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AN ANALYSIS OF 1 Cor 14:34–35 WITH ITS RELEVANCE TO THE  
ELCT–MBULU DIOCESE

FOR THE COURSE:  
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BY

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses 1Cor 14:34–35, on the background of the social world of Paul within the context of first Corinthians and, more broadly, the entire Bible, in order to find out to what the instruction in these verses to women to keep silence precisely refers. Given that in various churches the issue of granting equal roles and positions to women as to men is still problematic, the findings of this study will make a contribution to the biblical scholarship in understanding the matter. Furthermore, the results will help the church, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania – Mbulu Diocese which still use the Scripture to deny women from being ordained as pastors. Thus, the study will show whether the denial of ordination and other leadership roles for women is truly scriptural or whether it is rooted in patriarchal cultures and is a result of misinterpretation of what Paul wrote. Other challenges that women face because of misinterpreting the Scripture are also addressed.

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## **Abbreviations**

NIV: New International Version  
NLT: New Living Translation  
ESV: English Standard Version  
BLB: Berean Literal Bible  
ABPE: Aramaic Bible in Plain English  
DRB: Douy-Rheism Bible  
BSB: Berean Study Bible  
NASB: New America Standard Bible  
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible  
ISV: International Standard Version  
NETB: New English Translation Bible  
GWT: God's Words Translation  
NAS: New America Standard  
DBT: Darby Bible Translations  
YLT: Young's Literal Translation  
RSV: Revised Standard Version  
KJB: King James Bible  
NHEB: New Heart English Bible  
JB200: Jubilee Bible 2000  
KJ2000B: King James 2000 Bible  
AKJV: Authorized King James Version  
ASV: American Standard Version  
ERV: English Revised Version  
WBT: Webster's Bible Translations  
TDNT: Theological Dictionary of the New Testament  
BDAG: A Greek-Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature  
ELCT: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania  
ND: Northern Diocese  
UNICIEF: United Nations Children's Fund  
v: Verse  
vv: Verses

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Motivation of the Study

Being brought up in a patriarchal society, I have seen how the status of women is undermined. Patriarchy is a form of mental, social, spiritual, economic and political organization, respectively, structuring of society produced by the gradual institutionalization of gender-based political relations created, maintained and reinforced by different institutions linked closely together to achieve consensus on the lesser value of women and their roles. These institutions interconnect not only with each other to strengthen the structures of domination of men over women, but also with other systems of exclusion, oppression and/or domination based on real or perceived differences between humans, creating states that respond only to the needs and interests of a few powerful men.<sup>1</sup> Patriarchal relations, between men and women and between elders and young people, are explained and justified through an ideology of men's superiority and women's inferiority, in which the former have more social value and worth than the latter. The system becomes even worse when in some societies women are considered as mere objects. Almost all Tanzanian tribes have proverbs on gender relationships. For example, an elderly man in Tarime, in the far north of the country, explained how women were valued: "The wife is the most important implement in the house. You are supposed to use it intelligently and wisely."<sup>2</sup> A proverb from Kondoa, further to the south, describes a woman as being "like a walking stick which is always replaceable."<sup>3</sup> These statements not only describe women but also reflect deeply rooted attitudes about gender relationships. Considering women as objects or stating that, like a walking stick, they are not highly valued because they are replaceable, are examples of Tanzanian patriarchal ideology.

Many Tanzania girls and boys grow up in households and communities that treat them differently and unequally. Boys learn that they have greater social value because they are permanent members of their families of birth. When they marry, their new wives leave their own families to join them; and when their fathers die, they – and not their sisters – inherit rights to clan land or valuable property such as cattle. Girls, by contrast, do not have such rights within their natal families. When they marry, their labour is lost by their parents and is

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<sup>1</sup> Alda Facio, *What is Patriarchy*, 2013, available at <http://learnwhr.org/wp-content/uploads/D-Facio-What-is-Patriarchy.pdf>, accessed on 5.5.2017.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, *The Girl Child in Tanzania: Today's Girl Tomorrow's Woman* (A Research Report) (compiled by Richard Mabala and S.R. Kamazima), Dar es Salaam, 1995 United Republic of Tanzania 2nd and 3rd *Periodic Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women – 1998, April 1998*, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 23.

gained by their husbands and in-laws. The gender inequality has been one of the obstacles to development in Tanzania.

In recognising gender inequality as an obstacle to socio-economic and political development, Tanzania has taken a number of measures to address the gender inequality in the country. Some of the undertaken measures include formulation of different policies and enactment of legislations and laws as well as introduction of administrative and affirmative actions, which have altogether enabled Tanzania to record remarkable achievements in sectors such as education where equal access and equity between men and women and among different social groups, have been recorded.<sup>4</sup> For example, for the first time in history, Tanzania now has a woman in one of the highest positions of leadership in the government, she is a vice-president. The church also has shown the concern in educating her members that women may have the status that Christ worked for them as Paul asserts, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Understanding the equal status that men and women have in Christ, in 1990 the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) consisting of twenty-five dioceses agreed to permit female theologians to become pastors. However, its implementation was left in the hands of each diocese because each of them has own constitution and by-laws.

Given that the ELCT is a union whose leaders do not interfere into its member dioceses’ internal affairs, some dioceses did not ordain women immediately. Sadly, Mbulu Diocese has not begun ordaining women theologians until now.<sup>5</sup> What Schüssler Fiorenza observes happening elsewhere, I see applying also to Mbulu Diocese. She writes, “the official church teaching argues that women cannot fully participate in the leadership of the church because Christ and Apostles did not ordain women.”<sup>6</sup> Regarding the denial of ordination for women, Desmond Tutu laments, “I am sure the church has lost something valuable in denying the ordination to women for so long.”<sup>7</sup>

Although the Scripture is used as the rod they lean on in disputing women ordination, social studies conducted among the Iraqw people, the tribe that form Mbulu Diocese, show

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<sup>4</sup> Tanzania Women Lawyers’ Association, *Gender Forum Position Paper*, (Dar es Salaam: University Press, Revised Edition February 2013), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Hoyce Lyimo-Mbowe, *Feminist Expositions of the Old Testament in Africa Tanzania: In the Context of the Office Held by Deborah in Judges 4 and 5*(Berlin: Verlag λογος, 2015),101–102.

<sup>6</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Ekklesial Democracy and Patriarchy in Biblical Perspective* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 17.

<sup>7</sup> Desmond Tutu, *Crying in the wilderness. The struggle for justice in South Africa*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans, 1982), 149.

that traditionally women are seen unfit for some roles and leadership positions in the Mbulu area.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the church which ought to be helping people to be set free from oppressive systems is using Scripture to deny them from the roles and status they deserve. What my mind does not accept is: How long will the church suffer while there are women who could lead, even better than some men? What must be done if the Scripture is abused by the very people who should be defending it? Having been exposed to such a situation, I was not able to remain silent. But at the same time, I had no means through which I could address it. Now that I have opportunity to write my Master's thesis, I find this as the best opportunity to study the Scripture and address the situation. This is how I have ended up doing a research on this subject.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The role and position of women in the church has been a subject of discussion for a long time and has spread through the church.<sup>9</sup> Paul's words in 1 Cor. 14:34 and in 1 Tim. 2:12 are considered as sources of the problem. In these verses, Paul writes "the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law says" (1 Cor. 14:34) and "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silence" (1 Tim. 2:12). By reading these words, many people have been made to believe that it is the Scripture that restricts women from assuming the roles and positions that men enjoy in the churches, leave alone in secular sectors. Consequently, women receiving a call to serve as pastors have been deprived of the right for ordination and those who have been bestowed with leadership gifts have been denied the opportunity to exercise the gifts the Holy Spirit has endowed in them.

The words in 1 Cor. 14:34–35 read "the women should keep silence in the churches." An overall, seemingly consistent application of these words would be that women are neither allowed to sing, to confess the creed nor to respond anything to what the leader asks in the gatherings. They are simply instructed to be silent. However, such an understanding would contradict what Paul had written in 1 Cor. 11:5 "But any woman who prays or prophesies...". How could he possibly change his view in the same letter without explaining that he has amended what he had said earlier? This situation brings questions to my mind for which I

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<sup>8</sup> Magdalena Mathayo, *The Role of the Church in Empowering Women for Leadership Position* (Arusha: Makumira University Publish, 2013), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Arvind Sharma, *Women in World Religions* (New York: University of New York Press, 1987), 208. See also John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "Preface", in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1991), 10–12.



must study and look for answers: Was Paul making a rule or prohibition that says, “women can never speak in the church?” Was he addressing his comments to a certain situation, making the prohibition be limited in some way? If it was situational, what are the limits of Paul’s prohibition? What has made many readers to consider Paul’s words as a principle for the churches of all places and all time? How can we read these prohibitions in the communities that still deny women from assuming some roles and positions of leadership in their churches? These questions are a problem to me for which I am set to look for answers.

### **1.3 Aim of the Study**

The main goal of this study is to find out what might have been Paul’s meaning by writing that “the women should keep silence in the churches.” Having witnessed some women being restricted from serving God in the position they felt called by God, I want to present the findings of this study to them in order to help them understand what Paul meant. Thus, the goal is both to understand the text that I assume is being misinterpreted and to use the results of the study to set people free from the restrictions they are facing.

### **1.4 Choice of the text**

In two different epistles women are asked to be silent: “the women should keep silence in the churches” (1 Cor. 14:34–35) and “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to be silent” (1 Tim. 2:12). First Timothy is one of the disputed epistles when it comes to authorship. Apart from being considered pseudepigraphical,<sup>10</sup> there seem to be strong reasons for assuming that it was written some time after Paul had died by somebody belonging to his school; thus, it can be designated as deuteron-Pauline.<sup>11</sup> Though the epistle bears Paul’s name and is included in what is known as the Pauline corpus, I would rather focus my study on 1 Cor. 14:34–35 which belongs to a letter that is free from disputes as far as authorship is concerned.

Although 1 Cor. 14:34–35 belongs to one of the genuine Pauline epistles, there are some textual issues related to these verses which must be discussed. As this is an introductory chapter that does not deal with the passage in question, the issue will be discussed in Chapter Three.

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<sup>10</sup> David E. Aune, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to The New Testament* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 9.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), 366.

## 1.5 Research Methodology

This is an exegetical research that applies the historical-critical method to study 1 Cor. 14:34–35. Historical criticism is the method that investigates the origins of ancient texts in order to understand “the world behind the text.”<sup>12</sup> Its primary goal is to discover the text’s primitive or original meaning in its original historical context and its literal sense. It is urged that any text’s truth lies in its historical context. This is because ancient authors reflected their own historical situation and wrote to address people of their own time and place. The historical-critical method has specific procedures used to examine critically the text’s historical origins, such as: the time, the place in which the text was written, its sources, the events, dates, persons, places, things, and customs that are mentioned or implied in the text.<sup>13</sup> If these procedures are applied correctly in the process of studying the text, I see that they give the opportunity to collaborate with other methods. For example, in including the study of sources, events, dates, persons and places, it makes one interact with anthropological studies. When it comes to customs and culture, the method allows one to interact with social sciences. In the process of interaction, the interpreter does not take everything for granted; rather, one is critical in the sense that one asks questions as to why what you read was written that way. For example, if we bring 1 Cor. 14:34–35 in context here, the interpreter must ask why Paul had to write that women should be silent. Was the reason theological or cultural? After asking such questions, the interpreter uses specific tools to look for answers.

While opting for historical-critical method, I am aware that the method is one of the oldest ones.<sup>14</sup> It has been tested and used in much research, and therefore one might assume that no new result can be brought through it. While I concede that it is old and its offers have been seen already, I still see reasons that convince me to use it, especially when examining 1 Cor. 14:34–35. First, as seen in the definition, the method has the tools to penetrate the cultural values reflected in the text in question. The hypothesis I have concerning the prohibition in the text I focus on is that it has more to do with culture than theology. Since part of the goal of this study is to read the results in the context of the society whose culture puts down women’s position, I find that the method will be relevant. It will make me see how the two cultures separated by time and space come together in the text: the Corinthian culture as the one that produces the text, and the Iraqw culture of the Mbulu Diocese as one of the

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<sup>12</sup> R. Kendall Soulen and Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of biblical criticism* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 78.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 79.

<sup>14</sup> Gerson Mgaya discusses methodological approaches in his book *Spiritual Gifts*, 37–49. He points out both new and old methods and argues for a collaborative approach.

cultures that still have difficulties in understanding Paul. However, in either case, the intention is not to study culture, but rather to see how the Scripture either deviates from or shapes the cultural norms making it authoritative and dependable for decisions.

### **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided in four chapters. Chapter One introduces the thesis. Chapter Two discusses the social world of 1 Corinthians in order to determine the position of women in the Greco-Roman world. Chapter Three is dedicated to the exegesis of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 and to a study of its position within the entire Bible. Chapter Four contains conclusions, application and recommendations following the findings of the thesis.

## **2 CHAPTER TWO: WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF 1 CORINTHIANS**

This chapter studies the world of 1 Corinthians in order to find out how the background of the text relates or differs with the text, and if there are some influences that can be seen. The background referred to here concerns the world in which the author and his audience lived.

### **2.1 The Position of women in the Greco-Roman world**

The term 'Greco-Roman world' is a blend of Hellenistic Age and the Roman Imperial time. Hellenistic Age is a period in history defined as the time between the death of Alexander the Great and the rise of Roman domination. During this time, Greek culture was dominant throughout the Mediterranean, thus the name Hellenistic, which is derived from the Greek "Hellas" which means Greece. Its influence continued for some hundred years, but following the emergence of the Roman Empire, there came also the Roman culture making the two cultures to exist simultaneously, hence the Greco-Roman world. Therefore, the 'Greco-Roman world' is used to refer to those regions and countries that culturally and politically were directly and intimately influenced by the language, culture, government and religion of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The geographical areas in question are the Mediterranean and the Black Sea basin. These areas have been under Greek and Roman influence for a relatively long time. The culture was blended to the extent that it was not easy to find something purely Greek or purely Roman, though in some of the towns one culture was more dominant than the other. In this section, the focus will be on the position of women in order to determine whether what Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 14:34–35 relates to the culture of the time.

Historians point that, by Paul's time, in the first century A.D., Greek and Roman cultures had been blending around the Mediterranean basin for over 200 years.<sup>15</sup> The Roman entity had taken the place of the Greek empire around 168 B.C. and thereafter the area was often referred to as the Roman Empire. Many issues that are reflected in the Scriptures, seem to be those that began to happen in the days of Emperor Augustus, whose term of office ran from 27 B.C. to A.D. 14. Jesus was born in 'the days of Caesar Augustus' (Luke 2). Paul wrote his epistles about fifty or sixty years later. Thus, the first century of Christianity was also the first century of the 'Roman Empire'—when the 'empire' is defined not merely as a world power but more specifically as an entity ruled by an emperor. Like others have acknowledged, it is convincing to speak of Greco-Roman culture in the time Paul was writing

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<sup>15</sup> A. H. M. Jones et al., *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2d ed., rev. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 1–2.

to the believers in Corinth.<sup>16</sup>

Two categories of women are identified. The first is that of free women and the second is that of the slave women. The Greco-Roman world was politically dominated by men. All the Emperors were men; so also were the senators, the proconsuls, the praetors, and every other ordinary officer of state. There is no record which shows that women were in those positions. Women were excluded from voting in political elections. They were also denied to the right of bearing witness in the courts.<sup>17</sup>

At family level, free women were under their husbands. They would enjoy many rights like interacting with male guests, and if wives took good care of children, making them earn the title of good mothers, their husbands would allow them to take part in the public life.<sup>18</sup> When it came to the matters of divorce, free women were allowed to divorce given that the grounds were justifiable and that one had followed the procedures.<sup>19</sup> In the time of Augustus, the rights of a free woman were more considered, for even marriages were to be under the free consent of the girl.<sup>20</sup>

Free women enjoyed the rights to education, owned properties and had the privilege of not being taxed.<sup>21</sup> Some of them could even influence men, especially if they were rich.<sup>22</sup> For example, one record we read from the early church, is that believers met in the house belonging to the *woman* who was the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12). This authority to own property in Jerusalem was matched by a similar authority in Italy. In the second century, the historian Appian retold a well-known story from the era of civil wars which preceded the founding of the Empire. “To help meet the mounting military expenses, 1400 very rich women were summoned to make major financial contributions. The women refused to do so claiming that their mothers contributed from their belongings but could not get benefit.”<sup>23</sup> The fact that these women denied, is a sign that they enjoyed some kind of freedom. This was a century before Paul visited Ephesus and Corinth. It appears that such freedom was enjoyed

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<sup>16</sup> William Harvey Lawson, *First Corinthians 9:24-10:22 in its Contextual Framework*, (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 13–14.

<sup>17</sup> Ben Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's life in Greece and Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 174–175.

<sup>20</sup> Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: The People and the City at the Height of the Empire*, ed. Henry T. Rowell, trans. E. O. Lorimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940), 84.

<sup>21</sup> Myriam Pauline Razanamaro, *Women's Leadership in the New Testament: And its Implication to the Women's Leadership in Malagasy Lutheran Church* (Stavanger: Misjonskolen Press, 2015), 12.

<sup>22</sup> Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (New York: Cross Road Publish, 1998), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Lefkowitz and Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, 207–208.

even in the time of Paul, especially when we think of Lydia, a woman who managed her own business and household and who invited Paul to stay awhile at her house (Acts 16:14–15). There are more records that show that many women were loved and honoured by their husbands, parents, children, and communities.<sup>24</sup> We can think for example at the daughter of Herod who danced before the king and his invitees and got promised to be given whatever she would ask (Mark 6:14–29). The fact that King Herod fulfilled his promise even at the expense of John the Baptist’s death, tells that women were respected.

If many women and girls were loved with sincere affection, some women were publicly honoured. In Corinth only a few years before Paul went there an inscription was raised to “Junia Theodora, a Roman resident in Corinth, a woman held in highest honour . . . who copiously supplied from her own means many of our citizens with generosity, . . .”<sup>25</sup> It goes so that we read that free women served as physicians, mid-wives, nurses, pedagogues, wool weighers, fishmongers, hair dressers, salt vendors, actresses, etc., and so on and on, and also as poets, musicians, advocates, and even as authors of history books. At least one is remembered as a philosopher.<sup>26</sup> Others served as priestesses in some of the cults. For example, Flavia Ammon functioned as “high priestess of the temple of Asia and president in Ephesus,”<sup>27</sup> and Lalla, a wife of Ditomus, served as a priestess in the imperial cult.<sup>28</sup> Thus, women of this category enjoyed many rights in the society although there is no mention of any of them being the leader in high positions.<sup>29</sup> Let us now turn to see what was the situation of another category of women, the slaves.

The first thing I want to point out is that, both men and women were subject to slavery. Thus, the discussion here will contrast between the position of the two genders, namely the male and the female. Men worked in the house as well as doing the hardest field labour. This however was partly due to the fact that in the Greco-Roman world, agriculture was a man’s domain, while women were confined to domestic chores.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in a large household women seem to have done housework mostly, including spinning weaving and attending to children. It is said that female slaves nourished the Roman infants daily from their own breast and were normally the voice that the children first learned to mimic.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 207-208.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 14.

<sup>26</sup>Joan Breton Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 260.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 156.

<sup>29</sup> J.P.V.D Balsdon, *Roman Women* (London: Bodley Head, 1962), 238.

<sup>30</sup> Jack Gooday, *Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 35.

Some women slaves served their male owners sexually. A master had total sexual rights over his slaves regardless of his marital status. While this refers to both male and female slaves, there are many more references to the use of female slaves.<sup>31</sup> Occasionally, in the absence of the husbands, mistresses had relations with their favourite male slaves.<sup>32</sup> Hence just as female slaves would be forced to sexual relationship with their masters so were male slaves with their mistresses. Roman society accepted this sexual availability as proven by the fact that it was commonly known that leading figures such as Scipio Africanus, Emperor Augustus, and Emperor Claudius had female slave lovers.<sup>33</sup> The female slaves were reduced to mere properties so that when a man had sex with another's slave it was not considered as a crime against the slave, but as unlawful use of another's property.<sup>34</sup> It is even said that female slaves were used as source of incomes by their masters or mistresses because they were forced to engage in prostitution.<sup>35</sup>

If slaves were married, it appears that in most cases the status of a husband determined the status of the wife. In exceptional occasions women could raise the status of their slave men and women.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the status of the female slaves does not seem to have a significant difference from that of male slaves.

While free women were somewhat denied to the judicial rights, female slaves were treated just like male slaves in the matters of law. For example, when violence overtook a master or mistress, all slaves within earshot who did not come to his or her rescue were assumed guilty of complicity until proved innocent. Wiedemann records an incidence in which a slave girl was regarded as worthy of torture when she failed to scream for help when her mistress was attacked in her bedroom.<sup>37</sup>

We have seen that this culture was dominated politically by men. But within such a male-dominated society, women were not so bound to their husbands as might be supposed. Free women could own property, get an education, carry on their own businesses, and influence politics. They could also commit adultery, dominate their husbands, and get divorced at will. As a final word on the status of women in the Greco-Roman world, it

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 143, 225.

<sup>32</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *On Slaves and Freedom*; in Wiedemann, *Slavery*, p. 225. "Many Athenian women have become pregnant by foreigners or a slave."

<sup>33</sup> J.P.V.D. Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 230.

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought," in *Roman Sexualities*, ed. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 35.

<sup>35</sup> Rebecca Fleming, "Quae Corpore Quaestum Facit: The Sexual Economy of Female Prostitution in the Roman Empire," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999), 38–61.

<sup>36</sup> Wiedemann, *Slavery*, 52–53.

<sup>37</sup> Wiedemann, *Slavery*, 170.

appears that women were not silent. It will be interesting to find out what meaning the exegetical analysis of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 will offer us. At least, as this section has revealed, some women were influential to host even Christian gatherings (Acts 12:12). How could they be silenced? This is the task that will be discussed in details in sections 2.5 and 3.3.

## 2.2 Religious plurality and the role of women

Many studies that are interested in discovering what was going on in Corinth, especially in the time of Paul, reveal that one of the features of Corinth of that time is religious plurality. This is attested also in the text of 1 Corinthians. Paul made several references to idols and different religions. The following are some of those verses in which Paul refers to those religions: 1 Cor. 8:1,4,5,7,10; 10:7,19–21; 12:2. Such references suggest that before embracing Christian faith, most of Paul’s audience were worshipping idols. Because Paul does not explain what his audience had done when they were in those religions, it is important to get a picture of cults in Corinth and to see whether women had any role they played. This focus will help us to understand whether Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 14:34–35 “women should be silent” were a matter of concern against some practices that were entertained in the idol worship or it was something peculiar.

Pausanias, one of the Greek historians, asserts that “Corinth was full of temples consecrated to pagan idols.”<sup>38</sup> The city was a religious centre with temples for both older and newer cults flourishing side by side.<sup>39</sup> This situation leads many scholars to conclude that Corinth was marked by religious plurality.<sup>40</sup> Anybody visiting Ancient Corinth today will see the ruins of the temples in which people came to worship. The θεοὶ πολλοὶ καὶ κύριοι πολλοί (1 Cor. 8:5) to which Paul refers were very visible in the city. It was not possible to separate religion from social, political and economic life.<sup>41</sup> The gods stood behind earthly rulers, cities or communities, and families. Idols were present everywhere and worshipping them was part

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<sup>38</sup> Pausanias, *A Description of Greece*, Vol. 1, Attica and Corinth, translated by W.H. Jones. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), 2.2–5.

<sup>39</sup> D. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, in Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 9.

<sup>40</sup> Bruce Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 173; J. Crossan, and J. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus’ Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 13–68; David DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*, (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), 555–560; N. Bookidis, “Religion in Corinth: 146 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.,” *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Harvard Theological Studies 53, edited by D. Schowalter and S. Friesen. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2005) 141–164; and K. Sandelin, *Attraction and Danger of Alien Religion*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 290 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 77–132.

<sup>41</sup> R. Horsley, “Paul’s Assembly in Corinth: An Alternative Society,” *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, Harvard Theological Studies 53, edited by D. Schowalter and S. Friesen. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) 374.



of a daily routine.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, proper reverence towards them by means of worship was regarded as essential to continue political stability, economic prosperity, civil order, and individual success. This tells us that the encounters with idols in Corinth were not easy to avoid.

The gods that were commonly worshipped in the Greco-Roman world, and therefore known in Corinth as well include Apollo, Asklepios/Aesculapius, Zeus/Jupiter, Aphrodite/Venus, Hermes/Mercury, and Demeter/Ceres, Poseidon/Neptune, and Kore/Proserpina. Each god or goddess for whom a temple was erected required priests or priestesses. The discussion in section 2.1 above showed that women also were occasionally made priestesses and even high priestesses in some cults, especially those of goddesses. While scholarship on the Greek priests generally ignores the Greek priestesses, Joan Breton Connelly observes that, some contemporary writers choose to drop the gender-specific suffix *-ess* when referring to Greek priestesses and call both male and female sacred servants.<sup>43</sup> Such an attempt aims at deleting data that show women's involvement in religious matters and the roles and positions they held. Luckily, there is an access still to primary sources written in Greek language that show that both male and female served in the temples, although it cannot be denied that more men than women were involved. This however can be due to what Cassius Dio observes that regarding the Greco-Roman world, namely, that men greatly outnumbered women.<sup>44</sup> He gives some examples where there were 131 males per 100 females in the city of Rome. Thus, it came automatically that men had more representatives in religious leadership than the women. The Greek words that we generally translate as "priest" and "priestess" are based on the root *hieros*, which means "holy." *Hiereus* in the masculine and *hiereia* in the feminine are literally translated "those who are in charge of" or "those who take care of the holy things."<sup>45</sup> These "holy things" can include ritual objects, sacred rites and liturgies, and even religious festivals as a whole.<sup>46</sup>

It has been estimated that there were some two thousand cults operating in Attica during the classical period. With roughly 170 festival days a year in its sacred calendar, Athens

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<sup>42</sup> P. Coutsoumpos, *Paul, the Cults in Corinth, and the Corinthian Correspondence*, Pauline Studies, Volume 4: Paul's World, edited by S.E. Porter, (Leiden: Brill 2008), 172.

<sup>43</sup> Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 8.

<sup>44</sup> Rodney Stark, "Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity: The Role of Women," in *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 56, No. 3, Oxford Journals (Oxford University Press: Oxford, Autumn 1995), 233. In this article, Rodney quotes Cassius Dio on what he observed about the ratio in number between men and women in the Greco-Roman world.

<sup>45</sup> Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon*, 114; also Liddell et al, *A Greek and English Lexicon*, 304–305.

<sup>46</sup> Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 8.

hosted a religious hierarchy that was a very crowded arena.<sup>47</sup> The roles of priests or priestesses were publicly seen. Each priest was required to perform faithfully. But women were particularly conscientious in their attention to ritual practice. For priestesses, failure to observe cult requirements represented not just a lapse in duty but a serious crime.<sup>48</sup> Those who failed to follow the priestly vows, they were buried alive. Thus, priestesses served with high commitment and faithfulness proving that they managed. There is a record that shows that, “Lysimache served as priestess of Athena Polias on the Athenian Acropolis for sixty-four years, spanning the late fifth and early fourth centuries.”<sup>49</sup> That is a long time compared to many priests and it shows that she was faithful and a reliable priestess.

The onerousness of their duties depended on the importance of the cult which they served. Their work was largely seasonal, heaviest at festival time. In Athens the priestess of Athena Polias supervised the annual purification of the goddess’ venerable olive-wood statue in salt water and its clothing in fresh raiment. In the Greek world, to a less extent than in the Roman world, priests and priestesses served as temple overseers with responsibility for the care and upkeep of their sanctuary. In Corinth, the priestess of Demeter at Olympia would sit on the altar during the Olympic games.<sup>50</sup> Not much is told about her roles. But we read that in cults where there were both priests and priestesses, “active roles were presided by the priests whereas the priestesses were left with passive roles like opening doors into the sanctuary.”<sup>51</sup>

If one of the aspects of a ‘leader’ is special responsibility before others in the community, then priests and priestesses belong to this group called leaders. Priests and priestess were available in the temples to serve people who came to sacrifice and worship the gods and goddesses. It has to be born in mind that, the priests and priestesses in religion may say words and oracles that make even high-ranked political leaders like emperors obey. Take an example of today; in what we say normal or daily life, a pastor may not have the authority to order the president, king or queen to stand up or sit down. However, when in the church, they are subjected to following and obeying what the priest or priestess tells them. Thus, priests and priestesses were respected people for they were understood to communicate with gods and speak to people in the names of gods or goddesses.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, vi. 20,9.

<sup>51</sup> Eftychia Stavrianopoulou, *Ritual and Communication in the Greco-Roman World*, Kernos Supplement 16, (Presses Universitaires de Liège: Online, 2013), 64.

The participation of women in religion was not only the act of the priestesses. Other women also, both free and slaves, were involved. For example, the wife of the priest of Jupiter, like her husband, was subject to various obscure taboos. She appeared at some of the festivals celebrated by the Vestals, but was not considered a priestess of Juno. In some cults, it is even said that “the women are sacred and maddened by Dionysus.”<sup>52</sup> Such women were not priestesses but worshippers who stood in a very close relation to the god.

Hellenistic culture is not the only background of Paul. He has a Jewish background. Unlike other religions, Judaism was stricter in practicing its doctrine. Since 1 Cor. 14:34–35 was written by Paul, we cannot conclude this section without having a look at how women were viewed in Judaism. But, we begin first with the Old Testament time.

In general women in the Old Testament were legally the property of men (Gen. 3:16; Ex. 20:17; 21:2–4, 7, 22:16–17; Deut. 22:13–21; Judg. 19:16–30).<sup>53</sup> This condition is characteristic of patriarchal societies. Before marriage the girl was the property of her father. After marriage, a woman became the property of her husband (1 Sam. 18:17). Widows were placed under the authority of their fathers, sons or brothers-in-law (Deut. 25:5–10).

Polygamy was common. Women were considered objects of property among the spoils of war (Num. 31:18, Deut. 21:10–14). The ten commandments are an example of treating women as property. The last commandment lists a wife among objects of property which are not to be coveted. But it is interesting to observe that men are also exhorted to honour mothers as well as fathers, and to allow both women and men to rest on the Sabbath.

There are a few Israelite women who managed to exercise a leadership role in public life. In the time they were settling in the Promised Land, Deborah served as a judge and as military commander in battle against the Canaanites (Judg. 4–5). She was chosen by the Lord himself. After the death of Ahaziah, his mother, Athaliah ruled the southern kingdom for six years, making her the only female to rule Israel in the highest position (2 Kings 11). Although Esther served the Persians as a queen, her role in serving and saving the Jewish people cannot be bypassed.<sup>54</sup> And finally, Queen Salome Alexandra who ruled Judea in 76–67 B.C.E.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, a number of women are named in the Old Testament as functioning in the important religious office of prophet: Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, the wife of Isaiah, and

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<sup>52</sup> Apuleius, *Golden Ass* xi. 10; Pausanias ii. 7, 5.

<sup>53</sup> A. Oepke, “Gyne,” *TDNT*, Vol. I. 781.

<sup>54</sup> The whole Book of Esther is about Esther and her role.

<sup>55</sup> Kenneth Atkinson, *Queen Salome: Jerusalem’s Warrior Monarch of the First Century B.C.E.*, (US: McFarland, 2012), 1.

Noadiah (Exodus 15:20, Judges 4:4, 2 Kings 22:14-20, Isaiah 8:3, Nehemiah 6:14). Functioning as leaders, women have left behind some hymns which are remembered until today (Exodus 15:21 (song of Miriam), Judges 5 (song of Deborah)).

In the intertestamental and early rabbinic periods Judaism stood in constant struggle to preserve its identity against the influences of secular Hellenistic culture. Thus, in many areas it reacted against the social advances which were taking place in the empire. Judaism frequently adopted the strictest, most literal interpretations of the Torah, and encased these within elaborate rubrics and further regulations. Women were more restricted in Judaism than they had been in the Old Testament.<sup>56</sup> However, to a certain extent, those in Diaspora were freer than to those in Palestine,<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, they could not recite the prayers at meals. They were not obligated as men were to go up to Jerusalem to participate in the major pilgrim festivals. Women were barred from studying the Torah.<sup>58</sup> They could not be counted when any counting of people was to take place. Furthermore, while any adult person had the right to read and to preach in the synagogue, women were kept physically separate from men in the synagogue and were not allowed to read at all.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, women were not given an opportunity to study the Torah, the education which would have enabled them to preach.

In the diaspora, Judaism was somewhat affected by the experience of Hellenism and foreign cultures. It is recorded that, in some parts, women could own property and transact business, take oaths and initiate divorce. Women were also taxed like men and were called up for military service.<sup>60</sup> In other places, especially those living in Egypt, Judaism admitted women to full membership in the community, though they were to sit separately and silent during worship.

Philo, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher living in first century Alexandria, viewed women as inferior and evil creatures.<sup>61</sup> In his argument, one can see Philo believed that man was led by reason and woman by sensuality. On the other hand, he did advocate some, but not equal, education for women. The Palestinian Jewish historian Josephus spent part of his later life in Rome. As a Jew, Josephus accepted the theoretical inferiority of women. In one of his writings he says, "A woman is inferior to her husband in all things. Let her, therefore,

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<sup>56</sup> A. Oepke, "Gyne," TDNT, Vol. 1, 781.

<sup>57</sup> Craig Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Backer Academic, 1992), 76.

<sup>58</sup> A. Oepke, "Gyne," TDNT, Vol. I. 782.

<sup>59</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 74.

<sup>60</sup> Leonard Swidler, *Women in Judaism* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1976), 4-5.

<sup>61</sup> Philo, Apology for the Jews 11, 14-17, in <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book37.html>, accessed on 4.5.2017.

be obedient to him.”<sup>62</sup> But as an historian living within the Roman empire, he described several influential women in his historical works.<sup>63</sup> However, he reiterated that women could not be witnesses and were segregated during worship.<sup>64</sup> It is the Jewish view of woman that emerges as dominant in the thought of Josephus: “The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority has been given by God to the man.”<sup>65</sup>

While in the take off of this section it was said that the Greco-Roman world had a blended culture making it difficult to sort out identities of individual cultures of the peoples in that area, the Jewish culture appears to be peculiar. The position of women in the Mediterranean world of the first century differed from culture to culture. It has been possible to see how it viewed women amid the mixed culture. If we look at the position of the women in general, it is possible to say that women were nowhere *totally* free or equal. Yet Hellenistic, Roman and Egyptian women did enjoy some degree of freedom and exercised a real political, economic, and religious role in their societies. First century Judaism lived in the Roman empire and in the cultural setting of Hellenism. It was unable to ignore secular culture and its influence, but had to react to it either positively or negatively. Christianity was born into this complex and syncretistic world. The societies of this world still by and large advocated the traditional role of subordination and silence of women as the ideal. Yet in practical life, the women of history were neither subordinate nor silent. The ideal was challenged. The tension and conflict generated by this challenge were the social milieu in which New Testament Christianity was formulated. What do we make of it today?

As it has been seen, not all women held a second-class status as silent and submissive figures restricted to the confines of the household where they obediently tended to domestic chores and child rearing. Not all women were that much passive as it has always been claimed. We have seen that in other religions, some women were made high priestesses and both men and women took part in those cults, including the high-ranked political leaders. Consequently, the role and position of women in the 1 Corinthians world was not unanimously to be silent. As Joan Breton Connelly asserts, “women assumed roles equal and comparable to those of men.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Against Apion* II. 25, in in Josephus, Flavius. *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, translated by W. Whiston. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999.

<sup>63</sup> *Antiquities* VII 11, 8, XI 3, 5, War I 5, 1, in Josephus, Flavius. *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, translated by W. Whiston. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* V 8, 15., in Josephus, *The Complete Works*.

<sup>65</sup> *Against Apion II*, 201, in Josephus, *The Complete Works*.

<sup>66</sup> Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess*, 2.

### 2.3 The congregation in Corinth and its composition

More information is available to us about the believers' community at Corinth than of any other congregation that Paul founded. More than sixteen specific individuals are listed by both Luke and Paul.<sup>67</sup> None of these lists were meant to be exhaustive as the mentioning of particular individuals was occasioned by specific circumstances. Therefore, the number of believers at Corinth must have been much bigger than those mentioned in the lists. DeSilva estimates the congregation members to be around fifty.<sup>68</sup> Considering that there were no church buildings as we have today, this group of believers could not be comfortably accommodated even in bigger houses like those of Gaius, Stephanas, Chloe, and Crispus.<sup>69</sup> Hence, it is not going too far if we argue that the "Corinthian church was really a collection of house churches, patronized by several wealthy converts who owned homes large enough to accommodate the small cells of the church."<sup>70</sup> The church in the house of Aquila and Prisca (Rom 16:4; 1 Cor. 16:19) is one of those subgroups of the larger community. A 'whole' meeting (Rom 16:23; 1 Cor. 14:23) therefore was an exception rather than a norm.<sup>71</sup>

The interest I have with this section is to find out whether the composition of the congregation also consisted of women. If it did, from which background and status were before their conversion? This will help me see the kind of audience Paul was addressing in connection to the problematic phrase, "the women should keep silence in the churches" (1 Cor. 14:34). To start with, I would like to bring forward one aspect that was briefly pointed out in the previous section. The congregation at Corinth seems to have consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. Paul's sentence, ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε (1 Cor. 12:2) and other references like 1 Cor. 6:9–11; 8:7, are used as if the whole group had a non-Jewish composition. And some scholars think that way.<sup>72</sup> However, within the text of 1 Corinthians there are many indicators that suggest the presence of Jews in the community of Corinthian believers. For example, Paul's

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<sup>67</sup>In Acts 18 we read of Prisca and Acquila (v. 2), Titius Justus (v. 7), Crispus (v. 8), and Sosthenes (v. 17). In 1 Corinthians Paul mentions the people he baptized personally at Corinth: Crispus and Gaius (1:14) and Stephanas (1:16). In addition to Apollos (16:12), he complements the members of the delegation that brought the letter (7:1) from Corinth to Ephesus (16:8): Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17). The epistle to the Romans was written from Corinth, thus those who sent greetings in the last chapter were members of the church of Corinth: Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus and Quartus (Romans 16:21–24).

<sup>68</sup>DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 562.

<sup>69</sup>Anthony Thiselton, *The New International Greek New Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 28: These four listed members are considered to have been of high rank, esteem, wealth and therefore owned bigger houses than other members.

<sup>70</sup>DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 562.

<sup>71</sup>D. Balch, and J. Stambaugh, *The New Testament in its Social Environment*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 139–140.

<sup>72</sup>See for example Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 4; and P. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 59–62, 242 who argues that the Corinthian church was an exclusively Gentile church.

argument that concerns circumcision in 7:18 implies a presence of Jews or proselytes among the believers. Gentiles were not observant of the Mosaic Law. Furthermore, Luke writes that Crispus and Sosthenes were leaders of the synagogue, which means they were Jews like Aquila and Prisca.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, Paul's argument in 12:13 confirms that his audience was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. But the Jews might have been the minority in comparison to the number of Gentiles in the community. As Gerd Theissen argues, "Paul founded a large, pre-dominantly Gentile-Christian, community."<sup>74</sup> Thus, the influence of Gentiles' pre-conversion habits out-ruled the influence which ought to have come from those who observed the Law.<sup>75</sup> This might be one of the reasons that made the Corinthian believers think and act in many issues so differently compared to other Pauline congregations.<sup>76</sup>

We are not sure how many Jewish women were members of the congregation. At least we are informed of Prisca who, together with her husband, were influential at Corinth. I assume that Crispus and Sosthenes also were married and so their wives were members of the congregation, something that adds the number of women in the congregation. If Jewish women were many and that the same status they had in synagogues were transferred to Christian assemblies, then women might have been denied to some rights.<sup>77</sup> But, we are not told about this.

That women were present in the congregation is affirmed in Paul's text as he pays attention only on them at least two times. First, in 1 Cor. 11:2–16 women are considered as being fully involved in congregational life, participating vocally in gatherings for worship by praying and prophesying. Second, in the list of the members he mentions in Romans 16, nine out of the thirty-seven are women. This implies that women were present and that these mentioned ones probably had some responsibilities. Thus, including those without responsibilities, it convinces me to argue that women were many. Like in many modern congregations where female members outnumber the male, I am inclined to think that women might have been more than men.<sup>78</sup> This is because, most of those in lower class were women, and the early church was mainly formed with low-classed people, with a few from upper

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<sup>73</sup> On these characters see Acts 18:2, 8, 17, 18, 26; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:1, 14; 16:19.

<sup>74</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The New Testament: An Introduction*, (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 71.

<sup>75</sup> Here I refer to Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers.

<sup>76</sup> Lauri Thurén, "The Corinthian Heresies Revisited – A Rhetorical Perspective to the Historical Situation," *Saint Paul and Corinth – 1950 years since the Writing of the Epistles to the Corinthians*, Vol. 2, edited by S. Papadopoulos et al. Athens: Psychogios Publications, 2009), 778.

<sup>77</sup> Refer to the previous section on the paragraphs that concern women in the synagogues.

<sup>78</sup> This however does not contradict what was said in 2.2 that men by far outnumbered women in the Greco-Roman world. In many places women convert to faith so easily compared to men. I think this was the case of with the early church.

class. Many women might have joined the Christian movement as it gave them more freedom than that they enjoyed in the daily life.<sup>79</sup> In 1 Cor. 7:12–16 we read about mixed couples, that is, women were believers and the husbands were not. Peter writes about the same thing as well (1 Pet. 3:1–2). But even without this, Henry Chadwick notes that, the early church was successful because it attracted many upper-class women who then brought their husbands and admirers to faith.<sup>80</sup> It might not be taken for granted that each woman succeeded to bring her husband to faith. A good example can also be seen in today's situation. Many women are in the church, but not their husbands. Thus, the number of female believers might have been bigger than that of male believers.

The composition of the congregation at Corinth discussed so far has shown that, there were both male and female members, with a big possibility of women outnumbering the men. There were some of the women whose roles were notable, Chloe and Prisca to mention a few. If some of the women owned houses like Chloe did (1 Cor. 1:11) it raises questions as to how Paul would have dared to tell hosts to stay silent. This however will be uncovered more as the study proceeds, especially in chapter three of this thesis. Let us now turn to see if those women in the Corinthian congregation had some roles to play.

#### **2.4 The role of women in the congregation**

In the early church, almost all Christian meetings were held in private homes. This feature applied also at Corinth. The Corinthian congregation was mainly a composition of subgroups that met in households. While there is no record in the Scripture that the house owner automatically became the leader of the group that met in their houses, Marjorie Warkentin contends that “the hosts of the churches became the natural leaders of the church, because they were most likely persons of sufficient education and practical administrative ability.”<sup>81</sup> Hence, the active role of the house owner cannot be doubted. In this section I seek to discuss the supposed roles of women in the Corinthian congregation.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul makes no mention of specific Corinthian individuals except in 1:11 where Chloe's name is seen. Paul mentions her as having people in her house, “some of Chloe's household.” This suggests that Chloe had either a group that used to meet at her home or some members from her household. If there was no group meeting in her home, then Chloe was a notable member at least known for some other function which we do not know.

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<sup>79</sup> Stark, *Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity*, 235.

<sup>80</sup> Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), 56.

<sup>81</sup> Marjorie Warkentin, *Ordination: A Biblical-Historical View* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1982), 4.



But I would think that there was a group meeting in her home and Chloe had guided them spiritually. Chloe seems to be a reliable person since Paul dared to mention her as a source of the information about the situation at Corinth.

The fact that Chloe sent people from her household to Paul has to be seen in terms of roles she played. It must be that she was a leader and so she was channelling the matter in right protocols. For if she was a mere member, she would have sent her concern to the immediate leader. Chloe considered Paul as the immediate leader to deal with the conflict at Corinth, meaning Chloe was a leader. She was a leader of the group that met in her home. As spiritual leader, she must have been teaching, preaching, baptizing, and leading prayers.

Another woman who lived in Corinth that Paul mentions in different occasions is Prisca. Although several times she is mentioned along with her husband, there is one peculiar feature worthy noting. Four of the six times they are mentioned in the Greek text,<sup>82</sup> she is mentioned first. Because it was the customary of the Greco-Roman world to list the husband's name first, this reversal indicates Prisca's importance in the minds of the New Testament writers Luke and Paul.<sup>83</sup> However, the problem is that, we are not sure regarding the kind of prominence she enjoyed.<sup>84</sup> We only assume that it was something to do with spiritual leadership that might have originated from having house church at their home.<sup>85</sup> Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringer write that Prisca held a position of leadership that is related to gospel preaching.<sup>86</sup> But she does not specify the position she held. Whatever the form of prominence she had, one thing is clear, Prisca was not silent. In some of the references she earned a title of being a co-worker of Paul. See for example how Paul addresses her in Romans 16:3 “Ἀσπάσασθε Πρίσκαν καὶ Ἀκύλαν τοὺς συνεργούς μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ...” It is an honourable position for a person to be an apostles' co-worker.

Another prominent woman is Phoebe whom Paul mentions, even in the roles of a διάκονος and προστάτις. Two different titles are attached to Phoebe. They do not have the same functions. Therefore, I look at them separately. Apart from other meanings attached to διακονος, when the word is used in connection with the gospel, it refers to a person who

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<sup>82</sup> I put emphasis in Greek text, because while in English versions Acts 18:19 has their names mentioned, in Greek it is only κάκεινους. The other occurrences are in Acts 18:18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19 and 2 Timothy 4:19.

<sup>83</sup> Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 194.

<sup>84</sup> Gretchen Gaebelin Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1987), 256.

<sup>85</sup> C.E Cranfield, *Romans 9-16 International Critical Commentary*, (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004), 278.

<sup>86</sup> Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H Ringer eds., *Women's Bible Commentary Expanded Edition with Apocrypha* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 400.

teaches, preaches, and therefore is responsible for a certain group.<sup>87</sup> This title suggest that Phoebe held a position of considerable responsibility, prominence and authority in the group of believers that was at Cenchrea.<sup>88</sup> Although the place she ministered was Cenchrea, at least the distance between the two places is not long, and most often Cenchrea is referred to as part of Corinth.<sup>89</sup>

Phoebe is said to be a *προστάτις*, the word that comes from *προστάτης*. This title, as it is described in lexicon, means a woman set over others, a female guardian, protectress, patroness, caring for affairs of others and aiding them.<sup>90</sup> This title indicates that Phoebe was a well to do person secularly. She had influence in the society when it comes to daily life, because the title suggests that she had many people under her who needed her care. But when compared to what other people of the same status did,<sup>91</sup> we can infer that Phoebe supported the church and this way Paul also might have been her beneficiary.<sup>92</sup> Thus, Phoebe is one of female individuals who had active roles at Corinth, both in secular and religious life. How would Paul have dared to silence women if they had a voice and influence just like men?

The last woman I examine is Junia. In Roman 16:7 Paul speaks of Andronicus and Junia, who are “of are of note among the apostles.” The debate on whether Junia was a man or a woman is not resolved among biblical scholars.<sup>93</sup> Since the passage where she is mentioned tells that she was an apostle, some have doubted whether “Junia” is really a feminine name.<sup>94</sup> The RSV assumes that it is a man and therefore translates it as “Junias.” There is much evidence that Junia is a woman name. It is a Latin female name that was also used by some Diaspora Jews.<sup>95</sup> Thus writing about her as a woman apostle as Paul himself has described gets support also from extra-biblical literature that the name is for a woman.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Arland J. Hurtgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans Press, 2011), 569.

<sup>88</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 239.

<sup>89</sup> The distance is only 14km, which means Cenchrea is within Corinth. But it was perhaps treated as a separate part at the time of Paul, especially if Phoebe resided there and there was a house church in her home.

<sup>90</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Chicago: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 549.

<sup>91</sup> Luke 8:2–3 writes about the women who served Jesus by supporting financially his movement.

<sup>92</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 240.

<sup>93</sup> Maryiam Razanamaro presents discussion that is among scholars concerning Junia's gender. See her thesis: Razanamaro, *Women Leadership*, 49–54.

<sup>94</sup> In his book, Eldon Epp discusses the view that Martin Luther had on Junia and that following his view on her as a man, many scholars understood it to be that way. See Eldon J. Epp, *Junia, The first Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 38. Also Razanamaro, *Women Leadership*, 49.

<sup>95</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 241, 253.

<sup>96</sup> James Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, Word Biblical Commentaries, Vol. 38B, (Dallas, TX: Word, 1988), 894. In that page, Dunn quotes Lampe who observes over 250 occurrences of the name in different Latin inscriptions.

Understanding that Junia was a woman apostle and that she could travel with Andronicus, a male apostle, suggests that they were either brother and sister or husband and wife. But most probably husband and wife as it was with the case of Prisca and Aquila (Rom.16:3), because Paul asserts that most apostles were married (1 Cor. 9:5) and the early church recognized the husband-wife apostolic team.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, the emphasis here is not on the relation that Andronicus had with Junia, rather on the fact that Junia was a woman and that she could be referred to by Paul as an apostle. If she is referred to as an apostle and a fellow prisoner of Paul, I wonder how Paul are to understand the expression “women should keep silence in the churches” (1 Cor. 14:34). As an apostle, Junia must have been teaching and preaching the gospel in different places. Like it is said of other women discussed above, there is much evidence from the Scripture that Paul acknowledged and respected the service of women.

It is not clear what roles that other women Paul mentioned in Romans 16 had. If they mentioned were because of the Christian group that met in their homes, then, they might have had some active roles to play whenever the group met. This however remains at a hypothetical level. We can only rely on those women from whom we have their records, and on them we build the foundation that women were not behind in church life at Corinth. They prayed and prophesied (1 Cor. 11:6), and having groups in the homes they owned, they preached and taught (1 Cor. 1:11).

## **2.5 The silence of women**

Having seen the situation of women in the Greco-Roman world in different sectors like politics, religion and domestic life, now we can be in a position of presenting a synthesis of the background of 1 Corinthians concerning the role and position of women.

In the first place, it was noticed that the role and position of women in the Greco-Roman world woman depended on the status of an individual. Those who belonged to high class, they were influential in many ways according to their status. They could own property, slaves, manage business, and therefore they were at liberty in doing many things independently. It was only the women from the low class, especially the slaves that they were bound and limited in many ways. But when the status of female slaves was compared with that of the male, it was seen that there were no differences. They were all treated equally except for the duties that were determined according to the gender. Thus, the image that

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<sup>97</sup> Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 108.

many writers paint that women were only like objects and so they were to remain silent is not true.

In the religious sector, women were given roles and positions to serve as priestesses and in some cults as high priestess. In societies where religion is respected, its servants are given special respect. We observed already that in the Greco-Roman world, religion was the business of the day. Cults were scattered all over something that suggest that people considered religion to be helpful in their daily life. Thus, women serving as priestesses were considered as leaders. They could even give oracles and orders to worshippers regardless of their position. Here I include one event that shows that priests were highly respected and their words were taken seriously. Josephus writes about Decius Mundus who coveted Paulina, a wife of another man, and that after all attempts to get her failed, he went to a priest who, having received a big sum of money from Mundus, summoned the woman in question and spoke to her as a prophet and finally Mundus got the woman for the purpose he wanted.<sup>98</sup> Although the priest in question is male, my interest is on how the priest can be listened to and obeyed for what he says. This means that priestesses too were obeyed when they said something in the name of gods. The audience would not question the message of priests and priestesses.<sup>99</sup> The words of priestesses were received and acted upon as directed.

It is in Judaism where we find the position of a woman was down and her that her roles were limited. The study pointed out that she was not allowed to study Torah as male did, and therefore she could not teach. In the temple, women were to sit differently from men and their roles were only to listen. Could this have influenced Paul to write what we read in 1 Cor. 14:34–35? It can be yes or no. The exegesis of the text under study and how it relates to Paul's thought will show how much Paul followed Jewish traditions after his conversion.

But we should not forget that Paul had both Gentile and Jewish backgrounds and that both backgrounds played a great role in sapping his teachings. When writing epistles, it was not only the writers' background that influenced the text, but the audience's as well. The congregation had believers from both Gentile and Jewish background. Some women had responsibilities in the congregation. Women like Chloe, Phoebe and Prisca who had house churches in their homes might have been teaching as well. A person like Prisca was accepted as considered Paul's co-worker. Her role and work was so remarkable that Paul honestly acknowledges it in his epistle to the Romans. How comes that Paul could silence women if

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<sup>98</sup> Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.4

<sup>99</sup> Gerson Mgya, *Spiritual Gifts*, 79.

they were active and their roles and positions remarkable? The next chapter scrutinizes the text to find out what Paul meant by what he wrote in 1 Cor. 14:34–35.

### 3 CHAPTER THEREE: ANALYSIS OF 1 COR. 14:34–35

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret 1 Cor. 14:34–35 by means of studying its words and extracting message from them. After getting its message, it will be checked how it relates with what is said about the same subject in the rest of the Scripture.

#### 3.1 Literary Context

Any verse in the Bible has both social and literary contexts.<sup>100</sup> A good interpretation of it is the one that considers both.<sup>101</sup> Having explored the social context of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 in chapter two of this thesis, the current section is set to study its literary context. By literary context I mean the texts surrounding the passage in consideration. In studying the literary context of the text, one investigates how the passage in concern relates with its literary environment that is the texts that come before and after it. Other biblical approaches, especially those which approach the Scripture from rhetorical perspective, call it a rhetorical unit into which the text under the study belongs. They argue that each rhetorical unit presents a certain argumentation. As it is not usual for an argumentation to be in just one paragraph, a rhetorical unit may have many paragraphs. Thus, whether spoken of as literary context or as rhetorical unit, the idea behind is the relation of the text in concern with the passages that come before and after it. In literary context, we find the sense of unity with other texts. Let us see what is said to be the literary context of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 and the kind of the theme Paul discusses.

The subject of the verses 1 Cor. 14:34–35 is said to be ‘the women should keep silence in the churches.’ The verses do not constitute an independent argumentation, because they appear to be part of an ongoing argumentation that began before them and continues after them. In verses 1 Cor. 14:26–33a Paul instructs how worshippers can exercise and weigh spiritual gifts during the public worship. He addresses specific groups in a logical order: people with the gift of the tongues vv. 27–28 and those with gift of prophecy vv. 29–33a. Then comes vv. 33b–36 that concern the silence of women, and finally is vv. 37–40 in which Paul make a conclusion. Thus, 1 Cor. 14:34–45 (or more correct 1 Cor. 14:33b–36) do not constitute a self-contained unit. They belong to 1 Cor. 14:26–40.

Not every scholar accepts the structure noted above. In fact, there is an unsettled dispute regarding the exact division between verses 34–35 and the preceding passage. Does the complete verse 33 belong to the preceding subunit, or does its second half belong together

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<sup>100</sup> V.G. Shillington, *The New Testament in Context*, (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 14.

<sup>101</sup> Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), 20.

with verses 34–36?<sup>102</sup> The argument raised is whether we are to read ‘For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the congregation of the saints’; or ‘As in all the congregations of the saints, women should keep silence in the churches’? Some scholars argue that the latter is stylistically inelegant, for in Greek the words rendered ‘congregations’ and ‘churches’ by the RSV are the same words: i.e., ‘As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches.’ Donald Carson observes that “what some see as stylistic inelegance, others see as a powerful emphasis achieved by repetition.”<sup>103</sup> Moreover, if verse 33b is linked with what precedes, it is uncertain just what the line of thought is. In the sentence, “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the congregations of the saints,” what is being compared? God and the congregations of the saints? God’s peaceful order with what is in all the congregations of the saints? The sentence can be salvaged only by understanding an additional phrase, such as: “and this principle must be operative in your church, as in all the congregations of the saints.” But something like that is missing from the passage. We are left with a situation which Thiselton calls “immensely complex.”<sup>104</sup> But he does a wise division which I concur with. He sees that the case of the silence of women in churches is in vv. 33b–36. It seems best to take verse 33b with what follows and let it end in v. 36: ‘What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?’ The reason for considering verse 36 as belonging together with verses 33b–35 is that Paul here asks two rhetorical questions that appear to be a direct response to something. At this stage, it is difficult to say to whom or to what he was responding, because a word study of verses 34 and 35 has not yet been undertaken. The detailed exegesis of the verses will let us know. In 1 Cor. 14:37–40 Paul seems to draw a conclusion of what he has been talking about, but it does not seem that this conclusion concerns only the discussion appearing in 1 Cor. 14:26–40. It is quite clear that it has a wider context, but from where does it begin?

Many scholars argue that the large context into which 1 Cor. 14:34–35 belongs begins in 1 Cor. 12:1 and is introduced by *περὶ δέ*, the formula that Paul used many times to introduce a new topic in 1 Corinthians, especially beginning with chapter 7.<sup>105</sup> According to them, *περὶ δέ* is a unit marker. If the *περὶ δέ* were to be the only feature to determine the literary unity, then the two verses under the study would belong to the passage that begins in

<sup>102</sup> See Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1146–1151; Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes*, 409; Carson, “Silence in the Churches”, 133; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 244; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 520.

<sup>103</sup> Carson, “Silence in the Churches,” 133.

<sup>104</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1146.

<sup>105</sup> Margaret Mitchell, “Concerning PERI DE in 1 Corinthians,” *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1989) 229–256; and Gerson Mgya, *Spiritual Gifts*, 82.

1 Cor. 12:1 ending in 1 Cor. 15:58 as Martin treats it.<sup>106</sup> However, other scholars argue that there are various ways to determine rhetorical units and two of them are recognizable in 1 Corinthians. In addition to *περὶ δέ* another marker is the type of vocabulary.<sup>107</sup> One rhetorical unit has related vocabulary, because the author speaks on one theme. The vocabulary type that characterizes 1 Cor. 12–14 is spiritual gifts. Beginning with 1 Cor. 15:1 we see a drastic change. It is no longer about spiritual gifts, but about death and resurrection. This shows that just as there is a shift in vocabulary uses so too there is a change in the theme of discussion. The theme that is in 1 Cor. 12–14 does not extend to 1 Cor. 15.

Other scholars suggest the literary context of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 to go back as far as 11:2 and to end with 14:40. The theme given to this unit is worship.<sup>108</sup> I find this suggestion convincing because the spiritual gifts discussed in 1 Cor. 12–14 have worship as their setting. Paul does not speak of spiritual gifts in a general way. He has worship as its specific setting. For example, Paul’s statement, “If therefore the whole church be assembled together, and all speak with tongues, and there come in men unlearned or unbelieving, will they not say that ye are mad?” (1 Cor. 14:23), indicates that the audience’s problem arises when they are in worship. Furthermore, the language used in 1 Cor. 14:34–35 verifies that Paul is addressing the question that has to do with worship. Therefore, the wider context of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 is 1 Cor. 11:2–14:40. The unity of this wider context is hereby presented. In its outset, Paul gives guidance to men and women who pray or prophesy in the church (1 Cor. 11:2–16). It ends with order in worship. Thus, the literary context of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 is to be found in 1 Cor. 11:2–14:40, and the theme is worship. There is a compact unity within this whole passage. This can be seen well when we look at the structure of the whole passage as it is presented below.

- i) Men and women leading in worship: Prophetesses and how they dress (11:2–16).
- ii) Order in worship: Sacrament—the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34).
- iii) Gifts and the nature of the body (12:1–30).
- iv) The hymn to love (12:31–14:1).
- v) Spiritual gifts and the up building of the body (14:2–25).
- vi) Order in worship: Word—Prophets and speakers in tongues (14:26–40).

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<sup>106</sup> Ralph Martin, *The Spirit and the Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12–15*, (Grand Rapids Michigan: Eerdmans, 1984), 5.

<sup>107</sup> José Chiu, *1 Cor. 12–14 Literary Structure and Theology*, *Analecta Biblica* 166, (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2007), 158.

<sup>108</sup> Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes*, 295.



And for 1 Cor. 14:26–40, the passage the contained the verses of my focus, the structure appears this way:

- i) Worshippers can exercise spiritual gifts, but should weigh them (vv. 26–33a).
- ii) Women should keep silence in the weighing process (vv. 33b–36). But in this thesis, 1 Cor. 14:34–35 and 1 Cor. Will be used interchangeably and in many cases, they will mean the same thing.
- iii) What I have written to you is the command of the Lord (vv. 37–40).

As can be seen, six subunits make up the argumentation on worship seen in 1 Cor. 11:2–14:40. Among all the rhetorical units within 1 Corinthians, the argumentation on worship is the longest.<sup>109</sup> Paul presents his argumentation step by step. To use such a big space for one theme tells that the theme was more confusing. It necessitated Paul to spend enough space and time to settle it. Because this section aimed only at placing 1 Cor. 14:34–35 in its literary context, it does not go into the inside of the text. It is the next section that will open more on what Paul meant as it deals with lexical study to determine the meaning of the words to be found there.

### 3.2 Lexical analysis

This section studies the meaning of the words that are used in 1 Cor. 14:34–35. The task commences with identifying all the words as they appear in Greek language. The identification is based on the BibleWorks7. A detailed discussion that follows the table below will discuss their meaning and specific usage. According to Novum Testamentum Graece, the 28<sup>th</sup> edition, the two verses contain thirty-six words as shown in the table below.

No	Word	transliteration	Meaning	Parsing
1	αἱ	hai	the	definite article nominative feminine plural
2	γυναῖκες	gunaikes	woman	noun nominative feminine plural common from γυνή
3	ἐν	en	in	preposition with dative
4	ταῖς	tais	the	definite article dative feminine plural
5	ἐκκλησίαις	ekklēsiais	church, assembly	noun dative feminine plural common from ἐκκλησία
6	σιγάτωσαν	sigatōsan	to keep secret, to keep silent	verb imperative present active 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural from σιγάω

<sup>109</sup> The other literary units are: i) The cross and Christian Unity (1:10–4:16); ii) Sex: Men and Women in the Human Family (4:17–7:40), iii) Christian and Pagan: Freedom and Responsibility (8:1–11:1); iv) Worship: Men and women in the congregation; and v) The Resurrection (15).

7	οὐ	ou	not	adverb from οὐ
8	γὰρ	gar	indeed	coordinating conjunction
9	ἐπιτρέπεται	epitrepetai	it is allowed	verb present indicative passive 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular from ἐπιτρέπω
10	αὐταῖς	autais	to them	pronoun personal dative feminine plural from αὐτός
11	λαλεῖν	lalein	to talk	verb infinitive present active from λαλέω
12	ἀλλ'	all	but	coordinating conjunction
13	ὑποτασσεσθῶσαν	hupotassesthōsan	to be in submission	verb imperative present passive or middle 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural from ὑποτάσσω
14	καθὼς	kathōs	as	subordinating conjunction
15	καὶ	kai	also	adverb
16	ὁ	ho	the	definite article nominative masculine
17	νόμος	nomos	law	noun nominative masculine singular common from νόμος
18	λέγει.	legei	says	verb indicative present 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular λέγω
19	εἰ	ei	if	Subordinating conjunction
20	δέ	de	moreover	Coordinating conjunction
21	τι	ti	anything	pronoun indefinite accusative neuter singular
22	μαθεῖν	mathein	to learn	verb infinitive aorist active from μαθάνω
23	θέλουσιν	thelousin	they wish, desire	verb indicative present active 3 <sup>rd</sup> plural from θέλω
24	ἐν	en	at	preposition dative
25	οἴκῳ	oikō	home, house, a dwelling	noun dative masculine singular common from οἶκος
26	τούς	tous	the	definite article accusative masculine plural
27	ιδίους	idious	own	adjective normal accusative masculine plural
28	ἄνδρας	andras	husbands	noun accusative masculine plural from ἀνήρ
29	ἐπερωτάτωσαν	eperōtatōsan	let them ask, to inquire of	verb imperative present active 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural from ἐπερωτάω
30	αἰσχρὸν	aischron	shameful	adjective normal nominative neuter singular from αἰσχρός
31	γὰρ	gar	indeed	coordinating conjunction
32	ἐστίν	estin	it is	verb indicative present active 3 <sup>rd</sup> person

				singular from εἰμί
33	γυναικὶ	gunaiki	a woman	noun dative feminine singular from γυνή
34	λαλεῖν	lalein	to speak	verb infinitive present active from λαλέω
35	ἐν	en	in	preposition dative
36	ἐκκλησία	ekklesia	church	Noun dative feminine singular from ἐκκλησία

**Figure 1. The table of words that are in 1 Cor. 14:34–35.**

Seventeen of the words used in 1 Cor. 14:34–35, as shown in the table above, are lexical words and the remaining are only functional. Of the seventeen lexical words, λαλεῖν, γυνή and ἐκκλησία each appear twice. When we take these repetitions into account, we are finally left with fourteen different lexical words. While every word has a contribution to the meaning of each verse, linguistically, in sentence construction, it is the lexical words that play a major role in making up meaning. I recognize the presence of functional words, but I would like to focus on the fourteen lexical words to find out what Paul wanted to convey as he used them. The words I refer to are γυναῖκες / γυναικὶ, ἐκκλησίαις / ἐκκλησία, σιγάτωσαν, ἐπιτρέπεται, λαλεῖν, ὑποτασέσθωσαν, νόμος, λέγει, μαθεῖν, θέλουσιν, οἴκῳ, ἄνδρας, ἐπερωτάτωσαν, and αἰσχρὸν.

The word γυναῖκες, from γυνή, occurs twice in these two verses. In the first occurrence, it is used as a generic name for female and it can mean an adult female person, woman,<sup>110</sup> wife or lady.<sup>111</sup> The same meaning is found in Acts 5:14; 8:3 and Galatians 3:28 to mention a few. If the word stands alone, one might be in a difficult situation to determine the meaning the word represents. But it is luck that words do not always stand alone. They are often used in a certain context, and by basing on that context, their meanings are determined.

In the second occurrence of γυνή, that is in v. 35 refers the married women, because this word here is connected with the word ἀνὴρ, where it is said the γυνή has to learn from ἀνὴρ when they are at home. This indicates that the γυνή is under some kind of authority or guardianship of ἀνὴρ.<sup>112</sup> The ἀνὴρ being referred to here cannot be father or brother because these words have specific Greek words, πατήρ, ἀδελφός respectively. Therefore, the most probable relation between γυνή and ἀνὴρ here is wife and own husband. If that is accepted, then the two occurrences of the word γυνή in 1 Cor. 14:34–35 refer to married women, and

<sup>110</sup> BDAG, 208.

<sup>111</sup> Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon*, 57.

<sup>112</sup> The word ἀνὴρ will be explained in later paragraphs because I would like to follow the word order as they appear in the passage under the study.

therefore live with their ἀνὴρ, husbands to whom they are to be subordinated. This way the context suggests that the issue being dealt in this passage concerns women who live with their husbands, because it would be irrelevant to tell unmarried women to ask anything from the husbands while they do not have any. When such a relation is called into attention, we need to ask two questions: is the passage about silence of the women or subordination or both? If the focus is only on married women, does this mean that unmarried women could speak freely or the γυναῖκί as used here has to be understood in its general reference? James Walter and William Orr argue that the term γυνή in this passage refers to the wives. They see such view being strengthened by the exhortation to continue to be subordinate.<sup>113</sup> The wives are said to have contradicted what their husbands said and therefore the husbands were embarrassed. But I leave this matter pending until we the next section that deals with the message of the passage. One word alone cannot decide the message, though it has a contribution to it.

The second word is ἐκκλησία from ἐκκλησία. The dictionary meaning of the word is calling out, community, society, or assembly.<sup>114</sup> In other lexicons, it is referred to as a casual gathering of people.<sup>115</sup> The original use of the word does not suggest any difference between secular and religious meaning. Thayer discusses various meanings that are represented in the word ἐκκλησία.<sup>116</sup> He indicates that the word stands for any gatherings, and among those he points out are: i) a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, ii) an assembly of people convened at the public place of council for the purpose of deliberating, iii) any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance or tumultuously.<sup>117</sup> All these have nothing to do with religious meetings. But it appears that the word has gained dominance in its religious use to the extent that whenever it is used in the Scriptures, it is the religious connotation that gets represented. Thus, what is the meaning embedded in this word as it is used in the passage in concern? Thiselton comments that the meaning here cannot be rendered based on word-for-word lexicography alone because it will violate the context. I consider his argument important to note and therefore, the use of words here should not be isolated from their context.<sup>118</sup> Other scholars argue that the words need to be understood as

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<sup>113</sup> James Walter and William Orr, *1 Corinthians: A New Translation with a Study of the Life of Paul, Notes and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1976), 312.

<sup>114</sup> Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon*, 75–76.

<sup>115</sup> BDAG, 303.

<sup>116</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Chicago: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 427–428.

<sup>117</sup> Joseph Thayer lists many meanings, but here I have taken only those which have nothing to do with religious meetings. For all meanings, see the footnote above.

<sup>118</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1147.

referring only to a Corinthian congregation.<sup>119</sup> But if v. 33b is to be read in connection with vv. 34–36, then word ἐκκλησία does not refer only to a local congregation.

The third word is σιγάτωσαν from σιγάω. The word means to be silent, to say nothing, to keep still or silent, depending on the context where it is used.<sup>120</sup> In other situations, it can mean to keep something close, secret or hold peace or refrain from using a particular kind of speech.<sup>121</sup> In this passage, it is used intransitively, that is, women are not silenced, but they themselves are to remain silent. This act relates to what is said in the Book of Proverbs when a fool keeps silent (Prov. 17:28) and when the wise man holds back his speech (Prov. 29:11). That kind of silence, according to John Lawlor, is a positive one.<sup>122</sup> The passage in which the women are told to be silent does not suggest that those women were fools. It only mentions that the law does not allow. It is therefore good to find out what is that law and on what basis women were to be silent.

The fourth word is ἐπιτρέπεται, from ἐπιτρέπω. The meanings rendered to this word are allow, permit, give leave or license, and let something be in a certain situation.<sup>123</sup> In other lexicons it has just one meaning to turn towards.<sup>124</sup> Its use in connection with the νόμος as it appears in the passage under the study, makes it be given the meaning of permit or allow. Thus, the word shows that the νόμος did not permit women to speak. In the analysis of νόμος it will be seen what kind of that νόμος did not permit women to speak in assemblies or meetings. What we need to note is that apart from writing the epistle in order to correct the audience in some of their practices, Paul was also guiding them. Thus, the extraction of the message from this word analysis will lead us to finding the kind of Paul conveys in the passage under the study.

The fifth word is λαλεῖν, from λαλέω. The word simply means to talk or utter words. It carries no special meanings that some of the lexicons that deal with key words in the Greek New Testament skip it.<sup>125</sup> But since it is the very action to which women are denied, I would like to write something though briefly. In classical Greek, λαλέω does not have special meaning in addition to “I talk.” But in Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, there are five related meanings to λαλέω. First, it is to utter a voice or emit a sound. Second, it refers to speak, that

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<sup>119</sup> Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers, III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 384.

<sup>120</sup> BDAG, 922.

<sup>121</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1153.

<sup>122</sup> John Lawlor, “Silence”, in *The New Testament Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible. S–Z, Volume 5*, edited by Katharine Doob Sakenfeld et al., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 255.

<sup>123</sup> Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers, III, 384.

<sup>124</sup> Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon, A Simplified Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), 247.

<sup>125</sup> Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers, III, 384

is to use the tongue or the faculty of speech, to utter articulate sounds as contrasted to sounds given by dumb (1 Cor. 14:11). Third, it is to talk in the sense of making audible sound and outward form of speech. Fourth, the word refers to tell something to another. Finally, there is this meaning: to use words in order to declare one's mind and disclose one's mind and thoughts.<sup>126</sup> In other lexicons it is referred to as "expressing oneself."<sup>127</sup> One can express oneself by means of speaking or writing. But the context suggest that the word required wives to keep silence, that is not to speak. Verses 33b–36 do not tell about the things in which these wives were to keep silence. But one has to see the context in which the passage appears. Thus, its meaning will be found in the context of 1 Cor. 14:26–40.

Two issues arise regarding what women were restricted from. First, there is no indication of whether λαλέω could mean teach or preach. The passage suggests that women were being restricted from discussion that arose as a result of evaluating the prophecy as the context suggest.<sup>128</sup> Second, since λαλέω means any use of sound, it is interesting to find that the problem has singled out only preaching, and more specific ordination, which hardly appears in this passage. How has the issue of ordination come into this passage?

The sixth word is ὑποτασέσθωσαν, from ὑποτάσσω. The lexicons offer six related meanings.<sup>129</sup> First, it means to arrange something under another thing, that is, to subordinate.<sup>130</sup> Second, it means to subject or put something in subjection. Third, it means to subject one's self, that is to obey. Fourth, it means to submit to one's control or be under one's authority. Fifth, it refers to be under one's admonition or advice and mainly it is the advice of one with authority. Sixth, the word means to cause to be in a submissive relationship, to subject, to subordinate.<sup>131</sup> The same word form can be parsed as passive or middle voice, depending on the context. When it is in middle voice it means to submit oneself under somebody. But when it is in passive voice it means to be subjected or to be subordinated.<sup>132</sup> According to the passage, women are asked to submit themselves to the husbands. It is something they have to do whether they like or not.

The seventh word is νόμος. The word traces its origin from the verb νέμω, to divide, distribute or apportion.<sup>133</sup> When a noun is deduced from νέμω resulting to νόμος, the

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<sup>126</sup> Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 373–374.

<sup>127</sup> BDAG, 582.

<sup>128</sup> Mgaya, *Spiritual Gifts*, 139.

<sup>129</sup> Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 645.

<sup>130</sup> H. G. Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 680.

<sup>131</sup> BDAG, 1042.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 427–428.

dictionary gives meaning as law. In its loose sense, νόμος means a procedure or practice that has taken hold, therefore it has become as a rule, regulation, command or custom.<sup>134</sup> Based on the fact that the word refers to regulations or command, the first five books of the Bible also are called the Law (Matt. 5:17–18; 11:13; Luke 16:16), hence The Mosaic law.<sup>135</sup> But in addition to that, the word νόμος can stand for the whole Old Testament (John 1:17; Rom. 3:19; 1 Cor. 14:21).<sup>136</sup> That is, prophetic books and the writings like Psalms are sometimes referred to as the Law.

When the meaning of established rules or customs is read in the context of 1 Corinthians, it can mean two things. First, the customs of the Greco-Roman world from which most of the converts came. Second, the customs of the Jews which in the Judaizers were demanding that Gentiles converting to Christianity must observe. Because at this stage the task is only to study word meaning, we cannot decide to which meaning Paul was referring. This will be decided when discussing the message of the whole passage, because then meaning of words will combine together to determine what Paul meant.

The eighth word is λέγει, from λέγω. Lexicons ascribe various meanings to this word. Thayer, who gives more details on the word, presents its earliest use and how it was used later. According to him, the earliest uses of the word are: lay, cause to lie down, collect, and pick out. Then he shows the later use of the word as recount, narrate, describe.<sup>137</sup> Souter does not include the earliest usage, but gives three different meanings. The first meaning has five related words, say, speak, mean, mention, and tell. Second, the word can mean call or name something. Third, λέγω can mean tell or command.<sup>138</sup> When these meanings are brought into the context of 1 Cor. 14:34–35, it appears that the word refers to say or command.

The ninth word is θέλουσιν from θέλω. The meanings found in the lexicons are to have a desire for something, wish to have, desire or want,<sup>139</sup> to will, to fix one's will on something, to stick on something.<sup>140</sup> Following the νόμος that required women to keep silence in the public, the passage tells the women if they wish to understand something, they can ask from their husbands when at home. Here, the word sheds more light to the fact that what the women should ask from their husbands has nothing to do with a certain position,

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<sup>134</sup> BDAG, 677.

<sup>135</sup> Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon*, 167.

<sup>136</sup> Barrett, 322.

<sup>137</sup> Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 373–374. See also H. G. Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 880.

<sup>138</sup> Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon*, 144.

<sup>139</sup> BDAG, 447.

<sup>140</sup> Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon*, 109.

role or office. It is something that concerns the discussion which Paul talks about in the passage that precedes the two verses under study.

The tenth word is μαθεῖν from μανθάνω. Its dictionary meaning is to learn, to hear or be informed, to understand.<sup>141</sup> In the passage under concern, the word is translated following these meanings. Women are required to learn from their husbands at home if they have that wish. That is to say, it was taken for granted that men were to be present in the venue where the discussion took place. If the husband was not at the place of the event, what was being discussed, though physically present, the woman would not know.

The eleventh word is οἶκῳ from οἶκος. Four meanings are given to this word. The first is house. This refers to either an inhabited house, any building, or any dwelling place. The second meaning is household or one family. The third meaning is clan, tribe or people descended from a common ancestor as somewhere it reads the ‘house of David’ (Luke. 2:27) or the ‘house of Israel’ (Matt.10:6). Fourth, a house and what is in it, property, possessions, estate.<sup>142</sup> The meaning that seems to concern its use here is that of a family or household. But, if the νόμος in question was the Jewish one or the accepted norms of the Greco-Roman world, then the passage requires the woman to talk only to her husband or to the one with whom she is related. This means that she could extend the number of men to learn from her own husband to other male relatives as well. If relatives are inclusive upon whom the woman can learn from, then the use of γυνή above can have also a general reference, regardless of being paired with ἀνήρ.

The twelfth word is ἄνδρας from ἀνήρ. The dictionary gives four meanings for it.<sup>143</sup> The first one is a male human being. This distinguishes him from a female. Second, ἀνήρ is used with reference to age, and this distinguishes an adult man from a boy (Matt. 14:21). Third, it refers to a human being regardless of gender (Matt. 14:34; Acts 4:4; James 1:20). Fourth, the ἀνήρ also means a married man, a husband of a wife. Of the four meanings, the context suggests that it is this last meaning that the ἀνήρ stands for. A wife has to ask from her husband at home if she wants to understand something from the discussion.

The thirteenth word is ἐπερωτάτωσαν from ἐπερωτάω. The words mean to put a question, ask, inquire, demand, request, or to consult.<sup>144</sup> All the meanings that the dictionary offers could apply in the passage. Women can ask, request to be informed more, demand, or consult their husbands if they wanted to know.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>142</sup> BDAG, 699.

<sup>143</sup> Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 45.

<sup>144</sup> Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 230.



The fourteenth word is αἰσχρὸν from αἰσχρός. The word means base or disgraceful.<sup>145</sup> The same meaning, though with other terminology, is found in other lexicons where it is explained as filthiness,<sup>146</sup> improper, disgrace or dishonour.<sup>147</sup> It has the aspect of describing something which is socially or morally unacceptable and therefore it is disgraceful.<sup>148</sup> With this kind of description, the idea looks more cultural than theological. It is even compelling to think that the νόμος could refer to customs rather than to Scriptures. Whatever is referred to by νόμος, we are not told why it was improper for women to talk in the public. The only reason that was found was that male's attitude of female was that they are inferior and are to be subjected under the authority of men.

Based on the lexical study done in this section, some facts can be deduced. First, none of the words used in 1 Cor. 14:34–35 addresses the question of leadership of either women or men. Second, if the expression “women should be silent in the churches” is a general prohibition, then it appears that almost every church violates that νόμος, because women sing in choirs, recite creeds, lead prayers, preach and teach. Third, the view that women should keep silence in the churches because the νόμος does not permit them leaves me with some doubts on whether the word νόμος refers to the Holy Scriptures or to the Jewish norms which Paul several times rejected. If it refers to the Holy Scriptures, should we not see Paul as contradicting what he had said in 1 Cor. 11:2–16? Or, should we see the prohibition as case-specific limited only to the Corinthian church? If the νόμος refer to Jewish norms, can it be that the expression “women should be keep silence in the churches” was a quotation from the Corinthians' letter to Paul? Because this section was concerned with lexical analysis, the discussion that concerns the message of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 and how it relates to Paul's view on women's role in the church will be done in the next sections.

### **3.3 The message of 1 Cor. 14:34–35**

The use and play of words in a sentence or passage create meaning, not according to the reader, but according to the author. It is the author who selects and arranges words to convey the meaning he has in mind. In section 3.2, the study focused on the words used in 1 Cor. 14:34–35 in order to find out what might have been Paul's meaning in using them. The data from that section will be utilized in this section to determine the kind of silence spoken of in the text.

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<sup>145</sup> Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon*, 9.

<sup>146</sup> Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 17.

<sup>147</sup> Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 20.

<sup>148</sup> BDAG, 29.

Before discussing the message of 1 Cor. 14:34–35, I would like to discuss the idea concerning the authenticity and placement of these verses. I spoke about this briefly in section 1.4, but could not go into details as I waited until the word study is done. Since that is done in Section 3.2, now I can discuss it. The view that vv. 34–35 are interpolated is given on two bases. First, it is said that some of words used in the two verses in concern are foreign to Paul.<sup>149</sup> The study shows that the strange words are αἰσχρὸς, ἐκκλησίαις instead of the singular form, ἐκκλησία,<sup>150</sup> and the construction ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων, in the churches of the saints. Following this strangeness of the word, a number of scholars find that the whole idea in these verses cannot be Pauline.<sup>151</sup> Second, some scholars content that the two verses disrupt the flow of argumentation that is about speaking in tongues and prophecy.<sup>152</sup> Therefore, the passage is considered not original in the place it is. The proponents of this view argue that the verses belong either after v. 40 or an editor inserted them.<sup>153</sup> Fee who strongly defends this view maintains that, the Western tradition has the reading that is as early as that which was predominant in the East. With this view, it becomes difficult to decide which theory is right as both are well defended. If these two verses are not original to the place, then we are wrestling with what ought not to be, and no wonder that, “the translation and exegesis of these two verses is immensely complex.”<sup>154</sup> However, any text has both external and internal evidences. Not always that internal and external witnesses will agree. This is the case of 1 Cor. 14:34–35. But let us now see what it is said about its internal witnesses.

Ben Witherington, approaching the text from a rhetoric point of view, observes that vv. 34–35 take up a large amount of significant vocabulary from the verse that immediately precedes them. Five words are identified. First, is λαλέω which appears several times in verses 14–32. Second is σιγάω that appears three times in verses 28,30 and 34. Third is ἐκκλησία which also appears three times in verses 28, 34 and 35 and finally is ὑποτάσσω that appears two times in verses 32 and 34. With this continuation of vocabulary, the verses are at home. One needs to see the connection of argument that is therein. In addition, σιγάω is a catch word that stands opposite to λαλέω, unfortunately it “is overlooked by theories of

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<sup>149</sup> Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 1994, 279.

<sup>150</sup> See Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1150

<sup>151</sup> Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 1994, 281; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 699. For others with similar view, see the discussion in Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1148–1150.

<sup>152</sup> Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 1994, 275.

<sup>153</sup> Donald Carlson, *Silence in the Churches*, 133. See also Gordon D. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 698–705; Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 330.

<sup>154</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1146.

interpolation.”<sup>155</sup> Since the passage concerns silencing people, it is doubtful that the verses are foreign. Their presence in the place they are makes a good connection with what comes before and after them. Like Bailey argues, if the verses are omitted, an abrupt hole is created in the argument that Paul has in 1 Cor. 14:26–40.<sup>156</sup> Therefore, we need to interpret their message in the place they are.

There are at least, six different proposals that concern the message of 1 Cor. 14:34–35; i) the verses are a Corinthian slogan which Paul quotes and thereafter refutes, ii) Paul silences women who were chatting during the worship service, iii) Paul silences women who were asking questions in the service, iv) Paul prohibits women from speaking in tongues, prophesying preaching and teaching in the worship service, v) Paul reminds women that they are in the church, not at home, and vi), Paul restricts women from heated discussion that concerned the evaluation of prophecies. Let us examine these views one by one.

### 3.3.1 A Corinthian slogan

Some scholars consider that 1 Cor. 14:34–35 constitutes a Corinthian slogan which Paul refutes in v. 36.<sup>157</sup> According to them, the whole issue begins with Paul’s style of writing which is considered to be difficult as noted in 2 Cor 10:10 and 2 Pet. 3:15–16. What makes it even more difficult is that, several times he is seen quoting his audience’s words before he can correct them. Examples cited are in 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4; 6:12–13; 7:1; 8:1, 4; 10:23; 12:15, 21; 15:32. It is true that in all those quotations, we do not see any quotation marks, and therefore it needs the interpreter’s attention to discern whose voice the words represent. But rendering that these verses are a Corinthian slogan simply because they are difficult to understand is more like doing violence to the Scripture. Unless it said, we have to maintain it as Paul’s words. Our task is to try to use every means to understand them in the manner they are used here.

Scholars arguing that the verses are a Corinthian slogan see that Paul’s use of the Greek word  $\eta$  in verse 36, immediately following the statement about women being silent as another support for their view. It is true that the particle  $\eta$  is a disjunctive conjunction which

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<sup>155</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1151.

<sup>156</sup> Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes*, 412.

<sup>157</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Paul, Women, and the Church,” *Worldwide Challenge* 3 (1976): 9–12; Neil M. Flanagan, “Did Paul Put Down Women in 1 Cor. 14:34–36?” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 11 (1981): 10–12; Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 144–153; and Jerome Murphy- O’Conner, “Interpolations in 1 Corinthians,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 90–92.

can be used variably, depending on the context.<sup>158</sup> One of its uses is to distinguish things or thoughts which either mutually exclude each other, or one of which can take the place of the other.<sup>159</sup> In most English Bible Bibles the  $\eta$  has been either left untranslated or translated by a simple “or”, which serves to diminish the forceful manner in which the speaker is using it or as “what”.<sup>160</sup> Elsewhere in 1 Cor. 6:1 and 9:8 Paul uses it and it is translated as a disjunctive that refutes what was going on in the preceding sentences. It is in this case that some scholars render it the word by “nonsense”,<sup>161</sup> “nonsense!”, “rubbish!”, “certainly not!”<sup>162</sup> If we take their suggestion, then Paul is refuting what is in vv. 33b–35. But this does not appear to be so as there is no indication that Paul quotes from his audience. The translation by RSV and other versions can be looked in two different ways. First, it can mean that Paul is surprised by what has just been said in vv. 33b–35.<sup>163</sup> This view has its own troubles. If we consider  $\eta$  as “what!” then the flow of the arguments in vv. 33b–36 will support that Paul refutes the Corinthians slogan. The second view is what Thayer’s suggests regarding the use of this particle. He argues that the disjunctive particle in question here is used to introduce a “sentence contrary to the one just preceding,” not in order to dismiss the preceding, but in order “to indicate that if one be denied or refuted the other must stand.”<sup>164</sup> Meaning, if the Corinthian women deny to keep silence as the law demands, then let them consider another reality which he introduces through rhetorical questions.

By asking the rhetorical questions whether the Word of God originates from them and whether it is only they who heard suggests that Paul wants them to consider that there are other churches which observe the order in church. With these rhetorical questions, I consider the emphasis being on observing order rather than women being silent. If this view is accepted, then, the two questions that are in 1 Cor. 14:36: ‘What! was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?’ are directed to the whole church at Corinth which is being argued to do things by observing order.

What Paul appears to wrestle with in 1 Corinthians is the influence of non-believers’ behaviour on the believers. Scholars who write on 1 Corinthians affirm how non-Christian

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<sup>158</sup> Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon*, 275.

<sup>159</sup> BGAD, 432.

<sup>160</sup> The NIV, NLT, ESV, BLB, ABPE, and DRB have translated it as “or”. Then, the BSB, NASB, HCSB, ISV, NETB, GWT, NAS, DBT, and YLT have left it untranslated and the RSV, KJB, NHEB, JB200, KJ2000B, AKJV, ASV, ERV, and WBT translate it as “what”.

<sup>161</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 144-153; Loren Cunningham and David J. Hamilton, *Why Not Women* (Seattle: YWAM, 2000), 190

<sup>162</sup> Cunningham and Hamilton, *Why Not Women* (Seattle: YWAM, 2000), 190.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon*, 275

norms influenced the believers at Corinth. One of them writes, “there is scarcely a paragraph in 1 Corinthians that does not bear historical witness to what was happening in Corinth.”<sup>165</sup>

This suggests that attitudes and ideologies from the world the believers lived permeated into their faith and was determining their practices in their assemblies as well. Christian gatherings appeared to make no major differences from non-believers. In 1 Cor. 3:3 Paul tells them they walk in the flesh, that is nothing has changed following their conversion. But what could be the practice be which Paul is irritated with and for whose reason writes that women should keep silence? It is probably the negligence of the νόμος. In their pre-conversion time, especially the gentiles lived without Scripture guidance, but following their conversion, they are subjected to the guidance of the Scripture. But the only problem we get here is that Paul does not mention what part of the νόμος he appeals to. Nevertheless, we should not that Paul connects νόμος to subordination, and not to silence.

Paul is doing here is that, he uses rhetorical questions as one of his devices of persuasion. He uses them in two different ways. First, he uses rhetorical questions to encourage the listeners and readers to think about what the answer to the question must be. He also uses such questions to stimulate negative responses from the readers or listeners.<sup>166</sup> Paul considers those people as leaning on false foundation, because the Word did not originate from them, but from God. If it is God, then the Corinthians have to follow the order that God wants. They should not outdo God’s authority. God is the God of order and what he had set has to be followed. This is why Paul has devoted such a long passage to explain how the Corinthians are to exercise the spiritual gifts they are given, and in 1 Cor. 14:26–40 he instructs them how to control when exercising them. It is not enough that one is inspired to speak, but one has to consider also whether what is inspired builds the congregation. If it does not, it is better that one keeps silence. And here, Paul asks women to keep silence, but for the sake of order. Moreover, Paul adds another question that you are not the only ones who heard the word of God. God has spoken in other churches also, and therefore you have to learn from them and see how order is maintained. Here, Paul holds the whole Corinthian church as responsible for deviating what is in line with the νόμος. Thus, as Carson argues, “verse 36 must not be understood to be addressed to women only. The masculine μόνους eliminates such view.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Mgaya, *Spiritual Gifts*, 39.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>167</sup> Carson, “Silence in the Churches,” 147.

### 3.3.2 Silencing chatting women

Kenneth Bailey maintains that the text silences women because they were noisy for two different reasons. First, in that time women rarely met in their daily life. Coming together in a religious meeting was a golden opportunity for them to meet each other. While the service continued, they would be changing ideas and chatting as if they were in the market place. In supporting his view, Kenneth Bailey quotes John Chrysostom of Antioch who is said to have been disgusted by women who kept making so much noise while he was preaching that he had to stop and silence them.

Then indeed the women, from such teaching keep silence; but now there is an apt to be great noise among them, much clamour and talking, and nowhere so much as in this place [the cathedral]. They may all be seen here talking more than in the market or bath. For, as if they came here for recreation, they are all engaged in conversing upon unprofitable subjects. Thus, all is confusion, and they seem not to understand, that unless they are quiet, they cannot learn anything that is useful.<sup>168</sup>

It is a good suggestion and convincing comparison, but there are two problems here we need to consider. First, why then would the passage tell them to learn or ask from their husbands when at home? How is their chatting related with asking questions from their husbands? Second, if the women were chatting with each other during the service, that is situational and peculiar only to Corinth. Paul was correcting it. Can we take a corrective statement and make it a principle that applies to all women in the world? Are all women having the same problems of not meeting in their daily life and therefore are chatting while in the church? This view appears incomprehensible as it does not fit to the ongoing argument that Paul had.

But then, Bailey has another support that comes from his own experience as he lived and worked in Egypt. He writes that women were noisy and the reason that made them make noise was that they did not understand properly the language the leader used when presiding the service. He takes the idea of Corinth being a large city and diverse and therefore making people have different accents in their speech. When the worship service leader was preaching or teaching, the difference in accents was noticeable and became a barrier in communication. When the speaker was not clearly understood by the listeners, they would ask each other, “what did he say? What was that word?”<sup>169</sup> Mainly those who did not know the language were the women because they were mostly confined at home. Thus, the women were required to ask their husbands at home the words they did not understand as the worship leader spoke. Here I find two aspects that make me reluctant in accepting the view. First, not all women

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<sup>168</sup> John Chrysostom, Homily IX [1 Timothy ii. 11–15],” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: 1979), 13:435, quoted from Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes*, 414–415.

<sup>169</sup> Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes*, 413.

stayed at home in their daily life. According to the findings presented in chapter 2, there were women who were influential in their community and in that case, they met people in their daily activities. So, if this view is right, then it concerns only a few women.

### **3.3.3 Silencing women who were asking question during the service**

This view considers that Paul silences prophetesses who were asking questions, and perhaps inappropriate ones making worship service to be interrupted.<sup>170</sup> Ben Witherington III compares the Corinthian situation as per text to the oracles of Delphi where the prophet or prophetess prophesied by responding to questions including those questions that concerned purely personal matters. If this view is right, then Paul's concern was that worship service should not be turned into a question-and-answer session. This view gets in trouble in solving the connection between vv. 34–35 and v. 36. I see that Paul addresses the whole church that it should keep order and learn from other churches as well.

### **3.3.4 Silencing women from speaking in tongues, prophesying, preaching and teaching**

Some consider that Paul prohibits women from teaching, preaching, prophesying and speaking in tongues in the church. Antoinette Wire who entitles her work as *The Corinthian Women Prophets* writes that “Paul’s arguments of silencing women are clear and follow each other.”<sup>171</sup> But when looked in the text, it is this controversial passage that is being referred to. A modification on this view is done and it maintains that the women were restricted only in assemblies.<sup>172</sup> That is, they could prophesy at home as did Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:8–9) or teach individuals if they met privately as Priscilla did (Acts 18:26). This view receives three critical objections. First, why did Paul not make his position clearer back in 1 Corinthians 11 where he seems to allow properly covered women to speak in tongues and prophesy (11:5). As a response to this objection, the proponents of this view argue that Paul’s pastoral approach did not allow him to address all things at once.<sup>173</sup> They see Paul laying the foundation in 1 Cor. 11:2–16 before he can deny them. I see their view and answer as a little bit misleading. Against this view, if Paul denied women from speaking in tongues, teaching and prophesying, why didn’t he mention those activities clearly as it is done in 1 Tim. 2:12? I

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<sup>170</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 287.

<sup>171</sup> Antoinette Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric*. (Fortress Press: Augsburg Press, 1995), 154.

<sup>172</sup> Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians: Concordia Commentary*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 361–363.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

find it hard to accept the view because, if Paul meant to deny women from carrying those activities, he would not have left it unclear as it is. Second, how is speaking in tongues, prophesying and teaching connected with asking questions to their husbands at home. Because in speaking in tongues or teaching, the individual gets the inspiration from the Spirit and thereafter delivers to the people as the Spirit wills. There is hardly any connection with husbands or any people to be asked in getting what is to be taught. Here I see two unrelated ideas are being connected. As Thiselton had suggested, the silence concerned the heated discussion that resulted from weighing prophesy.<sup>174</sup>

The third objection that disapproves this view is that, in the outskirts of the city of Corinth, at Cenchrea, there was a woman who ministered the congregation and in writing to the Romans (Rom. 16:1) Paul commends her by mentioning her roles as well. How comes that the same Paul would deny women from prophesying, teaching and speaking in tongues? In addition, there is no reason that is given as to why Paul would restrict them performing those roles in the church, but allow them to exercise them at home. As argued earlier in Chapter Two of this thesis, Paul valued and appreciated the roles women had in the ministry. There are no records that he ordered them not to teach or preach. On the contrary, he himself partnered with some of them sometimes.

### **3.3.5 Reminding women that the church is different from home**

Karl Olav Sandnes raises an issue of space between public and private, and therefore between church and home.<sup>175</sup> He begins the discussion on 1 Cor. 14:34–35 by asserting that, space is a key issue in this controversial passage.<sup>176</sup> He then writes that he would give space to this aspect. He then continues by showing how the passage is linked with the preceding discussion to show that it is not to be read in isolation with the discussion of evaluation of prophecies. The vocabulary choice he points are like that which Ben Witherington points, therefore I do not repeat them here.

Given the reality that during that time there were no churches, services were held in private homes. That was the space where women had authority compared to public spheres. In support of the view on space, he quotes some ancient writers like Valerius Maximus, Livy and Plutarch who emphasized that women's world is at home, but the public is for the

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<sup>174</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1159.

<sup>175</sup> Karl Olav Sandnes, "Ekklesia at Corinth: Between Private and Public", *Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke* 78 (2007), 256.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid*, 254.



men.<sup>177</sup> However, while the homes were a private space, the services were a public thing and therefore it belonged the men's world. The church could not longer be private because its message for public.<sup>178</sup> With this private space hosting a public event, it was difficult to make women silent, because they were in their space.<sup>179</sup> Women spoke beyond control. According to Sandnes, Paul reminded the women members that order had to be maintained even if they are in the space where they think they are free to talk, ask questions at any time they wanted. By doing so, women were interrupting the services now and then, and for that reason, Paul had no option than restricting them. Paul had the concern of "building fellowship through order."<sup>180</sup>

On two matters, I consider Sandnes' view something suggestive and can be commended. First, he is right in saying that services were held in homes, because that is the feature we read concerning the churches of that time. We can see for example what Paul writes in Rom. 16:4 and 1 Cor 16:19) where he mentions the church in the house of Aquila and Prisca. Second, Sandnes does not consider this prohibition to be general. He views that Paul prohibited them to a specific situation. Paul prohibited women to ask questions but allowed them to pray and to prophesy. Sandnes argues that what they were allowed to do was not offensive.<sup>181</sup> Thus, Sandnes appears to view that the prohibition was not a general one.

But the problem I see in his argument is that, elsewhere Paul had commended women for the ministry. The women like Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia, and Chloe had public roles. If some of them had questions, how they were to be considered. In his argument, it does not become clear whether even women like Phoebe and others as I mentioned above would be silenced. Thus, while the question of space is what Paul was concerned with, can we find some exceptions to it, that is, the prohibition is for a specific issue and for the specific place. Which mean means, women could teach and pray just as they could pray and prophesy as Sandnes himself notes. The discussion in the next view adds more insights on the issue that concerns 1 Cor. 14:34–35.

### **3.3.6 Silencing women from evaluating prophecies**

The last view maintains that Paul restricts women from heated discussion that arose as a result of the evaluation of prophecies. The second view considers that Paul was silencing

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 256.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 261.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 256.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 254.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 257.

women in the heated discussion that arose as a result of weighing and judging prophecy.<sup>182</sup> In this view, the argument raised is that, both men and women were actively involved in the discussion. When some women contradicted their husbands' arguments, the situation that risked their relation and also making the service more like a battle-ground instead of being a place where order could be seen. Thiselton brings the idea of "the prophet is not honoured in his homeland."<sup>183</sup> That is to say, wives did not respect their husbands just as the prophet is not respected by his close people. Faced by this situation, Paul urges order to be observed.<sup>184</sup> In his argument, Thiselton observes two kinds of "order". First, it is that which concerned the worship and therefore, to maintain it, disruptive women were required to keep silence. Another kind of order he brings in is the ordered character of creation and human life. Here, Thiselton refers to Gen. 3:16 which has something to do with subordination.<sup>185</sup> This is to say, Paul was reminding the church at Corinth about the order and the relation that God has put between man and woman. Even if the services were held in homes where women were considered to have authority, women were to keep silence because the church is a public thing. The issue in question here is not that women are not commanded to submit to their husbands, but to the principle of order set in the Scripture.<sup>186</sup>

The view that women are asked to keep silence during evaluation of prophecies seems to be the one which Paul meant. Paul has just been arguing that the church in Corinth should carefully weigh the prophecies. Women, of course, may participate in prophesying as it was established in chapter 11:2–16. But Paul's point here, is that women may not participate in the oral weighing of such prophecies. That is not allowed in any of the churches. Paul adds that, it is the νόμος that does not allow them. Some scholars argue that Paul's appeal to the νόμος is unlikely as he himself had authority.<sup>187</sup> But what appears to support Paul's appeal to the law or higher authority is seen twice in the same chapter. We see him referring to the law in 14:21 and also in 14:37. And according to some scholars, appealing to authority in order to convince the listeners was a common thing in rhetoric during Paul.<sup>188</sup>

Several final observations on this last view may prove helpful. First, this interpretation fits the flow of chapter 14. Although the focus in the second part of the chapter is still on tongues and prophecy, it is still more closely related to the order the church must

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<sup>182</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1153.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 1159.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, 1153.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 1153.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 1155.

<sup>187</sup> Mary Evans, *Woman in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 95.

<sup>188</sup> Mgaya, *Spiritual Gifts*, 135.

maintain in the enjoyment of those spiritual gifts. Paul wanted that while the fellowship is built, order has to be maintained. In order to bring that order in the church, Paul had to restrict women from asking questions. Thus, verses 33b-36 are in line with immediately preceding verses, because even the vocabulary he uses, support that the passages follow each other.<sup>189</sup> Likewise, the verses follow the general topic of 1 Corinthians 11:2–14:40.

Second, this interpretation makes sense not only of the flow but also of the structure of the passage. Chapter 14 is dominated by a discussion of the relative places of tongues and prophecy. Most of the chapter does not here concern us here. The unit beginning in verses 26 and following, clearly deals with practical guidelines for the ordering of these two gifts in the assembly. Verse 26 is fairly general. Verses 27–28 deal with practical constraints on tongues speakers. In verse 29, Paul turns to prophecy and writes, “Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.” The two parts of this verse are then separately expanded upon: the first part, “two or three prophets should speak”, is treated in verses 30–33a, where restrictions are imposed on the uttering of prophecies; the second part, “and the others should weigh carefully what is said”, is treated in verses 33b–36, where again, limitations are imposed on the evaluation of prophecies.<sup>190</sup>

Third, there is an objection that questions Paul’s consistence in his arguments to permit women to prophesy and then to forbid them to weigh prophecies. In common church life, especially in Corinth, giving prophecy was recognized to be Spirit-inspired utterance. One with inspired utterance was permitted to speak, and that is what Paul does in 1 Cor. 11:5. He guides women to pray and prophesy in a proper order. That was not a problem to Paul. However, there was no guarantee of divine authority in every detail of the prophetic utterances (1 Cor. 12:3), whether given by men or women. Therefore, prophetic utterances required evaluation (1 Cor. 14:29).<sup>191</sup> The evaluation process involved heated arguments making women either challenge their husbands or keep asking questions. In that evaluation, mainly it was the common sense that were to be used. Since women were disturbing, it was necessary to bring them to order.

In winding up the discussion, I would like to highlight out the following points: First of all, the passage says nothing about either leadership roles in the assembly or ordination for both men and women. Only a manipulated eisegesis can construe the text as speaking to

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<sup>189</sup> Sandnes, 254 points words like *σιγάω*, *λαλέω*, and *ὑποτασσώ* as indicators for the link between vv. 33b–35 and the verses before them. Thus, the idea of interpolation is indirectly denied. See Sandnes, “*Ekklēsia* at Corinth”, 254.

<sup>190</sup> Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, 250–251.

<sup>191</sup> Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 91–100

those topics.<sup>192</sup> Second, while many interpreters have used 1 Cor. 14:34–35 to back their attitude of denying women to ordination and leadership roles claiming that Paul wanted them to be silent, the passage is concerned with regulating the kind of discussion that emerged as a result of the evaluation of prophecies. Therefore, it is not about teaching or preaching, it is about evaluating the prophecies. Third, 1 Cor. 14:34–35 is situational. It is a case specific passage that deals with the situation that occurred in Corinth. But, we should not forget that, this situation message can have impact on other churches. Nevertheless, when applying it to our context, we need to remember that it had its context. The text tells all readers of any culture that the Scripture comes from God and it is he who has the authority. When using the Scriptures, we need to be in line with order that is revealed in it. The Corinthians got their response, and their problem was corrected. It is our duty today to study and understand it.

### **3.4 Placing the theme of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 in the entire Bible**

At the outset of this thesis, the problem posed was that women are not allowed to speak in the church because the Scripture denies them from doing so. By means of studying the words Paul used in the passage that many interpreters cite when claiming that the Scripture does not allow them to serve as pastors or in whatever leadership position, it has been found that the passage has its own context. It restricted women from the discussion that involved the evaluation of tongues. Although the passage does not deal with anything that is related with office or any kind of leadership, it does not deny them to serve in those positions. Thus, women can speak in the church just as men speak. They can preach and teach as the Spirit of God requires of them. This section is set to find out how this message relates with the portrayal of women in the Bible outside 1 Cor. 14:34–35. I will begin by relating it to what is said of women in the rest of 1 Corinthians, then in the Pauline corpus, the New Testament and finally the Old Testament.

#### **3.4.1 First Corinthians**

In the very beginning of the rhetorical unit in which this passage belongs, namely 1 Cor. 11:2–14:40, Paul talks about women who pray and prophesy (11:5). In those verses, Paul does not have any objection to the practice that they were involved in praying and prophesying. He understood that both men and women can be bestowed with the Spirit and therefore they can speak as the Spirit manifests. However, knowing that Christianity was at its early stage and that there was no guidance given when he was with them physically, Paul

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<sup>192</sup> This is against those who lean on 1 Cor. 14:34–35 as one of the texts to deny women from being leaders in the church.

gives them the required guidance how they could do it. If Paul had been opposed to women speaking in the assembly, this stage of the argumentation would have been right place to say it, because already they would already had shown something he did not accept. It would have been proper for him not to tell them how to do it, but to deny them completely to pray or prophesy. But instead of denying them, we find him instructing them how they were to dress. Being guided by the situation, Paul was inclined to respond to each case teaching them how they should appear and behave in Christian gatherings. In the first place, they had raised the issue of covering heads, and Paul sticks to it. In the second place, the issue was about the discussion that concerned prophecies, and Paul deals with it separately. We see him correcting their practice, but as in other places where he corrects them,<sup>193</sup> he does it carefully by means of persuasion. Having told women to keep silence, he brings in rhetoric questions that would silence them. With those questions, we see that the two places within the rhetoric unit he speaks of women are not in contradiction. In the first place, he instructs them how to dress, and in the second place he guides them how to maintain order. Being in the church and being led by the Spirit was not meant to allow them to destroy the order, but on the contrary, the Spirit has always been an agent of order.<sup>194</sup> Paul is consistent in his view.

### **3.4.2 The Pauline corpus**

Paul's consistency in his teaching is not restricted to 1 Corinthians only, but is also in all the seven undisputed epistles. For example, in Galatians 3:27–28 Paul speaks of both women and men being made equal in and through Christ. Such an understanding would have not been different towards the women at Corinth. In the contrary, we see his view on them being the same. Whereas in 1 Corinthians he sees that women also can prophesy just as men do, in Galatians he considers both men and women as one in Christ, which can also mean equal or people of the same status.<sup>195</sup> The oneness or equality which is seen in Galatians is not something which one merits. It is worked out by Christ. It is a favour that one gets freely. This is why Paul writes, “you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). It is the equality that one is given when one is in Christ. Here we should note that, the Epistle to the Galatians was written as an anti-thesis to what legalistic Judaizers had taught among the believers of Galatia, aimed at correcting it. They wanted to infuse Jewish laws in Galatian congregations

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<sup>193</sup> Read for example 1 Cor. 12:31. He corrects their view of gifts, but instead of denying them that there are no such greater gifts, he does it in a technical way which has resulted different and opposing interpretations. For details see Mgaya, *Spiritual Gifts*, 126–129.

<sup>194</sup> Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1154.

<sup>195</sup> Thayer, *Greek–English Lexicon*, 184–187.

and make the Galatian believers become followers of them. We see Paul vigorously rejecting their view, insisting that they were justified by what Christ worked for them, not by the works of the law. The grace that was on men was also on women giving them the status that places both men and women in the same level as it was with Jews and Gentiles. This however does not mean that Paul did not see the difference between males and females. He saw it very well, but in Galatians it was not his focus to point to those differences as he does in 1 Cor. 14:34–35. In applying the truth that Paul had told to the Galatians, to the Corinthians we see him telling in 1 Cor 12:13 that they are baptized by the one Spirit and have drunk the same Spirit whether males or females. With this truth, we see Paul holding them as equals. If women are in the position to assume leadership, let them do. Paul had no objection to that. However, for whatever was to be done, Paul wanted that it is done in order, because even the best thing what is one's rightful to do, when done without following order, it is not entertained.

In other genuine letters, we read about Paul's attitude towards the role of women in the church and what they can do. In order not to repeat what was discussed in section 2.3, I mention them by passing only. He commended women for ministry, see especially the case of Phoebe who is mentioned by two titles as *διάκονος* and *προστάτις* (Rom. 16:1). Both titles characterize a person with influence over others and Paul knew it that is why he mentions them. Paul appreciated women's ministry and considered them reliable, that is why he could even work on the information they provided him (1 Cor. 1:11). Junia was considered as an apostle (Rom. 16:7). Some of the women earned the status of being his co-workers (Rom. 16:3). You cannot make a person your co-worker if you do not value them. You have to value that person before accepting that one co-work with you, because in co-working, there will come a time when your co-worker has to stand with you, to replace or represent you and sometimes defend you when the situation requires. Paul says openly that, Prisca along with her husband was ready to lose her life for him (Rom. 16:4). By no means do we see Paul despising the status and role of women. They had just the same place in his theology as men had. Paul sees that women are worthy to receive the grace of God by means of spiritual gifts and therefore can serve in whatever role and position in the church. This is good news for women from the Pauline corpus which in some parts and groups of the world it has been and still is being abused.

Paul understood Jesus right on his proclamation that he came to set the captives free (Luk 4:19). Captives are not only those who are under the devil's oppression or sicknesses. There are others who are under ideological captivity which is a human construct. Many world

cultures suppress and oppress some groups, especially women and children. Sadly, some of the forms of oppressions are administered in the name of the Scripture. Interpreting 1 Cor. 14:34–35 as a prohibition against women’s teaching and being ordination is to bring women to captivity from which Christ set them free long time ago and Paul announced it as he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians.

In the Deuteron-Pauline letters we meet one challenging passage that restricts women from teaching or assuming any authority. This passage is found in 1 Tim. 2:8–15.

(8) I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling; (9) also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire (10) but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. (11) Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. (13) For Adam was formed first, then Eve; (14) and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. (15) Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

When the text quoted above is read out of its context appears to contradict many things that concern Paul and his theology. First, it contradicts Paul’s attitude and teaching on women as seen in his genuine letters. In the genuine letters, Paul encourages women to speak as the Spirit manifests, but in a proper way (1 Cor. 11:5). Here we see a drastic change, from encouraging to denying women to the same tasks. Second, the passage goes against Paul’s teaching on equality. Whereas in Galatians Paul writes that women and men are one in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:27–28), here the author looks down on women and declares that they are not allowed to teach and preach. Third, if in 1 Cor. 12:28–29 Paul writes that God has appointed some to teachers, it is obviously that he held teaching activity as one way of using spiritual gifts. How can he then tell one not to use spiritual gifts while in 1 Cor. 14:26 he encourages them to use?

Although it is not the concern of this thesis to study 1 Timothy, but in order to understand the passage cited above, I see the urgency of writing, though briefly, about the background of 1 Timothy. Like it was said of 1 Corinthians, there is no epistle that was written without a specific background. In order to interpret rightly its message one has to consider its setting. If interpreted without considering its background or setting, it will be doing harm to the text concerned. This is why, though studying 1 Cor. 14:34–35, for the sake of comparison, I must write shortly on the background of 1 Timothy.

One of the goals that the author of 1 Timothy had in writing his epistle was to remind Timothy “how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church

of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15). The author had this concern because the church at Ephesus, the town where Timothy was teaching, was beset by false teaching (1 Tim. 1:3). Some people from within the church had deviated from the true teaching of the gospel, and became quarrelsome and argumentative, and were spreading doctrines that were erroneous.

It is not so clear about the specifics of this false teaching,<sup>196</sup> presumably because the author knew that Timothy was well acquainted with the problem. On our case now, we cannot be at all sure about the precise nature of this false teaching and, particularly, about its impact on the women in the church.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, there were false teachings and to some extent they influenced the author to write in the way he did.

The false teachers sowed dissension and were preoccupied with trivialities (1 Tim. 1:4–6; 6:4–5; 2 Tim. 2:14, 16–17, 23–24). The false teachers stressed asceticism as a means of spirituality. They taught abstinence from certain foods, from marriage, and probably sex generally (1 Tim. 4:1–3). In keeping with these ascetic tendencies, the false teachers may also have stressed physical training as a means of spirituality (1 Tim. 4:8). Furthermore, these false teachers persuaded many women to follow them in their doctrines (1 Tim. 5:15; 2 Tim. 3:6–7). Lastly, the false teachers appear to have encouraged women to discard traditional female roles in favour of a more egalitarian approach to the role relationships of men and women. As a result, women did not see role distinctions between men and women because they now relied on the false teaching.<sup>198</sup> And that way, women began bringing these to their husbands and were teaching them. What other measures the author of 1 Timothy would have taken apart from what he took as we read in 1 Tim. 2:8–15? Therefore, what the author does in this was to passage remind Timothy that women must be told the importance of the created order and the ongoing significance of those role distinctions between men and women that he saw rooted in creation.

When we look carefully at this prohibition, especially in connection with the false teaching that existed, it appears that the author of 1 Timothy prohibits the wives who were teaching their husbands. This way, the prohibition is a case-specific. I see that it concerns married women teaching their husbands, and probably teaching those stuffs which these women had received from false teachers. The author was concerned about the church and its message. As a person of authority, the author had to eradicate false teaching by showing that

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<sup>196</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 32–38.

<sup>197</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Black, 1963), 10–18.

<sup>198</sup> David M. Scholer, “Timothy 2:9–15 and the place of Women in the Church’s Ministry,” *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 198.



he had authority over them, and not the false teachers. This is why we see him prohibiting wives to teach and exercise authority over husbands.

Considering 1 Tim. 2:8–15 as dealing with a specific situation just like 1 Cor. 14:34–35 does, I do not see it as contradicting the view that Paul had on women. The fact 1 Tim. 2:8–15 restricts women to teach or assume authority, we need to explain well. The author does not tell those women not to teach at all. The prohibition is only on teaching husbands and assuming authority over them. The text does not mention church, which means, the teaching might have been in their homes whether they thought they had authority. The fact that the author tells them to learn well in submissive can be looked positively, especially if we consider the purpose of learning as understood in those days. It is said that, in the ancient time, the purpose of learning was to prepare one to teach.<sup>199</sup> Meaning, if those women learned well and that they had something to true to be taught, I do not see the author would prohibit them. Thus, even the Deuteron-Pauline letters where many scholars have taken this verse as constituting a general prohibition to women, I view it slightly different. We cannot use it as a general rule because the author was responding to a specific case. Having said this, now I turn to seeing how the theme relates to how women are viewed in the gospels.

### **3.4.3 The Gospels**

The position of women in the gospels is a positive one. We read about the angel talking to Mary about the conception of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. God saw the value and dignity of a woman and therefore gave her that responsibility. God Almighty would have chosen any means to make the Messiah come to earth, but he chose that he comes through birth and a woman was involved. Paul himself acknowledges it (Gal. 4:4). When Mary was inspired, she sang a hymn of praise just as Zechariah did. Luke records Mary's hymn (Luk. 1:46–55) just as he recorded Zechariah's hymn (Luk. 1:68–79). Luke understood both Zechariah and Mary were inspired by the Spirit and that is why he records their hymns.

Another occasion concerns the woman whom Luke records about when Jesus was brought to the temple for dedication. In that event, an elderly prophetess named Anna “gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38). Unfortunately, we do not know what she said or how she spread the news. But that she was a prophetess and that she spoke words in the temple is clearly

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<sup>199</sup> Aida Besanon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women called to Ministry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 75–79.

stated. The story is briefly told right after that of Simeon's, indicating that both men and women were active. Men and women heard Anna speak just as they heard Simeon speaking. We do not read that Anna was silenced. This is to say, Anna was respected, though she was a woman.

Other incidents that concern women are in the time when Jesus had begun his ministry and therefore the gospels show how they interacted with Jesus. Although Jesus did not choose women to be among the twelve disciples, his interaction with them helps us to determine the attitude he had towards them. Jesus valued women's fellowship, prayers, service, financial support, testimony and witness. He honoured them, taught them, and ministered to them in thoughtful ways. Jesus did not distinguish between male and female. He considered both of them as his genuine audience. Jesus rendered dignity to women in his ministry in four ways: first, by employing women as illustrations in his teaching (Matt. 12:42; 13:33; 24:41; 25:1–13; Luke 4:26; 15:8–10; 18:1–8; 21:1–4), second, by teaching women theological truths (Luke 10:38–42), third, by commending the faith demonstrated by women (Matt. 15:28; 26:10, 13), and fourth, by having women participate in his life and ministry (Luke 8:1–3). Jesus' ministry gave a renewed respect to the place of women in His society. His regard for women was much different from that of His contemporaries. Evans terms Jesus' approach to women as "revolutionary" for His era.<sup>200</sup> For Jesus, women have an intrinsic value equal to that of men. Jesus said, "... at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female'" (Matt. 19:4; cf. Gen. 1:27). Women are created in the image of God just as men are. Like men, they have self-awareness, personal freedom, a measure of self-determination, and personal responsibility for their actions. Scanzoni and Hardesty point out that "Jesus came to earth not primarily as a male but as a person. He treated women not primarily as females but as human beings."<sup>201</sup> Jesus recognized women as fellow human beings. This is why he regularly addressed women directly while in public. This was unusual for a man to do (John 4:27). The disciples were amazed to see Jesus talking with the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar (John 4:7–26). But Jesus saw something special in her and actually, as a result of that conversation, the woman became one of the earliest missionaries to tell people about Jesus, and Jesus let her do. He did not deny her.

There were also women who seem to have been active in Jesus' ministry. Luke 8:2–3 recounts a group of women who ministered to Jesus and His disciples financially. They may

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<sup>200</sup> Mary J. Evans, *Women in the Bible: An Overview of All the Crucial Passages on Women's Roles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 45.

<sup>201</sup> Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974), 56.

have served Jesus in other general ways as well, since the term is used of these women twice elsewhere without any reference to money (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:41). Their service was important and some of their names are recorded: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome. There were also many others (Luk. 8:3). We are not told how often these women travelled with Christ and the apostles. As we can read in the gospels, women were more active while Jesus was in the Galilee region near their homes, although Matt. 27:56 mentions their travel with Christ all the way to Jerusalem. Apparently, when Jesus travelled in Judea, this is told more in John, and Samaria, he may sometimes have had the apostles make other arrangements for food and other provisions (Luk. 9:52).

All four gospel writers bestow a great honour on the women who lovingly and with servant hearts came early to the tomb of Jesus (Matt. 28:1–11; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:2–9; John 20:1–2). Having known that Jesus had risen, they faithfully bore witness of his resurrection to his disciples and, no doubt, to countless others in the months and years that followed. Here I ask myself, why were the women chosen as witnesses of the resurrection? Was it not God bestowing a special honour on these women? Was it not God trying to indicate larger roles for women in his new community of believers? What I see here is that the women not only were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, but also stand perpetually as examples for all believers. The women led the way in proclaiming the gospel that Christ died for our sins, was buried, but rose again for our justification the third day. As a conclusion on the position of women in the ministry according to the whole New Testament, I find James Borland writing convincingly, "the duty and high privilege of witnessing for Christ is open to every believer, without distinction as to gender."<sup>202</sup>

#### **3.4.4 The Old Testament**

Concerning the position of women in the Old Testament, some details were already given in chapter 2.2. Although the Old Testament setting was in the male dominated society, we still find several women who served as public leaders both in religion and in politics. Miriam was a prophetess. We do not read more about her role, but after the Israelites had crossed Red Sea she sung a hymn and the public responded (Ex. 15). Her role was recognized by both male and female. If men were to say, 'women are not allowed to speak,' she would have been silenced. If the author of Exodus would have maintained that women should not speak, he

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<sup>202</sup> James A. Borland, "Women in the Life and Teachings of Jesus," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Crossway, 1991), 115.

would have not included Miriam's song. But it was included because God had a purpose with it. Today we use it as one place to help us understand that women can speak in our assemblies when God inspires them. But we see that both the public that was during Miriam's singing and the author giving respect to her. Although the customs considered women should be silent, when it was God who inspired the woman, just as he inspired men, women were left to speak.

In Deborah's case things become even more clear that God can use women just as he uses men in accomplishing his will. The book of Judges tells about Israelites' early life in the Promised Land. The leaders that ruled them were chosen and empowered by God himself. Most of them were men and they were only judges, no other title attached to them. But when it comes to Deborah we find that she is called a judge and prophetess, two titles in one. She could foresee events that would happen later, she could warn and exhort people (Judg. 4:9–21). Both men and women listened. In addition, in Deborah's time, it was the women who got more respect than men (Judg. 4:9), because apart from leading the people, God put the enemy's life under the women as well (Judg. 4:21). Men saw it was right and they acknowledged it.

We have other women who are said to be prophets. There is Huldah and Isaiah's wife. Huldah's standing and reputation are attested to in that she was consulted, rather than Jeremiah, when the lost book of the law was found, and that her word was accepted by all as a divinely revealed one. When Hilkiyah the priest found the book in the Temple, Josiah sent immediately for Huldah and, attesting to the genuineness of the scroll. She prophesied national ruin because of disobedience to the commands of God. Her prophetic message and the public reading of the law brought about a revival resulting in the reforms carried out by Josiah. With a renewed spiritual life king and people vowed to follow the God of their fathers more faithfully. If women were not allowed to speak, and given that there were both a prophet and a prophetess, why would Josiah consult Huldah? This shows that she had a reputation just as Jeremiah had. And upon being consulted, she proved that she had the message from God.

The fact that other Scripture passages on the leadership of women are ignored causes the misinterpretation of other passages to a point that some men become instruments of oppression within the body of Christ. That Adam was formed before Eve cannot be disputed, but that does not make Eve or any other women a lesser person, when compared with Adam or men in general. The correct interpretation of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 was that Paul was declaring order in the church, because of the misconduct portrayed by some women. However, this

should not only apply to women, but to all people who disrupt proper church order regardless of gender or race.

All biblical interpretations have two dimensions. The first is concerned with discovering the meaning of a statement, whereas the second takes account of changes in meaning, which contemporary readers may attach to the same words. The principle of determining the meaning of a word is to study the context as well as the usage of the meaning when applying it to own context. When the context is ignored, often the message suffers. From what has been discussed above, it appears that, many interpreters have been ignoring the contexts of both 1 Cor. 14:34–35 and 1 Tim. 2:8–15. With that negligence, the passages have been given meanings that contradict the view that other passages of the Scripture have concerning the ministry of women in the church.

This section concludes with an affirmation that the message of 1 Cor. 14:34–35 is in line with the teaching of the Bible about women’s dignity and role in the church and in the community. We have seen Paul commending them for and partnering with them in the ministry. Moreover, we have read about women being taught by Jesus, being inspired by the Spirit to prophesy and lead, and their message, upon being applied brought about great changes.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The task in this chapter was to analyse 1 Cor. 14:34–35 in order to get the message contained therein. Four processes were involved: examining the literary context, studying the words used, extracting the message and finally seeing how that message fits in the entire biblical teaching.

In the literary context, it was found out that the passage belongs into a rhetorical unit that is about worship. Being in worship in whatever setting the Spirit can manifest to people inspiring them to speak. In that pericope, Paul was giving guidance how they could respond to the manifestation of the Spirit. Paul’s response hasn’t been clear to many interpreters, especially concerning 1 Cor. 14:34–35. Some interpreters understand Paul as denying women to teach or preach in the church. Furthermore, there are others who go further by saying that the passage denies women from being ordained as pastors or assuming any leadership in the church. The word study that was done in 3.2 and the message discussed in 3.3 indicated that the text did not restrict women to teach or preach, but it limited them in the discussion that concerned the evaluation of prophecies. That was done in order to maintain the order.

When that message was seen how it fits in the biblical teaching on women teaching or speaking the church, it was found that from the Pauline corpus through the entire New Testament back to the Old Testament, women were respected, inspired to speak and some of them served as prophetesses and queens. In Tim 2:8–15 the author explicitly ordered women not to teach, preach or assume authority over men. But like the case of 1 Cor. 14:34–35, the author of 1 Tim. 2:8–15 was dealing with a specific case and as it has been argued above, the matter was pastoral. That is why he did not restrict them from teaching in the church, rather not to teach their husbands. Thus, there were some kind of teachings which the author of 1 Timothy commanded those women to stop from teaching. With this discussion, I do not find any contradiction in the entire Bible concern the ministry of women. Contexts and backgrounds of any passage of the Bible are very important in helping the interpreters to get the message intended before they can apply it to their own situation.

Unlike in Jewish societies where women's status was low and in the Greco-Roman culture where women were considered as second-class citizens, in Christianity both women and men are one in Christ. They deserve respect and freedom to speak, however, they have to observe order. These are the findings of this chapter.

## **4 CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this thesis has been to interpret 1 Cor 14:34–35 in order to find out what might have been Paul’s meaning by writing that “women should keep silence in the churches.” Understanding that this is a prohibition, this thesis wanted to find out whether that prohibition is a general rule to be applied by the churches all over the world or whether it was situational and specific referring to a particular problem in the Corinthian church at the time when Paul wrote First Corinthians. Whether general or specific, how can we read and interpret these prohibitions in our churches today? Having this concern, the findings of this thesis are meant to help those churches which do not yet allow women to teach, preach or receive ordination. In the next two sections I present some conclusions and recommendations.

### **4.1 Conclusions**

Many of the insights and conclusions have been noted in the previous chapters already, but at this stage I want to bring together the major ones.

The examination of 1 Cor 14:34–35 began looking at the context of this passage. Two contexts were studied, the social and the literary context.

In the social context, addressed in Chapter Two, the aim was to get oriented to the world of 1 Corinthians because the social world always has influence on the way one thinks and writes. Thus, the position of women in the Greco-Roman world was studied, and it was found that, although some women were restricted to the role of house wives, there were other women whose roles were in the public. Some of them were priestesses whereas others were business people like Lydia. Thus, the position of the women in the Greco-Roman world during the time of Paul was not so much low as other writers present. Research referred to in Chapter Two of this thesis has helped me understand this.

The literary context was studied in Chapter Three. It was noted that scholars are divided on whether the verses are by Paul or not. This situation made everything that concerns this passage appear as complex, because if they are not by Paul, then we are dealing with something that never existed. If they are written by Paul, how comes that in some manuscripts they appear after vv. 40 and in others they are in the position they are now? After discussing and comparing different arguments, the conclusion reached was that the verses are by Paul and have to be interpreted in their very context because the vocabulary and theme fit their context. Paul had begun the topic of worship in chapter 11 and ended it in

chapter 14. The section in which the verses appear (14:26–40) is about order in the church, and it appears that they are in their right context.

Having confirmed their legitimacy, the study continued by studying the words that Paul used. The aim here was that, words appear in isolation as well as in passages. When they are in isolation they have their meaning which might change as they combine with others to bring about the meaning which the author wants to convey. It is the context that determines their proper meaning. This thesis examined only the lexical words because the grammatical words only help the lexical ones to bring the message in the way one wants. The meaning of the words gained in that study was helpful in determining the message of the passage.

Concerning the message of the verses, it was observed that different scholars have different opinions on what might have been Paul's meaning. Six different views were identified. First, there was a view that the verses are a Corinthian slogan; second, Paul was silencing chatting women; third, it was meant to silence women who were asking questions during the service; fourth, Paul was prohibiting women from speaking in tongues, prophesying, teaching and preaching; fifth, Paul was telling women to make a difference between home and church and therefore they should keep silence in the church; sixth, Paul was restricting women from heated discussion that concerned the evaluation of prophecies. Through discussing and comparing it with what it is taught elsewhere in the Bible concerning the role and position of women in the church, this thesis sided with the view that maintains that Paul was silencing women from heated discussion that concerned the evaluation of the prophecies. What is compelling in this view is that, during evaluation of the prophecies, members could challenge the speaker and if it was the wife challenging the husband that was risking their marriage. But also, women would speak with emotion and that way the order in the church was altered. To bring order, Paul had to remind women to be silent. But this had nothing to do with their use of spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues, giving prophecies, teaching or preaching.

The view that women can prophesy, preach and teach was recognized as compatible with Paul's view on women as known from the Acts of the Apostles and from other epistles where he values women ministries and commends them. He even partnered them. This was the view Jesus had on women also. After his resurrection, he commissioned Mary Magdalene to announce to the disciples that he is alive and that they would see him in Galilee. This thesis has also observed that in the Old Testament, when the patriarchal system was strong, women held positions in the community. Some of them were prophets, judges, and one was a



queen. This tells us that Paul's prohibition as read in 1 Cor 14:34–35 was situational, and indeed it was dealing with a specific case that was in Corinth.

Through this study it was noted that many interpreters have misunderstood Paul in the matter he appealed to the law. While many studies consider that women are required to keep silence in the church because the law demands so, in this thesis it was observed that Paul in 1 Cor 14:34 does not connect the law with keeping women silent. In this verse the situational silence for women is simply seen as an appropriate inference from subordination and not as a general principle or rule. With this view, the thesis concludes that 1 Cor. 14:34–35 does not address anything that concerns leadership in the church, though people lean on it as if it reads so. This thesis ends by giving a caution to readers that Paul's epistles are difficult to understand. If interpreters are not aware of this feature or begin interpreting while having their own prejudice, they might end up inferring a message which Paul never intended to convey. This seems to be the case with these verses that have been the focus of this thesis. We are confused about their message and it seems that there is no hope of coming into a consensus about it. Nevertheless, we should continue studying it.

#### **4.2 The application of the message of 1 Cor 14:34–35**

Paul's message in 1 Cor 14:34–35 has been extracted. Women were not completely denied to speak in the church, except during the evaluation of prophecies. This means that they could teach, preach, pray and prophesy. Such a view is not only present in the passage in concern, it is the teaching of the entire Bible on the position, status and ministry of women in the church. How can the church today apply this message? This is the concern of this section.

In the section in which I stated the motivation of this study I explained that there are many communities which do not allow women ordination for the reason that the Scripture does not allow. But behind that attitude there is a cultural background. In those communities, historically, women's status has not been as that of men. Only men have been enjoying education and therefore leadership positions, because they were the only ones who were educated. Women were understood to be born for marriage through which parents could earn money as husbands paid dowry. When married, they were understood as gardens of husbands and therefore their roles were to bear children and take care of the home. They were being raised to be submissive to their husbands even when injustice was done against them, because if they opposed their husbands, they would be beaten or brought back to their parents. That would bring shame to the parents, and sometimes parents would be required to pay back the dowry received.

With the arrival of the Christianity, girls were sent to schools and were expected to rise from doing only domestic works to doing office works even assuming some leadership positions. In this way some of the women were educated to be evangelists, teachers and nurses. When the position they held was not that which men would have occupied, there was no problem. But when women began doing what men would be doing, arguments arose where men would say, after all 'it is not our culture that women should be doing what you are doing.' The situation at hand brought them back and began questioning how women have come to do what they are doing. Men used and use the Scripture to subdue women and strip off their rights. They argue that Paul denied women from speaking in the church. But, as we have seen, the Corinthian prohibition was situational. It was dealing with a specific case that involved evaluating prophecies, something which hardly happens in our time.

Paul teaches that men and women are fundamentally equal in the eyes of God. Men and women are sinners and both are saved by grace (Rom. 3:23, 24). Both men and women receive the same standing before God, including the promise of eternal life through faith in Christ. Moreover, both men and women are equally indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who transforms both into the same image of Christ (Col. 3:10, 11). This same Spirit endows on both men and women spiritual gifts which are significant for ministry in the church (Rom. 16:1-16; 1 Cor. 12:13ff.). How can a human being deny them from using such gifts the Spirit has endowed? If they are to be silent, why does the Spirit bestow them with spiritual gifts? Why does he inspire them? What I see happening by denying women to teach or preach is like fighting against God and indirectly blaming him for inspiring women. Those who reject women from being ordained so that they can teach and preach, have to tell the one who bestows spiritual gifts in them to stop doing that. Otherwise, I see that the Scripture authorizes women to teach and preach like men are doing.

This is not just abstract theology. The truth is that we see in those churches that have recognized women as having equal status as men and allowed them to teach, a lot of blessing, exactly because they let women preach and hold different positions given that the Holy Spirit installs them to it. They experience tremendous blessings from women services just as from men.<sup>203</sup> We observed this already in the early church on the cases of Prisca, Chloe, Phoebe and other women. Paul recognized their giftedness, and so he let them work according to how God wanted to use them. Paul shows that the Spirit comes on both men and women just as he comes on both Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor 12:13). Thus, those who deny that women should

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<sup>203</sup> Craig Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women Ministry in the Letters of Paul*, (Grand Rapids: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 2.

teach because the law requires them not to, need to be specific about their motive. We should not live by our culture and then claim that it is the Scripture that tells so. We have to be outspoken and frank: If it is the culture, then let it be clear that it is the culture. There is no person who is free from culture. Jesus also was born under the Jewish culture, and was at some points subject to culture. But, there came moments when cultural ties had to be broken. This is why he taught both men and women, and at some points he let them go to bear witness about him (John 4). Also, women were the first to be given the news about the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus counted that they could carry such news, why should we today deny them from preaching or teaching?

A dialogue on what is thought to be the rationale for denying women to teach and preach in the church should be an ongoing task until women are given their due rights on this matter. In our communities, even in those churches which maintain that Paul denied women from preaching or teaching, women sing in choir, lead prayers, teach Sunday school and preach in small happenings. If indeed Paul had denied women from teaching and preaching in the church, should we not then silence them in all respects? But we have selected some occasions and allow them to teach or preach, but in other places we deny them. This means, partly we understand that the prohibition was situational, but then, due to cultural set up, we are not ready to allow women to assume what is their due. To be specific, this is what I see happening in the ELCT–Mbulu Diocese. Men are still of the view that women must not be allowed to take leadership roles in the church and community. Their idea is that women misuse their position in the church as Hinga writes, “Some women have identified the church as one of the key factors in promoting violence against women. The biblical teaching asks women to be submissive to their husbands. This biblical teaching has been misused to the disadvantage of women.”<sup>204</sup> Men use the Scripture to silence women, even in places where they should not be silent.

It is correct to apply the Scripture in our present life, but it is not correct to ignore the situation and the circumstances of the original readers before we can apply the passages into our life. If the situation of the Corinthian church in the time of Paul was different from ours, it means we must be careful not to pretend as if we are in the same situation as in Corinth. The fact is that if Paul, because of the situation, were to forbid women to teach, it does not mean that he would forbid them in every situation, but only in that specific situation. In actual sense, we do not have it as a biblical rule that women must not teach, because if that is

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<sup>204</sup> Teresia Hinga, *Violence against women: A challenge to the church*, (Acton Publishers: Nairobi, 2000), 124.

the case, the Bible will be contradicting itself when we read about women like Huldah (2 Kings 22:14) or Deborah (Judg. 4–5), whose duties were to proclaim the message of God in front of all people, including men. Modern societies need to understand that Scripture was given in a particular context. Only when we have examined the context well, we can be in the position to apply it into our situations. The fact that women are denied to teach in 1 Tim. 2:11–12 cannot be used as a principle for all women in the world. The reason the text forbade them was that men used divine services to further their own quarrels and that women wished to make themselves heard in an offensive fashion. Today it will be also correct to forbid them if they continue with this forceful tendency, but not for the wrong reasons. But we do not see women being unruly. They are well behaved.

The church must be the first institution to condemn the abuse and subordination of women, because Christ has given all people equal status regardless of their gender, culture and race. No one is to be subject of the other. The church must promote equal rights and opportunities for all regardless of their gender. In 1 Corinthians, Paul advocates equality in Christ for the believers. There is equality between Jews and Gentiles, free and slaves, and likewise men and females (1 Cor. 12:13). If that has been his view throughout the epistle, it would be surprising that in 1 Cor 14:34–35 he would have changed his mind and deny women from teaching and preaching in the church. Thus, leaning on this passage to authorize our cultural dictum is doing violence to the text in two ways. First, the passage is stripped off its message. Second, the passage is given the meaning, which does not fit to its context as well as to the biblical teaching on the ministry of women. The biblical teaching is that God inspires and calls women to teach the Scripture.<sup>205</sup> This is the message of Paul that we need to apply in our churches, not contradicted by 1 Cor. 14:34–35 if these verses are read properly in their context as a situational restriction on women not to be involved in heated discussion concerning the evaluation of prophecies.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

At the outset of this thesis, it was stated that in patriarchal societies women are deprived of their benefits and denied many rights, be it in secular or religious institutions. Since the church carries a message that is good news for the human kind of all time, this same church must reform its patriarchal structures to include women's right to full participation in all leadership roles. The church as bearer of a redeemed humanity ought to represent especially

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<sup>205</sup> Craig Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women Ministry in the Letters of Paul*, (Grand Rapids: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 12.

this equality of men and women in its institutional life.<sup>206</sup> In believing that this can be possible, I hereby recommend the following:

First, research should continue being done. The church in general should continue scrutinizing the Scripture, paying more attention to controversial passages, by using both old and new approaches. The Scripture, as a document written in the ancient time, has continued to be interpreted. Always interpretations are influenced by the time in which the interpretation is done. For example, Martin Luther's attitude to the epistle of James was somewhat negative calling it a straw epistle as he saw its emphasis on works. But this was partly influenced by the environment in which he lived. What Luther observed to be the message of James is not what can be understood now. By this analogy, I want to emphasize that the meaning given to 1 Cor 14:34–35 may not be the one which Paul meant. Since the text is controversial, we should continue examining it by allowing different methods to collaborate. It might be that what I am convinced with now, will be modified or even changed when new research employing a different approach is done. Therefore, my call to the church is that in order to update herself, she should continue doing research. It is through ongoing research that new insights are gained. Upon receiving new insights, the church should be ready to update her stand. However, order has to be observed.

Second, education on the position and role of women in the church is needed. Because of the oppression women have been experiencing, as Desmond Tutu writes, some “women are side-lined for something they can do nothing about.”<sup>207</sup> Men have side-lined them by depriving them of their rights. The only remedy to the confusion and pain that is caused by patriarchy, to both the oppressed and the oppressor, is an intensive positive education, for education is power, and power liberates. Education that will be part of therapy should, for now, start amongst women in order to empower them by means of shepherds who believe in their leadership skills. This can take place through, for example, inviting motivational speakers to speak on topics like self-esteem, women and leadership, transformation, to name but a few. We notice that the churches are divided on the issue of female leadership. Great wisdom is needed in order to harmonise institutions that do not speak one language of fostering equality even in the church. Sometimes, the church can learn from secular sectors also. Many countries in this world have women as presidents or chancellors, and they are doing great jobs. If one looks at countries like Germany, Finland,

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<sup>206</sup> Rosemary R. Reuther, *Sexism and God Talk*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 104.

<sup>207</sup> Desmond Tutu, *Women, Religion and Change*, available in <http://www.theelders.org/article/women-religion-and-change>, accessed on 4.5.2017.

India and Liberia, will find that women are in the leading positions and things are going well. This is to say, when women are given the opportunity to lead, they can lead, sometimes even better than some of the men. Therefore, the church should continue educating her members to understand the truth that women are capable if they are given the opportunity to lead, and men should accept this truth. For example, during my conversation with the leadership of the ELCT–Mbulu Diocese I realized that the reasons for not ordaining women is not grounded on Scripture, but on traditional culture. Nicolous Nsanganzelu, the Bishop of the ELCT – Mbulu Diocese, asserted, “personally, I think it is okay to ordain women. If women are able to lead, they should be given that opportunity to lead, but the only problem in our context is culture.”<sup>208</sup> The assistant to the Bishop, Rev. John Nade, had similar point of view as he said, “I would be happy seeing women theologians been ordained and work as pastors in our diocese. But first, we have to do something with our cultural attitude towards women.”<sup>209</sup> Magdalena Mathayo, a female theologian, expressed her view on women participation in the church and the way they are accepted. In her own words, she affirmed, “we receive good cooperation from the church and truly we are respected just as men are, but the problem is that they do not allow us to be ordained. This seems to be rooted in our traditional culture, which does not allow women to lead men.”<sup>210</sup> Based on these interviews, I argue that African traditional cultures, which hinder the emancipation of women, need to be challenged. More education is needed from the grassroots to higher level of the Church as larger institutions. It is my hypothesis that if the Church decide to make an effort towards emancipation of women, and challenge the patriarchy structures that marginalize women, it will be a good vehicle in liberating women in Mbulu Diocese and beyond.

Third, pastoral caregivers must rise up and take a strong stand against all forms of abuse and discrimination in the church. They must become the voice of the voiceless. Just as much as some men are captives of patriarchy, so are some women because they were brought up from the same mould. Some women are depressed as a result of experiencing oppression from men who elevated them to leadership positions, but yet withheld their support. Other women cannot rise to high and expected leadership levels because of an inferiority complex due to their upbringing that leads them to believe that men are leaders and women are followers. Women who do not prove themselves capable of leading lessen the morale of women at large. To men it is a confirmation that women are weak and incapable of leading.

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<sup>208</sup> Nicolous, Nsanganzelu. Interview by Siael ElkanaMoshi, 06/07/2016, Mbulu Tanzania.

<sup>209</sup> John, Nade. Interview by Siael ElkanaMoshi, 06/07/2016, Mbulu Tanzania.

<sup>210</sup> Magdalena, Mathayo. Interview by Siael Elikana Moshi, 06/07/2016, Mbulu Tanzania.

Thus, individuals who are ready to encourage and uplift women to the position they should be in, are needed. The church must prepare them for that task.

Fourth, the church, especially female members should understand that time is needed. They should not expect that women will be granted the permission to teach, preach and receiving ordination at once. It will take time. As it is said, “even Rome was not built in a day.”<sup>211</sup> Meaning, it will take time until church members come to a common understanding regarding what women can do in the church. I understand that already, there have been movements world-wide by feminists, who are aggressive and sometimes go beyond the borders to demanding things which cannot be attained or changed. For example, there are women who demand that God should not be addressed by masculinity. As a remedy for this, they either attach neuter. I call this as extreme and the church should not tolerate it. But at the same time, the church should continue understanding what the women address concerning their role in the church. I have hope that time will come when this matter will be resolved. Men and women in all churches will be free to serve as they are free in some churches.

Fourth, dialogue is an imperative. The churches that do not accept women leadership must deliberately engage in the dialogue on the leadership position and roles of women with other churches which have agreed to let women take part in the church as leaders and pastors. Taking an example of Mbulu Diocese, it could deliberately engage in conversation with other dioceses within the ELCT. The Mbulu Diocese can learn a lot from other dioceses regarding the ministry of women. Sometimes it might be wise to learn not only by looking at what women are doing, but also by looking at the whole process they passed until they had come to the position they are. Thus, reading their journals, magazine, books and whatever is recorded on this subject is needed. This will help them to know whether they also have similar questions. We live in the world where learning from others has become the game that everybody can do. If we can learn in matters of culture and politics, why should the church not learn from each other? If learning from each other is difficult, let us learn from the period of Judges where Deborah was the judge and prophetess, or from the ministries of Priscilla and Phoebe who lived in the time Paul ministered.

Therefore, the dialogue can be operated starting from the text itself and then move on to practical life. If the readers consider that in 1 Cor 14:34–35 Paul denies women to teach and preach, they should compare and contrast it with other passages of the Bible. They should let it dialogue with other texts because in other texts it is the same Paul who affirmed,

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<sup>211</sup> <http://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/Rome+wasn%27t+built+in+a+day>, accessed on 7.5.2017.

and commended women to the ministry. Thus, the churches that are yet to allow women to teach, preach and receive ordination can learn how beneficial it is to allow women to assume those roles. Here at the end, I would like to use Desmond Tutu's words on his position and plea of women ordination and leadership in the church. Tutu writes,

When we exclude women, we diminish ourselves. This shouldn't be such a difficult topic for people of faith. It seems entirely consistent with the teaching of the world's great religions that men and women are equal in the eyes of God. .... In my own church, which decided only in 1992 that women could be ordained as priests and bishops, it was quite a shock to realise how much we had diminished ourselves in our ministry when we saw the difference women made. In this volatile time, when there is so much distress and dissatisfaction, we are wasting a huge source of talent and wisdom by not including women as equals in all aspects of life – whether in politics, business or religion. ... Can faith leaders show the way? We religious leaders have been given an incredible privilege. In almost any community, even in this day and age, people still listen carefully to what we have to say. I believe that we have the task of humanising our communities and helping them to change when change is necessary. We also need to look at changing our own practices if need be. I think that my colleagues and I were in agreement that women need to play a great leadership role across the board... We as religious leaders have an important role to play in facilitating positive change in our communities. I hope that we can continue our conversation and find ways to work together to build a more equitable world.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Desmond Tutu, *Women, Religion and Change*, available in <http://www.theelders.org/article/women-religion-and-change>, accessed on 4.5.2017.



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