

WHAT WINGER PRESENTLY GETS WRONG:

“WOMEN KEEP SILENT” (1 COR 14:34-35)

10 March 2023

In 1 Corinthians 14, there are two disputed verses that say women should be silent. What exactly do they mean? Do they even belong in the Bible?

This article responds to Mike Winger’s video ‘5 Views on “Women Keep Silent” (1 Cor 14:35-36): Women in Ministry part 11’.¹ Although Mike’s title refers to verses 35-36, that’s just a typo for verses 34-35.

If you’re in a hurry, go to www.bit.ly/40qntgC for a quick summary.

Please do not misunderstand our title ‘What Winger Presently Gets Wrong’ as implying any personal criticism of Mike. On the contrary, by including his name in the title, we are acknowledging the prominence of the ministry to which the Lord has called him. His Bible teaching is often of good quality and of much benefit to many people. He is a valued brother in Christ. But on this topic of Women in Ministry we are convinced that he has made mistakes and has misread Scripture.

Of course, Mike tries hard to think clearly and teach biblically. But if you think that Mike consistently succeeds in that aim, our responses may give you reasons to reconsider.

Who are we, and why are we responding to Mike Winger?

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‘Complementarianism’ subordinates women under men’s authority in the church and in the home. When Andrew and Terran wrote their books, Andrew was a member of a complementarian church and Terran had just completed his long tenure as a leading pastor of a complementarian church. They each engaged with the leading scholarly complementarian works and independently concluded that God’s word does not subordinate women under men.

¹ The video can be found on Mike’s own site biblethinker.org and on YouTube.

Mike Winger started releasing his video teachings on ‘Women in Ministry’ soon after Terran’s book was published. Because Mike’s lengthy videos have been watched by many thousands of people, he has emerged as one of the world’s most influential complementarian teachers. On reviewing Mike’s videos, Andrew and Terran found that there were substantial errors in Mike’s research, reasoning, and handling of Scripture.

Since the ordinary believer is more likely to get their information about Scripture from free online resources than from scholarly books, Andrew and Terran decided to team up and write some freely available responses to Mike’s teaching. Terran credits Andrew with doing the lion’s share of the work.

We love Mike’s heart. He repeatedly indicates his readiness to change his mind if solid reasons are put to him. He says: ‘If you’re a scholar who’s really studied in this area and you want to give me pushback, I really would like to read it now. If I’m wrong, I want to know it. Love to see that pushback.’ [Part 8 video, 0hr6mins] We commend Mike for his openness, and we thank him for his invitation. We are hopeful that his engaging with our feedback will result in a good conversation in which we all make progress in our understanding of God’s word.

If you find that we have made some errors of our own, please write and tell us, so that we can make any needed corrections. You can email us at terranwill -at- gmail.com.² Please put these words in the subject-line: Winger Part 11.

You can see our articles on other videos by Mike at <https://terranwilliams.com/articles/>. Or use these links:

- *Part 2 (Genesis 1–3) — www.bit.ly/40lo9oh*
- *Part 3 (OT Women) — www.bit.ly/3jAjCNX*
- *Part 4 (NT Women) part A — www.bit.ly/3JDVRiB*
- *Part 4 (NT Women) part B — www.bit.ly/3X08GXx*
- *Part 5 (Women Apostles) — www.bit.ly/3mMssJV*
- *Part 8 (Meaning of Head) — www.bit.ly/3RwliET*
- *Part 9 (“Wives submit”) — www.bit.ly/3l8CmVv*
- *Part 10 (Head Covering, 1 Cor 11) — www.bit.ly/3JV6kpD*
- *Part 11 (“Women be silent,” 1 Cor 14) — www.bit.ly/3naLVUL*

² You’ll need to replace “ -at- ” with “@”.

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A much-debated text

The text which we know as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 states:

'[34] the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. [35] If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.' (ESV)³

Many different interpretations have been suggested. Commentators acknowledge two areas of difficulty:

- The first is that the words seem to be inconsistent with other things that Paul says in chapters 11 to 14 of his letter, with some things that he says elsewhere, and with his expert knowledge of the Old Testament.
- The second arises from the ancient manuscript evidence. In different manuscripts, the words appear in two different places in Paul's letter. This raises an issue: Why did that happen? Are the two verses authentic?

³ We often refer to the ESV in this article because that is the version that Mike uses most. Our use of it does not indicate a preference for it. In some places, we point out unsatisfactory translation choices in the ESV.

This topic has real, practical significance for women's use of their spiritual gifts when the church assembles for worship.

1 Corinthians 14:26 says:

'When you meet together, each one has a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. All these things must be done to build up the church.' (CEB)

Andrew vividly remembers a Sunday morning at a Christian brethren assembly in Oxford in the early 1970s when the unthinkable happened. A *woman* – let's call her Rosemary – stood up and *spoke*.

By putting into practice verse 26, Rosemary collided with the apparent prohibition in verses 34-35. The congregation's shock was palpable.

Does 1 Corinthians 14 really silence women, or does it actually urge them to use the speaking gifts that the Lord has given them?

Five views

Mike discusses five views on the disputed verses. He rejects four of them and argues for the fifth.

Using Mike's own labels for the different views, the four which he rejects are –

1 Interpolation: Verses 34-35 are not authentic. Paul did not write them. They were added in later.

2 Quotation/refutation: In verses 34-35 Paul is quoting what some people in Corinth have said, which he disagrees with; in verses 36-40 he goes on to reject it.

3 Education/clatter: Paul is dealing with some kind of temporary or local situation, in which uneducated or unruly women or wives are being disruptive when the congregation meets for worship, whether by chattering or by asking unsuitable questions or in some other way.

4 Utter silence: Paul means exactly what he says – women should be silent and not speak in church.

Mike argues for the fifth view –

5 Judging prophecy: Paul means that women should not participate in evaluating prophecies which have been spoken in the assembly.

Mike sees this fifth interpretation as supporting his view that women should be under men's authority in the church.

The video contains more than 3 hours of discussion. To avoid making this response over-long, we will concentrate on the aspects which are most relevant for Mike's topic of Women in Ministry. We will say more about Views 1 and 5 than about the others.⁴

Our conclusions will be:

- Mike's view is not a viable interpretation because it is in conflict with the text in multiple ways.
- The interpolation view is the most probable, since it best fits all the data and resolves all the difficulties.
- The disputed verses do not support restrictions on women's ministry.

What went wrong in Mike's discussion?

Mike rightly acknowledges that every teacher makes mistakes from time to time:

'I will make mistakes and I will teach wrong things sometimes – never intentionally, but it's inevitable. Have you ever known a single teacher other than Jesus and the apostles to not make mistakes in their teachings?' (0hr31mins)

'Maybe you disagree with me on exegetical grounds. Maybe there's a bunch of stuff I've got wrong.' (3hr12mins)

We will aim to show where Mike has made mistakes in his Part 11 video. His discussion appears unsatisfactory, especially in regard to Views 1 and 5.

What went wrong in Mike's discussion of View 1 *Interpolation*

What Mike says about View 1 (*Interpolation*) could sound convincing to listeners who are not already familiar with the discussion. But the chief mistake in it could scarcely be more fundamental.

We were reminded of Proverbs 18:17:

'The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.'
(ESV)

Both sides need to be heard before reaching a conclusion.

In his notes for Part 7, Mike stated:

'The series will be exhaustive. I will interact with scholars and their best cases.'

⁴ The five views as identified and discussed by Mike are by no means the whole field of proposals for resolving the apparent inconsistencies. Mike mentions some more in the small print at the end of his written notes. For further information, see *Men and Women in Christ*, 165-169, in chapter 9, under the heading '**Unsatisfactory attempts at harmonization**'. Further views are mostly additional variants of Views 3 and 4.

But in Part 11, he has overlooked this. He gives ample consideration to arguments that have been put forward *against* the interpolation view, but does not engage directly with the case *in favor of* concluding that the verses are an addition, not written by Paul.

When listening, we kept wondering when he would get to interacting with scholars who have concluded that the verses were an addition, but he arrived at his conclusion without doing so.

What went wrong in Mike's discussion of View 5 Judging prophecy

Mike maintains that the true meaning of the two disputed verses is that women should not evaluate prophecies (View 5).

As with View 1, what Mike says about View 5 could sound convincing to listeners who are not already familiar with the discussion.

He tries to answer some of the points made against View 5. But View 5 is subject to weighty objections which Mike does not address.

The way ahead

We will start by explaining the seeming inconsistencies and other difficulties arising from the disputed verses. It is important to understand these before considering potential solutions.

We will then examine the five views, roughly in order of their probability.

We will see that Mike's favored view is not viable, because it stands in irreconcilable conflict with the text. For the purposes of Mike's series on Women in Ministry, and for the freedom of women to fulfill their callings in the body of Christ, that is the most important conclusion.

We will consider the interpolation view last.

The apparent inconsistencies of instructions, values and knowledge

Many different proposals have been made for interpreting verses 34-35.

Why have commentators struggled so much with these verses? It is because of the extent of the apparent difficulties which require solutions.

The extent of the matters needing to be resolved is sometimes underplayed, as if the only issue is that in chapter 11 women are instructed in praying and prophesying, whereas in the two disputed verses in chapter 14 women are instructed to be silent. But there is much more that needs to be resolved. To see the overall picture, we need to:

- compare the disputed verses with Paul's *other instructions*,
- review the mismatch between the reasoning in the disputed verses and Paul's *values* as expressed elsewhere, and

- consider whether the verses are compatible with Paul's *knowledge of the Hebrew Bible*.

Conflicting instructions?

In (what we call) chapter 11, Paul gives instructions about men and women praying and prophesying.⁵ Some of his instructions are addressed specifically to men, and some specifically to women. His letter is certainly addressed to a mixed-sex congregation in Corinth.

In chapter 12, Paul gives instructions about the use of spiritual gifts. His instructions are for both men and women, without gender distinction. All should use their gifts for the common good. He says that the gifts are distributed as God wills, without any mention of gender distinction. The gifts include speaking gifts and leadership gifts (12:8, 10, 28).

In chapter 13 Paul teaches about the most excellent way of love. His words apply equally to men and to women.

In chapter 14, Paul is writing about the appropriate use of spiritual gifts when all the believers assemble together for corporate worship. *Other than in the words which we call verses 34-35*, his instructions make no distinction between men and women, just as in chapters 12 and 13. The gifts include forms of speaking, such as prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and teaching.

Paul uses repeated, emphatic language to make clear that his instructions are for *all* believers, such as 'everyone' (12:6), 'each' (12:7), 'each one' (12:11), 'all' (12:13), 'each' (12:18), 'all' (12:26), 'all' (14:5), 'all' (14:24), 'each one' (14:26), 'all' (14:31).

The people for whom Paul's instructions are intended are somewhat obscured in the ESV, which uses specifically male language even though Paul's evident intention is to address both men and women. In 1 Corinthians 11:33, 12:1, 14:6, 14:20, 14:26, and 14:39, the ESV uses the term 'brothers' although Paul means 'brothers and sisters'. Paul's meaning is given correctly in the ESV's footnotes and in about 20 other English versions, including the NIV.

In 14:26, according to the ESV, Paul writes:

'What then, brothers? 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.'

The phrase 'each one' is correct. However, other parts of this translation do not make Paul's meaning clear. As we have noted, Paul uses the Greek word for 'brothers' to address both men and women (as in old-fashioned English, where 'brethren' meant 'fellow-Christians'). And the ESV's ambiguous term 'lesson' does not refer to a reading from the Bible. It translates the Greek word *didachē*, which means 'teaching'. This is a common word, used about thirty times in the New Testament.

⁵ We will use the conventional numbering of chapters and verses to refer to the text. But it should be remembered that our present system of chapters dates from the thirteenth century and verses from the sixteenth century. Paul did not write separate chapters and separate verses but a continuous letter.

Earlier in the same chapter, Paul uses the same word to refer to *the teaching that he himself brings to the Corinthians* (14:6). In that instance, the ESV translates it transparently, as ‘teaching’. The same word is frequently used in the Gospels, to describe the ‘teaching’ of Jesus (as in Matthew 7:28).

1 Corinthians 14:26 is the only place in the New Testament where the ESV translates *didachē* as ‘lesson’. The ESV’s translation choices obscure Paul’s approval of women teaching in the assembled church.⁶

It seems that in his letter, aside from the disputed verses, Paul could scarcely make it any clearer that both men and women should contribute vocally in the assembly, in accordance with the speaking gifts that God has given them, whether in teaching, prophecy, prayer, tongues, discernment of spirits, or otherwise. This should be done in a loving, thoughtful and orderly manner, so that unbelievers may be converted and believers may be built up, as Paul explains in chapters 13 and 14. Leaving aside verses 34-35, there is no trace of a restriction on women contributing vocally in the assembly in accordance with their gifts. On the contrary, they are being urged to use their speaking gifts.

But if, as verses 34-35 say, women must keep silent and not speak in the churches, that is, in the assemblies (*ekklēsiais*), then they cannot engage in any of the speaking activities which Paul repeatedly urges them to engage in.

The inconsistency of verses 34-35 with what has gone before seems to be sudden, stark and startling.

The disputed verses also appear inconsistent with what immediately follows, where Paul rounds off his instructions for corporate worship. In verse 39, Paul tells the brothers and sisters to be eager to prophesy, and not to forbid speaking in tongues. How can a woman both prophesy and not speak? If speaking in tongues must not be forbidden, why do the disputed verses forbid all speaking by women?

In addition, the disputed verses appear inconsistent with Paul’s instructions to other churches. Paul is addressing both men and women when he writes in Colossians 3:16:

‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.’ (ESV)

Those instructions are not uniquely for Colossae. Paul says that his letter should be read to the Laodiceans also (4:16). Similarly, in Romans 12:3-8 he urges ‘everyone’ to use the spiritual gifts that God has given to them, including the gifts of prophesying, teaching and exhortation.

⁶ Like the ESV, the NET Bible makes the same anomalous translation choice, rendering *didachē* as ‘lesson’ just this once out of some thirty occurrences. The ESV and the NET are versions of the Bible produced by complementarian scholars.

But how can women teach and admonish others, or use their gifts of prophesying, teaching and exhortation, if they are ‘not permitted to speak’?

Paul’s values?

Beyond explicit instructions, there appears to be also a mismatch with Paul’s values.

Let’s start with honor/shame values. We can compare what the disputed verses regard as honorable or shameful with what Paul (in chapter 11 and in the remainder of chapter 14) regards as honorable or shameful.

Verse 35 states a reason why women must be silent in the assembly:

‘For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church (*en ekklēsia* – literally, *in an assembly*).’

This reason is in line with Greco-Roman culture. The words of verse 34 ‘women ... are not permitted to speak’ state a prevailing cultural fact.

Corinth was a Roman colony in Greece. In a Greek assembly (*ekklēsia*), women were not permitted to speak.⁷ Plutarch wrote of the virtuous woman:

‘her speech . . . ought to be not for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, . . . keeping silence. For a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband.’⁸

Similarly, in Roman culture women were expected to be silent in a public assembly.⁹ The instruction in verse 35 to ask husbands at home echoes a similar sentiment in Livy’s *History of Rome*.¹⁰

But, outside the two disputed verses, Paul does not accept this Greco-Roman cultural value. He repeatedly urges women to speak in the assembly and instructs them how to do so appropriately. In this respect, the values apparent in Paul’s uncontested instructions are countercultural.

⁷ See references in *Men and Women in Christ*, 177 n31 in chapter 9 under the heading ‘**The second reason for women’s silence: cultural disgrace**’.

⁸ *Moralia*, ‘Advice to Bride and Groom’, 31–32.

⁹ Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings* 3.8.6: ‘*quid feminae cum contione? si patrius mos servetur, nihil.*’ Andrew’s translation: ‘What have women to do with an assembly? If Rome’s customs are to be observed, nothing.’

¹⁰ In his account of Cato’s unsuccessful speech against the repeal of the Oppian law, Livy has Cato castigating women for speaking in public to other women’s husbands, when they could have asked their own husbands at home: *History of Rome (Ab Urbe Condita Libri)* book 34 (written in Latin shortly before the turn of the era from BC to AD). Mike mentions this in his video. He is right to point out that it is not a precise comparison; in Livy, the wives are not asking in order to learn but for the repeal of the law. The similarity is the sentiment that wives should be silent in public and, if they want to ask something, they should ask their husbands at home. Livy’s phrase is: ‘*istud ipsum suos quaeque domi rogare non potuistis?*’, which can be translated as ‘Couldn’t you have made the very same request of your own husbands at home?’ (H. Bettenson) or ‘Could you not have made the same requests, each of your own husband, at home?’ (Evan Sage).

In chapter 11 he writes about what is honorable or shameful when women pray and prophesy. He does not regard it as 'shameful' for a woman to speak to a mixed congregation in Corinth unless she lets down her hair (or, on another interpretation, unless she uncovers her head) or unless her head is shaved. And in chapter 14, except in the disputed verses, he urges women to use their speaking gifts in the assembly. So, he appears to be urging them to do that which, according to verse 35, should not be done because it is shameful.

Further, the disputed verses do not sit comfortably with Paul's objective. His goal for prophecy and interpretation is that *all* may learn together *in the assembly* (14:29-31). Asking questions out of a desire to learn was a normal part of learning, as we see in the Gospels and in Acts, as well as in other first-century Jewish, Greek and Roman literature.¹¹ And when congregations met in homes, one would expect ample freedom to ask questions. There is no prohibition here on men asking questions in the assembly out of a desire to learn, in the normal way. After saying that he wanted 'all' to learn in the assembly (14:31), has Paul's objective changed three verses later, so that, while he remains content for men to learn by asking questions in the assembly in the usual way, in verse 34 he is prohibiting women from learning in that way?

In addition, the disputed verses seem inconsistent with Paul's pastoral values, his care for the believers, his rule of love (chapter 13), because they appear neglectful of the reality of women's lives. Paul knows that some of the believing women in Corinth are widows (7:8) – if they desire to learn, they cannot ask their husbands at home. He knows that some are wives of unbelieving husbands (7:13) – they cannot ask their husbands at home. He knows that some are not yet married (7:34) – they cannot ask their husbands at home. Are all of these women to be disadvantaged by hindering their learning? Is that Paul's pastoral intent? Is he insensitively inconsiderate of the reality of their lives?

Paul's knowledge of the Hebrew Bible?

The disputed verses also appear inconsistent with Paul's expert knowledge of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament).

Verse 34 (ESV) says-

'women ... are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission (*hupotassesthōsan* – literally, *they should be put in subjection*), as the Law also says.'

Paul's intimate knowledge of and reliance upon the Hebrew scriptures is apparent throughout his writings. When he uses the expression 'the Law says' in other places in his letters, he refers to something specific in the Old Testament, as we see in Romans 3:10-20 and 1 Corinthians 9:8-9.¹² But in the case of verse 34, the Old Testament passage to which the words refer has not

¹¹ See Keener in *Discovering Biblical Equality* (3rd edn), 150-151.

¹² Paul most often uses 'the Law' to refer to the law of Moses (Rom. 7:7; 1 Cor. 9:8-9; Gal. 3:10, 12). He also uses it once to refer to Genesis (Gal. 4:21-23), once to one or more psalms (Rom. 3:10-20) and once to Isaiah (1 Cor. 14:21).

been positively identified. There is no other place in Paul's writings where his explicitly intended Old Testament reference is uncertain.

However, the apparent problem with verse 34 goes beyond a question merely of uncertainty. It is not just about selecting the correct Old Testament passage. The problem is with finding any suitable passage in the Old Testament.

The phrase 'as the Law also says' could be taken to refer (1) to the whole of 'it is not permitted to them to speak but they should be put in subjection' or (2) only to 'they should be put in subjection'. Either way, the problem is the same. No one has found an Old Testament passage which says that women are not permitted to speak in an assembly of God's people or which commands that they should be put in subjection. The same is true if 'women' is read as 'wives'.

In the Old Testament, women were permitted to speak in the assembly of Israel – even if what they said included a challenging question (see Numbers 27:1-11, where the Lord approves what the women say).¹³

Traditionally, it was said that Paul was referring to Genesis 3:16 ('he shall rule over you'), but that suggestion was abandoned when complementarians and egalitarians alike recognized that Genesis 3:16 is not a command but a statement of one of the consequences of humanity's disobedience to God.

Mike's proposal here is that Paul is referring to Genesis chapter 2 (1hr15mins). But that proposal doesn't appear realistically viable. The needed words are not there. Genesis 2 does not say, whether directly or indirectly, that women should not speak, whether in an assembly or anywhere else. Nor does it say, whether directly or indirectly, that women should be put in subjection.¹⁴

Concerning Genesis 2, even Chrysostom, who firmly believed in women's subordination to men, rightly states:

[the woman] was not subjected as soon as she was made; nor, when He brought her to the man, did either she hear any such thing from God, nor did the man say any such word to her: he said indeed that she was "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh" (Gen. ii. 23): but *of rule or subjection he no where made mention unto her.*' (emphasis added)¹⁵

We are not aware of any satisfactory identification of an Old Testament text to support 1 Corinthians 14:34. Commentators tend to resort to vague statements along the lines that Paul is referring to a principle of order (women submitting to men) that is (supposedly) taught somewhere in the Old Testament.

¹³ See also Psalm 68:11 (NIV 2011), in the context of 68:24-27.

¹⁴ For more on Genesis 2 – 3, see our response to Mike's Part 2 video on Genesis 1-3 'Was Women's Submission Just A Curse To Be Overturned?'

¹⁵ Homily 26 on *1 Corinthians*.

Note, however, that there is evidence of a misconception among Greek-speaking Jews in the first century that there was indeed a scriptural command which required a woman's subjection, as cited in verse 34. Such a belief can be seen in the Jewish historian Josephus, writing about 95-100 AD:

'for, says the scripture, "A woman is inferior to her husband in all things." Let her therefore, be obedient to him.'¹⁶

Verse 34 looks as if it reflects this misconception.

Anyone familiar with the quality of Paul's writing, and more especially anyone who regards the New Testament as God's word, must view with surprise and discomfort a text where Paul apparently refers to an Old Testament scripture which cannot be identified, but which some Greek-speaking Jews of his day mistakenly believed to exist. This instance is unique in Paul's letters.¹⁷

Now that we have sketched the extent of the apparent difficulties, we will examine the proposed solutions, roughly in order of their probability.

View 4 *Utter silence*

This view takes the disputed verses at face value as requiring women's complete silence in the assembled church.

The *Utter silence* view comes in various versions. The common theme is that what Paul says in chapter 11 about women praying or prophesying is downplayed in some way, so that there is no concern about inconsistency of chapter 11 with 14:34-35.

Versions of this view were widely adopted throughout most of church history. For example, near the end of the fourth century, Chrysostom saw no difficulty in complete silence. In the sixteenth century, Calvin's explanation was a version of this view. Likewise, in the mid-twentieth century, the renowned biblical scholar, Charles Ryrie, advanced a view of this kind.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Against Apion* 2.25, in Whiston's translation.

¹⁷ For further discussion, see *Men and Women in Christ*, 173-176, in chapter 9, under the heading '**The first reason for women's silence: the law**'. The difficulty here is quite unlike the more usual difficulties arising from the way Paul uses identifiable Old Testament texts. (Paul is often mistakenly accused of misquotation or of selecting an out-of-context proof text. See *Men and Women in Christ*, 176 n30.)

¹⁸ Chrysostom, Homilies 26, 36 and 37 on *1 Corinthians*. Calvin, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*: 'when he reproves them for prophesying with their head uncovered, he at the same time does not give them permission to prophesy in some other way, but rather delays his condemnation of that vice to another passage, namely in 1 Corinthians 14.' Charles Ryrie, *The Role of Women in the Church* (1958, rev edn 2011), 124: '... in light of the general prohibition of chap. 14, which was clearly the custom of all the churches, apparently, the fact that women prayed and prophesied at all was very extraordinary and probably limited to the Corinthian congregation. ... Corinth was a city of very loose standards ...'

However, all versions of the utter-silence view fail, because they leave unresolved the apparent inconsistency of the disputed verses with the whole of the remainder of chapter 14.

Why did the Church for most of its history overlook this inconsistency? Probably for two main reasons:

- With the rise of the official clergy and prescribed forms of worship, lay people generally no longer exercised their spiritual gifts when the church assembled together. In that situation, Paul's instructions for the exercise of gifts, whether in chapter 11 or in chapter 14, must have seemed largely irrelevant.
- In Greco-Roman and subsequent patriarchal cultures, women's silence was the norm in assemblies, whether sacred or secular, so verses 34-35 stated what people expected. If there was any consideration of the practical application of chapter 14, it would tend to focus only on *men's* use of speaking gifts.¹⁹

We agree with Mike in rejecting this view. As Mike's notes rightly say:

'Total silence doesn't fit the context at all and creates massive contradictions.'

View 5 *Judging prophecy*

This is Mike's favored view.

It is an ingenious proposal, which was first imagined in 1962.

While its recent invention could be a concern, the timing can be explained by cultural factors. Until the twentieth century, most societies were so patriarchal that few commentators perceived that there were seemingly substantial inconsistencies, especially within chapter 14, which needed to be seriously considered.

It has some seeming attractions:

- Paul has mentioned certain requirements for silence and/or submission in verses 28, 30 and 32, the application of which is qualified by the immediate context, so it makes sense to look for contextual qualifications when the same words are used again in verse 34.
- It proposes a unified context for verses 29-36, which is prophecies and their evaluation.

¹⁹ The culturally-derived blindness of those who held to the *Utter silence* view was extreme, as we can see from remarks of Calvin on the Lord's Supper. He argues that women should be admitted to the Lord's Supper, even though 'we do not read that they were ever admitted to it in the day of the apostles.' (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4, chapter 16, paragraph 8). Although women's participation in prayer and prophecy are expressly mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, it simply did not occur to him that Paul's instructions for participation in the Lord's Supper, which we read in 11:17-34, were addressed as much to women as to men.

- There is a neat logic in the idea that, having mentioned prophecies and evaluation in verse 29, Paul goes on to say more, first about prophecies (verses 30-33) and then about evaluation (verses 34-35).
- It claims to offer a resolution of one of the mismatches between the disputed verses and Paul's other teaching: for a woman, prophesying and other vocal contributions are honorable – it is only judging prophecies that is shameful. (For complementarians, this is explained by reference to women's subordinate 'role'.)

Nonetheless, this view is subject to at least nine strong objections, to which Mike offers either inadequate answers or no answer.

Objection (1): 'Speak'

The disputed verses twice express the prohibition by using the word 'speak'. Women are not permitted to 'speak' (verse 34). It is shameful for a woman to 'speak' (verse 35). The use of the word 'speak' (Greek, *laleō*) is inconsistent with banning judging of prophecies by women while at the same time permitting women to prophesy.

Mike's view requires that the judging of the prophecies takes place audibly. Otherwise, verses 34-35, which restrict speaking, could have no relevance to the judging of prophecies. Under his theory, women are permitted to prophesy audibly while being prohibited from judging a prophecy audibly.

If 'speak' (*laleō*) is understood in its ordinary meaning ('talk', 'speak', 'announce'), the ban on speaking rules out *both* vocal prophesying *and* vocal evaluation. Yet Paul plainly approves of vocal prophesying by women, as Mike agrees.

If *laleō* is understood in a particular, more limited sense, such as 'chatter' or 'prattle', the ban on speaking rules out *neither* vocal prophesying *nor* vocal evaluation.

There is no known sense of this word which would apply to vocal judging of prophecies (so as to prohibit women from judging prophecies) while not applying to prophesying (so as to continue to permit women to prophesy).

Mike does not address this fundamental objection. His interpretation of the disputed verses is not viable.

If we record how it's going as if on a soccer scoreboard, the score is:

Judging-prophecy 0 *Unanswered-objections* 1

Objection (2): No clue

Despite the theory that Paul is addressing first prophesying in verses 30-33 and then, in verses 34-35, judging of prophecies, there is *nothing in the context* which supports the idea that judging prophecies is actually the subject-matter of verses 34-35:

- There is no signal in the lead-up to verse 34 that Paul is about to move on to the subject of judging prophecies.

- Verses 34-35 themselves say nothing expressly about judging prophecies – they don't mention either prophecies or evaluating them.
- The only specific *application* of the prohibition is something quite different from judging prophecies, namely, that women who desire to learn something should ask their husbands at home (verse 35).
- The following verses, verses 36-40, give no indication that Paul has just been talking about judging prophecies.

As complementarian scholar Tom Schreiner pithily puts it:

‘Paul ... gives no clue that judging prophecies is specifically in view.’²⁰

The absence of any such clue in the text is a severe obstacle to Mike's view. We do not find an answer to it in Mike's video.

The score is now:

Judging-prophecy 0 Unanswered-objections 2

Objection (3): Total ban

The plain words of the disputed verses impose a *blanket* ban on women speaking in an assembly, and it is expressed in *forceful and emphatic* language which, understood in its *cultural context*, requires complete silence.

The express words of verses 34-35 enjoin silence in unqualified terms.

This unqualified ban is stated three times (‘women should be silent’, ‘they are not permitted to speak’, ‘it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in an assembly’).

We should notice how strong this is:

- Each of the three phrases, on its own, indicates a *complete ban* on women speaking in the assembly.
- The forcefulness of the complete ban is intensified by the rhetorical use of threefold repetition, which would have been familiar to Paul and well-understood in Corinth. To make the same point three times in different ways was a common device in both Jewish and Greco-Roman discourse for expressing maximal emphasis.²¹
- The contrast between the prohibition on speaking in the assembly and the positive direction to ask husbands at home (verse 35) reflects the widespread Greco-Roman cultural distinction between the silence which was expected of women in mixed company

²⁰ Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (2018), 297.

²¹ For an Old Testament example, see Ecclesiastes 8:17. For Greek, see Hermogenes, *Peri Ideōn (On Types of Style)* 287. For repetition in Roman oratory, see Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 6.1.1–2, and as an example the opening words of Cicero's *First Oration against Catiline*: ‘*quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quam diu etiam furor iste tuus nos eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia.*’ Andrew's translation: ‘Until when, Catiline, will you keep on abusing our patience? How much longer will you mock us with your madness? When will you stop flailing around with your effrontery?’

in the public sphere and their freedom to speak in a private situation at home (which we explained above). Since one of the reasons given for silence is that audible speaking by a woman in an assembly is shameful, this cultural understanding reinforces an absolute reading of Paul's prohibition.

This strong combination of unqualified words, of threefold repetition for maximum emphasis, and of culturally-required complete silence constitutes a severe difficulty for proposals that only a particular kind of speaking is being prohibited, such as the judging of prophecies.

What is Mike's answer to this third objection?

in his three hours of video, he never addresses it head on.

He does correctly point out that the silences instructed in verse 28 and in verse 30 are qualified by circumstances (in verse 28, a tongues-speaker must be silent if there is no one to interpret; in verse 30 a prophet must be silent when another prophet receives a revelation to utter). (0hr28mins-31mins)

But Mike overlooks the fact that the circumstance that qualifies the silence of women in verses 34-35 is that they are *in an assembly*. So, if they are in an assembly, they must be silent.

And Mike makes no mention of the well-understood rhetorical purpose of threefold repetition.

Since Mike has no answer to this objection, the score is now:

Judging-prophecy 0 Unanswered-objections 3

Objection (4): Clumsiness

For communicating an instruction that women's speaking should be restricted in the particular respect that they should not judge prophecies, the language of the disputed verses is unsuitable in every possible way; so, if Mike's view is right, it requires us to be highly critical of Paul's writing.

We have already pointed out multiple mismatches between Mike's theory and the actual words of prohibition in verses 34-35.

If Mike's theory is right, what does that mean for the quality of Paul's writing?

It does not mean simply that Paul has written something that is hard to understand. There are indeed some places in his writing where that is the case (2 Peter 3:16).

It means something distinctly derogatory:

- With great clumsiness, Paul is misleading his listeners by stating a total ban on all kinds of women's speaking, and emphasizing it by threefold repetition, even though what he actually intends is a partial ban, applicable only to judging prophecies.
- With great clumsiness, Paul is misleading his listeners by limiting the ban only by whether the women are in an assembly, even though he actually intends to limit it much more narrowly to when prophecies are being judged.

- With great clumsiness, Paul is misleading his listeners by including, as his only specific example of the ban, the asking of questions out of a desire to learn, which is an entirely different activity from the one that he actually intends to prohibit.
- With great clumsiness, Paul is misleading his listeners by saying that all speaking by women in an assembly is shameful, while meaning that only women's judging of prophecies in an assembly is shameful and that other speaking by women in an assembly, such as prophesying, is honorable.

Those who have a high opinion of Paul's writing, and who believe in the inspiration of Scripture, as we do, will find it hard to view this as a credible scenario.

We are sure that Mike believes in the inspiration of Scripture, and we imagine that he has a high opinion of Paul's writing, but we do not find in Mike's video an answer to this objection.

Judging-prophecy 0 Unanswered-objections 4

Objection (5): Permitting what is prohibited

Mike's proposal effectively *permits* questions in the assembly for the purpose of learning, whereas the disputed verses *prohibit* such questions.

Verse 35 says:

'If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home.' (ESV)

The word for 'learn' is the ordinary word that describes a disciple or student learning from a prophet or teacher (compare verse 31, 'so that all may learn').²² It is plain from verse 35 that women are *not* permitted to ask a question in the assembly which is motivated by a desire to learn. Instead, they should ask their husbands at home.

But Mike's view bans only women's evaluation of prophecies. If so, then it permits questions motivated by a desire to learn (which the disputed verses prohibit).

Mike understands that this Objection (5) is a challenge to his view. He candidly acknowledges that his interpretation is weak at this point, though he claims that the weakness is not 'fatal' (2hr28mins). (In fact, he explicitly assesses it as 'the weakest' part of his interpretation, but that is in the context that there are fatal objections which he is presumably unaware of, because he does not mention them.)

His response to Objection (5) is that asking questions can be used as a way of passive-aggressively taking over control and subverting the leadership (2hr59mins-3hr01mins, 3hrs04mins). He gives examples, such as this:

'I've had this happen myself where a student sought to control the meeting by asking constant questions because he was just bored and he was entertaining himself and so I had, I had to tell him you can't talk during the services because he was just causing a problem.'

²² The meaning is clear in the ESV. In this instance, the NIV is less clear; it says in verse 35: 'If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their husbands at home.'

But this is not actually an answer to the objection. Verse 35, by its plain terms, is not addressed to passive-aggressive attempts at control. It is explicitly addressed to asking a question motivated by a desire to learn. Mike is trying to explain the banning of questions by recasting the type of question as something different from what is actually mentioned.

This will not do. If, as Mike says, the real purpose is only to prohibit women from judging prophecies, then it follows that the kind of questions which are mentioned in verse 35 – *bona fide* questions, motivated not by a desire to take control but by a desire to learn – would be unobjectionable. But that is not what the words show: verse 35 plainly includes such questions in the ban.

Judging-prophecy 0 Unanswered-objections 5

Objection (6): Verse 29

Verse 29 is a strong barrier to Mike's interpretation. However one interprets it, his theory does not work.

Verse 29 says:

‘Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.’ (ESV)

Who are ‘the others’?

Mike considers that the expression ‘the others’ is ‘fairly vague’, ‘not the most clear thing in the world’ (2hr40mins). He discusses differing proposals on who ‘the others’ are, whom Paul has in mind. The proposals are:

- ‘others’ is used in a negative sense of ‘not the prophet who spoke the prophecy to be judged’, without any positive reference to who should actually do it;
- the remainder of the congregation;
- the other prophets;
- those who are equipped to judge prophecies because they have the gift of discernment;
- the elders, who have the duty of preserving sound doctrine and guiding the flock.

Mike opts for the elders.

In our view, ‘the others’ most likely means the other prophets, on the assumption that among them there will be the gifts and wisdom needed for weighing the prophecy. But let's leave that open and consider every possibility of who ‘the others’ might be.

The first one, the negative sense, does not appear linguistically possible. Paul is indicating who should weigh the prophecy. But in any event, to see if Mike's view could be correct, our task is to understand which ‘others’ Paul's words may actually apply to, so we need to examine the positive suggestions.

On examining them, in one way or another they all produce a conflict with Mike's theory about the judging of prophecies. (We will assume here that the judging of prophecies took place audibly in the assembly, as is probable, and as Mike's theory certainly requires.)

If Paul is instructing that *the remainder of the congregation* should judge a prophecy, that includes women. The instruction in verse 29 for women's participation in it is inconsistent with Mike's interpretation of the disputed verses.

If Paul is instructing that *the other prophets* should judge a prophecy, that includes women. That is again inconsistent with Mike's interpretation.

If Paul is instructing that *those who have the gift of discernment* should judge a prophecy, since gifts are not distributed by gender, that again is liable to include some women. Yet again, that is inconsistent with Mike's interpretation.

If Paul is instructing that *the elders* (whom Mike takes to be only men) should judge a prophecy, that requires us to believe that Paul's expression 'the others' means specifically 'the elders', *even though the elders of the church, and their duties, are not mentioned or alluded to in the immediate context, or even in the whole of the letter*. Paul gives no clue in the letter that by 'the others' he really means 'the elders'. Mike's interpretation is not credible.

Judging-prophecy 0 Unanswered-objections 6

Objection (7): Unresolved inconsistencies

In our explanation of the apparent inconsistencies between the disputed verses and uncontested Pauline material, we noted that there is a mismatch of values.

After Paul says that he wants 'all' to learn in the assembly (14:31), are we to believe that his objective has changed three verses later, so that, while he remains content for men to learn by asking questions in the assembly in the usual way, in verse 34 he is suddenly prohibiting women from learning in that way? Since Mike argues, as part of his view, that questions are prohibited for women in the assembly, his theory does not offer a coherent explanation of this inconsistency.²³

We also noted that the disputed verses appear inconsistent with Paul's expert knowledge of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), and that Mike's answer to that difficulty is not adequate.

Judging-prophecy 0 Unanswered-objections 7

Objection (8): Missing the target

²³ We also noted a pastoral problem that seemed out of line with Paul's values. The disputed verses appear neglectful of the reality of the lives of widows, of women married to unbelievers, and of unmarried women. According to Mike: 'Paul ... just assumes that women are generally married, so when he gives general broad instructions to women, he treats them like they're married.' Mike's judging-prophecy view does not directly address this. He suggests Paul would expect the women who cannot ask husbands at home to think 'Oh, I will have to ask someone else'. (3hr06mins)

Mike says that prophecies must be judged by male elders, since only they have the authority and responsibility to do so (2hr45mins-52mins). If the male elders did not judge prophecies and left it to others to do so, that would be 'an abandonment of their God-given role'.

If it is true, as Mike contends, that judging prophecies must be done by male elders, and that the disputed verses are regulating the judging of prophecies, then the words should require silence on the part of *all non-elders, both men and women*, while the elders judge prophecies. But the disputed verses only require *women's* silence. The verses do not accurately hit the proper target.

Imagine an assembly of 50 women and 50 men, of whom 3 are elders. If the 50 women should not judge prophecies because they are not elders, then neither should the 47 men who are likewise not elders.

On Mike's theory, the verses should prohibit *everyone who is not an elder, both male and female*, all 97 of them, from judging prophecies. But the prohibition only applies to the 50 women.

This is a weighty objection, as Mike ought to recognize, for he uses a corresponding argument to reject View 3.

One version of View 3 *Education/clatter* is that the ban is on disruptive interventions by uneducated women who were asking unsuitable questions. The idea behind this is that in the first century men were generally more educated than women.

Mike points out that some women were educated and many men were not. Moreover, the *relevant* education would be education in the gospel and the Bible, not secular education, and in that context there would probably be less difference between men's and women's level of education. After all, Priscilla was well educated in Christian truth.

So, if there was a problem of disruptive interventions, it makes little sense for Paul to require silence of all '*women*' and to say nothing at all about uneducated men.

If the problem was that *people with insufficient Christian education* were asking disruptive questions, then Paul should have said that *people with insufficient Christian education, whether women or men*, should not ask disruptive questions, rather than imposing a blanket ban on speaking by *all women*. (1hr43mins-54mins)

Mike relies on this objection against View 3:

'That doesn't make any sense. Why is it *all women, all women? All the women* in Corinth and *all the women* in other places?' (3hr0mins)

In short, why silence *all* women and *no* men? On View 3, Paul's words do not accurately hit the proper target. So, Mike rejects this version of View 3.

But the same line of reasoning applies to Mike's own view, that the partial ban is upon women judging prophecy. If only *elders* should judge prophecy, why silence *all* women and *no* men? On

Mike's version of View 5 (*Judging prophecy*), Paul's words do not accurately hit the proper target.

If this line of reasoning makes Mike reject View 3 as implausible, why does it not make him reject View 5 as implausible? We do not know. Mike does not address the problem that his own objection to View 3 applies also to View 5.

If we apply Mike's own line of reasoning, the judging-prophecy view should be rejected.

The ninth objection is that the judging-prophecy view, like all theories which regard the disputed verses as authentic, does not offer a sufficiently probable explanation for the manuscript evidence. We will postpone discussion of that aspect until we reach the interpolation theory. So, for now, the score is:

Judging-prophecy 0 *Unanswered-objections* 8

Objection	Mike's Answer
(1) 'Speak'	None
(2) No clue	None
(3) Total ban	None
(4) Clumsiness	None
(5) Permitting what is prohibited	Inadequate
(6) Verse 29	Inadequate
(7) Unresolved inconsistencies	Inadequate
(8) Missing the target	None

In sum

The distance between the text and Mike's interpretation remains too great, with too many conflicts between them.

Mike's interpretation requires that, when Paul stated with emphatic threefold repetition that women *must be silent* in the assemblies, that they are *not permitted to speak* and that it is *disgraceful for them to speak* in the assembly, and told them to ask their husbands at home if they wanted to learn anything, he wrote so clumsily that what he really meant was something quite different. He intended to convey that, with appropriate decorum and orderliness, women may pray aloud in the assembly (11:5, 13), may speak in tongues in the assembly (14:5, 27), may interpret tongues in the assembly (14:13, 27), may teach in the assembly (14:26), may offer a psalm in the assembly (14:26) and may prophesy in the assembly (11:5; 14:5), but may not judge prophecies in the assembly. This interpretation of Paul's intent is not credible or viable.

And it is all the more implausible after Paul has given his instruction for judging prophecies in 14:29:

‘Let two or three prophets [*who certainly may include women*] speak and let the others weigh what is said.’

View 3 *Education/clatter*

‘*Education/clatter*’ is Mike’s label for the view that Paul is dealing with some kind of temporary or local situation, in which uneducated or unruly wives or women are being disruptive when the congregation meets for worship, whether by chattering or by asking unsuitable questions or in some other way. This is undermining the learning environment or upsetting ancient social decorum, or (in some versions of this view) is contrary to ‘male headship’. By ‘clatter’, Mike means a noisy disturbance.

Versions of this view are widely held.

For example, in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, versions of View 3 are put forward by three of the four authors – egalitarians Linda Belleville and Craig Keener and complementarian Tom Schreiner.²⁴ Their interpretations concentrate on the asking of questions, since this is the specific example given in verse 35. The three authors make many good points.

However, objection (3) (*Total ban*) applies to every version of View 3, and none of the three authors offers an answer to it.

In addition, we have already mentioned the application of objection (8) (*Missing the target*).²⁵ Some others also apply, to varying extents.²⁶

In brief, View 3 runs into fewer obstacles and is more likely than Mike’s view, but it needs to find answers to several weighty objections, especially Objection (3).

²⁴ Belleville at 70-78; Keener at 228-230; Schreiner at 192, 260-261. See also Keener’s fuller explanation in *Discovering Biblical Equality* (3rd edn), chapter 8.

²⁵ Objection (8) applies more strongly to some versions of View 3 than to others.

²⁶ Briefly, objections (1) (*‘Speak’*), (4) (*Clumsiness*), and (7) (*Unresolved inconsistencies*) apply to some extent to View 3, although with less force to some versions of it. Objections (2) (*No clue*) and (5) (*Permitting what is prohibited*) are not applicable to some versions of it. Objection (6) (*Verse 29*) is not applicable to any version of View 3.

View 2 Quotation/refutation

The quotation/refutation view understands the disputed verses as Paul quoting a faction in Corinth whom he disagrees with.

It has some notable strengths:

- None of Objections (1)-(8) applies to the quotation/refutation view.
- Likewise, the objections which apply to the utter-silence view do not apply here.
- If Paul is citing something said by people whom he disagrees with, all of the problems of inconsistent instructions, Paul's values, and Paul's knowledge of the Hebrew Bible disappear completely.
- There are other places *in the same letter* where Paul is generally understood to be citing what people at Corinth are saying, for the purpose of disagreeing with them (see 1 Corinthians 6:12, 13; 7:1; 8:1; 10:23; 15:12).²⁷
- In the nineteenth century, Sir William Ramsay suggested three tests for suspecting that Paul might be quoting from a letter previously sent to him by the Corinthians: Does he refer to their knowledge? Is the statement in marked contrast with the immediate context? Is the statement in marked contrast with Paul's own views? It can reasonably be said that all three of these pointers apply here.²⁸

However, View 2 appears also to have some weaknesses.

Centrally, the format of the relevant passage is unlike the generally accepted instances of quotation of opponents.

The accepted instances of quotation are brief statements, of only a few words. They are followed by Paul's own view, commencing with 'but' (in Greek, either *alla* or *de*), as in 6:12 (twice), 6:13 (twice), 7:1-2, 8:1, 10:23 (twice). (The instance in 15:12 is formatted a little differently, because there Paul explicitly indicates that he is referring to what 'some among you' say, before continuing with a statement that starts with 'but'.)

The format in chapter 14 does not follow the usual pattern. The supposed quotation in the disputed verses is much longer than in the accepted instances, comprising 36 words in Greek, and containing argumentation (two clauses starting with 'for'). And it is not followed by Paul's own view, commencing with 'but'.

In addition, this theory, like all theories which take the disputed words to be original, requires that there be a probable explanation for the manuscript evidence, consistent with the disputed verses being original to Paul's letter. This is more of a difficulty than at first may appear, as we will explain below.

²⁷ Some commentators suggest also 8:4, 6. These are less clear.

²⁸ Katharine C. Bushnell, *God's Word to Women: 100 Bible Studies on Woman's Place in the Divine Economy* (1908), Lesson 27, paragraph 205. Bushnell argues for the quotation/refutation view.

Our current assessment is that *View 2 Quotation/refutation* is more likely than *View 4 Utter silence* and *View 5 Judging prophecy*, but it remains problematic. Perhaps further study and research may change our assessment. If *View 2* is correct, it fits with an egalitarian, rather than complementarian, understanding of Paul's teaching about women in the church.

Introducing *View 1 Interpolation*

There is disagreement among scholars over whether verses 34-35 are authentic. Are they original to Paul's letter, or were they added by someone at a later date? This is a question of 'textual criticism'.

Textual criticism has nothing to do with criticizing the Bible. Rather, it is the study of the written text and of small differences between ancient hand-written copies of books of the Bible in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and other languages for the purpose of excluding copying errors and gaining as much confidence as possible about the exact wording of the original Bible text in the original language.

Suppose a Bible scholar is comparing two manuscripts, where one of them has a phrase in it which isn't in the other one. The scholar will be considering what is called 'transcriptional probability':

- Is there a probable reason why a copyist could have *missed out* those words? For example, were there two phrases which ended with the same word, so that the copyist mistakenly jumped over the second phrase when copying?
- Or, is there a probable reason why a copyist could have *added in* those words – for example, have they incorporated a comment that had been written in the margin of what they were copying, mistakenly thinking that it was intended as an insertion to correct an earlier omission from the text?

Considering such questions is the work of 'textual critics'.

Examination of ancient manuscripts sometimes results in verses or parts of verses being removed from the Bible because research by textual critics shows that they are not authentic and should not have been included (as, for example, at John 5:3-4, Acts 24:6-8 and 1 John 5:7-8).

The basic principles of textual criticism are widely agreed. (They are applied to copies of any ancient work, not just the books of the Bible.) But there is an important difference between Bible-affirming commentators and theologically liberal commentators on how to apply the principles to the text of the Bible. Liberal commentators are sometimes more ready to propose that words are not original, based solely on *internal* evidence such as stylistic features, consistency of thought, and the like. But there is a strong reluctance on the part of Bible-affirming scholars to accept any proposed emendation of the text which is not supported by

external manuscript evidence (essentially, differences between ancient manuscripts). This is a wise reluctance, because without it there could be a nearly irresistible temptation to propose that inconvenient words are not original.²⁹

To avoid any confusion, we should make clear that the real doubt over authenticity applies only to what we call verses 34-35, and not to any part of verse 33. It is only verses 34-35 that appear in the manuscripts in two different places in Paul's letter. In some modern versions, including the ESV, the last phrase of verse 33 is separated off and re-paragraphed to make it go with verses 34-35; but there is no sound justification for that innovation.³⁰

Interpolation: Mike's approach

Mike refers to Gordon Fee's 'brilliance in textual criticism' (0hr17mins).

Gordon Fee was a Bible-affirming scholar who was considered 'one of the finest textual critics of the twentieth century' (he died in 2022).³¹ In his major commentary on 1 Corinthians, published in 1987, Fee reviewed the evidence concerning the authenticity of verses 34-35 and concluded that the disputed passage was not by Paul.

But Mike's video never engages directly with what Fee writes about verses 34-35. He gives no indication of having read it.

Probably no one alive today has done more research on this particular textual issue than Philip Payne, who is 100% committed to the authority of Scripture. He has written about the inauthenticity of the disputed verses in scholarly articles and in his 2009 book *Man and Woman, One in Christ*. And Payne has published additional research since 2009, which he has presented as further confirmation that the two verses are not part of original Scripture.

Mike has interacted with Payne's 2009 book on some other topics.

But Mike's video gives no indication that he has read Payne's book chapter or his articles on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Mike seems unaware of major parts of the discussion.

Andrew Bartlett also provided a detailed analysis in chapter 10 of *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts*. There is no indication that Mike has read it.

²⁹ Temptations to remove things too readily are not confined to the Bible. One editor of works by Euripides is said to have worked 'on a principle somewhat like that of the provincial English dentist – "if you won't miss it, why not have it out?"'. See *Men and Women in Christ*, 184, in chapter 10, under the heading '*Principles to apply*'.

³⁰ The splitting of verse 33 is not found in ancient manuscripts. On why verse 33 should not be split, see *Men and Women in Christ*, 161-163, in chapter 9, under the heading '**Relationship of verses 34-35 to verse 33**'.

³¹ See his obituary at <https://www.regent-college.edu/about-us/news/2022/remembering-dr-gordon-d-fee>.

Mike's discussion of the interpolation view offers controversial statements as if they were incontestable. Presumably, that is a result of engaging with only one side of the discussion.

For example:

- Mike says that there is no reason to think that any manuscript ever existed, from which the two verses were missing (0hr11mins). But in fact there is strong evidence that there *were* manuscripts which lacked the two verses.
- In his notes, Mike recommends as 'very helpful', a 2009 article by textual critic Curt Niccum. In contrast, Payne identifies Niccum's central point in that article as 'a pivotal error' and provides details of how, in his view, Niccum's argument 'contains many false or exaggerated statements and conjecture, all of which are stated as fact'.³² Mike simply assumes that Niccum is right, without engaging with Payne's critique.
- Mike raises the stakes by forcefully stating that he 'cannot stress enough' how much the interpolation view would put much of Scripture into question, because the same approach could be used to dispose of any unwanted passage (0hr48mins). But that scare statement is a misunderstanding, which lacks a basis in reality. If Mike had read Fee and Payne, he would have seen that the conclusion against the authenticity of verses 34-35 is reached by applying the same principles of textual criticism as are applied to all such questions where there are differences between manuscripts. There is not even one other passage in the whole of the New Testament which is threatened by a conclusion that verses 34-35 are a spurious addition. The unusual features of the textual evidence in this instance are not paralleled in the case of any genuine New Testament text.

At the start of his video, after reading the two disputed verses, Mike makes a strong statement about rebellion:

'I'm bound as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus who believes in the Lord and that this is his word, I'm bound to believe this, to receive it fully, to understand it carefully. That's a lot of what we're going to be doing today – is – understanding it carefully. And then to support it completely. That's what it means to, I think, be Christian in, in the world. And I get that there's a lot of Christians who think that obeying and trusting the Bible is optional. But I think that you are rebelling against Jesus when you think those sorts of things.'

We agree. However, we note that there is no qualification here, no thought about how one should react if the verses are *not* authentic.

In dismissing the interpolation view, he states (0hr47mins):

'This view in my opinion isn't just wrong. ... It's actually *reckless*. It's actually *reckless* because it seeks to remove a passage a lot of people would be happier to see gone. ... I don't know about you, but *I react by holding on even stronger to those passages*.

³² *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 235-237.

Hey, man, if there's something about us that doesn't like what God wrote here, then we probably need it even more. We probably need to hold on to it even more tightly. We probably need to talk about it more, probably understand it better, not less. And certainly not removed from Scripture.

If you like the idea of removing these verses, I just encourage you who are listening to be completely transparent with yourself about your motives. How much do you want this passage gone? How much would that make you happy?'

We would have hoped that someone approaching this topic without a partisan pre-commitment to silencing women, as we hope Mike has tried to do, would have made a more balanced statement, since considerations of this kind cut both ways. If this passage was written by Paul, and provided it is rightly understood as normative, then – we agree – it should be obeyed; however, if we find evidence that it may not be authentic, then obeying it may prove to be a form of disobedience. So, we need to do our utmost to ascertain its validity.

Where there is a textual uncertainty, scholars are under obligation to God, and to the Church, not to be dismissive but to analyze all of the available evidence with the utmost seriousness. Since the Bible as originally given is the Church's primary authority for faith and life, it is important that we have accurate copies of it. It is particularly important that we do not treat spurious additions – which appear to conflict with genuine Scripture, and which God has not endorsed – as if they were God's word.

If the Holy Spirit did not inspire Paul to write that women must be silent in the churches, then we are misrepresenting God by retaining those words in the text.

Of course, it would be a serious error to cut verses out of the Bible on the basis of speculations or dislikes. Likewise, verses should not be cut out simply on the basis that they don't seem to fit the train of thought – after all, we may have failed to understand correctly how the author was thinking. When the issue is only that we cannot understand, we leave the text as it is, and hope for more light on it.

But where *the manuscript evidence* raises a question about authenticity, it needs to be thoroughly considered. Only someone with a low view of Scripture can be unconcerned about a possibility that inauthentic words have crept in. We need to examine thoroughly the hard evidence bearing on whether these verses were original to Paul.

That is something which it appears Mike has not yet done.

Interpolation: Our own journeys

In *How God Sees Women*, Terran ranked the five views from least to most plausible. He placed the Interpolation View as the second most plausible, and what Mike calls View 3 (which Terran

called ‘The Disruptive Learners View’) as perhaps the best, with a tentative conclusion that it ‘might be’ correct. However, in an endnote, he stated a doubt about View 3:

‘... I must admit, along with those who prefer [the Interpolation View] ..., that the call for the silence of women, mentioned no less than three times without qualification, may constitute an absolute (and not just a situation-specific) ban on all vocal contributions by women in the meetings.’

As Mike’s teaching caused him to drill down once again into the plausibility of each view, this time with the help of Andrew’s analysis, Terran has come to give pride of place to the Interpolation View.

Andrew had come around to the Interpolation View when he researched for his book *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts*. Terran has agreed that Andrew should tell you about his personal journey of discovery.

Andrew writes:

Many scholars, irrespective of their views on what the Bible teaches about women, are strongly dismissive of the idea that the disputed verses might not be genuine.

For example, here is egalitarian Stanley Porter:

‘arguments for removing the passage are not convincing and smack of special pleading’³³ (‘Special pleading’ means making a special exception from the usual approach to an issue, in order to reach a desired result.)

And here is complementarian D.A. Carson, writing about Gordon Fee’s reasoning, in words quoted by Mike in his video:

‘With all respect to a brother whose text-critical prowess is far greater than my own, his arguments in this case sound a bit like the application of a first-class mind to the defense of a remarkably weak position.’³⁴

Aware of this climate of opinion, and having heard that there are no surviving manuscripts from which the verses are wholly absent, I was instinctively skeptical of the theory that they were not authentic. While I approached the issue with a willingness to go wherever the evidence and reasoning led, I had a strong expectation that I would find Fee’s and Payne’s arguments to be weak and unconvincing, and that the arguments of Grudem, Carson and other defenders of the verses would be solid.

However, as a judge and international arbitrator, I have worked for many years under the discipline of the rule of judging which is captured in the maxim *audi alteram partem* (‘hear the other side’), which can usefully be stated more emphatically as:

³³ *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 3rd edn, 332.

³⁴ *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (2021 printing), 185.

‘always, *always*, **always** listen *fully* to **both sides** before you decide!’

I approached the question of authenticity in the same way that in Court, or in an arbitration, one approaches a dispute which depends upon evidence from experts in a specialist field: (1) gain a sufficient knowledge of the subject-matter to understand the evidence and arguments presented by the specialist experts on each side, (2) analyze the evidence and reasoning which they present, (3) reject poor reasoning, accept cogent reasoning, and seek the explanation which best accounts for all the available evidential data.

When I started reading both sides, I soon saw, contrary to my initial impression, that there was a serious issue to be looked into.

I also saw some things which surprised me greatly.

I saw that Grudem, in his major work *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, mis-stated the nature of Fee’s argument, because he misunderstood it as depending most decisively on the *internal evidence* (the inconsistencies of the contents of the disputed verses with the undisputed text of 1 Corinthians). But Fee’s actual argument depended primarily on the *external evidence* (the differences in manuscripts), which Grudem did not fully engage with. And I saw egalitarian scholars make the same mistake as Grudem.³⁵

I saw that Carson’s statement, that Fee’s text-critical prowess was far greater than his own, was a sober evaluation. Carson’s lengthy treatment of the issue, in the complementarian handbook *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, was marred by misapplication of principles of textual criticism and by faulty reasoning.³⁶ Fee’s reasoning was more cogent.³⁷

The biggest surprise of all was in connection with the application of the first principle of textual criticism:

- the form of the text that best allows an explanation of the origin of all variants is most likely the original.

In order to apply this principle, textual scholars are always concerned with the question: what is the most historically probable scenario which explains what we see in every variant of the text?

In this instance, the biggest piece of external evidence that needs to be explained is how, in ancient manuscripts of 1 Corinthians, the disputed verses came to be in two different places –

³⁵ For further details, see *Men and Women in Christ*, 189 n15 in chapter 10 under the heading ‘**Variation in the position of verses 34-35: four explanations to consider**’. Fee emphasizes that the decisive evidence is the differences in the manuscripts: see *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (1994), 272-281, 275.

³⁶ See *Men and Women in Christ*, chapter 10, especially 191-192, 195-197, under the headings ‘**Examining explanations 1 and 2: moved down or moved up?**’, ‘**Relevance of intrinsic evidence to explanations 3 and 4**’ and ‘**On the available evidence, which explanation is the most probable?**’ See also our Postscript: Looking at *Codex Fuldensis*.

³⁷ In *God’s Empowering Presence*, 272-281, ‘Excursus: On the Text of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35’ Fee addresses the views of Carson and others. His conclusion is: ‘this passage is almost certainly not by Paul.’

after what we call verse 33 (in most manuscripts) or after what we call verse 40 (in the so-called Western manuscripts).

Upon reading articles, book chapters, and PhD theses which argued for the genuineness of the disputed verses, I was surprised to see that the central element in all of them was unsatisfactory. They offered explanations of the supposed displacement of original text from one position to the other, but the explanations were weak. None of them convincingly passed the test of historical probability.

The disputed verses consist of 36 Greek words. Realistically, that is too big a chunk of text to be moved accidentally, as nearly all scholars agree.³⁸ If the disputed verses were original, someone must have *deliberately* moved them from one position to the other, so that we are now left with two different streams of surviving manuscripts, in which we see the words in the two different positions.

The duty of a scribe is to copy God's word faithfully. To deliberately move a chunk of text from one place to another is a big step to take in any circumstances, and especially when the change alters the order of the apostle's argument. The scribe must be convinced of two things: (1) that the words *cannot correctly belong* where they are, in the manuscript that is being copied, and (2) that moving them to the new location *solves the problem*.

No one provided an historically convincing explanation of how a scribe concluded that the words *could not belong* where they were. There is ample evidence of how ancient commentators reacted to chapter 14: they were not troubled by the relationship between the 36 words and the rest of chapter 14; they didn't see it as a problem.³⁹

And no one provided a convincing explanation of how a scribe concluded that moving the words to the new location *solved the problem*. Even if one imagined an historically exceptional scribe who was troubled in some way by the relationship between the 36 words and the rest of chapter 14, moving the words to a different position is not an effective solution.

Importantly, as far as I could discover, no scholar pointed to any comparable example of deliberate displacement anywhere in the New Testament manuscripts. There is no example where the order of the argument in Paul's teaching is recast by moving a substantial chunk of it to a different place. This is interference at a different order of magnitude from the occasional re-ordering of a few words (which can happen either accidentally or because a scribe mistakenly concludes that an earlier copyist made an accidental transposition.)⁴⁰

³⁸ With the notable exception of the well-known feminist scholar A.C. Wire, whose theory depends upon multiple improbabilities. For a brief explanation, see Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 232 n55.

³⁹ See, for example, Chrysostom's Homily 37 on *1 Corinthians*. For him, it was easy to explain why women should be totally silent: 'And what may be the cause of setting them under so great subjection? Because the woman is in some sort a weaker being and easily carried away and light minded.' He shows no sign of being troubled by the order of Paul's argument or by any contradiction with the remainder of chapter 14.

⁴⁰ It is instructive to compare the scribal change to Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 11:11, which reversed the order of two phrases consisting of four words each ('neither woman without man neither man without

I saw that the most historically probable explanation of the textual evidence was substantially as offered by Fee and Payne, combined with information about the transition of Christian assemblies from homes to more public spaces:⁴¹

- When the church was growing, and beginning to meet in more public venues instead of in homes, someone wrote a marginal comment of 36 words, expressing his view that the women should be silent because it was shameful for them to speak in an assembly. This would have appeared an appropriate step in the new circumstances, in line with Paul's teaching about acting in a loving way so as to help to convert outsiders rather than offending them (10:32-33; 13:5; 14:23-25).
- Something written in the margin can be either a comment, or a piece of original text that is put there because it was left out of the main text by mistake. When unsure, the tendency of scribes was to include words rather than lose them. Scribes mistook the comment for a piece of original text. So, they put it in – but it wasn't clear exactly where it belonged, so different scribes made different decisions about where to put it. (There is much more that can be said about historical probability, but that is the basic point.)

I saw that Payne offered six further items of external evidence, of which I previously had no knowledge.

Upon assessment, I found that four of them were of little weight. One looked important but was hard to assess, because it involved an under-developed area of research which has yet to be fully explored.⁴² But the sixth item, once examined and understood, was weighty: the evidence from *Codex Fuldensis*.

Codex Fuldensis is a sixth-century Latin manuscript which was prepared under the direction of Bishop Victor of Capua.

woman'), without any further transposition. A hierarchical interpretation of the passage required the reversal; the scribe implementing it could easily have imagined that a prior scribe had accidentally written the words the wrong way around. That is nothing like deliberately moving 36 words to a different location, 52 words away, for no obvious reason. The frontrunner which is put forward for comparison with 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is the blessing in Romans 16. The eight Greek words in verse 20 ('The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you') are judged to be original; and the eleven Greek words in verse 24 ('The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen') are judged to be displaced to that position. But this example falls well short of being comparable: (1) It does not recast the order of argument in Paul's teaching. (2) At 8 or 11 words, it is much shorter than the 36 words of the disputed verses. (3) There are obvious historical reasons for the uncertainty of the text at this point, including that *every* other letter attributed to Paul *ends* with words of blessing, so scribes are likely to have been puzzled by the placement at verse 20, which is prior to the final greetings.

⁴¹ Brian Capper, 'To Keep Silent, Ask Husbands at Home, and Not to Have Authority over Men: The Transition from Gathering in Private to Meeting in Public Space in Second Generation Christianity and the Exclusion of Women from Leadership of the Public Assembly.' (2005) *TZ* 61, no. 2: 113–131 (Part 1); and 61, no. 4: 301–319 (Part 2).

⁴² This item was the meaning of scribal markings in *Codex Vaticanus*. Payne interprets them as indicating where words included were absent from other manuscripts.

Victor was a careful textual scholar. As a bishop, he had privileged access to earlier manuscripts that are no longer in existence. His annotations and corrections are acknowledged to be astute and valuable.

Victor ordered a correction to be made in the text of 1 Corinthians which shows that *he had seen manuscript evidence that the disputed verses should be omitted*. His textual judgments are widely seen to be supported by manuscript evidence. And only sight of an earlier manuscript can adequately explain why Victor chose a reading omitting verses 34-35, since that was against his normal preference for following the Vulgate (Jerome's very influential Latin version).⁴³

Having started out very skeptical about the interpolation theory, I concluded that it was the only theory that explained the external evidence in a satisfactory way, taking into account all of the data. In addition, it resolved every difficulty arising from the internal evidence (all of the contradictions with Paul's other instructions in 1 Corinthians and elsewhere, and the troubling contents of the two verses, given Paul's knowledge of the Old Testament and his firm view that it was not shameful for women to speak in an assembly).

The external and internal evidence, added together, made a formidable case.

If I had to make a formal judicial decision on whether the verses were authentic, on current evidence, and having listened to the experts on both sides, my decision would be that they are probably a spurious addition to Paul's letter.

Our current assessment of authenticity

Because Mike has read one side only, he both fails to engage with matters of central importance and makes errors in dealing with the points that he does address.

Mike seems unaware of the important evidence from *Codex Fuldensis*, for he does not mention it.

Mike refers to the opinion of Bruce Metzger, whom he describes as 'one of the premier textual critics in history – super-highly respected man' (0hr20mins). Mike's quotation of Metzger's view that the verses are original is from 1994. But Mike's research was insufficient. Metzger's assessment changed when he saw more evidence. Metzger concluded in 1995 that Payne's interpretation of Bishop Victor's annotations was correct.⁴⁴

Like Metzger, Fee agreed with Payne's interpretation, stating that *Codex Fuldensis*-

⁴³ This is explained by Payne, with additional reasoning, in 'Is 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 a Marginal Comment or a Quotation? A Response to Kirk MacGregor', *Priscilla Papers*, Vol. 33, No 2, Spring 2019, 24-30, 28.

⁴⁴ Payne 1995. 'Fuldensis, Sigla for Variants in Vaticanus, and 1 Cor. 14.34-5.' *NTS* 41, no. 2: 240-262, 245, n28.

'bears witness to a text *without* these verses.'⁴⁵ (emphasis original)

If the verses are original, they must have been displaced from one position to the other. But Mike does not address the lack of historical probability in the displacement theory. He cites no evidence that any ancient commentator was troubled by inconsistency of the two disputed verses with their immediate context in chapter 14 or was troubled by the order of Paul's argument.⁴⁶ Mike does not acknowledge the difficulty of explaining why, in this sole instance in Paul's letters, a scribe would take the unprecedented step of knowingly and deliberately making a wholesale alteration in the order of Paul's argument.

Fee observes:

'such a total disruption of an author's argument on the part of a scribe *has no precedent in the entire NT textual tradition*.'⁴⁷ (emphasis added)

Mike appears unaware of the uniqueness of the imagined displacement of the text. Instead, he says:

'It's easy for an unlearned person on these particular topics to hear that it's in a different location and get sucked into believing it's not original.' (0hr20mins)

On matters of textual criticism, Gordon Fee was not an unlearned person. Nor was Bruce Metzger. Nor is Philip Payne.⁴⁸ The evidence and reasoning deserve to be fully weighed.

When that is done, the interpolation view *passes* the probability test, while the displacement theory *fails* that test.

When the disputed verses are omitted, the text reads smoothly, and the wording of verses 32-33 makes good sense as leading into verse 36, like this (our literal translation):

'... and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets – for God is not of disorder but of peace – as in all the congregations of the holy people. Or did the word of God go out from you? Or are you the only people it has come to? ...'

After insisting that prophetic gifts should be exercised in an orderly fashion at Corinth, as they were in other congregations, Paul is rebuking the Corinthians. He is telling them to adopt some humility and fall into line with the standard practice in other churches.

The interpolation view accounts for all the available evidential data, both external (the differences and markings in the manuscripts) and internal (the peculiarities and inconsistencies

⁴⁵ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 281 n16.

⁴⁶ Some propose that the disputed verses were moved because they seemed to be a digression which didn't fit the context. But, as Keener acknowledges, brief digressions were common both in Paul and in other ancient writers: *Discovering Biblical Equality* (3rd edn), 147. Even if one were to suppose that someone within a traditional hierarchical culture perceived them as a digression, perceiving a digression is not an historically realistic reason for deciding to move the text to a new location.

⁴⁷ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 276.

⁴⁸ And in his 2009 book, Payne cited 55 published studies which concluded that the two verses were a later addition.

which the disputed words introduce into the text). It does not conflict with any credible evidence. It resolves every historical and interpretive problem associated with these verses. No other explanation does this.

We conclude: It is probable that the disputed verses are not authentic.

You can read a fuller assessment of the interpolation issue in chapter 10 of Andrew's book. It includes a short guide to how textual criticism is done.

In addition, you can see *Codex Fuldensis* for yourself, online.⁴⁹ In a Postscript, below, we've included a short explanation of what you can see.

Conclusions and impact on women's ministry

On their face, verses 34-35 of 1 Corinthians 14 are in rather stark conflict with what Paul writes in the rest of chapters 11-14 of his letter, with some of his instructions elsewhere, with his pastoral values, and with his knowledge of the Old Testament.

Scholars have struggled to find a way of resolving the inconsistencies.

Mike rejects all of the proposals, except the idea that Paul means to prohibit women from judging prophecy. For Mike, this seems to make a lot of sense, because he sees it as fitting into his belief that authority in the church rests with male elders and that women are under their authority.

But here are two questions for every reader to consider:

(1) How do you rate your ability as a letter-writer and Christian teacher, compared with the apostle Paul?

(2) If you were writing a letter to your church, meaning to instruct them that *women should not weigh prophecies*, would you try to get your meaning across by not actually saying so, and instead by stating an unqualified ban on any speaking by women in church? And would you state the unqualified ban three times in different words? And would you indicate, as the sole example of the application of your instruction, that *women who desire to learn* must not ask questions in church but should ask their husbands at home? And, knowing that there were women prophets active in your church, would you write: 'Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.'?

For multiple reasons, many of which Mike does not say anything about, the judging-prophecy view is not a realistically viable interpretation of the text.

If we were to assume that the disputed verses are part of Paul's original letter, and so part of Scripture, do these verses provide secure grounds for restricting the ministry of women in

⁴⁹ At <https://fuldig.hs-fulda.de/viewer/image/PPN325289808/496/>.

some particular ways? Given the intractability of the inconsistencies and the resulting wide diversity in the interpretive theories of respectable scholars, the answer has to be 'no'.

In view of the lack of a satisfactory solution for the interpretive issues, it is not appropriate to base firm church policies on the disputed verses. Since no one has found an interpretive solution in which we can have confidence, we remain at a loss to know exactly what, if any, restriction is intended, and we cannot be confident of how to apply these verses to churches in different times and cultures.⁵⁰

However, of the many views, currently the most probable solution is the interpolation view: the words are not an authentic part of Paul's letter because they were added later.

Mike's overall view of the egalitarian side of the women in ministry discussion is:

'I don't think this is even debatable. ... It really shouldn't be debated. ... Where I thought we might find really good arguments, it was just not good arguments over and over again. That's my honest assessment.' (Part 7 video, 0hr9mins)

We accept that is his honest assessment. But it appears that Mike did not look in the right places. He remained unaware of major objections to the judging-prophecy view. And we have seen that Mike only interacted with one side of the discussion concerning authenticity. So, it is unsurprising that he did not find good arguments for the interpolation view.

Textual criticism is an honorable effort to weed out errors that occur in the transmission of texts by manual copying. Given the presence of verses 34-35 in two different places in the manuscripts, careful scrutiny is warranted. This need is heightened by the internal difficulties of the disputed verses: the apparent inconsistencies with Paul's own words and beliefs.

A motive for someone to add a marginal comment is not hard to find – a concern about a negative impact on the church's witness to outsiders, accustomed to patriarchal society, if women were not restricted from speaking in more formal, more public meetings. Such a comment readily explains the manuscript evidence: copyists mistook the comment as part of the original letter and promoted it into the main text. But it was unclear where it belonged, so two different decisions were taken about where to insert it.

This explanation accounts for all the available data and resolves every historical and interpretive problem associated with these verses. No other explanation does this.

We suggest that women may use the speaking gifts that our Lord has given to them, in a way that is thoughtful, loving, and orderly. They can do this knowing that, though some people will disapprove or tell them to 'go home', God's word authorizes and instructs them to speak. New Testament scholar Cynthia Westfall urges gifted women:

⁵⁰ This is the same situation as with 1 Corinthians 15:29 – we are unsure what baptism 'for the dead' was; therefore, we do not do it.

‘Go ahead and do what you are called to do ... If you follow Christ, you will follow him in tough places.’⁵¹

You may wonder what happened to Rosemary. Being single, she couldn’t ‘ask her husband at home’. She answered a call to follow Christ in tough places, serving as a missionary to the people of Pakistan. We thank God for women who are not deterred from doing what they are called to do.

Postscript: Looking at *Codex Fuldensis*

We can show you the evidence from *Codex Fuldensis*, even if you do not read Latin.

The most important page to view is at this address:

<https://fuldig.hs-fulda.de/viewer/image/PPN325289808/496/>.

You can see a page of text of 1 Corinthians. It continues on the next page.

The numbering system is not our modern system of chapters and verses. Paul’s letter is divided into sections. Each section starts with a number and the first few words of the section are written in red. On the relevant page, you can see section LXIII (meaning 63) and LXIII (meaning 64).

Section LXIII (63) starts with *Prophetae* (‘Prophets’). It comprises what we call chapter 14 verses 29-33.

Section LXIII (64) starts with the word *Mulieres* (‘Women’). Section 64 is what we call chapter 14 verses 34-40.

You will notice that just after the last word of section 63, there is a letter ‘h’, then a tiny letter ‘d’ with a bar over it. That is an abbreviation which indicates that something needs to be inserted at this point.

There are seven lines of text written in the bottom margin of the page. At the end of the insertion there is a letter ‘h’ and a letter ‘s’ with a bar over it. That is an abbreviation which indicates that this text in the bottom margin is what should be supplied at the insertion point.

The insertion is what we call verses 36-40.

The version in the bottom margin contains two corrections for section 64. One correction is omitting the disputed words that we call verses 34-35. The other is putting right a spelling mistake in the next-to-last word of section 64.

Payne’s interpretation of the markings is this: Bishop Victor is telling us to replace the version of section 64 in the main text with the version in the bottom margin. Metzger and Fee agree.

⁵¹ Discovering Biblical Equality (3rd edn), 183.

That is the only reasonable interpretation of Victor's markings.⁵²

In *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Carson dismisses the evidence from *Codex Fuldensis*. He states that *Codex Fuldensis*-

'places the verses after verse 40, but also inserts them in the margin after verse 33'.⁵³

As you can see when you look at *Codex Fuldensis*, that short statement contains three errors:

(1) *Codex Fuldensis* does not put the disputed verses in two places; they are in one place only.

(2) The main text does not place them after verse 40; it places them after verse 33.

(3) The correction in the margin does not insert the disputed verses after verse 33; it *omits* them.

Bishop Victor corrected *Codex Fuldensis*, in accordance with the best evidence available to him, by omitting verses 34-35.

For a fuller explanation, see chapter 10 of *Men and Women in Christ*.

<https://terranwilliams.com/what-winger-presently-gets-wrong-women-keep-silent-1-cor-1434-35/>

⁵² Victor cannot mean that, after reading *the corrected version* of section 64 in the margin, the reader should then go back to the main text and continue by reading also *the uncorrected version* of section 64. Translated into our familiar verse numbers, that would mean reading verses 36-40 as corrected, then verses 34-35, then verses 36-40 again, including the spelling mistake. No one could have thought that reflected the correct and original reading of Paul's letter. It is obvious that the intended place to resume reading the main text is the end of section 64, after the spelling correction.

⁵³ 1991 printing, p134, 2021 printing, p 181.