

tasks of ministry, a fact that needs to be taken into account in any assessment of the roles of women in early Christianity. Whatever Paul writes or does not write elsewhere, here he simply assumes that women too are God's agents on behalf of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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1 CORINTHIANS

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INTRODUCTION

Paul founded the church in Corinth around 51 CE. First Corinthians—actually the second letter Paul wrote to this church (see 1 Cor. 5:9)—provides an account of this early work (1 Cor. 1–3), but it is highly rhetorical and yields few concrete details beyond the names of the first converts (1:14–16). The dramatic account in Acts 18:1–18 is more detailed, but the historical reliability of that book is uncertain. Nevertheless, there one learns of various individuals who participated in the founding of the church, including Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquila, a missionary couple with whom Paul stayed in Corinth (see also 1 Cor. 16:19). Though Acts suggests an ethnically diverse church of both Jews and Gentiles, Paul addresses the entire congregation as formerly pagans, that is, as Gentiles (1 Cor. 12:2). The social makeup of the church, however, was clearly diverse (1 Cor. 1:26–29), and this was a factor in the disputes there.

Between Paul's departure from the church and the writing of 1 Corinthians, there were a number of important developments and a lively exchange of information. Paul sent Timothy to Corinth to remind them of his teachings (4:17); he wrote the Corinthians a letter with instructions, which they misunderstood (5:9–13); Chloe's people (the slaves, relatives, or associates of an otherwise unknown, but apparently influential, woman) brought Paul news of divisions within the church (1:11); and a delegation

of three men arrived from Corinth and were with Paul when he wrote this letter (16:17–18). These men were probably the bearers of a letter from the church (7:1) in which the Corinthians raised questions concerning, or challenging, Paul's earlier instructions. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (16:8), probably in 54 CE, in order to respond to these developments.

The outline of the letter is fairly straightforward. In the opening chapters Paul lays the rhetorical and theological groundwork for his later admonitions. In chapters 5–6 he addresses issues communicated by Chloe's delegation, while chapters 7–16 are primarily devoted to questions raised in the Corinthians' letter. Points where Paul explicitly responds to these questions are signaled by the phrase, "Now concerning . . ." (see 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).

As Paul responds to the Corinthians' written questions, he frequently quotes from or alludes to their letter to him. This, of course, posed no problem for the Corinthians, who would have immediately recognized Paul's references to their own words. For the contemporary reader, however, it generates serious problems. Where is Paul quoting the Corinthians' opinions, and where is he citing his own? Where does his wording of an argument derive from their phrasing of the question, and where does it reflect and accurately convey his own particular emphases? These issues must be constantly kept in mind.

COMMENT

Status and Authority in God's Realm
(1 Cor. 1-4)

In the opening section of the letter, Paul addresses the central problem afflicting the church: divisions among its members into competing groups (1:10). Status competition was endemic to the culture, but it was antithetical to the spiritual health of the church, so Paul's first concern was to eliminate this behavior and promote unity among its members. Ironically, though, in order to do this, Paul had to assert his own status and authority, which had eroded in his absence. It is not surprising, then, that his argument takes a number of somewhat contradictory twists and turns.

Paul's first rhetorical move is to subvert all status markers of the Greco-Roman world (class, wealth, wisdom, rhetorical skill, physical strength and beauty) by invoking the ethic of the cross. That a condemned and crucified man—one of lowest possible status in the world—is God's vehicle for salvation reveals that the status markers of God's realm are not those of the world. Indeed, God has chosen, and thus bestowed highest status on, those that the world despises: the weak, the low-born, the foolish (1:18-31). This argument does not eliminate hierarchy, but it does invert it: the last (lowest) are first (highest).

Paul uses this new hierarchy first to separate believers from nonbelievers (2:1-16) and then apostles from the Corinthian believers (3:1-4:13). He closes by urging the Corinthians to follow the model of his own Christlike behavior. Like him they are to embrace the logic of the cross, as a community to accept weakness and humility as marks of God's favor, and thus to eliminate status-seeking behavior among themselves. Then, abruptly abandoning this logic, he threatens them with punishment if they do not comply (4:14-21)!

Women are not singled out here as a distinct group, but they are implicitly included among the intended recipients of the message. They may have heard in Paul's words a rebuke of their status-seeking behavior or an affirmation of their high value in the cross-logic of God's realm—or, plausibly, both messages.

Sexual Immorality and Lawsuits
(1 Cor. 5-6)

Paul closes the preceding section by offering the Corinthians a choice: "What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (4:21). Underscoring that choice, the next section opens with the verbal equivalent of the stick, pronouncing the extreme judgment of excommunication ("handing over to Satan") on a man charged with sexual immorality (*porneia*). Paul's tone and his emphasis on *porneia*, which dominates these chapters, are fueled by his conviction that sexual immorality can pollute and thus destroy the body of Christ more readily than other sins. It is not simply that such behavior is inappropriate for those who collectively constitute that body (12:27). In Paul's view, the mystical union of an individual man with Christ is very real, and that union does not dissolve when the man has sexual intercourse with a prostitute. Paul recoils with horror from the ontological implications of this (6:15).

Throughout this urgent discourse, Paul focuses exclusively on the actions of men. Reflecting the prevailing view of his culture, he assumes women are merely passive objects of men's desires. Moreover, the women in question here—prostitutes—are (presumably) outside the community of faith. Thus Paul does not have—nor does he take—the opportunity to reflect on the implications of a woman's mystical union with Christ.

In 6:1-11 the topic shifts to lawsuits between believers before outside judges. These actions not only erode the boundary between church and world; they also reflect the damaging divisions within the church. Hierarchy and power issues are not explicit here, but in Paul's world one did not take (or only rarely took) a social equal or superior to court. Higher-class believers were probably bringing lawsuits against lower-class believers. Paul's response is to invoke again the ethic of the cross: "Why not rather be wronged [than take a believer to court]?" (6:7).

Sex and Spirituality (1 Cor. 7:1-40)

Paul begins here to respond to the issues the Corinthians raised in their earlier letter. His

obvious concern in this chapter, to present arguments that are balanced in their treatment of women and men, is striking. The nature of the issues addressed (sex, marriage, divorce) does not adequately explain this. Women were probably prominently involved in raising questions about these issues, forcing Paul to break out of his normal mode of addressing a community exclusively through its male members. Only in this chapter, for example, are women generically distinguished from men by using separate Christian kinship terms: "the brother or sister" (7:15). Elsewhere in Paul's letters all members of the community are collectively addressed as "brothers."

Several categories of women are mentioned: "wives" are paired with "husbands" in a natural way (7:2-4), and "the unmarried" are mentioned with "the widows" (7:8). A third group, "the virgins," is distinguished in a natural way from married women, but they are also distinguished from "unmarried women" as if they were a separate group (7:34). It is possible that Paul and this community had developed a special vocabulary for describing some groups of women, and one cannot assume that all of these terms bore their "natural" meaning.

Sex, Marriage, and Divorce (1 Cor. 7:1-24). Paul begins his comments with an abrupt statement that defines the primary issue here to be sex and not marriage: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman." There is a growing consensus that these words do not represent Paul's own opinion but are a quotation from the Corinthians' letter. (To indicate this, the NRSV now encloses the words in quotation marks; compare the text of the older RSV.) What gives weight to this conclusion is the way Paul continues the argument, for with a qualifying "but" he introduces instructions that effectively undermine the quoted statement: "But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have [sexual relations with] his own wife and each woman her own husband" (7:2; note the similar pattern of quoted statement followed by qualifying argument in 6:12; 8:1; and 10:23). The Corinthians, or some of them, seem to be encouraging a rigorous asceticism even for married couples. The basis for this asceticism is not entirely clear, but it is likely that those who practiced it enjoyed enhanced status. Paul himself was celibate too, but he argues for

flexibility, affirming various choices instead of only one.

The quotation cited above ("It is well for a man not to touch a woman") presents the issue of celibacy solely from the male perspective; but in both the content and balanced format of his response Paul insists on the two-sidedness, the mutuality, of sexual relations within marriage. One cannot conclude from this that Paul viewed the entire marriage relationship as one of equality (see comments on 11:2-16 and 14:34-35); nevertheless, the sense of mutuality in at least this area of married life is exceptional for a man of his time and culture.

On the other hand, Paul's insistence on sexual relations within marriage, however mutual they might have been, is predicated exclusively on a concern for self-control (7:2, 5; see also 7:9, 36-37), and he seems to view marriage primarily as a means of sexual containment. There are no references to love or procreation, for (in his view) the world already stands in the shadow of the end (7:29-31). Indeed, sex within marriage, for all its mutuality, is defined in rather joyless terms: it is a "debt" or "duty" that must be paid ("conjugal rights" in the RSV and NRSV); each spouse has "authority" (power) over the other's body; thus to be married is to be "bound" (7:27, 39).

He does, however, convey a sense of the pervasive holiness of marriage that embraces children and can somehow touch even unbelieving marriage partners (7:14). He also views marriage as a deep commitment. It involves a concern for the spouse so profound that it competes with the Christian's devotion to the Lord (7:32-35). It is striking that Paul can say this without any obvious trace of criticism. To be sure, because of this aspect of marriage, he recommends the unmarried life as more suited to the times. The old world, as he thinks, is passing away, and its dissolution will be marked by trauma and crisis. Under these circumstances, undivided devotion to the Lord is advantageous, so Paul recommends unmarried life. But he does not challenge married couples to revise their priorities. Paul recognizes that concern ("anxiety") for the spouse is part of the fabric of marriage and cannot be overruled.

Though Paul insists that consummated marriages are not the place to practice celibacy, his basic conviction is that for those for whom it is an option, the celibate life has concrete,

practical advantages. Thus in 7:8-9 he affirms that for the unmarried and widows (or perhaps "widowers and widows") "it is well for them to remain unmarried." In saying this, he is probably again citing, and this time agreeing with, the Corinthians' own position on the matter. As before, however, he immediately introduces a qualification, though this one is not as all-inclusive as the one concerning marriage partners: "But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry." Once again he promotes marriage solely as a means of sexual containment. The basic premise—that unmarried women can and should remain that way—is, however, strikingly innovative. Marriage in the Greco-Roman culture was prescribed for women and defined by patriarchy, yet Paul not only insists that within a Christian marriage women and men were equal sex partners; he also sanctions for women a life *without* marriage, and thus a life permanently free from all the hierarchical strictures of that relationship. Paul thus opens wide the door to social independence for those women gifted with celibacy.

The desire for the celibate lifestyle seems to have encouraged many of the Corinthians to seek divorce, and Paul addresses this aspect of the issue in 7:10-16. For the first and only time in this chapter, Paul's response takes the form of a command: Neither wives nor husbands should divorce their spouses. Paul attributes this prohibition directly to the Lord (see Mark 10:2-12 and Matt. 19:3-9), yet even so he permits a partial exception: "But if she does separate [from her husband], let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband" (7:11). But even if the spouse is an unbeliever—and the motivation for divorce in this case is even greater (see 2 Cor. 6:14-18)—Paul insists that the preferred course of action is for the married couple to remain as they are. The holiness of the believing spouse will consecrate the marriage and the children and may even effect the salvation of the unbelieving partner (7:16). Remarkably enough, Paul seems to imply that peace is more important than possible conversion. If the unbelieving partner agitates for divorce, the believer is to permit it—for the sake of peace (7:15).

Throughout this evenhanded discussion of women and men, Paul mentions the role of the man (husband) first. In the discussion of divorce, however, he mentions the wife first (7:10), and the exception clause is applied only

to the case of the woman (7:11). (In the sayings of Jesus on divorce, the wife is discussed second [Mark 10:11-12] or not at all [Matt. 19:9].) This reversal of emphasis could indicate that the pressure for divorce within the Corinthian community is coming primarily from the women, who, one could surmise, are encouraged to seek freedom on a social level commensurate with their freedom in Christ (Gal. 3:28). Paul does not forbid this (7:11a), but neither does he encourage it. Throughout his advice to this community, Paul proclaims a conservative ethic: Remain as you are. The advantages of the single, celibate state are not so great as to demand universal compliance or social disruption. Paul concludes this section of the letter by discussing this general principle in some detail (7:17-24), and as he does so he reverts to the male perspective that is more characteristic of his letters.

Virgins (1 Cor. 7:25-40). Paul's use of the phrase "Now concerning . . ." in 7:25 indicates that he is responding to a related but separate question from the Corinthians. It concerns a group called the "virgins," and because both the Corinthians and Paul treat this group separately, something other than the question of marriage for the "unmarried" (7:8-9) must be at stake.

Paul reverses his earlier sequence and here presents the general principles first (7:26-35). He repeats the point mentioned earlier (remain as you are, 7:26) and now buttresses it with comments concerning the passing of the age (7:26, 29, 31). In view of the rapidly approaching end and the divided loyalties that marriage creates for the Christian, it is better for a virgin to remain as she is. Thus far Paul's advice is not markedly different from that he gave earlier to the unmarried. He even provides a similar exception clause: "But . . . if a virgin marries, she does not sin" (7:28). Nevertheless, his later comments (7:36-38) seem to presuppose a somewhat more complex situation. Most translations obscure the difficulties by translating "virgin" as "fiancée" or "betrothed," but the strangeness of the situation comes out with a more literal translation of the text.

But if anyone thinks he is behaving disgracefully toward his virgin, if his passions are strong and so it has to be, let him do what he wishes, he is not sinning. Let

them marry. But whoever stands firm in his heart, and has no necessity, but has authority concerning his own will and he has determined in his own heart to keep his virgin, he will do well. So then, the one who marries his virgin does well and the one not marrying will do better.

(7:36-38, *my trans.*)

Several things are striking here. First, the sense of mutuality so prominent in Paul's earlier discussion is completely absent. The man alone determines whether to marry "his virgin," and no thought is given to her passions, her wishes, or the determination in her heart. Second, Paul seems concerned to reassure the Corinthians that marrying one's virgin, though not ideal, is no sin (7:28, 36). This suggests that some in the community are claiming that marrying one's virgin—not behaving disgracefully toward her, but *marrying* her—is a sin. Something more is at stake than meets the eye.

Finally, the way Paul refers to the men and their virgins is decidedly strange. For some time the prevailing opinion was that Paul is referring to fathers with virgin daughters of marriageable age, but the text does not really support that interpretation. Most translations now reflect the idea that engaged couples, caught up in the Corinthians' enthusiasm for asceticism, have sworn to remain in this state of celibate engagement but now are having second thoughts. But "his virgin" is a strange way to refer to a man's fiancée. It suggests at the very least that, for the Corinthians, virginity rather than espousal has become the defining characteristic of the relationship. This suggests a third interpretation of this text.

Corinthian men and women have perhaps voluntarily entered special celibate relationships, "spiritual marriages" (the NEB refers to "partners in celibacy"). Perhaps the virgins symbolize the entire community's relationship to the returning Christ, for Paul speaks later of his desire "to present [the church] as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). The situation is superficially similar to the celibacy within marriage that Paul rejected earlier (1 Cor. 7:1-7), but in this case the "spiritual marriage" that Paul approves is understood from the beginning to be a special, symbolic relationship. The Corinthians may have considered the symbolism so sacred that it was a sin to break it. Details of the situation are simply not clear.

Paul's response, however, is clear and clearly one-sided. The man, whether involved in a celibate engagement or spiritual marriage, should not be pressured by the community (or even by his virgin!) into remaining in this perpetually chaste relationship. If he has the gift to sustain it, well and good. If not, marriage is no sin.

Paul rounds off his discussion in 7:39-40 by returning to some points he made earlier (cf. 7:8, 9, 13): Married women should not divorce their husbands and while widows may marry, they will be better off (Good News Bible "happier") if they do not. These somewhat redundant comments about women provide an artificial sense of balance to 7:36-38, which focuses exclusively on men's behavior. Paul's concern here for women's happiness also stands in some tension with his earlier lack of concern for the virgins' preferences. In the context of Paul's earlier advice, the final verses also serve as a reminder to the celibate partners that if the relationship is transformed into a normal marriage, the change is permanent. Whereas "real" married partners can engage in temporary periods of celibacy (7:1-7), their mirror opposites, the celibate couples, cannot enjoy temporary periods of "marriage."

Summary. Some Corinthians, it seems, were placing too much value—and status—on celibacy within marriage or no marriage (and thus no sexual intercourse) at all. Paul argues for options. There is more than one way to live a holy life. A marriage with full and mutual sexual activity is holy (7:14-15), and celibate life is holy too (7:34). Yet even as he argues against excessive zeal for celibacy, Paul cannot deny that, in appropriate circumstances, it is the better way. Nevertheless, he knows that few are gifted for celibacy. For the others, frustrated sexual passion is a more serious threat to one's spiritual life than the distractions of marriage. So Paul affirms marriage with as much enthusiasm as his own gifts and insights allow, but these gifts do not permit him really to celebrate its possibilities.

Idol Meat and Class Conflict (1 Cor. 8-10)

The problem Paul addresses in these chapters is that some members of the church feel free to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols, while for others this creates a crisis of faith. Class issues are implicit in the problem, and the ethic of the

cross informs Paul's response. The relatively well-to-do, who can purchase meat at the market, are able to eat with a clear conscience. Those of lower status, whose consumption of meat is limited to public religious festivals, are unable to dismiss so easily the connection of the food with idols. Paul agrees with the position of the first group ("no idol in the world really exists"), but argues that they should give up their freedom to eat for the sake of the others. Women are not explicitly mentioned, but they probably numbered in both groups.

Chapter 9 seems to address a different issue, but in actuality Paul is using himself as an example of one who has relinquished his rights for the sake of others. In the course of the argument he reveals that the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas (Peter) were all married. Apparently he alone of this group was not.

Disruptions of Worship (1 Cor. 11)

Paul next addresses two issues that, in his view, undermine the congregation's worship services. The first directly concerns the actions of women; the second reflects class conflicts.

Women, Veils, and Worship (1 Cor. 11:2-16). Paul's comments in these verses are as obscure as any he makes, though his basic point is clear: women who pray and prophesy during congregational meetings must wear veils. But what did the veils signify? Did they signify the same thing to the women who were removing them as they did to Paul, who would impose them?

Paul begins by commending the church for maintaining the traditions he has established, but then he launches immediately into his criticism of the women's behavior. Paul refers first to the way men pray (11:4), but he mentions this only to provide rhetorical balance to the argument. There is no problem with their behavior; they are, it seems, praying and prophesying with heads properly uncovered. Yet these comments and the comment about cropped hair (11:6) make it clear that by removing their veils the women are dressing—at least in part of their attire—like the men. One can postulate that this came about because the women of this church took seriously the baptismal affirmation used in Paul's churches: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is

no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). The traditional distinctions between women and men are no longer relevant, especially when both are inspired by one and the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11), and the women symbolize this by removing a distinctive feature of female dress during the worship service: their veils.

Paul's response is to insist on the traditional gender hierarchy: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (11:3, my trans.). (Paul speaks here of the relationship between men and women in general [based on the story of the creation of Eve from Adam's "rib" in Gen. 2], not, as the NRSV presents it, the specific relationship between husband and wife.) This point reappears in 11:7, where Paul asserts that "a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection [RSV "glory"] of God, but woman is the reflection [RSV "glory"] of man." This argument is based on a misreading of Genesis 1:27, which actually asserts that all humankind—both women and men—was created in the image of God. Several scholars have noted that Paul does not deny that women are created in God's image, but Paul also does not affirm it, and this silence is significant. By stating that woman is (only) the reflection of man, Paul implies again her derivative and secondary status, and then he confirms this by insisting with emphatic parallelism that woman was created from and for the sake of man, and not vice versa (11:8-9).

This argument is developed with discouraging symmetry, with the man and the woman presented as a contrasting rather than a coordinate pair (cf. 1 Cor. 7!). Since Paul opens this argument by asserting that a man "ought not" to wear a veil, one expects him to complete the contrast by insisting that a woman ought to wear one. That, after all, is the obvious rhetorical goal of this passage. Instead he says (when the Greek is translated in the most reasonable way), "a woman ought to have authority over her head" (11:10, my trans.). One expects insistence on an act that symbolizes derivative status: veiling the head. Instead, Paul asserts the woman's authority over her head. He seems to be contradicting his own logic—or is he insisting that the women cooperate in their veiling?

Paul continues to undo his earlier argument with a statement of mutuality that borders on

equality: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of [perhaps: "not different from"] man or man independent of [perhaps: "different from"] woman" (11:11). He follows this with a clear rebuttal of the derivation sequence he has just established: "For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman" (11:12; see 11:8). Finally, he presents a statement that demolishes every argument in which superior status is based on derivation: "All things come from God" (11:12). Without warning Paul has reversed directions in his argument, affirming the mutuality of existence and equality of origin that he earlier denied. And without warning he reverses direction again. Abandoning any attempt to present a reasoned argument for his position, abandoning also the sense of mutuality he has just encouraged, Paul concludes by simply asserting that veiling of women is proper, natural (since women's long hair is nature's way of providing a veil), and customary in all the churches of God.

It is hard to know what to make of this. Some scholars dismiss the entire argument as a later insertion into the letter, but there is little textual evidence to support this. Paul probably wrote it, but what lies behind his vigorous objection to the women's unveiling? Verse 10 seems to provide the answer: "because of the angels." But what does that comment signify? It is likely, but not certain, that Paul has in mind evil angelic beings (see 2 Cor. 12:7) who would be sexually tempted by the women's self-exposure, and through them gain access to the community.

Affirming Pauline authorship does not, however, sanction the use of these chaotic verses to define Paul's normative view of women. One senses conflicting views within Paul shutting down the rational process, and where reason fails, emotion and tradition take over: "But if anyone is disposed to be contentious—we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God" (11:16). The only thing that remains constant in the argument is the uncontested assumption—shared, apparently, by both sides—that women's participation in worship is functionally equal to that of men. The issue Paul addresses concerns only the mode of dress (or hairstyle) the women adopt while praying or prophesying in church. The right to pray or prophesy—and this involves a prominent role in the service (see 14:3-5, 24-25, 29-33)—is bestowed by the Spirit and cannot be contested (12:4-11).

It is only veils that are at issue here, but veils were—and are—a highly symbolic article of clothing. They connote inferiority, subordination, even sexuality. All the participants in this ecclesial drama were acutely aware of this, as were later generations. It is perhaps not surprising then that it was not the uncontested assumption of functional equality that prevailed in the later church, but the message of secondary, derivative status conveyed by the firmly reimposed veils (see Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

Class and Conflict at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34). The second problem reflects the persistent class-status issues that threatened the integrity of the congregation. Celebration of the Lord's Supper, which at that time was incorporated into a community meal, provided a rich opportunity for class distinctions to emerge. In accordance with Greco-Roman social customs, those of higher class at the meal received more and better food than those of lower class, who may also have arrived late because their labor and thus their time were controlled by others. Paul's response again reflects the status-destroying ethic of the cross: the congregation must discern the body of Christ, not only in the bread of the Eucharist, but also as the congregation itself (11:29). Within the body of Christ, traditional hierarchy no longer prevails (a point Paul develops in the next chapter). The well-to-do must set aside their expectations of privilege at the meal.

Status and Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12-14)

As in the previous section, the issue here is status divisions, but divisions based on possession of spiritual gifts, not (at least, not directly) on wealth. Paul's response is to promote those gifts (e.g., prophecy) and actions (e.g., love) that enhance community over those more exotic (and in Corinth, more esteemed) gifts that enhance primarily an individual (e.g., speaking in tongues). To emphasize the point, Paul applies a familiar body metaphor to the community in an unprecedented way. This metaphor was typically used in the Greco-Roman world to support the prevailing hierarchy, but Paul uses it to reverse that hierarchy. Those members of the body/community of apparent lesser honor and value (in this context, a reference to those with mundane spiritual gifts)

are actually, by God's arrangement, of greater honor and status. Women clearly participated in these gifts (see comments on 11:2-16), but whether Paul approved of this depends on the significance of 12:13 and the authenticity of 14:33b-36.

No Male and Female? (1 Cor. 12:13). To illustrate the diversity of the body of Christ, Paul asserts that "in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (12:13). Behind this verse is a baptismal formula, reproduced more fully in Galatians 3:28, that included "male and female" among the cultural divisions overcome in the body of Christ. Why did Paul omit the male and female pair in his letter to Corinth? Most likely because including it would undermine his already tortuous argument in chapter 11 concerning the wearing of status-marking veils. Absence of a specific reference to women in 12:13, however, does not imply that they did not drink of the one Spirit or receive the Spirit's gifts. The prophesying women of chapter 11 prove that they did. More problematic is the later comment that "women . . . are not permitted to speak" (14:34).

Silence! (1 Cor. 14:34-35). These two verses, usually printed as part of a paragraph that extends from 14:33b to 14:36, are strange by any reckoning of the matter. Though Paul responds conservatively and restrictively to the question of veils in chapter 11, one is still unprepared for these verses and their absolute insistence on the silence of women in the church. How can women exercise their acknowledged right to pray and prophesy (1 Cor. 11) if they must keep absolute silence? How can women like Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3), Prisca (Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19), Mary (Rom. 16:6), Junia (Rom. 16:7), and Tryphaena and Tryphosa (Rom. 16:12) function as coworkers in the churches if they cannot speak in those churches? How can Phoebe fulfill the role of deacon (Rom. 16:1-2) if she cannot speak out in the assembly? Something is seriously amiss here.

Various solutions to this dilemma have been proposed. Some have suggested that the praying and prophesying described in chapter 11 were done in the home, while silence was imposed on women in the church. Nothing, however, in chapter 11 suggests a domestic setting, and chapter 14 rather clearly establishes

worship services as the appropriate setting for prayer and prophecy. Others see a contrast between inspired speech (1 Cor. 11), which Paul permits, and uninspired chatter (1 Cor. 14), which he does not. Yet the language of the injunctions in chapter 14 rather clearly—and emphatically—covers all forms of speaking. Some assume that Paul applies the command of silence to married women, while granting the holy, unmarried women (7:34) the right to participate actively and vocally in worship. But Paul does not signal here, as he does in chapter 7, that different groups of women are being addressed.

Some ascribe the differences to a change in Paul's attitude. In chapter 11, Paul presupposes full participation of women in the worship services, but his growing concern over the chaotic practices in Corinth leads him in 14:34-35 to an unfortunate reversal. In the interest of order, various groups, including the women, are commanded to silence (14:28, 30, 34-35). The words to women, however, have an absolute quality not found in the words to the other groups. Indeed, they are presented as universally valid, which is inconsistent with an ad hoc development in Corinth.

Another approach is to assume that these words are not Paul's. There are two possibilities here. As we have seen, Paul frequently quotes the excessive positions of the Corinthians only to correct them (6:12; 7:1-2; 8:1, 4-6). A rather tenacious line of interpretation thus ascribes 14:34-35 to the Corinthian church, and Paul's emphatic disagreement with this position is signaled in verse 36. There is much to commend this view. It eliminates the tension between the views expressed here and in chapter 11, and it corresponds to Paul's established mode of argumentation in this letter. Yet the proposal is not totally convincing. There is, for example, no clear signal here that Paul is quoting the Corinthians (cf. 7:1; 8:1, 4); the other quotes are not as lengthy as this one; and elsewhere Paul's rebuttal is more clearly marked. A second possibility, though more radical, avoids these problems.

In the early New Testament manuscripts, the verses in question do not always appear at the same point in the text. In most manuscripts they are found as traditionally printed: after the assertion that God is a God of peace. In some manuscripts, however, they appear after the final words of this chapter. The most likely explanation for this is that the words on

women's silence were originally what is called a marginal gloss—comments added in the margin of a manuscript by a later reader. Following a fairly common practice, copyists of this manuscript, uncertain as to the origin of the gloss, incorporated the words into the text of the letter, some inserting them in one place, others in another. The fact that the attitude expressed in these verses corresponds not to Paul's expressed views but to the views of the later church (1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 3:1-6) supports this hypothesis of a later addition.

The inclusion of these verses in the text of Paul's letter is particularly unfortunate, for their strong wording affects the way the rest of Paul's comments on women are read. They reinforce, for example, the conservative tendencies of chapter 11 and obscure the more liberating aspects of Paul's statements about women. The fact that the verses could be so readily received as Paul's own words reflects not only the ambiguity of Paul's position (see esp. 1 Cor. 7:36-38; 11:7-9), but also the impact of the more overt misogyny of the deutero-Pauline letters (those ascribed to Paul, but likely from a later follower of Paul). It is difficult enough to assess Paul's own words on women. When later views invade the picture, the task becomes hopelessly complex.

Resurrection Issues (1 Cor. 15)

Paul closes the body of the letter on a theological topic that seems to be free of status and gender implications: the resurrection. Many think, however, that his strong insistence that the resurrection is *of the dead* means that some in the community claimed instead a resurrection of the living spirit. Moreover, spiritual resurrection may have been anticipated, if not experienced, in the spiritual gifts celebrated in the community. Since these gifts had strong status implications, claims of spiritual resurrection would have had them as well. Oddly,

Paul's list of witnesses to Jesus' resurrection does not include the women mentioned in the Gospels, though whether that is because their names were not included in the tradition Paul received (15:1-3) or because Paul suppressed the names to avoid stoking women's claims to enhanced status is not clear. He does promise that at the final resurrection all—women as well as men—will share equally in the glorified resurrection body of the man of heaven (15:49), ending finally all gender and status distinctions.

Concluding Remarks (1 Cor. 16)

Paul concludes the letter with the usual exhortations, travel plans, and greetings. Included among those sending greetings is Prisca, the female half of a peripatetic couple who was known in Corinth, had a house church in Ephesus (16:19) and later one in Rome (Rom. 16:3), and served as Paul's coworkers in the mission field (Rom. 16:3).

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