

**WHAT DO WE DO WITH
1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35?**

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

1 Corinthians 14:34-35

Introduction

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 presents an especially knotty set of problems. The most glaring of these is the fact that, just a few verses earlier, Paul seems to imply that any member of the congregation – male or female – can contribute to the worship gathering: ‘When you come together, *each of you* has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. ... For you can *all prophesy* in turn, so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged’ (1 Corinthians 14:26b & 31, emphasis mine).

Then there’s the fact that, a few chapters earlier, Paul clearly expects the women in Corinth to be praying and prophesying out loud in meetings (1 Corinthians 11:2-16). Paul’s agenda in this passage is often misunderstood. His aim isn’t to make it more difficult for women to make their voices heard in church meetings. It’s the exact opposite. The reason he urges women to wear head coverings (in line with the social expectations of the day) is so that they can contribute to church meetings with dignity and without a hint of shame.

So, how do we square those passages with what we read in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35?

In this paper, I’ll set out my personal take on this passage. I don’t pretend to answer all the questions. Nor will I present all my working (for those who wish to delve into this some more, I include more detail in the endnotes).

I’ll build my case in two stages. First, I want to say a few words about how we interpret the Bible. Sometimes, when we find a passage confusing, or its meaning isn’t immediately apparent, we need to step back and consider the question: ‘What’s the context of what’s being said here?’ I’m going to introduce something called the ‘three worlds model’ which helps address that question. If that sounds a bit complicated, don’t worry. It simply gives us a series of steps that can help us interpret *any* passage of Scripture – especially those passages that we find tricky.

Then I’m going to demonstrate the usefulness of the three worlds model by applying it to our passage. When we do that, I think the general meaning becomes clear (even if biblical scholars are likely to continue arguing about the finer details). My basic position is that whatever Paul is saying about women in 1 Corinthians 14, these verses shouldn’t be taken as an absolute prohibition on women contributing to church meetings. Properly understood, this passage doesn’t provide grounds for silencing women today.

Interpreting the Bible: The Three Worlds Model

The ‘three worlds model’ is associated with biblical scholar, Terence Fretheim.¹ According to Fretheim, whenever we read the Bible we should think of three worlds colliding:

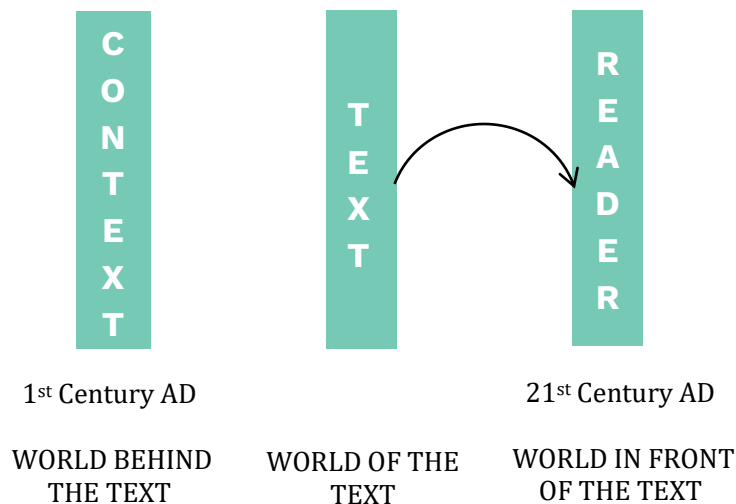
- Firstly, there’s *the world of the text*. These are the particular features of the text itself, such as the particular words that have been chosen, the way the argument has been structured, and so on.
- Then there’s *the world behind the text*. This is the historical context in which the text was originally written. Appreciating the world behind the text means knowing something about the way the original audience saw the world (hint: the ancients didn’t see the world as we see it today).

- Finally, there's *the world in front of the text*. This is our own cultural and church context. This differs in all kinds of ways from the culture in which the text was written. I've already mentioned one example: a woman wearing a head covering doesn't carry the same meaning in our culture as it carried in New Testament times (and still carries in certain parts of the world today). The world in front of the text also includes us as readers. Each of us 'filters' our understanding of the text through our own experience and assumptions about reality. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's an unavoidable feature of *all* interpretation. Whenever any of us picks up any text, we read it in a way that's particular to us. This can be an important consideration when tackling texts (like these verses in 1 Corinthians 14) that may touch on personal sensitivities on things like gender identity, male and female roles in ministry, women's profile in the church, and so on. I'm currently engaged in a writing project that addresses these topics. It's a massive area, and too big to get into here, but I think it's important that we acknowledge that our personal background can influence, sometimes quite strongly, how we handle passage like this one.

So, there they are. The world of the text, the world of behind the text and the world in front of the text. Which of these worlds is most important? They all are. *A text's meaning is found in the interplay of the three worlds.*

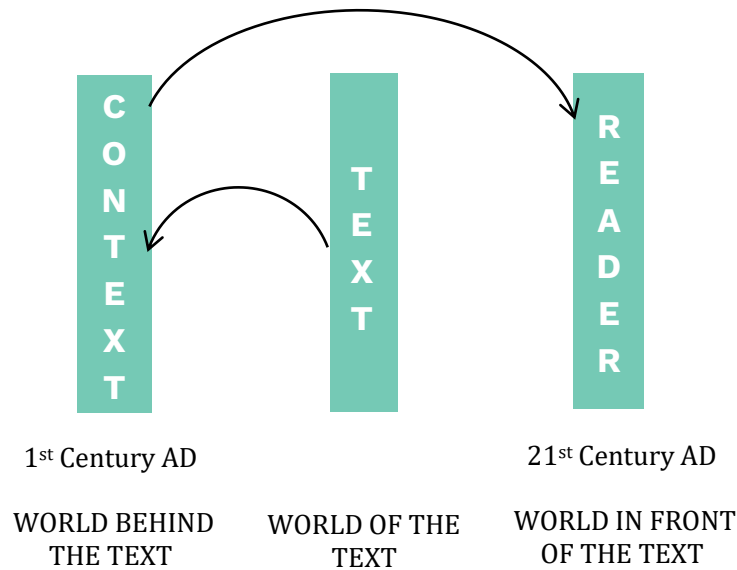
This means that a skilled interpreter of the Bible will keep all three worlds in play. Let me give you two examples which will hopefully show how this works in practice. I'll begin with an example of how the task of biblical interpretation is often done *badly*.

Consider the diagram below.² This diagram represents how the Bible is frequently interpreted. Beginning with the world of the text, the interpreter immediately jumps to the world in front of the text. The attitude here is: 'Here's what the text says! That settles it! If the text says, "Women are not allowed to speak," then that's what the text means. Women should not be permitted to speak in church meetings today.'



The problem with this approach should be obvious. The world behind the text is left out. The specific ways in which Paul crafted his message to address a specific situation in first-century Corinth are completely ignored. It's a significant omission. Most people will appreciate that what the text meant to the original audience should have some bearing on how we understand the text today. Old Testament scholar John Walton is fond of saying that the text was 'written *for us* but not *to us*.'³ It was written to a specific audience in the ancient world, and the only way in which the text can be considered as having authority *for us* is by first understanding what the author intended to communicate *to them*.

So, a more thoughtful interpreter will take a different approach, represented by the second diagram. Beginning with the world of the text, the interpreter will first consider how the text speaks to the concerns of the original audience, before applying the text to our contemporary world:



This is a much better approach. Whenever we're seeking to understand the meaning of a passage of Scripture, we shouldn't be too quick to apply the text to our world without first doing the hard work of attempting to understand the world behind the text. We must make the effort to consider what the text would have meant to the original audience, seeking to get at the original author's intended meaning.

This may seem complicated. I admit that sometimes it can be, and the diagram above is greatly simplified!⁴ But, like anything, the three worlds model becomes more familiar as we begin to use it. So, let's have a stab at applying the three worlds model to our passage in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35.

Applying the Three Worlds Model

Before getting started, let's remind ourselves of our text:

1 Corinthians 14:33-34

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

Straight off the bat, it's important to mention one way of handling the passage that has become prominent in recent years. Some scholars have argued that these verses weren't originally written by Paul; they began their life as a note that someone else wrote in the margin, before finding their way into the version of the text that we have today.⁵

I don't propose to get into a detailed examination of this view. The details are complex and extremely technical. Suffice to say, most biblical scholars are unpersuaded by this position. It remains a minority view.⁶

I think the best approach is to take the text at face value. So, let's get into the three worlds model, starting with what we can piece together about the world behind the text.

The world behind the text

Paul was clearly writing into a specific situation in the church in Corinth. The whole tone of his first letter to Corinthians is corrective and chapter 14 is written to address specific abuses in the church concerning spiritual gifts, especially the gift of tongues. But what was going on with women in the church? If we were able to step into a time machine and visit the church in Corinth in the first century, what would we see? Here are a couple of suggestions, each based on a different reconstruction of the world behind the text.

Scenario 1: Women were getting involved in discussions that evaluated prophecy

According to this view, the problem in Corinth was not that women were speaking per se, but that they were weighing prophecies, and thus stepping into an authoritative role that Paul considered to be restricted to men.⁷

Proponents of this view point out that it seems to fit well with the flow of passage. If you have a Bible handy, take a moment to read the verses leading up to these verses on women. Paul begins with a discussion of the gift of tongues. After a general observation in verse 26, Paul moves on to practical guidelines concerning the use of tongues in public gatherings (verses 27-28). Then Paul does the exact same thing with prophecy. Beginning with a headline statement that references *speaking* and *weighing* (verse 29), Paul proceeds by giving practical guidelines concerning each of these two activities in turn (speaking in verses 30-33a and weighing in verses 33b-36).⁸

It's a neat argument but I personally don't find it convincing. Gordon Fee provides three reasons for rejecting this viewpoint.⁹ John Hosier (a seasoned and respected Bible teacher in our family of churches) agrees, arguing that 'such an interpretation strains the passage – it seems nowhere near [a] natural and commonsense interpretation.'¹⁰ If Paul thinks that women shouldn't be involved in discussions about prophetic words, then why doesn't he just come out and say so? I think we need to consider a different possibility of what was happening in Corinth.

Scenario 2: women were being vocal when it wasn't their turn to stand up and speak

This is perhaps the most common view taken by interpreters this passage. The idea is that Paul had no problem with women contributing to meetings, so long as they had their head covered (1 Corinthians 11 again), and that they stood up and shared when it was their turn to do so (1 Corinthians 14:30). The problem appears to be that women in Corinth weren't speaking in their turn; they were speaking at other times as well. If we were to visit them in our time machine, we might witness such things as the women chatting among themselves, calling out questions to the speaker, offering unsolicited opinions or having spontaneous prophetic outbursts when someone else was already speaking. All these things contravened Paul's basic concern that 'everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way' (verse 40).

But why does Paul specifically focus his prohibition on *women*? Some have speculated that the answer is found in the fact that women weren't as well educated as the men. Perhaps the women were chattier than the men because they were asking one another what was going on?¹¹ It's an attractive possibility, but there are problems. D. A. Carson explains:

The argument that some of the women were too noisy cannot be taken very seriously, for we must ask why Paul bars *all* women from talking. And were there *no* noisy men? Nor is it plausible that the women are silenced because they were uneducated; for again, we must ask why Paul doesn't silence uneducated *people*, not just women. And since Paul's rule operates in all the churches (verses 33b-34), it would be necessary to hold that *all* first-century Christian women were uneducated – which is palpable nonsense.¹²

My own view is that it's entirely possible that men in the church were being as disorderly as women. However, Paul regards the conduct of the *women* as being especially problematic. Why might this be? I think the answer may be found in another aspect of the world behind the text: the wider context in which Paul was writing.

Cultural context

Christians are fond of saying that the gospel mounts a powerful challenge to existing social divisions. It requires that we revise all traditional understandings of human society that are based on hierarchy. All this is true. It's why Paul declares that 'all are one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28) and insists on the mutuality of men and women (1 Corinthians 7:4; 11:11-12). However, Paul also accommodates his message to culture. And throughout his letters, he's frequently concerned with the need to safeguard the reputation of the churches.

The fact is that Paul's world was patriarchal, and not mildly so; it was patriarchal in a profound, dyed-in-the-wool sense. Men and women (and children and slaves) occupied different positions in the hierarchy of being. Where you found yourself on that ladder was unalterable and it affected *everything*. So, when we see Paul being exercised about *women's* disorderly conduct in the church, we need to remember that his words were written into that kind of culture.

New Testament scholar Andrew Perriman¹³ suggests we would do well to keep this issue in mind when we read anything that Paul says about women. In particular, we need recognise the following features of Paul's world (the world behind the text):

- In Greco-Roman culture, women were prohibited from contributing to the public assembly. They were expected to remain silent and were unable to vote.
- Jewish society allowed women to play significant roles in the synagogue, but it's unlikely that they would have been permitted to officiate in worship.
- There were religious cults that promoted the participation of women and frequently attracted the criticism of outsiders who viewed these novel faiths as a threat to the moral and social fabric of society.

Given this background, it becomes easier to see why Paul was at pains to focus his attention on curbing what many would have regarded as the unruly and unseemly conduct of women in church gatherings. Such behaviour would have done nothing to commend the gospel to Gentiles or Jews, and risked outsiders writing off the new Jesus movement as being just like any of the 'mystery religions' of the day.

Now, not everyone accepts that this is a relevant consideration for understanding our text. D. A. Carson (who supports our first possible scenario) rejects this view on the grounds that it would make Paul 'unbearably sexist.'¹⁴ I don't agree with Carson that Paul's concern for the reputation of his churches makes him sexist; I think it makes him canny and wise. Terran Williams explains: 'Paul was not idealizing the culture the church was trying to reach, but instead was, out of evangelistic intention, trying to accommodate to its social decorum without compromising key values.'¹⁵

I think Terran Williams hits the nail on the head. In his letters, Paul is concerned with two things, not just one: fidelity to God's Word *in* the Church, and how the Church is perceived by people *outside* the Church. He's committed to biblical faithfulness *and* missional relevance.

Let's put it this way. Let's consider the kind of report that Paul may have received about the church in Corinth. We can imagine the kind of thing: 'Have you heard about their meetings? Have you heard about how the *women* are behaving? "Unruly" doesn't do it justice. They're out of control! I don't know why the leaders stand for it. And where are the husbands? How can they think it's okay for their wives to

carry on in this manner? And in full public view! I wouldn't have anything to do with that kind of community, would you? And what does it say about the kind of *God* that they worship?

Admittedly, this is speculation on my part, but it does communicate, I think, why Paul might have regarded disorderly conduct on the part of women as being such a problem. The reputation of the church and the gospel were at stake! In fact, there are a couple of occasions in the New Testament where both Paul and Peter urge particular conduct on the part of women out of a desire to safeguard the reputation of the gospel (Titus 2:5 & 1 Peter 3:1. Titus 2:10 and 1 Peter 2:15 are also worth a look). What I'm suggesting is that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is another of those passages.

One consequence of acknowledging the importance of 'reputational concern'¹⁶ for Paul is that it makes it far less important to try and reconstruct the specific set of circumstances in the Corinthian church. Perhaps Paul was thinking of women calling out in the meetings when he wrote this passage. Perhaps he was thinking of women chatting among themselves. It's even possible that he was thinking of women contributing to general discussions that included, among other things, the weighing of prophecy. We simply don't know. And I don't think it's necessary for us to know. *Whatever* the women were up to in the church in Corinth, Paul insists that they recognise their place: *not* because they are any less than men, but because the gospel needs to be sensitively and appropriately worked out in their social reality.

Of course, our social reality is different in many respects from theirs. But we haven't yet gone as far as we can go in trying to make sense of the text. What are the clues in the text itself that can help us get at Paul's intended meaning?

The world of the text

Before I go any further, let me say that this text is exceedingly difficult. I don't think for one moment that I've got its meaning all sewn up. But I do find these insights from Andrew Perriman extremely helpful.¹⁷ He points out that, looking at our two verses in the context of what's going on around them, we find four grounds of Paul's appeal to the women of Corinth:

- i) *Paul appeals to custom* ('as in all the congregations of the Lord's people...', verse 33b). This suggests that Paul's intention is to bring practice in the Corinthian church into line with practice in other congregations (in fact, this is a significant concern of Paul through 1 Corinthians¹⁸). In Andrew Perriman's words, there are strong grounds for saying that when Paul appeals to common church practice in 1 Corinthians, he isn't referring to 'an absolute and incontestable ruling' but to 'well-established guidelines for dealing with a current situation.'¹⁹
- ii) *Paul appeals to law* ('For [the women] are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says', verse 34). Paul refers to 'the law' in general rather than to any specific command from the Jewish Law. We can't be certain what he means. It's possible that the submission of which Paul speaks isn't submission to human authority (either male authority or apostolic authority) but to a principle of order that applies to all the churches.²⁰ Then Paul's meaning would be that his command carries 'law-like authority.' We simply don't know.²¹ All we can say is that, presumably, what's unclear to us would have made sense to his original audience.²²
- iii) *Paul appeals to shame* ('For it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church', verse 35b). This appeal is much clearer than the last. Andrew Perriman regards it as being the decisive one for unlocking the meaning of this text.²³ I think he may be right.

Let's think for a moment about the issues of honour and shame (which represent two sides of the same coin). The point of honour/shame is that they mark deviation from an accepted social norm rather than necessarily transgressing an absolute command.

Consider the example of picking your nose in public. Such a practice is certainly unhygienic but it's clearly not illegal. Nor would one argue (I think) that it's immoral. The issue with nose-picking in public is that it offends social sensibilities rather than transgressing a civil or moral law. And this is why most socially adjusted adults would feel a sense of shame if they were caught doing it by others.

This gives us some idea where Paul is coming from when he makes this third appeal. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Kenneth Bailey remarks that 'the cultural equivalent in English might be the Victorian sense of "improper." *Ladies* do not chat during worship. It is "not done"'.²⁴ I think Bailey is on to something here. Sometimes a practice is wrong, not because it violates a timeless principle, but because it deviates from a social norm. Recall the earlier discussion of the world behind the text. I think Paul was extremely sensitive to problems that threatened to bring the church and its message into disrepute. I think that's what lies behind his words here.

iv) *Paul appeals to the Lord's command* ('... let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command', verse 37). At first glance, this appeal seems to sit uneasily alongside the previous one. It looks like Paul is issuing an absolute command rather than urging conformity with a cultural custom. However, not all commands are absolute and universal. Some are specific to a particular context. Here are a few examples: 'Do not walk on the grass.' 'No diving in the pool.' 'Children are not permitted in the kitchen' (that last one, or something like it, appearing on our own Grace Church signage!).²⁵

The world in front of the text

Where does all this lead us? How does all this apply to our world, the 'world in front of the text'? While there are plenty of difficulties associated with interpreting this passage, I think the following points can be stated with reasonable confidence:

- Firstly, I think there are too many indications of the contextual flavour of this passage to universalize the principle that 'women should remain silent in the churches.' These clues don't just come from our two verses of interest, where honour/shame is an important theme, but also from what Paul says earlier in the letter (as I explained in the opening paragraphs of this paper). Paul is *not* issuing a timeless command that women shouldn't contribute to public meetings.
- Secondly, I think 1 Corinthians 14 sensitizes us to the fact that church practice is *always* contextualized to a particular culture. While Paul doesn't include a timeless, theological principle for why women should remain silent, he does insist that women conform to social norms. The prominence of the theme of shame in the passage suggests that his primary motivation may be to safeguard the reputation of the gospel. Our culture is very different to Paul's. This requires us to do the hard work of adapting (theologians would say 'contextualizing') the Christian message to *our* time and place. We can't simply 'carry over' Paul's command from *this* passage to church meetings today.²⁶
- Part of the process of contextualization means ensuring that we don't adopt or replicate practices that unnecessarily bring the gospel into disrepute. The word 'unnecessarily' is important. The faithful preaching of the gospel will always cause offence. Our responsibility isn't to soften the uncompromising command of Christ to 'deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me' (Mark 8:34). Our responsibility is to remove any *unnecessary* obstacles that may make it harder for people to give the message of Christ a hearing.

Throughout history, there have been churches and movements that have used 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to teach that women should remain silent in church meetings. That made a lot of sense in Paul's world,

but it doesn't make any sense in the contemporary world. I would go further and say that, if we were to apply this prohibition to women in our church context, it would constitute an unnecessary obstacle to belief. It would do nothing for the reputation of the church or the gospel in the eyes of unbelievers.

Yes, we need to abide by the presumption of obedience when we read any biblical command. But the presumption of obedience means doing what the text says *unless* there are good biblical reasons not to do so.²⁷ In the case of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, I think there are features in the text itself which point to Paul's command being context-specific. I hope that the above discussion has shown that my position isn't a consequence of dismissing the text or trying to explain it away; it's a consequence of making a genuine attempt to allow the text to speak on its own terms.

It's fair to say that I'm still working some of these things through. As I said earlier, I don't think I've got it all sewn up. This applies especially to the extent to which reputational concern is a governing idea for Paul. So, it's likely that my thoughts will continue to develop in future. The views that I've expressed here are provisional and open to revision. They're written in pencil rather than ink.

Even if someone doesn't accept all my conclusions regarding this text, I hope that something of my methodology will 'stick'. What I've tried to show in this paper is that I consider the three worlds model to be a powerful and helpful tool for thinking through issues of interpretation. In the final analysis, you may or may not agree with my position on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, but I hope you're persuaded at least by the importance of ensuring that each of the three worlds is given its due whenever we seek to understand the Bible's meaning.

Endnotes

- ¹ Terence Fretheim, *The Pentateuch* (1996), cited by Pete Hughes, *All Things New: Joining God's Story of Re-Creation*, Colorado Springs: David Cook, 2020, p. 38.
- ² The diagram is adapted from Hughes, *Ibid*, p. 38.
- ³ John Walton says this in a lot of places. Here's one of my favourites: *Genesis Through Ancient Eyes Pt 1* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOnsqCVq42A&t=257s>
- ⁴ We should really imagine arrows moving in all different directions. For example, both the world in front of the text *and* the world behind the text influence what a reader sees *in* the text. There are plenty of books out there dealing with the complexity of the interplay of the three worlds. But analysing those dynamics isn't my main purpose here.
- ⁵ This view is most famously associated with New Testament scholar Gordon Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1987, pp. 699-705; *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*, Peabody: Hendricksen, 1994, pp. 272-81). The position is also adopted by Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation series), Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1997, pp. 245-48.
- ⁶ D. A. Carson presents a line-by-line response to Fee (1987) in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (J. Piper & W. Grudem, eds), 1991, Ch. 6, pp. 180-85. Available at: <https://document.desiringgod.org/recovering-biblical-manhood-and-womanhood-en.pdf?ts=1620230082> I find Carson's points of rebuttal of Fee's argument persuasive, although I don't think we can be dogmatic on the question of how and when the text of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 originated.
- ⁷ This view is associated with Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (1982) and championed by D. A. Carson, *Ibid*.
- ⁸ This argument comes from Carson, *Ibid*, p. 195.
- ⁹ The reasons are: (i) there's a 'closure' element to vv. 32-33, meaning that there's a definite break between what Paul says about prophecy in verses 29-31 and what he says about women in verses 34-35; (ii) there's no hint in verses 34-35 that Paul has weighing prophecy in mind, or that the phrase 'they must be in submission' relates to submission to male authority; (iii) the statement 'if they want to enquire about something' (verse 35) suggests that what Paul has in mind is a woman's desire to understand what's going on, not to evaluate prophetic words (*Ibid*, p. 704).
- ¹⁰ John Hosier, *Christ's Radiant Church*, Oxford: Monarch, 2005, p. 175. John is still going strong, I'm happy to say.
- ¹¹ E.g. Leon Morris: 'We must bear in mind that in the first century women were uneducated. ... The Corinthians women should keep quiet in church for no other reason than because they could have had little or nothing worth while to say' (*1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series (Revised Edition), Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press Academic, 1988, pp. 197-98).
- ¹² *Ibid*, p. 188.
- ¹³ Andrew Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul*, Leicester: Apollos, 1998, pp. 114-19.
David Instone-Brewer, senior research fellow at Tyndale House, Cambridge, and regular contributor to *Christianity* magazine, is a strong advocate for saying that much of the New Testament teaching on women is shaped by the authors' concern to safeguard the credibility of the gospel in the eyes of the society ('Educated Women', *Christianity*, May 2009, pp. 36-3; 'Gender Equality', *Christianity*, June 2009, pp. 42-43; 'Should Women Submit?', *Christianity*, February 2022, pp. 54-55).
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 188.
- ¹⁵ Terran Williams, *How God Sees Women: The end of Patriarchy*, Cape Town: Spiritual Bakery, 2022, p. 124.
- ¹⁶ A phrase that I've borrowed from Terran Williams, *Ibid*, pp. 186-88
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 123-34.
- ¹⁸ Take a look at 1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 11:16 & 14:33.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 125

²⁰ Of course, these things aren't mutually exclusive. 'Perhaps we should think of submission to the husband as the underlying rationale for the more general submission to the order of worship' (Perriman, 1998, p. 122).

²¹ In *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, D. A. Carson suggests that the term 'law' is shorthand for the scriptural (Old Testament) pattern concerning male and female roles. Consequently, what Paul is doing in this passage is invoking the Genesis 2 creation narrative of God creating the woman from man. It's true that Paul doesn't explicitly mention Genesis 2 in 1 Corinthians 14, but he does mention Genesis in other passages that prohibit or restrict women speaking, specifically 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 and 1 Timothy 2:13 (Ibid, p. 194). Surely this passage ought to be read in the light of these others?

Simon Kistemaker follows a similar line of argument, (although he excludes 1 Timothy 2 from his analysis), arguing that 'Paul consistently appeals to the creation account of Genesis 2 throughout this epistle' (*Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New Testament Commentary, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993, p. 512). He cites 1 Corinthians 6:16, where Paul quotes from Genesis 2:24 as well as 11:8-9 where he alludes to Genesis 2:18 & 21-22.

Yet, these are a mere two references. This is a long way away from Paul making 'consistent' appeals 'throughout' his letter. For me, Carson's and Kistemaker's position strains credulity. There's no logical connection between Paul's arguments in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, and 1 Timothy 2 was written considerably later. Moreover, as Andrew Perriman points out, Genesis 2 'does not "say" that the woman should be silent or submissive; nor is it *clear* that in Paul's view these were implied in the order of creation' (Ibid, p. 127, emphasis mine).

²² Or perhaps not. Peter notes that Paul's letters 'contain some things that are hard to understand' (2 Peter 3:16). So true!

²³ Andrew Perriman suggests that 'the various regulations and assumptions regarding the status and behaviour of women ... in [this] chapter are all underpinned, emotionally and socially, by a strong sense of what is honourable and what is shameful' (Ibid, pp. 131-32).

²⁴ Kenneth Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians*, London: SPCK, 2011, p. 417.

²⁵ Andrew Perriman notes that Paul finishes with this rationale, rather than starts with it. This may suggest that Paul includes it to reinforce a position that has already been established on other grounds. In other words, *given* that it's understood to be shameful for women to speak in church, then it's fitting for Paul to add that this prohibition is not based merely on human opinion, but comes with divine authority (Ibid, pp. 133-34). I don't know what I think about this, although I find his argument intriguing.

Kenneth Bailey holds a different view, suggesting that 'the Lord's command' referred to is actually the command to love which carries over from chapter 13. He sees this as Paul's summary statement that relates to the many worship problems he has discussed in the section stretching from 11:2-14:40 (Ibid, p. 418).

How we assess these views will depend on whether we see vv. 36-37 flowing directly from (and forming part of) Paul's instructions about women, or functioning as a kind of summary statement of a broader argument that begins much earlier. On balance, I think I incline towards the latter.

²⁶ It's important to spell out what I'm not saying. I hope it's clear that I'm *not* saying that what Paul commands is *never* applicable to our context. That would completely undermine the principle that Paul's writings are authoritative for us. My conclusion here relates to this specific text. Each text must be considered on its own terms.

²⁷ Andrew Wilson, *Spirit and Sacrament: An Invitation to Eucharistic Worship*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018, p. 109.