. *First Clement*, probably written in the last decade of the first century, alludes to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Revelation. Such extensive allusions are most easily explained if the codices of the NT or of Paul’s letters were in circulation by then.

The gloss could have been entered into the margin of any manuscript that became the exemplar (or Vorlage of the exemplar) of the first copy of Paul’s collected letters as a codex. The gloss could even have been written into the very first codex collecting Paul’s letters sometime late in the first century. Since it was common for scribes to write text in the margin that they had omitted by mistake, subsequent scribes would insert 1 Cor 14:34-35 from the margin into the body text.

From that manuscript with 1 Cor 14:34-35 in the margin, at least two copies must have been made, one or more with these two sentences interpolated into the body text after verse 40 and one or more with these two sentences interpolated into the body text after verse 33. The manuscript(s) with 14:34-35 after verse 40 became the exemplar(s) of the Western text-type tradition. Manuscript(s) with 14:34-35 after verse 33 became the exemplar(s) from which all the non-Western text families descended...²⁸

Payne, as an egalitarian, may be said to be motivated, at least partially, on theological grounds to favor 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as being inauthentic to Paul’s letter. Taking a middle view is Philip W. Comfort, in his 2008 *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*:

²⁴ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 565.

Cf. Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland 27th Edition* (New York: American Bible Society, 1993), 466; Nestle-Aland *Greek-English New Testament*, NE27-RSV (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies/Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 466; Kurt Aland, et al., *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1998), 601; Barbara and Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th Revised Edition* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: Stuttgart, 2012), pp 547-548.

²⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp 699-708; against: D.A. Carson, “‘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 and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), pp 141-145.

²⁶ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), pp 217-267; against: Adam D. Hensley. “σιγαω, λαλεω, and υποτασσω in 1 Corinthians 14:34 in Their Literary and Rhetorical Context” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Vol. 55 No. 2 (2012): 363-364.

²⁷ 1 Timothy 2:11-15, and the various issues surrounding *authentēō* (αὐθεντέω, v. 12), *plassō* (πλάσσω, v. 13), and *dia tēs teknogonias* (διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, v. 15) are addressed in the commentary *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic* by J.K. McKee. As these verses appear in the Author’s Rendering appendix:

“Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. But I do not permit a woman to teach or **usurp authority** [*authentēō*] of a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was **formed** [*plassō*] first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, fell into transgression. But she will be saved **through the Child-Bearing** [*dia tēs teknogonias*], if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sensibility.”

²⁸ Payne, pp 266-267.

[I]t seems fair to consider that 14:34-35 might be a gloss. If so, the point of Paul's passage is to urge the Corinthians to emulate the meeting behavior of the other churches (cf. 11:16). But if 14:34-35 is not a gloss—and there is no clear extant textual evidence to prove that it is—then we are faced with the challenge of exegeting the passage within the context of 1 Corinthians itself and the rest of the NT epistles. As such, it seems fair to say that Paul was not prohibiting all speech during a church meeting; rather, he was prohibiting female participation in the teaching of Scriptures in the church at Corinth, for this was a role designated to the male apostles and elders.²⁹

Ultimately for the Bible reader, the issue of whether or not 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are authentic verses written by the Apostle Paul, should be evaluated on theological grounds. **Is Paul being consistent with himself and the universal availability of the Holy Spirit to move both men and women of God?** Payne³⁰ lists a number of significant theological reasons to be evaluated, for whether or not 14:34-35 should be considered legitimate, including:

- vs. 34-35 contradict Paul's encouraging women to speak in the assembly (11:5, 13)
- vs. 34-35 interrupt the flow of Paul's argument
- vs. 34-35 conflict with the goal of instruction in the assembly (14:26, 31)
- vs. 34-35 are contrary to Paul championing the downtrodden, or a subordinate, weak social group (8:7-13; 10:31; 11:21-22, 33-34)

Within an evangelical Christianity that is presently and widely debating complementarian and egalitarian views of women in ministry and gender roles, it seems probable that there will be a growing number of proponents who will agree that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are not authentic to Paul's letter, given various textual and theological data. Today's broad Messianic community is behind the curve on these discussions and debates, although there have been a few voices who have expressed not only egalitarian positions on females as ordained rabbis and clergy, but also that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are not authentic to Paul's letter.³¹

While recognizing it as controversial to be sure, this writer—who has without hesitation been quite open with his egalitarian convictions regarding women in ministry and gender roles³²—would be inclined to seriously consider the views of evangelical theologians like Fee and Payne, who are not convinced that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are authentic to Paul's letter. These are verses which should be placed in some kind of brackets [] or {} in English Bible translation, given their dubious nature. This is especially highlighted when it is recognized that there is **no specific prohibition** in the Torah or Pentateuch that bars women from speaking in the assembly. But, even if, per the small chance, that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are actually authentic to Paul's letter, these verses must be read as localized instructions to the original recipients of his correspondence—and **not at all** as universal instructions for the Body of Messiah.

²⁹ Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 519.

³⁰ Payne, pp 253-265.

³¹ Joshua Brumbach. (2007). *Women Rabbis and Messianic Judaism*. Retrieved 12 February, 2014, from <<http://messianicjudaism.me/yinon/>>.

³² This has been seen especially in his commentary volumes *Ephesians for the Practical Messianic* (2009) and *The Pastoral Epistles for the Practical Messianic* (2012).