

LONG-STANDING DOUBT.

The two verses of 1 Cor. 14:34,35, "Let the women be silent ..." have been described as 'the most obviously inauthentic texts of the New Testament'.¹ There is long-standing doubt that St Paul wrote them. Rather they were some commentator's notes in the margin of a manuscript which later found their way into the text, but in different places. For 85 years, from 1927 – 2012, we who use the Nestle Greek N.T., which is expected of scholars, have had this reminder in the footnotes that accompany these verses, noted thus: (-Straatman cj). This means a scholar Straatman conjectured that these verses were not part of St Paul's letter. Probably because it was a conjecture we thought it meant it was 'mere speculation' on Straatman's part and we failed to come to grips with Straatman's well thought out argument. However because Nestle kept this notice before us for so long, and his conjecture is now being explained, we should have taken his scholarship more seriously. We can no longer hide this doubt about the genuineness of these verses from the Church when for so long it has been known to us Pastors.

Straatman argued his case in 1863, before the role of women in the church was seriously debated. His argument has remained significant. He noted the different places these verses appear in the manuscripts, either after our v.33, or v.40. He also noted how these verses contradicted other writings of St Paul. The evidence that points to these verses being an addition to St Paul's text has not diminished but increased since Straatman. In my 'Primary Sources' contribution to OWL last year I documented the evidence of the primary sources and some of the exegetical difficulties. I was alerted to the exegetical difficulties by the late Pastor Herman Pech who may also have written about this in LTJ. Rob Schubert's OWL contribution "Do the key texts..." also highlights some exegetical difficulties. The evidence that these verses were not part of St Paul's letter is overwhelming. The doubt about them has been public for over 150 years.

When we accept these verses are an interpolation, then we no longer need to debate how silent women are to be in the church. We no longer find that St Paul writing 'as the law teaches' is at odds with his other references to the purpose of the law. We don't have to guess what law he refers to. We no longer have a conflict of a command for women to be silent in v.34,35 and women being permitted to prophecy in the public worship, if their head is covered, as allowed in 1 Cor. 11:5. We have no need to speculate that women were chattering or asking disruptive questions during worship which elicits the command to be silent. We don't have to postulate that St Paul is quoting from an unknown letter to the Corinthians (Rob Schubert). Nor need we ask if this command to silence applies only to women who have husbands at home or all women. We have no need to apply the divine passive of v.38 to verses 34,35 (John Kleinig). We are assured that St Paul does not contradict himself.

Also when we read other writings of St Paul which refer to the role of women in ministry we do not have to resort to the form of argument of liberals. They dilute the meanings of words and concepts to accord with their presuppositions, especially about the Divinity of Jesus and his miracles. Hence we do not have to dilute the word 'Apostle' when it refers to the woman Junia in Rom. 16:7. We accept St Paul's usage of this title when elsewhere he writes, 'God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets...' (1 Cor. 12:28), or, 'I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be

¹ The Amsterdam NT Weblog: Straatman and 1 Cor...

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called an apostle...' (1 Cor. 15:9). This is a precious title for St Paul with which he honours also Andronicus and Junia.

We do not have to dilute the Greek word 'diakonos' when it describes the ministry of Phoebe in Rom. 16:1, but accept that St Paul uses it to describe the ministry of men and women in the same way, as he does to describe Jesus' ministry in Rom. 15:8; his own ministry in Eph. 3:7; Tychicus' ministry in both Eph. 6:21 and Col. 4:7; Timothy's ministry in 1 Tim. 4:6.

We do not resort to the liberal method of dilution for the title 'fellow-worker' because it is used to describe Prisca's ministry in Rom. 16:3. We accept that St Paul is consistent with his terminology when he uses this word to describe the ministry of Timothy in 1 Thess. 3:2, of St Paul's and Apollos' ministry in 1 Cor. 3:9, of Epaphroditus' ministry in Phil. 2:25, of Mark ...Luke in Philemon 24.

We have no need to dilute the meaning of 'prophecy' because Philip's daughters prophesied, Acts 21:9, and St Paul allowed women to prophesy in Corinth as we read in 1 Cor. 11:5.

In accepting the long-standing doubt that 1 Cor. 14:34,35 'Let the women be silent...' is not what St Paul wrote but someone else's comment added later, and the evidence for this is most compelling, then we clean up St Paul's writings. We find he does not contradict himself, he does not use titles for ministry in one way when speaking of women and in another way for men, but is consistent in the way he writes. We confirm our belief in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture.

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