SILENCE IN TRANSLATION:
INTERPRETING 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35 IN MYANMAR

Anna Sui Hluan

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The concept of silence, which is understood by Myanmar people as a sign of submission to the powerful who are anyone in a position of authority, has gained importance in Myanmar due to its prolonged history of imperial, colonial, and post-colonial authoritarian rules. This prolonged history reinforces the rule of the powerful and their control of the people. It has greatly impacted the current political and social sphere, including between rulers and ruled, relationships between men and women, parents and children, and also the religious sphere between leaders and followers of different religions in Myanmar. Within Myanmar Christianity, this concept of silence as a sign of women’s submission to authority gained its importance through the teachings of nineteenth century missionaries. Among the missionaries, Adoniram Judson was the most influential due to his scholarly work on Burmese Bible translation. Myanmar Christians read this Scripture from their past experiences of silence, and thus uncritically accept the role of silence for women in church and society.

In this context, the first question that this work seeks to answer is “what is the impact of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 on Myanmar Christians’ views of the role of women in the church?” Therefore, this work looks at this text, which demands that women keep silent in the church, and how this text was translated in the Judson’s Burmese Bible. The uncritical acceptance of Judson’s translation demonstrates that the common hermeneutical approach in Myanmar is a literal approach. This approach is unaware of how the text embodies the translator’s interpretive viewpoints in translation.

This indicates the need for a critical analysis of hermeneutics in Myanmar, and thus leads to the second question that asks “what would a satisfactory contextual hermeneutic in Myanmar today look like in order to interpret passages that concern women for today?” In order to answer this, firstly, this work looks at how 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 has been interpreted by three representative contemporary schools of interpretation: the literal traditional, feminist and egalitarian interpretations, and thus points out the importance of starting point in determining the meaning of the text.

All of these interpretations represent current views in Myanmar about the role of women in the church. They will be analyzed in order to draw appropriate hermeneutical principles for Myanmar today. Then this work proposes a critical contextual feminist hermeneutical methodology for Myanmar, which takes the Bible seriously as the rule of faith and life. This method includes exegesis and the evaluation of three contexts, Myanmar culture, exegesis of Scripture, and analysis of Judson’s Burmese Bible Translation.

The intention is to promote critical evaluation that leads to an informed response that makes it possible for Myanmar Christians to evaluate and implement appropriate contextualized practices. Critical keys for evaluation in analyzing the text include Jesus’ example of servant leadership, and Paul’s general acceptance of women’s involvement in the church. This work challenges the traditional reading of the concept of silence and raises questions of relevancy in the contemporary context of Myanmar. These questions require a critical dialogue with the gospel.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Although hermeneutics is generally referred to as a “science of interpretation,”¹ it is not a straightforward process. Biblical interpretation involves bridging the gap between the world of the biblical text and the world of the interpreter. Many approach biblical texts from the perspective of a personal search for meaning. Even when one seeks to be concerned with the intentions of original authors, editors and translators, questions arising from one’s own culture, context, and experience lead to differences of meaning drawn from the same text.

The reference in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 to women and silence is a significant instance of this “conflict of interpretation”² in biblical studies. Although many conservative scholars do not view this text as prohibiting women from exercising Christian leadership and ministry, others do. In some contexts, this is reinforced by cultural attitudes and beliefs about the role of women in society. Even New Testament scholars attempting to interpret this text with the aim of identifying its original intention have drawn very different conclusions about its meaning. This underscores a problem which this work wishes to address, namely the conflict that interpreters in Myanmar face in interpreting New Testament texts, focusing on 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

My interest in interpretive issues surrounding 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, along with other scriptural texts which have had a bearing on the role of women in the church, began when I decided to pursue theological education. Both schools where I studied in the United States hold a traditionalist or fundamentalist view on the role of women in the church, one that restricts women from preaching and teaching in the church. As a woman, this led me to question my place in the church and to wonder if I would be able to use my theological education after graduation. Despite many challenges, upon my return to

² This term is adopted from the work of Paul Ricoeur, The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics, ed. edited by Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), xv.
Myanmar I became a pastor, an academic dean of a Bible college, and a Greek language teacher at two seminaries. My fourteen years of experience in these fields, especially teaching New Testament in Bible colleges in Myanmar, led me to a deeper interest in hermeneutical issues surrounding biblical passages that concern women.

My initial inquiry into the hermeneutical issues facing interpreters of 1 Cor 14:34-35 occurred in 2000, when I began studying for a Doctor of Ministry degree. I decided to undertake research among sixty women who were alumnae of six theological seminaries representing evangelical churches in Myanmar. The title of my dissertation was “Analysis on the Leadership Challenges Facing the Women Alumnae among the Evangelical Seminaries of Yangon.”

The main purpose of this research was to determine the percentage of women alumnae who go into church-based ministry and the challenges they face. During the research, 1 Cor 14:34-35 was often mentioned as one of the reasons for not allowing women to preach in the church. This passage was mentioned more than 1 Tim 2:12-15. This led me to pursue this study of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, particularly issues related to differing ways of interpreting this text.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As noted above, the central problem to be addressed in this study is the conflict that interpreters in Myanmar face in interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. A key issue concerns the Bible translation of the nineteenth century missionary Adoniram Judson, who translated λαλέω as “preaching” instead of what I will argue is the better translation, “speaking.”

From this interpretive choice of λαλέω as “preaching,” especially in the context of σιγάω, “be silent,” Myanmar interpreters generally take this text as prohibiting women from authoritative forms of speech, specifically “preaching.” This translation has significantly influenced perceptions of the role of women in the Myanmar churches due to the respect people have for the pioneering missionary Adoniram Judson and his translation of the Bible. I am not aware of anyone in Myanmar raising linguistic issues

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4 I will discuss this in Chapter 3.2.2.3 and Chapter 7.2.4, and argue for “speaking.”
surrounding the 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 text, although this translation of Judson is still used widely in the church.

These linguistic issues relating to Judson’s translation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 highlight two areas of concern in Myanmar hermeneutical practices. The first area of concern is the influence of the Burmese Bible translation in forming theological meanings. It is only recently that biblical scholars in Myanmar such as La Seng Dingrin, John De Jong, and Naw Eh Thar Gay have begun to dialogue critically with the Judson translation. Their works will be summarized in the literature review.

The fact that only a few scholars have interacted with the Judson Bible translation highlights the need for critical dialogue in Myanmar between biblical studies and contextual realities. Therefore, this work engages not only with the Judson Burmese Bible translation but also with the historical and contextual background of this translation and its reception by Myanmar Christians. The attitudes of reverence that people have toward this translation, along with their common embrace of a literal interpretational method, have contributed to an uncritical acceptance of Judson’s translation. Given this attitude of reverence, biblical interpreters in Myanmar have hardly questioned Judson’s translation. Without seriously engaging with this translation from within the context of Myanmar, the effectiveness of Christian communication of the gospel becomes questionable in terms of the mission of the church.

The next area of concern relating to contextual aspects of Myanmar hermeneutical methodology is the role of the interpreter’s presuppositions. ‘Context’ includes the religious, socio-political, and cultural background of the interpreter, which shapes the interpreter’s presuppositions. The concept of silence, for example, has been deeply rooted in the cultural background of Myanmar throughout its history, and thus reinforces understandings and practices in the present time. This historical-cultural background plays a significant role in the way 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 has been interpreted.

Such presuppositions, in other words, influence the interpreter’s understanding of the translated texts, and the translated texts in turn reinforce the commonly accepted applications of the texts. This influential role of the interpreter’s presuppositions was not

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5 I will discuss this in Chapter 2.
acknowledged in the past due to the hermeneutical approach of Myanmar interpreters that relied heavily on the imported approaches of Western biblical interpreters, as conveyed by the missionaries, whose inherited denominational teachings are still promulgated by many contemporary interpreters in Myanmar today. These Western methods and worldviews were adopted uncritically, and thus there was a failure to realize that those missionary interpreters were themselves products of their own cultural worldviews, which are different from the Myanmar worldview and experience. This work aims to identify key interpreter presuppositions and influences that have shaped present-day Myanmar Christians’ approach to biblical texts, in particular to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which is the text under consideration.

All the above underlines the complexities that interpreters in Myanmar face in interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, which further raises the question of the relevancy of biblical hermeneutics in present-day Myanmar. Without a critical dialogue with the Myanmar context, the contextual questions and issues that interpreters bring to the biblical texts will be ignored. This would mean that the biblical hermeneutics of Myanmar would continue to be dependent on the interpretations of outsiders. In this light, this work further seeks to propose a new hermeneutical methodology that includes consideration of contextual elements to bring about some contextually relevant hermeneutics for Myanmar.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The challenge that interpreters in Myanmar face in interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 will be analyzed through a Context-Critical Hermeneutic. This method is a combination of evangelical feminist interpretation and principles gleaned from contextual theology. It aims to evaluate historical Christian traditions of interpretation that have influenced and shaped the role of women in the Myanmar church today. For that reason, this method takes the Myanmar context seriously. It has affinities with broader approaches to

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6 Interpreters in Africa, Asia, and Latin American raised the question of relevance in biblical studies since the 1960s. In explaining this, John R. Levinson and Priscilla Pope-Levinson note, “[These interpreters] spawned a new generation of contextual theologians and biblical interpreters who believe that the Bible is relevant for their contexts and that the relevance of the Bible can be best grasped from the reality of their contexts.” In P. Pope-Levinson and J.R. Levison, Return to Babel: Global Perspectives on the Bible (Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 3.
contextual theology, which examine every context carefully through the lens of social analysis. The research for this study relies primarily on relevant sources in contextual theology and contextual biblical studies literature.

Although this thesis moves toward the articulation of a Context-Critical Hermeneutic method, the first section is structured in a way that highlights the need for such a hermeneutics in Myanmar. The second section of the thesis examines three contemporary schools of interpretation and the methods and principles of key contextual theologians. It is only in this section that a context-sensitive hermeneutic is introduced and its principles are explained. The third section then demonstrates how this methodology may be applied in the context of Myanmar.

The challenges which interpreters in Myanmar face in interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 are addressed in eight chapters, divided into three sections as explained in the previous paragraph. The first section focuses on the first question the thesis seeks to answer, namely the impact of Bible translation on Myanmar Christians’ views of the role of women in the church. The next section focuses on the second question of the thesis and asks what a satisfactory contextual hermeneutic in Myanmar would look like today in order to appropriately interpret passages that concern women. The third section then revisits 1 Cor 14:34-35 considering the proposed hermeneutical method for interpreting passages that concern women in the church.

The first section comprises two chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 addresses the cultural background that influences Myanmar Christians’ interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35. This chapter looks specifically at the historical background of the concept of “silence” in Myanmar. Also, this chapter examines the impact of Bible translation on Myanmar Christians’ view of the role of women in the Myanmar church, and looks particularly at the historical background of Adoniram Judson and the factors that influenced his hermeneutical decisions. This includes examining his theological background as well as his cultural background. Chapter 3 analyzes the differences between Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 and those of other Burmese translators, considering the original Greek.
The second section consists of two chapters. This section focuses on issues of interpretational conflict regarding 1 Cor 14:34-35 among three contemporary schools of thought. The aim is to highlight principles of interpretation that may provide points of convergence or divergence in the process of constructing a context-sensitive hermeneutic for Myanmar. Arising from this central concern, Chapter 4 looks at how the three contemporary schools of thought interpret the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text, and here I also address the reasons for choosing these three approaches.

In this regard, the three scholars highlighted represent, respectively, a traditional/complementarian view, a feminist view, and an evangelical feminist/egalitarian view, and my overview highlights the influences behind each of these three contemporary hermeneutical approaches. The aim is to understand the presuppositions underlying each school of thought. This includes a determination of their divergent starting points in approaching biblical texts and their usage of other scripture passages to interpret the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text. This chapter then provides detailed interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34-35 from each of the three schools. The principles and presuppositions behind each hermeneutical school are examined to learn how they contribute to the interpretational process.

Then, Chapter 5 proposes hermeneutical methods which are new for Myanmar. This section addresses the question, ‘what are the appropriate hermeneutical principles for Myanmar when interpreting passages that concern women in the church?’ Chapter 6 focuses on the principles of contextual hermeneutics based on a critical form of analysis relating to three contexts: the Myanmar interpreter, the Bible translator, and the context of the Bible in its historical setting. Chapter 6 then attempts to address the question, ‘what are the critical issues and challenges to be considered when applying the proposed hermeneutical principles for Myanmar?’

Considering all the above-mentioned, the third section of this thesis revisits the context of Myanmar and the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text. Chapter 6 looks at the problematic nature of Myanmar hermeneutics in engaging critically with the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text. Then, chapter 7 revisits the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text, and demonstrates what an interpretation that follows the principles of the proposed context-sensitive hermeneutics may look like in the Myanmar context. This chapter seeks to answer the question, ‘what are the practical
means of approach to 1 Cor 14:34-35 using the principles of a contextual hermeneutics for Myanmar? Chapter 8 then concludes by summarizing the contributions of this proposed contextual hermeneutics for Myanmar.

1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is limited to the Myanmar context, focusing particularly on interpreters from the Protestant churches and related institutions that use the Bible translation of Adoniram Judson. My approach is primarily hermeneutical. I have not been able to locate material on the training in biblical interpretation which Judson may have received at Brown University or anywhere else. Additional work on placing Judson within the history of interpretation (following William Smalley) would be an interesting avenue for further study but has not been undertaken here.

The scope of this study is also limited to written documents that have been available to me. There are almost no written documents that represent the views of Myanmar interpreters of 1 Cor 14:34-35, although they are voiced orally through preaching and teaching in the church. Also, to my knowledge, it is only recently that a very few theologians from Myanmar have raised any issues pertaining to the Bible translation of Adoniram Judson. For these reasons, I have limited this study to the literature that is available in published form. Although I searched for literature relating to this study in the two largest libraries in Yangon in November of 2015, I could locate only a very few sources, most of which were written by Western historians on Judson.

Additionally, due to the severely restricted interaction of Myanmar with the West from the time of its independence until recently, the literature in Myanmar on contextual hermeneutics is limited to studies by contextual theologians abroad. There are no books on contextual hermeneutics and only a few books that reflect on contextual theology from the perspective of Myanmar. Therefore, the principles of hermeneutics that form the framework for this study are drawn primarily from only three hermeneutical schools of thought (a traditional/complementarian, a feminist, and an evangelical feminist/egalitarian). Due to the word limit placed on the thesis, the fundamentalist view (which advocates the total silence of women in the church) is not included in this study.

7 The works of William A. Smalley are referenced in the literature review of this chapter 1.5.
The materials I have used to help formulate the principles undergirding the contextually sensitive hermeneutics I propose draw on the works of seminal contextual theologians.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant, firstly, because a hermeneutical study of 1 Cor 14:34-35 has never been done from the context of Myanmar, to my knowledge. There are no written materials that I am aware of on the issue of Adoniram Judson’s interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 and the importance of this interpretation for the role of women in the Myanmar church. In fact, as I have noted, I was not able to locate any written material which addresses interpretation issues in the New Testament texts of Judson’s Burmese translation. I was not able to locate any studies in Myanmar that parallel the concerns of this thesis. In that light, this study has been undertaken with the hope that it will contribute to New Testament studies in Myanmar.

Further, it is my hope that this work will contribute to supporting the work of women pastors in Myanmar, the focus of my D.Min. research, and those asking sincere questions about the place of women in Christian leadership. In addition, I hope that this study will help interpreters in Myanmar, whether male or female, to have conversations with biblical texts such as the one which is the focus of this study and to understand more fully all the issues surrounding such texts.

The need for such dialogical conversation between interpreters and sacred texts is also crucial and timely because Myanmar is in a new phase of its history as a country. Because of the recent political and economic changes in Myanmar, the role of women in society is also undergoing change. More than ever before in the history of Christianity in Myanmar, women are now being trained in theological institutions. But although theological institutions have accepted these women, the traditions in the church make ministry difficult if not impossible for them. Therefore, this study is significant because it is an invitation to biblical interpreters in Myanmar to dialogue and reflect together on these issues as a community of believers.

Moreover, this study can offer a contribution to hermeneutics, a new approach to understanding the Bible in the context of Myanmar. It is my hope that this study will challenge the interpreters of the Bible in Myanmar to evaluate the current practices of
hermeneutics critically and to seriously consider a fresh approach to biblical interpretation that is relevant for Myanmar. It is hoped that this study will raise awareness of the role of the interpreter’s presuppositions in biblical interpretation, including the relevance of cultural understandings, social location, and theological traditions as important factors that influence the decisions of the interpreter. I hope that by applying the questions raised by this thesis, we will discover new insights from the Bible that we have missed because we have followed traditional ways of reading texts. It is my belief that, through this new way of reading the Bible, we will discover new ways of doing contextual theology in the context of Myanmar.

In short, this study can contribute to various interrelated aspects of the work of the church in Myanmar, including its theologizing, hermeneutics, mission, translation, social analysis, assessment of the role of women in church and society, and New Testament studies. In that regard, this is a resource that can be useful for the theological institutions in Myanmar.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

All the literature collections on the Myanmar context used for this thesis come from the library research I have done in the libraries of the Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (MEGST) and the Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT). The other sources, on contemporary biblical hermeneutics and contextual theology, come from library research within New Zealand, mainly from the Otago University library. I also identified relevant materials in the helpful reference work, *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*.

Based on these search efforts, the literature review is divided into four categories. They are (1) literature on Myanmar, which deals with interpreting the Bible in general or interpretation done by Myanmar authors; (2) material on Myanmar contextual theology that helps in the formulation of a contextually engaged hermeneutic; (3) material on the three contemporary hermeneutical schools of thought, and material on first-century Corinth; and (4) material on similar contextual studies in other contexts.

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1.5.1 Literature on Interpretation in Myanmar

The literature review on interpretation in Myanmar focuses on material that addresses issues relating to Bible translation. To the best of my knowledge, there is limited material that deals with issues surrounding the Bible translation of Judson, and the few in existence are mostly in article form. Even these available sources generally deal with different aspects of his translation work other than an exegetical analysis of his translation. It is only recently that scholars in Myanmar have begun to dialogue critically with Judson’s translation.

An early questioning of the translation of Judson is found in an article written by La Seng Dingrin. From the perspective of mission, Dingrin raises the issue of linguistics, highlighting the terminology borrowed by Judson from Burmese Buddhism in his gospel brochures, which includes terminology for God and ways of making references to God. He notes the importance of these words in Judson’s handouts as well as in his Bible translation. Dingrin’s primary concern is to point out the reason behind Judson’s failure to reach many Burmese, which he attributed to Judson’s negative attitude toward Buddhism. Although the focus of his article is different from that of this thesis, it is helpful in pointing out certain influences behind Judson’s translation choices.

Other issues related to Judson’s linguistic usage, highlighted by Khoi Lam Thang and Eh Tar Gay, are helpful in historical and translational analysis. From the perspective of translation, Khoi Lam Thang, a translation officer of the Bible Society of Myanmar, examined translation issues in Isaiah 40:31, where Judson translated the term for eagle as *shwe lin ta* (“golden vulture”) instead of *lin yung* (“eagle”). In this article, he defended Judson’s translation choice while acknowledging its problematic aspects. From the perspective of postcolonial hermeneutics, Eh Tar Gay’s Ph.D. thesis raises the issue of missionary influences on the role of women in the church of Myanmar. She examines

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several New Testament texts that deal with authority, power, and submission in people’s social, political, and religious life. This work addresses how these texts have been exegeted by mainstream scholars, missionaries, Asian liberation theologians and feminists, and by Myanmar Christians.

For the purposes of this thesis, Gay’s work is particularly helpful in understanding the influential role of Judson’s Bible translation in shaping the Myanmar churches’ position on the status of women in the church. This work is also helpful in informing our understanding of how words such as authority, power and submission have gained importance in the Myanmar church based on the broader political situation, social and cultural traditions, and religious teachings. However, although she briefly notes the important influence of Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 on women in the church, the linguistic differences between Judson’s translation choices and the Greek text are not mentioned. This particular linguistic issue has become a primary interest of this study.

A study whose aims are perhaps like those of this study is that of John De Jong, who approaches issues raised by Judson’s translation from the perspective of Old Testament studies. His work raises the same kinds of linguistic questions that I raise in this thesis. For example, he notes Judson’s Burmese translation of the Hebrew word hattat as “sin offering” rather than “sin” in Gen 4:7. In his study, De Jong sees Judson’s translation approach as similar to that of Matthew Henry (1662-1714) and Adam Clarke (1762-1832). He points out that Judson’s rendering of Gen 4:7 was widely held in that era. However, he notes that this reading is no longer considered an accurate rendering, although this is the reading that most Myanmar Christians know. Considering these conclusions, De Jong asks Myanmar interpreters to accept the reality that “Judson was affected by the understanding of the time.” Although my work shares some similarities with De Jong’s in terms of linguistic analysis, it differs significantly with respect to methodology.

12 Ibid., 284.
14 Ibid., 91.
1.5.2 Literature on Contextual Theology in Myanmar

The available literature on contextual theology in Myanmar generally focuses on contextually appropriate communication from the perspective of mission, rather than on contextual hermeneutics. Theologians such as Tha Din (1963), Pau Khan En (1995), Peter Thein Nyunt (2010), and Samuel Ngun Ling (2014) address Christian communication approaches, missionary strategies and issues relating to indigenous Christians, especially in relation to evangelization with Bamar Buddhists. This material contributes to an understanding of the influential role of context in shaping the Myanmar worldview and way of life.

Tha Din was trained in the scholarship of Buddhist monks before his conversion to Christianity. His book *Comparative Study of Buddhist and Christian Scriptures* raised awareness of the important role of Buddhism in the Myanmar worldview and daily life. From this understanding, he developed a comparative approach between the teachings of the Bible and the teachings of Buddhism. His method highlights similarities between the two religions rather than differences. Although Din’s work is a serious and substantive treatment of the religious teaching of Buddhism in conversation with that of Christianity, and although it has raised awareness of Buddhism’s influence on the Myanmar worldview and cultural identity, it is limited in terms of the primary concern of this thesis, since it does not include exegetical analysis of sacred texts.

Pau Khan En’s Ph.D. thesis, "*Nat Worship: A Paradigm for Doing Contextual Theology for Myanmar,*" addresses the need for doing contextual theology in Myanmar. He points out an aspect of Nat (‘spirit’) worship in Myanmar as an example of the need for Myanmar Christians to think seriously about contextual theology. He argues that this aspect of Nat (‘spirit’) worship is widely practiced among Buddhists in their daily life, and therefore must be considered theologically by Myanmar Christians when addressing issues related to spirituality and worship. This work is helpful in raising awareness of another contextual

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influence on the Myanmar worldview. However, it is also limited since it does not provide principles and methods for contextual hermeneutics, the primary interest of this thesis.

Peter Thein Nyunt, a former Buddhist monk, examines past and current approaches of the Protestant church to Burmese Buddhists in his book *Missions Amidst Pagodas.* He agrees with Tha Din and Pau Khan En on the influences of Buddhism in forming a Myanmar worldview based on core religious values, which he sees as directly influencing how the Bamar people make daily life decisions, including the decision to convert to Christianity. According to Nyunt, the Protestant missionaries’ endeavors to communicate the gospel to Burmese Buddhists must be assessed as being unsatisfactory, due to their inability to enter into the worldview of the people. He further analyzes the current approaches to Gospel communication in Myanmar as inadequate because they continue to imitate Western denominations, and thus their communication strategies are contextually irrelevant for Myanmar. Nyunt proposes a missiological strategy based on principles of effective contextual communication for Myanmar. Although Nyunt’s work differs from my concern for contextual hermeneutics, it clarifies the role of the interpreter’s worldview in the hermeneutical inquiry process.

The work of Samuel Ngun Ling, *Christianity through Our Neighbors’ Eyes,* is the most relevant to the concerns of this thesis, in that he is searching for a critical form of analysis that takes the context of Myanmar seriously. In this book, Ling, who is the president of the Myanmar Institute of Theology and a Baptist, analyzes the way theology and mission are understood and practiced among the Baptist churches of Myanmar. Although he is focusing on the Baptist churches, his work is relevant for the broader context of church

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life in Myanmar. He analyzes conventional approaches to theology and mission in Myanmar, which he sees as still very much dependent on the missionaries’ teaching and the imported theologies of the West. His argument is that they are no longer relevant to Myanmar’s religious, cultural, and socio-political contexts.\(^\text{20}\)

In this light, he calls for contextualization by way of the deconstruction of Western traditions and practices in the church, reconstructing these traditions and practices in the “Burmese way and thought forms with the use of Burmese religious cultural resources.”\(^\text{21}\)

In order to do this he proposes a cross-textual hermeneutics\(^\text{22}\) that interprets the Christian text and the Buddhist text dialogically, as a part of inter-religious dialogue.\(^\text{23}\) This concept is helpful in understanding another way of doing contextual study. However, his work is limited with respect to the primary concern of this thesis, which focuses on developing a critical contextual hermeneutical method.

Among the above sources on contextual theology, it is perhaps significant that two authors are from the Bamar Buddhist monk background, while the rest are from a Christian background. These sources are helpful in that they engage with important issues related to contextualization in Myanmar.

1.5.3 Literature on Three Hermeneutical Approaches

In this thesis, the hermeneutical approaches of three Western biblical interpreters are examined to discover principles that may have relevance for the articulation of a contextual Myanmar hermeneutics. The reason for selecting these interpreters for scrutiny is the lack of published materials in Myanmar in biblical interpretation. In fact, there is almost no literature that explores interpretational issues surrounding 1 Cor 14:34-35 written by interpreters in Myanmar. Furthermore, I was able to locate only one exegetical paper that deals with women’s silence in the church, and this paper, written by Eh Tar Gay, is on 1 Tim 2.\(^\text{24}\) The three schools of thought have thus been selected because of their influences on contemporary views in Myanmar on the role of women in the

\(^{20}\) Ling, Christianity Through Our Neighbors’ Eyes, 177.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 129.


\(^{23}\) Ling, Christianity Through Our Neighbors’ Eyes, 295.

church. The selected scholars for each hermeneutical school are also chosen based on their similarities in understanding the historical context of 1 Cor 14:34-35 as relating to prophecy.

The work of the complementarian scholar Wayne Grudem is considered as being representative of the literal-traditional school. Grudem is a professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary.\(^\text{25}\) In particular, his book *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*,\(^\text{26}\) based on his Ph.D. thesis, is explored in dialogue with his other works.\(^\text{27}\) In its examination of New Testament prophecy, particularly focusing on 1 Corinthians, Grudem’s thesis highlights 1 Cor 14:33-35.\(^\text{28}\) He argues from the perspective of what can be called a hierarchical view that sees male headship as “biblical manhood.”\(^\text{29}\) He thus makes the case that Paul is preserving male leadership as the norm in the church. His work provides helpful insights in discerning the ideology and methodology behind the traditional view of women as subservient to men which is normative in the Myanmar church.

As a salient representative of feminist hermeneutics, the work of feminist biblical scholar Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is explored. She is the Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School.\(^\text{30}\) Particularly, her book *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*\(^\text{31}\) is examined, along with her other works\(^\text{32}\) that address interpretive issues in 1 Cor 14:34-35. In *In Memory of Her*, Schüssler Fiorenza introduces her famous critical methodology known as a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion.’ Her method draws attention to the patriarchal context of biblical texts and the androcentric presuppositions within biblical texts, as well as the gradual patriarchal

\(^{25}\) [http://www.waynegrudem.com](http://www.waynegrudem.com). Grudem is also the General Editor for the ESV Study Bible.


\(^{30}\) [http://hds.harvard.edu/people/elisabeth-sch%C3%BCssler-fiorenza](http://hds.harvard.edu/people/elisabeth-sch%C3%BCssler-fiorenza).


influences that resulted in forgetting women’s history in the early Christian church.\textsuperscript{33} In this context, she traces the negative impact on the role of women of these patriarchal presuppositions that lie behind certain New Testament texts, and calls for a historical recovery of the place of women in the New Testament. She argues from the perspective that Paul was not himself hierarchicalist.

For the egalitarian or evangelical feminist hermeneutical point of view, the work of Ben Witherington is examined. He is the Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary.\textsuperscript{34} His book \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians}\textsuperscript{35} is of relevance for this thesis, and is examined in dialogue with his other works\textsuperscript{36} that analyze 1 Cor 14:34-35. He argues from a perspective that views the issues highlighted in 1 Corinthians as more cultural and rhetorical than theological. His method pays attention to historical critical analysis, and therefore contextualizes the cultural and social context of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in historical perspective, along with a literary reading of the passage and the book. He argues that Paul was neither hierarchical nor feminist.

These hermeneutical works are evaluated in conjunction with contemporary commentaries and works of other Western biblical scholars. The primary commentaries consulted in this thesis include the works of Anthony C. Thiselton,\textsuperscript{37} Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner,\textsuperscript{38} David Garland,\textsuperscript{39} and Gordon Fee.\textsuperscript{40} I also consult the work of male

\textsuperscript{33} I will discuss these in detail in Chapter 4 of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{34} http://www.benwitherington.com/.
\textsuperscript{35} Ben Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians} Includes bibliographical references and indexes. [Grand Rapids, Mi: William B. Eerdmans, 1995].
scholars such as Phillip Payne,\textsuperscript{41} Craig Keener,\textsuperscript{42} and Jerome Murphy-O’Connor;\textsuperscript{43} female scholars such as Antoinette Wire,\textsuperscript{44} Cornelia Crocker,\textsuperscript{45} and Lucy Peppiatt;\textsuperscript{46} and the work of Asian scholar Edgar Ebojo.\textsuperscript{47} They are chosen for the insights they provide on the historical and literary analysis of 1 Cor 14:34-35. In addition, the work of Bruce Winter\textsuperscript{48} has been useful for his perspectives on the socio-historical context of Corinth.

\subsection*{1.5.4 Literature on Contextual Hermeneutics}

As noted in the discussion of methodology, the interest of this thesis is in developing a contextual method that will enable serious engagement with the context of Myanmar. Due to this concern for context, this thesis has drawn on the works of Western contextual theologians for methods and principles of interpretation that pay close attention to context. The thesis focuses on the work of two Roman Catholic scholars, Stephen Bevans and Robert Schreiter, and two evangelical scholars, Paul Hiebert and Dean Flemming. These works highlight the contextual character of all theology, and thus provide foundations for constructing my own contextual hermeneutics for Myanmar.

The work of Stephen Bevans in \textit{Models of Contextual Theology}\textsuperscript{49} clarifies a core concern of this thesis, namely the role of context in hermeneutics. From his own experience of living for several years in the Philippines as a missionary and his work as professor of historical and doctrinal studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Bevans provides a helpful explanation of the differences between the perspectives, assumptions, and methods of Western and Third World theologians. He points out that the enterprise of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Philip Barton Payne, \textit{Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).
\item \textsuperscript{43} Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, \textit{Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
\item \textsuperscript{44} Antoinette Clark Wire, \textit{The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric} (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990).
\item \textsuperscript{45} Cornelia Cyss Crocker, \textit{Reading First Corinthians in the Twenty-First Century} (New York: T & T Clark International, 2004).
\item \textsuperscript{46} Lucy Peppiatt, \textit{Women and Worship at Corinth: Paul’s Rhetorical Arguments in 1 Corinthians} (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015).
\item \textsuperscript{47} Edgar Ebojo, ”Should Women be Silent in the Churches? Women’s Audible Voices in the Textual Variants of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35,” \textit{Trinity Theological Journal} (January 2006): 1-33.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Bruce Winter, \textit{Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans 2003).
\end{itemize}
theology in the Third World has traditionally been dictated by inherited Western perspectives and thus has failed to address contextual issues and concerns. Bevans invites all readers to enter into a creative dialogue by examining five models of contextual theology: "translation," "synthetic," "praxis," "transcendental," and "anthropological" models. In terms of the interest of this thesis, Bevan’s work verifies the important role of contemporary experiences and questions in all theological conversations. His work also aids in analyzing the influences of Western biblical and theological perspectives in the context of Myanmar. At the same time, Bevan’s work is limited in terms of offering hermeneutical principles for approaching biblical texts in Myanmar.

Robert Schreiter’s influential work, Constructing Local Theologies, is helpful in articulating the principles of a contextual hermeneutics. Like Bevans, Schreiter is a former missionary and professor of theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Schreiter also asserts the importance of the cultural context in generating questions that interpreters bring to theological conversations. He argues that these questions emerged out of the experience of colonialism and dissatisfaction with colonial interpretations in various Third World contexts. He sees these questions as a valid starting point in theological conversations and proposes a new method of studying theology that takes local questions seriously. He calls for a theology that seeks to answer the questions with which people ‘on the ground’ grapple, rather than the institutional agendas of the church. Although his work is limited to addressing the process of listening to contemporary culture in local theology, it provides helpful guidelines for a local hermeneutic. His demonstration of the method known as ‘dialogical analysis’ (between the contemporary context and the Bible) is particularly helpful for this thesis.

From the perspective of evangelical scholarship, scholars such as Paul Hiebert and Dean Flemming raise the same concern that Bevans and Schreiter have addressed since 1985. Paul Hiebert, who was Professor of Mission and Anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a former missionary in India, raises the issue of context in an article.

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entitled "Critical Contextualization." Here he proposes a critical contextualization method from the perspective of faith that takes the Bible seriously in responding to questions of non-Western Christians about traditional beliefs and practices. Hiebert highlights the need to analyze contemporary culture alongside exegesis of biblical texts, in order to respond critically when applying such texts. This includes forming new practices that are more relevant for the given context, as well as checking those practices against the risk of syncretism. Although this work is limited to contextual theology, it is especially helpful in understanding the need to include a critical form of analysis in any contextual hermeneutics.

All the aspects of contextualization which Bevans, Schreiter and Hiebert have raised are summarized well by Dean Flemming in his book Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission. Flemming is Professor of New Testament and Missions at MidAmerica Nazarene University and taught for several years at the Philippines Nazarene Seminary. This work clarifies the patterns of contextualization in the New Testament. It demonstrates how the Apostle Paul’s letters can be interpreted through a contextual lens, namely a “context-oriented hermeneutics.” He explains Paul’s method as a dynamic interplay between “Israel’s Scriptures, the gospel as an interpretive matrix, and the life situation of the mission churches.” He sees Paul as interpreting Hebrew scriptures through the lens of the gospel of Jesus, in an interpretive matrix, to bring edification and restoration to the community of faith.

Like the other three contextual theologians, Flemming believes that the contemporary questions which interpreters bring to the biblical text are an important beginning step of the interpretive process. The next step is discovering the meaning of the text in its original

54 Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," 89.
57 He also calls this method a “context-sensitive hermeneutics.”
59 Ibid., 172.
setting, which allows the text to confront the presuppositions and assumptions that interpreters bring to the text. In sum, Flemming calls for a critical as well as transformational form of biblical study for today. His work is particularly helpful for this thesis in understanding how Paul appropriated Hebrew scriptures in his own context.

All the above scholars contribute to this work in laying the foundation for the context-critical hermeneutics that I will construct in Chapter 5 of this thesis. They add insights to this new hermeneutic for the context of Myanmar. The fact that these scholars write from their experiences of living in various non-Western cultures strengthens the validity of their work, and their contributions in turn strengthen the hermeneutical method which this thesis is developing for Myanmar.

Lastly, this thesis has benefitted from work written by Western scholars on Bible translation. Since the primary questions raised by this thesis arise from the linguistic usage of the Judson Burmese Bible translation, it has been important to understand the work of William Smalley, especially his *Translation as Mission: Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement*. Smalley was Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and he also worked for the United Bible Societies for many years. In *Translation as Mission*, Smalley not only outlines the historical development of Bible translations but also discusses a variety of translation issues, such as theology and the principles of translation, including dynamic equivalence. This work is helpful not only in providing the background to translation, but also in understanding how translations of the Bible are related to a range of hermeneutical issues. Smalley highlights the important issue of the interpreter’s presuppositions, personal experiences, and preferences in interpreting theological meanings within the text. While acknowledging that clarity of translation helps in interpretation, he traces the source of many interpretive problems to the interpreter. Therefore, his work is helpful in providing tools to analyze the influences

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of translation and the presuppositions that interpreters bring to their examination of biblical texts in the context of Myanmar.
SECTION I: THE MYANMAR CONTEXT

This section focuses on two problematic areas that contemporary biblical interpreters in Myanmar encounter in interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:34-35: the significance of the cultural context of Myanmar, and the influence of historic Bible translations. The cultural context of Myanmar is analyzed to identify the underlying presuppositions that influence Myanmar Christians in their interpretations of biblical passages about women and silence. This is viewed from a perspective that acknowledges the cultural context (or the “cognitive environment”\(^63\)) of the interpreter as the contextual lens through which interpretations are made. In other words, the cultural context shapes the “hermeneutical assumptions”\(^64\) of the interpreter.

With this framework in mind, the first chapter of this section, Chapter 2, examines the cultural worldview and ideological orientations of Myanmar that lie behind interpreters’ understandings of the word ‘silence.’ Chapter 3 then looks at the influences of the Burmese Bible translation in forming theological meanings. This analysis is undertaken to identify how 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 was translated in Judson’s Burmese Bible and the impact of that translation on Myanmar Christians’ views of the role of women in the church. The underlying perspective is one that views the Myanmar interpreter’s understanding of words as functioning together with Bible translations in forming the theological meanings and social implications of the text. Both areas of concern, the cultural context and issues related to Bible translation, are vital in understanding how to address the questions that interpreters bring to the text, and how this passage in 1 Corinthians can best be interpreted in the Myanmar context. With these concerns in mind, the following two chapters explore the influences of cultural context and translation in Myanmar on the hermeneutical process.

\(^63\) Larry W. Caldwell, "Part 1: Reconsidering Our Biblical Roots: Bible Interpretation, the Apostle Paul and Mission Today," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29:2 (Summer 2012): 25. According to Caldwell, most Western interpreters who value the roles of hermeneutics and contextualization in the mission of the church follow two steps in their methodology: looking at the original context of biblical texts in order to find out what the Bible message meant to its original hearers; and analyzing their present context to determine applications of the text for the present day. However, this approach still fails to address the “cultural influences” that shape one’s own hermeneutical “orientations” and “assumptions.”

\(^64\) Ibid., 4.
Chapter 2

SILENCE IN MYANMAR: THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

The contextual setting of Myanmar is complex and culturally diverse. According to the 2014 census, Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) is a homeland for over 51 million people. There are eight major ethnic groups—Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Bahmar, Rakhine, and Shan. It is also recorded in the census that there are 135 spoken languages in Myanmar. It is therefore accurate to claim that multi-ethnic diversity defines Myanmar. The Bamar form the majority group at 68% of the population, with the Shan at 9%, Kayin 7%, Rakhine 4%, Mon 2%, Kachin 1.5%, Chin 1%, Kayah 0.75%, and the remainder comprising Chinese and Indians. In addition to the multiplicity of ethnicities, Myanmar is also religiously diverse. The same report indicates that 89% of the population follow Theravada Buddhism, 4% are Christians, 4% Muslim, 1% animist, and 2% are listed as ‘others.’ This diversity of ethnicities and religions has made the country culturally rich, but at the same time it has created complexities and conflicts—ethnically, religiously, and politically.

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66 This changing of the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar is explained well by David I. Steinberg, Burma the State of Myanmar (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2001), xi. The name of the country was changed from Burma to Myanmar in 1989 by the military government, along with changes from the English translations of many colonial-era names into Burmese. Due to questions surrounding the legitimacy of the military government at the time, and the lack of a referendum regarding the name change, the renaming was contested by the opposition party and many countries, including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. However, the United Nations and other entities, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, refer to the country as “Myanmar.”


68 Luo Guo, ed. Understanding Burma (Myanmar): History, Geography, Economy (Beijing, China: Intercultural Press, 2013), 24. This book was written for the CIA, and thus the information it contains is the same as that found in the above-mentioned CIA website.

69 Ibid.
This complex context is the conceptual framework or lens through which the Myanmar interpreter approaches biblical texts. This is the backdrop which lies behind the assumptions which Myanmar interpreters bring to 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. It is in this light that this chapter discloses the contextual background of Myanmar in terms of three major historical periods, in relation to how the worldview that is revealed in this cultural and political history predisposes the people of Myanmar, including its Christian biblical interpreters, to understand the concept of silence.

### 2.1 THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF SILENCE IN MYANMAR

In Myanmar, as in other contexts, biblical interpreters’ prior understanding of the concept of silence cannot help but influence their interpretation of silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. The Burmese people generally understand the concept of silence as a sign of submission, as well as a sign of respect for the powerful, meaning anyone in a position of authority. This concept has been socially constructed within the historical realities and cultural worldview of Myanmar. It has gained significance in Myanmar due to its prolonged history of living under imperial, colonial, and post-colonial authoritarian rule. This concept is also rooted in and reinforced by the religious teachings of the major religion (Buddhism) and the cultural values that are intertwined with these religious teachings.

This chapter thus traces the development of the concept of silence in Myanmar in relation to the historical and political perspective, the background of relevant religious teachings, and how this concept has influenced the status of women in present-day Myanmar. The type of silence on which this thesis is focused is the silence that is imposed by the powerful upon those who are less powerful. This religio-cultural framing of silence is analyzed through factors such as the use of power, particularly how respect is enforced by the powerful over against the powerless, through actions that create fear in people, thereby preventing them from voicing their concerns. These factors are cross-examined with particular reference to the status of women in key historical periods.
2.1.1 The Pre-Colonial Period

The earliest known settlements in Myanmar were Mon and Pyu. The Mon people settled in the Irrawaddy Delta and Tennesarim coastal areas around 2500 to 1500 BCE, and the Pyu (present-day Yunnan) set up the first known city-states in the central part of Myanmar around the 2nd century BCE. It was only in the 9th century CE that the Burmans/Bamar people founded a small settlement at Pagan (Bagan), and they later overwhelmed the Pyu. Pagan gradually grew in power, and this led to the beginning of the first Bamar Empire. The pre-colonial period, from around the second century CE to the year 1824, when Myanmar came under British rule, was a period of kings and kingdoms, where kings generally practiced an absolute form of authoritarian rule. The low status of women during this period was related to class and Myanmar’s long history of absolute monarchy.

The Pagan Empire, from 1050 to 1287 CE, was founded by King Anawrahta, who introduced Theravada Buddhism into the kingdom in 1050 CE. The Mongols defeated this empire in 1287 CE, and this led to a series of smaller kingdoms such as the Shan, the Mon in the Hanthawaddy Kingdom, and the Bamars in the Ava Kingdom. The Taungoo Empire covered the period from 1552 to 1752. It was founded in 1522 by the third king of the Taungoo Dynasty, who was known as Bayinnaung. He conquered and unified a wide swath of mainland Southeast Asia. However, the Taungoo Empire unraveled soon after.

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70 Ibid., 4.  
72 Elizabeth H. Moore, Early Landscapes of Myanmar (Thailand: River Books, 2007), 236. The cities they built were known as Thayetitaya, Bekthano and Prome.  
76 Ibid., 6. He further notes that the rulers from this period of the Pagan Empire were exceptionally powerful and wealthy, for they built over 10,000 Buddhist temples in the Pagan capital zone alone. Many of these temples are still standing to the present day. During his reign, the Burmese language and culture gradually became dominant in the upper Irrawaddy. Also in William J. Topich and Keith A. Leitch, The History of Myanmar (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2013), 156.  
77 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 13.  
79 Guo, ed., Understanding Burma (Myanmar): History, Geography, Economy, 7. He conquered the Shan states, Lan Na, Manipur, the Chinese Shan states, Siam, Lan Xang, and southern Arakan.
Bayinnaung’s death in 1581, and finally fell into the hands of the Mon in 1752. The Konbaung Empire, from 1752 to 1824, was formed by Alaunpaya from Shwebo in 1752. This kingdom was the last kingdom of Myanmar. The Konbaung king, Mindon, was a proponent of formal education, and modernized the kingdom. However, during his son Thibaw’s reign, three wars were fought with the British, the first in 1824. After the third war, the whole country became part of British India in 1885.

The social structure of these pre-colonial period societies can be characterized as strongly hierarchical, placing the king at the center of power and the village unit at the bottom. During these periods, the kings, as well as chiefs or headmen of the villages, were known for their authoritarian use of force, which paralyzed and terrorized the lives of ordinary people. In these three periods of the Myanmar kingdoms, although there were a few benign kings, most were known for their cruelty and their demands for respect that forced people into submission. They “could remove or even execute their officials at any time, for the slightest offence.” The legends of the 37 talented individuals who were killed by kings due to jealousy and suspicion are testimonies to the unbridled power and authority of the kings. The legends describe these kings as turning into powerful spirits, called nats. These spirits were believed to have influence over human affairs, and many in Myanmar still worship them today.

Seekins describes this pre-colonial period in Myanmar as a time of “absolute monarchy.” During this period, the kings were viewed as superior to all others, even if they were killing and persecuting people. They were thought to have obtained such an exalted position due to their birth and the meritorious deeds of their past lives. This belief derives from the

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80 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 13.
81 Ibid. Also in Guo, Understanding Burma, 8
82 Guo, ed., Understanding Burma (Myanmar): History, Geography, Economy, 8. Guo notes that King Alaunpaya attacked the Thais, and his son, King Hsinbyshin, destroyed the Aythhaya in 1767. The palace was moved from their capital of Shwebo to Ava, then to Amarapura, and finally to Mandalay. Also in Topich and Leitich, The History of Myanmar, 37.
83 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 12-14. The first Anglo-Burmese War was from 1824-1826, the second Anglo-Burmese War from 1852-1853, and the third Anglo-Burmese War took place in 1885.
84 Ibid. Also in Guo, ed., Understanding Burma (Myanmar): History, Geography, Economy, 8.
86 Ibid., 16.
87 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 50.
religious concept of kutho, or karma,⁸⁹ which teaches the importance of doing good deeds to achieve a better life through reincarnation. This concept legitimized the king’s power and authority since the belief was that a king was born into the royal family by his good deeds in past lives.⁹⁰ This belief also legitimized the suffering of the people, which was assumed to be the result of their lack of meritorious deeds in past lives.

The kings were further thought to have entitlement to hpoun (charismatic glory or innate power), since hpoun is endowed only to men, who possess let-yon (military force), and ana (authority).⁹¹ The downfall of a king was viewed as the result of weakness in his karma and hpoun. In the context of victory in battle, the cruelty of the king toward the defeated was considered as a sign of his hpoun.⁹² These concepts were introduced during the period concurrent with the installation of Buddhism in the kingdoms. They became strongly integrated into the belief system of the people and continue to exert a powerful influence on the worldview of the people, and especially on the daily lives of contemporary women in Myanmar.

Despite the absolute power of the kings, there is also the suggestion that, relative to other societies at the time, women enjoyed some degree of freedom in their social roles during the pre-colonial period. According to Jessica Harriden, the social roles and status of women during the Pagan period were determined by class as much as by gender.⁹³ She notes that class distinctions were less rigid than in other Asian societies and were based on “differences of birth, wealth and profession.”⁹⁴ Women who were born into the ruling class, which included the royal family and the high-ranking officials, had power and status, derived from their family lineage, over commoners. She notes that although the highest offices in the king’s court were reserved for men, during this period educated women,

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⁸⁹ The doctrine of karma asserts that the present life of a person is the result of one’s own merit accumulated in previous incarnations.
⁹⁰ Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 61.
⁹² Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 208.
⁹³ Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 55.
⁹⁴ Ibid. She notes four categories of commoners: Asan (“unbounded people who earned their livelihood through private business”); Kween-to (“people in the royal service”; kwest (“people bonded to private individuals”); and pura kwest (“those dedicated to Buddhist establishments”). She defines kwest as being not precisely equivalent to slavery, because some people became kwest out of obligation and a relationship formed between “a client and his or her patron.”
especially those of higher status, served as lower level officials, royal secretaries, and clerks in the court.\textsuperscript{95}

Among the commoners, the wives and daughters of rich traders had the right to inheritance and property, and such women had opportunities to work in any profession, albeit with much lower wages than men. However, a woman’s status was typically linked to her relationship to a powerful man. The prime example of this is the only woman monarch, Queen Shinsawbu (1453-1472 CE), from the Hanthawaddy Kingdom, which controlled a major Burmese state.\textsuperscript{96} Her rule was made possible only when no male relatives of the king were left to rule, as she was the wife of the late king.\textsuperscript{97}

The role and status of women in society during the pre-colonial period can thus be described as both somewhat liberated as well as limiting. This can be seen in the marriage relationship of this period, where the standard for husbands was different from that of wives. For example, although a man could have many wives, a woman could not have more than one husband. Harriden argues that this widely practiced custom of polygamy among elite men “created unequal power between men and women.”\textsuperscript{98} This practice is linked to the concept of \textit{hpoun} mentioned earlier, which assumes that only men can possess inborn glory and \textit{karma}. This concept viewed men as being of a higher spiritual order and thus superior in status to women, and this concept continues to influence the worldview of both men and women in society to this day.

Built on this concept, the husband is referred to as \textit{ain-oo-nat}, meaning “spirit head of the house,” while the wife is only referred to as \textit{ain-shin-ma}, meaning "lady, house owner."\textsuperscript{99}

The customary law of \textit{Dhammathat} even allows a husband to chastise his wife by beating

\textsuperscript{95} Harriden, \textit{The Authority of Influence}, 55.
\textsuperscript{96} Seekins, \textit{Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)}, 405.
\textsuperscript{97} Harriden, \textit{The Authority of Influence}, 71.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 58.
her with a stick. Although motherhood is highly esteemed among Burmese women, mothers are expected to view their “son as lord and husband as god.”

According to the Burmese Buddhist female writer Mi Mi Khaing, the concept of *hpoun* not only shaped the Myanmar way of life historically but still influences the daily lives of women today. This cultural value can be seen in the daily lives of all women, especially wives. They are expected to respect the glory of men and to protect this glory by not standing or sitting higher than a man, not thrusting their feet in his direction, and not sleeping on his left side because his *hpoun* resides on his right side. A woman is even expected to treat a man’s clothes with the same respect accorded the man himself. Therefore, a woman’s clothes must not be placed over anything connected with a man, including his clothes. Ma Sein Sein, a prominent Burmese Buddhist woman, summarizes the influence of this concept on the daily lives of women in this way:

> It has always been believed that men have a kind of in-born power of glory called *phon [hpoun]*, regarded as a distinctive feature of men, and which keeps them on a different plane from that of women. The women have not this *phon*. This *phon [hpoun]*, according to the belief, must in no way be harmed or weakened. A woman’s skirt is supposed to be a dangerous article. As such, no man will touch the skirt of a woman, unless it is his mother’s or grandmother’s, once it has been worn. He will never bathe in water from the same jar or tub which the female members or the household used for themselves.

Since the concept of *hpoun* entrenches the glory and holiness of males, it has had an impact on the religious lives of Burmese women as well, by reinforcing the religious hierarchical structure that restricts women in the religious spheres. Since the thirteenth century, the *sangha*, which is the highest spiritual authority in Theravada Buddhist

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100 Gay, "Authority and Submission," 44.
101 Burmese children are taught from earliest childhood that the care given by their parents is beyond repayment. One of the examples often cited is that, even though Buddha showed his mother “the way to nirvana, he did not manage to repay more than a minute portion of what he owed her.” Kyi, *Freedom from Fear: And Other Writings*, 75.
103 Ibid.
104 Khaing, *The World of Burmese Women*, 16. Women’s clothes are considered as a symbol of their sex.
107 *Sangha* are the community of monks who are voluntary members of monasteries. They have solemn responsibilities of conserving and teaching *dhamma*, the teachings of Buddha. They live according to a strict monastic rule, including disciplines of studying religious texts, the *Tipitaka*, and practicing meditation in order to prepare for entry into *nirvana* (*neikban* in Burmese), which is liberation of oneself from *Samara*, the cycle of rebirth, and suffering. Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)*, 334.
societies, has excluded religious women (nuns) from being fully ordained *bhikkhuni*, meaning “female Buddhist monastics,” instead designating them as *thilashin*, or “owners of virtue,”\(^{108}\) while male monks are referred to as *pongyi*, meaning “great glory.”\(^{109}\) This distinction means that only boys can go through the ceremony known as *Shinpyu*, which is initiation into Sangha.\(^{110}\) Girls merely go through an ear-piercing ceremony during the time of the *Shinpyu* ceremony, a ritual that is considered only a social occasion, without the spiritual significance of *Shinpyu*.\(^{111}\)

This hierarchy of value has created perceptions of the family and the communal and social order of Myanmar that have sanctioned a view of women as inferior to men. This concept was used by men historically as the “ground of social, political and religious hierarchy to legitimize women’s oppression and subordination.”\(^{112}\) Although women were allowed to participate in gaining merit (*kutho*)\(^{113}\) by practicing generosity (*dana*),\(^{114}\) including building monasteries and temples as well as making small donations, only men were considered to be able to attain “enlightenment.”\(^{115}\) In other words, a man is considered to be spiritually higher than a woman.\(^{116}\) Womanhood is seen as a stage of low *karma* due to their misdeeds or lack of *kutho* (merit) in the past. For a woman to attain such enlightenment, she must be reincarnated as a man first to attain the state of *Nirvana* or


\(^{110}\) *Shinbyu* is a “ceremony marking adolescence for boys, when they spend a short time as novices in a monastery.” This is done with great celebration, usually by the parents or sponsors, in order that they will gain much *kutho* (merit); the boys who go through the ceremony also gain *hpon*. Khaing, *The World of Burmese Women*, 197.

\(^{111}\) Ibid. Khaing explains this as a ceremony where the first pair of earrings is given to girls on this day, “symbolizing her entry into a woman’s world and ending her days of careless play in the company of boys.”


\(^{113}\) Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)*, 389. Buddhism teaches that everyone must work out his or her own liberation through observation of precepts, performing good deeds of merit, and meditation. The monks are not responsible for laypeople’s liberation.

\(^{114}\) *Dana* is an act of offering to the monks by donating daily food (*soon*) to the monks when they go out daily with bowls to receive food donations. When the monks refuse to receive the “daily food offering,” this is a form of religious protest, and it affects laypeople negatively, as the laypeople then lose their opportunities to gain merit.

\(^{115}\) Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*, 57. This is also in Pe Maung Tin, "Women in the inscriptions of Pagan," *Journal of Burma Studies (JBR)* 25, no. 3 (1935): 149-59.

\(^{116}\) Khaing, *The World of Burmese Women*, 16. She says, “For us it is no less than a glorious truth to recall that the greatest concentration, clean thought, and enlightenment was attained by the Buddha as a man, who had discarded his family ties ruthlessly. So, there is no doubt in our minds that, spiritually, a man is higher than a woman.”
Women are in fact seen as hindrances for men in achieving the state of Nirvana. For these reasons, many women during this precolonial era expressed their desire to be reborn as a man or a nat (spirit).

In examining this long period of kings and kingdoms, the upshot of this form of absolute authority of rulers over the lives of their subjects is that it created an atmosphere of fear. The people accepted the rule of the kings, as well as their own servitude, as being the result of the meritorious deeds of the kings in their past lives, and thus they obeyed the kings without question. Although the social status of women was in certain cases somewhat on a par with men, their religious role and social position introduced in this period relegated them to an inferior status. Their silence sealed this status.

2.1.2 The Colonial Period

The status of women in Myanmar during the colonial era has affinities with racial and gendered patterns found in other colonized countries where the structure of society was based on colonial constructs of power and control. The colonial period in Myanmar started with the first Anglo-Burmese war with the British in 1824. After the third war and the fall of Mandalay, all of Myanmar came under British rule in 1885. It was then part of British India until the separation of territories from India in 1937. However, due to growing anti-British sentiment and nationalism, the Burma Independence Army

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117 Ibid. This is a state where there is no more Samsara, the cycle of birth and rebirth.
118 “Monks, I see no single form so enticing, so desirable, so intoxicating, so binding, so distracting, such a hindrance to winning unsurpassed peace from effort—this is to say monks, as a woman’s form. Monks, whatever clings to women’s form—infatuated, greedy, fettered, enslaved—for many a long day shall be ... snared by the charms of a woman.” In Anguttara Nikaya, The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara Nikaya), The Book of the Fives, trans. F. L. Woodward, vol. III, Pali Text Society Translation Series (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 2001), 93.
119 Pe Maung Tin, Women in the Inscriptions of Pagan, Fiftieth Anniversary Publications, No.2 (Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1960), 412. He notes that the female donor of the pagoda in Pagan inscribed her feelings as follows: “And I wish to be freed from this state of a woman and when in future existence I pass through the abodes of men and of spirits I wish to be born a man endowed with virtue, understanding, truth and faith.”
120 Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 110.
121 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 14. The second Anglo-Burmese war was in 1852.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid. In 1937 Ba Maw became the first Prime Minister and Premier of Burma. The British moved the capital to Yangon, which was called Rangoon at that time.
124 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma, 301. The wars themselves would have led to anti-British feeling, but British attitudes and examples of arrogance fueled this sentiment, some of which were perceived as disrespectful of Burmese cultural values. The British policy was two separate kinds of government in one country, known as a “divide and rule” policy. It was not invented by the British, nor was it unique to Burma (it was also the policy in India, for example). What is significant is how this worked out in Burma and the
fought against the British with the help of the Japanese, and ended the colonial era in 1942. The Japanese occupied Myanmar from 1942 until 1945, when the unified Burma National Army, allied with the British army, defeated the Japanese. Myanmar became an independent country on 4 January, 1948.

The effects of the colonial era on women’s roles and status were twofold, both positive and negative, as they produced both opportunities and limitations, socially, economically, and politically. Firstly, a positive effect of colonialism on Burmese women was the opening of formal education for girls, which was only available to mostly male and elite children in the pre-colonial period, through monastery education. The first school for girls in Burma was established by Christian missionaries in 1827, and British authorities introduced co-educational schools in Lower Burma in 1868. This access to formal education opened new economic and social opportunities whereby women became involved in journalism, law, nursing, and teaching professions, and later became influential figures in the nationalist movement against colonial rule.

However, although most colonial writers were convinced that education enabled Burmese women to make ‘great advances,’ Burmese women writers accused the colonial way it created problems for future relationships among the ethnic groups, which the British favored, and the Burmese Buddhists. This reinforced a growing religious polarization. The British administered two separate territories, one known as “Ministerial Burma,” where Burmese dominated, and the other known as the “Frontier Areas,” controlled by traditional chiefs. The growth of a Buddhist-centered nationalism was a response to the rapid spread of Christianity among other ethnic groups and the favoritism displayed by the British colonials towards these ethnic groups. Additionally, the arrival of many Indians who took over businesses from the Burmese, and the British refusal to remove their shoes in Buddhist temples, led to further tension. Saya Sang led several rebellions from 1930-32. As in other colonial countries, the British colonial authorities used ethnic battalions to crush uprisings, and created further tensions between ethnic groups and the Burmese Buddhists.

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125 Seekins, *Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)*, 22. Seekins notes that this was led by student leaders such as Aung Sang, who organized student groups and called for independence. In 1940, before Japan formally entered the Second World War, Aung San formed the Burma Independence Army in Japan. In 1942, the Japanese formed the Burmese Executive Administration headed by Ba Maw.

126 Ibid., 22-25. This agreement was officiated by General Aung San with ethnic leaders, as a commitment to live together in a new country side by side. This treaty was signed in Panlong, a town in what is now Shan state, at their second conference, and is known as the Panlong agreement. The decisions made at the conference were embodied in the constitution of 1947, which combined the features of a federal and a unitary state.

127 Ibid., 22.

128 Ibid., xxvi. General Aung San did not live to see the independence of Burma, because political rivals assassinated him and eight other cabinet members on 19 July, 1947.

129 Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*, 118.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid., 142.
educational system of instilling “conceptions of femininity and domesticity in Burmese girls” that trained them primarily to be good wives and mothers.\textsuperscript{132} Mi Mi Khaing agrees and notes the popular perception of parents at that time that the education of their daughters would increase their value on the “marriage market.”\textsuperscript{133} Therefore, female education during the colonial era must be evaluated as limited, for it equipped women mainly with domestic skills and British colonial morals rather than with scholarly or open-ended skills.\textsuperscript{134}

The formal education of females during the colonial era must also be viewed as a limitation in that it was a movement away from the traditional economic role that Burmese women enjoyed in the pre-colonial period. Before colonization, many women were economically independent, being involved in agriculture, trading, weaving and textile manufacturing.\textsuperscript{135} Due to rapid commercial expansion during colonial rule, many women lost their traditional businesses to Indians, who were brought from India by the colonial rulers as soldiers, civil servants, construction workers and traders in the early part of the colonial period, and who also became moneylenders.\textsuperscript{136} The domination of Indians in business in Burma also fueled the resentment by the people toward colonial rule. Many women who lost their land and businesses later joined the nationalist movement against British colonial rule. Given these experiences under colonial rule, the formal education of females can be deemed a limitation because of the loss of women’s economic power to more “appropriate” professions that “reinforced gender differences.”\textsuperscript{137}

The impact of colonialism on the role and status of women in Myanmar cannot be separated from the Buddhist-led nationalism that began to contest the rule of the distant administration of the British monarch. This was started in response to the religiously motivated favoritism displayed by the British toward the ethnic minorities.\textsuperscript{138} Christianity was introduced during this period by missionaries and became prominent among the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 119. See also Lucy Delap, “Uneven Orientalisms: Burmese Women and the Feminist Imagination.(Report),” \textit{Gender & History} 24, no. 2 (August 2012): 389-410, 406.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Khaing, \textit{The World of Burmese Women}, 93.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Delap, “Uneven Orientalisms: Burmese Women and the Feminist Imagination.(Report),” 403.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Harriden, \textit{The Authority of Influence}, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 117.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{138} An example is the way some foreign missionaries encouraged the Karen to cooperate with the British in suppressing Burmese rebels during the Third Anglo-Burmese War.
\end{itemize}
ethnic minorities, making it seem to the Buddhist majority to be a foreign religion and hence a threat to national identity. A popular catchphrase of the majority was “to be Burmese/Burman is to be Buddhist.”

When educated Burmese Buddhist men formed the YMBA (Young Men’s Buddhist Association) in 1906, many women participated in their nationalist activities, especially those village women who had lost their businesses under colonial rule. However, the role of women in this organization was restricted to supporting the role of the male leaders, especially given “the religious divide between monks and women and the cultural emphasis on male political authority.” In 1920, female students also joined the first students’ strike, which was against an educational system that taught more about the kings and queens of Britain than their own history. This was seen as education that fostered dependence on and submission to British authority. Women also played an important role in the 1930 strike, both as journalists and publishers as well as in supportive roles such as cooking and cleaning.

However, although women actively participated in this movement, the growing involvement of the movement in militant nationalist activities “reinforced the view that they [women] needed men’s protection and guidance.” Once again, the role of women

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139 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 11.
140 Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 123. The name was an imitation of the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association). This movement began in response to growing concerns about the development of Christian missionary movements among the ethnic minorities.
141 Ibid.
142 Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 125.
143 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 425. Also in Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 132.
144 This affected Christian mission schools as well. Even though there have been some changes in the educational system, many mission schools have maintained their Westernized curriculum, together with Christian religious education, as their main instruments for evangelizing Buddhists. Although the missionaries themselves were not from Britain, the work of the missions was considered as a colonial invention. Therefore, until this day, Christianity is identified in Myanmar as a Western religion.
145 Kyi, Freedom from Fear: And Other Writings, 54. In 1920, the male student leaders started Dobama Asiayone (meaning “we Burmese association”), and they were known as Thakhins (meaning “masters”). The women who joined the movement were known as Thakhimas, (mistresses). During the colonial era, the term Thakhin was used to address British people. By appropriating this term in the Dobama Asiayone, they are asserting that “the Burmese rather than the British were the true masters of the country.” Also in Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 445.
146 The anti-British spirit was sparked by dissatisfaction toward the rule of British Commissioners and officials as well as Indian junior staff. This led to several uprisings. The colonial authorities ruthlessly crushed the revolt led by Saya San with unarmed peasants in 1930-1932.
147 Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 131.
148 Ibid., 133. Harriden notes that “in both the 1936 and 1938 strikes, male nationalist and student leaders emphasized the need to protect the female participants.”
was restricted to supporting the male leaders, since militant activities were considered as masculine. This view of women was reinforced during wartime (during and after World War II) by the British as well as the Japanese. Although a women’s army unit, consisting of one hundred female soldiers, was formed to join anti-Japanese resistance in 1945, only seven women were chosen to serve in minimal duties, such as cooking and providing moral support for the male soldiers. This regiment only lasted three months, and thus Harriden notes that it provoked “no significant shift in men’s perception of women’s (limited) capabilities.”

In evaluating the role and status of Burmese women throughout the colonial period, it was not only Burmese men who relegated women to a submissive and subordinate role derived from patriarchal cultural and religious beliefs. British colonial attitudes also reinforced an ideology of women as inferior to men. Even though colonial writers portrayed Burmese women as possessing more freedom, independence and equality with men than in neighboring countries and the West, they quickly pointed out that women’s independence and influence was seen as not “feminine,” and was a mark of an “uncivilized and backward society,” and as undermining their husbands’ “authority” and “power.” Given this view of Burmese women, colonial officers were warned not to take Burmese wives or mistresses, and thus instances of intermarriage between the British and the Burmese was significantly lower than in other colonial societies in Southeast Asia.

The colonial authorities also at times depicted Burmese women as possessing a traditionally “high status” in comparison to other colonial countries, especially India. Pointing out this relatively higher status of Burmese women was one way in which the

149 Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*, 139.
151 Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*, 108. The prime example often used was the last queen of Burma, Supayalat. Most historians portrayed her negatively as being extremely domineering over her husband, King Thibaw. Her use of power and influence was described as like that of men and not feminine, but at the same time she was accused of using her sexuality to dominate her husband. Many colonial writers blamed the fall of the Kongbaung dynasty as being the result of her interference in political and military matters, which were reserved for men.
152 Ibid., 111.
153 Ibid., 112.
154 Ibid., 113-14.
colonials could indoctrinate Burmese women into believing that they enjoyed a privileged position, in comparison to the more ‘backward’ Indian women.\textsuperscript{156} The colonial writers often pointed out that the Burmese women did not have to practice “\textit{sati} and \textit{purdah}”\textsuperscript{157} like women in India, that Burmese women had the right to receive an inheritance, and that they had the right to receive property in a divorce settlement.\textsuperscript{158} On the other hand, colonial writers also highlighted the low literacy rate of Burmese women and the high infant mortality rate as evidence of their failures in education.\textsuperscript{159} Missionaries such as Ann Judson also claimed that Burmese women had a high status, but concluded that they still lacked education since these women allowed men to oppress them.\textsuperscript{160} The influences that missionaries have had on the role of women in Myanmar will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, which addresses the history of interpretation in Myanmar.

In assessing the impact of the colonial period on Burmese women, one could conclude that colonial attitudes towards Burmese women were conflicting and led to mixed results.\textsuperscript{161} On the one hand, women’s greater access to education and the colonial narrative about their having a ‘high status’ contributed to their participation in nationalist movements to contest colonial rule in Burma. Women advocated for independence, yet they were not given important roles in the nationalist movements.\textsuperscript{162} The nationalists also condemned the intermarriage of Burmese women and Indians as unpatriotic and as an abandonment of their ‘high status.’\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{156} ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{157} \textit{sati} is the practice of widow-burning and \textit{purdah} is the wearing of a veil. ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{158} ibid., 58.
\textsuperscript{160} Delap, “Uneven Orientalisms: Burmese Women and the Feminist Imagination.(Report),” 389. She notes: “In 1823, a memoir recording the travels of the Baptist missionary Ann Judson described Burmans as a lively people, oppressed by their ‘despotic rulers’, whose way of life was in sharp contrast to their ‘Hindoo’ neighbours. ‘They have none of the habitual indolence of the natives of Hindostan, nor are they addicted to that gloomy jealousy which prompts so many eastern nations to immure their females in the solitude of a harem. The sexes have equally free intercourse as in Europe...’ Mrs Judson wrote to her American supporters that Burmese women ‘are on an equality with ourselves. Wives are allowed the privilege of eating with their husbands.’ Nonetheless, she still stressed the need for strenuous action on their behalf: ‘Show us the situation of our tawny sisters on the other side of the world, and though the disgusting picture breaks our hearts, it will ... excite us to stronger exertion on their behalf...’ She believed that Burmese women lacked education and were tyrannized by their male kin.”
\textsuperscript{161} Harriden, \textit{The Authority of Influence}, 111.
\textsuperscript{162} Ikeya, "The 'Traditional' High Status of Women in Burma: A Historical Reconsideration," 64.
\textsuperscript{163} ibid., 74.
In short, the presumed ‘high status’ of Burmese women was used by both colonial men and Burmese men as a political tool during the colonial era. The positive view of women’s involvement in economic life and education existed side by side with negative ideologies that restricted women to a limited and subservient role in society. Ikeya sums up the role of Burmese women in this period by noting that “the very attribute that gave women their autonomy and power subordinated them to men religiously, politically, ritualistically, and ceremonially.” Thus, Burmese women’s experiences in the colonial era, despite some gains in terms of greater access to education, were once again restricted to obeying and submitting to authority, as in the pre-colonial period.

2.1.3 The Postcolonial Period

The status of women in Myanmar during the postcolonial period has been determined by gender-appropriate ideals, membership in the elite class, and ethnic identities seen in similar societies with military dictatorships, where the structure of society is “hierarchical,” “authoritarian,” and androcentric. This postcolonial period in Myanmar has been described as a period of drastic “decline in women’s status,” politically, economically, and socially.

After gaining independence from the British in 1948, Myanmar enjoyed a brief period of parliamentary government until 1958. However, serious problems began with a rebellion of some ethnic minority troops, which led to the “Burmanization” of the military. Various ethnic groups considered this as a violation of the Panlong agreement.

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164 Ibid., 55. See also Ikeya, “Gender, History and Modernity: Representing Women in Twentieth Century Colonial Burma,” 9; ibid.
165 Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 180.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid., 174.
168 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 29, 78.
169 In 1949, the Karen ethnic group, with the help of other ethnic troops, started an uprising. The great majority of officers who were Burmans, and some ethnic troops, remained loyal to the government, and fought against these rebels. This ended the mixed multi-ethnic army that the British established in 1945. For additional information, see Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 29.
170 The Burmanization of the army was a mobilization instigated by General Ne Win to include only the Burman ethnic group in the military, especially at the command level. Also in Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 308.
171 This agreement was signed at the Panlong Conference on 12 February, 1947 at the town called Panlong in Shan State. The agreement was signed by General Aung Sang with ethnic leaders of the Kachin, Chin, and Shan. They agreed to incorporate two regions, Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas, into one independent Burma. They also agreed to ensure “fair and equal treatment of the Frontier Area peoples through
and resulted in many other insurgencies during this period. The tension increased with an attempt by the government to promote Buddhism as the state religion, and resulted in a military coup on 2 March, 1962. The military ruled the country under a one-party socialist system until 1988.

Due to the government’s failure to provide adequate education and economic opportunities which led to further poverty, students led massive protests against the military rule, beginning in August, 1988. In response, the military formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council and seized power in September, 1988. In the face of continuing political unrest, the government held free elections for the first time in May, 1990. Yet, despite the fact that the National League for Democracy (NLD) achieved a landslide win in that election, the military continued to rule the nation. After the so-called ‘Saffron revolution’ led by Buddhist monks in 2007, the process of political change was again initiated and a new constitution was published in 2008. Military rule

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172 Ibid., 29. U Nu, the first Prime Minister of the country, was in office during this time.
173 Ibid., 30.
174 This government was called “the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma.” During this government, the ethnic minorities lost their special status that had been guaranteed in the Constitution of 1947, after implementation of the Constitution of 1974. General Ne Win retired in 1981 and was succeeded by San Yu (1981-1988), Sein Lwin (July-August 1988), and Dr. Maung Maung (August-September, 1988). Ibid., 419.
175 This demonstration was known as the “Four Eights Movement,” named after a general strike that began on 8 August, 1988. This was a street demonstration organized by student activists who were joined by thousands of citizens, and the response was a violent crackdown by the military. This is detailed in Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 192.
176 They are known in abbreviated form as SLORC. Later, they changed their name to SPDC, the State Peace and Development Council. Ibid., 419.
177 Ibid., 323.
179 Rogers, Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma’s Tyrant.
was finally dissolved in 2011, and a parliamentary democratic system of government was reinstalled in Myanmar.

The role and status of women in postcolonial Myanmar is tied to the entire experience of repressive, authoritarian military rule described above. During both the Socialist phase and the SPDC (the State Peace and Development Council) period, military leaders controlled the whole country and silenced all opponents by imposing severe restrictions on the media, closing independent newspapers or nationalizing them, prohibiting any criticism of the government, and punishing those who spoke out in any way against the government with imprisonment and torture. Any opposition to the government was illegal in this period. During the socialist period, the party leadership did not tolerate “public dissent or criticism from party members, let alone from anyone outside the party.” All government workers and civil servants were ordered not to engage in politics, and people generally were also too afraid to participate in politics. It became even harder for ordinary women in Myanmar to express political views when military leaders imposed the authoritarian system of rule.

Conditions during the latter period of military rule were described by Judge Rajsoomer Lallah, the United Nations Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, in October of 1996 in these stark terms: “There is essentially no freedom of thought, opinion, expression or association in Myanmar. The absolute power of SLORC (the State Law and Order Restoration Council) is exercised to silence opposition and penalize those holding dissenting views or beliefs.” Under this government, the economic status of women

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181 Skidmore and Wilson, Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar, 13. Also in The New Lights of Myanmar, 30 March, 2011, accessed 16 September, 2012. General elections under the new constitution, which promised a “discipline-flourishing democracy,” were held on 7 November, 2010. The name of the country was changed from the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and Thein Sein became the first president of this newborn democratic country on 30 March, 2011.

182 The form of government is described as a self-styled military form of democratic government. The parliament consists of two legislatures, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (House of Representatives, 440 seats) and the Amyotha Hluttaw (House of Nationalities, 224 seats). 25% of seats are allocated to military personnel, so the military’s presence continues in the new government. Aung San Suu Kyi and 42 other NLD members who won in the April, 2012 by-elections later joined the parliament. In Soe Than Lynn, “NLD Can Spur Judicial Reform: Hluttaw Reps,” The Myanmar Times, 9 April, 2012, accessed 16 September, 2012.

183 Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 181.

184 Ibid., 179.

declined as the whole country suffered through mismanagement of the economy and through corruption. Ordinary wives struggled alongside their husbands to provide adequately for their families, although the wives of the top military leaders, and those who were close to the elite families, prospered.

During this period, the use of force by the army to force people into submission was the normal way of life. Several major violent crackdowns occurred: on unarmed university students in 1962, on thousands of protestors in 1988, during the peaceful demonstrations of monks in 2007, in the wars waged against ethnic groups, in imprisonment of anyone who attempted to express dissent against the military, in displaced villages, forced labor, and the forbidding of freedom of speech and expression. These were routine occurrences during this period.

As in Myanmar’s historical past, the role and status of women in society during this period depended on their connections to powerful men. This was the case for both the wives of senior military officers who were given significant roles in politics during military rule, and for Aung Sang Suu Kyi, who was asked by the opposition groups to be their leader against military rule due to her connection as the daughter of the national hero of Myanmar. However, although the wives of the military elite and Aung Sang Suu Kyi shared a connection to powerful men, their experiences differed because of their positions relative to authority and power. The status and role of women who were closely related to the military elite enjoyed the social, economic, and political opportunities that other women did not have. Through their connection to military leaders, these wives and other women in the elite circles experienced great advances in economic wealth and influence in society.

To stop international criticism of their discrimination against women, the wives of the top military leaders were given leadership opportunities by their husbands. First, the military leadership formed the Myanmar National Working Committee for Women’s Affairs (MNWCWA) in 1998, albeit with males in top leadership positions. However, after the

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186 Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*, 308.
187 Houtman et al., *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics: Aung Sang Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy*, 139. Also in Harriden, *The Authority of Influence*, 244. General Khin Nyunt, SLORC Secretary-1, and General Soe Myint, Minister for Social Welfare and Resettlement, were leaders.
CEDAW 188 Committee session of the United Nations in 2000 that pointed out inadequacies of the military government in addressing women’s rights, and reports of ethnic women’s groups189 that accused the military of rape and violence against women in ethnic regions, the military government formed the Myanmar Women’s Affairs Federation (MWAF) with the wives of the generals in leadership roles. 190 All wives of military personnel and government officials, and all female government employees were expected to join,191 but the leadership positions were restricted to the wives of the ruling elite.

The MWAF promoted “social welfare and traditional culture”192 in a way that reinforced the already existing stereotypes of women’s role in society by providing programs that focused on women’s nurturing role, vocational training in skills such as sewing and weaving, and promoting the concept of feminine culture through beauty pageants.193 This organization supported and defended the military regime’s policies and actions. Women’s empowerment was encouraged only to the extent of mobilizing women to defend the military. Members were warned not to get involved in politics, and women involved in opposition politics were condemned,194 especially Aung Sang Suu Kyi, 195 who was the most prominent voice of resistance during this time; she was placed under house arrest.

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188 Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, United Nations.
189 Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 256. The report was assembled by the Shan Human Rights Association (SHRF) and the Shan Women’s Action Network (SWAN), and was entitled License to Rape: The Burmese Military Regime’s Use of Sexual Violence in the Ongoing War in Shan State. The military denied such charges and asked women in the MNCWA and women’s NGOs to work harder to defend the government.
190 Daw Kyaing Kyaing (wife of Military Council Chairman Than Shwe), Daw Mya Mya San (wife of Vice-Chairman Maung Aye), and Dr. Daw Khin Win Shwe (wife of Prime Minister Khin Nyunt) held administrative positions.
191 Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 261.
192 Ibid., 263.
193 Ibid., 253.
194 Ibid., 258.
195 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 98. She is the daughter of late General Aung Sang. She married a British scholar of Tibet, Michael Aris, in 1972 and they lived in London and Oxford. She came back to Rangoon in April, 1988 to take care of her sick mother. She became the main leader in the general strike against the military in August, 1988.
for several extended periods of time.\textsuperscript{196} After the 1988 demonstrations, there were more female political prisoners than ever before.\textsuperscript{197}

During this period, ordinary women were involved in agriculture, industry, service sectors, and professions such as nursing and teaching. The military encouraged women to pursue only professions that were considered appropriate for females. In line with their nationalist ideology, the military appropriated the nationalist discourse of the colonial era and condemned Burmese women who married foreigners.\textsuperscript{198} Although the government did not officially make Buddhism the state religion, they vigorously promoted it. As with the nationalist rhetoric of the colonial period, the Buddhist religion was used to control people through the promotion of devotion to senior monks and the allocation of huge resources for pagoda projects, which led to public support for the religious majority.\textsuperscript{199}

And as in precolonial times, the religious concepts of \textit{hpoun} (glory of authority), maintaining \textit{hpoun} by merit, and making \textit{kutho} in order to gain good \textit{karma} in the next life were manipulated by the military leaders to legitimate their authority. The military maintained control over the people by making them believe that military rule was part of their \textit{karma}.\textsuperscript{200} Aung Sang Suu Kyi challenged this ideology by pointing out another aspect of \textit{karma} that promotes creating one's own \textit{karma}.\textsuperscript{201}

In addition to appealing to the concepts of \textit{karma} and \textit{hpoun}, the military used the cultural concept of respect for authority to ensure the obedience of the people. From childhood, children in Myanmar are taught to submit to “five reverent ones”\textsuperscript{202}—Buddha, \textit{Dhamma}

\textsuperscript{196} She was put under house arrest several times, from 1989-1995, 2000-2002, and 2003-2010. In 1991 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her nonviolent struggle for democracy. She was finally released on 13 November, 2010.

\textsuperscript{197} Fink, \textit{Living Silence: Burma Under Military Rule}, 167.

\textsuperscript{198} The military used Aung Sang Suu Kyi’s marriage to Michael Aris against her in their nationalist discourse.

\textsuperscript{199} Seekins, \textit{Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar)}, 378.

\textsuperscript{200} A person’s \textit{kan}, which is the Burmese version of \textit{karma}, is one of the key concepts that lies behind the understanding of authority in Myanmar. Although this concept of \textit{kan} is generally understood as “luck” in English, it is more about the destiny or fate of a person. This destiny is determined by an individual’s merit (\textit{kutho}) or demerit (\textit{akutho}). It is explained clearly in the common Burmese saying, “a person’s good or ill fortune is the ‘fruit’ of good or bad \textit{karma} from a previous life.” As a result, a person would generally accept the control of authoritarian figures over their lives unquestioningly. Ibid., 239, 389.

\textsuperscript{201} Aung Sang Suu Kyi, \textit{The Voice of Hope} (London: Rider Books, 2008), 168 and 86. She says, “I remind the people that karma is actually doing. It’s not just sitting back.” “You create your own karma. And in a sense, I believe in destiny, it’s something that I create for myself.”

(the teachings of Buddha), Sangha (the community of monks), parents, and teachers. Both teachers and parents are to be regarded with “awe, love and respect.” Paying regular homage to them and obeying their instructions without question are considered as showing proper respect. The military rulers used this important concept of respect for authority during this period to enforce silent submission and obedience by the people.

This leads to a question concerning whether women in the ethnic groups understand submission and silence in the same way as the Burmese women. In Myanmar, the culture of ethnic minorities is like that of Burmese culture, in that both accept the ideology of patriarchy. In Chin society, women have traditionally enjoyed even fewer social opportunities than Burmese women, because the cultural mores of the Chin do not accord women inheritance rights. Men can divorce their wives at any time, for any reason. The father has the sole right to retain custody of the children in the event of divorce. Caring for children, as well as domestic duties, are considered women's duties alone. Like the veneration of men through the concept of hpoun, women’s role in Kachin society is considered as one of lowly drudgery. Being considered impure or unclean, women are not allowed to participate in religious ceremonies, and are "prohibited to climb trees lest the fruit fall before it is ripe, or to enter a newly built house because they might defile it."

The traditions and cultural practices among the ethnic groups support a hierarchical worldview in which men are at the top and women at the bottom.

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203 Ibid., 67.
204 The culture of showing gratitude and reverence to parents, teachers and monks is manifested collectively as well as individually, and it has been long practiced in history. A collective way of showing reverence to these revered persons occurs during the month of Thadingyut, which is the festival of light that marks the end of the Buddhist Lent around mid-October, and on the Burmese New Year's Day called Thingyan, which is in the middle of April. The proper way of showing respect is called gadaw, and it entails positioning oneself by bowing down deeply before parents, teachers, or monks to receive their forgiveness and blessings. This is one of the Burmese traditions in which a person of lower social standing always pays respect to a person of higher standing by kneeling before them and paying obeisance with joined hands and bowing. During this time, fruits, tinned foods, candles, and other articles are placed in decorated baskets before the teachers, parents, and monks as token of respect.
205 Steinberg, Burma the State of Myanmar, 53. The military says, “the government ... is the parents; the people are the children who must obey the parents and must be punished when they do not do so. If recalcitrant children (e.g. the insurgents) repent, then as wayward sons and daughters they would be welcomed back into the fold.”
207 Ibid.
The proverbs or popular sayings among the ethnic groups also portray negative attitudes toward women. Some of the examples of Chin sayings that degrade women include the following: “Wives and gongs: the more you beat, the better the sound;” “the voice of women is worthless and meaningless;” “a woman’s word cannot reach up to the gate;” and “the price of a woman is equal to a smoking pipe.”208 Similar attitudes are found in Burmese proverbs as well. Some examples include: “The sun rises with crowing of the rooster, but never at the clucking of the hen;” “the voice of women never reaches beyond the gate;” “as the topknot (hairstyle) follows the head, the wife follows the husband;” and “buffalo and woman, the more you beat them the better they work.”209 All of these patriarchal cultural values were reinforced and strengthened by the military government, which used them to ensure women’s silent obedience. In this milieu, women in the ethnic groups would understand submission and silence in the same way as the Burmese women, for they share “a culture of silence and impunity.”210

Khin Ohnmar, one of the leaders during the 1988 democracy uprising in Myanmar, traced the prolonged military rule of this period to this culture of respect that silences people from speaking out against anyone in authority. In her response to the question of what holds back women’s organizations in Myanmar, she gave a clear explanation of how this concept of authority is culturally imbedded and how this has influenced the mentality of women. She explains,

Culturally, it is imbedded very deeply that you can’t raise questions. I think this is what is prolonging the military rule, in fact!! This exists in every level of our society. You can’t question your mother, your father, brother, teacher, director, manager—you just can’t! We see this among ourselves as well, not just with men. We have internalized this ‘do not question your leaders,’ and it has an impact on our work. Breaking through this is difficult.211

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During this military period, the decrease in women’s access to economic and political power was endemic to all minority experiences in Myanmar, whether ethnic or religious. Due to the increase and severity of wars with ethnic groups, not only did women’s access to economic participation decline sharply in those regions, but as in all wars they also suffered mentally and emotionally. A study among these women revealed that decades of conflict and experiences of torture, shootings, interrogations, and forced labor deeply ingrained women’s sense of fear. Creating and sustaining such fear was a strategy that was used by the military to impose silence and submission and to reinforce all social hierarchies in Myanmar.

These experiences of ethnic women in the war regions are intertwined with religious minority experiences, since most of these women are Christians. As in the colonial period, Christianity was considered an alien Western influence and thus foreign missionaries were banned from living inside the country from 1962 till the present day. Christians are still seen as having supported British colonial rule, and therefore Christians have found it difficult to rise to high-ranking positions in the army or the civil service.

The role and status of Christian women during this period is linked to the experiences of other Christians across Myanmar. The effect of military rule on ethnic minority Christians is noted by Fink, who observes that “although Christians in the cities and towns in central Burma have not faced physical persecution, they have been harassed in various ways.” Some of the difficult problems that Christians encountered across Myanmar during the military period include being denied building permits for churches, new churches being pulled down even after proper permits were obtained, difficulty in getting passports for church leaders, crosses being taken down and replaced with Buddhist temples, forced conversions to Buddhism among ethnic children who study in Buddhist monastery schools, forced labor on Sundays, physically abusing Christian clergy, prohibiting the vice-chair of the Burmese Women’s Union, and a member of the Forum for Democracy in Burma. She received the Vital Voices Global Leadership Award for her achievements as a social and political activist for change.

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213 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 302.
215 Ibid.
import or publishing of religious materials, and many other examples. Among the Christian ethnic minorities, cases of persecution relating to religion have been more dominant than other ethnic-related issues, since Christians view their struggle as necessary “not only to protect their ethnic rights but also their religion.” Christians as a minority population have found it very difficult to have any public voice.

Christians also struggled theologically in this period with whether to accept unjust rule as “God’s will.” A clear example of this occurred when the most prominent churches in Myanmar remained silent during the 2007 demonstrations. One author attributed the churches’ silence at that critical time to the church’s interpretation of Romans 13:1-7 as equating silence in the face of an unjust government with following God’s will. Many Christians, pastors as well as church members, accepted suffering as God’s will and took a passive role during this period. Christian women’s acquiescence in this silence echoed their silent submission to their husbands, fathers, and other men in authority over them.

We may conclude that, while the role of women in the colonial era was a mixture of positive and negative experiences, the role of women in the postcolonial period was more negative than positive. Christian women’s role and status during this postcolonial period was centered on their gender as well as their ethnic and religious identity. Although Christian women shared the struggles of women in general, their ethnic and religious backgrounds added an additional layer of suffering to their experiences. As the system of government in the country turned more repressive than in the colonial period, the nationalist religious-based (Buddhist) traditional values it embraced diminished the status of women. The domestic and submissive roles of women were strengthened, and women’s empowerment and independence diminished. The result of oppression on the mentality of women was silent obedience to authority.

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Looking at the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods, we can conclude that there have been two forces at work, aspects of liberation as well as repression, throughout the history of Myanmar. The political history of Myanmar highlights a “culture of power” which is deeply rooted in the religious teachings of Buddhism. This concept of power was reinforced throughout Myanmar’s political history by authoritarian rulers. Throughout the various historical periods, the rulers forced submission on the people by using fear to silence them to legitimize their rule. This concept of silence greatly influenced the underlying ideology and identity of the people. The impacts of this concept were manifested in the political sphere in the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, in the social sphere in relationships between men and women and parents and children, and in the religious sphere in relationships between the leaders and followers of different religions.

All the factors highlighted above have contributed to the ideological framework within which Myanmar biblical interpreters have understood the concept of silence. This cultural and historical understanding of the concept of silence, grounded in submission to authority, was reinforced by the early missionaries. For this reason, the next section examines the role of missionaries in buttressing a culture of silence for women in the church.

2.2 IMPACT OF MISSIONARIES ON MYANMAR INTERPRETERS’ UNDERSTANDING OF SILENCE

As the previous section made clear, the concept of silence is understood in Myanmar as a sign of submission to anyone in a position of authority. This concept is derived from a collective history and a worldview steeped in a religious orientation. This heritage indicates the integral role of religion and culture in shaping the thinking of both men and women in Myanmar regarding authority and the status of women. This understanding has strengthened the control of every perceived authority over the people in all areas of life, including the political, societal, and religious spheres. Particularly, it suggests that much of Myanmar women’s self-image and social image derives from “religious values,” and that the dominant (Buddhist) religious worldview has had a profound effect on women,

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219 Steinberg, *Burma the State of Myanmar*, 50.
whether one views this effect as one of “oppression or liberation.” Against this backdrop, we now explore how the worldview of key missionaries in Myanmar’s history impacted the role and status of women in the church.

Christianity in Myanmar was significantly shaped by the cultural worldview of its founders, Western missionaries who came during the British colonial period. Even after the missionaries had left Myanmar, Christians in Myanmar continued to follow their teachings and example, which they continue to do, for the most part, to the present day. The churches in Myanmar still depend on “the imported theologies inherited from the past centuries and eras without critical appraisal of their relevancy and empowering vitality.” Nearly two centuries after the first missionaries came to Myanmar, the ideological presuppositions of the missionaries continue to influence the church in Myanmar in terms of its “God-talk (theology),” “form of worship,” “structure of church organization (ecclesiology),” and “strategy of mission outreach (missiology).” For this reason, studying the history and legacy of the missionary era is important in order to understand the current worldview and attitudes of the Myanmar church.

To show the influences of the missionaries on current church life in Myanmar mainly on the church’s interpretation of silence in relation to women, it is important to review Myanmar’s mission history, particularly the historical background of the nineteenth-century Christian missionary Adoniram Judson. The focus is not only on Judson’s role but also that of the women missionaries of this period, who had a huge impact on Myanmar Christians’ view of the role of women in the church. These influences will then be considered in dialogue with contemporary Myanmar Christians’ understanding of the role of women, given their interpretations of biblical passages such as those on women and silence.

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221 Simon Pau Khan En, *Called to be a Community: Myanmar’s in search of New Pedagogies of Encounter* (Yangon, Myanmar: Association of Theological Education in Myanmar, 2002), 15.
2.2.1 Overview of Christian Missionaries in Myanmar

The history of missionaries in Myanmar began in 1554 with the arrival of the Roman Catholic Missionary Father Pierre Bonfer, who was a French Franciscan. His stay was brief, however, as he left Myanmar in 1557 since he found it difficult to convert the Burmese. In 1600 several Jesuit fathers accompanied the Portuguese adventurer, Philippe de Brito, who established a colony at Syriam (Thanlyin). Their most famous convert was Natshinnaung, king of Taungoo and a renowned poet, who was killed in 1613.

A Christian presence continued in the country throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most notably with the arrival of the Italian Barnabite Order of Roman Catholic priests in 1721.

Protestant missionaries only arrived in Myanmar in the early part of the nineteenth century, the first being British Baptist missionaries in 1807. This was initiated by a Rev. Chater and Felix Carey, a son of William Carey. However, Protestant mission work only became firmly grounded and began to flourish after the arrival of Adoniram and Ann Judson from America in 1813. After having little success in proselytizing Buddhist Burmese, the Judsons moved to Moulmein, in British-occupied territory, after the First Anglo-Burmese War. There large numbers of Karen were converted to Christianity.

Then, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Baptist missionaries, both Karen and foreign, also converted other ethnic groups, such as the Kachin and Chin.

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224 Seekins, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), xxiv.
226 Chain, "Wives, Warriors And Leaders," 1. Also in Seekins, "Missionaries, Christian," in Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 300. Father Vincentius Sangermano was one of the most notable of these priests.
227 J. Clement, Adoniram Judson: Being a Sketch of His life and Missionary Labors (Auburn, AL: Derby and Miller, 1852), 39.
228 Chain, "Wives, Warriors And Leaders," 1.
229 S’Peh, a Karen man, and Josiah N. Cushing, an American, were the first missionaries to the Kachins in 1878. See Samuel Hugh Moffett, A History of Christianity in Asia, vol. 2:1500-1900 (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 577.
The earliest Anglican mission work in Myanmar is often dated from the time of the establishment of the Diocese of Yangon in 1877, although British Anglican chaplains had been present in Myanmar since 1852. The Anglican missionaries started mission schools in the lower and middle part of Myanmar. In 1879, Methodist missionaries arrived in Myanmar and started their mission by opening the Methodist English Church in lower Myanmar.

Due to the evangelistic efforts of these mission organizations, the church in Myanmar grew in numbers despite many hardships and challenges during the time of World War II. However, in 1962, when General Ne Win established the Revolutionary Council, all missionaries were ordered to leave the country. The last missionaries left Myanmar in 1966, and all the schools that missionaries had established were nationalized. The government of that time considered the missionaries as “accomplices of British colonial oppression and agents of cultural imperialism, robbing indigenous people of their authentic beliefs and ways of life.” However, others have highlighted their positive contributions in promoting “health, education and literacy, and a new national identity for ethnic minority peoples, especially among the Karen, Kachin and Chin.”

2.2.2 The Influence of Adoniram Judson

Of all the missionaries who came to Myanmar, the nineteenth century missionary Adoniram Judson is considered the most influential in the history of the church, due to

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232 Ibid., 27. In addition to educational work, the missionaries translated part of the Book of Common Prayer into Burmese.
233 Ibid., 542. They started many schools across the country, and within twenty-five years of the commencement of their mission work, schools were established in twenty cities.
234 Ibid., 577.
236 Ibid. Jessica Harriden notes that “Christian missionary activity among non-Burman indigenous populations was one of the most important factors in the development of ethnic nationalist movements during the colonial period. Under missionary and British guidance, Christian ethnic minorities could advance—educationally, socially and politically—to gain far greater influence than that warranted by their numbers.” In Harriden, The Authority of Influence, 123.
his important role as a pioneering Protestant missionary. His influence extends to the theology and practices of the church, missional approaches to evangelistic outreach, and, significantly for our interests, the language and terminology that is still used in the church today. Samuel Ngun Ling asserts that “[t]here is no doubt that the life and works of missionaries, particularly of Adoniram Judson, the first American Baptist missionary to Myanmar, dominated whatever theological thinking there was among the ethnic Christians and early Burman converts of the nineteenth century.” Adoniram Judson is also known as the most influential missionary in Myanmar due to his contributions to literature, which include translating the Bible into the Burmese language as well as several literary works, including the Burmese-English Dictionary, the Pali Dictionary, and several tracts on basic Christian beliefs.

This overview provides an important building block for understanding a central issue this thesis raises, namely the influence of Judson’s Burmese translation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 on Myanmar Christians’ views of the role of women in the church. In this light, it will

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240 Seeiks, Historical Dictionary of Burma (Myanmar), 351. Pali is the sacred language of Theravada Buddhism, in which the Tipitika is written. It was originally a language of ancient India (Sanskrit was India’s original literary language). It is usually compared to Western European languages dependent on Latin and Greek as an original source.

be helpful to examine the historical background of Judson to locate the worldview that influenced his translation, theologically and ideologically.

### 2.2.2.1 Historical Background

Adoniram Judson arrived in Yangon (Rangoon at that time) on July 13, 1813, with his wife, Ann Hasseltine Judson. They both devoted three years to the study of the spoken Burmese language and Pali, the sacred religious language of Theravada Buddhism. After Judson mastered the language, he began in 1816 to translate the Gospel of Matthew from Greek into Burmese, a task he completed in 1817. The translation was considered so respectable that a Burmese governor, who received one of his translations during this period, was surprised to find that it was the work of a foreigner who had only learned and used the language for four years. He also published several tracts in Burmese, translated the Epistle to the Ephesians, and preached in Zayat despite the unfriendly attitude of the Burmese monarch during this period.

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244 Knowles, "Life of Mrs. Ann H. Judson: Late Missionary to Burmah, with an Account of the American Baptist Mission to that Empire," 83. Due to her sickness, Ann was not able to continue learning for some period. Thus, she notes after two years of learning that “Mr. Judson has obtained a tolerable knowledge of the construction of the language, and only needs time and practice to make it perfectly familiar. I can read and write, but am far behind Mr. Judson in this part, though in conversation I am his equal.”

245 Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson*, 2, 165-67. Wayland claims that Judson mastered the Burmese language “to a degree never before attained by a foreigner.” He also records that a linguist in India who was an expert in Burmese said of Judson’s translation, “We honor Wickliffe and Luther for their labors in their respective mother tongues; but what need of praise is due to Judson for a translation of the Bible, perfect as a literary work, in a language so foreign to him as the Burmese.” Burns, “Spirituality of Adoniram Judson,” 112.


248 Zayat is a resting place for travelers. It was a small, low building built outside of town on the great Pagoda road. Zayat are found in all Burmese villages. This particular Zayat that Adoniram Judson built consisted of three parts. The first part opened to the road without wall partitions or windows. The second part was a...
After six years of his labors, the first convert, Maung Naw, was baptized in 1819. Judson completed translation of the entire New Testament in 1823 and was published, and was also awarded a Doctor of Divinity degree by Brown University in 1823. He and his wife then moved to Ava in 1824, where he preached until a war between the English and the Burmese broke out in the middle of the year. Due to suspicions that any foreigner was a British spy, he was arrested and placed in prison in June 1824 for approximately two years, under conditions of extreme cruelty. He was released from prison in 1826, and the Judsons then moved to Amherst, a new British settlement. Not long after his release from prison, he returned to Ava as an interpreter for the British to negotiate a new treaty between the British and the Burmese. This adds to the nationalist view of him as pro-British and the missionaries as representatives of colonialism rather than purely religious teachers. While he was in Ava, his wife Ann died in Amherst in October 1826, and his daughter died soon after in 1827.

Realizing the need to distance the message of the gospel from the colonial rulers, Judson ceased his affiliation with the British in 1828. In 1829 he moved to Moulmein to work with George and Sarah Boardman, and several converts were added to the church.

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large room containing four floors and four windows in opposite directions. The third was mainly an entry opening to the garden. See also Clement, Adoniram Judson, 71.

Ibid., 75. Duesing, Adoniram Judson, 143.


Nyunt, "Toward a Paradigm," 141. Nyunt notes that Burmese historians later discovered that Judson wrote a letter to Colonel Benson dated 18 July, 1838, in which he stated that "to be successful in Christian mission among the Burmese people" is "to occupy their country is the best way." See also Trager, Burma Through Alien Eyes: Missionary Views of the Burmese in the Nineteenth Century, xi.


Clement, Adoniram Judson, 186-88. Duesing, Adoniram Judson, 115. After the death of Ann, Judson fell into deep depression. He renounced the D.D. degree that he had received from Brown University in 1823. He gave away his property to the American Baptist Mission Board. In 1828, he isolated himself in a hermitage applying ascetical spiritual disciplines of Roman Catholic mystics of the time. This extreme methods of sanctification and asceticism are detailed by Wayland, A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, 2. and also in Duesing, Adoniram Judson, 79. Only after he heard that his brother Elnathan had come to ‘trust in Jesus’ ten minutes before he died did he came out of his depression in 1829. Ibid., 81.

Clement, Adoniram Judson, 186-88.

Judson traveled on evangelistic tours to Rangoon, Prome, and among the Karen people in the jungles during 1830 and 1831. Duesing, Adoniram Judson, 81.
January 31, 1834, after twenty-one years in Burma, Judson completed the translation of the entire Bible into Burmese.\textsuperscript{260} That same year he married Sarah Boardman, by then the widow of George Boardman. He took seven more years to revise his translation and at last, on October 24, 1840, the entire Bible was ready for the press and printed shortly afterward.\textsuperscript{261} In 1842 he began work on a Burmese Dictionary, with two complete vocabularies, English to Burmese, and Burmese to English, but his second wife’s illness interrupted this work. On their journey back to America in 1845, Sarah Judson died and was buried on the island of St. Helena.\textsuperscript{262} In 1846 he again returned to Moulmein with his new wife, Emily Chubbuck.\textsuperscript{263} Judson continued his work on the dictionary though he did not finish it due to his own ill health. He died on April 12, 1850 on a ship he had boarded with the hope of restoring his health, three days out from Moulmein, and was buried at sea.\textsuperscript{264}

Judson’s influence extends beyond his missionary life. According to Maung Shwe Wa in the \emph{Burma Baptist Chronicle}, the American Baptist mission work that Judson started continued to grow. By 1854 there were already 63 missionaries (including wives), 154 Burmese preachers and assistants, and 8,836 members in the Baptist church.\textsuperscript{265} The Burmese and English dictionary, completed by Mr. Stevens after Judson’s death and published in January 1851,\textsuperscript{266} a \emph{Pali} dictionary, a Burmese Grammar, and a complete Burmese Bible are his great contributions to the church in Myanmar, unparalleled till the present day. Although there are at least five other translations or revisions\textsuperscript{267} in the Burmese language listed by the United Bible Societies, and translations in 18 languages of the ethnic minorities who form the largest part of the Christian community of Myanmar,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{260} Clement, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 221. Duesing, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 85.
\item \textsuperscript{261} Clement, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 237. Duesing, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 85.
\item \textsuperscript{262} Clement, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 242. Duesing, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 95.
\item \textsuperscript{263} Clement, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 288. Duesing, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 97.
\item \textsuperscript{264} Clement, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 237. Duesing, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 149.
\item \textsuperscript{265} Maung Shwe Wa, G. Sowards, and E. Sowards, \emph{Burma Baptist Chronicle} (Board of Publications, Burma Baptist Convention, 1963), 135.
\item \textsuperscript{266} Clement, \emph{Adoniram Judson}, 320. Duesing, Adoniram Judson, 85. Judson, \emph{A Dictionary, Burmese and English}.
\item \textsuperscript{267} Thang, "Eagle in the Myanmar Bible," 195. Five other translations or editions mentioned in this book are: (1) U Tun Nyein’s version in 1906, (2) the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) version in 1928, also known as the Anglican version, (3) the McQuire version in 1933, (4) the Common Language version in 2005, and (5) the Eagle edition in 2006. The Catholic version is not included in the list.
\end{itemize}
Judson’s translation of the Bible is still considered the best amongst them, and it remains the most popular.\textsuperscript{268}

\textbf{2.2.2.2 Influence of Judson’s Bible Translation}

Among all his publications, the Burmese Bible translation is considered the most significant tool provided for the church. Up to this day, this Bible translation is noted as “the most widely read version in the Myanmar language.”\textsuperscript{269} It is highly regarded still as “classic literature.”\textsuperscript{270} The Judson translation is referred to as “the authorized Bible in Myanmar,”\textsuperscript{271} meaning that, whether or not people understand the linguistic usage today, the “language becomes sacred language, which people feel should not be changed.”\textsuperscript{272} For this reason, Judson’s success in translation is noted as “rare in the history of Bible translation.”\textsuperscript{273} A recent biographer of Judson noted that when Burmese biblical scholars met to develop a new edition of the Bible, they decided not to pursue the project further, since Judson’s translation was so remarkably beautiful that they “could not improve upon its accuracy and purity.”\textsuperscript{274}

However, critics of Judson’s work point out that there are two significant problems regarding his translation: the usage of \textit{Pali} vocabulary and honorific language. Both linguistic choices are not the ordinary language that everyone understands. \textit{Pali}, for example, derives from Sanskrit and is only used by Buddhist monks as their religious language, which is considered a “dead” language. Judson learned this language and used it in his translation since he felt it was necessary to do so after seeing that \textit{Pali} terms were mentioned in every Burmese book.\textsuperscript{275} Honorifics were used as reference to royal persons and members of the Buddhist Sangha. This type of usage highlights the rank of the speaker and the person addressed by using certain personal pronouns as well as nouns. Some

\textsuperscript{269} De Jong, "A 'Sin Offering' " 91.
\textsuperscript{270} Thang, "Eagle in the Myanmar Bible," 195.
\textsuperscript{271} Gay, "Authority and Submission," 21. The Judson translation is compared with the authorized version of the English Bible, and it is noted as having a “King James version effect” in its continuing use.
\textsuperscript{272} Smalley, \textit{Translation as Mission}, 50.
\textsuperscript{273} Smalley, "Language and Culture," 61.
\textsuperscript{274} Hunt, "Bless God and Take Courage: The Judson History and Legacy," 254-55. However, she did not give the date of the meeting.
\textsuperscript{275} Pleasants, "Beyond Translation: The Work of the Judsons in Burma," 2.
examples of Judson’s use of honorifics include: Jesus’ tears “fall royally” in Jn 11:35, and Jesus “sleeping royally” in Mk 4:38.276

Judson’s scholarship is indisputably of high quality. His linguistic choices in translations are also undeniably aimed at maximizing the expansion of Christianity. He incorporated Buddhist contributions from culture and religion into Christian theological language, although he understood that this language was only used by educated Buddhists. However, Judson’s hope to attract educated Buddhists to Christianity by incorporating sacred language led Dingrin to conclude that Judson’s work left a “conflicting legacy,”277 since Christianity flourished paradoxically among the ethnic minorities, in terms of their own linguistic, cultural, and religious heritage, rather than among the Burmese.

### 2.2.2.3 Judson’s Influence Related to Gender

Another problematic aspect of Judson’s legacy concerns the role of women in the church, where inclusion as well as restriction of women in ministry occurred. Although Judson allowed women missionaries, including his wives, to be actively involved in the work of the church, at the same time his translation of passages like 1 Cor 14:34-35, where he translated λαλέω as “preaching” in the context of women’s silence, precluded women from preaching in most instances. This translation no doubt influenced the missionary women of his era, including his wives, who were actively involved in evangelism and teaching in the church but, for the most part, refrained from preaching. This is one example of Judson’s role in forming significant concepts that still influence church life in Myanmar today.

One of Judson’s influential concepts is his hierarchical and patriarchal notion of authority. This is seen in his translations of the word “κεφαλή” in Ephesians. Instead of translating this term “κεφαλή” as simply “oo khaung,” meaning “head,” relating to the headship of Christ over the church in Ephesians 1:22, he chose to translate this term as “a choke a char oo Khaung,”278 meaning “absolute head.”279 Since the word “absolute” is attached

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278 The Anglican version translates “head” as “a tut a tate” meaning “the ultimate.” Thus, the word authorizes a male’s authority as being ultimate. See Gay, “Authority and Submission,” 120.
279 The usage of these words in the Judson Bible 1834 version, which is before his corrections, is the same as the version that was printed in 1840.
referentially to the head, this word influences how contemporary interpreters in Myanmar understand power. Judson implies that the meaning of this passage is that “Christ has absolute power over man as man has over woman.” Later, in Ephesians 5:23, Judson translated the same word, “κεφαλή,” as “oo khaung,” meaning “head” only where the relationship of Christ, man and woman are mentioned. Elsewhere, in 1 Cor 11:3-10, when speaking of head coverings, and in Col 1:18-19, speaking of Christ as the head of the church, Judson refers to “κεφαλή” as “head” only.

Although Judson translated some words into stronger terms than we find in most English translations, in other passages he used words that are weaker than in the English translation. For example, about the relationships of husbands and wives found in all his translations of the Epistles, he translated the term “ὑποτάσσω,” as “won khan,” meaning “to consent, agree to, or comply with,”[280] which is milder in meaning than the English translation of “be subject” or “submission.” In general, however, Judson’s linguistic choices reflect the patriarchal view of authority and submission embraced by the missionaries, mission boards, and sending churches. These understandings are the background of Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14:34-36, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. The following section will explain how these understandings influenced women missionaries and how these women in turn influenced the formation of the Myanmar contextual understanding of the role of women in the church.

2.2.3 Influences of Women Missionaries on the Role of Women

In the nineteenth century, in the United States and Great Britain, many women became involved in “evangelistic, missionary, benevolence, and reform societies founded and led by women,”[281] despite the cultural challenges and limitations imposed upon them. The legacy of women missionaries is paradoxical. Their influence had empowering as well as limiting effects on the role of women in the church. These women missionaries influenced the role of women in the church through their teaching as well as their actions, which

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reflected beliefs and teaching of the male missionaries as well as the sending mission agencies.

Among the missionary women who came to Myanmar, the women most often mentioned in the history of the church are the first two wives of Adoniram Judson, Ann Hasseltine and Sarah Boardman. They were greatly involved in the ministries of teaching, Bible translation, and to a much more limited extent alongside Judson. Their involvement in the work of mission not only set examples for women in Myanmar, but they also inspired many women from their home country to make a commitment to mission work.

Ann Hasseltine Judson came to Myanmar on July 13, 1813 with her husband, Adoniram. She learned Burmese with her husband, and her language skill was recorded as exceeding his for a time.²⁸² She founded the first Christian school²⁸³ with the help of Ma Min Lay,²⁸⁴ who was the first Burmese Christian woman, where both boys and girls in the villages could be taught to read and write. She started the school mostly for girls at first, because at that time no attention was given to female education. However, it soon became a co-educational school. This school was significant for providing education for both boys and girls in villages, since education at that time was only available to boys and a few females from the higher classes of society.²⁸⁵ Through this school, many students were converted to Christianity.²⁸⁶

Ann Judson went back to America in June 1823 due to her ill health, but even during that time she helped to publish the first book about Baptist mission work in Burma, *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burma Empire*.²⁸⁷ She assisted Adoniram with his translation work by translating several tracts into Burmese and translating the Books of Daniel and Jonah.²⁸⁸ She then also translated the first New Testament in the Thai

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²⁸³ The school was opened on January 20, 1821, and it still exists today.
²⁸⁴ Eh Eh Wah, "The Outstanding Baptist Women Leaders in Myanmar " B.D. thesis, Myanmar Institute of Theology, 1991, 10. A detailed description of Ma Min Lay is found in this chapter, at 2.2.4.
language. Ann returned to Burma in December 1823, only to discover that her husband was in prison in Ava. When she found out that government officials were to confiscate their house, she put all the Burmese translation drafts of the New Testament in a pillow and gave it to her husband in prison. Thus, the translation of the Bible was preserved. Although she endured many hardships with her husband, faced the death of her children in Burma, and suffered serious illnesses, she committed her life faithfully to mission work. Ann died on October 24, 1826, and is buried in Amherst (Kyait-kha-mi).

Another outstanding female missionary was Sarah Hall Boardman, widow of missionary Rev. George Dana Boardman. She came to Burma with her husband in 1827 and started mission work among the Karen people around Tavoy. Sarah continued to carry out this mission work after her husband’s death in 1831. She proclaimed the gospel in the Karen language and started a Christian school at Tavoy in 1833. She later married Adoniram Judson in 1834. She finished the translation of the New Testament into the Mon language. She also translated Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress into the Burmese language. Sarah continued to witness for Christ with her husband until her death in 1843 on her way back to America. She was buried on St. Helena Island in the South Atlantic.

Through the stories of these pioneer women missionaries, not only Myanmar women but also many Western women were encouraged to become involved in mission work. From early 1861 onward, “the influence of women’s organizations expanded to the foreign mission field. Women’s missionary boards sent out a host of unmarried female missionaries; in less than fifty years there were two women for every man on the mission field.” Ruth Tucker, Calvin Seminary missiologist, claims that “the women’s missionary movement was unique in that for the first time in history women could take up leadership

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289 Wah, "The Outstanding Baptist Women Leaders in Myanmar " 5.
290 Ibid., 4.
291 Clement, Adoniram Judson, 188.
292 Wayland, Memoir of the Life, 1, 423. It is noted that Ko Tha Byu, the first Karen convert who later became the first Karen pastor, was the first fruit of their mission.
293 Ibid., 427, 524.
294 Ibid., 2: 82.
296 Clement, Adoniram Judson, 188. Also in Wah, "The Outstanding Baptist Women Leaders in Myanmar " 7.
positions in evangelistic outreach on a large scale," with the support of millions of people from the home churches.298

However, although these women missionaries of the nineteenth century had a positive influence on women regarding teaching and education, their influence on the role of the women in the church is contested. They reinforced and affirmed the traditional understanding of a limited role for women in the church based on their own understanding of authority and submission. The following shows the traditional expectations that these women missionaries of the nineteenth century reinforced and affirmed through their teaching and activities.

### 2.2.3.1 Women as Supporters and Homemakers

Firstly, the women missionaries of the early nineteenth century helped reinforce and affirm the role of women as supporters of husbands and homemakers. The attitude of the sending mission agencies supported this view. Pierce Beaver notes that the American Mission Board of that time (the nineteenth century) made decisions concerning missionary marriages and encouraged males to have wives while working on the mission field. The reason was explained by the mission board in terms of their view that the main duty of women was “being a helpmeet and companion” to men and a “mother of children,” and that the only suitable jobs outside of the home were teaching their children and other women.299

The general rule of the American mission boards during this period was to allow only married couples as missionaries, which had prevented the appointment of single women. However, this policy later changed, and Adoniram Judson lived to welcome the first single woman as a missionary to Burma, Sarah Cummings.300 These attitudes and policies of the mission boards guided the missionaries, especially the missionary wives, who in turn influenced the general understanding of women’s role in the church in Myanmar.

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298 Ibid.
300 Kawl Thang Vuta, "A Brief History of The Planting and Growth of the Church in Burma," Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983, 73. Sarah Cummings arrived in 1832, and started the mission work in Chumerah, a remote and malaria-infested area that was about sixty miles above Moulmein on the Salween (Thanlwin) River. While serving faithfully, she died of jungle fever at Moulmein in 1834.
Rosalie Hall Hunt rightly argues in her book that Judson’s accomplishments were not his alone, and that the three women he married contributed greatly to his work. She describes Ann Judson as a person who “translated tracts and kept Adoniram alive while he was in prison,” his second wife Sarah as a person who “proved a remarkably adept linguist and evangelist,” and his third wife Emily as a “talented writer and expositor of her husband’s career.” However, these women were admired for their supportive role in relation to their husband’s work more than for their individual contributions to the church.

### 2.2.3.2 Women’s Ministry as an Exception

Although Judson thought the rule that restricted single women from missionary service was “probably a good” rule, he argued that “our minds should not be closed” to making exceptions when Sarah Cummings was appointed as a missionary to Burma. This resonated with the attitudes of the nineteenth century mission boards that considered the work of women as an “exception,” to be permitted only when male missionaries were unavailable. Dana Roberts points out work in areas such as translation, literary work, or “itinerant evangelism” was seen in the nineteenth century as “the responsibility of missionary men.” An example is the American Mission Board policy that “the ordained ministry among the constituency of the American Board precluded women from working in Bible translation.”

The work of Ann Judson as an evangelist and translator alongside her husband was an exceptional case due to the lack of male missionaries to help with the work in Burma. Although Ann Judson was instrumental in opening the door to theological education and ministry for Myanmar women when she introduced co-educational schools, in other respects she reinforced the traditional roles of women as homemakers through the domesticating curriculum for girls in those schools. She also was involved in teaching in women’s groups. She met regularly with groups of women who were interested in learning about the new religion, and taught those women to read the Bible for themselves instead of having it read to them. Although she emphasized the importance of educational

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301 See Hunt, "Bless God and Take Courage: The Judson History and Legacy," 337.
304 Ibid.
opportunities being available to girls as well as boys, she also promoted the ideology and theology of the headship of men over women. She avoided preaching to men until her husband’s captivity.\textsuperscript{305} During that period, when Ann Judson preached to gender-mixed congregations, it was considered that her preaching was acceptable since she was without a male protector.\textsuperscript{306}

This was also the case with Adoniram Judson’s second wife, Sarah Boardman. Although Sarah assumed the work of her late husband, George Boardman, by preaching to Karen men and women on several occasions, she gave up her role as evangelist and preacher when she was remarried to Judson and took on the role of homemaker. Her translation of Bunyan’s \textit{Pilgrim’s Progress} was praised by her husband Adoniram as “one of the best pieces of composition we have published.”\textsuperscript{307} Although she began the Mon (Pequan) Bible translation and finished the New Testament, she gave up her translation work to a male missionary as soon as one became available.\textsuperscript{308} She taught Bible classes and led prayer meetings for women after her marriage to Judson. She also directed the co-educational school and instructed native women in “maternal and social studies.”\textsuperscript{309} Like her predecessor, Sarah Boardman contributed to the development of women while at the same time affirming the societal expectation of the role of women as homemaker.

\textbf{2.2.3.3 Obedience to the Authority of Men}

Thirdly, almost all the women missionaries, whether married or unmarried, emphasized obedience to the ultimate authority of men,\textsuperscript{310} both through their teachings and their personal example. Although there were many restrictions on missionaries’ wives and single women missionaries in the nineteenth century, there were women among the Baptist missionary wives, like Deborah Wade and Calista Vinton, who were noted for their outstanding evangelistic preaching. Deborah Wade, who was a contemporary of Ann

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\textsuperscript{305} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{306} Gay, “Authority and Submission,” 53.
\textsuperscript{308} Ibid., 308. The name of the missionary who carried on her work was Rev. James Haswell, and he continued to carry out this translation project and published it in 1847.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid., 305.
\textsuperscript{310} Gay, “Authority and Submission,” 52.
\end{flushleft}
Judson, worked among the Karen people with her husband. She preached and taught both men and women when her husband left to preach in the jungle areas.  

Calista Vinton also came with her husband to work among the Karen, along with the Wades, in 1834. Given the great need for evangelism, the Vintons soon began traveling to separate locations. They each took assistants and went their separate ways to preach from Karen village to village. Dana Lee points out that Calista Vinton and Deborah Wade preached and taught in mixed congregations. However, Deborah Wade refused to call what she did “preaching,” although Calista Vinton accepted that preaching was her calling. Calista’s preaching was accepted by the home church in America because it was done in modesty and did not contradict St. Paul’s rule that women were not to “usurp authority over the man.” Once again, this is connected to the perception that the work of women was an exception, since women were only allowed to participate in ministry under the condition that they remained obedient to the authority of men.

Ellen Mason’s legacy was different from that of the other women mentioned above. She was expelled from the Baptist mission with charges against her that she had not followed the instruction of the proper authority on the issue of “indigenous leadership and the role of women.” Ellen spent her first year as a missionary in an area supervised by the first single woman missionary, Sarah Cummings, who was a teacher and evangelist. Ellen assumed similar roles for herself when she moved to Toungoo with her husband in 1847. She started a school for girls and trained young women to evangelize adult women at home.

Ellen Mason was accused of causing division in the churches because she fostered the indigenous leadership of both male pastors and female missionaries. Her husband was accused of “sustaining” her “in the exercise of an authority in the church with which,
according to the teaching of the Apostle, no woman ought to be entrusted,” and blamed for not controlling her with marital authority to curb her overzealous leadership.\footnote{318} Although she was expelled from the church, her husband was allowed to continue his missionary work in Myanmar. Even though the council of the American Baptist Church accused her of doctrinal errors, William Womack points out that the main underlying reason for her dismissal was due to her strong “interest in politics and the politics of gender.”\footnote{319}

When examining the work of these missionary women, we see that the attitudes and policies of the sending mission agencies were deeply connected to the perception that the role of women was as supporters of husbands and homemakers, that their forays into the sphere of male missionary work was an exception, and that obedience to the authority of male leadership was unquestioned. Although most of the missionary women complied with the rules, a few resisted. The compliant attitudes and activities of women further legitimized the authority of men in the church. We can conclude that these missionary women had a profound influence on the role of Myanmar women in the church, both positively and negatively. We now hear some of the voices of contemporary Myanmar Christian women concerning the influence that women missionaries had and continue to have on the role of women in the Myanmar church.

2.2.4 Myanmar Women’s Reflections on the Role of Women Missionaries

Regarding the positive influence of missionary wives on Myanmar Christian women, Eh Eh Wah argues that the missionary wives encouraged Burmese women to be actively involved in mission work. She points out that Ma Min Lay, who in 1820 became the first female Burmese Christian and the tenth Burmese convert under the ministry of the missionaries, was an impressive example of indigenous female involvement in mission work.\footnote{320} Ma Min Lay’s involvement was undeniably significant for she helped Ann Judson found a co-educational school for both boys and girls, which was opened on January 20, 1821.\footnote{321} After Ann Judson passed away, Ma Min Lay carried out the work of the mission

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\item \footnote{318} Toungoo Baptist Mission (TBM), "Minutes of a Council Held at Toungoo" (Rangoon, 8 October 1863), 102.
\item \footnote{319} Womack, "Contesting Indigenous and Female Authority in the Burma Baptist Mission: The Case of Ellen Mason," 543-59.
\item \footnote{320} Wah, "The Outstanding Baptist Women Leaders in Myanmar " 10.
\item \footnote{321} Judson, An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman Empire: Letters, 256.
\end{itemize}
based in Amherst and extending to the eastern part of Tennesarim. She died in 1827, nine months after Ann's death in Amherst. In order to remember her contribution to mission work, a ‘Ma Min Lay Day’ has been observed annually in the second week of September since 1983, in U Naw's Memorial Baptist Church, by the Burmese Women Missionary Society.\(^{322}\) After her death, another Burmese woman, Hpwa Tee,\(^{323}\) took the place of Ma Min Lay in teaching and carried out all of her duties, alongside other missionaries.\(^{324}\)

Looking at these women, it is clear that their involvement indeed showed the positive influence of the nineteenth century women missionaries on the women of Myanmar.

However, as with the male missionaries, the influence of the nineteenth century women missionaries were not all empowering for Burmese women. Although these women may have envisioned new possibilities for themselves through Christian teachings and education, the women missionaries were also seen as personal examples for them to follow. Even though the women missionaries initiated education for girls, the main emphasis in these institutions was on the traditional roles of women as subordinate to men. Despite these patriarchal restrictions, “many of the (women) graduates became teachers, bible women and pastor’s wives.”\(^{325}\)

It will be helpful to hear the views of some of the contemporary female biblical interpreters in Myanmar who trace the origins of present-day church traditions, especially concerning the role of women in the church, to the teachings and the lives of the nineteenth century women missionaries. In Myanmar today, the normative view of the churches continues to be that the role of women in the church is that of wives, homemakers, and supporters of male leadership.

Aye Nwe traces this tradition in the Baptist Church of Myanmar to the “patriarchal tradition” of the missionaries. She notes that the church is still following this tradition by restricting “women’s ordination, leadership, [and] priesthood ministry” and only allowing women to aspire to the highest role of “assistants of male pastors.”\(^{326}\)

\(^{322}\) Wah, "The Outstanding Baptist Women Leaders in Myanmar " 11.

\(^{323}\) Ibid., 13. Hpwa Tee and her husband Nai Mehm Boke were the second converts among the Mon people. She was baptized in December, 1828.

\(^{324}\) Ibid.


explicitly traces this traditional view of the role of women as wives and homemakers to the wives of the nineteenth century women missionaries. She argues that this legacy is one of the reasons women tend to assume a quiet role in the church and not a leadership role. Thus, most of the women in Myanmar serve in the church as Sunday School teachers, secretaries, women’s group leaders or youth leaders, rather than pastors, even though they may be educated at the same level or higher than male pastors.

When a few women do end up in leadership positions, their work is still considered as an exception, just as the leadership roles of women missionaries were considered an exception. Most of the churches allow women to teach other women, but not to teach mixed congregations or male audiences. Anna May Chain points out that this strategy of women teaching other women is a direct legacy of the missionary wives. She explains that this is the reason that the Myanmar church started training schools for “Bible women,” who teach the Bible to women and children only. Eh Tar Gay highlights that this attitude concerning women’s role in the church was the reason for turning these training schools into Women’s Bible Colleges, even if they are now becoming co-educational. She also observes that although the numbers of women students are rising in most theological institutions in Myanmar, the “women graduate(s) still have to struggle to find places as pastors, theological educators, and executives in associations, conventions, and synods.”

In sum, although these educated Myanmar women see new possibilities for themselves in the light of Christian teaching, they find that their ministry opportunities are limited. They remain under the authority of men in the home and the church, where silent submission to authority continues to be legitimized not only by Burmese culture, rooted in its patriarchal history and Buddhist religious teachings, but also by the examples of their “new liberators, the missionaries,” who used the Bible as their authority. In other words, the concept of silence, which is understood in Myanmar as a sign of respect or submission to anyone in a position of authority, found legitimacy in the biblical teaching

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330 Ibid.
331 Ibid.
and the example of the missionaries. This reality leads us to consider the impact of this missionary legacy and cultural heritage on contemporary interpreters of Scripture in Myanmar.

2.2.5 Impact of Missionaries and Culture on Biblical Interpretation in Myanmar

The influence of missionaries, combined with the hierarchical and patriarchal cultural perceptions about the role of women, has had an extended effect on present-day Myanmar biblical interpreters. Their interpretational tradition supports the hierarchical and patriarchal culture in the church, as well as an uncritical understanding of issues involved in the translation of the Bible. Judson’s Burmese Bible is regarded as a literal translation from the original languages and there is little awareness of how all translation involves issues of interpretation by the translator.

With few exceptions, the interpretational tradition of the Myanmar church has affirmed the hierarchical and patriarchal culture that has prescribed the place for women as being in the home and the role of women as subordinate to men. In this religious-cultural worldview, the appropriate virtues for women are to be shy, quiet, meek, and mild. This tradition makes it difficult for women to speak for themselves or to critique others, especially men, and encourages them to remain silent in the face of abusive situations.

The following examples from writings by Myanmar interpreters uphold the view that a woman’s place is in the home, encourage silence even in cases of domestic violence, and affirm beliefs that women’s role in the church should be limited. As noted in the Introduction, the literature referenced here is limited due to the strict Press Scrutiny Board censorship that did not allow religious books to be published for public use from 1962 until very recently.\footnote{See Chapter 1.3.} For this reason, the writings of Myanmar interpreters cited here came from materials found in the MIT library\footnote{The Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT) in Yangon belongs to the Myanmar Baptist Convention. It was founded in 1927 and is the largest seminary in Myanmar.} and the MEGST library only.\footnote{The Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (MEGST) in Yangon was founded in 1995. It is an interdenominational school of the Myanmar Evangelical Christian Alliance (previously known as the Myanmar Evangelical Christian Fellowship).} Despite the small sampling, it is fair to suggest that the views articulated in this material represent the prevailing attitudes toward women in the church in Myanmar.
Firstly, the belief that a woman’s place is in the home is the dominant attitude in the Myanmar church. This view is echoed in a series of articles in *Myanmataman*, a Christian magazine published monthly by the Myanmar Baptist Convention. In a 1967 article entitled “Wanted: Christian Daughter-in-Law,” Aung Din describes the ideal wife as someone who lives a virtuous life, who takes good care of her husband and children, and who fulfills all the household responsibilities. A wife should be a supporter of her husband, a protector of his honor, and a follower of his leadership. In writing on preparation for marriage, Din stated that young men should prepare to be able to lead and feed their households, and that young women ought to prepare to take care of their children and the household. In other article, Din wrote that a wife should do the domestic work in the home, save the money that is earned by her husband, and teach children to live a good moral life. In the above-mentioned articles, Din maintains that the place for women is in the home, that work for women is domestic work, and that women must be submissive and obedient to their husband’s leadership. As I wrote in the conclusion of my D.Min. dissertation, such teaching influences women to remain silently in the background and to stay away from vocational ministry.

Another writer, Samo Thoung, emphasizes the leadership role of the husband. He argues that men alone have the Spirit of God (Gen 2:7). Since Adam was the first receiver of God’s commandment (Gen 2:16), therefore husbands should be the leaders of the family. Using these passages from Genesis to prove men’s place of leadership, he concludes that all men should be providers and protectors of children, wives, and the church. Offering a contrasting view, Nang Thuzar Mon links this kind of teaching from Genesis, including the

335 The magazine was founded in 1862. See in cover page of Myanmar Baptist Convention, *Myanmataman Magazine* (Yangon: Myanmar Baptist Convention, March 2016).
336 Translation from Burmese title.
339 Ibid., 11-12.
341 This is the main reason given in my research among women alumnae of Evangelical seminary. The question focused on the main reason why women graduates from seminary at times did not go into ministry after they had studied and received their degrees. A number of the respondents (40% of the respondents) answered that marrying someone who thinks a woman’s place in the home was the main reason women did not enter vocational ministry.
teaching that men are masters of women because the first woman was created out of the rib of a man, to the problem of sex trafficking of Myanmar girls into Thailand. She regards these teachings as contributing to women’s feelings of being undervalued, which she sees as further influencing a woman to believe that “she cannot raise her voice against violence (since) she has been taught not to.”

Some writers, such as Khin Maung Myint, even encourage women’s silence in cases of domestic violence. In an article in *Myanmataman*, Myint argues that the basis for women to submit to the ruling of their husbands, even in the case of domestic violence, is based on 1 Pet 3:1-5. While acknowledging that this passage was referring to the married women of unbelievers, he insists that the passage instructs all wives “to love, revere, respect, obey and submit to the ruling of the husband. Even if the husband is not religious and a cruel man, the wife is to submit to his ruling.”

According to Myint, the prime example of such obedience is Christ’s obedience until death. He therefore admonishes wives that, even if their husbands are violently abusive to them, they should “remember that God alone is the judge and ask God for strength to be able to endure it.” Myint advises wives to be a helper to their husbands in everything, based on Eph 5:22, and never to disobey their husbands. He compares the disobedient wife to Jezebel, warning that wives should “not be like Jezebel, who was a bad woman that died with violent death, and do not yield to the temptations of Satan by disobeying your husband.” He equates wives’ disobedience of their husbands to “rebellion against God,” since he sees this act as rejecting the authority whom God has appointed to rule.

Finally, a disapproving view of women’s participation in leadership in the church is also found in other available writings from Myanmar. One well-known Christian writer, Thanlwin Pe Thwin, who was a member of the Translation Supervising Committee for the Myanmar Common Language Bible, sees women’s leadership in the church as negative.

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345 Ibid.
346 Ibid.
347 Myint, *How to Choose Your Mate*, 82.
348 Ibid.
349 I discuss the Myanmar Common Language Bible in Chapter 3.2.3.
Although he gives no specific scriptural text to support his argument, he seems to allude to passages like 1 Cor 14:34 and 1 Tim 2:12. He sees women as drawn to gossip and creating arguments in the church. He describes women’s preaching and praying as long and boring. He believes women are more easily attracted to worldly things than men and thus more easily tempted than men. He therefore concludes that women tend to have more difficulty in concentrating on spiritual things and are thus not suitable for leadership roles.\footnote{Thanlwin Pe Thwin, \textit{Myanmataman} (May 1-15, 1972). Cited also in Gay, \textit{"Authority and Submission,"} 284.}

The above sentiment is shared also by an anonymous author in the journal \textit{Golden Balance}. The writer characterizes women who aspire to be in leadership roles in the church as being too bold, like Eve, reaching out for something that is not for them. He describes men who allow their wives to lead as acting in a cowardly way, like Adam.\footnote{Anonymous, \textit{"Golden Balance 21,"} (Yangon, Myanmar: Golden Balance, n.d), 2.} For this writer, leadership in the church is reserved only for men.

In the many churches in Myanmar that share these views, women’s participation is limited even if in certain situations women can contribute somewhat to some ministries. Although the restrictions placed on women vary from denomination to denomination, Baptist, Anglican, Catholic and Evangelical-Pentecostal women in Myanmar have all stated that the concept of women’s leadership is a continual challenge in today’s churches.\footnote{\textit{"Engagement, Women Roles, Rights and Pastoral Leadership in the 21st Century: Inter-Denominational and Inter-Ethnic Cultural Perspective (Denominational Perspectives),"} in \textit{Engagement} (Yangon, Myanmar: MIT Judson Research Center, 2008): 21-38.} They note that men find it difficult to see women as “co-equal, much less to submit to women in higher authority,”\footnote{Cin Lian Cing, \textit{"Women Roles, Rights and Pastoral Leadership in the 21st Century: Inter-Denominational and Inter-Ethnic Cultural Perspective (Evangelical Perspective),"} in \textit{Engagement} (Yangon, Myanmar: MIT Judson Research Center, 2008): 38.} due to the hierarchical-patriarchal historical background of Myanmar.

For this reason, there are few women in pastoral roles in Myanmar churches today. These women face tremendous challenges, beginning with the right to ordination. Even though some women work hard for many years to achieve their theological education, ordination is not permitted for women in some churches, and others require more years of probational ministry than men. Anna May Say Pa highlights some of the problems entailed
in achieving ordination for women. She describes how because of “strong ideas of [the] pollution of menstruation, elderly women have a greater chance of ordination than younger women. Some men will not take communion served by a woman because of this factor. Whereas a man, just a few years out of seminary, will easily get ordination.”

The realities described above indicate the general view of men toward women’s role in the church in Myanmar. The view that sees women as inferior to men has influenced the attitudes of women as well. Even in the cases where women in the church are given some opportunities, they find it difficult to take up leadership roles because they lack confidence. Say Pa links this lack of confidence to the churches’ teaching of women’s subordination and submission. She points out that taking a leading role for a Myanmar woman is “to go against upbringing and training,” because she has been taught to think of herself as not as valuable as a son throughout her life; she has been acculturated from girlhood to be submissive and passive, and she was told that a good girl is never assertive in any sector of society.

Further, Say Pa notes that the silence passages of Paul in 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-15 are used as “proof texts for limiting women’s ministry in the church and restricting women’s pastoral leadership role in the church.” Thus, a Christian feminist writer like Aye Nwe raises the need for “reading the Bible critically and reinterpretation for women’s emancipation” to challenge the perceptions of both men and women in the church.

### 2.3 CONCLUSION

Our examination of the contextual setting of Myanmar has provided a conceptual framework within which to understand how biblical interpreters in Myanmar have understood silence in 1 Cor 14:34-35. The contextual background of silence in Myanmar is inextricably linked to its hierarchical and patriarchal culture and the symbols that

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355 Anna May Say Pa was a former principal of the Myanmar Institute of Theology. She is known as a pioneer of feminist theology in Myanmar. She studied in Princeton Theological Seminary and graduated with a Ph.D. in Old Testament in 1989. She served at MIT as principal from 1998-2005.
357 Ibid.
358 Pa, "A Place at the Round Table. Equipping Burmese Women for Leadership," 18.
359 Nwe, "Womens Roles," 33.
embody that cultural worldview. This worldview forces people into submission, and it is rooted in and has been reinforced throughout Myanmar’s history by authoritarian political rulers and religious teachings. In the church, this cultural worldview that legitimizes women’s silence was reinforced and strengthened by Adoniram Judson and the women missionaries of his era, who affirmed the prevalent cultural concept of the domestic and subservient role of women. This background helps to explain the cultural assumptions that Myanmar interpreters bring to their interpretation of women’s silence in the most popular Bible in Myanmar, the Judson Burmese Bible translation.

Just as the interpreter’s understanding of words in biblical texts is contextually conditioned, the same dynamic occurs in the translator’s choice of words. In Judson Burmese Bible translation, the passage on women’s silence in 1 Cor 14:34-35, is a great example of such conditioning. Judson’s understanding of the role of women contributed to his choice of words in his translation. The following chapter will therefore analyze the Judson Burmese Bible translation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 to show how his choice of words continues to have an impact on Myanmar Christians’ views of the role of women in the church.
Amongst the Protestant churches in Myanmar, there are six different Bible translations in the Burmese language which are in use. In addition to the Judson Burmese Bible, Khoi Lam Thang, a translation officer of the Bible Society of Myanmar, notes five translations or editions: (1) the U Tun Nyein version based on the English Revised Version (ERV) and published in 1906; (2) the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) version of 1928 also known as the Anglican version; (3) the McQuire version of 1933 which was a revision of Judson’s Bible by a committee of the Baptist mission; (4) the Common

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365 This translation is also known as the Garrad Bible, which was considered a revised version of U Tun Nyein’s translation. Translators were Charles Edward Garrad, William Sherratt and George Kya Bin. Translated from Hebrew and Greek. It was completed in 1926 and published in 1927.
366 Warburton, Eastward! The Story of Adoniram Judson, 155. The main contributors were John McGuire, W. F. Thomas, U Tha Din, and U Lu Din.
Language version of 2005,367 and (5) the Eagle edition of 2006.368 Of these, this chapter takes a closer look at the Common Language Bible text of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in comparison with the Judson Burmese Bible.

The reasons for choosing Judson's Bible translation are that it is the most popular translation in Myanmar, it has been used as a basis for other translations, and it is often used to provide proof texts for limiting women’s ministry and women’s pastoral leadership in the Myanmar churches. The reason for choosing the Common Language Bible translation is that it emerged out of dissatisfaction with the terminologies of the Judson Bible.369 This was explained at the dedication service for the Common Language Bible on 12 January, 2006, where it was noted that the meanings of some words used in the Judson Bible were “no longer the same today,” or had “become archaic,” and that “a lot of phrasal expressions are hard to understand for modern Myanmar speakers.”370 Although the Common Language Bible is not as popular as the Judson Burmese Bible, this translation is also used fairly widely in Myanmar. The Common Language Bible is used in this chapter to compare with the Judson Bible to highlight the linguistic choices of Judson.

The first part of the chapter examines the historical background of both the Judson Burmese Bible and the Myanmar Common Language Bible. The second part analyzes the linguistic choices of the Judson Burmese Bible in 1 Cor 14:34-35. It will show that Judson normally follows the Textus Receptus, like many translators in the nineteenth century,371 although with some revision from Griesbach and Knapp. Therefore, the first part of the chapter also compares the Judson Burmese Bible with the Textus Receptus (TR) and Knapp. The chapter then also analyzes the text of NA28,372 which is the most recent contemporary critical Greek text, to highlight differences and similarities with the

369 Bible Societies of Myanmar, "Brief history of Myanmar Bible in Common Language."
370 Ibid.
linguistic choices of Judson. The third part of the chapter compares the linguistic usages of the Judson Burmese Bible with the Common Language Bible. The differences and similarities are analyzed to illustrate the linguistic choices in Burmese language usage of 1 Cor 14:34-35. The chapter ends with a summary of the prevailing view of women in Judson’s American church context that would have influenced his own view.

3.1 THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TWO BURMESE BIBLES

3.1.1 The Judson Burmese Bible (JB)

Judson completed his translation of the New Testament in 1823,\(^{373}\) ten years after his arrival in Burma. The entire Bible was printed on 24 October, 1840.\(^{374}\) After his death, the second edition of Judson’s Bible was printed in 1883. This later edition was a reprint of the first edition with the addition of E. A. Steven’s references. Many still agree with the assessment that the Burmese Bible translation was Judson’s “greatest literary achievement.”\(^{375}\) His other literary works, such as dictionaries,\(^{376}\) derived from his work on this translation.

Despite a number of more recent translations amongst the Protestant churches of Myanmar, Judson’s translation of the Bible is still the most popular translation.\(^{377}\) For many it is considered to be a better translation than the later Burmese versions that attempted “to revise or replace it.”\(^{378}\) As noted above, a recent biographer of Judson, Rosalie Hall Hunt, records that when some Burmese biblical scholars met to develop a new edition of the Bible, they unanimously decided not to pursue the project since Judson’s translation was remarkably beautiful and they “could not improve upon its accuracy and purity.”\(^{379}\) This group disbanded their effort to revise Judson’s translation

\(^{373}\) Clement, Adoniram Judson, 95.
\(^{374}\) Ibid., 237.
\(^{375}\) Warburton, Eastward! The Story of Adoniram Judson, 156.
\(^{376}\) Judson, A Dictionary of the Burman Language; Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English.
\(^{378}\) Smalley, Translation as Mission, 50.
\(^{379}\) Hunt, "Bless God and Take Courage: The Judson History and Legacy," 254-55. Hunt did not provide the year or location of this committee meeting. However, this could possibly be a Translators’ Conference that was held in Yangon, Myanmar in 1953. Eugene Nida, who introduced the Dynamic Equivalence principle of translation, attended that conference. The revision of the Judson Burmese Bible was discussed in this conference but abandoned since many were against revision. H. C. Willans, "Translators' Conference in Burma," The Bible Translator 4, no. 1 (1953): 21-25, http://tbt.sagepub.com/content/4/1/21.short, accessed 16 Aug 2016.
before they had even started. Smalley describes this as the “King James version effect” that the Judson translation has on people, which means that many feel that his linguistic expressions should not be changed although they are no longer easily understood by everyone in the present day.

However, critics of Judson’s work point out that there are significant problems in his translation. As noted previously, these include his use of honorific language and Pali vocabulary. In the nineteenth century, the honorific form of language was used regarding the royal family and Buddhist teachers. It indicates the rank of the speaker and the person addressed by the choice of personal pronouns as well as nouns. Again as noted above, some of the examples of Judson’s use of honorific language include his saying that Jesus’ tears “fall royally” in Jn 11:35, and that Jesus is “sleeping royally” in Mk 4:38. Since the end of the Burmese kingdom, this form of language has only been used by Buddhist teachers. But in 1853, Judson’s use of honorific language was not seen as problematic by Wayland, who saw his translation as “free from obscurity to the Burmese mind. It is read and understood perfectly,” and the style and language choices of Judson were “elegant.”

Although Pali was already considered a dead language in Judson’s day, Pali terms were used widely among Buddhists, more so than today, especially among Buddhist teachers. This was “similar to the way Latin continues to occupy a key place in Roman Catholic theology and liturgy.” Judson felt it was an absolute necessity to learn the Pali language, and he used Pali words in his translation to draw the attention of the educated and the Buddhist teachers. Although Judson’s intention in following this linguistic usage was for the purpose of maximizing the expansion of Christianity, it is ironic that Christianity flourished only among the ethnic minorities, not the Bamar, which created difficulties and prompted questions for some seeking to understand his linguistic choices.

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380 Duesing, Adoniram Judson, 85.
381 Smalley, Translation as Mission, 50.
384 Duesing, Adoniram Judson, 86.
As a result of developments since the nineteenth century in biblical scholarship, textual criticism and interpretation, some interpreters have claimed that there are “mistakes in Judson’s translation.”³⁸⁶ Others have argued that Judson allowed himself “to be turned aside from the accurate translation of a word or a passage by his presupposition as to the meaning.”³⁸⁷ Although there are some issues with Judson’s translation, as there are with all translations, accusing him of committing “mistakes” and not being “accurate” does an injustice to his careful scholarship, using the resources available to him. The scholarly attention that Judson gave to the process of translation is seen in the letter that he sent to the printers, where he noted,

I have bestowed more time and labor on the revision than on the first translation of the work. ... Long and toilsome research among the biblical critics and commentators, especially the German,³⁸⁸ was frequently requisite to satisfy my mind that my first position was the right one.³⁸⁹

This leads to the question of differences found in Judson’s translation compared with how particular words and phrases might be translated today. There are two reasons for such variances. First, although the Textus Receptus was very much the standard in his day, Judson follows different Greek texts than the Textus Receptus (TR) (received text). This is explained in a study done on Bible translation that followed the traditions of Textus Receptus, in which researchers noted some variances from the TR within a few hours of looking at the Judson Burmese Bible.³⁹⁰ The first assumption was that such variances were done by others. However, after they compared four editions of Judson’s Burmese Bible (1823, 1907, 1926, 1933), they “ruled out someone else changing the text since Judson was very much alive when the New Testament was printed.”³⁹¹ His reliance on critical Greek texts, along with the TR, is explained by Judson himself:

³⁸⁷ Ibid.
³⁸⁸ Page 80 of this chapter explains the German works that Judson consulted.
³⁹¹ Ibid.
In the first edition of the Old Testament, I paid too much regard to the critical emendations of Lowth, Horsley, and others. In the present edition, I have adhered more strictly to the Hebrew text. In my first attempts at translating portions of the New Testament, above 20 years ago, I followed Griesbach, as all the world then did; and though, from year to year I have found reason to distrust his authority, still, not wishing to be ever-changing, I deviated but little from his text, in subsequent editions, until the last; in preparing that which I have followed the text of Knapp (though not implicitly), as upon the whole the safest and best extant; in consequence of which the present Burmese version of the New Testament accords more nearly with the received English.

The above statement clarifies that the Judson Burmese Bible is a combination of both the received text (TR) and contemporary critical Greek texts. For the New Testament, Judson first consulted the work of Johann Jacob Griesbach, who was the first German scholar to present an actual revision of the TR text, the Elzevir edition. However, later Judson doubted Griesbach work and followed the work of Georg Christian Knapp instead. This indicates that Judson’s base text for the TR was the Elzevir edition instead of the older

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394 Judson’s reference to “Others” could be “the exegetical works of Stuart, Robinson, Stowe, Ripley, Bush, Noyes and such like, with some of the best German works.” E. Judson, The Life of Adoniram Judson, 406. They are American NT and OT scholars.

395 Clement, Adoniram Judson, 237.


edition of TR called the Stephanus edition. \(^{399}\) The reason is not only that the critical works of Griesbach were based on the Elzevir edition of the TR; \(^{400}\) Knapp’s text was also based on Griesbach’s work. Knapp’s text was known for correcting the punctuation of Griesbach’s text. \(^{401}\) It is possible that Judson’s comment elsewhere \(^{402}\) on consulting the work of German scholars was referring to these two scholars. Later in our analysis of the texts, the Elzevir edition of TR is presented alongside Knapp’s texts to highlight the differences.

Second, variances found in Judson’s translation are linked to the role of translator’s interpretation in translation. De Jong gives a helpful explanation of such variances in Judson’s translation. He sees them as indicators that “Judson was affected by the understanding of the time,” and describes Judson’s translation of a particular text as an “exegetical fossil.” \(^{403}\) Smalley’s exposition of translation theory stresses the importance of the translator’s “culture, attitudes, education, and experience,” and argues that the “theological assumptions” of the translator are “foundational” in translation. \(^{404}\) This dynamic can be seen in Judson’s translation. His contextual and theological assumptions contribute to variances in his translation. This awareness contributes to our understanding of the important role of the translator’s background in shaping theological assumptions that influence the translation of biblical passages, in Judson’s case concerning women’s silence in the churches. His translation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 is analyzed here to identify whether such variances occur for these reasons.

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402 See page 79 of this chapter.
403 De Jong, "A 'Sin Offering' " 3. De Jong did a study of Gen 4:7 where Judson translated the Hebrew word *hattat* as “sin offering” rather than “sin,” which the modern exegetical commentaries understood as the meaning of this word.
404 Smalley, "Language and Culture," 61.
3.1.2 The Myanmar Common Language Bible (MCL)

The Myanmar Common Language Bible was translated 170 years after Adoniram Judson translated the first Burmese Bible. As noted, this translation resulted from the view that perceived much of the terminology in the Judson Bible as archaic.\(^{405}\) The project started in 1966 to provide a translation that contemporary people would be able to understand. The chief translator, U Sein Pe,\(^{406}\) was a headmaster of mission schools, a well-known teacher, and State Education Officer. Through his competency in Burmese and English, and with the expertise of Harold K. Moulton\(^{407}\) and Norman Mundhenk\(^{408}\) in Greek and Hebrew, the translation was finished in February 1981. The *New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs in Myanmar Common Language* was published for the first time in 1984. Then, after corrections, a second edition was published in 2001. The first publication of the whole Bible was completed in 2005.\(^{409}\)

The base text for the Myanmar Common Language translation was the *Good News English Bible*, also known as *Good News for Modern Man*,\(^{410}\) *Today’s English Version* (TEV), *Good News Bible* (GNB), or *Good News Translation* (GNT).\(^{411}\) The *Good News Bible* was translated by Robert G. Bratcher\(^{412}\) in consultation with a committee appointed by the American Bible Society; the first New Testament was published in 1966, the second

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\(^{406}\) Thang, "Eagle in the Myanmar Bible," 196.


\(^{408}\) Norman A. Mundhenk, "Punctuation," *The Bible Translator* 32, no. 2 (1981): 227-34. Mundhenk is a Translations Adviser with the United Bible Societies based in Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea. Mundhenk, Moulton, Nida and Bratcher were all from the United Bible Societies and they are mentioned as giving translation seminars at different places in "The Editor: Translations—1970, a Review of the Year," *The Bible Translator* 22, no. 2 (1971): 61-67.

\(^{409}\) Thang, "Eagle in the Myanmar Bible," 196.


The completed Old Testament was published with a revised edition of the New Testament in 1976 as the Good News Bible: The Bible in Today’s English Version (GNB). In the 1979 edition, the Apocrypha was included, and a new edition with gender-inclusive language was published in 1992.

The Myanmar Common Language translation (MCL) is based on two principles. The first is Eugene Nida’s principle of “Dynamic Equivalence.” Bratcher explains this principle as translating “to try to stimulate in the new reader in the new age the same reaction to the text as the one the original author wished to stimulate in his first and immediate readers.” In other words, this method seeks to translate using words that best express the meaning of the original Greek word in contemporary English, as naturally as possible, rather than translating the Greek word to the same exact word in English. This method translates “the biblical meaning into a modern cultural equivalent.” The second principle consists of a “Common Language” approach to translation, that is, using “part of the English language that is common to all who read and write it, irrespective of the degree of formal education or national origin.” With these two principles in mind, the

418 Bratcher, ”The Nature and Purpose,” 97.
419 Ibid. See also Stanley Porter and Mark J. Boda, Translating the New Testament: Text, Translation, Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 126. Porter and Boda summarize Nida’s definition of dynamic equivalence as an approach that looks at source language and receptor language. As a result, “(1) a translation must aim primarily at reproducing the message of the source language, (2) a translation is to seek equivalence of the message rather than conserving the form of the utterance, (3) the closest natural equivalent is to be used, (4) meaning is given priority over structure, and (5) style, though secondary to content, must still be preserved.”
420 Bratcher, ”The Nature and Purpose,” 97.
421 Porter and Boda, Translating the New Testament: Text, Translation, Theology, 179.
423 Bratcher, ”The Nature and Purpose,” 97.
Common Language Bible in English is translated from the UBS Greek text of 1966 with few variant readings.\textsuperscript{424}

The Greek text Bratcher used differs from the Textus Receptus.\textsuperscript{425} He translated the TEV New Testament by using the 1966 United Bible Societies’ “book of the Greek New Testament edited by four Biblical textual scholars, Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren.”\textsuperscript{426} Based on a theory of textual criticism that sees “older” texts as “better manuscripts,” this translation used a Greek New Testament text that is much older than the 1611 text.\textsuperscript{427}

The Myanmar Common Language translation in turn based its text on the translation of the TEV New Testament or the Good News Bible (GNB). The MCL translation project was influenced greatly by Eugene Nida himself from his visit in 1953 to the Translators’ Conference held in Myanmar.\textsuperscript{428} In this conference, as noted earlier, the revision of the Judson Burmese Bible was one of the topics discussed. However, the translation attempt was not successful since many people wanted to keep the Judson Burmese Bible unchanged.\textsuperscript{429} The MCL translation project started in 1966.\textsuperscript{430}

\textsuperscript{424} Beduhn, \textit{Truth in Translation}, 40. Beduhn asserts that there are fourteen variant passages. They include Mk 6:20; Luke 21:19; Acts 7:46; 10:19; 12:25: Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 13:3; 2 Cor 8:7; Heb 4:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Jude 5; Rev 14:3; 21:3
\textsuperscript{425} Bratcher, "The Nature and Purpose," 39. This text is also known as the King James text.
\textsuperscript{426} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{427} Bratcher also stated that the King James texts are based on the work of Erasmus (1516). He noted that they were “based on late and corrupt Greek manuscripts, replete with changes, additions and deletions made by copyists during the centuries when the manuscripts were copied by hand. Many of the changes were accidental, and many were intentional. ... It should be remembered that the British scholars, when they revised the King James New Testament in 1881, made over 5,000 changes based on the Greek text; and now even further changes must be made, as a better text is available.” In Bratcher, "The Nature and Purpose," 39.
\textsuperscript{428} Willans, "Translators' Conference in Burma," 21-25.
\textsuperscript{429} Rosalie Hall Hunt, \textit{Bless God and Take Courage: The Judson History and Legacy} (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), 254-5.
\textsuperscript{430} Willans, "Translators' Conference in Burma," 21-25. H. K. Moulton served as advisor for the Greek and Hebrew side of the Myanmar Common Language translation. This is noted in Bratcher, "The Nature and Purpose," 107.
3.2 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35

3.2.1 Variances in the Judson Burmese Bible (JB)

Comparing the versions of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in the 1832, 1837, 1840, 1866, 1885, and 2007 editions and reprints of Judson’s Burmese Bible, the variances found in Judson’s usages of words are not great in number. This is seen in Table 1 (following page), which provides a comparative chart of these editions and reprints. Most of the changes found were suffixes that make no significant changes in the meaning of a word or words. No changes were found in editions that range from 1837 to 1885.

However, some of the words in the 1837 reprint are slightly different from the 1832 edition. This is shown in Table 2. The 1837 reprint of the JB differs from the first printing of the 1832 edition in four places. The 1837 reprint replaced the word for “remain” (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို (with ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို)), the word for “preach” (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို (with ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို)), the word for “submit” (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို (with ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို)), and the word for “should ask” (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို (with ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို)).

In the Burmese language, these changes do not greatly alter the meaning of the words or the sentence. For example, a suffix (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို) after the word “ask” (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို) gives more emphatic tone to the command, but no changes in the meaning. This is also the same issue for “preaching” (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ကို (haw pyaw thaw)) that changed to (haw pyaw ya thaw). Adding a suffix (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀) after the verb “preach” (ဗုဒ္ဓ၀) (haw pyaw) does not alter the meaning of the word. Another variant, ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ is a case of writing style that creates no significant change in meaning, and the suffix ဗုဒ္ဓ၀ is a short form of ဗုဒ္ဓ only.

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### Table 1. Comparing Variances in Judson’s Burmese Bible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Passage 1</th>
<th>Passage 2</th>
<th>Passage 3</th>
<th>Passage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td><img src="image9.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image10.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image11.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image12.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td><img src="image13.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image14.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image15.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image16.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

437 All of these passages are screen shot pictures of the Judson Bible editions, which are public materials available at [www.hathitrust.org](http://www.hathitrust.org) and [https://play.google.com/store/books](https://play.google.com/store/books).
These variances lead to the question of who is responsible for such changes in these editions of the Judson Burmese Bible. The changes from 1837 and 1840 suggest that Judson himself would have been responsible, since he was still alive during this period. In comparing the 1840 edition to 2007, only two words differ between them. The word for “wife” (မိန်း) in the 1840 edition changes to မိဳႊိဳ in the 2007 reprint. All the early editions of JB translate “wife” as မိႀမင်း; it only changes to မိဳႊိဳ in the 2007 reprint. Again, this change does not alter the meaning of the word. The change is due to the form of writing. In his dictionary, Judson used both မိဳႀ and မိဳႊိဳ for woman.

The following section looks at 1 Cor 14:34-35 in the Judson Burmese Bible. In analyzing Judson’s choices of words in his translation, the Burmese text will be taken from the 1885 revised edition of the JB to compare with the Greek text. The two dictionaries of Judson,

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438 Words in the brackets are words from the later editions.
439 Judson died on 12 April, 1850.
441 Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English. Also Judson, A Dictionary of the Burman Language.
Burmese to English and English to Burmese, are then used to determine the meaning of
the words in his translation.

3.2.2 Analysis of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in the Judson Burmese Bible (JB)

To clearly identify the variances between the Judson Burmese Bible translation and the
Greek text, the verses from 1 Cor 14:33-35 are separated into several charts. Each chart
contains four lines. The first line gives the Elzevir edition of Textus Receptus, with the
English translation in the King James Version. The second line is Knapp’s Greek text of
1797, with an English translation given in the 1835 edition of the Bible, which included
the text and the various textual readings of Knapp. The third line shows the NA28 critical
Greek text, with English translation in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The
fourth line gives Judson’s translation from the 1885 reprint of the JB, with my own
English translation.

The first part of the textual analysis of 1 Cor 14:34-35 looks at the place of 1 Cor 14:33 in
relation to this text. The main divide among interpreters concerns whether verse 33b is
connected to verse 33a or to the subsequent verse 34. Judson’s translation of 1 Cor
14:33 shows that he understood verse 33b to be linked with verse 33a, rather than with
verse 34. This is similar to Knapp’s text that separates 33b and 33a with a semicolon, which
indicates a connection rather than separation. The English translation of Knapp clarifies
further and shows verse 33b as a continuation of 33a. This is different from the NA28 text

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442 Robinson, Elzevir Textus Receptus (1624): With Morphology.
445 The Holy Bible Containing the Old Testament: Tr. Out of the Original Hebrew, and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised: And the Greek New Testament; Printed from the Text and with the Various Readings of Knapp: Together with the Commonly Received English Translation. Designed for the Use of Students, (New-York: Charles Starr, 1835).
448 Judson, The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 470. E. A. Stevens edited this edition with contents of chapters and references. The translation was the work of Judson. This edition is an 1883 reprint from the earlier version. Translation in this 1885 edition of 1 Cor 14:34-35 is the same as in the 2010 reprint copy of the Bible Society of Myanmar.
449 See Table 1.
that sees verse 33b as a separate sentence from verse 33a. Table 3 shows the differences between the Greek texts and English texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. 1 Cor 14:33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TR</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>KJV</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NRSV</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JB</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NRSV</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14:33, two things point to the role of interpretation in translation. First, this is noticeable in Judson’s choice of words in translating ἀκαταστασιας.451 He translated God as not nurturing ἁμαρτανωδος ὁ θεος (“a work of confusion”) rather than a literal translation of the word as ἀκαταστασιας (“of confusion”). In so doing, the sentence focuses on things that God does rather than on who God is. Both the KJV and NRSV focus on who God is by translating “God is a God not of disorder.”

Second, Judson added the word ἁμαρτανωδος (“harmonious”) to ἁμαρτανωδος ὁ θεος (“peace”). This addition is not only significant for the meaning of verse 33, but also connects well to the next verse, 34, that speaks of women’s silence in the church. By adding this word, Judson connects verse 33b more strongly to verse 33a and portrays God as initiating and nurturing harmonious peace in the church. This connection of 33b and 33a into a sentence

450 Holy Bible ... with The various readings of Knapp, 1114-15.
451 ἀκαταστασιας is the Genitive Singular Feminine noun of ἀκαταστασια.
shows Judson following the textual decisions of Knapp, who connects the two verses with a semicolon. This is different from NA28 which separates 33b from 33a and connects verse 33b with verse 34.

These nuances, including this connection and Judson’s choice of words mentioned above, challenge a general assumption that Judson’s Burmese translation was a strict literal translation of Greek words to Burmese words. What we see here is a high level of conscious interpretation, alongside translation. From this understanding, the following section looks more closely at Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14:34-35.

### 3.2.2.1 Silence in Translation

Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 13:34a highlights the role of translator in the way he translated σιγάτωσαν, γυναῖκες and ἐκκλησίαις into Burmese. This is shown in the Table 4. This section looks at Judson’s translation of σιγάτωσαν in context. The root word for σιγάτωσαν is σιγάω, which occurs ten times in the New Testament. It appears six times in Luke-Acts, three times in 1 Corinthians 14, and once in Romans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TR</th>
<th>σιγάωσαν γυναικές ἐν ταις ἐκκλησίαις</th>
<th>KJV</th>
<th>Women [ ] should be silent in the churches.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knapp</td>
<td>Αἱ γυναῖκες ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν</td>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>women [ ] should be silent in the churches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA28</td>
<td>αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν</td>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>women [ ] should be silent in the churches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB</td>
<td>သင်တို့၏မိန်းမတိတိတ်စွာချန်စစ် တိတ်တိတ်စွာ။</td>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>The wives of yours should stay silent in the church.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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452 Other words for silence in Greek are (1) ἡσυχαία to say nothing and remain quiet, which appears four times in the NT: Acts 22:2, 2 Thess 3:12, 1 Timothy 2:11, 12; ἡσυχάζω, Luke 4:4, 23:56, Acts 11:18, 21:14, 1 Thess 4:11; (2) σιωπάω: not be able to speak, or not having the ability to speak, Mt 20:31, 26:63, Mk 3:4, 4:39, 9:34, 10:48, 14:61, Luke 1:20,19:40, Acts 18:9; (3) φιμόω, say nothing, muzzle (1 Cor 9:9 κημόω), put to silence, cease to make sound, Mt 22:12, 34, Mk 1:25, 4:39, Luke 4:35, 1 Tim 5:18, 1 Pet 2:15; (4) ἐπιστομίζω, to keep someone from speaking, Tt 1:11(5) στόμα φράσσω, to silence, to remove any reason to speak, Ro 3:19.


454 1 Corinthians 14:28, 30 and 34.

455 Romans 16:25.
The noun form σιγή is used two times, in Acts 21:40 and Revelation 8:1. According to Balz and Schneider, in general σιγάω means “to keep silent or still,” in the sense of holding speech and saying nothing or stopping speaking, whereas the word σιγή means silence or stillness.456

Judson translates this word σιγάω with four different meanings, depending on the context. In Luke-Acts,457 he translates σιγάω as တိတ်ဆိတ် (teih seih), in the sense of “say nothing, keep still, keep silent … as to hold one’s tongue.”458 However, in Luke 9:36 and also in Romans 16:25 he translates the same word as ဝတ်ထား (whet thar). Judson translates Luke 9:36 as တပည်တာတကျစွာသားသည် ၏သည်တိပါစွာသားသည်။ ("the disciples hid all that they had seen, they told no one in those days"). He translates Rom 16:25 as ေနǺးကပ်ကလပတ်လပတ်လပတ်လပ ("thing that had been hidden in the old days now being revealed"). The meaning for ဝတ်ထား is given in Judson’s dictionary is “to hide, conceal, keep back; to be obscure ὄφ ὄφ ὄφ ὄφ.” 459 This is very similar to BDAG’s definition, “to keep something from becoming known, keep secret, conceal.”460

Then, in Rev 8:1 and Acts 21:40, Judson uses စွာသားတိမီး for σιγάω. In Rev 8:1, he translates it as ကိုဏ္ဏာဏတိတ်စွာသားစွာသားစွာသား ("in heaven they stayed silent for half an hour"). He translates Acts 21:40 as ကိုဏ္ဏာဏတိတ်စွာသားစွာသားစွာသား ("when they became very quiet, he spoke in the Hebrew language"). Judson’s Burmese dictionary gives the meaning of စွာသားတိမီး as “to be still, silent and quiet.”461 This meaning corresponds to BDAG’s definition of σιγάω, which generally refers to “absence of all noise, whether made by speaking or by anything else, silence, quiet.”462

459 Judson, A Dictionary of the Burman Language, 357.
460 BDAG, 922. σιγάω meaning 2.
462 BDAG, 922. s.v. σιγή.
In 1 Cor 14:28, 30 and 34, Judson uses ဗိုလ်းကြား for စောင်း in all three appearances. He translates 1 Cor 14:28 as စောင်းချ်ချ်ပြောနေသော စောင်းချ်ချ်စောင်း စောင်းချ်ချ်နေသော စောင်းချ်ချ် ("If there is no interpreter, the one who prophesied should stay silent in the church and speak only to oneself and God"). He also translates 1 Cor 14:30 as စောင်းချ်ချ်တချ်ချ်မှာ စောင်းချ်ချ်တချ်ချ်စောင်း ("if anything be revealed to the one sitting, the previous person that prophesied should remain silent"). 1 Cor 14:34 is translated as စောင်းချ်ချ်သည် စောင်းချ်ချ်စောင်း စောင်းချ်ချ် ("the wives of yours should stay silent in the church"). In all of these verses, he translates စောင်း as စောင်းချ် together with a command suffix န (nay), since all three occurrences of စောင်း are in the imperative verb form. Judson’s dictionary translates န (nay) as “stay or remain.”464 The combined word စောင်းချ်နေသော စောင်းချ်နေသော (teih seih swar nay) is defined as “to prevent (one’s) speaking, to still, and to put an end to.”465 This is similar to BDAG, which gives the meaning of silence in these passages as “stop speaking, become silent ... in the sense of losing one’s power of speech.”466

In 1 Corinthians 14:34, Judson’s translation adds the word ကြည့် (kya) to စောင်းချ်နေသော, resulting in စောင်းချ်နေသော ကြည့် (teih seih swar nay kya zay), meaning “should stay silent.” Judson explains the word ကြည့် (kya) as indicating “verb affix (suffix) of number denoting the plural,”467 and လို (zay) as referring to “commission, order, command.”468 Therefore, Judson’s translation of စောင်း as စောင်းချ်နေသော ကြည့် in 1 Cor 14:34a shows the sentence as a command or “order” from the usage of the imperative verb. However, his translation of verse 34 does not provide any hint as to whether the command to silence is referring to temporal or timeless silence.

3.2.2.2 Silence: Wives and the Church

We now examine Judson’s translation of ဂေါ်နအိုင် and ဗိုလ်းချောင်း in verse 34a. He translates αἱ γυναῖκες as စောင်းချ်ချ်စောင်း (thin doet meinma doet thi), meaning

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463 All three are in the present active imperative form of စောင်း
464 Judson, A Dictionary of the Burman Language, 211. This first edition gave the meaning as to “stay or continue.” However, to show continuance the word has to be စောင်း or စောင်းနေသော. Therefore, the word here suggests “stay” in the sense of the later edition. Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 580.
466 BDAG, 922.
“women of yours,” and ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις as the singular ἄνδρας (a thinn daw hneit), meaning “in the church,” rather than ἄνδρας ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις (a thinn daw myarr hneit), meaning “in the churches.”

In Table 5, both TR and Knapp’s texts use αἱ γυναῖκες with ὑμῶν, and thus we have ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις meaning the “women of yours.” This shows Judson agreeing with both Knapp and TR. Inserting the word ὑμῶν (“your”) into αἱ γυναῖκες is supported by 6th to 9th century Greek manuscripts such as D F G 630. 1505 ᱃ b sy; Cyp (Ambst).469

Table 5. 1 Cor 14:34a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TR</th>
<th>KJV</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>αἱ γυναῖκες ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν</td>
<td>Women [ ] should be silent in the churches.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knapp</td>
<td>Αἱ γυναῖκες ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν</td>
<td>Let your women keep silence in the churches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA28</td>
<td>αἱ γυναῖκες [ ] ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν</td>
<td>women [ ] should be silent in the churches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB</td>
<td>သင်တိ၏မိန်မတိသည်မှာ။ သင်တိ၏စွမ်းတန် မိန်မှာ။ အသင်းများဖြင့်စွမ်းတန်မှာ။ အသင်းများဖြင့်စွမ်းတန်မှာ။</td>
<td>The wives of yours should stay silent in the church.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, 4th and 5th century manuscripts such as Ψ 123 A B supported a shorter reading of αἱ γυναῖκες without the word ὑμῶν, using only ἄνδρας ("women").470 In the Burmese language, this insertion of ὑμῶν next to αἱ γυναῖκες reinforces the meaning of αἱ γυναῖκες as wives rather than women in general. It is likely that Judson chose to include “your” with “wives” based on the texts of Knapp and TR, although various interpreters conclude that even without ὑμῶν in the sentence the appearance of ἄνδρας together with αἱ γυναῖκες in the same context would mean “the wives.”471


470 Ψ 123 A B Ψ 0243. 33. 81. 104. 365. 1175. 1241. 1739. 1881. 2464 lat co. Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 547. The manuscripts D F G that support the insertion are Greek-Latin bilingual texts that have 6th and 9th century dating with Old Syriac, whereas the textual reading of “αἱ γυναῖκες” is supported by Greek witnesses like Ψ A B, which are 4th and 5th century documents. Due to the earlier date of the MSS and shorter text, many take “αἱ γυναῖκες” as the preferred reading.

471 Various scholars such as Garland, Johnson, and Schüssler Fiorenza see this word as referring to “their wives,” based on the word pair of “ἡ γυνὴ” to “ὁ ἀνήρ” in the same sentence. Garland points out that whenever Paul pairs the noun “ἡ γυνὴ” to “ὁ ἀνήρ” as in 1 Cor 7:25 and 11:3, he is making references to the relationships between wives and husbands. Garland, 1 Corinthians, 667. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, In
Judson’s translation of ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις into the Burmese language is another indicator of the role of the translator in the process of translation. Although ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις is a plural word, he translates the phrase as “in the church” rather than “in the churches”. NA28 raises no critical points on textual issues regarding the reading, which is clearly plural. This translation into a singular form suggests two possibilities. First, it could be that Judson sees this passage as an issue of the Corinthian church alone, rather than having universal application. Second, he may have chosen to translate in the singular to show agreement with verse 35, where the church is mentioned as ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, a singular noun. Whatever the reason may be, this variance is a reminder of the critical place of the translator in the process of translation.

3.2.2.3 Silence as No Preaching

We now highlight the textual and linguistic variances of Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14:34b. Table 6 (following page) shows these variances. Judson’s Burmese translation of the word ἐπιτρέπεται shows some of the differences from the Knapp text as well. This is seen in his translation of the present passive indicative verb ἐπιτρέπω as a noun, အခင့်, meaning “permission.” This translation indicates that Judson is following the perfect passive form επιτετραπται found in a number of texts rather than ἐπιτρέπεται, the present passive usage of Knapp. Instead of “they are not permitted,” the sentence is translated as သိတိသည်သာ့မျိက ("they have no permission"). Further, although TR and Knapp use the word γὰρ, Judson omits this word in his translation. Both KJV and NRSV translate this word γὰρ as “for.”

Although omitting γὰρ in translation does not significantly change the meaning of the sentence, the translation of λαλέω into Burmese brings a significant change to the meaning. This word λαλέω is used thirty-four times in twenty-eight verses in 1 Corinthians...
alone, and it is used mostly in the context of speaking in tongues and prophecy in tongues.\textsuperscript{476} This word appears twenty-four times in 1 Corinthians 14, and it is used twelve times in 1 Cor 14 context of prophesying in tongues. Judson translates these twelve usages, including \textit{λαλέω} in 1 Cor 14:34b, as \textit{ေဟာေြပာ} (\textit{haw pyaw}). Judson also translates \textit{λαλέω} in verse 35 as \textit{ေဟာေြပာ}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6: 1 Cor 14:34b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his Burmese dictionary, Judson explains this word as a combination of two separate words, \textit{ေဟာ} and \textit{ေြပာ}. The word \textit{ေဟာ} means “to repeat, utter or preach, as the priests.”\textsuperscript{478} His later edition of the dictionary notes that the word \textit{ေဟာ} means “to utter in a formal manner, as in preaching, prophesying, foretelling.”\textsuperscript{479} In both editions, the word \textit{ေြပာ} is translated as “to say, speak, tell.”\textsuperscript{480} This usage differs from both KJV and NRSV, which translates the word literally as “speak,”\textsuperscript{481} which is equivalent to the Burmese word \textit{စကားေြပာ} or \textit{ေြပာ} (“speaking”). In the New Testament, the word \textit{λαλέω} is used in reference to a general sense of speaking rather than the specific form of speaking (“preaching”) Judson suggests. The following lexical works describe the word \textit{λαλέω} as referring to a general sense of speaking. Louw and Nida describe it as “speak or talk, with the possible implication of more informal usage ... to speak, to say, to talk, to tell.”\textsuperscript{482} BDAG describes

\textsuperscript{476} \textit{λαλέω} occurs 296 times in the NT, 60 times in the Pauline Epistles and 34 times in 1 Corinthians alone.

\textsuperscript{477} \textit{λαλεῖν} is the present, active, infinitive of \textit{λαλέω}.

\textsuperscript{478} Judson, \textit{A Dictionary of the Burman Language}, 411.

\textsuperscript{479} Judson, \textit{A Dictionary, Burmese and English}, 745.

\textsuperscript{480} Judson, \textit{A Dictionary of the Burman Language}, 247. Also in Judson, \textit{A Dictionary, Burmese and English}, 469.

\textsuperscript{481} See Table 3, page 96.

the general usage of the word λαλέω as “to make a sound,” “to utter words, talk, speak.”

The variance between this general sense of “speak” and Judson’s choice of “preach” raises again the issue of the role of interpretation in his translating. There are several interpretations of the kind of speaking that Paul would have prohibited in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Some see the word λαλέω as referring to “frenzied shouting of tongues in the church,” “inspired speech of any kind that [is] uttered in public meetings,” “all kinds of speech, both inspired and uninspired,” “teaching,” “evaluation of prophecy by asking questions,” and “chatter or disruptive form of speech.” Taking these into account, there are two possible interpretations behind Judson’s choice of words here.

First, it is possible that Judson sees this verse as a prohibition of women “preaching,” since a literal reading of the word ေဟာေြပာ suggests such a meaning. This is a popular view in the Myanmar context, and this text is used frequently to prevent women from preaching in the church. Second, it is possible that Judson viewed this passage as prohibiting wives from “prophesying” in public meetings. This view is also possible since a later edition of his dictionary defines ေဟာ also as “prophesying or foretelling,” along with preaching. It gains credence also because λαλέω is translated as ေဟာေြပာ in the context of prophesying.

483 BDAG, 582.
484 Catherine Clark and Richard Kroeger, "Strange Tongues or Plain Talk?," Daughters of Sarah 12, no. 4 (1986): 10-13. See also G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, and G. W. Bromiley, "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament," TDNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 506. TDNT defines this word as ‘to prattle,’ ‘to babble.’ This view leads to the conclusion that Paul is prohibiting speaking in tongues. The problem with this conclusion is that the word is also used for prophesying in tongues, as well as interpretation of tongues in 1 Cor 14:2-4, 27, 29.
485 C. K. Barrett, A commentary on the first Epistle to the Corinthians (London: A. & C. Black, 1971), 332. This view sees “λαλέω” as referring to the prohibition of inspired speech.
486 Jorunn Okland, Women in their place: Paul and the Corinthian discourse of gender and sanctuary space (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 204. Okland sees Paul as prohibiting women from teaching, since female prophets were generally accepted in the culture of that time, whereas female teachers were generally banned.
487 Piper and Grudem, eds., Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism, 151.
488 Garland, 1 Corinthians, 671. See also Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287.
489 Thielson, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1157. He points out that “the use of λαλεῖν to refer to chatter in this verse ignores first-century lexicographical evidence and the context of the discussion in 14:27-40.”
490 This is mentioned in Chapter 1.1.
491 Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 745.
in tongues in 1 Cor 14:3, 6, 18, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 39.\textsuperscript{492} Elsewhere, in 1 Cor 14:2, 5, 6, 9, 11, 19, 21 and 26,\textsuperscript{493} Judson translates λαλέω as ἄρα (\textit{pyaw}), meaning "speak," in the context of speaking in tongues.

\textbf{3.2.2.4 Silence: The Law and Consent to Man’s Ruling}

Table 7 shows the textual and linguistic variances of Judson’s translation in 1 Cor 14:34c. Here we see that Judson’s translation differs from the TR, Knapp and NA28 Greek texts. Although these Greek texts include the word ἀλλά, meaning “but,” Judson’s translation does not include this word, which should be ἀλλὰ ἢ or ἀλλὰ in Burmese.\textsuperscript{494} Instead, Judson translates the rest of the sentence as ἵππος ἐλεωσιμος, ἰδίᾳ ἐλεοσιμος, ἵππος ἐλεωσιμος ("as the law commanded they must consent to the ruling of man"). Both the KJV and NRSV include the word “but” in their translation of the sentence. Since there is no known textual variant issue raised either by Knapp or NA28 on the usage of ἀλλά,\textsuperscript{495} the omission here once again displays an interpretive choice of the translator.

Second, the usage of the word ὑποτάσσεσθαι in Burmese demonstrates that Judson was not following the textual tradition of the Greek text of Knapp, who reads ὑποτάσσεσθαι as “to obey,” which is the present, passive, infinitive form of ὑποτάσσω. Griesbach’s text keep the same word, ὑποτάσσεσθαι, while noting the textual variant issue at the bottom of the page.\textsuperscript{496} Judson’s translation is closer to the critical text of NA28, which used the present passive imperative form ὑποτάσσεσθαι ("must obey"). Judson translates ὑποτάσσω as ὁπίς ἤ (\textit{won khan}) as “to consent, agree to or comply with,”\textsuperscript{497} the word ὁπίς as a verb suffix

\textsuperscript{492} 1Cor 14:3-39
\textsuperscript{493} 1 Cor 14:2-26
\textsuperscript{494} Adoniram Judson, \textit{A Dictionary, English and Burmese} (Maulmain: American Baptist Mission Press, 1849), 63
\textsuperscript{495} Knappius, \textit{Novum Testamentum Graece}, 528. Also, Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 547.
\textsuperscript{496} Johann J. Griesbach, \textit{Novum Testamentum Graece}, vol. 2 (Halae: Saxorum, 1806), 277.
\textsuperscript{497} Judson, \textit{Dictionary of the Burman Language}, 348.
meaning “must,” and as a suffix sign that shows the plural number. Although the word would generally be used as a future suffix of the verb “shall” or “will,” Judson combines with the verb “go,” referring to “must go” in his first Burmese dictionary.

Table 7. 1 Cor 14:34c

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TR</th>
<th>ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσεσθαι καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει</th>
<th>KJV</th>
<th>but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knap</td>
<td>ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει</td>
<td></td>
<td>but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA28</td>
<td>ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσεσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει</td>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>But [ ] should be subordinate, as the law also says</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB</td>
<td>As the Law commanded they must consent to the ruling of man.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reading of ὑποτασσεσθωσαν in NA28 is supported by earlier manuscripts such as Α, B, which are fourth and fifth century manuscripts. In contrast, Knapp’s reading is supported by textual manuscripts such as the fifth century manuscript D and eight to ninth century manuscripts F G K L Ψ and the majority text. The root word of ὑποτάσσω and ὑποτασσεσθωσαν, which is ὑποτάσσω, is used thirty-eight times in the New Testament, with twenty-three occurrences in the Pauline Epistles alone. Throughout the New Testament, ὑποτάσσω is used mostly about relationships between God and Jesus, rulers and their subjects, and husbands and wives. The reference to husband and wife relationships are found in 1 Cor 14:34, Eph 5:21, 24, Col 3:18, Titus 2:5, and 1 Pet 3:1.

499 ibid. Also, Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 512.
500 ibid. Also, Judson, A Dictionary of the Burman Language, 74.
It is only in 1 Cor 14:34 and Col 3:18 that ὑποτάσσω appears in the imperative verb form. This verb appears nine times in 1 Corinthians 14, 15, and 16. In these appearances, where ὑποτάσσω refers to the husband and wife relationship, Judson translates the word as ဝနခံ in the sense of consenting or agreeing to the other person.505 This translation of ὑποτάσσω as consenting or agreeing is significant since most of the English translations translate this word as “to obey, to submit to, obedience, submission,”506 or “to subordinate.”507 In the Burmese language, the word for “obey or obedience” is closer to ဗုဒ္ဓိနီး (nar htaung) rather than ဝနခံ that Judson uses.509 Judson’s own definition of the word “submission” in his English Burmese dictionary is “the act of yielding to another or the act of submitting to another.”510 Therefore, Judson’s translational choice for ὑποτάσσω in 1 Cor 14:34 as ဝနခံ shows that for him the concept of obedience or submission mentioned in this passage is not about subordination as suggested by NRSV, but rather a conscientious yielding of one person to another person.

Third, Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14:34c includes the word ဗုဒ္ဓိနန်း (“to man’s ruling”) after ὑποτάσσω, which neither TR nor Knapp mentions. The English translations KJV and NRSV also do not include these words.511 However, both the Griesbach512 and NA28513 texts mention the textual variant issues in their textual critical notes. They note the occurrence of textual issues in the usage of the words τοῖς ἀνδρασὶν and μανθανεῖν. The usage of τοῖς ἀνδρασὶν is supported by 5th century manuscript A only.514 The usage of μανθανεῖν is supported by 4th and 5th century scripts such as κ A,515 whereas the omission of this word is supported by 3rd to 5th century manuscripts such as

505 Judson, Dictionary of the Burman Language, 348. This is also mentioned on page 98 of this chapter.
506 Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, 1, 467. KJV says “but they are commanded to be under obedience.”
507 NRSV gives “but should be subordinate.”
508 Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 400. It gives “to listen, hearken, attend to; to mind, obey.” In Judson, A Dictionary, English and Burmese, 398. he meaning for “obey” is given as “to listen with regard and acceptance.”
509 Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 672. “to consent, agree to; to engage for, take the responsibility.”
510 Ibid., 496.
511 See Table 7, page 99.
512 Griesbach, Novum Testamentum Graece, 2, 277.
513 Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 547.
514 Both Griesbach and Nestle & Nestle mention only A as supporting the insertion of this word. See Griesbach, Novum Testamentum Graece, 2, 277. Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 547.
515 κ A 33. 81. 104. 365. 1241. 1505. 2464 This is mentioned in Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 547. Griesbach mentioned the supporting textual traditions as A 17 23 26 31 and 73, in Griesbach, Novum Testamentum Graece, 2, 277.
It is apparent that Judson followed the textual variant suggestions of Griesbach on the usage of τοῖς ἀνδρασίν and μανθανεῖν in his translation rather than the TR and Knapp textual traditions.

The role of the translator in translation is also apparent in Judson’s translation of τοῖς ἀνδρασίν from ဗယ်ကျား ("to men") in plural form, to the singular ဗယ်ကျား ("to man"). This translation in the singular form could be for clarity, to point out that the man here refers to the husband. The women are to consent to the ruling or authority of their own husbands, but not to all men. Judson’s translation of this word in 1 Cor 14:34 agrees with other passages that speak of the relationship of husband and wife, such as Eph 5:22, 24, Col 3:18, Titus 2:5, 1 Pet 3:1 and 5. In these verses, he uses the words “consenting to man’s ruling.” We also note that Judson has translated ὑποτάσσεσθαι as "consent to the ruling" because he has the translation as အပ်စိခင်း (Oat Soo chin) in Burmese, meaning "ruling.” Judson has not followed the Griesbach variant of μανθανεῖν. Judson’s dictionary gives the meaning of ဗယ်ကျား as “to rule, preside over” or “to rule, have authority over.”

As mentioned above, Judson follows the textual variant that Griesbach suggests in his textual critical notes.

Judson translates ὁ νόμος as ပညတ်တရား (pyit nyat taya), which is a combination of the words ပညတ် and တရား in the Burmese language. The word ပညတ် (pyit nyat) means “a command” or “a prohibition or command; a name” and တရား (taya) means “moral principle or law.” Two times out of ten occurrences of the word ὁ νόμος in 1 Corinthians, in verses 9:9 and 14:21, Judson translates this word as ပညတ်တရား. This word ပညတ်တရား is a Pali form of the same word in Burmese, and ကမ္ဘာကြီး means “a religious writing

516 N2 B D F G K L Ψ 0243. 630. 1175. 1739. 1881 (cf.). This is mentioned in Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 547.
518 Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 102.
519 The word “νόμος” is used 121 times in 87 verses in the Pauline epistles, 75 times in Romans, 9 times in 1 Corinthians, 32 times in Galatians, 1 time in Ephesians, 3 times in Philippians, and 2 times in 1 Timothy. In 1 Corinthians, the word νόμος appears in 1 Cor 9:8, 9, 20 (4 times); 14:21, 34; 15:56.
520 Judson, A Dictionary of the Burman Language, 221.
521 Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 427.
522 Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 427.
or book.” In both 1 Cor 9:525 and 1 Cor 14:21,526 Judson’s translation adds တိုက်ခိုင်း to differentiate the law as referring to “the Scriptures of the law.”527

In the context of 1 Cor 9:8, မြန်မာဘာသာ: with စိုးကျွန်း စိုးကျွန်း (“the scriptures of Moses’ law”), supported by a scripture quotation of Deut 25:4, ၶးီးဗ်းး clearly refers to the Pentateuch, the Torah. The law in 1 Cor 14:21 is referring to the Tanakh law—the whole Old Testament Scriptures—since the supporting quotation comes from Isaiah 28:11. Judson translates ၶးီးဗ်း as မြန်မာဘာသာ: consistently in its remaining appearances in 1 Corinthians, the one exception being 1 Cor 15:56,528 where the law is a reference to “the law of God” in general. The other six occurrences of ၶးီးဗ်း in 1 Cor 9:20-21529 point to the Law of Moses in the Pentateuch.

All of this leads us to ask how Judson understood the usage of ၶးီးဗ်း in the context of 1 Cor 14:34. Interpreters differ greatly on what they think the reference to ၶးီးဗ်း means in this context. Some suggest that ၶးီးဗ်း here refers to the secular law of the Romans,530

525 Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 9:9 is မြန်မာဘာသာ: ပြည်သူဌာန် ကျောင်းသား သိပ်သာသော အရောင်းအဝယ် ဒေသ မှားကြောင်း အနေဖြင့် မြန်မာဘာသာ:.
526 Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14: 21 is မြန်မာဘာသာ: သိပ်သာသော အရောင်းအဝယ် အနေဖြင့် မြန်မာဘာသာ:.
527 This view is supported by Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 791. Fee points out that whenever Paul appeals to the law, he always cites the text, usually to support a point he himself is making. and gives two examples—1 Cor 9:8, that speaks of not muzzling an ox when it is treading out of the grain, quoting from Deut 25:4; and 1 Cor 14:21 that talks of God speaking to the people through strange tongues as a sign to unbelievers, quoting from Isa 28:11.
528 Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 15:56 is မြန်မာဘာသာ: ကျဆုံးဖြင့် မြန်မာဘာသာ: ကျဆုံးဖြင့် မြန်မာဘာသာ:
529 ၶးီးဗ်း၊ မြန်မာဘာသာ: ပြည်သူဌာန် ကျောင်းသား သိပ်သာသော အရောင်းအဝယ် ဒေသ မှားကြောင်း အနေဖြင့် မြန်မာဘာသာ:.
530 Wier, The Corinthian Women Prophets, 135. Wier suggests that the law here refers to the Velleian decree passed by the Roman Senate during the time of Claudius. The decree was passed to restrict the right of women to testify in court.
others to Paul’s own teaching, the Jewish culture, the Jewish tradition as the law, the Pentateuch and the Old Testaments scriptures as law, or the principle of order as law.

Although Paul often used ὁ νόμος in 1 Corinthians to refer to Mosaic Law, the Pentateuch, and the Old Testament scriptures, the usage of ὁ νόμος in the context of 1 Cor 14:34 is difficult to determine, since there is no clear reference to specific scriptures from which he was quoting in this context. The only clue to Judson’s understanding of the law here is the translation of the Burmese: သည်ျား၏အပ်စိခင်းကမည် (“they [women] must consent or yield to the ruling of man”) after translating ပည်တရားစီရင်သည််အတင်း to mean “as the law commanded.” He is referring to a law that required women to consent to the ruling of men or husbands. Given Judson’s consistent usage of ὁ νόμος as ပည်တရား, it is

531 B. Aland et al., eds., The Greek New Testament: A Reader’s Edition UBS⁴ (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 87. They see the law mentioned here as Paul’s own teaching in the rabbinic tradition. This view is disputed in Elim Hiu, Regulations Concerning Tongues and Prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 146. Hiu points out that in the Judaism of the first century there is usually “a reference to a prohibition, either in the Old Testament or rabbinic sources, [that] could take the negative form ‘it is not permitted,’ but this kind of usage is rare and Paul never refers to the rabbinic traditions with νόμος anywhere else, despite the frequent use of this word.”

532 Robert S. Nash, 1 Corinthians (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2009), 382. Nash points out that Paul may have shared the same view as Philo, who held that the Law of Moses did teach the subordination of wives to their husbands, and husbands’ duty to teach the law to their wives. He quotes Hypoth 7.3.5, where Philo says “Wives must be in servitude to their husbands, a servitude not imposed by violent ill-treatment but by promoting obedience in all things.” He then continues in Hypoth 7.14 to say, “The husband seems competent to transmit knowledge of the laws to his wife.”

533 It is Jewish men’s attitude that Paul is rebuking. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (London: Yale University Press, 2008), 533. Fitzmyer sees that this is the view of Corinthian men, who believe that custom derived from Jewish tradition is “the law.” He points out that this law “apparently derived from it [Jewish custom] as a sort of ‘unwritten law,’ forbidding women to come to the synagogue (Str-B, 3:467).” He asks, “What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?” This double-rhetorical question formulates Paul’s reaction to the attitude of Corinthian Christian men quoted in the two preceding verses.” Also in Peppiatt, Women and Worship at Corinth: Paul’s Rhetorical Arguments in 1 Corinthians, 129.

534 C. K. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (London: A & C Clarke, 1968), 330. See also Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 325. They see Gen 3:16, “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you,” as the background of Paul’s speech, and submission of women to their husbands as the rationale for women’s silence. They also see Paul as alluding to the Genesis creation narrative in 1 Cor 11:3, 8-10, and thus the law here as referring to wives’ subordination based on the Pentateuch and Old Testament scriptures.

535 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1153. Thiselton sees the law mentioned here as the repeated emphasis of the whole Old Testament on the principle of order, where God turns chaos into order. Women are commanded to submit not to their husbands, but to the principle of order in the worship place, and note that “the proof of the permanence of the principle of order even within an eschatological mode emerges in 1 Cor 15:28.” See Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1155. He argues that the allusion to Gen 3:16 confuses “the Christian believer’s role within the created order with a role still unresolved within fallen creation, which then appears to conflict with Gal 3:28.”
likely that he sees ὁ νόμος in 1 Cor 14:34 as referring to the Law of Moses in the Pentateuch or the Old Testament scriptures. However, this creates a challenge in attempting to understand Judson’s view of women’s silence, since the Law of Moses mentioned in the Pentateuch or elsewhere in the Old Testament does not mention women’s silence or women preaching.

3.2.2.5 Silence and Learning

This section looks at the textual and linguistic variances of Judson’s translation of 1 Cor 14:35a. Table 8 highlights three issues in this translation. First, he does not translate δέ although the Greek texts of TR and Knapp have the word δέ in all the texts. The word δέ is also used in Griesbach’s text, and there is no mention of a textual variant issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. 1 Cor 14:35a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>KJV</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NA28</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NRSV</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JB</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Second, Judson inserts the word မိန်းမတိ ("women" or wives") into the sentence, although this word is not mentioned in either the TR or the Knapp texts. Griesbach and NA28 also make no mention of the occurrence of a textual variant issue. Although none of these Greek texts specifically use this word, the third person plural usage of the verb θέλω, meaning “they want or desire,” already points to “the women” just by looking at the context. Thus, it is likely that Judson adds this specific word မိန်းမတိ into the sentence, instead of using only “they,” for clarification purposes.

Third, Judson keeps the aorist infinitive word μαθεῖν in his translation, as do the TR and Knapp Greek texts, Griesbach and NA28. A textual variant issue here concerns whether

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[Griesbach, Novum Testamentum Graece, 2, 277.]

the word μανθάνω is in the aorist infinitive form μαθειν or μανθανειν in the present infinitive form. The reading of μανθανειν is supported by fourth and fifth century manuscripts Χ* A537 and the reading of μαθειν is supported by the manuscripts Β46 to be dated around 200 CE and by fourth and fifth century manuscripts Ν2 B D.538 In taking the reading of μαθειν, Judson translates this word in Burmese as သင်လိအင် (thinn lo hlin), meaning “to learn or to receive instruction,”539 rather than ဝင်လိအင် (“to keep on learning”), which would be a translation of μανθάνω in the present infinitive to denote the action verb as “continuous or repeated.”540

Fourth, Judson’s translation includes the word ἰδίους by translating မိမိ (mi mi) as “one’s own.”541 By including ἰδίους in the translation, Judson is following the textual traditions of TR and Knapp, which also use the word ἰδίους in the text (see Table 9 below). This is different from both the KJV and NRSV, which omit the word ἰδίους, leaving “their husbands” rather than “their own husbands.” The word ἰδίους is included in the NA28 and there are no textual issues.542 It is likely that the reason for not including the word ἰδίους in the KJV and NRSV is due to the similarity of meaning between “their husbands” and “their own husbands.” However, including this word in Judson’s translation gives a clearer reading of the women in this verse as “wives” rather than women in general.

Judson translates the word ἄνδρας into Burmese as ၏င်ပွန်း (khin pun), meaning “husbands.”543 Thus the sentence reads ပွန်းဖောင်းကြားများ (“let them ask their own husbands at home”) rather than ကြားများမှခြင်း (“let them ask their men at home.”) The insertion of “own husbands” (မိမိခင်ပွန်း) into a sentence regarding “women” (မိမိကြားများ) in Judson’s translation indicates that the relationship highlighted in this verse is between husbands and wives rather than men and women in general. This

537 The word μανθανειν is found in Χ* A: 33. 81. 104. 365. 1241. 1505. 2464. See Nestle and Nestle, Nestle Aland: Novum Testamentum Graece, 547.
538 The word μαθειν is found in Β46 Ν2 B D F G K L Ψ 0243. 630. 1175. 1739. 1881 (cf 39). Ibid.
540 H. P. V. Nunn, The elements of New Testament Greek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 49. Nunn sees in the use of the present infinitive that “the action denoted by the verb is to be regarded as continuous or repeated.” The use of the aorist infinitive is “not confined to expressing action in past time.” Also Daniel Wallace notes “time is absolute in the indicative, relative in the participle, and nonexistent in the other moods.” Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mi: Zondervan, 1996), 498.
542 Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 547.
translation shows Judson’s understanding of the comment to women’s silence as a prohibition in the context of the husband-wife relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. 1 Cor 14:35b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TR</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NA28</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JB</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear from Table 9 that Judson’s translates γυναιξὶν as မိန်းမသည် “woman.” Judson’s translation of singular “woman” is different from the plural usages of TR and Knapp, which appear as γυναιξὶν, a dative plural feminine noun of γυνῆ. The difference between the usage of TR and Knapp is that TR keeps the word γυναιξὶν, which is a plural form, with a singular form ἐστίν. However, Knapp keeps the word γυναιξὶν in a plural form. The evidence then points to Judson following the textual guide of Griesbach, who suggests the usage of γυναίκη to align with the singular verb ἐστίν in the sentence. This is another example of Judson not following the TR tradition too closely.

Once again, Judson translates the word λαλεῖν as ေဟာေြပာ(haw pyaw) as “preach,” as in 1 Cor 14:34b. He keeps the translation of the word ἐκκλησία in the dative singular noun form အသင်းတာ် meaning “church,” which he also uses in 1 Cor 14:34a in singular form, although the Greek texts appear in plural form. Another example of the translator’s interpretive role in translation is seen in Judson’s choice to omit the word γάρ here. Both the KJV and NRSV translate the conjunction word γάρ as “for.” If Judson had included this word γάρ in his translation, the word would be "αἰσχρὸν γὰρ ἐστὶ γυναίκῃ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ λαλεῖν." in the

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544 See the discussion of Judson’s usage of γυνῆ in this chapter 3.2.2.2.
545 Griesbach, Novum Testamentum Graece, 2, 277.
546 See the discussion of Judson’s usage of λαλέω in this chapter 3.2.2.3.
547 See the discussion of Judson’s usage of ἐκκλησία in this chapter 3.2.2.2.
548 Judson, A Dictionary, English and Burmese, 203.
Burmese translation. In using αἰσχρόν, Judson’s choice is like KJV and NRSV. He translates the adjective αἰσχρόν as ဗိုင်း ("shameful"), which is like the KJV and NRSV, but adds ကြမ်း, giving the sense of “an effect, an occasion,” “an event,” “a circumstance, business, affair” and “a consequence.” Judson thus translates 1 Cor 14:35b as “It is a shameful thing for a woman to preach in the church.”

Analyzing these issues in 1 Cor 14:34-35 in Judson’s Burmese Bible, several differences are discovered between Judson’s translation and the Greek texts of his day, such as TR, Knapp and Griesbach, as well as the textual critical texts of NA28. Most often, Judson’s translation indicates that he is following the Greek texts of TR and Knapp. However, this agreement with TR and Knapp is not always consistent, as he also follows Griesbach. Overall, Judson’s translation shows the influences on his interpretation of texts that are visible in his choice of words and the meaning of those words in translation. In the same way, it is inevitable that his translation in turn would play an influential role in shaping the views and attitudes of readers in the Myanmar church context.

Although Judson’s Burmese Bible translation provides a smooth reading of the language, his translation of ကြမ်း for λαλέω as “preach” in the context of women’s silence becomes more problematic than the translation of λαλέω as “speak” in KJV and NRSV. As mentioned in Chapter 2, his translation had a conflicting effect on the nineteenth century women missionaries in Myanmar. Although it supported greater opportunities for women missionaries, including Judson’s wives, to be involved actively in the church, the women ended up defending the preaching they did as not really constituting preaching.

Even though this translation of λαλέω as “preach” was less restrictive than the prohibition of “speak,” which would have meant restriction of women from all forms of speaking in the church, it has restricted readers in present-day Myanmar from the critical process of textual analysis that examines the context of the biblical passage to determine the intended meaning of the original writer. In the present-day context of Myanmar, where there are few resources other than the Bible available to believers, it is likely that

549 Nominative, singular, neuter noun of αἰσχρός.
550 See Table 10, page 111.
552 Judson, A Dictionary, Burmese and English, 12.
a passage like 1 Cor 14:34-35 will be read in a way that goes beyond the intention of the original writer, a problem that will be elaborated in Chapter 5.  

All the above leads to the main concern of this thesis: Judson’s interpretive view behind the translation of the word λαλέω as ၾမား in the context of women’s silence. This will be discussed later in this chapter. Meanwhile, the following section looks at the differences and similarities of translation between the Judson Burmese Bible and the Common Language Bible, to compare their linguistic usages and highlight the influential role of the translator in the process of translating biblical texts.

3.2.3 Judson Burmese Bible (JB) Compared with the Myanmar Common Language Bible (MCL)

As mentioned earlier, the Myanmar Common Language Bible closely follows the texts of the Good News Bible: Today’s English Version (GNB or TEV). A prime example is found in the translation of the Greek word τὸ αἷμα in Matthew 27:25. The MCL translates this as ထိတ်သွာ်ခင်း (tho thu thay ya chin), meaning “this man’s death,” which is similar to “the death of this man” in the GNB. This word is translated in the KJV as “the blood of this just person,” and in both the NRSV and NIV as “this man’s blood.”

The MCL and GNB avoid the usage of “the blood” in their translations. This is considered problematic to many due to the important role of the blood of Christ in the doctrine of atonement. The shedding of the blood of Christ is not only redemptive but it is the power

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553 What I suggest is the original intent of Paul is explained in Chapter 7.2.4.
556 The reason for not using ‘the blood’ in translation is explained by the translator Robert G. Bratcher as follows: “In the Bible, both in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, the word ‘blood’ (dam in Hebrew, haima in Greek) is often used of the violent death of animals or men, a death caused by something or someone. In Matt. 27:24, 25, for example, Pilate washes his hands before the crowd and says, ‘I am innocent of the haima of this man.’ The crowd answers back, ‘May his haima be upon us and our children.’ It is clear and obvious that the subject is the execution, the death, of Jesus, and in Greek it is natural and clear to speak of Jesus’ execution as his haima. In English, however, the word ‘blood’ does not mean death: it means only the liquid that flows in the veins and arteries of men and animals.” Bratcher, “The Nature and Purpose,” 99.
557 King James Bible: Authorized Version.
558 NRSV.
of Jesus and a significant symbol of propitiation. This is one of the reasons that many conservative churches do not accept the GNB translation bolstered by their rejection of Robert Bratcher’s critique of the premise of biblical inerrancy. This rejection resulted in a financial crisis for the American Bible Society, and Bratcher was requested to resign in 1981. However, the GNB translation later became a model for translators around the world and influenced the task of Bible translation in Asia.

Although there are several controversial issues regarding the choice of words in the GNB, Metzger comments that this translation has “made clear some passages that are unclear in the original,” which has led to the conclusion that “this is interpretation, not translation.” Robert Bratcher, who was the main translator of the GNB, has spoken out clearly about the role of interpretation in translation, arguing that “in trying to be clear, a modern translator avoids being vague and ambiguous, and attempts to represent the meaning of the text as simply and precisely as possible. This means that he must make more choices, and more difficult choices, than those made by traditional versions, which often are (deliberately, sometimes) ambiguous.” Given this perspective, it is inevitable that the translation of the MCL, which followed the principles of the GNB, would also show the translator’s own interpretations of biblical texts.

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561 Leviticus 6:30 (NRSV) says, “But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting for atonement in the holy place; it shall be burned with fire.”
562 Many conservative Christians not only resented this translation, due to several controversial issues, but also stopped giving financial support because of Robert Bratcher’s comments on biblical authority and inspiration.
563 Robert Martin, Accuracy of Translation (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1989), 15. He quotes Bratcher as saying, “Only willful ignorance or intellectual dishonesty can account for the claim that the Bible is inerrant and infallible. To qualify this absurd claim by adding ‘with respect to the autographs’ is a bit of sophistry, a specious attempt to justify a patent error. … No truth-loving, God-respecting, Christ-honoring believer should be guilty of such heresy. To invest the Bible with the qualities of inerrancy and infallibility is to idolatize it, to transform it into a false God. … No one seriously claims that all the words of the Bible are the very words of God. If someone does so it is only because that person is not willing thoroughly to explore its implications. Even words spoken by Jesus in Aramaic in the thirties of the first century and preserved in writing in Greek 35 to 50 years later do not necessarily wield compelling or authentic authority over us today. The locus of scriptural authority is not the words themselves. It is Jesus Christ as THE Word of God who is the authority for us to be and to do.”
564 Omanson, “Robert Galveston Bratcher (1920-2010),” 169. Bratcher went on to be a “Translation Consultant” with the United Bible Societies after his resignation.
566 Beduhn, Truth in Translation, 38.
This section analyzes the command for women to be silent in 1 Cor 14:33-35 in the Myanmar Common Language translation, comparing it with the Judson Burmese Bible. To demonstrate the differences and similarities between the translations, the following comparison charts of 1 Cor 14:33-35 consist of four lines. The first line shows the Greek based texts of JB and MCL, which mention the texts of Knapp for JB and UBS for MCL.568 The second line gives the English translations, KJV for JB and GNB for MCL. The third line provides the Burmese translations, JB and MCL. I then give my own back translation of the Burmese texts into English.

Table 10 shows that the Myanmar Common Language (MCL) translation differs from the Judson Burmese Bible (JB) in two places. This includes the usage of ဘအရာခင်သည် for ὁ θεὸς (“God”) in verse 34a, and ေနကေစ for ἐπιτρέπεται (“stay”) in verse 35b. In the translation of 1 Cor 14:35, MCL is often very different from JB and they are identical only in two places, where Judson uses ခင်ပ�န်း for ἄνδρας and အိမ်တွင် for ἐν οἴκῳ. We will analyze the MCL text by focusing on three areas. These include analyzing the differences between the translations of MCL and JB; the translation of MCL in comparison to its base text, the Good News Bible, to highlight differences and similarities; and pointing out the extent to which MCL applies the principle of dynamic equivalence introduced by the Good News Bible.

The translations of 1 Cor 14:33-34a by MCL and JB differ on the placement of ὃς ἐν πάσαις τὰς ἐκκλησίας τῶν ἁγίων in the sentence. MCL places this phrase at the beginning of verse 34 rather than at the conclusion of verse 33, which was the way Judson’s Burmese Bible had rendered it. By connecting this phrase with the last part of verse 33, Judson makes God the subject of administering peace in the church of Corinth as in all the other churches.569

568 UBS texts are used as a basis for the GNB. See page 85.  
569 See detailed explanation of Judson’s translation of this phrase in this chapter 3.2.2.
the first visible difference between MCL and JB is that JB uses the word "silence" and translates the sentence "As in all the churches of God’s people, the women should stay quiet in the meetings." whereas MCL translates ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν as “As a practice in all the churches, the women should keep quiet in the meetings.” This leads to the question of how the MCL translator understands silence in relation to women in the church. 

In contrast, MCL’s placement of this phrase at the introduction of verse 34 presents women’s silence as a regular practice in all the churches. MCL translates οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεός ἀλλ' εἰρήνης· ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων, ἀι γυναίκες οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεός ἀλλὰ εἰρήνης. Ως ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων αἱ γυναίκες σιγάτωσαν as “As in all the churches of God’s people, the women should stay quiet in the meetings.” This shows that MCL is closely following the GNB translation of UBS, which starts the sentence with ὡς, capitalized, and translates the sentence “As in all the churches of God’s people, the women should keep quiet in the meetings” (see Table 11, next page). This leads to the question of how the MCL translator understands silence in relation to women in the church.

### 3.2.3.1 Silence as Quietness in Meetings

We now examine 1 Cor 14:34a to highlight differences and similarities between MCL and JB, as well as the role of the translator in the translational process. Looking at Table 11, the first visible difference between MCL and JB is that JB uses the word οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεός ἀλλ' εἰρήνης· ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων, ἀι γυναίκες σιγάτωσαν whereas
MCL does not include this word. The word သင််တိ့့ in Burmese refers to ὑμῶν in Greek, meaning “your.” This shows that MCL is closely following the GNB, which followed the textual tradition of UBS that used αἱ γυναῖκες for “the women” without ὑμῶν in the sentence.

Table 11 shows that MCL not only differs from JB, which includes the word ὑμῶν with αἱ γυναῖκες in the sentence, but also in the choice of words in translating αἱ γυναῖκες into Burmese. MCL uses အမျိọသမီးများသည် (a myo tha mi thi) for “women” whereas JB uses မိန်မတိတိသည်. MCL continues to use အမျိọသမီးများသည် for “women” in all three apparent usages of the word γυνή in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35, where the imperative command was given on women’s silence.570 MCL keeps the translation of γυνή as အမျိọသမီးများသည်, referring to women in general, and this is also seen in 1 Cor 11:11-16. However, MCL translates the same word, γυνή, as မိန်သာ, meaning specifically “wives,” in 1 Cor 11:2-6. This shows that MCL is closely following the translation of GNB, which also translates “women” in 1 Cor 11:11-16 and “wives” in 1 Cor 11:2-6.

### Table 11. 1 Cor 14:34a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JB</th>
<th>MCL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knap</td>
<td>αἱ γυναῖκες ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν·</td>
<td>αἱ γυναῖκες ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν·</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJV</td>
<td>Let your women keep silence in the churches</td>
<td>the women [ ] should keep quiet in the meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB</td>
<td>အဖွဲ့ ်မိန်မ ်တိ့်ဆိတ်ဆိတ် စွာ ကေစ။</td>
<td>အမျိးသမီးများသည် အစည်းအဝေးများတွင် ဆိတ်ဆိတ်စွာ ကေစ။</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCL</td>
<td>The wives of yours should stay silence in the church.</td>
<td>the women [ ] should keep quiet in the meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Judson’s dictionaries, အပျင်သိ့ is translated “a fellow countrywoman”571 whereas the term မိန်သာ is used for “a woman”572 or “a female of the human race.”573 This may help to explain why Judson translates all the appearances of γυνή in 1 Cor as မိန်သာ. However, with the passage of time the meaning of the Burmese word မိန်သာ used in JB later becomes

570 See Tables 11 and 13, pages 113 and 117.
572 Ibid., 275.
573 Judson, A Dictionary, English and Burmese, 584.
“female or wife,” whereas the word အမျိးသမီး becomes a reference for “woman.” This explains MCL’s separate usage of အမျိးသမီးများ for women in general, and မိန် for wives. This also shows how language and meaning have changed since Judson’s translation.

For the translation of σιγάτωσαν, MCL’s usage does not differ greatly from Judson’s translation of this word as တိတ်ဆိတ် (“silence”). MCL translates σιγάτωσαν as ဆိတ်ဆိတ် (seit seit). The words တိတ် and ဆိတ် are both a combination of two words. The word တိတ် is a combination of တို့ and တ်, meaning “quiet, still, or silent,” and ဆိတ် is a combination of the same words, “quiet, still, silent.” MCL uses the same word, ဆိတ်ဆိတ်, in the context of speaking in tongues in 1 Cor 14:28, in the present imperative form ရပ်နားေစ. However, MCL translates the same word, σιγάτω, in 1 Cor 14:30, in the present imperative form, to more emphatically stress ရပ်နားေစ (yet nar say) as “stop speaking,” in the context of prophesying in tongues. In the context of σιγάτωσαν in 1 Cor 14:34, MCL’s translation is likely to have the same sense as its base text, the GNB. The GNB translates this word in the sense of “quiet,” which explains the meaning of the sentence as “the women should keep quiet.”

However, MCL differs significantly from JB’s translation of ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις in 1 Cor 14:34a. MCL translates ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις as အစည်းအဝေးများတွင် (“in the meetings”), whereas JB translates အသင်းထော် ဝ as “in churches.” This indicates that MCL is closely following its base text, GNB, which translates ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις as အစည်းအဝေးများ (“in the meetings”). This translation shows MCL following the dynamic equivalent principle of GNB. The translation of “in the meetings” is likely referring to worship meetings that take place in the church as it gathers, because MCL translates ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις as ၀တ်ြပာတ်အစည်းအဝေးများတွင်.

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575 Judson, A Dictionary of the Burman Language, 149.
577 MCL translated this as ၊အကယ်၏ ဆိုထားသည် ဆိုကြခြင်းတွင် အို့ချင်သောင်းချင်သောင်းသောင်း၊ ဗိုလ်အို့ချင် သည်ရပ်နားေစ၊ ဗိုလ်အို့ချင်သည် ဟါးပါက ဗိုလ်ဟာေြပာဆိ၊ meaning “But if no one is there to interpret, the one who wants to speak in strange languages must be quiet and speak only to oneself and to God.”
578 MCL translates this as အကယ်၏ ဆိုထားသည် ဆိုကြခြင်းတွင် အို့ချင်သောင်းချင်သောင်းသောင်း၊ ဗိုလ်အို့ချင်သည် ဟါးပါက ဗိုလ်ဟာေြပာဆိ၊ meaning “But if someone receives a message from God, the one who is speaking must stop speaking.”
579 See Table 10, page 111.
(whit pyut a si a wayi), a combination of the words ဝိုတ် ("worship") and အစည်းအေဝး ("meeting"), or worship services, in 1 Cor 14:19.580

3.2.3.2 Silence: Women and Speaking

Table 12 (following page) outlines textual and linguistic variances of Judson’s translation in 1 Cor 14:34b. Table 12 shows that MCL does not include the word γὰρ ("for") in its translation, like Judson’s Burmese translation. Here MCL is closely following the base text GNB, which translates only “they are not allowed to speak,” without the word γὰρ, although UBS’s Greek text includes it. The usage of သတိတမ in JB and သတိတမ in MCL is similar in meaning. The word သတိတမ is referring to “they” in English. The Burmese word သတိတမ is a nominative suffix to denote the agent or subject of the sentence,581 and ရိ is a nominative suffix used interchangeably with သတိတမ. 582 The word comes from the third person plural dative pronoun αὐτάς in the sentence. The MCL and JB translate this word as the nominative form “they” instead of “to them.” This shows the role of translators in choosing terminologies as well as adjusting words to clarify the meaning of the sentence.

Table 12. 1 Cor 14:34b

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JB</th>
<th>MCL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knap</td>
<td>KJV</td>
<td>for it is not permitted unto them to speak;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJV</td>
<td>They are not allowed to speak;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

580 ἐκκλησία is a dative singular feminine word, and MCL translates it as ပရသတ်ဝတ်ခင်း meaning “worship of the congregations.”


583 αὐτάς is the third person, dative, plural, feminine pronoun of αὐτός.
MCL gives ἐπιτρέπεται for the word ἐπιτρέπεται, meaning they are not “allowed,” which JB translates as ἄρα ἐστὶν ἄκριτος, meaning they are not “permitted.” MCL’s usage of ἀκριτός in the phrase ἐπιτρέπεται ἀκριτός means that women have no “right to” speak, whereas JB’s usage of ἄρα ἐστὶν ἄκριτος means that women have no “permission” to preach. However, MCL’s translation differs significantly from JB in verse 34b in the translation of λαλεῖν, which MCL translates as ῥώμης ὁ λόγος (“speak”), whereas JB translates it as ῥώμης ὁ λόγος “preach”). MCL translates the same word in 1 Cor 14:1-5 as ῥώμης ὁ λόγος, and in 1 Cor 14:29-32 as ῥώμης ὁ λόγος, meaning “preach.” JB differs from MCL in translating λαλεῖν as ῥώμης ὁ λόγος only in 1 Cor 14:3, 23, and in 1 Cor 14:27-30. This is due to MCL’s understanding of the context of 1 Cor 14:1-5 as “prophesying” and the context of 1 Cor 14:29-30 as “prophesying,” whereas JB understands the context of 1 Cor 14:1-5, 23 and 1 Cor 14:27-30 as “prophesying in tongues.”

Further, MCL’s translation of λαλεῖν is slightly different from the translation of GNB, which translates it in 1 Cor 14:1-5 as “proclaiming” but in 1 Cor 14:27-30 as “speaking.” This shows that MCL does not always follow the base text, GNB. However, in 1 Cor 14:34b, MCL follows the translation of λαλεῖν in GNB (“speaking”). MCL’s translation of λαλεῖν as ῥώμης ὁ λόγος in 1 Cor 14:34-35 indicates the prohibition on women “speaking” generally, rather than JB’s specific form of speaking (“prophesying”). MCL’s view is even clearer in its translation of 1 Cor 14:35b, to which we will return later.586

3.2.3.3 Silence: Jewish Rabbinic Teaching and Not Leading

We now discuss the textual and linguistic variances of the MCL translation from the JB translation of 1 Cor 14:34c. Table 14 shows how the MCL differs significantly from JB. Firstly, the translation of MCL differs from JB in translating the word ὁ νόμος. MCL translates ὁ νόμος as ὡς ὁ νόμος (yuda panyat kyan) as “the Jewish law,” whereas JB translates it as ὡς ὁ νόμος (“the law”). This insertion of “Jewish” before “law” implies that the command to women to be quiet in the meetings is backed by the Jewish law, whereas JB translates this term more generically as “the law.” MCL also has “the book of the Jewish law.” This is slightly different from MCL’s base text, GNB, which translates it as “the Jewish

584 ἐπιτρέπεται is the third person, singular, present, passive, indicative form of ἐπιτρέπω.
586 See page 120.
law” only. The MCL reference to the Jewish law could be simply referring to the Pentateuch.\textsuperscript{587}

The MCL translation explains the kind of prohibition imposed: အမျိǿ းသမီးတိǽသည်အစည်းအေဝးများတွင်ခါင်းေဆာင်များမဖစ်စေဖြစ်ပါ။ (“women must not be leaders in the meetings”).

This unique translation of MCL is derived from the word ὑποτάσσέσθαι, which MCL translates as “women must not be leaders in the meetings,” rather than the JB translation, ပုံတိတိသိန်းအထူးသောနှစ်ခါဖြစ်ပါက (“they should consent to the ruling of man”).

GNB, the base text of MCL, points to the prohibition imposed by Jewish law, stating “as the Jewish law says, they must not be in charge.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13. 1 Cor 14:34c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JB</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knap  ἀλλὰ ὑποτάσσεσθαι, καθώς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJV  but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB  ἀλλὰ ὑποτάσσεσθαι καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the Law says they should consent to ruling of man.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MCL translation replaces GNB’s translation of the word “they” with “the women.” This is likely due to the intention to clarify the word “they” as referring to “women” in this context. MCL also uses the translation “women must not be leaders” rather than a literal translation of ὑποτασσέσθωσαν (“women should submit”). Further, MCL adds the phrase “in the meetings” although both UBS and GNB do not include this in their texts. By

\textsuperscript{587} Some suggest that “the Jewish law” refers here to a Jewish rabbinic tradition that prohibited women from coming to the lectern of the synagogue, which is mentioned in Str-B, 3:367. Str is a short form of Hermann Leberecht Strack and Paul Billerbeck, Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament Aus Talmud Und Midrasch, Paul Billerbeck (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2010 [1922]). This book contains collections of rabbinic literature. Also in A. Weiss, Women at Prayer: A Halakhic Analysis of Women’s Prayer Groups (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 2001), 71. A collection of extra-Mishnah material, Tosefta, Megillah 3:5, also reads, “all are included among the seven, even a woman and even a minor. But a woman is not brought forth to read in public.” This is noted also by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 533.
inserting “in the meetings” at the end of the sentence, MCL indicates that the place women needed to be quiet was in the “meetings” of the church, and MCL’s translation of 1 Cor 14:35b later gave “meetings in the church.” These differences are clearly shown in Table 14, which is a comparative chart of the two translations. These examples show MCL following the translation principle of dynamic equivalence by inserting and changing words to give a clearer meaning of the texts. The MCL translation of this text is another example of the influences of translators in the translation of biblical texts.

### 3.2.3.4 Silence: Knowing and Inquiring

This leads to a discussion of the textual and linguistic variances between the MCL and JB translations of 1 Cor 14:35a. Looking at Table 15 below, we see that MCL omits δέ (“but”) in the translation, just as JB had done. If the word δέ is translated, it would be in the Burmese language. MCL’s omission is like its GNB base text that also omitted the word δέ.

#### Table 14. 1 Cor 14:35a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JB</th>
<th>MCL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knap ἐὰν δὲ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν·</td>
<td>UBS ἐὰν δὲ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν·</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KJV And if they will learn anything let them ask their husbands at home;</td>
<td>GNB If they want to find out about something, they should ask their husbands at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JB မိန့်မတိသည်လို၍ မိမိခင်ပွန်။ မိမိခင်ပွန်။</td>
<td>MCL မိမိခင်ပွန်။ မိမိခင်ပွန်။</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If women want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home.</td>
<td>If they want to know about something they should inquire their own husbands at home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MCL translation gives the subject of the sentence as only မိမိ၏ခင်ပွန်း, a general sense of “they,” whereas JB translates it more specifically as မိမိ၏ခင်ပွန်း (“women”). However, the word for εἰ (“if”) appears as the suffix after the word μαθεῖν, which JB translates as ἐὰν (“if want to learn”), while MCL translates it as ἐὰν (“if want to know”).

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588 See page 119 for explanation.
589 Judson, Grammar of the Burmese Language, 31. The word ἐὰν is used to denote “the completion of an action or state of being prior to another” or “supposition or conditionality.”
This shows that MCL sees the word μαθεῖν as wanting “to know” whereas JB sees it as wanting “to learn.” MCL further translates τι as “about something” whereas JB translates τι as just “something.” Therefore, the phrase εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν in verse 35a is translated in MCL as “if they want to know about something,” while JB translates it as “if women want to learn something.” Both usages of the word show the desire in general “to come to understand as the result of a process of learning.”

However, MCL’s “if they want to know about something” is difficult to connect with “women must not be leaders in the meetings” in the previous verse, 34c. This raises a question concerning what those leading the meetings should do with women wanting to know. Regardless of this difficulty, MCL’s translation reads well. The translation of MCL includes τοὺς ἰδίους with ἄνδρας translating ၿမိမိတိ as “their own husbands,” whereas JB uses ၿမိမိတိ in the sentence. The word ၿမိမိ is in the singular and ၿမိမိ is in the plural form. Both words show one’s own possession, and MCL gives the word ၿမိမိ with the possessive suffix ၿ at the end.

Although UBS includes τοὺς ἰδίους with ἄνδρας, GNB does not include τοὺς ἰδίους in its translation. Here MCL is not following GNB closely. MCL translates ἄνδρας as ၿမိမိတိ (“husbands”), as does JB. This usage of the word ၿမိမိတိ indicates the specific term for husbands, whereas ၿမိမိတိ could be used for “men” or “husbands.” In this context, MCL uses ၿမိမိတိ specifically to match with τοὺς ἰδίους ၿမိမိတိ, meaning “their own.” MCL then translates οἴκῳ as ၿမိမိတိ, while JB translates it as ၿမိမိတိ. The meaning of these words is the same since the words ὁδίκ and ὁδίκ are locative suffixes that indicate the same thing, “at home.” Further, MCL translates ἐπερωτάτωσαν as “inquire” or “inquiringly ask,” whereas JB translates it as “ask” only. Translating the word for ἐπερωτάτωσα as ၿမိမိတိ in Burmese indicates a combination of two words, ၿမိမိတိ (may myann), meaning “ask,” and ၿမိမိတိ (song san), meaning “investigate or inquire.”

It is important to note that MCL translates “the women” as ၿမိမိတိ in verse 34a, 34c, and later in 35b. Although it is possible that ၿမိမိတိ could mean both “wives”

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590 Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, 1, 380.
592 Judson, Grammar of the Burmese Language, 18.
593 Myanmar Language Commission, Myanmar-English Dictionary, 357.
and “women,” this word is used here about women. The reason is that MCL uses the term မိန်, in other contexts that clearly refer to wives, such as in 1 Cor 11:20. Although a specific term for husband (ခင်ပွန်) is used in verse 35a instead of the generic term for man (အမျိးသား), MCL uses အမျိးသမီးများ throughout 1 Cor 14:34-45. If MCL intends အမျိးသမီးများ to refer to women in general, although the word ခင်ပွန် is used for husband in the same context, it is following the base text GNB quite closely. Another possible reason could be that MCL uses both terms interchangeably, အမျိးသမီးများ with ခင်ပွန်, since most of the women in that culture married early.

3.2.3.5 Silence: Speaking and Shame

Finally, we examine the differences and similarities of the MCL and JB translations of 1 Cor 14:35a. Table 16 (next page) shows that both MCL and JB omit the Greek word γάρ in translation. Again, MCL translates γυναῖκι as အမျိးသမီးများ, whereas JB translates it as မိန်သည်. It is important to note that MCL translates the singular word γυναῖκι in the plural (“women”). The reason for using the plural form for a singular word could be that MCL sees this sentence as referring to all the women, as in verse 34. Generally, the MCL translations closely follow the base text, GNB, by omitting γάρ in translation. However, MCL differs from GNB in translating γυναῖκι as “women,” whereas GNB gives only “a woman.”

MCL translates ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ as အသင်းတာ် ("in the church’s meeting"). The word အသင်းတာ် means “of a church” and အစည်းအေဝး means “in a meeting.” Only JB uses အသင်းတာ် ("in a church"). This is another example of MCL following GNB closely, because GNB translates ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ as “in a church meeting,” although a literal translation should be “in church” only. Although MCL and GNB focus on clarity of meaning for readers from the viewpoint of dynamic equivalence, this addition of အစည်းအေဝး: ("meeting") to အသင်းတာ် ("of church") requires more explanation, since in contemporary Myanmar a meeting could also mean a business meeting of the local church.

594 Ibid., 60.
595 This was mentioned in this chapter 3.2.3.2.
596 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 706.
597 γυναῖκι is a noun, dative, singular, feminine form of γυνή.
598 Myanmar Language Commission, Myanmar-English Dictionary, 553.
as well as a worship meeting. If the meeting is referring to worship, then it should be translated as ဝတ်စုံကုန်း: instead of အစည်းအဝေး: in Burmese.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 15. 1 Cor 14:35b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JB</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knap:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστι γυναιξὶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ λαλεῖν.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JKV:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For it is a shame for women to speak in church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCL:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ἀσαρκοῦν ἑσσαρκοῦν ὅσατον ὅσατον ὅσατον:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A woman to preach in the church is a shameful thing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MCL and JB agree on the word αἰσχρὸν but their chosen terminologies are not the same. MCL translates αἰσχρὸν as နီက်ဖွယ်သာကြီး and JB translates this word as နီက်ဖွယ်သာကြီး. The word နီက်ဖွယ်သာကြီး⁵⁹⁹ means “shameful” whereas အမှူ means “affair,”⁶⁰⁰ and ၎င်း:⁶⁰¹ means “cause or reason.” GNB translates αἰσχρὸν as “a disgraceful thing” whereas KJV translates it as “a shame.” In MCL and JB, the words အမှူ and ၎င်း: appear behind the word နီက်ဖွယ်သာကြီး to give a literal translation of αἰσχρὸν, which is a neuter adjective.⁶⁰² This is likely the reason for GNB to translate this as “a substantive disgraceful thing” instead of “a disgrace.”

Finally, in MCL the ‘shameful thing’ for women to do in church meetings is ၎င်းသာကြီး (“speaking”), whereas in JB the shameful thing for women to do in the church is ၎င်းသာကြီး (“preaching”). Both translations, speaking and preaching, come from the word λαλεῖν. This shows that MCL is again closely following the translation of GNB, which says that for a woman “to speak” in a church meeting is a disgraceful thing. This also shows GNB following a literal reading of λαλεῖν by translating it as “speak.” In the context of “in the meeting of the church,” MCL’s use of “speaking” is likely about the

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⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 25. The range of meaning includes “business, work, affair, a process in law.”
⁶⁰² αἰσχρὸν is an adjective, nominative, singular neuter form of αἰσχρός.
prohibition of women from all forms of speaking rather than a specific form of speaking ("preaching") in JB’s translation.

Comparing the MCL and JB translations, it is noticeable that they are relatively different from each other. The differences are expected since MCL started with the view that the terminologies used in the JB translation were distant from modern-day usage. One difference in terminology in 1 Cor 14:34-35 occurs with JB’s translation of γυναικὶ as မည်မ for women, which changes to အမျိးသမီးများ in more modern usage. The other differences are basically due to the translator’s understanding of the passage rather than terminological changes. Regardless of these differences, both translations read well.

Both translations show the influences of the translators’ understanding of the passages and interpretive role in the process of translation, such as choosing what they believe to be appropriate terminologies and adding as well as omitting words in the sentence. In comparing these two translations, JB stays closer to the base Greek texts, whereas MCL differs more from its base text, GNB. This is likely due to MCL’s claim to be following a meaning-based translation that allows for adding words to give a clearer meaning of the text, per the context of the readers. However, as noted above, the MCL translation of အသင်းတားအစည်းအဝး (“in the church’s meeting”) especially raises more questions than the translation of JB that gives အသင်းတာ as “in a church.”

However, although MCL’s literal translation of λαλεῖν as “speaking” puts forward the notion that women are prohibited from all forms of speaking, rather than JB’s specific form of speaking, the MCL translation is helpful in raising critical questions about the text and the context of its contemporary readers, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 6. In the JB translation, this critical questioning process is missing in the process of interpreting, since the translation already indicates the kind of prohibition as preaching. The literal translation of λαλεῖν as “speaking” not only occurs in the MCL, but in most English versions, such as NIV, ESV, NRSV, KJV, NLT, NKJV, and RSV. This further explains...

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603 This was mentioned in the beginning of Chapter 3.1.
604 This was mentioned in the beginning of Chapter 3.1.2.
the lack of critical engagement with the Judson translation in Myanmar, because its translation of λαλεῖν already provides an answer to the kind of silence that is required of women in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35.

All the above findings show the important role of interpretation in the process of translation. This leads to the raising of further interpretive issues in translation. Here we examine the kinds of influences that lie behind Judson’s decision to interpret women’s silence as women’s silence in preaching. This involves looking at the “culture attitudes, education, and experience” of the translator, which influence “personal predispositions” and “theological assumptions.” These issues are elaborated in the following section.

### 3.3 HISTORICAL FACTORS AFFECTING JUDSON’S TRANSLATION

Adoniram Judson’s view about women preaching was influenced by the prominent understandings of women’s role in church and society in nineteenth century America. The view that women should not preach was observable in denominational teachings and commentaries in this period. In a study on women and preaching in the early nineteenth century in America, Catherine Brekus notes that during this period most mainline American Protestant churches strongly opposed women preaching, primarily on the grounds of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Brekus mentions the Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Congregationalists among the Protestant churches that opposed women preaching. The denominational teaching of these churches used Pauline passages such as 1 Cor 11:3 that refer to the headship of man, 1 Tim 2:11-12 that commands women not to usurp authority over men by teaching, and the command for women’s silence in 1 Cor 14:34-35.

Amongst the biblical commentaries available in Judson’s day, the six-volume work of Matthew Henry on the Old and New Testaments had a significant influence on the

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607 Catherine A. Brekus, Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America (Waco, TX: The Center for Christian Ethics, Baylor University, 2009), 22.
608 Ibid.
609 Matthew Henry was born in 1662 and died in 1714. His first volume was published in 1708, and up to four other volumes appeared in a uniform edition in 1710. Before his death, he completed his commentary on Acts for an unpublished sixth volume. After his death, a complete edition consisting of all six volumes was printed in 1811, edited by George Burder and John Hughes. See J.B. Williams, Memoirs of the Life, Character, and Writings of the Rev. Matthew Henry (London: J.O. Robinson, 1829).
Protestant churches, from the printing of the first volume in 1710. The fifth volume, containing commentary on the book of 1 Corinthians, was printed in 1806,\textsuperscript{610} a few years before Judson left for Burma. It is therefore likely that Judson was familiar with the work of Matthew Henry, although he did not specifically mention Henry. In Henry’s interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35, he described women’s silence in this passage as a prohibition of women’s speech in the limited sense of “preaching, or interpreting scripture by inspiration.”\textsuperscript{611} He added that for “a woman to prophesy in this sense was to teach, which does not so well befit her state of subjection. A teacher of others has in that respect a superiority over them, which is not allowed the woman over the man, nor must she therefore be allowed to teach in a congregation.”\textsuperscript{612}

This interpretation is validated by the general understanding of the early nineteenth century Protestant churches on women preaching. A historian describes this period as a “double-edged sword for Reformed women who felt called to preach,” and because the churches “tended to take Paul’s admonitions about women’s silence literally, women’s preaching was not always welcome.”\textsuperscript{613} The restrictions enforced on women preaching and speaking in the church were spelled out in the declarations of those churches that were against women preaching. A declaration of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1832 stated that “to teach and exhort, or to lead in prayer, in public and promiscuous assemblies, is clearly forbidden to women in the Holy Oracles.”\textsuperscript{614}

Another American church historian, Clare Midgley, mentions the Baptist Church along with the Congregational Church as prominent among the denominations that opposed women preaching based on 1 Cor 14:34-35. Through denominational views and popular teaching on women’s position in the family and church, as helper and supporter of men, the interpretation of this passage about women being silent also led the foreign missionary societies of the early nineteenth century to avoid recruiting women as

\textsuperscript{611} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{612} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{613} Rosemary Skinner Keller et al., \textit{The Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America 3vols.}, vol. 1 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 347.
\textsuperscript{614} Brekus, \textit{Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America}, 21.
missionaries. Therefore, the only opportunity for women to go into missionary service during this period was as wives of the male missionaries.

Since preaching the Gospel was considered the primary work of missionaries and the other aspects of ministry were considered secondary, the involvement of missionaries’ wives in Bible translation and establishing schools was considered acceptable during this period, along with their primary vocation of helping and supporting their husbands. This explains why Ann Judson, as well as other women missionaries mentioned in Chapter 2, claimed that their preaching, or what we today would regard as preaching, was not actually doing the work of preaching. The prohibition of women from preaching persisted in all the mainstream churches until the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Judson belonged to the Congregational Church and later the Baptist Church, both of which were among the denominations that opposed women preaching based on their interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Judson was born into a Congregational minister’s family. As mentioned earlier, he was an ordained minister as well as a missionary, first in the Congregational Church and later in the Baptist Church. Before becoming a minister, he studied theology, beginning in 1808, at Andover Theological Seminary, which was known as a conservative Calvinist school. All of these experiences undoubtedly influenced Judson’s attitudes and theological assumptions behind his

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616 See Chapter 2.2.3.
617 Clare Midgley, "Can Women Be Missionaries?" 338.
619 See Chapter 2.2.2.
620 Wayland, *Memoir of the Life*, 1, 27-28. He was at first admitted to Andover on 12 October, 1806 as a special student since he had not yet made a public profession of faith. By 2 December, 1808, six weeks after his arrival at Andover, Judson had made a solemn declaration of himself to God and joined the Third Congregational Church in Plymouth, where his father was the pastor.
621 Henry K. Rowe, *History of Andover Theological Seminary* (Newton, MA: [s.n.], 1933), 9. The Andover Theological seminary was founded in 1807 by conservative Calvinists who fled Harvard College after it appointed liberal theologian Henry Ware to the Hollis Professorship of Divinity in 1805.
622 Ibid., 14. According to Rowe, the evangelical zeal of the founders was seen in their Constitution, which explained that their purpose was to increase “the number of learned and able defenders of the Gospel of Christ, as well as of orthodox, pious, and zealous ministers of the New Testament; being moved, as we hope, by a principle of gratitude to God and benevolence to man.”

translational work. Judson’s high regard for the Bible as God’s inspired Word influenced him greatly in terms of his theology of ministry and strategy for missionary work. These views were found in Judson’s writings and preaching notes.

This background suggests that Judson was well acquainted with the prevailing views about women preaching, since the discussion of these issues had been commonplace in the mainline churches since the seventeenth century Puritan influence. According to Kim, these churches prohibited women from preaching by adopting Luther’s view of women’s inferiority to men in voice, eloquence, memory and other natural gifts, and Calvin’s view of social inequality between men and women. Thus, the possibility of women being allowed to preach in this period was described as “nearly unthinkable” in those churches.

Despite all these restrictions on women preaching in the church during the seventeenth century, questions were raised in some Puritan churches about the appropriate status of women in church and society in America. Ann Hutchinson (1591-1643) was a prominent

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624 Ibid., 155. Wayland notes Judson’s belief in the Calvinist view of “irresistible grace” that prompts the elect to respond to the electing love of God. It was his theological understanding of the human condition, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the grace of God that drew Judson to mission service while at Andover.

625 Courtney Anderson, To the Golden Shore (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1956), 411. His high regard for the Bible was seen in the prayer Judson prayed at the completion of his Bible translation. He prayed that God would make “his own inspired word, now complete in Burman tongue, the grand instrument of filling all Burmah [Burma] with songs of praise to our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

626 Wayland, Memoir of the Life, 1, 157. Ann Judson captured what they hoped to accomplish through translating the Bible, saying, “O, that the time may soon come, when this people will be able to read the scriptures of truth in their own language, and believe in that Savior.”

627 Ibid., 154. Wayland described Judson as believing that, because of Adam and Eve’s sin, their descendants “became sinners” and “in consequence of the sin of each individual, every descendant of Adam is deserving of eternal banishment from God.” For their sins, the race of man must be “doomed to misery temporal and eternal.” However, “in consequence of the incarnation, obedience, and sufferings of Christ, a free and full pardon is now offered to all the race of man, who, in sincere repentance for sin, commits themselves, in humble trust, to the mercy of God through the ... proclamation of the Gospel, the good news of salvation, ... [and that the] “Holy Spirit should with irresistible energy accompany the proclamation of the message of salvation.” The teachings of Calvinism were found in the only English sermon Judson ever preached in Burma, and in the Confession of Faith he wrote for the Burmese in 1829. See Hulse, Adoniram Judson and the Missionary Call, 13.

628 The Puritans were strict followers of Luther and Calvin. They held two views of women. Firstly, they saw women as “the daughters of Eve,” inferior to men, and held that “they should subordinate to male authority at home, at church, and in society at large.” Secondly, they believed that not all women were daughters of Eve and that there were some “good wives.” These good women, who were “pious and obedient to the norms of social order, are spiritually equal to men.” See Eunjoo Mary Kim, Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages (Cleaveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 91.

629 Ibid., 85.

voice among those who raised such questions. Although the Puritans did not allow women to preach or speak in the church or in society, the Quakers allowed them to do so during this period. For this reason, some of the sympathizers of Anne Hutchinson left the Puritan churches and eventually joined the Quakers.

Broader changes regarding the role of women in the church began to occur only in the eighteenth century. These changes were influenced by two major revivals, the First Great Awakening (1740-1770) and the Second Great Awakening (1790-1850). During the First Great Awakening, all of the churches in the northern and middle colonies of America, regardless of denomination, experienced revivals that reflected the Wesleyan revivals in England and Scotland. Many new members were drawn into the churches through these revivals, especially women. These mass conversions marked the beginning of the Great Awakening and changed many aspects of church life during this period, marking it as the beginning stage for greater involvement of women in the church.

During this time several laywomen, alongside laymen, became itinerant preachers in churches due to the revivalists’ view of the authority of preaching being the “preacher’s

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631 Keller et al., The Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America 1, 347. Ann Hutchinson was a well-known Puritan woman from Boston, Massachusetts who felt called to teach and preach. Though she faced strong opposition, she continued to teach and preach to mixed audiences in her own home. She was later accused of teaching false doctrine and exercising authority over men in public gatherings, and exiled to Rhode Island. See also Kim, Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages, 91.

632 Kim, Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages, 85. The Quakers, also known as the Society of Friends, were very much like the Puritans in their faith and followed the reformers’ doctrine of Christian freedom. However, they differed from the Puritans in their egalitarian view of women and men and their pacifism. They were known as strong defenders of the ministry of women and allowed women to engage in preaching during this period.

633 Ibid. The Quakers used Scripture references such as Acts 2:17-18, 21:9, 1 Cor 11:5 and Joel 2:28-29 to support the legitimacy of women in ministry. They explained that the Pauline prohibitions in 1 Cor 14 should be understood as “local temporary conditions which have passed away.” They emphasized the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit and a personal relationship with God as major qualifications for being a preacher, rather than theological education and ordained ministry. For these reasons, Quaker women could engage in preaching and receive ordination to various ministerial offices even in the seventeenth century.

634 Ruth A. Tucker and Walter L. Liefeld, Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1987), 247. See also Keller et al., The Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America 1, 347. Numerous conversions took place in New England and New Jersey among the Congregational churches and greatly stimulated growth in the churches through the itinerant preaching of the evangelists, such as George Whitefield (1714-1770).


637 Ibid.
experience of conversion and inner regeneration,” 638 rather than formal theological
training or social status. Several women became itinerant preachers in the Methodist
churches through the encouragement of John Wesley, 639 who believed the Awakening
was an extraordinary time in which “exceptions to the biblical command of silence [for
women] could be made.” 640 Others shared the view of Jonathan Edwards, a renowned
Puritan preacher and theologian, that the occurrence of mass conversion and women
preaching in the Great Awakening were signs of the “the Latter-day Glory.” 641

However, Judson’s Congregational Church, like the Reformed and Presbyterian churches,
was among the churches that retained the conservative views of the Puritans on the role
of women in the church and the role of ministers. Their emphasis on orthodox theology
rather than on spiritual gifts, as well as their insistence on an educated clergy, did not
permit lay ministry in their churches during the First Great Awakening. These churches did
not allow women to preach during this period, “since women did not have access to
Seminary education at that time, and [the churches] encouraged women to follow
traditional gender roles and expectations of women in the church.” 642

Although the First Great Awakening brought religious passions and enthusiasm into the
churches, it also resulted in divisions among the churches. 643 This led some churches that
had been open to women preaching to prohibit women from speaking and preaching.
Among the Baptist churches, Brekus notes that the northern Separate Baptist
congregations began to ban women from praying aloud in public as early as 1750. 644 The
role of deaconess, once enjoyed by the women of the southern Separate Baptist

638 Kim, Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages, 92-93. See also Brekus, Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America 1740-1845, 466. Brekus notes that women, regardless of race or age, were “praying aloud, testifying, and ecstatically responding to the guidance of the Spirit during worship services. Women even began acting as exhorters, informal evangelists who, from their pews, encouraged others to repent.


641 Kim, Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages, 93.

642 Keller et al., The Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America 1, 347.

643 Ibid., 226. Congregations in these churches divided into New Lights, a group that supported revivalists, and Old Lights, a group against the revivalists.

644 Brekus, Strangers and Pilgrims: Female Preaching in America 1740-1845, 466.
congregations, which was a role of care for the poor and the sick (a pastoral role except for preaching), ended when the Separate Baptists merged with other Baptists in 1787. Among the Wesleyan churches, the acceptance of women preaching began to fade with the death of Wesley in 1791, and they began to restrict women’s preaching only to women’s groups by 1803. Although the influences of the First Great Awakening on the role of women lasted only a short time, due to the rising conservatism across the churches, the spiritual enthusiasms and conversion experiences did pave the way for a greater involvement of women in the Second Great Awakening.

In the Second Great Awakening (1790-1850), the subject of women preaching intensified as women’s participation in evangelism grew. As in the First Awakening, the evangelistic nature of preaching during this revival again contributed to massive conversions across denominational lines, including Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Baptists. Due to female conversions outnumbering those of men, women started to gain more active roles in the leadership of the church as well. Some revivalists encouraged women to lead public prayers and to preach, even to gender-mixed audiences, to promote revival. Through the encouragement of male leaders of the revivals, women began to stand behind the pulpit in those churches that were open to women preaching.

The churches that allowed women to preach and challenged the restrictions on women’s preaching in the early nineteenth century included the Freewill Baptists, the Christian Connection, the northern Methodists, the African Methodists, and the Millerites (predecessors of the Seventh-day Adventists). These churches allowed female preaching firstly for a practical reason, since they lacked male ministers to keep pace with their fast growth in the early nineteenth century revival. Secondly, women preachers were allowed based on theological considerations that interpreted Paul’s teaching as only

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645 Ibid.
646 Kim, Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages, 88.
648 Kim, Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages, 95.
649 Brekus, Female Preaching in Early Nineteenth-Century America, 22.
650 Kim, Women Preaching: Theology and Practice Through the Ages, 94.
against the “ruling” of women over men, but not prohibiting women to pray, sing, witness, exhort or preach in public; thus women were allowed to help save souls.\textsuperscript{651}

Those who supported women preaching during this period were likely sourcing the commentary of Adam Clarke (1760-1832).\textsuperscript{652} The silence of women in 1 Cor 14:34 was explained by Clarke as referring to the Jewish law that forbade women from teaching and asking questions in the assembly until the time of the Gospel. He linked 1 Cor 11:5 with women’s prophecy and the teaching of Joel’s prophecy mentioned in Acts 2, and concluded that women are liberated to prophesy and to teach since the Spirit of God was poured out on women as well as on men. He maintained the view that the wife was subordinate in marriage, but emphasized that a woman who was gifted and enabled by God should not remain silent in the church.\textsuperscript{653}

As in the First Great Awakening, the Baptist churches in the Second Great Awakening remained divided on women preaching. Resolutions that opposed women speaking publicly were adopted by the Baptist churches around 1756 and again in 1785, but the Freewill Baptists allowed women to preach and began licensing women preachers in 1815. However, the mainline Baptists did not allow women to preach even in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. The Freewill Baptist churches began opening theological departments for women in 1878 and began to ordain women in 1886.\textsuperscript{654} The American Baptists began to ordain women preachers only at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1894.\textsuperscript{655}

The Congregational churches did not allow women to preach even in the Second Great Awakening period. As mentioned earlier, this was due to their focus on traditional theology and a theologically trained clergy, rather than on charismatic gifts.\textsuperscript{656} However, their theological institutions began to open doors for women to study around the middle

\textsuperscript{652} Adam Clarke was converted through Methodist preaching in 1782 and later was commissioned by Wesley himself as an itinerant preacher. He published a six-volume Bible commentary on the Old and New Testaments. See Janette Hassey, \textit{No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry Around the Turn of the Century} (Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books), 120.
\textsuperscript{653} Adam Clarke, \textit{The New Testaments, “Romans-Revelation”}, vol. 6 (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1851; reprint), 278.
\textsuperscript{654} Hassey, \textit{No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry Around the Turn of the Century}, 56.
\textsuperscript{656} See page 123.
of the nineteenth century. Thus, the role of women began to change in the Congregational Church, and it even became the first denomination to ordain women to pastoral leadership, in 1853. Although Judson witnessed single women being appointed as missionaries in his lifetime, he did not see the first woman being ordained in the Congregational Church since he died three years before this event took place.

From this overview of the development of American churches’ positions on the role of women from the seventeenth century till the early nineteenth century, it is evident that the Congregationalists, as well as some of the Baptists, were among the denominations that strongly prohibited women from preaching based on their interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Both denominations affirmed the conservative view of the place of women in the home and the role of women in the church as helpmate to men, and thus prohibited women from speaking or preaching in public. Since Judson was an ordained minister and missionary first in the Congregational Church, and later in the Baptist Church, it is reasonable to conclude that Judson’s translation of λαλεῖν as ေဟာေြပာ as “preach” in 1 Cor 14:34-35 was influenced by the prominent interpretation of his day and his church affiliations.

3.4 CONCLUSION

After examining the two major Bible translations in Myanmar, the role of translator is clear in both the Judson Burmese Bible and the Myanmar Common Language Bible. Historical as well as textual analysis shows that the translators’ interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34-35 influenced their choices of words and structures in translation. A prime example is a usage of “wives” as opposed to “women” in Judson’s translation. This shows the need for interpreters today to look carefully at the Judson Bible in its own historical context. The analysis of the MCL text shows that the meaning of this word has changed since the time of Judson.

The comparative analysis of the JB and MCL translations provides further insight regarding the major concern of this thesis, which is the influence of Judson’s unique translation of

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657 The Congregational Church ordained Antoinette Brown, who was one of the students of Charles Finney at Oberlin College. She was not only the first woman to be ordained by the Congregational Church, but also the first in the whole United States as well. See Keller et al., The Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America 1, 347.
λαλεῖν as ἀναργυρίῳ in 1 Cor 14:34-35. In the context of Myanmar, which has limited access to biblical resources other than the Bible, this translation as well as a literal approach to interpretation would see the meaning of women’s silence as a prohibition of women from preaching. Comparing the JB and MCL texts with Greek texts reveals several critical issues within the text. This contextual and textual analysis highlights the need for critical scrutiny of the translator’s usage of words considering the historical context of the translator, along with critical analysis of the biblical text in its own historical context, to understand the intended meaning of the original author.

This highlights the importance of critical approaches for present-day interpreters in Myanmar, especially in interpreting difficult passage like 1 Cor 14:34-35. It is essential to recognize the influential role of an individual’s theological views and cultural perceptions of words in interpretation. As Judson was influenced by his own cultural and theological context, so interpreters today are likewise influenced by the prevailing understandings of the present time. From this understanding, the following chapter examines several contemporary interpreters of 1 Cor 14:34-35 to critically assess their interpretations.
SECTION II: HERMENEUTICS AND THE CONTEXT

This section focuses on the second question of the thesis about what satisfactory contextual hermeneutics in Myanmar would look like today to interpret texts like 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. This section consists of two chapters. The first part of this section, chapter 4 examines the interpretations of three contemporary schools of thought on 1 Cor 14:3-4-35 to identify issues of interpretations as well as to obtain principles of interpretation for Myanmar. The second part of this section, chapter 5, starts with a summary of evaluations on the three contemporary schools of thought. Then, the chapter continues with identifying key components for constructing a satisfactory contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar in interpreting passages like 1 Cor 14:34-35.

CHAPTER 4
SILENCE IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP

Hermeneutics has a vital role to play in analyzing how the command for women to be silent in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 has been understood in different periods and contexts. Moreover, hermeneutics provides analytical tools for critical analysis and bridging the gap between the world of the text and the world of the interpreter, which can be thought of as “two horizons.” 658 Academic and popular biblical scholarship has produced quite different readings of the 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 text. This reflects the complexity of interpreting the Bible generally but also the different ways in which this text appears to resonate with or challenge social values and situations. In the context of Myanmar, the translational issues in Judson’s translation noted in the previous chapter add to the complexity. This also reflects the role of interpreters in constructing the meaning of the text, and their conceptual understandings of silence as influencing the hermeneutical process. 659

From these understandings, this chapter looks at three different hermeneutical schools of thought from Western biblical scholarship to identify appropriate hermeneutical tools

659 Ibid., 16.
to help resolve interpretational issues that Judson’s Burmese translation raises concerning the texts that command women to be silent. These hermeneutical schools of thought can be labelled as literal-traditional, feminist, and egalitarian. These contemporary interpretations are chosen due to their influential place in Myanmar’s hermeneutics around women’s role in the church, along with their ways of doing theology and approaches to biblical texts. Therefore, the chapter seeks to identify relevant hermeneutical principles that are appropriate for the Myanmar context in interpreting difficult texts like 1 Cor 14:34-35. This derives from analyzing the hermeneutical processes and approaches of three contemporary interpreters, in two sections.

The first part of the analysis focuses on the interpretations of the three schools of contemporary scholarship on 1 Cor 14:34-35. This section focuses in particular on the interpretative decisions of these interpreters regarding crucial terminology that provides interpretive meaning within the texts that command women to be silent. This is done to highlight the process and the approach of each individual school of thought to this text.

The second part of the analysis focuses on two hermeneutical issues affecting these three schools of thought. The first hermeneutical issue is the role of presuppositions in interpretation, which includes interpreters’ view of the Bible, their choice of starting point in interpreting, their sociological perspective, and their theoretical framework behind interpretation. The second hermeneutical issue looks at the interpreters’ hermeneutical approach to the historical setting of the 1 Corinthians context. This includes the interpreters’ view of Paul’s overall attitude on women, and how the interpreters deal with 1 Corinthians in the overall context of Pauline literature. All of the above are approached with a consciousness of how the contemporary interpreters interact with the context of the original writer and their own contemporary context.

4.1 HERMENEUTICS OF CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP ON 1 COR 14:34-35
The following analysis of contemporary scholarship focuses on one contemporary scholar from each of three contemporary hermeneutical school of thought. For the literal-traditional hermeneutics, the complementarian\textsuperscript{660} scholarship of Wayne Grudem is chosen for analysis. The work of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is analyzed as a

\textsuperscript{660} The meaning of complementarian is explained below.
representative of feminist scholarship, and the work of Ben Witherington III is analyzed in terms of egalitarian/evangelical feminist interpretation.

Wayne Grudem is a Research Professor of Bible and Theology at Phoenix Seminary in Scottsdale, Arizona.\textsuperscript{661} He received a PhD in New Testament from the University of Cambridge, England.\textsuperscript{662} He was president of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1999. He also was a co-founder and president of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.\textsuperscript{663} This council is an organization that was founded in 1987 to represent the complementarian view,\textsuperscript{664} which acknowledges women and men as equal in value and worth but having gender-differentiated roles and functions in marriage and ministry in the church.\textsuperscript{665} He was a member of the Translation Oversight Committee and also served as General Editor of the English Standard Version of the Bible from 2005-2008.\textsuperscript{666} His published works include a wide range of subjects,\textsuperscript{667} including systematic theology,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Wayne A. Grudem, \textit{Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism: Biblical Responses to the Key Questions} (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2006), 5.
  \item Baker, "An Analysis of the Leadership Challenges," 17.
  \item \textit{ESV}.
\end{itemize}
prophecy, politics, business, biblical doctrines, and the role of women in the church.

For feminist interpretation, the work of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is analyzed. She is Krister Stendahl Professor of Scripture and Interpretation at Harvard Divinity School, and co-founder and co-editor of the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion. She earned her PhD in biblical studies at the University of Münster. In 1970, she moved to the United States and taught at the Catholic University of Notre Dame for fifteen years. She then moved to a Protestant institution, first at Episcopal Divinity School and then, in 1988, to

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668 For politics, see: Wayne A. Grudem, Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).
671 Piper and Grudem, eds., Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism. See also Grudem, Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism: Biblical Responses to the Key Questions; Wayne A. Grudem, Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism? (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006); Grudem, Evangelical Feminism; Wayne A. Grudem, Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than One Hundred Disputed Questions (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004).
673 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist Ekklesia-logy of Liberation (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 39. During her study there, she encountered closed doors for ministry within the Roman Catholic Church because of her gender, and she was refused a scholarship with the excuse that a woman "had no future in the academy." These experiences, as well as being trained in the traditions of German philosophy, such as of Bultmann’s emphasis on the interpreter’s pre-understanding in the hermeneutical process, have shaped her formulation of her own feminist hermeneutics. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Changing the Paradigms," in The Christian Century "How My Mind Has Changed" Series (September 5-12, 1990): 796-800. Schüssler Fiorenza, Discipleship of Equals, 54. and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 160.
674 Ng, Reconstructing Christian Origins?, 8. During her fifteen years of teaching there, she experienced alienation from her male colleagues just as she had experienced from male theologians in Germany. She also felt unhappy with the official statements of the Catholic Church that were opposed to women’s leadership and ordination in the church. This led her to move to a Protestant institution and then later to Harvard Divinity school. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone, 159.
Harvard Divinity School. She also became the first female president of the Society of Biblical Literature, in 1987. At the center of her work is her concept of the “discipleship of equals,” which is also known as “ekklesia of wo/men,” which expresses an egalitarian vision of discipleship of both men and women together and opposes “hierarchical structures of domination both within the church and in society at large.” Schüssler Fiorenza has emerged as a major feminist biblical interpreter. She has written and edited more than twenty-five books on biblical studies. Her writing ranges from biblical studies to hermeneutics, ecclesiology, and theology.

For egalitarian hermeneutics, the interpretation of Ben Witherington III is analyzed. This school of interpretation acknowledges the equality of genders in values and functions, and believes that "women [should] function within the church based upon character qualifications, gifts and theological education, not on the basis of gender restrictions." A major organization representing this view is Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE). Ben Witherington III has been the Jean R. Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary since 1995, after teaching at Ashland Theological Seminary from 1984-1995. He is also a faculty member at St. Andrews University in Scotland. He has also taught at High Point College, North Carolina from 1982-1983, Duke Divinity School from 1982-1983 and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1988 and 1990. He received a PhD in Theology with a New Testament concentration from the University of Durham, England in 1981. He has been an elected member of the Society

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675 Ng, *Reconstructing Christian Origins?,* 8.
680 Ibid., 9.

4.1.1 Silence in Interpretations

In analyzing the silence passage of 1 Cor 14:34-35, the following focuses on differences and similarities of the above-mentioned contemporary scholars’ interpretations of the text. In particular, this section looks at five areas where interpreters are required to make decisions in the process of interpreting the meaning of this text. These areas include the interpreters’ explanation of authorship, the context of the text that commands women to be silent, and the interpreters’ decisions on the usage of certain terminology, such as σιγάτωσαν, γυναῖκες, ἐκκλησίαις, λαλεῖν, ὑποτάσσεσθαι, and νόμος, in relation to the context of the text that commands women to be silent in 1 Cor 14:34-35.

684 http://www.benwitherington.com/cv.html. This is a society dedicated to New Testament studies. This society is also called SNTS – Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas.


4.1.1.1 Pauline Authorship

One issue relating to 1 Cor 14:34-35 is that of authorship, that is, whether Paul is the author of the passage that commands women to be silent. This question arose out of an occurrence of the textual transposition in which 1 Cor 14:34-35 is moved to after verse 40. This transposition is found in the Western manuscripts such as uncial D (06), Codex Claromontanus. 688 F (010), Codex Augiensis. 689 G (012), Codex Boernerianus. 690 a b691 vgms, Codex Fuldensis. Vulgate manuscript. 692 and the fourth-century church father Ambrosiaster. 693 However, the very early papyrus G66 together with uncial x (01), B (03), Psi (044) and most of the manuscripts 694 read these verses in their traditionally accepted order.

This occurrence of a textual transposition of verses 34-35 to after verse 40 in some manuscripts and peculiarities of linguistic usage viewed as being unlike Paul, have led some interpreters to conclude that these verses were not authored by Paul. Their arguments are based on verses 34-35 being words of the Corinthian men 695 or these verses as an interpolation. 696 However, all three of the contemporary interpreters, Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Witherington, argue for Pauline authorship of 1 Cor 14:34-35, as well as the placement of verses 34-35 in the traditionally accepted order before verse 40. 697 At the same time, each points out different aspects than the others.

688 Codex Claromontanus.
689 Codex Augiensis.
690 Codex Boernerianus.
691 Old Latin manuscripts entitled Armachanus and Veronensis. They are witnesses of the fourth and fifth centuries.
692 Codex Fuldensis. Vulgate manuscript.
693 Research, ed., NA28, 466.
694 Ibid.
696 Gordon Fee sees this text as interpolation, and argues that “although these two verses are found in all known manuscripts, either here or at the end of the chapter, the two text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic probability combine to cast considerable doubt on their authenticity.” Although he acknowledged that they are present in all known manuscripts, he considers these verses as inauthentic of Paul for three reasons: linguistic usages, such as speaking, silence, submission, are used differently from other usages of Paul; seeming contradiction of 1 Cor 11:2-16 to 1 Cor 14:34; and usages such as “the law” that are foreign to Paul. See in Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 699. Payne also sees this text as interpolation. See Payne, Man and Woman, 246. Munro sees both 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36 verses as post-Pauline “pastoral insertions.” See W. Munro, Authority in Paul and Peter. The Identification of a Pastoral Stratum in the Pauline Corpus and 1 Peter SNTSM, vol. 45 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 67-82.
While acknowledging a textual transposition issue in the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text, where verses 34-35 are placed after verse 40, Grudem notes that these verses are mentioned in all the known Greek manuscripts as providing a valid case for Pauline authorship of the text. He then argues for the traditional accepted order of verses 34-35. According to Grudem, the traditionally accepted order of verses 34-35 is supported by two arguments. First, the fact that the transposition of these verses is found in the Western manuscripts strengthens the traditionally accepted order of verses 34-35, because the Western texts are “unreliable elsewhere in any case.” Second, he sees the traditionally accepted order of these verses as supported by the “United Bible Societies’ fourth edition of the Greek New Testament,” which gave the “B” rating of “almost certain” for the placement of these verses in the traditionally accepted order.

In agreeing with Grudem’s exegetical decision of Pauline authorship, and given that her method is in line with the structural analysis of Grudem although with a different perspective, Schüssler Fiorenza argues for Pauline authorship and considers that Paul’s injunction to silence is because of the context. She does not think there are any text critical grounds for it being an interpolation. Thus, she approaches these verses as “original Pauline statements” and contends that explaining these verses “within their present context” is a better approach to these verses.

Like Grudem and Schüssler Fiorenza, Witherington also sees the textual issue of the displacement of verses 34-35 to the end of verse 40 as not a significant “argument for interpolation.” In his view, the displacement probably occurred due to the scribes who assumed that these passages were about “household order, not order in worship,”

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698 Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 236.
699 Ibid.
701 B rating is an indication of the text as “almost certain.” See in Aland et al., eds., *UBS*4, Fourth Revised ed., 3; ibid.
703 Ibid.
704 Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 288.
based on their own context “when there were church buildings separate from private homes.”\(^{706}\) However, he rejects the view of verses 34-35 as an edited work of the scribes using 1 Tim 2:11 as a base text,\(^{707}\) because he sees the issues in 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians as divergent from one another since the first one deals with “teaching and authority” whereas the latter deals with “asking questions and learning.”\(^{708}\) Witherington sees a consistent usage of four key terms found in both places, verses 34-35 and the whole context of 1 Cor 14, as validating Pauline authorship of these verses. These terms include “λαλέω (repeatedly from 14:14 to 35), αἰων (14:28, 30, 34), ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ (14:28, 35; cf. 34), and ὑποτάσσω (14:32, 34).”\(^{709}\)

Looking at the above-mentioned explanations of these three contemporary interpreters, their decision on the Pauline authorship of verses 34-35 centres on the fact that these verses appear in all the known Greek manuscripts, even though some place them in different locations. Agreeing with this view, I argue for Pauline authorship and the traditionally accepted order of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in Chapter 7 of this thesis.\(^{710}\) From their understanding of Pauline authorship of verses 34-35, as well as establishing the place of these verses in the traditionally accepted order, these three contemporary interpreters approach the texts that command women to be silent from the contextual analysis of the text within their immediate historical context. The following section looks at how these contemporary interpreters see verses 34-35 within the context of 1 Cor 14 and read the overall context of 1 Corinthians.

4.1.1.2 The Corinthian Context

The exegetical decisions of Grudem, Schüessler Fiorenza and Witherington on 1 Cor 14:34-35 revolve around how they see these verses fitting into the overall context of 1 Corinthians as well as the immediate context of 1 Cor 14. For the immediate context of 1 Cor 14:34-35, 1 Cor 14 is analyzed to determine the context. For the overall context of 1 Corinthians, the passage that apparently allows women to pray and prophesy in 1 Cor

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\(^{706}\) Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 288.

\(^{707}\) Ibid.

\(^{708}\) Ibid. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1152.


\(^{710}\) See Chapter 7.
11:2-16 is compared with the passage of 1 Cor 14:34-35 that commands women to be silent, in order to determine whether Paul gave conflicting commands in the same book. Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington all see the immediate context of 1 Cor 14:34-35 as restricting women to the context of prophecy. However, they disagree on the kind of event that Paul is restricting. Grudem sees Paul as restricting all women from evaluating and judging men in the context of prophecy. Schüssler Fiorenza sees Paul as instructing Corinthian wives to embody decency and order in the practice of spiritual gifts in the context of prophecy. Witherington sees Paul as commanding Corinthian prophetesses to ask questions in an appropriate manner without disrupting worship service. This section looks at how these contemporary interpreters deal with peculiarities of linguistic usage and the flow of the sentence in explaining their understandings of the context.

First, the three interpreters take note of the linguistic usage and the flow of the sentences from 1 Cor 12-14 in explaining the context of the text that commands women to be silent. Grudem points out that Paul mentions prophecy in twelve verses and tongue-speaking in thirteen verses in 1 Cor 14 alone. He sees Paul as following procedure in writing 1 Cor 14:29-35, which is an evaluation of prophecy. Then, as he notes, “the closest contextual material to the verses about women being silent, verses 29-33a, does not refer to tongues, but it does contain a discussion of prophecy.” Therefore, Grudem believes that approaching 1 Cor 14:33b-35 from the context of prophecy fits well with a “consistent Pauline advocacy of women’s participation without governing authority in the assembled church.”

Describing 1 Cor 14:26-36 as being about “church order” in the context of prophecy, Schüssler Fiorenza notes a structural pattern in 1 Cor 14 as important in determining the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35. She points out the pattern as containing dialogues on tongue

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711 Wire and Thiselton also understand this passage in the context of prophecy. See Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets. Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians.
713 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 230.
714 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287.
716 Ibid., 224.
717 Ibid.
speakers in verse 27, prophets in verses 29-33, and wives in verses 34-36.\textsuperscript{718} She sees these passages that command women to be silent in verses 27, 29 and 34 as general statements on regulations that command women to be silent, and then verses 28, 30 and 35 as describing ways to apply this command for women to be silent.

Agreeing with Grudem and Schüssler Fiorenza about 1 Cor 14:34-35 being in the context of prophecy, Witherington notes two areas in particular that support these verses in the context of prophecy. First, he sees the appearances of the word σιγάω in verses 28, 30 and 34 of 1 Cor 14 as a “catch-word connection,”\textsuperscript{719} indicating that these verses follow the same flow of argument.\textsuperscript{720} Second, he sees 1 Cor 14:34-35 as following Paul’s pattern of “ethical exhortation,” as in Col 3:18, Eph 5:19, and 1 Cor 14:27. In these passages, Paul mentions women in relation to ὑποτάσσω (“submission”) regularly after mentioning forms of inspired speech, which include prophecy, tongues and spiritual songs. Witherington sees this same pattern of exhortation appearing in 1 Cor 14:34-35.\textsuperscript{721}

Second, the three interpreters pay close attention to the place of verse 33b in analyzing the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Both Grudem and Witherington agree that verse 33b is linked logically with verse 34. Grudem explains 1 Cor 14:33b, ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων (“as in all the churches of the saints”), as connecting to verse 34, which is different from those who see verse 33b as linked with 33a.\textsuperscript{722} Grudem argues that if verse 33b goes with verse 33a, “for God is not a God of confusion but of peace,” this would suggest that God was a God of peace in some churches but not in others.\textsuperscript{723} For this reason, verse 33b makes better sense with verse 34a in the context of instructions on behaviour in the worship setting, as it reads, “as in all the churches, women should keep

\textsuperscript{718} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her}, 230.


\textsuperscript{720} Witherington, \textit{Women in the Earliest Churches}, 91.

\textsuperscript{721} Ibid. He quotes this from J. M. Robinson, "Die Hodajot-Formel in Gebet und Hymnus des Frühchristentums," in \textit{Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen} (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1964): 224.


\textsuperscript{723} Grudem, \textit{Evangelical Feminism}, 234.
silence.”\textsuperscript{724} In this view, women should keep silence not just in the church in Corinth, but in all the churches of Paul’s time. He reasons that Paul’s rule cannot be restricted to “one local church where there supposedly were problems,” and that Paul directs the Corinthians to “conform to a practice that was universal in the early church.”\textsuperscript{725} Thus, he sees verse 33b as fitting well with what Paul is attempting to prohibit in the following verses on “weighting of prophecies.”\textsuperscript{726}

For the immediate context, Witherington sees “as in all the churches” in 1 Cor 14:33b as the beginning of verses 34-35, and the reason is that he sees the whole context of chapter 14 as instruction for orderly worship. In other words, “worship should be undertaken with the same orderliness in Corinth as elsewhere, since God is the same everywhere.”\textsuperscript{727} According to Witherington, whenever this phrase “as in all the churches” is used, such as in 1 Cor 4:17, 7:17 and 11:16, Paul is referring to a rule of behaviour—“his rule, or the rule of all the Christian churches” —but not to the rule “of God in all the churches.”\textsuperscript{728} Thus, in this context also, Paul is setting forth a “general rule in his congregations or in all early Christian congregations,” setting forth how the Corinthians should “conform to the practice elsewhere in the Body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{729}

Schüssler Fiorenza does not explain clearly the place of 1 Cor 14:33b in the context of 1 Cor 14. This is likely due to her feminist method that is concerned with uncovering ideologies and structures that restrict women’s role in the church rather than textual issues.\textsuperscript{730} However, she mentions “1 Cor 14:33b-36” as a title in her notes on the debate about whether these verses are an authentic Pauline injunction or added later by a Pauline school. This would seem to indicate that Schüssler Fiorenza accepts the place of verse 33b with verse 34. She notes that “it is exegetically more sound to accept” 1 Cor 14:33b-36 as “original Pauline statements and then explain them within their present context.”\textsuperscript{731}

\textsuperscript{724} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{725} Ibid., 245.
\textsuperscript{726} Grudem, \textit{The Gift of Prophecy}, 219.
\textsuperscript{727} Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth}, 287.
\textsuperscript{728} Witherington, \textit{Women in the Earliest Churches}, 96.
\textsuperscript{729} Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth}, 287.
\textsuperscript{730} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Jesus: Miriam’s Child}, 12.
\textsuperscript{731} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her}, 230.
Third, the three contemporary interpreters also look at Paul’s attitudes toward women in discussing the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Acknowledging that Paul sees women as prophesying in the New Testament churches, Grudem gives two examples: Acts 21:9: in which the four unmarried daughters of Philip prophesy in the assembly of Christians; and 1 Cor 11:5, where women are praying and prophesying with a head covering. From that understanding, Grudem notes that the silence command for women in 1 Cor 14:34-35 is not about stopping women from praying or prophesying, but rather prohibiting women from evaluating prophesies given by men.

Regarding Paul’s attitudes toward women in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35, Schüssler Fiorenza sees Paul’s view on women’s role in the church as conflicting. While women, including married women such as “Prisca, Junia,” and “Aphia,” were leaders, apostles and missionaries, she sees Paul as prohibiting women from leadership in specific situations, such as the “speaking and questioning of wives in the public worship assembly.” This is due to his concern for preserving “order and propriety” in the church, “so that an outsider cannot accuse the Christians of religious madness.” However, she sees Paul as not expecting “his regulation to be accepted without protest by the Corinthian community which knows of wives as leading Christian apostles and missionaries,” and thus he asks a rhetorical question in 1 Cor 14:36. Therefore, she concludes that verses 14:37-40 are the concluding statement of the whole context of order, showing how serious the issue is “for Paul and how much he expects resistance to his viewpoint.”

Fourth, the three contemporary interpreters also look at 1 Cor 11:2-16 in setting the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington see the command about women’s silence in 1 Cor 14:34-35 as not conflicting with 1 Cor 11:2-16, where he encouraged women’s praying and prophesying without a gender specification. Grudem sees 1 Cor 14:34-35 in the same context as not only 1 Cor 11 but also 1 Tim 2.

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732 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy, 215. Grudem mentions that Luke wrote about these women when he reports that Paul and his companions came to Caesarea near the end of Paul’s third missionary journey; the fact that Luke reports it strongly suggests that “Paul and those with him were present while these women were prophesying.” Also, he points out that the present participle usage for prophesying, προφητεύουσα (present, active, plural, feminine, participle) suggests that the prophesying was “a regular or continuing occurrence with these daughters.”

733 Ibid., 222.

734 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232.

735 Ibid.
where women are prohibited from teaching in the church. He explains that the silence in 1 Cor 14 does not mean that women were to keep silence always, but that “women could not give spoken criticism of the prophecies which were made during a church service.” He sees the underlying theme of Paul, which is role distinctions between men and women, in all three passages. His explanation of the usage of the Law in 1 Cor 14 sums up his view:

Paul elsewhere appeals to the Old Testament to establish the idea of male headship and female submission to male leadership (see 1 Cor 11:8-9 and 1 Tim 2:13), and it is certainly possible, therefore, to see him as appealing to the Old Testament to support a distinction in authority of judging prophecies as well. But it would be difficult to derive from the Old Testament any prohibition against noisy women in church or against women speaking in tongues.

According to Schüssler Fiorenza, 1 Cor 14:34-35 is in the same context as chapter 11, and 1 Cor 12-14 is about Paul as seeking “to persuade the Corinthians that decency and order should be more highly esteemed than the spiritual status and exercise of individual pneumatic inspiration.” Schüssler Fiorenza’s view of the context of 1 Cor 14 derives from her understanding of what Paul meant in the context of 1 Cor 7, where he is addressing problems related to the relationship between the sexes, and 1 Cor 11:2-16, where he is talking about head-covering. Thus, she sees the continuation of the

736 Ibid., 233.
737 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy, 224.
738 Ibid., 223.
739 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 230. Schüssler Fiorenza reasons that Paul here is persuading the Corinthians to prioritize decency and order. To Paul, the Corinthians seem to value speaking in tongues, which is individual pneumatic inspiration, more than the gift of prophecy and interpretation, which Paul favours in terms of “order and mission (14:4, 5, 19).” Thus, Paul is reminding the Corinthian pneumatics of their main mission, which is not being concerned only with exercising of their spiritual gifts but also “with the building up of the community and with the impression they make on interested outsiders (14:16, 17, 23ff).”
740 Ibid.
741 Ibid., 221. In the context of 1 Cor 7, Schüssler Fiorenza explains that Paul had the baptismal declaration of Gal 3:28, which is equality in Christ, in mind when he was addressing the problems of the relationship between the sexes in chapter 7. She sees Paul as maintaining marriage as a calling and gift of God, and even insisting on equality and mutuality in sexual relationships between husbands and wives as well as promoting celibacy as “the higher calling.”
742 Ibid., 228-30. She sees the traditional interpretation, in which Paul insists that pneumatic women leaders wear the veil according to Jewish custom, is incorrect. She sees that since verse 15 maintains that women do not need a head-covering, Paul is likely speaking about the way “women and men should wear their hair praying and prophesying.” Thus, she points out that the practices of unbound hair and head thrown back were typical of “the cult of Dionysus, in that of Cybele, the Pythia at Delphi, the Sibyl, and unbound hair was necessary for a woman to produce an effective magical incantation,” and this was also found in the “Isis cult, which had a major center in Corinth.” She thinks that the Corinthian pneumatics copied those practices,
missionary intention of Paul in 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36, and points out that these verses cohere with the overall argument in chapter 14. She views 1 Cor 11:2-16 as in “the ring composition” with 14:33b-36, “beginning and ending with a discussion of women’s role” in the worship of the Christian assembly.743

Like Grudem and Schüßler Fiorenza, Witherington sees 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in the context of prophecy, as a continuation of 1 Cor 11:25-33. He points out that this passage must be explained in terms of two contexts, the immediate and the larger context. He sees the discussion of prophecy and judging of the prophecies in chapter 14 as the immediate context and chapters 11-14 as the larger context. He explains that chapters 11-14 are about the “discussion of abuses in Corinthian worship caused by pneumatikoi,” who are prophetesses, and that they seem to have been “imitating some of the practices of women involved in the mysteries” that result in “significant disorder.”744

Looking at the three interpreters’ approaches to the contextual background of 1 Cor 14:34-35, all three looks carefully at the immediate context of the text, as well as the overall context of Paul, to determine the meaning of the text. Their analyses of the context centre on how they deal with the flow of the sentences from 1 Cor 12-14, how they deal with verse 33b in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35, how they reconcile the verses with Paul’s attitudes toward women in general, and how they connect 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 1 Cor 14 in terms of women’s silence.

4.1.2 Silence: The Women and the Church

This section examines how Grudem, Schüßler Fiorenza, Witherington and several other commentators make exegetical decisions on the meaning of the terms γυναῖκες and ἐκκλησίαις in 1 Cor 14:34a. This text gives αἱ γυναῖκες ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν, which is translated by the NRSV as “women should be silent in the churches.”745 Grudem, Schüßler Fiorenza and Witherington all disagree on who αἱ γυναῖκες is referring to in 1 Cor 14:34a. Grudem sees “αἱ γυναῖκες” in this context as referring to all women, including

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743 Schüßler Fiorenza, "Rhetorical Situation," 395.
744 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 92.
745 English translation from NRSV.
unmarried women. Schüssler Fiorenza sees αἱ γυναῖκες as referring to “wives,” and Witherington sees αἱ γυναῖκες as referring to Christian “women prophetesses” who are married. Looking at their decisions about who αἱ γυναῖκες is referring to hinges on their understanding of the textual variant issue concerning the omission of ὑμῶν in verse 34 following αἱ γυναῖκες, and their understanding of τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας in verse 35.

Agreeing with Grudem, other interpreters, such as Wire and Fitzmeyer, also see αἱ γυναῖκες as referring to all women, including daughters, widows, and women slaves, who are all subordinate to the man of the house. These interpreters explain the meaning of “αἱ γυναῖκες” in 1 Cor 14:34 in connection to “αἱ γυναῖκες” in verse 35, where the context is about women asking questions in order to learn. Grudem explains “women” here as including the unmarried women since they would be required to ask “other men within their family circles, or within the fellowship of the church, with whom they could discuss the content of the prophecies.” Grudem argues that if only “married women” are being restricted in this passage, then the proposal is guilty of “making Paul’s command nonsensical. For it would allow very young and immature girls to speak in church while denying that privilege to all married [women], even those who were much older and wiser and thereby much more qualified to speak.”

Although the word γυναῖκες here could refer to “all the women [including the very young],” the definition of BDAG does not allow this interpretation, since it gives the meaning of γυναῖκες as including “young woman,” meaning an adult female person, including virgins, “a wife” meaning a married woman, and a “bride” referencing a newly married woman. Therefore, the “immature girls” that Grudem has suggested would not be counted among the γυναῖκες as that word is defined in BDAG. Furthermore, it is also

746 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy, 222.
748 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287.
749 See Chapter 3.2.2. Inserting the word ὑμῶν, meaning “your,” into αἱ γυναῖκες is supported by 6th to 9th century Greek manuscripts such as D F G Ψ (a b) sy; Cyp (Ambst). Inserting the word ὑμῶν is supported by D F G K L 630. 1505 ℣ ar b sy; Cyp Ambst (cf. Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 547. Also in Kurt Aland, et al., eds., Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament, 27th ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993), 466.
750 Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophetss, 156. See also in Fitzmyer, First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, 531-32.
751 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy, 222.
752 Ibid., 248.
753 BDAG, 208-09.
not at all clear whether “very young and immature girls would have been permitted to speak in the church at all.”

Grudem does not mention the textual variant issue regarding the omission of ὑμῶν in verse 34 following αἱ γυναῖκες, and he gives his translation of the verse without mentioning the word ὑμῶν for “your.” Grudem’s choice of interpreting the word “αἱ γυναῖκες” as “all women” has more to do with aligning his interpretation of silence with τούς ἰδίους ἄνδρας in verse 35. This could be due to his understanding that the translation of the word as “wives” would omit all the other women who can exercise the gifts of prophecy in 1 Cor 11. This is contested by Garland, who sees “αἱ γυναῖκες” here as referring to the wives only, given the relationship of “ὁ ἄνηρ” with “ἡ γυνὴ” in this context, and contends that “Paul is not laying down rules for women in general for women prophets,” but rather, he is laying down rules for the wives. Agreeing with Garland, Johnson also points out that whenever Paul pairs the noun “ἡ γυνὴ” to “ὁ ἄνηρ” elsewhere, as in 1 Cor 7:25 and 11:3, he is making references to the relationships between wives and husbands.

For Schüssler Fiorenza, “αἱ γυναῖκες” must be interpreted in 1 Cor 14:33-36 as wives in order to avoid a contradiction with 1 Cor 11:5, since 1 Cor 11:5 already recognized women as spiritually gifted and permitted to pray and prophesy with tongues within the worship of the community. Thus, she sees 1 Cor 7:32-35 mentioning “wives” as a clear indicator that 1 Cor 14:33-36 is referring to the “wives of Christians” rather than women in general, since “not all women in the community were married or had Christian spouses” and therefore they could not ask “their husbands at home.”

Also, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that Paul is only prohibiting participation of wives in the worship of the community, but not prohibiting the pneumatic participation of the “holy”

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756 Garland, 1 Corinthians, 667.
757 Johnson, 1 Corinthians, 275. Johnson also points out in the same way that whenever “ἡ γυνὴ” is used in the same context with “ὁ ἄνηρ” ‘wife’ is the “correct translation (1 Cor 7:14; Eph 5:22; 1 Tim 3:2; 1 Pet 3:1),” but adds that “on the other hand, there are places such as in this context where ‘woman’ and ‘man’ may be more appropriate (Acts 5:14; 8:12; 22:4; 1 Cor 11:11-12).”
759 Ibid., 231.
women who are unmarried women and virgins because of their special holiness status mentioned in 1 Cor 7. She sees Paul as acknowledging the equality of husband and wife even though Paul makes clear his preference for the unmarried state by arguing that the married person is “concerned with the issues of marriage and family, while the unmarried person is completely dedicated to the affairs of the Lord.” She sees Paul’s concern here as in line with traditional Roman sentiment against wives speaking in public and questioning other women’s husbands.

Schüssler Fiorenza argues that ‘the women’ refers to “wives” especially in verse 14:35b, which says “Let them ask their husbands at home.” She points out that the community rule of 1 Cor 14:34-36 presupposes that, “within the Christian worship assembly, wives had dared to question other women’s husbands or point out some mistakes of their own during congregational interpretational custom and law.” Thus, the restriction imposed by Paul is only for the wives, with a missional concern for the appearance of the Christian community to outsiders.

Like Schüssler Fiorenza, Witherington contends that “αἱ γυναῖκες” in 1 Cor 14:34 is referring to “married women.” At the same time, he acknowledges that it could also refer to “all women,” since the phrase “their own men” in verse 35 could also be referring to “the male head” of a household, although “husbands” is more likely what Paul has in

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760 Ibid. Schüssler Fiorenza notes that “Paul here ascribes a special holiness to the unmarried woman and virgin, apparently because she is not touched by a man (cf. 7:1).” She sees Paul as further qualifying the single-minded dedication of the unmarried woman and virgin in 1 Cor 7:34, with a subordinate clause that “she may be holy in body and spirit.” Paul then gives “his injunction by invoking propriety” to the wives in verse 14:35b, saying “it is shameful to a woman to speak in church.”

761 Ibid.

762 Ibid., 231-32. However, Antoinette Wire, who, like Fiorenza, sees Paul being against women’s involvement in the church, differs with her on whether the women here meant “wives” or “all women,” and points out that Paul is referring here to women in general rather than wives. Wire acknowledges and agrees that “αἱ γυναῖκες” could mean ‘wives’ in other contexts, but points out that this is not so in this context. She explains that in this context the women are “women in general, or at least women of various stations.” She points out that Paul’s reference to women in plural form, as well as his earlier instruction in 11: 5 to “any woman who prays and prophesies,” his repeated statements that all can prophesy in 14:5, 24, 31, and his admonishment to all to be zealous for the higher gift in 12:21; 14:1, 12, 39 are good indicators that Paul is referring to women at large who are prophesying “as the spirit moves them.” She also points out that ὁ ἰδιὸς ἄνηγρος which is read often as “their own husbands,” appears in a separate sentence six clauses later, and that this could be translated as ‘their own men,’ because of the cultural context of the time in which all women in the Hellenistic world were subject to the dominant male of their extended family. Thus, to her the phrase is “appropriate not only for wives, since daughters, widows, and women slaves are just as subordinate to the man of the house.” Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets, 156.

763 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232.

764 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287.
mind in this context. Like Grudem, Witherington does not mention of the textual variant issue on the omission of ὑμῶν in verse 34 following αἱ γυναῖκες. He differs from Grudem and Schüssler Fiorenza on what he thinks Paul is referring to as ‘the women,’ and explains that those women are not only wives, they are prophetesses, who prophesied and were also “entitled to weigh” what was being prophesied.

Witherington points out that it seems to have been assumed that Christian prophets and prophetesses functioned much like the oracle at Delphi, who prophesied only in response to questions, including questions about purely personal matters. These women were asking questions, perhaps inappropriate questions that caused disruption in the worship service. In response to this situation, he sees Paul as explaining to the Corinthians that “Christian prophecy is different: Prophets and prophetesses speak in response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, without any human priming of the pump.”

Given these decisions of these interpreters on who αἱ γυναῖκες is referring to, it is possible to conclude that their decisions hinge mostly on their understanding of τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας in verse 35, rather than any textual variant issue. Since the critical text of NA28 raises no critical notes on textual issues on the usage of ἐκκλησίαις, whether it is plural or singular, all the contemporary interpreters keep the reading of ἐκκλησίαις in the plural, “churches” or “congregations.”

4.1.3 Silence: The Speaking

The exegetical decisions of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington on the meaning of the word σιγάω link to how they understand the word λαλέω in the text. Although all three interpreters see this verse in the context of prophecy, they differ on their understanding of λαλέω in relation to σιγάω. Grudem sees λαλέω as referring to the “judging or evaluation” of an inspired form of speech. Both Schüssler Fiorenza and

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765 Ibid.
766 Ibid.
767 Ibid.
768 Ibid.
769 Ibid.
771 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287.
Witherington see the word λαλέω as conveying the informal sense of speak, talk, or question.\textsuperscript{773}

According to Grudem, Paul is not requiring women to keep silent (σιγάω) from praying or prophesying, but rather to be silent by not asking (λαλέω) evaluative questions about prophesies given by men during a worship service.\textsuperscript{774} Grudem interprets the common term λαλέω (“speak”) here as “judging” or “evaluating,” since he sees the context as suggesting such a meaning, and thus notes that “women shouldn’t speak out and judge these prophecies; they should be subordinate.”\textsuperscript{775} Grudem links the concept of “silence” to “submission” in verse 34b, and notes λαλέω in this context as involving judging prophecies. The evaluation of prophecies is a “governing” or “ruling” function in the congregation, “the opposite of being submissive to male leadership in the church.”\textsuperscript{776}

Grudem’s view derives from his understanding of this passage as saying that women can prophecy but not teach. He sees prophecy as different from teaching and the authority of a prophet as unlike the authority of a teacher. He gives Romans 12:6-7, 1 Cor 12:28-29, and Eph 4:11 as examples to show that prophecy and teaching are separate gifts. In his analysis, prophecy is always “reporting something God spontaneously brings to mind” and the teaching is “explanation and application of Scripture.”\textsuperscript{777} He sees elders as the ones who do the teaching and eldership as reserved only for males. Thus, he notes that in the context of teaching in 1 Timothy 2:11, “doctrinal guardianship” and “eldership” are already reserved for men in 1 Timothy 3:3 and Titus 1:6.\textsuperscript{778} Therefore, he sees Paul as saying that “only men can give spoken correction to prophecies,” since correction is part of the task of “teaching and having authority” over the congregation. He sees this prohibition as fitting with the subordination passage in 1 Cor 14:34, since evaluating “involves assuming the possession of superior authority in matters of doctrinal or ethical instruction.”\textsuperscript{779}

\textsuperscript{773} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her}, 232. Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth}, 287.\textsuperscript{774} Grudem, \textit{The Gift of Prophecy}, 225.\textsuperscript{775} Ibid., 221.\textsuperscript{776} Grudem, \textit{Evangelical Feminism}, 234.\textsuperscript{777} Ibid., 229.\textsuperscript{778} Ibid., 234.\textsuperscript{779} Grudem, \textit{The Gift of Prophecy}, 222. See also in Grudem, \textit{Evangelical Feminism}, 232.
Schüssler Fiorenza sees Paul as using σιγάω to prohibit only the wives of men in the church from λαλέω in the general sense of “speaking to and questioning.” She sees the wives’ behaviours in 1 Cor 14:34-35 as causing offense to all traditional custom and law, because they were either questioning other women’s husbands or pointing out the mistakes of their own husbands during the congregational interpretation of the Scriptures and of prophecy. She sees Paul’s main concern in this prohibition as protecting the image of the Christian community from looking like “religious madness” to outsiders. She notes that Paul does not want the Christian community to be “mistaken for one of the orgiastic secret, oriental cults that undermined public order and decency.” In this light, Paul is not denying women the right to prophesy and pray in the worship assembly, since he already allowed them to do so, with the proviso of having a proper hairstyle, in 1 Cor 11:2-16. She sees Paul as having a specific situation in mind, namely, “the speaking and the questioning of wives in the public worship assembly.” Hence, she sees Paul as suggesting that wives in this context keep silent from speaking and questioning in the public assembly, and “remain subdued” in the assembly of the community.

Although Witherington shares Grudem’s view of λαλέω in the context of evaluating prophecies, he differs from Grudem on who can evaluate the gifts of prophecy and the kind of speech that is being prohibited by Paul. Their views hinge on how they see who the οἱ ἄλλοι (“others”) are in 1 Cor 14:29. Although Grudem sees οἱ ἄλλοι as referring to those who can evaluate in 1 Cor 14:29, as the male prophets, Witherington sees οἱ ἄλλοι as referring to both male and female prophets. Although he does not believe

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780 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 228.
781 Ibid., 230.
782 Ibid., 233.
783 Ibid., 230. She notes that oriental cults were already widespread in the second or third century B.C.E. She mentions that there was a public law that “prevents women from participating in these rites [secret cults and Cybeline orgies], particularly those rites which encourage drunkenness and ecstasy.”
784 Ibid., 228. Schüssler Fiorenza adds that even in Paul’s day loose-hair was the mark of a woman accused of adultery, as in Num 5:18 (LXX), and the sign of the uncleanliness of a leper, as in Lev 13:45 (LXX). Thus, she sees Paul as arguing that “women should not worship as cultically unclean persons by letting their hair down but should pin it up as a sign of their spiritual power and of control over their heads” since “the angels are present in the pneumatic worship service of a community that speaks the ‘tongues of angels.’”
785 Ibid., 233.
786 Ibid., 232.
787 προφῆται δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλεῖτωσαν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν· NRSV translates this as “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.”
788 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians, 238.
789 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 95.
that the οἱ ἄλλοι here means “the whole congregation,” he accepts that this view cannot be ruled out.  

Affirming Grudem’s view that sees the prophets mentioned in 1 Cor 12:29 as not like those in the Old Testament, Witherington adds that a prophet in the Corinthians context was “an individual who perceived him or herself as a prophet,” rather than someone holding “an appointed office of prophet.” Thus, he sees the need for “an evaluation, an investigation, a testing” of such individuals’ prophecies in order “to check the abuse of the gift of prophecy,” since these prophecies would include “a mixture of God’s words and human words.” According to Witherington, Christian prophecy is different from the oracles of the Pythia at Delphi who spoke out in a state of “trance or possession by the god” that led to “utterances including moans, cries and phrases to be interpreted by a prophet.” He sees Paul as already defining Christian prophecy as “an intelligible communication” that even non-believers can hear and be convicted by, as in 1 Cor 14:19 and 1 Cor 14:24-25. From his understanding of Christian prophecy as different from the oracles in Corinth, and λαλέω as referring to the general sense of asking questions, Witherington argues that Paul is using σιγάω to silence wives from asking disruptive questions during the prophetic worship service.

Witherington reasons that the word λαλέω in this context could not be referring to feminine chatter or “disruptive chatters” including gossiping during the service. He believes this view is “doubtful” because the word λαλέω does not “normally have this meaning when

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790 Ibid.
791 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians, 238.
792 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 94.
793 Ibid., 95. Witherington sees the gift of prophecy as different from that of the weighting of the prophecy, but sees both as being exercised by prophets. To him, the feature of prophecy is different from teaching and preaching, though there may be some overlap in the function of these gifts, because they all are “gifts of the word” and “gifts of the spirit.”
794 Ibid., 93.
795 Ibid., 92-93. In response to Grudem’s view that posits the gift of teaching as higher than the gift of prophecy, Witherington points out that it is not by accident that Paul lists the gift of prophecy ahead of glossolalia in Rom 12:6 and 1 Cor 12:10, and in 1 Cor 12:29 (cf. Rom 12:1-7) prophets rank immediately after apostles but before teachers. Then he adds that if one looks at all such lists in the Pauline corpus, “the only constant member is prophecy and prophet (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28ff., 13:1-3, 8ff., 14:1-5, 6ff., 26-32; Eph 4:11; 1 Thess 5:11-12).” Cited in James D.G. Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1975), 227.
796 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 102.
797 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287. Keener sees Paul as silencing the women from “disruptive chatters” in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35. See Keener, Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women in the Letters of Paul, 81.
Paul uses it,” and points out the usage of λαλέω in chapter 11 as praying and prophesying in the church. Witherington agrees that those women asking questions might “not yet [be] educated enough in the school of Christ to know what was and was not appropriate in Christian worship.” The main point here is that whatever the women asked may have been considered “disrespectful” or asked in “a disrespectful manner,” and thus the result was chaos, such that Paul has to rule that “questions should not be asked in worship. The wives should ask their husbands at home. Worship was not to be turned into a question-and-answer session.” Therefore, Witherington sees the word λαλέω in this context as a reference to uninspired speech in the form of questions, where women were asking questions that were disrupting the worship service.

From this understanding, Witherington concludes that evaluating prophecies is not a gender-specific gift, since there is nothing in 1 Cor 12-14 that suggests that prophecy (or preaching or teaching) are gender-specific gifts. Like Grudem and Schüssler Fiorenza, Witherington also sees silence in this context not as total silence, which would prevent a person from ever speaking in the church or being involved in a worship service. He explains the silence here as like that in 1 Cor 14:28 and 30, where a prophet or a tongue speaker is to be silent while the other is speaking in the context of prophecy. He sees verse 35 as indicating the reason for women asking questions, which is based on their desire to learn. He therefore sees verse 35 as indicating that Paul is affirming the right of women to learn, but also suggesting that women learn from their husbands at home.

799 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287.
800 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 103.
801 Ibid., 102.
802 Ibid., 96. Thiselton agrees and summarizes the view of Witherington clearly, as follows: “With Witherington, we believe that the speaking in question denotes the activity of sifting or weighting the words of prophets, especially by asking probing questions about the prophet’s theology or even the prophet’s lifestyle in public. This would become especially sensitive and problematic if wives were cross-examining their husbands about the speech and conduct which supported or undermined the authenticity of a claim to utter a prophetic message, and would readily introduce Paul’s allusion to reserving questions of a certain kind of home. The women would in this case (i) be acting as judges over their husbands in public; (ii) risk turning worship into an extended discussion session with perhaps private interests; (iii) militate against the ethics of controlled and restrained speech in the context of which the congregation should be silently listening to God rather than eager to address one another, and (iv) disrupt the sense of respect for the orderliness of God’s agency in creation and in the world as against the confusion which pre-existed the creative activity of God’s Spirit.” See in Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1158.
803 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 103.
804 Ibid.
Considering these views of the three interpreters, both Grudem and Witherington render the word σιγάω as “keep silent” and Schüssler Fiorenza as “remain silent” in their interpretations of the text. Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington see the word λαλέω as conveying the informal sense of speak, talk, or question. Grudem sees it as referring to an inspired form of speech which is “judging or evaluation,” which is similar to Adoniram Judson, who interprets it as “preaching.” Their interpretation of the word σιγάω is connected to their understanding of the word λαλέω in the overall context of 1 Cor 14. Furthermore, their interpretation of the words σιγάω and λαλέω correlate with how they understand the word ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, which comes from the root word ὑποτάσσω (“submission”). This leads to the next section, which focuses on how these contemporary interpreters make exegetical decisions on the term ὑποτασσέσθωσαν.

4.1.4 Silence: The Submission

The exegetical decisions of the three contemporary interpretations of the word ὑποτασσέσθωσαν differ based on their understanding of to whom the women should submit and the context in which the women are to submit. Grudem sees ὑποτασσέσθωσαν as referring to the submission of all women to “male leadership in the church.” Schüssler Fiorenza interprets this word as referring to the submission of all women to “male leadership in the church.”

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806 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232.
807 As cited in Chapter 3.2.2.3. Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, 1, 396. See also “λαλεῖν,” in BDAG, 582. Barrett sees the speaking here as referring to the sense of inspired speech. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 332.
808 Interpreters like C. K. Barrett understand λαλέω as referring to a form of inspired speech, “speaking in tongues.” Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 332. Matthew Henry’s commentary notes that women “are not permitted to speak (v. 34) in the church, neither in praying nor prophesying. The connection seems plainly to include the latter, in the limited sense in which it is taken in this chapter, namely, for preaching, or interpreting scripture by inspiration. And, indeed, for a woman to prophesy in this sense was to teach, which does not so well befit her state of teacher of others, [means that she] has in that respect a superiority over them, which is not allowed the woman over the man, nor must she therefore be allowed to teach in a congregation: I suffer them not to teach. But praying, and uttering hymns inspired, were not teaching.” Henry, Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume, 2271.
809 See Chapter 3.2.2.3.
810 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 247. Grudem here objects that Paul’s main concern is order in the church, noting that “Paul himself says that his concern is the principle of submission.” The problem with this view is that although Paul mentions submission here, he does not say that this is his main concern.
to their husbands. Witherington sees this word as referring to the submission of wives to the principle of order in the worship service.

Both Grudem and Witherington see the usage of the word ἀλλὰ ("but") in verse 34 as an important factor in understanding the kind of speaking Paul has in mind. Both see ἀλλὰ as giving a strong contrast to λαλέω ("speaking") and ὑποτάσσω ("subordination"), and thus providing the rationale for women to be silent. However, they see the silence required of women as backed up by different principles and scriptures. Grudem sees the main concern of Paul regarding silence as backed by the “principle of submission” that covers family as well as church relations, whereas Witherington sees Paul’s main concern here as the “principle of order” in the worship service, not disorder in family relations.

In identifying the kind of speaking that Paul intended to stop, Grudem argues that the clause beginning with ἀλλὰ indicates Paul as thinking of an insubordinate form of speech. He notes that the Corinthian women’s activity of “speaking aloud to judge prophecies” is problematic, since “it would involve assuming the possession of superior authority in matters of doctrinal or ethical instruction, especially when it included criticism of the prophecy.” In this sense, women’s evaluation of prophecies is the opposite of “being submissive to male leadership in the church.” Grudem backs his view of male authority over women by reference to Genesis 2, in which he sees Adam being the firstborn as giving him “headship in the family,” further validated by his being given authority by God to name Eve, and being given Eve as a suitable helper. He sees this

811 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232. She reasons from the “Greco-Roman exhortations for the subordination of wives as part of the law.”
812 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 100.
814 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 247.
815 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 102.
816 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy, 222.
817 Ibid.
818 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 230.
819 Although Grudem connects his view of male leadership with Genesis 2, he does not give a specific verse. However, Carson, who shares the same view as Grudem and expresses this view in a book that Grudem edited, makes reference to Genesis 2:20b-24. Grudem and Carson both admit that the passage in Genesis 2 does not mention “silence,” but insist that Genesis 2 does suggest that because “man was made first and woman was made for man, some kind of pattern has been laid down regarding the roles the two play.” See D. A. Carson, "Silent in the Churches: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36," in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1993): 152.
concept of male headship as the rationale behind the governing and teaching authority of the elders in the early churches. Grudem views Paul as establishing the idea of male headship and female submission to male leadership in 1 Cor 11:8-9 and 1 Tim 2:13 as well.

Witherington sees that the word ὑποτασσέσθωσαν is used to describe several relationships, including relationship between husband and wife, child and parents, slaves and masters, all persons to secular authority, Christians to church officials, all in relation to God, and believers in relation to Christ. However, he points out that interpreting ὑποτασσέσθωσαν as subordination of wives requires clarification as to why Paul tells women to keep silent in the worship service. Like Grudem, Witherington sees 1 Cor 14:34-35 as not mentioning to whom the women should show subordination. He sees the silence Paul enjoins here as indicating the fact that women were “speaking in some sense in the church” and that they are “to be silent because (causal γὰρ) it is not permitted them to speak.” He reasons that since Paul’s command to silence and submission is “caused by disorder in the worship service, not disorder in family relations,” ὑποτασσέσθωσαν here refers to subordination of wives to the principle of order in the worship service. In other words, “women are not being commanded to submit to their husbands, but to the principle of order in the worship service, the principle of silence and respect shown when another is speaking.”

Schüssler Fiorenza sees the word ὑποτασσέσθωσαν here as referring to submission of wives to their husbands rather than to the community leadership. Acknowledging the 1

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821 Grudem mentions the following passages, all from the NRSV:- Heb 13:17: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account.” 1 Pet 5:5: “In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders.” 1 Tim 5:17: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”
822 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 230.
823 1 Cor 11:8-9 (NRSV) says, “Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.”
824 1 Tim 2:13 (NRSV) says, “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”
827 Ibid.
828 Ibid., 100.
829 Ibid., 101.
830 Ibid., 102.
831 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 231.
Cor 14:34-36 text as not clearly explaining to whom the wives should be subordinate, she explains the problem here as the behaviours of wives who question “other women’s husbands or point out some mistakes of their own during the congregational interpreting of the Scriptures and of prophecy,” behaviour which was considered going “against all traditional custom and law.” In particular, she sees the wives here as violating the “Jewish-Hellenistic missionary tradition” that derived from the “Greco-Roman exhortations for the subordination of wives as part of the law.” The detail of the law is explained in the following section on the three interpreters’ understanding of the word ὦ νόμος.

To summarise, Schüssler Fiorenza sees the term ὑποτάσσομαι here as submission of wives to their husbands, Grudem understands it as referring to submission of wives to the principle of male headship, and Witherington understands it as the submission of wives to the principle of order in the worship service. Since none of them mention a textual issue concerning reading ὑποτάσσομαι with τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, their exegetical decisions on the meaning of ὑποτάσσομαι are linked to their understandings of the context rather than to a textual variant reading. This alternative reading of ὑποτάσσομαι with τοῖς ἀνδράσιν is mentioned in one manuscript, codex A. The preferred reading given by NA28 is ὑποτάσσομαι without τοῖς ἀνδράσιν (“to the husbands”) rather than ὑποτάσσομαι τοῖς ἀνδράσιν (“submit to the husbands”).

Furthermore, these interpreters do not mention another textual issue, namely, whether the usage of ὑποτάσσω is in the infinitive verb form ὑποτάσσεσθαι or the imperative verb ὑποτασσέσθωσαν. However, their explanations of this word indicate that they see ὑποτάσσω here as taking the imperative verb form. This is seen in Grudem’s quote from the RSV translation of “should be subordinate,” which shows the imperative form, and Witherington’s usage of the word ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, which is in the imperative form.

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832 Ibid., 232.
833 Ibid., 231.
834 See Chapter 4.1.5.
835 A is referring to Codex Alexandrinus. See Nestle and Nestle, NA28, 1 Cor 14:34-35.
836 Ibid.
837 See Chapter 3.2.2.4.
838 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians, 222.
839 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 100.
Looking at the exegetical decisions of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Witherington on ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, their decisions not only hinge on how they see the word σιγάω in connection to the word λαλέω. They also see the word σιγάτωσαν (v. 34) being connected to the word ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, in contrast with λαλεῖν in the same verse. These influences how they understand the word ὁ νόμος in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35. With this in mind, the following section looks at how these interpreters make decisions regarding the word ὁ νόμος.

4.1.5 Silence: The Law

The exegetical decisions of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington on the word ὁ νόμος revolve around how they see Paul using this word in the overall context of the New Testament. The fact that Paul did not specify which law he is referring to when he used ὁ νόμος in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35 contributes to differing interpretations among these interpreters. In this context of 1 Cor 14:34-35, Grudem sees ὁ νόμος as referring to the Old Testament in general in terms of its views on men and women. Schüssler Fiorenza sees ὁ νόμος as referring to “Greco-Roman exhortations for the subordination of wives;” and Witherington sees ὁ νόμος as referring to Old Testament understandings of silence in terms of respect of a student for a teacher. The fact that Paul does not specify the object of women’s submission in the text raises questions as to whether ὁ νόμος is talking about ὑποτάσσω ("submission") or αἰσχρὸν ("shame"). All three contemporary interpreters link ὁ νόμος to ὑποτάσσω in the context of prophecy, as follows.

Grudem sees ὁ νόμος in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35 as referring to the teaching of the Old Testament regarding submission to male leadership. Acknowledging that Paul does not quote any specific Old Testament passage, he cites Rom 3:19 and 1 Cor 9:8 as other instances when Paul mentioned “as the law says” with reference to Old Testament passages. From that understanding, he sees ὁ νόμος in this context as referring to an Old Testament passage, but not to “Roman law or to Jewish oral traditions;” for “Paul does

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840 Ibid.
841 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 246.
842 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 231.
843 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 100.
844 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 246.
not elsewhere use nomos in those ways." Thus, he sees ὁ νόμος in this context as referring to Gen 2, “where Adam is the ‘firstborn’ (with the concomitant headship in the family which that status implied), where he also has the authority from God to name Eve, and where Eve is made as helper suitable for Adam.” He sees Paul as alluding to the subordination of the wife already in the Genesis creation narrative in 1 Cor 11:3, 8-10. The fact that submission is already in the allusion to the creation narrative in 1 Cor 11 provides a reason for Paul not to repeat more about the theme of subordination in the context of 1 Cor 14.

As mentioned earlier, Schüssler Fiorenza sees ὁ νόμος in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35 as referring to the Roman law against wives speaking in public and gathering for public demonstrations. This view is rejected by Grudem, who points out that “Paul does not elsewhere use nomos in those ways.” However, Schüssler Fiorenza sees Paul as deriving his theological argument from the “Jewish-Hellenistic missionary tradition,” which adopted the “Greco-Roman exhortations for the subordination of wives as part of the law.” She reasons that this Roman sentiment on women was expressed in the third century by the consul Cato against the Roman women who sought the abolition of the Oppian law, which says:

845 Ibid. Also in Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians, 223. Grudem notes that out of 119 usages of ὁ νόμος, Paul never uses the law in reference to either the Roman law or the Rabbinic law. Although this is true, the fact that Paul writes this in the context of missionary church suggests that Paul may be referencing the law that was familiar in the Corinthian context. I will show this in my interpretation of the text in Chapter 7.2.5.

846 Barrett, Robertson and Plummer see “ὁ νόμος” as referring to Gen 3:16: “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” See Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 330. Also in Robertson and Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, 325. They see the background of Paul’s speech as submission of women to their husbands in the way of silence. Garland says the problem with the view that sees Gen 3:16 as a background of Paul’s thought is that the passage is “predictive, not prescriptive,” because the condition required in that passage is the domination resulting from the curse of the fall. See Garland, 1 Corinthians, 672. Also, F. F. Bruce comments that this passage is less likely referring to Gen 3:16, when he says, “This is unlikely, since MT and LXX Gen 3:16 speaks of a woman’s instinctive inclination ... towards her husband, of which he takes advantage to dominate her. The reference is more probably to the creation narratives...,” and he points out that the Pentateuch or Gen 1:26-28 and 2:21-24 might be what Paul is alluding to in this sentence. See F. F. Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Reprint ed., The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 135-36.


848 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 231.

849 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 246.

850 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 231.

851 This speech was composed by Livy in the first century, and the consul Cato used it in the end of the third century BCE.
If each man of us fellow citizens had established that the right and authority of the husband should be held over the mother of his own family, we should have less difficulty with women in general; now at home is conquered by female fury, here in the Forum it is bruised and trampled upon... What kind of behavior is this? Running around in public, blocking streets, and speaking to other women’s husbands! Could you not have asked your husband the same thing at home? ...Give the reins to their unbridled nature and this unmastered creature, and hope that they will put limits on their own freedom? Unless you do something yourselves, this is the least among the things imposed upon them either by custom or by law which they endure with hurt feelings. They want freedom, nay license (if we are to speak the truth) in all things... As soon as they begin to be your equals, they will have become your superiors.852

Schüssler Fiorenza’s decision on the meaning of ὁ νόμος in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35 is not only influenced by the interpreter’s understanding the text in the context of prophesy but also by the interpreter’s understanding of Corinth in the context of mission, where new believers are learning to live together in the community of faith. From this context of mission, she sees ὁ νόμος here as referring to community law, which derives from Roman law. Thus, she sees Paul as encouraging the Christian wives of Corinth to keep quiet in the assembly of the community so as to “prevent the Christian community from being mistaken for one of the orgiastic, secret, oriental cults that undermined public order and decency.”853

Witherington’s exegetical choice regarding ὁ νόμος hinges on his understanding of σιγάω in connection to ὑποτασσέσθωσαν. Witherington sees ὁ νόμος here as probably referring to the “respectful silence when a word of counsel is spoken” in Job 29:21.854 He reasons that this concept of respectful silence mentioned in the Old Testament should be a familiar subject among the Corinthians.855 He points out that silence is associated with submission in the Old Testament only in the context of respect for “God,”856 for “one in position of authority,”857 for “wise men noted for their knowledge and counsel,”858 and silence imposed by God on “someone who speaks insolently to a righteous person.”859

853 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232.
854 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 103.
855 Ibid.
857 Judges 3:19.
858 Job 29:21.
Amongst these, Witherington sees the concept of respectful silence of a student for a teacher when a word of counsel is spoken as fitting perfect in the context of the church in Corinth, which is troubled with disorderliness in the worship service. 860

Looking at the exegetical decisions of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Witherington on ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, σιγάω, λαλέω, and ὁ νόμος in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35, it is significant that their decisions on these words correlate with each other. As mentioned, the exegetical choices of the three interpreters on the usage of σιγάω in the context of 1 Cor 14:34-35 correlate with how they understand λαλέω, ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, and ὁ νόμος in the same context. Furthermore, their understanding of these words influences how they interpret Paul’s expectation in verses 35-36.

4.1.6 Silence: Paul’s Expectations

As mentioned, the exegetical decisions of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington on 1 Cor 14:34 revolve around how they see these verses fitting into the overall context of 1 Corinthians. This dynamic happens in their interpretation of verses 35 and 36 as well. All three interpreters see the sentence in verse 35, εἰ δὲ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, as providing an additional rationale for Paul’s usage of σιγάω in verse 34. 861

According to Grudem, Paul in this context of verse 35 is anticipating evasion by some women in Corinth concerning his teaching of silence in verse 34. Grudem sees Paul as expecting some women would say, “Okay, we won’t stand up and pass judgment on any prophecies. But we just want to ask a few questions. What’s wrong with that?” Anticipating such evasion, Grudem sees Paul as telling the women to ask their husbands at home in verse 35. 862 He quotes from the RSV translation of verse 35, “If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home,” 863 which omits the word ἰδίους (“one’s own”) in translation. This might be due to his view of ἀνδρας as referring not only to “husbands” but also to “other men within their family circles, or

860 Ibid.
862 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 234.
863 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians, 222.
within the fellowship of the church” to ask about the prophecies. Although Grudem raises the possibility of Paul’s expectation of Corinthian women’s evasion, he does not discuss the context of shame in asking questions as a subordinate, whether this is shame for a husband when his wife questions him publicly or any other form of shame that might relate to a woman.

Like Grudem, Witherington sees Paul as providing an additional reason in verse 35 for Paul’s usage of σιγάω in verse 34. He sees Paul as appealing to “shame” as a “secondary argument” to help correct the problem of disorderliness, as in 1 Cor 11:4-5. The fact that Paul commands the wives to ask these questions at home in verse 35, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἱδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν (“let them ask their husbands at home”), supports the view that Paul’s primary concern here is “the manner in which the wives ask, not just the fact of their asking.” He stresses that Paul sees a disruptive manner as shameful, and thus commands silence in “correcting an abuse of a privilege, not taking back a woman’s right to speak in the assembly,” which he had already granted in 1 Cor 11.

In short, Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Witherington all see verse 36 as Paul’s refutation of the expected argument of the Corinthians against Paul’s command in verses 34-35. Grudem explains the usage of particle ἢ here as a disjunctive referring to a “rebuttal” to the Corinthians’ view. He agrees with Carson in saying, “In every instance in the New Testament where the disjunctive particle in question is used in a construction analogous to the passage at hand, its effect is to reinforce the truth of the clause or verse that precedes it.” Grudem is pointing out that Paul is insisting here that the Corinthians’
church return to the “common practice and perspective of the churches (1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33) and to wholehearted submission to apostolic authority (14:37-38).”

Schüssler Fiorenza also argues that Paul realizes that this instruction for women to be silent “goes against the accepted practice of the missionary churches in the Hellenistic urban centers,” since many women missionaries were “preaching” and were founders of house churches. These women included married women such as “Prisca,” “Junia,” and “Apphia.” According to Schüssler Fiorenza, Paul’s injunction for women to be silent in the church and to ask their husbands questions at home would sound “preposterous” to the Corinthians’ ears, since these women were already considered prominent leaders in the church. For that reason, she sees Paul as expecting counter-arguments from the Corinthian community on his instruction on women’s silence. This is the reason she sees Paul claiming in verse 37 that his regulation has “the authority of the Lord.” This is also why she sees Paul reaffirming in verse 40 that his command to be silent is not from “theology,” but from “concern for decency and order” in the “behavior of pneumatic women and men in the worship service of the community.”

Witherington sees verse 36 as Paul’s reaction to all the abuses he had been dealing with in 1 Cor 11-14. After ruling out the view that advocates verse 36 as a Pauline forceful rhetorical response to the Corinthians’ views on verses 34-35, Witherington points out that it is contextually more probable to see 1 Cor 14:36-40 as the conclusion to the whole section of chapters 11 to 14. He sees Paul as revealing his “frustrations with the whole mess he had been dealing with” since 1 Cor 11:2, and thus concludes that Paul is “anticipating the response he expected to get (v.36) when the Corinthians read his argument (vv.34-35).”

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871 Ibid. Also in Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 241.
872 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232.
873 Ibid.
874 Ibid.
875 Ibid.
877 Odell-Scott see 1 Cor 14:34-35 as the “Corinthian’s view” and verse 36 as Pauline rhetorical questions over the Corinthians view. See in D. W. Odell-Scott, “Let the Women Speak in Church, an Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor 13:33b-36,” BTB 13, no. 3 (1983): 90-93. Witherington notes this view of Odell-Scott on the rhetorical question as making sense “if the Corinthians were appealing to their own inspired utterances alone, but not if they were appealing to: (a) conventional church practice; (b) the law; and (c) what was shameful.” In Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 98.
The three contemporary interpreters give their conclusions on the meaning of 1 Cor 14:34-35 as follows. Grudem sees the command of σιγάω here as meaning that “the women should keep silence during the evaluation of prophecies.” He sees Paul as arguing from a “larger conviction about an abiding distinction between the roles appropriate to males and those appropriate to females in the Christian church.” Therefore, he concludes that this passage commanding women to be silent fits well “with a consistent Pauline advocacy of women’s participation without governing authority in the assembled church.”

Schüssler Fiorenza sees the command of σιγάω as meaning that the Christian “wives” of Corinth should “keep quiet and remain subdued in the assembly of the community,” so that “an outsider cannot accuse the Christians of religious madness.” She sees Paul’s intention as not to exclude women from active participation of ministry, but to place “a limit and qualification on the pneumatic participation of women in the worship service of the community.” She concludes that this restriction has a “double-edged” impact on women’s leadership in the church, which further develops into the gradual exclusion of “all women from ecclesial office and to the gradual patriarchalization of the whole church.”

Witherington sees the command of σιγάω as “silencing” the Corinthian women from “their particular abuse of speech and redirecting their questions to another time and place,” because Paul wishes the “women to learn the answers to their questions.” Witherington notes that women alone are mentioned in this context since they were “the cause of the problem,” such that they are the “ones needing correction.” The problem of the texts that command women to be silent is not “a creation order or family order problem,” but it is “rather a church order problem caused by some women in the congregation.” He therefore concludes that this interpretation in “no way contradicts 1

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880 Ibid.
881 Ibid.
882 Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 232.
883 Ibid., 233.
884 Ibid.
885 Ibid., 236.
887 Ibid.
Cor 11.5, nor any other passage which suggests that women can teach, preach, pray, or prophesy in or outside the churches.”

Concluding their interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34-35, Grudem and Witherington give what they believe is a relevant application of this text for the contemporary setting. Since Schüssler Fiorenza sees the meaning of the text as not relevant for today, she does not offer any application. Due to his understanding of the authority of the Bible, Grudem finds the texts that command women to be silent as normative for today’s churches. From the same understanding of the authority of the Bible, Witherington also finds the texts that command women to be silent as normative for today’s churches, but only in similar situations in worship services that is, situations of disorder.

Given these interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34-35 by Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Witherington, it is reasonable to conclude that their exegetical decisions depend mainly on how they understand οἰγάω in connection with words like γυναῖκες, ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, λαλέω, and ὁ νόμος in the context. Their understanding of these words further influences how they interpret Paul’s expectations of reactions from the Corinthians, and how they arrive at the meaning of this passage. The question is how these interpreters end up with different meanings of the text even though all three were looking at the text using traditional hermeneutical tools that include exegetical and historical studies. The fact that these three contemporary interpreters arrive at quite different conclusions regarding the meaning of the text indicates an issue of interpretation beyond methodology. This suggests the influences of their commitments as complementarian traditionalist, feminist, and egalitarian interpreters.

In the past, the historical-critical approach was predominantly focused on understanding the world of the biblical text. This approach pays attention to the study of the linguistic and historical context so that, “through rationally defensible modes of analysis, the reader as investigator seeks to reconstruct the meanings of the text objectively within the time of its origins.” One example from the history of biblical interpretation is Ferdinand Christian Baur, who said in 1853 that his “standpoint in one word is historical. This alone

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888 Ibid.
889 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 245.
890 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 274.
is the basis on which to set forth a given fact in so far as it is overall possible to be understood in its pure objectivity.” This method suggests a starting point in which there is an assumption of “separation and distance between subject (reader) and object (text) by virtue of the recognition that the text originated in an ancient world and was written to speak to that world.” Thus, the reader approaches and examines the text from outside the text as a “neutral observer” who is “unencumbered by contemporary questions, values and interests,” in order to achieve the objectivity in interpretation that uncovers the original intention of the author.

However, later in the twentieth century, biblical interpreters began to acknowledge difficulties in the view that interpretation was objective. Yarchin notes that “just as the biblical text was created within a historical and cultural situation that affects the way it was written,” the readers of the Bible “themselves as readers are situated within a cultural situation that cannot but affect the way they read.” Thus, some practitioners of objective interpretation and objective hermeneutics came to accept “the myth of interpretive objectivity” by acknowledging that the interpreter’s view also shaped the “story,” “the text,” influencing “the assumption behind the text,” and influencing “exegetical questions.”

This leads us to question the influences behind the exegetical decisions of the three contemporary interpreters. Crocker asserts that knowing the background of the interpreter is important because it helps determine “how historical-critical methods are applied to various passages, and will direct one’s view about what should be considered as central evidence and what can be discarded as unimportant.” Therefore, the

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893 Yarchin, History of Biblical Interpretation, xxiv.
894 Ibid., xxvii.
896 Yarchin, History of Biblical Interpretation, xxvii.
898 Ibid., 409.
899 Ibid., 412.
900 Crocker, Reading First Corinthians in the Twenty-First Century, 35.
following section explores the hermeneutical keys of the three contemporary interpreters that guided their interpretations of the passage that commands women to be silent. This includes looking at the presuppositions, commitments, and ideologies of the interpreters to identify their influential role in the hermeneutical process.

4.2 HERMENEUTICAL KEYS OF CONTEMPORARY HERMENEUTICS

Examining the hermeneutics of the three contemporary interpreters, three keys are identified: methodologies, presuppositions, and interpretational approaches. The first part of this section investigates the methodologies of the interpreters. The second section then looks at the hermeneutical presuppositions of the interpreters which influence their approach to interpreting 1 Cor 14:34-35. This focuses on the interpreter’s view of the locus of authority in interpretation, which includes attitudes toward the Bible and the role of interpreter. This section also looks at the sociological perspectives and theoretical framework behind the hermeneutical presuppositions. The final section identifies the hermeneutical approaches of the interpreters, which include their starting point and other factors that influence the interpretive choices of the three interpreters.

4.2.1 Hermeneutical Methodology

There are significant differences over methods of interpretation in contemporary hermeneutics. I have identified three principles undergirding the methodologies of our three contemporary interpreters: the principle of analogy, the principle of determining meaning, and the principle of application, all of which guide their hermeneutical methods. We first examine how these three interpreters identify their method.

Grudem believes that much of the controversy over men’s and women’s roles in marriage and the church has to do with how one interprets the Bible. His complementarian hermeneutical method arises out of his use of literal-traditional hermeneutics. This hermeneutical method hinges first on the principle of the analogy of faith, which describes a belief that “since God is the author of Holy Scripture, what is taught in one Scripture cannot contradict what is taught in another Scripture on the same subject,” and thus “an obscure text or passage may be illumined by other texts of Scripture whose meaning is

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901 Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 329.
clear." This principle takes the authority of Scripture seriously and is committed to the grammatical and historical method of exegesis.

According to Grudem, the interpreter’s acceptance of the authority of Scripture is the most important part of interpretation since all other doctrines depend on it. He argues that since “all the words in the Bible are God’s words” and “Scripture cannot contradict Scripture,” to disbelieve or disobey them is “to disbelieve or disobey God himself.”

His involvement in translating the English Standard Version of the Bible, which is a literal translation, or “words to words,” gives an example of this approach to interpretation. This literal translation of Grudem is different from a dynamic equivalent translation that translates thoughts for thoughts. Thus, from his view of the authority of Scripture, Grudem sees the locus of authority in interpretation as resting on the Scripture texts themselves.

Schüssler Fiorenza describes her method as a “hermeneutic of suspicion,” “a feminist critical theology of liberation,” or “a critical feminist rhetorical interpretation of liberation.” Describing the method of interpreters like Grudem as a hermeneutic of “respect, acceptance, consent, and obedience” or a “hermeneutics of affirmation,” she notes that her method is significantly different. Identifying biblical interpretation as a political act, she argues that “a feminist reconstitution of the world requires a feminist

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902 Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 58. Grudem’s usage of this principle of analogy of faith is based on the premise that Scripture’s meanings are clear. Grudem’s view on the clarity of Scriptures is explained later, on Chapter 4.2.2.


904 Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 362. From this understanding of the internal agreement of Scripture, Grudem considers that 1 Tim 2:12 is not isolated from the rest of Scripture that speaks about church office and about conduct in public worship.


906 Grudem, "Are Only Some Words of Scripture Breathed Out by God?," 29. He argues that the translator should ask not only “Have I rendered the main idea of this sentence correctly?” but, “Have I represented correctly the meaning that each word contributes to this sentence?”


908 Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, xvi.

909 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 47. Schüssler Fiorenza describes this as a method that examines “not only the rhetorical aims of biblical texts but also the rhetorical interests emerging in the history of interpretation or in contemporary scholarship.”


hermeneutics that shares in critical methods and impulses of historical scholarship on the one hand and in the theological goals of liberations theologies on the other hand.”\textsuperscript{912} She uses the term “critical” to show that the first part of her methodology is a critical theology that uncovers Christian traditions and theologies that preserved alienation, domination and oppression, which are multiple structures of oppression that control “wo/men’s lives.”\textsuperscript{913} Her method thus analyses patriarchal elements both in the context of the texts themselves and the context of the interpreter.\textsuperscript{914}

Witherington calls his methodology “socio-rhetorical criticism”\textsuperscript{915} or “historical rhetorical criticism.”\textsuperscript{916} This method focuses on sociological insights that look at the “behavior and social forms of the society”\textsuperscript{917} surrounding the texts in their historical context, and on exegetical insights derived from the “ideas and images, the communication and form, of the texts.”\textsuperscript{918} Like Grudem, his hermeneutical principles are rooted in the authority of Scripture and commitment to the grammatical and historical method of exegesis. He notes that the interpreter “ought to begin with a posture of trust,” in contrast to Schüssler

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{913} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Jesus: Miriam’s Child}, 12. Schüssler Fiorenza sees this approach as investigating contradictions and silences inscribed in the text to reconstruct the world of the biblical text by using “persuasive power and literary strategies of a text which has a communicative function in a concrete situation” and invite a “response.” See Schüssler Fiorenza, “Rhetorical Situation,” 387.
\bibitem{914} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her}, 108-09. Schüssler Fiorenza notes that this method is based on four presuppositions: “(1) Texts and historical sources must be read as androcentric texts. (2) The glorification, denigration and marginalization of women must be read as patriarchal social construction or projection. (3) Formal patriarchal laws are generally more restrictive than the actual interaction of men and women. (4) Women’s actual social-religious status must be determined by their economic autonomy and social roles rather than any ideological or prescriptive statements.”
\bibitem{915} Ben Witherington, \textit{What’s in the Word: Rethinking the Socio-Rhetorical Character of the New Testament} (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 1. Also in Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth}, xii-xiii. Witherington’s approach includes the study of historical Greco-Roman rhetoric, which is “the art of persuasion, and particular literary devices and forms [that] were used in antiquity to persuade a hearer or reader to some position regarding the issue that the speaker or writer was addressing.” He sees this combination of sociology and rhetorical study as “historical discipline,” since he seeks to develop a “historical understanding of what the ‘authors’ of the NT were doing using the art of persuasion and what their social worlds were like.” See also in Witherington, \textit{What’s in the Word}, 2.
\bibitem{916} Witherington, \textit{What’s in the Word}, 1. In applying this method to the study of Paul’s letter, Witherington notes, “The rhetorical dimension of Paul’s letters has revealed how certain forms of argument or exhortation function in his letters, and thus how those forms ought to be interpreted.” See also Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth}, xii.
\bibitem{917} Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth}, xi.
\bibitem{918} Ibid. Witherington sees studying theological intentions of the NT writers alone as “traditional concerns” of the historical context. He sees socio-rhetorical criticism as a solution to bridge the gap between sociological and exegetical study, because “there is much to be learned about the text itself by allowing sociological insights to inform, reform, and expand traditional historical study of the text.”
\end{thebibliography}
Fiorenza’s stance which includes “a posture of distrust,” “doubt” or “suspicion,” in approaching a historical subject. He reasons that the “ancient texts deserve the same respect and benefit of the doubt and willingness to trust and listen to.”

Regarding the principle of determining meaning, the hermeneutical methods of the three interpreters influence how they approach the biblical texts, whether from faith or from suspicion. Grudem sees the role of the interpreter as important in discovering a “single meaning” of the Scripture. From this view of the principle of determining meaning, Grudem concludes that even ordinary believers can understand as well as discover “the plain meaning of the text of Scripture” due to the “clarity of Scripture,” also known as “the Perspicuity of Scriptures.” Admitting that some passages are easier to understand than others, Grudem nonetheless claims that “the Scripture is written in such a way that its teaching is able to be understood by ordinary believers.” In his view, a denial of the discoverability of the meaning of Scripture would be “an attack on the character of God – his goodness, his power, and his ability to communicate clearly to his people.” The meaning from the texts must be discovered through objective interpretation, not just from “some person’s subjective experience.”

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922 Grudem sees the understandability of Scripture “in Deuteronomy’s instructions to parents, in the Psalmist’s exhortations to meditate daily on Scripture, in Jesus’ repeated expectations that his hearers should know and understand Scripture, and in the willingness of Paul and Peter to address entire congregations with the expectation of being rightly understood.” Ibid., 21.

923 Ibid., 25. Grudem explains the word “perspicuity” as meaning “an older term for the clarity of Scripture.” See Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 108. The idea of perspicuity was made famous by Martin Luther during the Reformation, and this is considered an important principle of Protestant hermeneutics. See J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of Protestantism* (New York: Infobase Publishers, 2005), 266. Also M. Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications), 164.


925 Ibid., 20. The meaning that Grudem believes is discoverable is seen in his rejection of postmodern hermeneutics and the idea that “There is no absolute truth, nor is there any single meaning in a text – meaning depends on the assumptions and purposes that an interpreter brings to a text. Therefore, claims to know what Scripture means on any topic are just disguised attempts to exert power over others.” Grudem rejects this view.

926 Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 481. Grudem claims that “God never calls people to disobey His word. Our decision on this matter must be based on objective teaching of the Bible, not on some person’s subjective experience, no matter how godly or sincere that person is.”
Grudem’s method relies on the clarity of Scripture along with the analogy of faith, which have been important principles of Protestant hermeneutics since the time of the Reformation.\textsuperscript{927} It is also important that Grudem acknowledges, as does Scripture itself, that not everything is easy to understand. A valid question then concerns Grudem’s understanding of which category women’s silence belongs to, clear or unclear. Grudem does not answer this question in terms of 1 Cor 14:34-35, but he notes that commands for women’s silence, along with passages that prohibit women from being elders and from teaching, are “not isolated passages.”\textsuperscript{928} He reasons from their appearances in “the heart of the main New Testament teachings about church office and about conduct in public worship.”\textsuperscript{929} Thus, he notes that the “obscurity” or difficulty in understanding these texts on the restriction of women in church leadership throughout church history is not the problem of “the text of Scripture but in the eye of the beholder.”\textsuperscript{930}

Like Grudem, Witherington sees the interpreter as having an important role in discovering the meaning of the Scripture.\textsuperscript{931} He argues that “meaning resides in the text and is placed there by the author by means of his or her configuration of its words and phrases.”\textsuperscript{932} He points out that “though the writer may be deceased, his or her words and meaning can still live on without our trying to impose a modern meaning on the text that violates the author’s intended sense.”\textsuperscript{933} Therefore, the main task of the interpreter is to “interpret and apply God’s Word, not to create a personal canon within the larger canon.”\textsuperscript{934} Like Grudem, he sees the goal as the discoverability of the original meaning, the intent of the original author. Thus, the first step in discovering the original meaning intended by the original author is attending to the original historical setting and context of the text.\textsuperscript{935}

\textsuperscript{927} Melton, \textit{Encyclopedia of Protestantism}, 266.
\textsuperscript{928} Grudem, \textit{Evangelical Feminism}, 263.
\textsuperscript{929} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{930} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{931} Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth}, xiv.
\textsuperscript{932} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{933} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{934} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{935} Witherington, \textit{The Living Word of God}, 165. Witherington notes, “Understand as much as possible about the original historical setting and context of the text, remembering that the true meaning of the text must be something the human author and/or God would have wanted to say or allude to, to that original author and audience (e.g., 1 Cor 13, ‘when the perfect comes’ refers to what happens at the eschaton). Failure to attend to this rule leads to numerous errors and especially to anachronistic misreadings of the NT.”
In response to Grudem’s view of the “clarity of Scripture,” Witherington notes that clarity is only possible for the original hearer of the words. He points out that the difficulty of gaining clarity today is the “considerable cultural distance from the book and the literary conventions used to compose it.” In contrast to Grudem’s views of the discoverability of a “single meaning” in the text, he points out that “an author can say more than he realizes under inspiration.” His view does not suggest that “the whole Bible” has multivalent meanings. He sees a trajectory that can lead the text to several meanings, “more than its original historical intent.” According to Witherington, the “fundamental principle of the interpretation of the Bible is that a document cannot mean something today that would contradict the thrust or trajectory of meaning that was originally intended by the writer.” This meaning has “to be consistent with the literal sense of the text, and had to be intelligible to its original audiences.” From his view of the principle of analogy, Scripture must be interpreted in a manner consistent with the theme of redemption.

The second step in gaining the meaning of the text is the need to “hear the word as it is addressed to that original situation” in the context of the original audience. For difficult passages, Witherington points out that the problem is not discoverability of original meaning. He sees jumping “straight for application without properly understanding the meaning of the text” as one of the problems in the “misuse of 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 and 1 Tim.

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936 Ibid., 16. Grudem rejects this view. He gives the example of Jesus, who “held people responsible for understanding the Old Testament writings, though many of which were written more than 1000 years in the past, and the New Testament writers similarly expected their readers to know and to be able to understand the Old Testament rightly. Therefore, I think that the perspicuity or clarity of Scripture requires us to believe that it is still able to be understood rightly by readers today.” Grudem, “The Perspicuity of Scripture”, 7.
937 Witherington, The Living Word of God, 81.
939 Witherington, The Living Word of God, 187. Witherington points out that although “the text can mean more than its original historical intent,” it cannot mean other than “its original meaning,” which is “what the original author had in mind.”
940 Ibid., 158.
941 Ibid., 183.
942 Ibid., 158.
943 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, xiii.
944 Witherington, The Living Word of God, 158.
945 Ibid., 156.
946 Ibid., 165.
2.8-15” to prevent women from pastoral ministry. He concludes that there is “no purely objective, value-free scholarship,” and hence suggests interpreters should admit their own presuppositions and inclinations.

Unlike Grudem and Witherington, Schüssler Fiorenza locates “meaning” within the texts as less important. Determining the ideological constructs of the text that silence others is more important than determining a text’s meaning and how the text operates within its historical contexts. She sees a hermeneutics of suspicion as a method that investigates how ideology functions “in the interest of domination.” Since she regards all biblical scholarship as advocacy scholarship and identifies one’s method with one’s interest, she claims that a text can have multiple meanings depending on interpreters’ varying frameworks. Therefore, “intellectual neutrality is not possible in a historical world of exploitation and oppression.”

Regarding the principle of application, Grudem applies the principle of the analogy of faith and the clarity of Scripture to the principle of application, claiming that all the teachings of the Bible are relevant for today and thus the reader is to obey. In this view, the Bible has to say something only once for it to be true and God’s word to us, and therefore the reader is obligated to obey. In this framework all the teaching of the Bible is normative with application to Christians in all times and places unless Scripture itself indicates otherwise, and even isolated passages must not be dismissed.

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947 Ben Witherington, "Interpretation," in The Living Word of God (In an Age of Truth Decay) (October 31, 2007).
950 Schüssler Fiorenza, Wisdom Ways, 175.
951 Schüssler Fiorenza, Rhetoric and Ethics, 8.
953 Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone, 45.
954 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 331.
955 Ibid., 362. He gives examples of matters that he considers as valid practice in the church although they appear only once, such as taking the Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor 11:27-32, the value of being single in ministry in 1 Cor 7, and characteristics of deacons in 1 Tim 3:8-13.
956 Ibid., 368. Grudem reasons that even the so called “egalitarian texts” of Gal 3:28 opposite the “complementarian texts” of 1Tim 2:12 “would not lead us to affirm that because they do not teach that.”
957 Ibid., 362. Grudem notes that the fact that “the restriction of some governing and teaching roles to men occurs in only a few passages, or in one passage” still means “we are still obligated to obey it” rather than leaving them as “isolated” passages. However, on the issue of head covering in 1 Cor 11, he sees that since Paul’s concern was over what a head covering symbolized and not the outward form, he teaches that women do not have to cover their heads anymore. He explains that in this case it is better to ask married
suggests that God would not ask people to disobey his word. Therefore, everything in the Scriptures must be consistently followed through obedience. Although this seems compelling, it raises more questions on whether all the teachings of the Bible are timeless, constantly binding on all people. To the contrary, both the New Testament and the Old Testament show God as requiring different things of different people at different times.

Regarding the application of the text, Grudem follows the principle of identifying cultural relativity when speaking of a relevant application for the contemporary situation. He admits emphasizing some texts over others on the ground of applicability to the contemporary situation, but he argues that this is not the same as choosing to be subject to some parts of Scripture and not others, which would be a “canon within the canon.”

Regarding the principle of application, Witherington believes that “the basic rule of thumb is that while principles remain the same, practices often do not and should change with the differing cultural situations,” since the transition between two very different cultures in different historical periods is not a simple task. Therefore, he explains the third step in his methodology as hearing “the word as it addresses our situation.” Here Witherington looks at the text from the principle of differentiation, which recognizes that the context of the interpreter is very different from the “original situation in the context of the original audience.” In other words, this principle asks “what the text meant in its first-century context” and “what it might mean for us here and now.” The interpreter must “be faithful to the text and be guided and guarded by what it excludes and what it allows.” This leads Witherington to the fourth step in his hermeneutical methodology, which applies “the original meaning to new situations that are analogous and appropriate.”

women to wear “whatever symbolizes being married in their own cultures” instead of saying “we don’t have to obey today.”

958 Ibid., 402. Grudem explains that “culturally relative” commands concerning physical action that carry symbolic meaning (the holy kiss, head covering, foot washing, short hair for men and lifting hands in prayer) must be obeyed but applied in different forms today.

959 Ibid., 369.


961 Ibid., 165.

962 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, xiii.

963 Ibid., xiii-xiv.

964 Witherington, The Living Word of God, 165. Drawing from difficult texts of Paul as an example, Witherington points out that a letter of Paul may well have “significance” in terms of “different applications today,” but it is not to be “applied in a way that violates the apostle’s intended sense and meaning.” Recognizing that “Paul addressed specific people at a specific time in a language” is important so that
Schüssler Fiorenza sees the Bible as historically conditioned as well as “ideologically
determined” by the patriarchal attitudes of the biblical authors and editors.\textsuperscript{965} She
suggests that interpreters should critically examine the text with suspicion and then
“reject all religious texts and traditions” as authoritative that contribute to women’s
oppression.\textsuperscript{966}

Given the hermeneutical principles of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington, their
methods deal seriously with the historical aspects of the biblical texts. However, their
approaches and commitments vary quite markedly from one another. While Schüssler
Fiorenza’s approach differs significantly from Grudem, Witherington shares some
similarities with Grudem, such as the importance of approaching biblical texts from the
perspective of faith and locating the meaning of those texts within the historical setting,
with the aim to apply them in contemporary settings. All of these interpretive and
methodological differences amongst the three interpreters suggests the importance of
presuppositions in influencing their hermeneutics, the focus of the next section.

\subsection*{4.2.2 Hermeneutical Presuppositions}
There are four hermeneutical presuppositions that influence the hermeneutical processes
of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington in their interpretations of the 1 Cor
14:34-35 text. These are the interpreter’s view of the locus of authority in interpretation,
the interpreter’s understanding of the role of interpreter, the sociological perspective of
the interpreter, and the theoretical framework of the interpreter. These hermeneutical
presuppositions are fleshed out below.

\subsubsection*{4.2.2.1 Locus of Authority}
The three interpreters’ views of the locus of authority link to their views of the Bible. As
we have seen, Grudem and Witherington view the Bible in the traditional sense of the
Scripture as the Word of God, whereas Schüssler Fiorenza sees it as the written works
mostly of elite men.\textsuperscript{967} Given their view of the Bible, Grudem and Witherington see the
Bible as the locus of authority in interpretation, while Schüssler Fiorenza sees women’s
interpreters can understand that what Paul “intended as the text mean must be the starting point for all
responsible uses of the text today. See Witherington, \textit{Conflict and Community in Corinth}, xiii.
\textsuperscript{965} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{The Power of the Word: Scripture}, 64.
\textsuperscript{966} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Bread Not Stone}, xvi.
\textsuperscript{967} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{The Power of the Word: Scripture}, 64.
experiences as the locus of authority. Arguing “for the authority of the Bible,” Grudem sees the texts themselves as the locus of authority in interpretation. He affirms that “the Bible, as originally given, is the inspired and infallible Word of God. It is the supreme authority in all matters of belief and behavior.” He sees all sixty-six books of the Bible as both human words and the words of God. God does not dictate every word of Scripture to the human authors, but God influenced and directed the life of each author such that “the words were fully their own words but also fully the words that God wanted them to write, words that God would also claim as his own.” Grudem notes that the Bible itself claims to be authoritative and demands obedience, providing examples such as “thus says the Lord,” and the “commands of the Lord.”

In Grudem’s view, then, making anything other than the Bible the locus of authority is only a human construction of “logic, reason, sense experience,” and “scientific methodology.” This is dangerous due to flaws in human reasoning, and Grudem points out that human deductions drawn from the statements of Scripture are not equal to the statements of Scripture themselves. He does believe that asking about the words and situations that lie behind the text of Scripture may at times be helpful in understanding what the text means, but he also warns that these reconstructions should “never replace

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969 Grudem, “The Perspicuity of Scripture”, 1. This is the declaration of the Tyndale Fellowship doctrinal basis, and Grudem affirms this declaration.
970 Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 55-68. Grudem explains here the details of OT and NT canonization, which he sees as God at work in the “preservation and assembling together of the books of the Scripture for the benefit of his people for the entire church.”
973 Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christians Faith*, 33. Also in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 73. Grudem shows that in the Old Testament, “Thus says the Lord” appears hundreds of times and that whenever the prophet says “thus says the Lord” these words are “the absolutely authoritative words of God.” He cites several passages from the New Testament, such as in 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:21, that indicate all the Old Testament writings are thought of as God’s word. In showing the New Testament writing as God’s word and authoritative, he notes that 2 Peter 3:15-16 and 1 Tim 5:18 indicate an awareness that additions were being made to this special category of writings called “Scripture.”
974 Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christians Faith*, 36. Also in Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christians Should Know*, 13-15. Grudem notes Paul’s usage of “commands of the Lord” to the Corinthians, which he sees Paul as using “to imply” “that his own judgments were to be considered as authoritative as the commands of Jesus!”
976 Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism: Biblical Responses to the Key Questions*, 25. Grudem believes that our human “ability to reason and draw conclusions is not the ultimate standard of truth-only Scripture is.”
or compete with Scripture itself as the final authority."\(^{977}\) Grudem differentiates himself from non-evangelical theologians who are not convinced that the Bible is God’s word or absolutely authoritative.\(^{978}\) Unfortunately, Grudem’s position seems to miss the point that all perceptions of truth are mediated by interpretation.

In contrast to Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza’s understanding of the locus of authority is the experiences of women.\(^{979}\) Her approach to hermeneutics hinges on her understanding of the Bible. In her view, the Bible “contains the word of God” or “becomes the word of God” when the reader encounters it.\(^{980}\) She sees the Bible as a collection of texts written mostly by elite men in “androcentric\(^{981}\)-kyriocentric\(^{982}\) language,” a work that arose out of “patriarchal/kyriarchal societies, cultures, and religions,” and that “serves patriarchal ... kyriarchal interests.”\(^{983}\) Therefore, the emphasis on “scripture alone” (\textit{sola scriptura} and \textit{claritas scripturae}) is problematic since it has not only been written by humans but by elite men.\(^{984}\) Such androcentric ideologies distort not only the writing but also the canonical formation of the Bible, since the winners of the debates chose the canon.\(^{985}\) This is why there is less mention of the contributions of women than men in the Bible.\(^{986}\) Thus, the Bible is historically conditioned as well as “ideologically determined,”\(^{987}\) and the

\(^{977}\) Grudem, \textit{Systematic Theology}, 85. Affirming the prophetic gift for today, Grudem points out that although God at times uses subjective impressions of his will to “remind us of moral commands that are already in Scripture” and suggest facts that we “could have known or did not know,” they are not to replace Scripture. Ibid., 128.

\(^{978}\) Ibid., 129.

\(^{979}\) Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Bread Not Stone}, xvi.

\(^{980}\) Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{The Power of the Word: Scripture}, 64. Also in Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Bread Not Stone}, 10.

\(^{981}\) Schüssler Fiorenza explains it as “male-centeredness.” See Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Wisdom Ways}, 117.

\(^{982}\) Schüssler Fiorenza explains that this word comes from the word kyriarchy, meaning “master-centered.” Kyriarchy is a systematic analysis of both “patriarchy and androcentrism” that includes emperor, lord, slave-master, father, husband, elite educated male structures of domination. This is a pyramidal system of domination, and in which women are at the bottom of the socio-political and religious pyramid. This kyriarchy entails a “socio-cultural, religious, and political system of elite male power, which does not only perpetrate the dehumanization of sexism, heterosexism, and gender stereotypes but also engenders other structures of women’s oppression, such as racism, poverty, colonialism, and religious exclusivism.” Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Power of the Word: Charting Critical Global Feminist Biblical Studies,” in \textit{Feminist New Testament Studies: Global and Future Perspectives}, ed. Althea Spencer Miller Kathleen O’Brien Wicker, and Musa W. Dube (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 46. Also in Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{But She Said}, 104-25. and Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Rhetoric and Ethic}, 5-6.

\(^{983}\) Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Wisdom Ways}, 9.

\(^{984}\) Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{The Power of the Word: Scripture}, 64.

\(^{985}\) Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her}, 53. Schüssler Fiorenza argues that books such as \textit{The Acts of Paul and Thecla} were not included in the canon for that androcentric reasons.

\(^{986}\) Ibid., 48.

\(^{987}\) Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{The Power of the Word: Scripture}, 64.
Bible within the Christian tradition is the source of abuse and the silencing of women by elite men with kyriarchal interests.988

From her understanding that the locus of authority in biblical interpretation is the experiences of women,989 Schüssler Fiorenza identifies these as including the experiences of women who were part of the historical Jesus movement as well as others throughout history who have worked for justice.990 In this light, theological statements such as ‘the Bible is the revealed Word of God’ have been used as “norms for judging wo/men’s experience.”991 There is thus a need for women to become subjects in the hermeneutical process, arriving at meaning through the hermeneutical framework of the ‘discipleship of equals.’ 992 This can be accomplished by approaching the Bible as a historical “prototype”993 of Christian community and life rather than as an unchanging “archetype.”994 Although she views the Bible through its patriarchal lens, she finds signs of hope within the Bible and Christian tradition that resist the patriarchal overlay of the texts. She therefore suggests interpreting the Bible from a “critical commitment to the Christian community and tradition,” since the Bible continues to influence and empower the lives of women around the world.995

Like Grudem, understanding the Bible is crucially important for Witherington given his view of the Bible as “the living Word.”996 He sees “Scripture as divine inspiration”997 that claims “to be and is a word from, not merely a word about, God.”998 The source of the

988 Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone*, x.
989 Ibid., xvi.
990 Ibid.
991 Ibid.
993 Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 33.
995 Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 137.
996 Witherington, *The Living Word of God*, 13. Witherington sees the living word as including “an oral message,” “an Incarnate person” who is Jesus himself, and finally “a text,” particularly the Old Testament (the only Scripture in the time of the NT authors), which was certainly regarded as the inspired word of God in 2 Timothy 3:16–17.
997 Ibid., xiii.
998 Ibid., xiv.
Bible is “God who inspires, speaks, and empowers the words with qualities that reflect the divine character.” He also shares Grudem’s view of the Bible as both the words of God while being composed of human words. However, he rejects the mechanical dictation view that sees God as dictating every word of Scripture to the human authors. On the basis of his view of the Bible as the living word of God, he rejects two claims of Schüssler Fiorenza that see the Bible as “containing the word of God” or “becoming the word of God.” These are problematic since there the interpreter becomes the final authority. He sees the Bible as “making not only a truth claim but an objective claim on human beings in general, whether they are aware of it or respond to it or not.”

This understanding of the Bible leads Witherington to see the locus of meaning as residing in the text. He also recognizes the important role of personal experiences, which he views as “windows into the Scripture,” but warns that all of these experiences “must be normed by the Scriptures.” In his view, to suggest that reason, tradition, or experience has equal authority with the Bible or even higher authority is problematic, because even a genuine experience “does not in itself tell us the ethical or spiritual quality of the experience, or whether in the end it is good or bad for the person.” Thus, he points out the importance of keeping the Bible as the locus of authority in biblical interpretation.

Against the backdrop of this discussion, we now turn our attention to the question of how they understand the role of the interpreter in the hermeneutical process.

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999 Ibid., 13.
1000 Ibid., 36. Witherington explains the Bible as “always the word of God in human words whether it involves oracles where God speaks directly or some more indirect means of communication.”
1001 Ibid., 21.
1002 Schüssler Fiorenza, The Power of the Word: Scripture, 64. Also in Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone, 10. Witherington sees such claims of Schüssler Fiorenza as “far from the claim made in 2 Timothy 3:16 that every Scripture is God-breathed,” because “the very character of the document itself” is “truthful as God is truthful.” See in Witherington, The Living Word of God, 16.
1003 Witherington, The Living Word of God, 16.
1004 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, xiv.
1006 Ibid.
1007 Ibid.
1008 Ibid., 160-61. Witherington states that “without the final objective norm of Scripture, it becomes difficult if not impossible to tell the difference between a heart-warming experience brought about by the work of the Spirit, and some sort of emotive ‘spiritual’ experience that is neither edifying for the person in question nor glorifying to God.”
**4.2.2.2 The Role of Interpreter**

As mentioned briefly in our discussion of the hermeneutical methodology of the selected contemporary interpreters, all three are aware of the subjective participation of the interpreter in determining meaning and all agree on the existence of interpreters’ biases in interpretation. However, some see the possibility of excluding those biases.

Grudem sees a possibility of interpreters excluding subconscious influences, biases, and prejudices from the hermeneutical process. He acknowledges the role of “culture, tradition, personal inclination ... personal predispositions” in influencing past and present interpretations.\(^{1009}\) He advocates careful consideration of other Bible passages as one way to keep the influences of the interpreter’s own biases to a minimum.\(^{1010}\) He also believes interpreters can keep the influences of their own biases to a minimum by searching their “motives and seek[ing] to empty self of that [which] would tarnish true perception of reality;” by praying “to God for humility, teachability, wisdom, insight, fairness and honesty;” by making “every effort to submit one’s mind to the unbending grammatical and historical reality of the biblical texts in Greek and Hebrew, using the best methods of study available to get as close as possible to the intentions of the biblical writers;” by testing “conclusions by history of exegesis to reveal any chronological snobbery or cultural myopia;” and by testing “conclusions in the real world of contemporary ministry and look[ing] for resonance from mature and godly people.”\(^{1011}\) Whether or not he is successful in following these guidelines will be discussed later in light of his interpretational method.

Schüssler Fiorenza’s view of the role of the interpreter in the hermeneutical processes is quite the opposite of Grudem’s view. She argues that every interpretation of the Bible has elements of bias, since all biblical interpretations are conditioned by the interpreter’s present political interests that lead to selectively focusing on the “life setting”\(^{1012}\) of the biblical text. She thus rejects the historical-critical claim of “objectivist-factual...


\(^{1010}\) Ibid., 90.

\(^{1011}\) Ibid., 84.

\(^{1012}\) Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xv.
understanding of biblical texts,” which assumes a value-neutral approach to historical inquiry that insists that interpreters stand somehow outside of their own time. She sees such approaches as “radical detachment, emotional, intellectual and political distancing,” a kind of “disinterested and dispassionate scholarship” which is unconstrained by “contemporary questions, values and interests.” A neutral approach is impossible for interpretation is filled with “presuppositions, commitments, beliefs, or cultural and institutional structures influencing the questions they raise and the models they choose for interpreting their data.” The fact that the biblical exegete and theologian of today searches the Bible not “solely for the historical meaning of a passage, but also rais[ing] the question of the Bible’s meaning and authority for today” also makes a neutral approach impossible. Therefore, she sees the best approach to historical inquiry is “reflecting critically on and naming one’s theoretical presuppositions and political allegiances.”

Like Grudem and Schüssler Fiorenza, Witherington is aware of the role of presuppositions and biases that the interpreter brings into the interpretational process. He acknowledges that so often interpreters come to the Biblical text with his or her own agenda, and “catches what it is intended to catch” by partially clarifying and partially obscuring “the truth.” This is the link to “our presuppositions about the text, our ways of handling it, [which] dictate what sort of results we harvest.” Hence, he warns interpreters to recognize and admit their own faith postures, inclinations, or predispositions “before approaching the biblical text.” He sees the only way around the problems of the intrusion of the interpreter’s agenda into the text as that of “careful, comprehensive, historical study of the relevant material,” where one should first examine “what it meant to its author and audience in its original historical setting.” This involves the

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1013 Ibid., 5.
1015 Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xxii.
1017 Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xvii.
1019 Ibid.
1020 Ibid.
interpreters being aware of their own commitments and taking them into account in the interpretational process, even being open to correction. He sees such persons as “critical scholars” who are “capable of being self-critical and self-corrective, as well as being able to cast a discerning eye on this or that biblical text.”

All three interpreters acknowledge the role of the interpreter’s presuppositions in the process of interpretation, and they agree also that there is no such thing as “purely objective” and “value-free” scholarship. However, Grudem sees a possibility for interpreters to exclude those influences through methods that he has suggested, which I will show later as failing. Schüssler Fiorenza maintains it is impossible to eliminate biases and thus sees hermeneutics as “reflecting critically on and naming one’s theoretical presuppositions and political allegiances.” Although Witherington agrees with Grudem’s view of the authority of the Bible, his understanding of the interpreter’s role is closer to Schüssler Fiorenza’s view that sees the impossibility of excluding one’s presuppositions in the process of interpretation. These understandings lead to the next question, on the influences of these three interpreters’ sociological perspectives on their approach to biblical passages that command women to be silent.

4.2.2.3 Sociological Perspectives

The interpretations of the three contemporary interpreters not only hinge on how they see the locus of authority and the role of the interpreter but also depend on their sociological perspectives. Grudem’s sociological perspective centers on his view of patriarchy and hierarchy given a “complementarian” orientation. Grudem disapproves of being called a “traditionalist” or “hierarchicalist.” He reasons that “traditionalist” implies “an unwillingness to let Scripture challenge traditional patterns of behavior” and “hierarchicalist” overemphasizes “structured authority while giving no suggestion of equality or the beauty of mutual interdependence.” He argues for a complementary view that sees men and women as being created “equal before God as persons and

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1024 Grudem, “An Overview of Central Concerns,” 84.
1025 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, xvii.
1026 See the detailed history of this term in Grudem, Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?, 23-32.
1028 Ibid.
distinct in their manhood and womanhood,” and believes that distinctions in the masculine and feminine roles are “ordained by God as part of the created order.”  

Although he sees male dominance and male superiority as the result of sins "that have been seen in nearly all cultures in the history of the world,"  

he argues that the leadership of man is affirmed by God. God does this by creating role distinctions as part of the created order, such that male headship in marriage was ordained before the Fall.  

He sees the headship of man as derived from the created order of Adam, the representation of Adam as the human race, who names woman, has a primary accountability role, and finds Eve created as his helper before the Fall.  

He sees the headship of man as derived from the created order of Adam, the representation of Adam as the human race, who names woman, has a primary accountability role, and finds Eve created as his helper before the Fall.  

Therefore, he believes that the Bible affirms the patriarchal nature of the family, where the father is responsible for leading, providing for, and protecting.  

Acknowledging the problems in patriarchal cultures, Grudem finds that these evils are the result of sin and the abuse of male leadership, while patriarchy itself, its views and values, are not the problem.  

In his view the Bible affirms the wife’s responsibility to respect her husband and serve as his helper in managing the home and nurturing children.  

Schüssler Fiorenza’s sociological perspective is connected to her view of the Bible as being deeply enmeshed not only in patriarchy but also in the structures of “kyriarchy,” which

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1030 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 26.


1032 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 38.

1033 Grudem, Systematic Theology, 462. Grudem agrees with Raymond Ortlund that ‘helper’ here means that, whenever someone helps someone else, the person who is helping is occupying a subordinate or inferior position in relation to the person being helped. This implies that God is taking an inferior role as helper. See the explanation in Raymond C. Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism, ed. John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991): 104.

1034 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 30-40.

1035 Ibid., 44.

1036 Ibid., 147.

1037 Ibid., 44.

1038 As noted earlier, Schüssler Fiorenza sees kyriarchy as a pyramidal system of domination, in which women are at the bottom of the socio-political and religious pyramid. See in Schüssler Fiorenza, Wisdom Ways, 123.
is a combination of patriarchy and androcentrism, highlighting the structures of power and domination of the ‘master.’ In her view, speaking against the patriarchal power of the father alone is problematic, since this only focuses on exploitation and victimization of women by men based on gender and sex but ignores the fact that women can be agents of domination over other women. She argues that some women of elite status, some educated women, have “mediated and supported prejudices and structures of domination in and through education and ‘missionary’ work.” Likewise, she sees speaking against the androcentric nature of biblical texts is problematic since they also only deal with “the power relation between the sexes.”

Schüessler Fiorenza sees the structures of kyriarchy, or “kyriocentrism,” as inscribed in Christian scriptures in and through household “codes of submission,” just as is androcentrism. She sees this kyriocentric nature of Christian tradition as guilty of oppression, subordination and injustice, burdening women. This must be contested through ideological “kyriocentric discursive formation,” which looks at the “socio-cultural, religious, and political system of elite male power, which does not only perpetrate the dehumanization of sexism, heterosexism, and gender stereotypes but also engenders other structures of women’s oppression, such as racism, poverty, colonialism, and religious exclusivism.” Thus, she asks women not to leave the Christian tradition, but argues that “this tradition must be critically exorcised and rejected, wherever it is necessary.”

Like Grudem and Schüessler Fiorenza, Witherington’s sociological perspective on patriarchy and hierarchy is important in understanding influences behind his interpretation. Witherington describes his view as “the reformed patriarchal view.”

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1040 Schüessler Fiorenza, Wisdom Ways, 115.
1041 Ibid., 117. Schüessler Fiorenza gives black women’s experience of slavery as an example. She notes that these women were abused not only by male masters but also by female masters.
1042 Ibid.
1043 Ibid., 123.
1044 Ibid.
1046 Schüessler Fiorenza, The Power of Naming, 118.
1047 Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 25.
where he argues for reaffirmation of the traditional concept of headship in the family and introducing new roles in the community of faith. He explains this concept as centering on “the concept of the imago dei”\(^{1048}\) in Genesis and “its renewal in Christ.”\(^{1049}\) He notes that the relationship between male and female was broken after the Fall, such that “to love and cherish was turned into the curse to desire and to dominate (‘Your desire will be for your husband, and he will lord it over you’ [Gen 3:16]).”\(^{1050}\) Therefore, he sees the effects of this sin on the relationship between men and women as the ideology of domination and male superiority known as “patriarchy,”\(^{1051}\) which is different from the “origin and purpose” of God’s design for men and women that rested on “mutual dependency.”\(^{1052}\)

Although his view shares some similarities with Grudem’s complementarian view, Witherington sees Grudem’s view of headship as God-ordained, permanent male leadership over woman as problematic, since this view leads to the permanent subordination of women.\(^{1053}\) In this sense, he sees Grudem’s view as guilty of following the pattern of the Fall rather than the original design of God. What is needed is restoration from the “sporadic and broken relationship” between God and humankind, as well as the relationship between male and female, “in order to have an ongoing positive relationship with God” as well as to renew “human character so that the relationship can be both ongoing and positive.”\(^{1054}\) Thus, salvation should serve “not merely to restart a relationship, but to conform a group of people to the image of God’s Son, who is the ultimate image of God ever to grace the earth with his presence.”\(^{1055}\) For Witherington,

\(^{1048}\) Ben Witherington, *The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical Thought World of The New Testament*, vol. 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 10. Witherington highlights the *imago dei* in Genesis as showing that “all human beings are created in God’s image.”

\(^{1049}\) Ibid.

\(^{1050}\) Ibid., 317-18. Witherington argues that in the original creation order, with its distinctions that are God-ordained, “men are still men and women are still women,” differentiated in “origin and purpose” that rest on “mutual dependency.” See also in Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 170.


Witherington notes that understanding male headship as implying a God-ordained male permanent leadership over woman is problematic since this also leads to the suggestion of an eternal subordination of Christ in the Godhead.

\(^{1054}\) Witherington, *The Indelible Image*, 2, 10.

\(^{1055}\) Ibid.
the story of Christ is “the hinge, crucial turning point, and climax of the entire larger
drama." The story of Christ is the example to follow in dealing with patriarchy.

Witherington believes that Jesus did two things about patriarchy. First, Jesus did not reject
the patriarchal framework of culture “by not rejecting the traditional concept of
headship.” In Witherington’s view, Jesus came into a patriarchal cultural setting where
“males, by nature of the culture, assume the basic leadership role,” and where they were
“the heads of tribes, judges in the courts of law, heads of families and leaders in religious
observances.” Since patriarchy was already normative in that time and place,
Witherington believes that Jesus was attempting to reform patriarchal culture but not to
reject the patriarchal framework of his culture.

Second, Witherington sees Jesus as reforming the patriarchal culture by redefining the
concept of headship and the leadership model of his kingdom into a model of “servants
of all,” where the head takes the initiative in serving. He sees Jesus as breaking both
“biblical and rabbinic traditions that restricted women’s roles in religious practices, and
that He rejected attempts to devalue the worth of a woman, or her word of witness.”
Furthermore, Jesus’ willingness to accept women as disciples and traveling
companions and his teaching on the eunuchs and what defiled a person “effectively
pave the way for women to play a vital part in His community. Anyone could have faith in
and follow Jesus – He did not insist on any other requirements for entrance into His family
of faith.”

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1056 Witherington, Paul’s Narrative Thought World, 5.
1057 Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 25.
1059 Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 49. Witherington gives examples such as the choosing and commissioning of “the Twelve men both from and after His resurrection,” teaching on marriage, family and divorce as “views [that] remain within a patriarchal framework,” showing the unfair treatment of women in adultery in Mt 19:9, showing his intolerance of the double standard of Jewish leaders in responding to a woman caught in adultery in Jn 7:53, and reaffirming male leadership in teaching on males taking responsibility for their own actions in Mt 5:27-28 and Jn 7:53.
1060 Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 25.
1061 Ibid., 29.
1062 Found in Lk 8:1-3 and 10:38-42.
1063 Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 29.
has faith in and follows Jesus are the factors that Witherington sees as influencing the influx of women into the community of Jesus, which continued even after Easter.\(^{1064}\)

Witherington sees Jesus as promoting a “balance between the old and the new” consistently throughout his teachings.\(^{1065}\) He argues that Jesus allowed women to have a significant place and status in ministry by combatting prejudice and double-standards, while at the same time trying to “strengthen women’s traditional roles in the family.”\(^{1066}\) Witherington finds Jesus’ approach to be one of preserving a “healthy balance,” an approach that is neither “feminist” nor “traditionalist.”\(^{1067}\)

To summarise, the sociological perspectives of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington, their influences are noticeably clear in each of their interpretations. For example, the male headship concept of Grudem is consistently found in his explanation of 1 Cor 14:34-35.\(^{1068}\) The tone of contestation is noticeable in Schüssler Fiorenza’s interpretations.\(^{1069}\) The concept of reforming the old is clearly visible in the interpretations of Witherington.\(^{1070}\) Furthermore, these sociological perspectives not only serve as presuppositions that influence their interpretations, they also provide the framework within which the interpreters approach the text. The following section looks at how these sociological perspectives of the interpreters are situated in their theoretical framework.

4.2.2.4 Theoretical Framework

Grudem admits that his complementarian position is guided by the “principle of male headship” as well as the “principle of male-female equality in the image of God.”\(^{1071}\) In

\(^{1064}\) Ibid.


\(^{1066}\) Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 30. Witherington finds Jesus’ teaching on male headship as entailing “extra responsibility not extra liberty” (Mt 5.27-32); it is also strengthening a woman’s stature and security within the family. Also, Jesus’ teaching on men taking responsibility for their own lust as well as his teaching on divorce and marriage liberate women from a social stereotype of common Jewish teaching while reaffirming the traditional family structure. From that perspective, Witherington sees Jesus’ teaching on singleness as a viable option since Jesus does not see a “conflict between the demands of [the] family of faith and of the physical family so long as the latter was oriented to serve rather than to server the former.” Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 49-50.

\(^{1067}\) Ibid.

\(^{1068}\) Ibid.

\(^{1069}\) Ibid.

\(^{1070}\) Ibid.

\(^{1071}\) Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 392.
response to the egalitarian critique that complementarianism is inconsistent when it applies the principle of male headship only to the home and the church, Grudem points out that “the principle of male headship is not the only principle in the Bible,” and that “the principle of male-female equality in the image of God” is also included. He therefore concludes, “We are simply to obey the Bible in the specific application of these principles. What we find in the Bible is that God has given commands that establish male leadership in the home and in the church, but that other teachings in His Word give considerable freedom in other areas of life. We should not try to require either more or less than Scripture itself requires.”

From this understanding, Grudem sees the teaching of manhood and womanhood as God’s design as applicable to the practical details of church life, which is the family of God. He notes that just as “in the home, the husband’s loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity... in the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility.” Grudem explains that while man and woman are “equally valuable to God and equally important to God’s work in the church,” they do not have “equality in functions.” He believes that these functional differences between men and women are clearly pointed out by Jesus. Examples include Jesus’ choosing of twelve men as apostles in the Gospels, and also biblical passages such as 1 Tim 2:11-15, 1 Cor 14:33b-36, 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:5, where teaching and governing are roles or functions reserved for males. He sees this male leadership as a consistent pattern in Scripture since creation and that it has been practiced consistently in the history of the church. He thus concludes that “some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men.”

Schüssler Fiorenza’s theoretical framework for feminist interpretation is her understanding of the *ekklesia* of women, which refers to a “democratic assembly/
congress.” She adds the phrase “of women” to ekklesia to indicate that the church will never be the complete democratic assembly without including women. She notes that the ekklesia of women includes the female disciples in Jesus’ movement, where women were both disciples of Jesus and leading members of the early Christian communities.

Applying historical criticism to the Gospels, she points out that the Jesus of the Gospels is against the marginalization of women and that therefore female subordination is not part of the original gospel. To the contrary, she sees Jesus as calling forth the discipleship of women as equally as men. She describes the early Christian movement as a community that practiced equal discipleship and where women were as actively engaged in leadership in the church as men. However, women’s engagement in leadership created tension with “the patriarchal ethos of the Greco-Roman world.” This resulted in female subordination in the church. To restore Jesus’ vision of a discipleship of equality, she seeks to restore the women’s liberation movement that began during the early years of the church as a “Jesus movement.”

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1079 Schüssler Fiorenza, Wisdom Ways, 128.
1080 Schüssler Fiorenza, Discipleship of Equals, 196. Although Schüssler Fiorenza originally saw this concept of the “ekklesia of women” as exclusive of men, she later included men who identify with women’s struggle for equality, authority, and citizenship in the church. See also in ibid., 293. Also in Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus: Miriam’s Child, 27.
1081 Schüssler Fiorenza created the inclusive word “wo/men” to describe the identities of women as well as oppressed men in the church in this struggle of liberation. In other words, this word means “the movement of self-identified women and self-identified men.” Schüssler Fiorenza, The Power of the Word: Scripture, 6. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone, xiv. and Schüssler Fiorenza, But She Said, 127. Also in Shelly Matthews, Walk in the Ways of Wisdom, 5. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus: Miriam’s Child, 24-31.
1082 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, xx.
1083 Ibid. Schüssler Fiorenza explains that this subordination happened later, since “the story of Jesus movement as an emancipatory basileia tou theou movement is told in different ways in the canonical and extra canonical Gospel accounts, which have undergone a lengthy process of rhetorical transmission and theological editing. The gospel writers did not simply write down what Jesus said and did. Rather, they utilized the Jesus tradition shaped by Jesus’ first followers, women and men, or their own rhetorical interests and molded them in light of the political-theological debates of their own day.” Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus: Miriam’s Child, 94. Also Schüssler Fiorenza, “Feminist Theology and New Testament Interpretation,” 37.
1084 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 34. Also in Schüssler Fiorenza, “Feminist Theology and New Testament Interpretation,” 38. Schüssler Fiorenza adds, “the basileia [kingdom] vision of Jesus calls all women without exception to wholeness and selfhood, as well as to solidarity with those women who are impoverished, the maimed, and outcasts of our society and church.” See also Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 153; Schüssler Fiorenza, Discipleship of Equals, 174-79.
1085 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 35. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, Jesus: Miriam’s Child, 93.
called to “one and the same praxis of inclusiveness and equality lived by Jesus-Sophia,” which means becoming a “discipleship of equals.”

Within this framework, feminist interpretation centers on correcting this lapse of memory by reconstructing “early Christian history as women’s history in order not only to restore women’s stories to early Christian history but also to reclaim this story as the history of women and men.” She explains that women’s struggle for liberation is not to become masculine or like men, but they struggle “to achieve the rights, benefits, and privileges and equal authorities and citizenship which are legitimately theirs but which are denied to them by the kyriarchal regimes of most societies and the major world religions.”

This reconstructing of “women’s heritage as church,” a discipleship of equals as part of the *basileia* of God, is at the heart of the theoretical framework that shapes her hermeneutical approach.

Witherington’s understanding of the role of male and female in creation is important for his theoretical framework of a conservative egalitarian view. As mentioned above, he frames his egalitarian view on “the concept of the *imago dei*” in Genesis and “its renewal in Christ.” From this understanding of Jesus reforming the patriarchal culture of His day as his theoretical framework, he sees Paul as redefining the patriarchal culture, and thus argues that Paul is neither feminist nor patriarchal.

Recognizing the aim of Jesus in redemption as the restoration of relationship between God and humankind as well as between male and female, Witherington views Paul’s perspective as a “kingdom or eschatological orientation,” which places emphasis not on “what men and women are by way of the creation order, but rather on what they now are in Christ.” Thus, Paul was not only drawing from Jesus’ teaching, but also working...
from this eschatological outlook of Jesus\textsuperscript{1094} and the transformed vision of Jesus which affirms new roles for women in the community of faith.\textsuperscript{1095} From this perspective, Paul allows women to take up new roles in the church as long as the creation order of male headship in the physical family is recognized and affirmed.\textsuperscript{1096} He therefore sees Paul’s writings as redefining, not rejecting, “the concept of male headship and leadership in light of Christian or biblical ideas.”\textsuperscript{1097}

Within this theoretical framework, Witherington views Paul as encouraging women to exercise their spiritual gifts in “a way that did not involve the violation of their husband’s headship” in their physical family setting and thus permitting women to be involved in new roles in the religious context, where he considered several women as his co-workers.\textsuperscript{1098} Like Jesus, Paul affirmed a transformed vision of the patriarchy in the physical family setting, while also affirming women’s new roles in the community of faith. Witherington admits that Paul also “walked a difficult line between reaffirmation and reformation of the good that was part of the creation order, and the affirmation of new possibilities in Christ.”\textsuperscript{1099} Hence, he argues that Paul is neither feminist nor a patriarchal, but a balance between the two.\textsuperscript{1100}

The interpretational differences between these three interpreters can clearly be traced back to their presuppositions. Like Grudem, Witherington’s view can be traced back to his understanding of the distinctive functions of man and woman in creation.\textsuperscript{1101} He shares Grudem’s view of Jesus’ choice of male disciples as staying within the ideology of patriarchy. However, his view also differs significantly from Grudem in his explanation of headship, where Grudem sees headship in creation as a validation of universal male leadership in the church,\textsuperscript{1102} but Witherington sees this as the headship of man over his own family, in the sense that “headship comes to mean head servant, or taking the lead

\textsuperscript{1094} Witherington, Paul’s Narrative Thought World, 153.
\textsuperscript{1095} Witherington, The Indelible Image, 2, 317-18. See also Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 238.
\textsuperscript{1096} Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 179.
\textsuperscript{1097} Ibid., 248.
\textsuperscript{1098} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1099} Ibid., 179.
\textsuperscript{1100} Witherington, Women in the Ministry of Jesus, 30.
\textsuperscript{1101} Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 63.
\textsuperscript{1102} Piper and Grudem, eds., Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism, 470.
in serving.” Like Schüssler Fiorenza, Witherington sees Jesus as the center for changing the role of women in the church. However, he disagrees with Schüssler Fiorenza’s view of Jesus as the liberator of women from their patriarchal and hierarchical context, for he sees Jesus as neither feminist nor patriarchal. But, Witherington’s view is like her view of women as actively engaged in leadership in the early church, just as men were during and after Jesus’ time, and that Jesus’ attitude toward women helped change the roles of women in the emerging church.

This discussion also reveals that interpreters’ presuppositions influence not only the meaning they discern in the texts but also the whole hermeneutical process. The hermeneutical presuppositions of the three contemporary interpreters highlight their views on the locus of authority in interpretation and their understanding of their own role as interpreters in the hermeneutical process. Further, we have seen how their sociological perspectives provide a foundation for their theoretical framework in approaching the biblical texts. All of these hermeneutical presuppositions provide insights into their interpretation of the passages in the Bible that command women to be silent. The following section looks at how these presuppositions further influence the choice of a starting point in their hermeneutical process related to 1 Cor 14:34-35.

4.2.3 Hermeneutical Process Relating to 1 Cor 14:34-35

In examining the hermeneutical process of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington in relation to 1 Cor 14:34-35, it is inevitable that their hermeneutical presuppositions outlined above influence how they interpret the texts that command women to be silent. In particular, their presuppositions influence them to choose a certain starting point to interpret the texts that command women to be silent. This choosing or prioritizing of a starting point likewise influences their hermeneutical results. We begin, therefore, by identifying the starting points of each of the interpreters in approaching 1 Cor 14:34-35, and investigating how this continues to influence these interpreters as they analyze Paul’s overall attitude to women in connection to the passages that command women to be silent.

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1104 Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 135.
4.2.3.1 Starting Points in the Interpretational Process

Looking at the hermeneutical processes of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington regarding 1 Cor 14:34-35, two scripture passages are often mentioned in their interpretations of the texts that command women to be silent. These texts are Gal 3:28 and 1 Tim 2:11-14. Although these interpreters warn that choosing another text as a starting point is problematic, their interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34-35 show otherwise. Possibly due to the influences of their sociological perspectives and theoretical frameworks, the interpretations of these contemporary interpreters mention or emphasize some scripture texts more than others. These texts are emphasized to the point that they become the central point in their interpretation of the texts that command women to be silent. This section evaluates the three interpreters’ use of these texts in interpreting 1 Cor 14:34-35.

Grudem points out that choosing one text as a “hermeneutical priority” or starting point weakens the authority of Scripture, because this suggests being subject to “some parts of Scripture and not others.” However, he acknowledges that some texts do receive more emphasis than others, and perhaps this is the case with respect to his usage of 1 Tim 2:11-14. Acknowledging that his hermeneutics is guided by “the principle of male leadership,” and highlighting 1 Timothy 2:12 as a “complementarian text,” Grudem finds the male leadership in the church mentioned in 1 Tim 2:12 as important for understanding the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text.

According to Grudem, among the biblical passages that address restricting “some governing and teaching roles in the church to men” he sees 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as the most directly relevant passage. He points out that this passage appears in the context of the “the assembled church” (1 Tim 2:8-10), and that “Paul does not allow a woman to teach and have authority” over a man in the assembled church, where Bible teaching takes

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1105 Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 368.
1106 Ibid., 369.
1107 Explained in this chapter, 4.2.3.
1109 Ibid., 65.
1110 Ibid., 306. According to Grudem, this usage of “αὐθεντεῖν” is in the sense of the normal, neural exercise of authority, meaning, to “have authority.” He sees this authority as not in the sense of wrongful practice, abuse of authority, or a domineering use of authority in the negative sense.
He believes that the kind of teaching Paul has in mind is “Bible teaching,” or “preaching and teaching the word of the Lord, which is reserved for male leaders only.” He reasons that Paul in these verses is affirming male leadership by arguing from the creation story where Adam was formed first, meaning that “God was giving a leadership role to Adam.” Since Eve was deceived first, he sees Paul as highlighting the “differences in preferences and inclinations” of men and women. In this framework, God gave men a “rational” disposition to “teaching and governing in the church” and women a “relational” disposition that inclines toward “nurturing” in the church. From this understanding, Grudem concludes that this command for women is not a specific instruction only for Ephesus or a temporary command. He sees male leadership as transcending “cultures and societies.”

Given this understanding of male leadership, Grudem argues that “1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 is consistent with the teachings of the rest of the New Testament on appropriate roles for women in the church. Speaking out and judging prophecies before the assembled congregation is a governing role over the assembled church, and Paul reserves that role for men.” Further, to bolster this distinction between the roles for women and men, he states, “as in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, this distinction comes to focus in the prohibition of women from exercising doctrinal and ethical governance, even from time to time, over the congregation.” He then concludes that “1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 fits well with a

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1111 Ibid., 65.
1112 Ibid., 66. Grudem mentions Acts 15:35; 18:11; 1 Cor 14:47; 1 Tim 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim 2:2; 3:16 to back up his argument.
1113 Ibid., 67.
1114 Ibid., 70. See also ibid., 298. He did not see the usage of “ἀνήρ” and “γυνή” as referring to husband and wife here since the context is not that of marriage. He does not think that Paul referring to Eve being deceived first shows the “intellectual inferiority of women.”
1115 Ibid., 72. “...a disposition that is better suited to teaching and governing in the church, a disposition that inclines more to rational, logical analysis of doctrine and a desire to protect the doctrinal purity of the church”
1116 Ibid. “…a disposition that inclines toward a relational, nurturing emphasis that places higher value on unity and community in the church.”
1117 Ibid., 280. He explains that the false teachers named at Ephesus are men, not women. No clear proof of women teaching false doctrine at Ephesus has been found either inside the Bible or outside the Bible.
1118 Ibid., 301. He also explained the usage of the present indicative tense in the command “ἐπιτρέπεται” in the phrase “I do not permit” “cannot be ... a temporary command.”
1119 Ibid., 69.
1120 Ibid., 79, 235.
consistent Pauline advocacy of women’s participation without governing authority in the assembled church.”

Schüssler Fiorenza’s approach is to honestly state one’s assumptions up front. She admits that her feminist hermeneutics, like other approaches to biblical interpretation, is “a political act.” From that perspective, the starting point for her feminist critical interpretation must begin with “women’s experience in their struggle for liberation,” but not with “certain biblical texts.” She also argues that using a certain biblical text to interpret another is a “canon within the canon,” meaning “a theological criterion and measuring rod with which to assess the truth and authority of the various biblical texts and traditions.” That said, the issues concerning women presented in the whole Corinthians context must be viewed as a modification of women’s self-understanding in Gal 3:28.

Schüssler Fiorenza finds that women’s self-understanding in Gal 3:28 comes from the believers’ realization of their received status of equality in Christ through their baptismal declaration, being “the new creation.” This baptism in Christ initiates a believer into a new creation, in which all distinctions of status between Jews and Greeks, free and slave, male and female are abolished, thus giving them all “religious equality.” She sees this understanding of religious equality in Christ as generating changes in social roles and the ecclesiastical status of the women, “because in Judaism religious differences according to the law were to [be] expressed in communal behavior and social practice.” This concept of new creation creates opportunities for women to become “full members of the people of God with the same rights and duties” as men. In this new creation, women’s role are no longer determined by “family and kinship” or “sexual

1122 Ibid.
1123 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 32. She got this term from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, The Woman’s Bible (1985).
1124 Schüssler Fiorenza, Bread Not Stone, 13.
1125 Ibid., 14.
1126 Ibid., 12. Her explanation on “canon within the canon” can also be seen in Schüssler Fiorenza, But She Said, 142 and Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Power of the Word: Charting,” 64.
1128 Ibid.
1129 Ibid.
1130 Ibid.
1131 Ibid.
dimorphism,” which is socializing people “into sex and gender roles as soon as they are
born according to their biological differentiation as male and female as well as cultural,
racial and social differences.”¹¹³²

Thus, for Schüssler Fiorenza, this usage of “there is no male and female” in Gal 3:28 refers
to the equality of “the social roles” between men and women in the sight of God, but is
not “a denial of biological sex differences.”¹¹³³ In other words, oneness in Christian
baptism is not “anthropological oneness but ecclesiological oneness or unity in Christ
Jesus.”¹¹³⁴ The usage of “there is no male and female” also refers to “marriage and gender
relationships,” such that patriarchal marriage and sexual relationships between male and
female are “no longer constitutive of the new community in Christ.”¹¹³⁵ This new creation
in Christ gives women a new identity, which is defined by “discipleship and empowering
with the Spirit.”¹¹³⁶ This will bring forth an inescapable change for women in their
ecclesial-social status and function, just as it did for Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Schüssler Fiorenza sees Gal 3:28 as “not a Pauline ‘peak formulation’ or a theological
breakthrough achieved by Paul,” but as belonging to the pre-Pauline “theological self-
understanding of the Christian missionary movement.”¹¹³⁷ She traces this understanding
of egalitarian leadership as originating from two groups of women prior to Paul, one of
which worshipped the goddess Sophia as an aspect of the godhead and the other which
followed Jesus-Sophia as Messiah; in both groups women held important leadership
roles.¹¹³⁸ She sees Paul’s acceptance of these women leaders as arising from a sense of

¹¹³² Ibid., 213. Schüssler Fiorenza explains, “Sexual dimorphism and strictly defined gender roles are
products of a patriarchal culture, which maintain and legitimize structures of control and domination-the
exploitation of women by men. Gal 3:28 not only advocates the abolition of the religious-cultural divisions
and of the domination and exploitation wrought by institutional slavery but also of domination based on
sexual divisions. It repeats with different categories and words that within the Christian community no
structures of dominance can be tolerated. Gal 3:28 is therefore best understood as a communal Christian
self-definition rather than a statement about the baptized individual. It proclaims that in the Christian
community all distinctions of religion, race, class, nationality and gender are insignificant. All the baptized
are equal, they are one in Christ.”
¹¹³³ Ibid., 211. Schüssler Fiorenza sees the main issue here as the Galatians’ view that male and female must
marry and have children to be truly in Christ, which is the traditional way of reading the creation story in
Genesis 1-2, with its command, “be fruitful and multiply.”
¹¹³⁴ Ibid., 214.
¹¹³⁵ Ibid., 211. Schüssler Fiorenza argues that this usage of “male and female” as a pair is alluding to Gen
1:27, where “humanity [was] created in the image of God as ‘male and female’ in order to introduce the
theme of procreation and fertility.”
¹¹³⁶ Ibid., 213.
¹¹³⁷ Ibid., 199.
¹¹³⁸ Ibid., 130-40.
obligation and says, “he probably has no other choice than to do so,” because these women already “occupied leadership functions and were on his level in the early Christian Missionary movement.” Thus, Paul’s command for women to be silent in 1 Cor 14:34-35 shows the problems amongst family relationships in the church caused by a new religious vision that denied all male “religious prerogatives in the Christian community based on gender roles. Just as born Jews had to abandon the privileged notion that they alone were the chosen people of God, so masters had to relinquish their power over slaves, and husbands that over wives and children.”

Schüssler Fiorenza sees that this new understanding among the Corinthian women created tension in family relationships and brought disorder into the church. For that reason, Paul, having a missionary concern about order in the church and given the danger of misunderstanding by outsiders, asks the Corinthian “wives” to be silent in the church by appealing to them to undertake culturally appropriate behaviour. Although she sees Paul as not restricting women’s involvement in the church, she notes that the command in 1 Cor 14:34-35 paves the way for students of Paul to later impose strict restrictions on women’s leadership in the church.

Like Schüssler Fiorenza, Witherington’s understanding of Gal 3:28 is important in explaining his view of the role of women in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2. He sees Gal 3:28 as the “Magna Carta, not only of true humanity but of Christian freedom,” and refers to it as the “Emancipation Proclamation for Women.” Unlike Grudem, who sees the Gal 3:28 passage as having spiritual implications for an individual’s access only into the Body

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1139 Ibid., 50.
1140 Ibid., 218.
1141 Ibid. Schüssler Fiorenza notes that it was “not the love patriarchalism of the post-Pauline school, but this egalitarian ethos of ‘oneness in Christ’ preached by the pre-Pauline and Pauline Christian missionary movement provided the occasion for Paul’s injunction concerning the behavior of women prophets in the Christian community.”
1142 Ibid., 220.
1144 Witherington, What’s in the Word, 120. Also in Ben Witherington, “Rite and Rights for Women – Galatians 3:28,” New Testament Studies 27, no. 05 (1981): 593-604. In that article Witherington also mentioned the opposite view from Magna Carta of humanity or emancipation proclamation for women as Coram Deo, which sees that there is no implications for social relations within the Body of Christ.
1145 Witherington, "Rite and Rights for Women – Galatians 3.28," 593.
of Christ. Witherington asserts that Paul’s statement is not “merely about the believer’s position,” but that “it has social implications for the covenant community and women’s status in ekklesia.” This is the view of Schüessler Fiorenza as well. Witherington sees Paul’s declaration as meaning that a female does not have to be linked to a male to have a place in the church community, such that the door to ministry is being opened to women, including the ministry of single men and women.

Like Schüessler Fiorenza, Witherington also sees Paul’s declaration that there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, as having clear social implications, and that Paul knew that social implications for males and females were inevitable “in the light of being one in Christ and being in the light of new creation.” However, Witherington warns that these social implications do not mean that the ethnic, social and sexual distinctions simply disappear in Christ; rather, “in the new creation the old is transformed and transfigured.” This transformation means that although the ethnic, social and sexual distinctions continue to exist, in Christ “they do not determine one’s soteriological, spiritual, or social standing in the body of Christ, nor do they determine the ministerial roles one can play in Christ. That is a matter of who is called and who is gifted by the Spirit to do certain tasks in the church.” In other words, the leadership structures in the church for Paul are not based on gender but rather on individual gifting and the graces of the Holy Spirit.

Unlike Grudem, Witherington sees 1 Tim 2:11-14 as Paul writing to correct “specific problems affecting worship,” where some women’s behaviour had taken on the negative...

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1146 Mentioned in this chapter, 4.2.3.
1147 Witherington, “Rite and Rights for Women – Galatians 3.28,” 600.
1148 Mentioned in this chapter, 4.2.3.
1149 Witherington, “Rite and Rights for Women – Galatians 3.28,” 600.
1150 Schüessler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 213. Witherington points out that Paul affirms the social implications of being neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ, and says he can be the Jew to the Jew and the Gentile to the Gentile in 1 Cor 9, Phil 3:4-9, and where Onesimus treats Philemon “no longer as a slave, but as a brother in Christ.” See also Witherington, What’s in the Word, 120.
1151 Witherington, What’s in the Word, 120.
1152 Ibid.
1153 Ibid.
sense of “authenteo,” which means to “usurp authority,” in the sense of domineering. He sees the usage of Genesis texts in 1 Tim 2:11-14 as indicating that these women were not properly instructed as Eve was not properly instructed. Therefore, he interprets this text as Paul saying that he was “currently not allowing” these women to teach since they “need to be learning,” which is quite different from Grudem, who believes women should not teach since they are more susceptible to deception, as was Eve. Witherington characterises this passage as “situation-specific advice,” not a universal prohibition of women teaching, since Priscilla and Aquila were mentioned in this role in 2 Tim 4:19. Witherington’s understanding of headship in Eph 5:22 is also important in his interpretation of 1 Cor 14. As mentioned earlier, Witherington’s theoretical framework in interpreting Paul’s passages on women is “the concept of the imago dei” and “its renewal in Christ.” He explains Paul as working from the trajectory where the image of God is being renewed through the redemptive work of Christ. This renewal in Christ does not eliminate the headship of man found in the order of creation, but transforms it to the concept of Christ’s headship, where headship means taking responsibility as the head servant. He sees the term “head” as meaning “one’s role and behavior in an ongoing relationship,” rather than “source, as in the source of a river,” “more responsibility” but not “more privilege” or “authority.” Therefore, he sees Paul as writing here to the husband to say that headship means “to take initiative in active loving and self-sacrificial serving as Christ has done for the Church. Head would then mean head

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1155 Witherington, _Women and the Genesis of Christianity_, 192. Also in Witherington, _Women in the Ministry of Jesus_. Witherington sees 1 Tim 2:11-14 in the context of grumbling men in 1 Tim 2:8 and certain women in 1 Tim 2:8-15. He also suggests that this passage must be understood from the larger context of 1 Timothy, where Paul wants the older women to instruct the young women, which is an indication that Paul is prohibiting women from all kinds of teaching.

1156 Ben Witherington, _Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians_ (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 231. Witherington believes Paul is saying, “Eve is like these women, inadequately instructed and therefore not prepared for the confrontation she has.”

1157 Ibid., 232.

1158 Mentioned in this chapter, 4.2.3.

1159 Witherington, _Women and the Genesis of Christianity_, 196.

1160 Witherington, _The Indelible Image_, 2, 10. See also Witherington, _Women and the Genesis of Christianity_, 248.

1161 Witherington, _Women and the Genesis of Christianity_, 158. Witherington reasons that whenever Paul wishes to talk about the roles or functions, “he speaks of headship and submission,” and that Eph 5 is written in the context of Christ’s headship over the church.

1162 Witherington, _Paul’s Narrative Thought World_, 310.
servant, and we are reminded that the definition of ‘the one who would be greatest’ is the one who serves (Lk. 22:24-7).” His explanation of headship is thus different from Grudem’s literal meaning that sees head as the authority of the one taking the lead.

Given this understanding, Witherington sees Paul in Eph 5:21 as calling “for mutual submission of all Christians to each other which includes, of course, marital partners. This does not lead the author to speak of totally interchangeable roles.” For Witherington, Paul not only wants the headship pattern to be maintained in the physical family, as mentioned above, but also wants this headship pattern to be expressed when “the family of faith meets in worship.” He sees Paul as asserting the headship pattern in two ways: first, “with the head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11,” and second, “by a command to silence 1 Corinthians 14 and an insistence that one direct one’s questions to husbands at home.” He sees Paul as reminding the Corinthians that new creation does not obliterate the original creation order distinctions in 1 Cor 11, and that men are still men and women are still women, by asking them to wear “a head covering in worship.” Again, he points out that Paul is both reaffirming the creation order, which is of the old, and establishing something new, which is women praying and prophesying in worship.

Witherington understands Paul’s concept of headship as the climax of the redemption narrative which leads to an ethic that focuses on the imitation of Christ’s servant leadership. Paul is seen as reaffirming the role of men in creation, a leadership role

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1163 Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 158.
1164 Mentioned in this chapter, 4.2.2.
1165 Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 156.
1166 Witherington, Paul’s Narrative Thought World, 310.
1167 Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 169-70. Regarding the headship pattern in 1 Cor 11, Witherington sees “head” in Eph 5:22 as a reference to “one’s role and behavior in an ongoing relationship,” and “head” in 1 Cor 11 as “source or origin.” He reasons that “head” in 1 Cor 11 is metaphorically talking about “Christ as the source of all men,” “God being the origin or source of Christ,” and “the source of man women in verses 8-9,” which would mean that man (not her husband but Adam) is the ultimate source of woman. He follows the traditional interpretation of 1 Cor 11 regarding the creation order, where man was not created for the sake of woman but was made before her in Gen 2, and that woman is made for the sake of man. Woman is the glory of man and woman’s hair is her own glory. The phrase “to have an exousia on/over her head” is translated here as meaning “an authority which women had to have to do what they were apparently doing which she would otherwise not be able to do.”
1168 Witherington, Paul’s Narrative Thought World, 310.
1169 Witherington, Women and the Genesis of Christianity, 169-70. Witherington sees the value of head covering in this way: “(1) it preserves the order in worship – only God’s glory is to be revealed there, and (2) it authorizes women to pray and prophesy without denying the creation order distinctions.”
1170 Ibid., 171.
1171 Witherington, The Paul Quest, 111.
within the physical family, while introducing the greater involvement of women in the church. In other words, he sees Paul as affirming some traditional patriarchal obligations for women while also instilling the concept of freedom for women in a way that does not “involve the violation of their husband’s headship.” From this perspective, Witherington sees Paul as addressing women and men “both in 1 Cor 11 and 1 Cor 14,” who thought their new status in Christ through baptism (Gal 3:28) obliterated “such distinctions and ordering patterns.”

The interpretations of all three interpreters are guided by their presuppositions, which in turn influences their choosing and emphasizing of particular scripture texts to support their interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35. Although some of them refer to choosing a scripture as only ‘emphasizing’ it, the above analysis of their interpretations demonstrates that those selected texts influenced their interpretations. It is reasonable to conclude that their presuppositions, including their sociological perspectives and theoretical frameworks, influence their starting point in interpreting 1 Cor 14:34-35. In short, their presuppositions play an influential role in their hermeneutical processes. This leads to a question, concerning how these three interpreters understand Paul’s relationship with several women mentioned in his writings as co-workers and leaders in the church. Thus, the following section examines how these interpreters address Paul’s overall attitudes to women in their hermeneutical process regarding 1 Cor 14:34-35.

### 4.2.3.2 Paul’s Overall Attitudes to Women in the Interpretational Process

Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington all agree that Paul allowed the Corinthian women to pray and prophecy in public, as 1 Cor 11 shows. But although they agree that Paul recognized women’s involvement in the church and offered words of appreciation to these women, they differ about the level of women’s involvement in the church and Paul’s attitude toward these women. This shows how the interpreters’ presuppositions influence their view of Paul and his attitudes on women. In this section, we will see how Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Witherington understand the extent of women’s involvement in the early churches and how they interpret Paul’s attitude on women in 1

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Cor 14:34-35, based on their understanding of Paul’s overall attitudes toward women in the church.

According to Grudem, women’s involvement in the early church did not include authoritative speaking. Grudem’s hermeneutical assumption of the principle of male leadership influences his view of Pauline attitude to women and their role, and this is found in his interpretation of women’s involvement in the church as deacons, apostles, teachers, and prophets. Concerning the role of women as deacons, Grudem notes that Paul accepted women as deacons in Rom 16, because “the office of deacons in the New Testament does not include the governing and teaching authority that is reserved for elders.” He points out that although there were women deacons in some parts of the early church, “they did not have teaching in the churches.” He explains the deacons’ tasks mentioned in 1 Tim 5:17 and Acts 20:17 as “practical service to the needs of the congregation,” whereas elders teach (1 Tim 3:2) and govern (1 Tim 3:5). Concerning the role of apostle for women in the church, Grudem notes that the role of Junia in Rom 16 is not the same as “apostles in the sense of the Twelve or Paul.” While admitting that Junia could be a woman, the “apostle” reference for her carries only the sense of “church messenger,” “one who is sent,” which Paul uses elsewhere in his writings, as in 2 Cor 8:23 “referring to the men who were accompanying Paul in bringing money to Jerusalem,” or Phil 2:25, where Paul tells the Philippians that Epaphroditus is “your messenger and minister[ed] to my need.”

Concerning the teaching role of women in the church, Grudem points out that the teaching of Priscilla, who taught Apollos in Acts 18:26, was private teaching that includes “private discussion and in small group Bible studies, as Christians everywhere have done

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1175 Grudem, “Prophecy - Yes, but Teaching- No,” 18.
1176 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 263.
1177 Ibid., 266.
1178 Ibid.
1179 Ibid., 227.
1180 Grudem mentions that the name Junia (Ἰουνίαν in Greek) could be either a man’s name or a woman’s name, because in Greek “this could be either masculine of feminine.” He lists differences in translations: “Junias” is used in NIV, NASB, RSV, ASV and “Junia” in KJV, NJKV, NRSV, NLT, ESV. Grudem also argues that οἵτινες εἰσὶν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις means “well-known to the apostles,” not “well-known among the apostles,” from the usage of the dative case with ἐν. Thus, he sees that whether Junia is man or woman is not significant for it “does not even name Junia (Junias) as an apostle.” See ibid., 224-25. Witherington references Junia as a woman as well. See Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 115.
1181 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 226.
for centuries.” 1182 Although the same word, ἐκτίθημι “explain or expound,” also appears in Acts 28:23, where Paul was expounding the Kingdom of God, Grudem sees Paul’s teaching in Acts 28 as public teaching. 1183 He differentiates the teaching of Pricilla as less authoritative than Paul. For women like Euodia and Syntyche in Phil 4:2, where Paul calls them “co-workers,” Grudem argues that Paul’s naming them as such does not imply that they had “equal authority to Paul, or that they had the office of elder or that they taught or governed in any New Testament churches.” 1184 Grudem points out that since teaching provided the doctrinal and ethical guidance for the NT church, there is a close connection “between the role of elder,” which is mentioned in Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 5:17 and 3:2, and “the role of teacher,” where authoritative teaching is reserved only for male leadership. 1185

Concerning the prophetic role of women in the church, Grudem believes that Paul allows this role of women because prophecy does not require the same authority as Scripture or apostolic teaching. He argues that Paul sees prophecies in the New Testament as different from prophecies in the Old Testament. 1186 The prophecies in the Old Testament were “based on something that God had brought to mind or ‘revealed,’ something that was then reported in the prophet’s own words” and “did not consist of the interpretation and application of Scripture.” 1187 Such prophecies are different from teaching, which is “an explanation or application of Scripture” that is “equal to Scripture in authority.” 1188 New Testament prophets do not consist of teaching or interpretation and application of Scripture. Thus, he sees the prophetic role of Philip’s four unmarried daughters in Acts 21:9 as not problematic for Paul. Based on these understandings, Grudem concludes that 1 Cor 14:34-35 does not contradict 1 Cor 11, because Paul is not prohibiting women from prophesying. He sees Paul as affirming an abiding principle of male headship or male leadership in 1 Cor 14:34-35, as Paul prohibits women from “speaking aloud to judge

1182 Ibid., 178.
1183 Ibid., 179.
1184 Ibid., 248.
1185 Grudem, “Prophecy - Yes, but Teaching- No,” 18.
1188 Grudem, “Prophecy - Yes, but Teaching- No,” 17.
prophecies,” which would indicate a “‘governing’ or ‘ruling’ function in the congregation.”

According to Schüssler Fiorenza and as I have noted, women’s extensive involvement in the various expressions of ministry in the early church had occurred before Paul. Paul accepted these women leaders since they were already active in the church before him. Overall, she finds Paul’s view of women puzzling. She reasons that Paul accepted women as leaders in the church, valued them as co-workers, and even expressed his gratitude for them by listing several names of women as leading missionaries and respected heads of churches in Rom 16 and 1 Corinthians. At the same time, Paul then restricts the ministry involvement of wives on the grounds of holiness, mentioning virgins as holy in 1 Cor 7 and thus suggesting that wives were less pure and holy. This apparent contradiction makes Schüssler Fiorenza wonder how Paul could have made “such a theological point when he had Prisca as his friend and knew other missionary couples who were living examples [that] his theology was wrong.” She concludes that Paul’s previous expression of appreciation for women as co-workers was out of obligation, since women like Junia and Prisca has already occupied leadership positions before him and were on his level in the early Christian missionary movement.

Therefore, she assesses Paul as being among those who hold patriarchal views and values. She sees evidence of this in Paul referring to himself as a “father of the community.” It is because of his patriarchal views and values that he restricts the active participation of wives in the ‘affairs of the Lord’ in 1 Cor 7:34 and 9:5, and then limits the pneumatic participation of women in worship in 1 Cor 11 and 14. Thus, Paul’s expressed appreciation of the women in ministry mentioned in Romans 16 is less important than his restrictions on women elsewhere. Her view of Paul as a person steeped in patriarchy influences her interpretive choices.

1190 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 50.
1191 Ibid., 47-50.
1192 Ibid., 235.
1193 Ibid., 226.
1194 Ibid., 50.
1195 Ibid., 234.
1196 Ibid., 233.
1197 Ibid.
According to Witherington, Paul recognizes the ministries of women not out of obligation but in genuine appreciation.\(^{1198}\) He notes that Paul does not prohibit women from any sort of teaching ministry but, rather, values them and relies on them to help him continue his ministry to the Gentiles. This makes his view of Paul’s attitude toward women opposite to Grudem’s view. Although Grudem sees the usage of the word “co-worker” as not referring to someone of equal authority as Paul,\(^{1199}\) Witherington understands this term “co-worker” in 1 Cor 16:16 and 1 Th 5:12 as Paul’s favourite description for one who aided him in his ministry, meaning someone who has a “leadership” role “involving some form of authoritative speech.”\(^{1200}\) This term is used with reference to women in 1 Cor 11:14, and in Phil 4:2-3 to refer the two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who worked together with Paul in the spreading of the Gospel.\(^{1201}\)

Witherington also points out that Paul mentions several women in Rom 16:1-16 as co-workers, including Phoebe, and the husband and wife team of Priscilla and Aquila. Paul further mentions Mary as a hard worker, another Christian husband and wife ministry team, Andronicus and Junia, as “outstanding” and “among the apostles,”\(^{1202}\) Tryphaena and Tryphosa, probably two sisters, as workers in the Lord, and Persis as someone beloved and who laboured hard “in the Lord.”\(^{1203}\) Regarding Junia mentioned in Rom 16, he takes the term “apostle” here as meaning “itinerant missionary,” since Andronicus and Junia were engaged in evangelism and church planting.\(^{1204}\)

Witherington rejects Grudem’s view that Priscilla’s teaching Apollos was only “instructing” in private,\(^{1205}\) and references Priscilla’s “teaching” in Rom 16 and Acts 18:24-26.\(^{1206}\) He also differs from Grudem in pointing out that 1 Tim 3:11 refers only to what character a

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\(^{1199}\) Mentioned in this chapter, 4.2.3.2.


\(^{1201}\) Ibid., 186.

\(^{1202}\) Ibid. This differs from Grudem, who sees this as outstanding “to the apostles.” See Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 226. Also in this chapter, 4.2.3.2.

\(^{1203}\) Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 186.

\(^{1204}\) Ibid., 188. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 115. Witherington notes here four ways the term apostle was used in the New Testament. It could refer to (1) the original twelve apostles, (2) a person who had seen Jesus and was commissioned by him, (3) an emissary (messenger) sent out by a particular church to perform particular tasks, and (4) a missionary.

\(^{1205}\) See in this chapter, 4.2.3.2.

“deacon or deaconess” must have but not to what they did, whereas Grudem insists that the tasks of deacon do not include a governing or teaching authority.\textsuperscript{1207} Witherington understands the terms “co-worker,” “deacon” and “apostle” in Phil 4 and Rom 16 as an indication that “Paul was receiving assistance from women in ministry not only in practical ways, but also in the ministry of the word.”\textsuperscript{1208} He therefore concludes that although at times Paul did apply women’s traditional roles and emphasized maintaining sexual distinctions, “there is certainly nothing in the undisputed Pauline texts that would rule out a woman from teaching and preaching.”\textsuperscript{1209}

In analyzing Grudem’s, Schüssler Fiorenza’s, and Witherington’s understandings of Paul’s attitudes toward women in the church, it is apparent that their interactions with various biblical texts concerning women’s involvement in the church are influenced by their presuppositions regarding authority, sociological perspectives, and their theoretical frameworks. The examples we have provided are an affirmation of the important role of the interpreter in the hermeneutical process, including approaches, choice of terminologies, and decisions regarding the meaning of texts. Whether the interpreters admit their biases and influences or not, our analysis has clearly demonstrated the role of presuppositions in their interpretations.

\textbf{4.3 CONCLUSION}

The divergent hermeneutical approaches of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington have highlighted the challenges in interpreting 1 Cor 14:34-35. They demonstrate the complex nature of biblical interpretation, where the interpreter’s presuppositions and approaches to the text influence the hermeneutical outcome. Since the purpose of analyzing these contemporary interpreters is to learn how to best interpret 1 Cor 14:34-35 in the context of Myanmar, the following principles may be drawn from their hermeneutical processes.

First, the interpretations of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington are helpful in identifying the textual problems and interpretational issues raised in the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text. Their interpretations highlight the importance of exegetical studies as well as

\textsuperscript{1207} See this chapter, 4.2.3.2.
\textsuperscript{1208} Witherington, \textit{Women and the Genesis of Christianity}, 190.
\textsuperscript{1209} Ibid.
historical studies. Their exegetical studies point out the importance of linguistic and textual structures and their historical studies point out contextual issues surrounding the text. Thus, the principle here is to commit to serious textual studies and historical studies.

Second, they also are helpful in raising the crucial issue of the role of the interpreter in the hermeneutical process. This is also helpful in understanding how the interpreter’s sociological perspective, whether complementarian or feminist or egalitarian, influences one’s theoretical framework in approaching the text. This highlights again the importance of the interpreter’s conscious awareness of influences and of their own theological and ideological commitments. Thus, the principle here is to know one’s own theological and ideological commitments.

Third, the approaches of the three interpreters clarify the importance of the locus of authority in interpretation. For interpreters who approach Scripture from the analogy of faith, Grudem and Witherington provide hermeneutical principles that are helpful. Their method provides the principle of the analogy of faith, the principle of determining meaning, and the principle of application. Schüssler Fiorenza’s principle of identifying factors contributing to the meaning of and reason for silence in the texts is helpful in identifying the factors impinging on Myanmar Bible translation.

Fourth, the interpretation of Schüssler Fiorenza provides a hermeneutical principle that is helpful for interpreters whose approach tackles contextual questions. This principle is a recognition that one’s presuppositions derive from experiences that affect the process of interpretation even before starting the hermeneutical process. Although Grudem and Witherington do not identify their hermeneutical questions in approaching the text, Schüssler Fiorenza identifies that her approach arises from the feminist concern for women’s experience. Since the concern of this thesis derives from a Burmese Bible translation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 on the role of women in the church, our approach to the text will be different from an abstract search of history.

Fifth, our understanding of the interpreter’s role in the hermeneutical process leads to one of the most important factors to consider in doing hermeneutics in the Myanmar context, which is identifying the contextual background that informs presuppositions and influences in the hermeneutical process. Looking at Adoniram Judson’s interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in Chapter 3, I have shown that his interpretation was influenced by certain
presuppositions and interpretations of his time. Likewise, concerning the interpretations of the three contemporary interpreters, it is clear that their presuppositions have influenced their interpretations. Given all of the insights derived from Judson’s Bible translation and these three contemporary interpreters, the challenge for Myanmar interpreters is to recognize that our own presuppositions will inevitably influence our interpretations.

The question here is how we should attempt to interpret the Bible in Myanmar knowing that “all interpretations of texts depend upon the presuppositions, intellectual concepts, politics, or prejudices of the interpreter or historian.” In approaching the translation of Judson, Flemming’s advice clarifies the need to interpret in the light of these challenges. He says, “the gospel must challenge the presuppositions of the missionary’s culture if it has any hope of speaking prophetically to the new culture in which it is being contextualized.”

This means allowing the gospel to challenge one’s own presuppositions. Flemming gives Paul as an example of someone whose old views were challenged by the gospel of Christ. Although Paul’s interpretations of the meaning of the gospel for the emerging church were influenced by three cultures (Jewish, Greek and Roman), he also challenged those worldviews, values and practices of Greco-Roman society which were normative in Corinth. Paul challenges “the culture of status, power and self-promotion” that characterized Roman Corinth in light of the cross.

Finally, our analysis of the three contemporary interpreters’ interpretations of 1 Cor 14:34-35 and their hermeneutical assumptions raise the question of the appropriate method for Myanmar interpreters in interpreting biblical texts on women. Although an analysis of these interpreters allow us to clarify the above-mentioned principles, they do not give a satisfactory answer regarding how to deal with the pertinent contextual questions. Since the concern of this thesis is how to approach biblical texts that concern women from the perspective of questions raised within the experiences of individuals or groups in the context of Myanmar, the following chapter looks at a new hermeneutical

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1212 Ibid., 171.
method that address contextual questions raised within a given culture, in this case Myanmar.
The critical analysis undertaken in this thesis has revealed the need to develop some hermeneutical principles that considers the context of Myanmar as a valid source in interpretation. The aim is to faithfully interpret the meaning of biblical texts in dialogue with the Myanmar context. This chapter therefore focuses on the second question of this thesis, which asks what some satisfactory hermeneutics in Myanmar would look like today, specifically as it interprets biblical passages that concern women.

The first section of the chapter identifies and explains criteria for defining some satisfactory hermeneutics in Myanmar. It looks for principles of hermeneutics that reflect critical contextualization. The principles that underpin a Myanmar hermeneutic draw upon insights from three contemporary schools of interpretation, together with a contextual theology orientation and an understanding of critical contextualization.

Considering the principles gleaned from these sources, this chapter then constructs critical contextual hermeneutics for Myanmar. This method provides analytical tools and a framework through which to evaluate the Christian traditions and interpretations that affect the role of women in the Myanmar church. The analytical tools focus on three contexts—the Myanmar context, the Bible translator’s context (in this case in the 19th century), and the historical context of the Bible—and include guidelines for contextually relevant applications of biblical texts. Finally, there is a description of a ‘dynamic interaction process’ which is the centerpiece of a critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar.

Drawing on these proposed principles and methodology of a critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar, Chapter 7 will revisit 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. The purpose there will be to show that analyzing biblical texts by means of the suggested principles and process is an effective way to address contextual questions in biblical interpretation,
thereby contributing to a contextually appropriate application of biblical texts in Myanmar.

### 5.1 EVALUATIONS OF RELEVANT HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

Three representative schools of interpretation and contextual theology provide helpful points of reference in the quest to develop relevant principles for a Myanmar hermeneutic. These principles derive from an evaluation of the three hermeneutical schools and the principles of contextual theology. We begin with summaries and evaluations of the guiding hermeneutical principles of the three schools.

#### 5.1.1 Evaluation of Three Hermeneutical Schools

The hermeneutical principles that underlie much of Western biblical scholarship have greatly influenced contemporary ways of doing theology and approaches to biblical texts in Myanmar. Amongst them, three hermeneutical approaches in particular—literal-traditional, feminist, and egalitarian—have relevance for our concern to construct a Myanmar hermeneutics.

Beginning with the feminist hermeneutics of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, three aspects are relevant for biblical interpretation in Myanmar. First, her recognition of the role of the interpreter in forming meaning is potentially helpful for biblical interpretation in Myanmar. 1213 She asserts the importance of recognizing the interpreter’s role and honestly stating one’s presuppositions before approaching the text. 1214 This is where Schüssler Fiorenza’s approach differs from the literalist and evangelical feminist approaches, which generally fail to acknowledge the significance of one’s presuppositions in the process of interpretation. This recognition of the interpreter’s role and the need to state one’s presuppositions before engaging in the hermeneutical process are important for a Myanmar contextual hermeneutics, where such self-awareness has until now been largely missing. In addition, feminist hermeneutics, like contextual hermeneutics, acknowledges the subjective elements of the interpretive process. Both appreciate the

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1213 Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Theology," 613.
1214 As cited in Chapter 4.2.2.2.
importance of experience and focus on the relevance of biblical texts for contemporary local social contexts.

According to Gordon Fee, any interpretive method that focuses mainly on relevance is subjective.\textsuperscript{1215} He explains this with reference to the two tasks of biblical studies: understanding the intended meaning of the biblical authors in their historical context, and finding relevant applications for today. In terms of the first task, he argues that the interpreter must undertake sound exegesis by carefully examining word usage, syntax, and literary forms to understand the intended meaning of the biblical authors. He sees this as the place where interpreters can engage the text with “a relative degree of objectivity,” despite the “cultural baggage and personal bias” that interpreters bring to a text.\textsuperscript{1216} He then notes the difficulty of upholding objectivity in hermeneutics when it moves to the second task of biblical studies, which focuses on the relevance of the intended meaning of the biblical text for today. As Fee notes,

> The other side of the task, however, and for the interpretation of Scripture the urgent one, is relevance. What does the biblical author’s intended meaning, as expressed in these ancient texts, mean for us today? At this point much depends on the presuppositions of the interpreter. Here is where evangelical and liberal divide, where Pentecostal and dispensationalist, or Baptist and Presbyterian, part company.\textsuperscript{1217}

The question is whether the subjective nature of such analysis is more a negative or a positive thing. Many see the inevitably influential role of the interpreter and the context in biblical studies as negative precisely because this colors the interpretive process with so much subjectivity. However, a contextual theologian like Stephen Bevans sees this subjectivity as simply an unavoidable feature of all theology. He calls on Christians to accept and even affirm that the interpreter’s “cultural and historical context plays a part in the construction of the reality in which we live, so our context influences our understanding of God and the expression of our faith.”\textsuperscript{1218} Hence, all theologies are contextual in one way or another. Angie Pears likewise recognizes the contextual nature

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1216} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{1217} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{1218} Bevans, \textit{Models of Contextual Theology}, 4.
\end{itemize}
of all theologizing, and notes that feminist theology, along with other contextual
theologies, is “influenced and indeed determined by the context of those engaged in the
theological enterprise.”

Second, Schüssler Fiorenza’s method of a “critical” approach is also potentially helpful for
the construction of a hermeneutics for Myanmar. Her critical method provides some
insights which other viewpoints miss. Her emphasis on critical analysis not only offers
helpful insights regarding the influence of patriarchy in the culture(s) of the Bible, but also
points out patriarchal influences in both the writing of biblical texts and the canonization
process. These insights derive from her understanding of the Bible as largely the work
of human authorship. As noted in Chapter 4, Schüssler Fiorenza sees the androcentric
ideologies associated with the male authorship of the Bible as the reason that the
contributions of women are included less often than those of men. She claims that
such androcentric ideologies must be contested.

This approach differs from the literal-traditional and egalitarian interpreters who mainly
focus on divine authorship, although they do acknowledge human authorship of the Bible.
Although I do not share Schüssler Fiorenza’s view of the Bible as the product of
androcentric ideologies and human constructions alone, her insights on the patriarchal
culture of the Bible and patriarchy’s influence on interpretations of the Bible throughout
church history clarify the historical context of the Bible.

Third, Schüssler Fiorenza’s feminist hermeneutic not only provides insights that other
readings miss, but also asks questions that are relevant for the situation of women in the
church and society. Like liberationist hermeneutics, Schüssler Fiorenza’s method calls for
reading the Bible from the “underside,” which allows the experiences and perspectives
of oppressed or marginalized people to be heard and highlighted. Like other feminist
hermeneutics, her method focuses on identity, and thus asks important questions that
concern women in the church. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 5, she focuses on

1220 As cited in Chapter 4.2.2.3.
1221 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 48.
1222 As cited in Chapter 4.2.2.4.
1224 As cited in Chapter 4.2.1.
analyzing the ways in which Christian traditions and theologies of the past have perpetuated women’s alienation, domination, and oppression over many centuries of church history. She describes this domination and oppression as the direct result of the attitudes of “patriarchy” and “kyriarchy”\textsuperscript{1225} in the church and society. She explains how these attitudes have influenced the interpretive process and the construal of meaning in the history of interpretation. In this sense, her approach is helpful for my study in that it poses questions that are relevant to the situation of women in church and society within the context of Myanmar.

However, Schüssler Fiorenza’s view moves beyond liberationist hermeneutics, which is mostly concerned with liberating themes in the Bible. From her view of the Bible as written mostly by elite men conditioned historically and ideologically by patriarchy,\textsuperscript{1226} she insists on not regarding as normative those passages in Scripture that restrict or denigrate women. She concludes that the central authority for interpretation is the experiences of women, not the Bible, and thus insists on a critical reconstruction of the Bible.\textsuperscript{1227} This raises a question regarding the validity of relying on the Bible at all. Although historical truthfulness is one of Schüssler Fiorenza’s goals in interpretation, the difficulty of her method lies in its evaluation of texts relying mostly on external evidence and judged by the “experiences” of women and “historical imagination.”\textsuperscript{1228}

For these reasons, Grudem and Witherington assess Schüssler Fiorenza’s view of the Bible as questionable.\textsuperscript{1229} Not all experiences of women are the same around the world, as cultures and societies differ greatly and continually evolve. Not even all feminist viewpoints concur in every respect, as they are as diverse as the times and places in which they emerge. Therefore, grounding the interpretations of biblical texts in the sphere of experiential relativity allows them to end up wherever the interpreter desires.

Additionally, there is the difficulty in Schüssler Fiorenza’s hermeneutic of locating God in the story. Jesus is revealed as only human, not God incarnate who came to save sinners. Instead of God being the one who brings liberation and wholeness throughout history to

\textsuperscript{1225} As cited in Chapter 4.2.2. Also in Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{Wisdom Ways}, 9.
\textsuperscript{1226} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{The Power of the Word: Scripture}, 64.
\textsuperscript{1227} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{In Memory of Her}, 34.
\textsuperscript{1228} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1229} As cited in Chapter 4.2.3.
free the oppressed, her view suggests that humans are their own liberators and Jesus is merely an exemplar for those who initiate women’s liberation.\textsuperscript{1230} In a context like Myanmar, where most Christians hold a high view of Scripture that accepts the Bible as the very Word of God, the approaches of Grudem and Witherington will be more widely accepted than that of Schüssler Fiorenza, given her view of the Bible.

In evaluating the literal-traditional hermeneutics of Wayne Grudem, a positive feature is his affirmation of biblical authority and the Bible as both human words and the Word of God.\textsuperscript{1231} Ben Witherington shares this view of the Bible as well. Their view of the Bible as a product of both human and divine authorship moves them to accept the Bible as the locus of authority, rather than human experience. They approach biblical texts from the perspective of faith rather than from the perspective of a hermeneutic of suspicion. Additionally, they focus on discovering authorial intent, that is, the intended meaning of the biblical texts.\textsuperscript{1232}

However, although they share a similar view of the Bible and its authority in interpretation, they approach texts differently. These differences start from their acknowledgement of the interpreter’s role in interpretation and continue to the application of biblical texts in contemporary contexts. Although Grudem acknowledges the influences of his presuppositions in interpretation, he sees the possibility of keeping the influences of the interpreter’s own biases to a minimum.\textsuperscript{1233} However, he fails to show how such biases can be minimized. His method shows influences of his own religious, political, and cultural presuppositions in the interpretational process, which I have addressed in Chapter 4.\textsuperscript{1234}

Although Witherington believes that all the interpreter’s presuppositions “must be normed by the Scriptures,”\textsuperscript{1235} his view of presuppositions gives interpreters more freedom to engage with the texts from their contextual setting. He describes the

\textsuperscript{1230} As cited in Chapter 4.2.
\textsuperscript{1232} As cited in Chapter 4.2.2.1.
\textsuperscript{1233} Grudem, ”An Overview of Central Concerns,” 90.
\textsuperscript{1234} As cited in Chapter 4.2.
\textsuperscript{1235} Witherington, \textit{The Living Word of God}, 160.
presuppositions of the interpreters as “windows into the Scripture” and “good things.” This approach provides helpful guidelines for contextual hermeneutics that seeks to take scripture, culture, and theology seriously. It also views the questions and presuppositions of interpreters as a valid starting point for the theological and hermeneutical process. This approach highlights the failure of the literal-traditionalist view to take the context of the reader seriously.

One of the positive features that all three methods—literal-traditionalist, feminist, and egalitarian—share is an insistence on serious exegesis of the historical aspects of biblical texts although even here there are different emphasis. Literal-traditionalists and egalitarians see the importance of discovering meaning within the historical context to apply insights to the present day. Schüessler Fiorenza is more interested in determining the historical ideological constructs of the text that silence others and how they operate within the historical contexts than in determining meaning.

Given his commitment to biblical authority, Grudem seeks to discover a “single meaning,” but this approach fails to allow us to change our views in light of new understanding of the historical biblical context. Witherington seeks to discover both “the [original] meaning and the trajectory of the advice given.” He sees a trajectory that can lead to the text meaning “more than its original historical intent,” and he proposes that texts be interpreted through the lens of the theme of redemption. Witherington uses an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating socio-rhetorical studies, for example, to engage with the texts in the broadest way possible.

In addition to the differences in their approaches to discovering meaning in biblical texts, Grudem and Witherington also differ in how they apply the meanings of the texts to the contemporary context. Grudem argues that all the teachings of the Bible are relevant for today and thus all readers are to obey them, because the Bible is transcultural and

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1236 Ibid.
1237 As cited in Chapter 4.2.2.
1239 Witherington, Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, 383.
1240 Witherington, The Living Word of God, 158.
1241 Ibid., 156.
1242 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 331.
normative for all times, unless Scripture itself indicates otherwise. He suggests that “culturally relative” commands in Scripture must still be obeyed but applied in different forms today. A questionable feature of this approach is its uncritical determination of relevance. In addition, Grudem’s assumption of ‘clear texts’ fails to take the context and culture of the reader seriously. As mentioned previously, he fails to consider that not all teachings of the Bible are clear in their instructions for today. His approach is constrained by his particular location in the history of interpretation, which is a literalist approach.

I find that Witherington’s method applies the meaning of texts to the contemporary context more thoughtfully than the literal-traditionalist approach. Witherington sees that making a transition or connection between two very different cultures in different historical periods is not a simple task. He therefore cautions the interpreter to remember that “the past [the historical context] is like a foreign country, for they do things differently there.” In this sense he seeks to differentiate between principles and practices, where “the basic rule of thumb is that while principles remain the same, practices often do and should change with differing cultural situations.” He then insists on asking both “what the text meant in its first-century context” and “what it might mean for us here and now.” Only in so doing will the interpreter “be faithful to the text and be guided and guarded by what it excludes and what it allows.”

Witherington’s approach to hermeneutics not only takes culture seriously alongside scripture and theology, it is also aware of the diversity of cultures. This keen awareness of cultural differences, and differences between historical contexts and contemporary contexts, is a positive aspect of this approach. In addition, Witherington’s method deals with contextual issues more appropriately than the literal-traditionalist view because he recognizes the nature of culture as dynamic and evolving. This leads him to propose

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1243 Ibid., 362.
1244 Ibid., 402.
1245 As cited in Chapter 4.2.2.1.
1246 My insertion.
1247 Witherington, The Living Word of God, 162.
1248 Ibid., 169.
1249 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, xiii.
1250 Ibid., xiii-xiv.
biblical applications only “where the situation is clearly analogous today.” This method also focuses on the missionary concern for applying biblical texts both faithfully and effectively in differing cultures and contexts.

Evaluating these three hermeneutical schools of thought, they all deal with contextual issues in their interpretive approaches. Feminist interpretation views women’s experiences as a central authority and values the importance of “social location.” From this perspective, Schüssler Fiorenza approaches biblical texts with suspicion. The literalist school approaches Scripture based on the centrality of biblical authority, and thus considers authorial intent in historical context, and the perspective of faith, to be of fundamental importance. Evangelical feminist interpretation takes seriously the experiences of contemporary individuals in the process of interpretation, more so than the literal-traditionalists. Evangelical feminist application principles consider differences between cultures, and thus this method is more missional and contextual than the literal-traditionalist. However, along with the literal-traditionalist approach, this method argues that the process of interpretation should take as its starting point the historical-critical research of the biblical texts and only move to their application as a secondary task. In my view, this overlooks the key role of the interpreter in forming theological meaning throughout the hermeneutical process.

The approaches of all three hermeneutical schools are somewhat abstract. I do find feminist hermeneutics to be helpful because it elevates the role of experience in the hermeneutical process. I also find both literal-traditionalist and evangelical feminist methods to clarify the importance of the Bible as the locus of authority. However, since the concern of this thesis is how to approach biblical texts from the perspective of questions raised by the experiences of Myanmar Christians, I find that none of these three hermeneutical schools offers adequate strategies for addressing contextual questions raised within a given culture. Even though all three hermeneutical methods acknowledge to some degree that their own North American context influenced their questions and approaches, they do not spell out or grapple with the present-day contextual factors that influence their interpretations. Therefore, to better address contextual questions within

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the contemporary culture in Myanmar, the next section explores contextual theology for helpful principles of interpretation.

5.1.2 Evaluation of Contextual Theology

An understanding of the role of interpreter in the interpretive process and the context of the interpreter are the two most important features of contextual hermeneutics. These features highlight the relationship between theology and context. When forming a hermeneutical methodology for Myanmar, the role of the interpreter’s context cannot be overlooked since the interpreter plays an important role in interpreting the meaning of biblical texts. Contextual theologians around the world have highlighted the importance of the interpreter’s context. Among them, and as noted before, the most significant work is that of two Catholic contextual theologians, Stephen Bevans and Robert Schreiter. Both have contributed significantly to defining the criteria for a satisfactory contextual hermeneutic. Bevans’ work is helpful in aiding our understanding of the role of context in hermeneutics, and Schreiter’s work contributes to an understanding of how the process of listening to both contemporary culture and the Bible works.

Stephen Bevans’ contextual theology developed out of his experiences as a missionary in the Philippines. He came to believe that there is no such thing as a universal theology, but “only contextual theology, feminist theology, black theology, liberation theology, Filipino theology, Asian-American theology, African theology, and so forth.” He concluded that “doing theology contextually is not an option, nor is it something that should only interest people from the Third World, missionaries who work there, or ethnic communities within dominant cultures.” In other words, contextualization is a “theological imperative.”

From this perspective, Bevans argues that contemporary human experience, or a people’s context, should be considered as an essential source for theology, along with scripture and tradition. This does not mean ignoring past traditions or approaches to interpretation, but he argues that although “we can certainly learn from others

\begin{itemize}
\item 1253 Ibid.
\item 1254 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies.
\item 1255 Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 3.
\item 1256 Ibid.
\item 1257 Ibid.
\item 1258 Ibid.
(synchronously from other cultures and diachronically from history),” without taking into account the contextual nature of all theology “the theology of others can never be our own.”

Bevans further claims that an acknowledgement of the significance of context for theology is essential. He sees that not only are scripture and tradition inevitably contextual, since they were “developed by human beings, written and conceived in human terms, and conditioned by human personality and human circumstances,” but they are also studied and interpreted today “within our own context as well.” From this perspective, doing theology contextually necessarily entails two elements: first, “the faith experience of the past that is recorded in scripture and kept alive, preserved, defended, and perhaps even neglected or suppressed-in-tradition," and, second, “the experience of the present, the context.”

Bevans notes that in order for theology to be authentically one’s own, “the received tradition must of course pass through the sieve of our own individual and contemporary-collective experience,” which includes “experiences of a person’s or group’s personal life,” the system of inherited ideas in the communal experience called “culture,” and our “social location.” He suggests therefore a dialectical reading between human experiences and the Christian tradition. He then identifies six models of doing theology that focus on context: translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic, transcendental, and countercultural.

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1259 Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 5.
1260 Ibid.
1261 Bevans quoted this from Rosemary Radford Reuther, Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 12-16. in Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 5.
1262 Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 5.
1264 Bevans quoted this from Hall, Professing the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context 33. in Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 5.He explains that social location "makes a difference, both feminist and liberation theologians have insisted, whether one is male or female, rich or poor, from North America or Latin America, at the center or at the margins of power."
1265 Jose M. de Mesa and Lode Wostyn, Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes (Manila: Maryhill School of Theology, 1982), 14-18.
1266 Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 28ff. He mentions only five models in the first edition of Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology.
Bevans’ explanation of the role of context in doing theology, and the interrelatedness of contextual theology and hermeneutics, leads to the conclusion that the experiences of a person or group within a given context are vitally important in contextual hermeneutics. What does this mean for contextual hermeneutics in Myanmar? First, hermeneutics in the Myanmar context cannot rest solely on the inherited methodologies of missionaries from the past. Their hermeneutical approach was embedded in the faith experiences of the past, recorded in Scripture and in church tradition. It was also itself a product of their own Eurocentric context. This acknowledgement does not mean that the old approach of the missionaries must be completely discarded, but rather that the present experiences of the people of Myanmar are also valid sources for theological reflection. For Myanmar hermeneutics, both past and present experiences are important for theological reflection today.

Bevans’ explanation of context in theology shares some similarities with the feminist hermeneutical methodology, in that it places emphasis on the importance of experience in hermeneutical formation and the process of interpretation. One difference is that the feminist hermeneutical approach focuses on the experiences of women, whereas contextual theology focuses on the experiences of people groups in a cultural context. Like the feminist hermeneutical methodology, contextual hermeneutics considers one’s presuppositions before the interpretational process begins. Both approaches see the role of experience as essential for the theological task.

I find that Bevans is most helpful in understanding how the context influences interpretation, and that Robert Schreiter is particularly helpful in understanding how the process of constructing theology takes place in contextual theology. Like Bevans, Schreiter stresses the importance of context in theology. He points out that people who raise concerns related to context often do so because of the inability of the “traditional frameworks of theology” to respond to the questions and issues that arise in local cultures and social settings.1267

Also, like Bevans, Schreiter argues that these questions about the role of context in theology have often arisen out of the experience of colonialism and dissatisfaction with

1267 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 3.
colonial interpretations. He sees the main questions confronting many of today’s Christians as these: “… how to be faithful both to the contemporary experience of the gospel and to the tradition of Christian life that has been received. How is a community to go about bringing to expression its own experience of Christ in its concrete situation? And how is this to be related to a tradition that is often expressed in language and concepts vastly different from anything in the current situation?”

Schreiter points out that the fact that such questions arise out of discontent often leads to the development of new ways of doing theology that are particularly concerned with “context, procedure, and history.” Amongst these three, he sees context as most critical for theological reflection, and therefore proposes an approach that focuses on the context first, before constructing a theology. For post-colonial Christians, this differs from the approach inherited from missionaries, which focuses first on an assumed ‘universal theology,’ out of which theological principles are ‘applied’ to a given context. He notes that, without the analysis of context as part of the theological process, theology can “become either irrelevant or a subtle tool of ideological manipulation.”

According to Schreiter, there are three ways of doing local theology—translation, adaptation, and contextualization. He sees translation as a model which missionaries in the past often employed as they saw what they considered to be parallel cultural situations from one context to the next. Schreiter describes this as “dynamic equivalence,” which he analyzes as problematic in that it assumes that “there is a direct equivalent in the local culture for the cultural pattern coming from another church setting.” This approach ignores the complexity of culture.

Schreiter explains the adaptation approach as a development of the translation model, with a more inclusive approach to the interplay between Christianity and local culture. However, he notes that this model still uses Western methods, if somewhat in dialogue with local contextual needs. This approach has limited value since the Western perspective is still prioritized over that of the local culture. He therefore argues for a

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1268 Ibid., xi.
1269 Ibid., 3.
1270 Ibid., 4.
1271 Ibid., 8.
1272 Ibid., 9.
third model, the contextual approach, which takes the local context seriously as it begins theological reflection with the cultural context. He notes two types of contextual theology—the “ethnographic approach” and the “liberation approach.”

Within the contextual approach to interpretation, which takes the cultural context very seriously, Schreiter highlights the process of analysis as ‘listening’ to contemporary culture and the Bible. In order to begin to articulate a local theology, he argues, the theological process must begin with “the opening of culture,” which includes an uncovering of cultural “principal values, needs, interests, directions and symbols.” Out of this listening to culture as a starting point in the interpretive process, he suggests a method called dynamic interaction, which is a dialectical study that moves “back and forth among the various aspects of gospel, church and culture.” He notes that this dialectical movement “raises questions that need to be addressed if local theology is to become an authentic and compelling voice in local churches.” He demonstrates how this dialectic works in what he calls a local theology map.

I would suggest that Schreiter’s approach sheds further light on Bevans’ view of context in the interpretive process. Schreiter addresses head-on the inability of the “traditional frameworks of theology” to answer the questions and issues arising within local cultures and situations—a central concern of this thesis. Therefore, I find that his explanation of ways of listening to culture and his highlighting of the influential role of context in theological reflection are helpful for constructing a Myanmar hermeneutics.

I also find that the “semiotic analysis” which Schreiter proposes for the process of listening to culture in forming local theologies is particularly helpful for constructing a contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar. According to Schreiter, this analysis is “the study of signs (from the Greek semeion=sign)” in culture, which examines “the apparent differences in understanding the meanings of the signs or symbols from one culture to another due to ‘artificial, or assigned, meanings’ attached to their cultural system.”

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1273 Ibid., 13.
1274 Ibid., 28.
1275 Ibid., 22.
1276 Ibid.
1277 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 56.
1278 Ibid., 50.
This is a study of signs in the “forms of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects” in cultural systems. These signs appear linguistically as well as in “painting, sculpture, music, dance, modes of exchange, dress, and family structure.” This analysis takes into account the complexity of language and signs in a culture. Recognizing that semiotics is an enormous field which cannot be fully explored given the constraints of this thesis, I will focus on only one aspect of Schreiter’s semiotic analysis that is particularly helpful for understanding the Myanmar context. This aspect analyzes the sign systems of a culture to aid in understanding the meaning of linguistic usages in interpretations of biblical texts.

The linguistic usage of Adoniram Judson in his Burmese translation of the Bible are a valid example of Schreiter’s concern, especially his use of the word “silence” in 1 Cor 14:34-36, given the contextual understanding of this word in Myanmar. I noted in Chapter 2 that the word “silence” in Burmese signifies much more than the general meaning of “not speaking,” because of the signs, codes and messages attached to the sign systems of Myanmar culture. In Myanmar culture the word “silence” also suggests patriarchy, and therefore a dictatorial authoritarianism which renders women silent—an association that then became associated with biblical authority because of Judson’s translation. This cultural understanding of “silence” has influenced how a biblical text like 1 Cor 14:34-36 has been interpreted in Myanmar.

To summarize, Schreiter’s focus on cultural influences in interpreting the meaning of biblical texts is particularly helpful for constructing a hermeneutic for Myanmar. This analysis sees culture as a “complex whole,” describing “a society’s beliefs and values,

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1281 “Semiotics” is defined in the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 734. Here the “communication of all form—whether between humans, plants, animals, or in other contexts—draws on a series of signaling systems.” Semiotics involves “the study not only of what we refer to as ‘signs’ in everyday speech, but of everything which ‘stands for’ something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects.” According to this definition, semiotics makes use of three disciplines: the study of signs, or semantics; the study of relationships between signs, or syntax; and the study of relating signs to their users, or pragmatics. These fields of study take account of “the effects of sociocultural and linguistic contexts.”
1282 As explained in Chapter 2.
behavioral norms, institutions and artifacts.” It therefore takes very seriously the cultural influences in defining the meanings of biblical texts. In the Myanmar context, such analysis would need to examine the language usages which missionaries have adopted in Burmese Bible translations. It would also need to analyze the implications of language usage for a local context by identifying influences behind interpreters’ assumptions in the hermeneutical process and the results of such assumptions. Our discussions in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 demonstrate this form of analysis. Chapter 8 will explore how this analysis adds to a contextual understanding and exegesis of 1 Cor 14:34b-36.

The question here is how an interpreter does contextual hermeneutics with an acute awareness of the context while also holding on to a commitment to the authority of the Bible. I find the approach of the evangelical contextual theologian Larry Caldwell to be particularly useful in this regard. His method evolved during thirty years of teaching experience in the Philippines, out of his frustration with the uncritical adaptation of Western curriculum and methodologies in Asian seminaries. He came to see that the Western model of theological education was irrelevant for the Asian context because it did not address contemporary issues, concerns, and values in that context. Further, he saw the lack of acknowledgement by Western-modeled theological educators of local people’s cognitive environment and the role of contextually informed assumptions in the interpretive process, resulting in an uncritical adaptation of imported theology and methodologies. This is an accurate depiction of the environment in Myanmar seminaries as well.

Caldwell contends that most practitioners of Western evangelical hermeneutics who claim to value contextualization in the mission of the church tend to follow two steps in their hermeneutical process. The first step is to analyze the original context of the biblical text to find out what the text meant to its original hearers. The question asked here is, “how is a particular Bible passage best interpreted in light of its original context?” The second step is to ask, “how can the meaning of the text in its original context be best interpreted and applied today?” According to Caldwell, while this method does

1283 Vanhoozer, et al., Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible, 151.
1285 As explained in Chapters 2 and 5.
attempt to engage the Bible contextually, the social location of the reader only becomes relevant in the second stage of enquiry, after the so-called “objective” exegetical work is complete. This he sees as problematic, since such interpreters are not challenged to become aware of their own “cultural influences” that shape their “hermeneutical orientations” or “hermeneutical assumptions.”

Caldwell concludes that this two-step approach to hermeneutics is flawed, primarily because it does not recognize that meaning is “shaped by the cognitive environment of the reader/hearer/interpreter.” He thus finds that this methodology has questionable relevance for the non-Western world, arguing that “any hermeneutical method must pay attention to both the interpreter’s own cognitive environment and its influence on the interpretation of a biblical text, as well as to the [original] reader/hearer and his/her interpretation of that same text.” He insists that this recognition of the interpreter’s role in forming meaning does not imply that the interpreter’s interpretation takes precedence over what the biblical text is saying. Rather, taking the interpreters’ and original or historical readers’ contexts into account will help the interpreters to understand their own cognitive environment, as well as that of “the audience.” Since he sees that the context of interpreters does in fact shape their interpretation of texts, he calls for a hermeneutical methodology that reflects the relevance of their cultural context and cognitive environment.

These approaches of contextual theologians can contribute to a new way of doing hermeneutics in Myanmar. Based on my evaluation of these contextual approaches to interpretation—two Catholics and an evangelical—I conclude that satisfactory contextual

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1287 Ibid., 91.
1289 Ibid., 92.
1289 My insertion.
1290 Caldwell, "Reconsidering Our Biblical Roots," 92.
1291 Ibid., 93.
hermeneutics for Myanmar cannot rely only on traditional methods of interpretation used in the past. Although these imported hermeneutical methods may have made positive contributions to the Myanmar church and theological education in the past, they cannot provide adequate answers to contextual questions raised within our context in present-day Myanmar. There is therefore a need for a new methodology that appreciates the methods of the past while exploring new ways of doing hermeneutics in Myanmar today. Contextual hermeneutics has much to offer to a new way of reading, interpreting and applying biblical texts in Myanmar.

This need for constructing such contextual hermeneutics is perhaps explained best by Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz in their preface to The Bible in a World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics. As they argue,

> When our own ways of understanding no longer work, it is essential to listen to others and learn from them. It seems to us that Western biblical scholarship suffers most from being ‘without context.’ It is carried out abstractly and therefore leads to abstract results and truths, which are not related to any context. ‘Abstract’ is not only understood in the usual sense of being opposed to ‘concrete.’ ‘Abstract’ also means: unattached to the life and reading of ‘ordinary’ people, far away from their questions, developed in the ivory tower of the university. ‘Abstract’ means: detached from the present and from its problems, concerned only with the reconstruction of a past with all its problems. Finally, another way of scholarly, ‘abstract’ reading that is disconnected from the real concerns of present-day readers is to flee into an imaginary ‘text world’—imaginary, because it is entirely created by scholars, ‘Abstract’ in the widest sense means: without context. All this does not contribute to understanding, which is related to our own context.\(^{1294}\)

In Myanmar, as elsewhere, reading the Bible is always contextual, because people approach the texts in relation to personal and coextensive communal issues. Due to prolonged economic, social, and political problems within the country, the abstract, academic study of theology has been a luxury that only a very few could enjoy.\(^{1295}\) A new way of doing hermeneutics in Myanmar now requires the inclusion of the laity in the hermeneutical process, as they reflect on interpretations and traditions of the past in conversation with the contemporary context of Myanmar. Including laity as well as clergy

\(^{1294}\) Walter Dietrich and Ulrich Luz, ed. The Bible in a World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), ix-x.

\(^{1295}\) Explained in Chapter 6.2.
in the hermeneutical process in Myanmar would aid the process of claiming interpretation, and theology in general, as our own. A new way of approaching biblical texts in Myanmar must include looking at the texts with an awareness of the contextually informed assumptions and experiences of the interpreters, while at the same time being willing to be corrected by the biblical texts. Grounded in this understanding, the following section introduces a new way of interpreting biblical texts in Myanmar.

5.2 CONSTRUCTING A SATISFACTORY CONTEXTUAL HERMENEUTIC

5.2.1 The ‘Critical Contextualization’ of Paul Hiebert

In constructing a satisfactory contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar, Paul Hiebert’s explication of “critical contextualization”\textsuperscript{1296} is helpful, since he confronts the challenge of grappling with questions of value that arise within particular contexts. He notes that contextualization has both positive as well as problematic implications for the church’s mission. In a positive sense, contextualization helps local theologies to avoid “the foreignness of a gospel dressed in Western clothes” by taking cultural worldviews and social realities seriously. He sees this has helping biblical interpreters to avoid a “monocultural approach.”\textsuperscript{1297} This new approach affirms “the right of Christians in every country” to be “cognitively free from Western domination,” and affirms the right of every church “to develop its own theology,”\textsuperscript{1298} institutions, and traditions.

However, Hiebert points out that an over-reliance on contextualization in theology and hermeneutics also carries with it several potential shortcomings. First, he sees that this approach can run “counter to the core Christian claims about the truth of the gospel and the uniqueness of Christ,”\textsuperscript{1299} since contextualization may view local cultural forms and systems of belief as inherently good. He calls this ‘uncritical contextualization’ and points out the need to evaluate every culture critically when considering the truth claims of the gospel.

\textsuperscript{1296} Hiebert, “Critical Contextualization.”
\textsuperscript{1297} Ibid., 108.
\textsuperscript{1298} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1299} Ibid.
Second, he sees the tendency to separate form and meaning in contextualization as problematic, since they are “inextricably linked.” He gives as an example of this linkage the fact that names are often inseparable from larger religio-cultural identities in most tribal societies. In Myanmar, some terminologies are inseparable from ideologies of the Buddhist religion. Adopting such terminologies without analyzing the meaning critically could lead to an undermining of the message of the gospel.

Third, Hiebert sees that contextualization often places emphasis on “accurate communication of meaning” while ignoring “the emotional and volitional dimension of the gospel.” Fourth, in contextualization “contemporary cultural contexts are taken seriously, but historical contexts are largely ignored.” He argues that there is still much to be learned from church history. As Christians face new questions in each cultural and societal setting, they will need to draw on the rich heritage of Christian traditions and biblical insights. Fifth, Hiebert points out that the extreme form of uncritical contextualization leaves no common ground between the theologies of one culture versus another, creating theological relativism. Finally, he notes that uncritical contextualization has a weak view of sin since it affirms that “human social organizations and cultures are essentially good,” which can undermine the gospel and lead to syncretism.

Despite these challenges entailed in doing theology contextually, Hiebert proposes a “critical contextualization” theological method that takes “the Bible seriously as the rule of faith and life.” He bases this critical method on an understanding that views “all human knowledge as a combination of objective and subjective elements” and “as partial but increasingly closer approximations of truth.” His critical method takes “both historical and cultural context seriously.” It looks critically at the “relationship between form and meaning in symbols such as words and rituals.”

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1300 Ibid.
1301 Ibid.
1302 Ibid.
1303 Ibid.
1305 Ibid., 111.
1306 Ibid.
1307 Ibid.
Hiebert’s views have affinities with those of Bevans and Schreiter, in that they all see the need for studying the historical context dialectically with the present context. He emphasizes the need to compare the messages and ritual practices of a given culture with the originally intended messages of biblical texts, through a process of mutual and analytic dialogue. This way of studying takes the perspective of faith very seriously, while at the same time freeing local theology from Western presuppositions, and from the need to do theology only by blaming colonialism or responding with a reactionary attitude of “anticolonialism.”

In sum, in his response to the question of how non-Western Christians should appropriate traditional cultural beliefs and practices, Hiebert argues that a critical contextual analysis must include “exegesis of the culture,” “exegesis of Scripture and the hermeneutical bridge,” “critical response,” “new contextualized practices,” and “checking against syncretism.”

Drawing on all of the above perspectives, a critical contextual hermeneutic is proposed as a fitting method for Myanmar Christians to adopt in order to interpret the Bible faithfully and effectively. This method considers key contextual questions. It also critically evaluates historical Christian traditions and, specifically in terms of the theme of this thesis, biblical interpretations affecting the role of women in the Myanmar church today. The following section elaborates the principles of such a critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar.

### 5.2.2 Components of a Critical Contextual Hermeneutic

Following Hiebert’s exposition of critical contextualization, a satisfactory hermeneutical method for Myanmar comprises two main components: critical-contextual, and feminist. The first component of this hermeneutical method, critical-contextual analysis, examines two contexts in Myanmar. It begins with the interpreters’ context —their cultural presuppositions and worldviews that influence how they interpret biblical texts. The purpose here is to understand the influences behind such interpretations.

This analysis includes looking critically at Bible translations in Myanmar considering the original languages of the Bible as well as local influences, which vary in different regions.

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1309 Ibid., 89.
of Myanmar, thus affecting translation preferences. For the purposes of this thesis, the critical analysis focuses on the Judson Burmese Bible translation, and evaluates the impact this translation has had on the role of women in the Myanmar church. The critical-contextual analysis also examines the historical context of the biblical texts, which influences the intended meanings of texts in specific times and circumstances.

The second component of this methodology draws on feminist analysis. Like liberationist hermeneutics, this method insists on reading the Bible from the "underside," which is the perspective of the oppressed or marginalized. However, the commitment to feminist analysis in this thesis is nuanced by an evangelical underpinning, which means that it accepts the Bible as the authority for faith and life. It is in this light that this method attempts to interpret and reevaluate biblical texts that concern the role and status of women in the church and society.

This method identifies the effects of patriarchy in the traditional interpretation of biblical texts as well as in the translation of biblical texts. It thus challenges traditional interpretations of the Bible in Myanmar which have been conditioned by interpreters’ patriarchal presuppositions. From the perspective of feminist hermeneutics, this work not only identifies issues surrounding the roles and status of women, but also reviews patriarchy based on the theme of liberation within the Bible. Thus, there is a reassessment of biblical texts considering their historical setting and the liberationist thrust of the gospel.

To summarize, critical contextual hermeneutics is a critical analysis of the Myanmar context, biblical translations, and the historical and theological contexts of the Bible. This method looks at these contexts dialogically, linking key themes by means of a hermeneutical bridge to arrive at appropriate applications for women in the contemporary Myanmar church. The following section explains the presuppositions behind this approach to interpretation.

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1311 As cited in Chapter 4.2.2.1.
5.2.3 Presuppositions of a Critical Contextual Hermeneutic

Two main presuppositions undergird critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar. First, there is an affirmation of Hiebert’s view of the Bible as the rule of faith and life. This is also the view of Grudem and Witherington, who see the Bible as claiming “to be and is a word from, not merely a word about, God.”\footnote{Witherington, The Living Word of God, xiv.} Drawing on their principle of situating oneself under the authority of the Bible, this method understands the Bible as the locus of authority in interpretation. In this sense, it differs from the approach of Schüssler Fiorenza, who sees the experience of women as the locus of authority. At the same time, it does take the contemporary experience of women as a valid source for critical reflection in the process of interpretation. This derives from the views of contextual theologians Bevans and Schreiter, who see the “the present human experiences” of any local community as a valid source for “loci theologici,” alongside scripture and tradition.\footnote{Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 4. Also in Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 19.}

Within this framework of biblical authority alongside recognition of the role of the contemporary context, this method focuses on discovering how to interpret the Bible faithfully in the local context, and on relevant ways of presenting the gospel in the context.

Second, it is important to reiterate that, although this method does not consider the experiences of women or the contemporary context as the locus of authority, it does consider the experiences of women as a valid starting point for a reevaluation of biblical texts that concern women’s role in the church. This method understands that although the Bible emerged out of a context of patriarchy, patriarchy is not part of God’s original creation, because God created all human beings in His image with equal worth and dignity.\footnote{Witherington, The Indelible Image, 2, 10.} Patriarchy is the effect of sin on relationships and is revealed in form and substance as the domination and assumed superiority of men over women.\footnote{Witherington, "Why Arguments against Women in Ministry Aren't Biblical."} In this sense, this method shares Witherington’s theological grounding in “the concept of the \textit{imago dei}” in Genesis and “its renewal in Christ.”\footnote{Witherington, The Indelible Image, 2, 10.}

The above two presuppositions must be stated at the beginning of the interpretation process since this method recognizes that “all interpretations are influenced and
conditioned by the interpreter and the interpreter’s context and viewpoint,” regardless of one’s commitment to biblical authority and view of the location of meaning in the text. This method acknowledges the interpreter’s presuppositions at the outset of interpretation to minimize biases.

An important critical tool of this method is examination of the historical context of biblical texts through careful exegesis. This critical tool is important not only in discovering the intended meanings of the texts, but also in minimizing biases in interpretation. Hence, this method acknowledges the importance of experiential questions arising within the interpreter’s context with sensitivity to hermeneutical issues surrounding biblical passages. In addition, it dialogues critically with the historical contexts of the Bible with an awareness of the interpreter’s biases in the hermeneutical process, to generate contextually appropriate responses.

5.2.4 Criteria for a Satisfactory Hermeneutic for Myanmar

The criteria for a satisfactory hermeneutic for Myanmar comprise three elements: comparative analysis, application analysis, and procedure. First, the comparative analysis includes an analysis of the present context of Myanmar and exegesis of two historical contexts—the translator’s context and the scriptural context. The second area is concerned with an analysis of the contextual applicability of the meaning discovered within the biblical text. The final function, procedure, explains how the above-mentioned contexts interact in the proposed contextual hermeneutics for Myanmar.

5.2.4.1 Comparative Analysis of Three Contexts

Having evaluated the contemporary schools of interpretation and contextual theology, my method focuses on three contexts which have relevance for Myanmar hermeneutics: the present context of the interpreter, the Bible translator’s context, and the historical context of the Scriptures. The context of the interpreter in this case is the context of Myanmar. The translator’s context is that of Adoniram Judson, who translated the Burmese Bible and whose historical influences have informed the teachings of the church in Myanmar. The historical context of the Scriptures includes the socio-historical setting of the biblical texts and the literary context, both of which influence the meaning of the

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texts. This critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar looks critically at all three contexts by means of comparative analysis. The following sub-sections elaborate on these contexts in detail.

5.2.4.1.1 Analysis of the Myanmar Context

Drawing on the perspectives of both Witherington, who sees experience as a “window into the Scripture,” and contextual theology, which views experience as a starting point of interpretation, my critical contextual hermeneutic understands the analysis of the Myanmar context to be crucial for biblical interpretation. This analysis of the Myanmar context includes an examination of cultural influences that have shaped theological and biblical interpretations, as well as cultural symbols and values embedded in the language. Bevans addresses the importance of symbols in his explanation of culture, which he describes as the “system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.” In this light, the analysis of Myanmar culture requires not only a critical examination of values and worldviews, but also the meanings of words and symbols within the local context.

For Myanmar Christians, symbols clearly influence the meaning of words in biblical texts. These cultural symbols derive from a collective religious and cultural history. They inform the meanings of words for interpreters, and interpreters in turn form the meanings of words in the biblical texts for other readers. Schreiter highlights this informing and forming nature of language in his discussion of semiotic analysis referenced earlier.

From this understanding of culture as informing and forming meanings embedded in language, he suggests a “holistic” approach between religion and culture. The reason for this is that he sees that one aspect of culture cannot be separated from other aspects, as they are all interconnected.

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1319 Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, 6.
1320 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 56.
1321 As cited in this chapter, page 229.
1322 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 43.
In the Myanmar context, religion and culture are connected to political history as well.\textsuperscript{1323} Thus, any analysis of the Myanmar context in relation to hermeneutics needs to include all three of these aspects of cultural analysis. A focus of cultural analysis related to the theme of this thesis is how Myanmar culture influences the meanings of biblical texts. Such knowledge leads to a deeper understanding of how these contextualized meanings inform Burmese Christians’ understanding of Scripture.\textsuperscript{1324}

This cultural analysis also helps to identify contextual questions raised by the text. Kevin Higgins’ work is helpful in this regard. Referring to how the recipients of a translated Bible respond to it, he notes that the cultural context of the recipient greatly influences how biblical texts are understood. In other words, “a person’s current and potential matrix of ideas, memories, experiences, and perceptions”\textsuperscript{1325} determines “what the recipient [of the Bible translation]\textsuperscript{1326} will assume to be the meaning of the text,” as well as framing “questions that are brought to the text.”\textsuperscript{1327} This is important in any analysis of the Myanmar context, because many of the questions raised in relation to Bible translation in Myanmar highlight the role of the recipient in assuming the meaning of the text.

The final focus area in critical cultural analysis entails an examination of contemporary interpretations of biblical texts. This is important because contemporary interpretations also greatly influence how the local community understands the meaning of the biblical texts. As noted in Chapter 4, current biblical interpretation in Myanmar owes an intellectual debt to Western scholarship.\textsuperscript{1328} It plays an influential role since biblical interpretations in Myanmar depend greatly on the doctrinal teachings of the respective denominations, which came about through the efforts of missionaries from Western countries. As noted previously, their interpretations have generally been adopted uncritically, without people realizing that these interpretations are influenced by the foreign interpreters’ own context. Therefore, the analytical need in Myanmar is to

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\textsuperscript{1323} As cited in Chapter 2.1.
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\textsuperscript{1324} As cited in Chapter 2.3.
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\textsuperscript{1326} My insertion.
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\textsuperscript{1327} Higgins, "Biblical Interpretation Diverse Voices," 195
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\textsuperscript{1328} As cited in Chapter 4.1.
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evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these Western interpretations to address contextual questions more effectively.

5.2.4.1.2 Analysis of the Translator’s Context

How do we approach biblical translation in Myanmar? As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Judson Burmese translation is, for some, viewed as a product of colonialism since it emerged during that period, even though the translator was from America. This view may also be related to Judson’s role as an interpreter for the British colonialists. In analyzing this translator context, I support Hiebert’s statement that interpreters from that era must not be evaluated solely by blaming colonialism or by responding with a reactionary attitude of anti-colonialism.

My colleague John De Jong concurs with this view. Although he agrees that Judson was certainly influenced by the prevailing assumptions of his time, he concludes that “the point is not to blame him for this, but rather that we too are all affected in the same way. There are areas of our interpretation and understanding of the Bible that may also not stand the test of time. We are thus called to humility and openness to other views with which we may not agree. The Word of God is infallible, but our interpretations are not!” This is valuable advice when analyzing the translator context.

However, as I have argued in Chapter 6, the challenge in Myanmar hermeneutics is more that the translation of Judson is unquestioned than that he is blamed for any outdated approach to translation. This makes it even more important that the translator’s role in forming local theology not be ignored in developing a hermeneutic for Myanmar. Considering the translator’s role in determining the meaning of texts and applying such meanings in each context, this role must be viewed as being as important as other aspects of contextualization. A critical approach insists on approaching translations of the Bible as interpretations of the translators, who were influenced by the worldview of their time and the presuppositions which flowed from it.

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1329 As cited in Chapter 2.2.1.
1330 Hiebert, “Critical Contextualization.”
1331 As cited in this chapter 5.2.1.
1332 De Jong, "A 'Sin Offering'" 91.
1333 As cited in Chapter 6.2.
Given this perspective, my analysis focuses on the following questions in the Judson Burmese translation of the Bible (although this principle is valid in relation to other Bible translations): What are the distinctive vocabularies that Judson used? Are these vocabularies different from other Bible translations in Myanmar? Are they different from the original languages of the Bible? What are the influential factors predisposing Judson to translate in the way he did? Is there any sign of patriarchal and androcentric ideologies and theologies behind the terminologies he used? What is the impact of his translation choices on the church? These questions are asked from the assumption that “every translation is already an interpretation.”

Given an understanding of the intermediary role of scholarship, one must conclude that the analysis of the translator’s context is critical in Myanmar biblical studies.

5.2.4.1.3 Exegesis of the Historical Context of Scripture

The critical contextual hermeneutics I am proposing differs in certain key respects from feminist and non-evangelical contextual theology approaches to exegesis of the historical context of Scripture. It approaches the historical context of the Bible from the perspective of faith, drawing on a high view of the Bible that sees biblical texts as the inspired Word of God. This method concurs with Witherington that all contextual presuppositions are to be normed by the Scriptures.

Given this understanding, my method focuses, on determining the intended meaning of the biblical texts in their historical context. This differs from the feminist view of Schüssler Fiorenza and from non-evangelical contextual theologians who view the Bible as mostly the work of men. Feminist and non-evangelical contextual theologians focus on discovering how the texts operate within the historical context and how these texts influence the present day. They look at the ideological constructs of the text that silence others, and seek a historical reconstruction.

Critical contextual hermeneutics focuses on the historical context of the biblical texts to discover the intended meaning of the texts, that is, the meaning that the original recipients of the texts would have taken for granted in their historical setting. This method

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1334 Witherington, *The Living Word of God*, 16.
1335 Ibid., 160.
1336 Schüssler Fiorenza, "*Biblical Interpretation and Critical Commitment,*" 11.
takes seriously Witherington’s view of context as “king”\textsuperscript{1337} in determining meaning, and thus analyzes a text in relation to both its immediate historical context and the overall context of the Bible.

Joel Green, in \textit{Dictionary of Theological Interpretation of the Bible}, describes this aspect of interpretation as “context as cotext,” which refers to “the location of an utterance within a string of linguistic data, the sentences, paragraphs, and chapters surrounding and related to a text and within which an utterance finds its meaning.”\textsuperscript{1338} This historical analysis of biblical passages includes linguistic data, literary forms, grammar, and critical analysis of the cultural and historical backgrounds of the text. Just as the cultural symbols in the Myanmar are shown to be essential to interpreting the Bible, the cultural symbols and values in the Jewish/Greek of the NT are significantly important to interpreting the Bible. Here the historical context is the dynamic element in determining the meaning of the text. Therefore, the process of interpretation in Myanmar is many-layered. It involves not simply honouring the Myanmar cultural context and that of Adoniram Judson but also the Jewish/Greek cultural context within which the NT was written.

\textit{5.2.4.2 Analysis of the Contextual Application of the Text}

The primary concern of critical contextual hermeneutics differs from the feminist method of Schüssler Fiorenza.\textsuperscript{1339} She sees any quest for “normativeness”\textsuperscript{1340} in a biblical text as another influence of patriarchal ideology and thus to be rejected. Critical contextual hermeneutics, in contrast, seeks to identify an appropriate application of the biblical text to the present context from the perspective of faith and the authority of the Bible. It focuses on “discerning between the permanent, universal, normative teaching of Scripture on the one hand and, on the other hand, that which is transient, not applicable to every person in every culture, not intended to function as a mandate for normative

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{1338} Vanhoozer, et al., \textit{Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible}, 132.
\bibitem{1339} As cited in Chapter 4.2.1.
\bibitem{1340} Schüssler Fiorenza, \textit{But She Said}, 138.
\end{thebibliography}
behavior.” This has affinities with both Grudem’s and Witherington’s appeal to faith as a principle for application.

A question raised here is the criteria for deciding whether a text is normative. As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, Grudem sees all teachings of the Bible as normative, with applications for Christians in all times and places, unless Scripture itself indicates otherwise. According to Grudem, even regarding the teaching of isolated passages, Christians are “still obligated to obey it,” although the application may assume different forms today than in the original context.

Generally, Witherington agrees with Grudem that, although the principles remain unchangeable, practical applications often do and should change with differing historical and cultural situations. He cautions interpreters about the importance of applying the texts only “where the situation is clearly analogous today.” As mentioned in my evaluation of his approach, Witherington adds that any application must consider not only the original meaning of the text, but also the trajectory of the advice given.

Witherington’s caution to consider the overall trajectory of New Testament theology is important for critical contextual hermeneutics in Myanmar. My approach takes seriously both the historical setting of texts, the theological trajectory of the New Testament, and the influences that have guided interpreters, whether in the past or the present. From their position of looking back into historical texts—rereading through the lens of the present—interpreters today are taking note of the patriarchy and other contextual issues in the Bible. Also from this position of looking back, interpreters can see the direction in which the New Testament is moving, which can stimulate attitude changes today.

One of the examples that Witherington gives to illustrate the notion of trajectory is that of the New Testament teaching on slavery. Rather than simply condoning the practice of slavery that existed in the world of the New Testament, the broader underlying liberating

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1342 As cited in this chapter 5.1.1.
1343 As cited in Chapter 4.2.
1344 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 362.
1345 Witherington, The Living Word of God, 169.
1346 Witherington, Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, 383.
1347 As cited in this chapter 5.1.
thrust of New Testament theology helped to bring about a change of attitudes about slavery among Christians later in the history of the church. He sees the same kind of attitude change occurring today regarding the role of women in the church, since the liberating thrust of New Testament theology is pushing believers today toward “the reformation of patriarchy coupled with affirmation of women’s new role.”

This focus on the theological trajectory of the Bible forces us to think critically about how issues such as patriarchy, violence, and other problems of inequality which can be observed in the Bible should be interpreted and responded to today. The analysis of critical contextual hermeneutics considers the broad trajectory of the Bible in the direction of inclusion and ‘oneness in Christ’ in determining appropriate applications of biblical texts in present-day Myanmar.

5.2.4.3 **Procedure: The Dynamic Interaction Process**

Critical contextual hermeneutics follows a procedure known as the *dynamic interaction process*. As already noted, the term “dynamic interaction” comes from the work of Robert Schreiter. Although he uses this process to focus on how critical analysis works in contextual theology, it is also relevant for contextual hermeneutics. My critical contextual hermeneutic process is a modification of the dynamic interaction process Schreiter has proposed. Instead of the two contexts which Schreiter compares (the biblical context and the interpreter context), my method focuses on the relationship among three contexts—the Myanmar context, the translation context, and the biblical context—to evaluate their importance in the development of a critical contextual hermeneutics.

This process of critical contextual hermeneutics can also be explained by means of mapping. The flow chart of the critical contextual hermeneutics map is a modification of Schreiter’s local theology map. Although some elements are adapted from Schreiter’s local theology map, most of my mapping differs from his. The main components of my map are identified in boxes and these boxes are numbered. The arrows indicate a possible flow of thoughts in the process of contextual hermeneutics. Schreiter’s mapping of the

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1349 *Ibid*.
1350 Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 22.
construction of local theology, and the dynamic interaction process among the three contexts of critical contextual hermeneutics, are outlined below.

Schreiter notes that this process occurs “especially when a community has wrapped up its identity in one particular theological expression.” In the context of Myanmar, interpreters’ cultural worldviews have guided their interpretive assumptions, as well as those of the missionaries’ Bible translations and denominational teachings, and even contemporary interpretations that have come from other cultural contexts outside of Myanmar. In my hermeneutical flow chart, the boxes that overlap show the link between previous local interpretations and these other influences. A dotted line from the contemporary interpretations to the previous interpretations shows the influences of these interpretations on local understandings. In short, this first step of critical contextual hermeneutics identifies the problematic nature of previous local interpretations. This process then leads to the next step, which seeks to ascertain the appropriate starting point of interaction in response to the issues identified in previous local interpretations.

**Chart 1. Robert Schreiter’s Map of Constructing a Local Theology**

![Chart 1](attachment:image.png)

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1351 Ibid., 26.
1352 Ibid., 25. His local theology map “Spirit and Gospel: Shaping the Community Context.”
5.2.4.3.1 Previous Local Interpretation (1)

Like Schreiter’s map, critical contextual hermeneutics begins with analyzing previous local interpretations. This step deals with questions of interpretation arising from the community of believers. These local questions arise when previous interpretations are no longer satisfactory for the local context in answering questions regarding biblical texts. According to Schreiter, these local questions, raised within a community to begin the theological process, indicate that the community is “coming to a certain maturity” and assume that “it has been fed by other local theologies up to that time.”

This first stage in the process examines previous local interpretations of scriptural passages to answer questions about why the former interpretation is no longer satisfactory or is now problematic.

5.2.4.3.2 Analysis of Contemporary Interpretations (3)

Differing from Schreiter’s map, the next area analyzes contemporary interpretations of biblical texts by considering their influential role in determining how the local

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1353 This is my modification of Schreiter’s local theology map. His map can be seen in ibid. I have borrowed only Nos. 1, 2, and 10 directly from Schreiter’s work.

1354 Ibid., 26.

1355 In Area 3, Schreiter looks at the emergence of themes from local theology.
community interprets and forms the meanings of biblical texts. It is important to examine contemporary interpretations considering how they have been influenced by the prior interpretations analyzed in the first stage of the method.

As noted earlier, current biblical interpretations in Myanmar owe an intellectual debt to outside scholarship, mainly Western scholarship.\textsuperscript{1356} Christians in the Myanmar context adopted Western interpretations without an awareness that the interpreters' own Eurocentric worldview influenced these interpretations. Because they are still normative for most Myanmar Christians today, it is essential to study them through critical analysis rather than uncritical adaptation. Therefore, in Chapters 5 and 6, I analyzed three contemporary schools of interpretation to show their influences on Myanmar interpretations. In Chapter 5 I highlighted the presuppositions behind their interpretations. In Chapter 6 I showed how their presuppositions have influenced their interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36.

\textit{5.2.4.3.3 The Opening of Culture (2)}

Following Schreiter, this area starts with “the opening of culture through analysis.”\textsuperscript{1357} In his understanding of contextual theology, cultural analysis is generally regarded as an ideal place to begin the process of analyzing previous local theologies. In the contextual hermeneutics, the process can begin either with cultural analysis (Area 2) or with analysis of biblical texts (Area 4) considering Bible translation issues. Irrespective of where one begins, both areas must be in dialogue with the original biblical language texts of Area 7. The double-headed arrow illustrates their back and forth nature of dialogue and inter-relationship.

The opening of the cultural process entails analysis of cultural influences that shape theological and biblical meanings. This area first analyzes values and worldviews found in Myanmar cultural and religious experience. As a part of this analysis, it evaluates the significance of religio-cultural symbols and meanings embedded in the language, and the influential factors behind such meanings. These symbols found within the language influence how one understands the meaning of words in biblical texts. In Chapter 2 and 3,

\textsuperscript{1356} As cited in Chapter 4.1 and this chapter 5.1.
\textsuperscript{1357} Schreiter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, 25.
I demonstrated how certain key words and symbols are understood in Myanmar and how they have influenced interpretations of biblical texts.

5.2.4.3.4 The Opening of Scripture through Analysis (4)

The opening of Scripture through analysis differs from Schreiter’s “opening of Church tradition through analysis.” In his concern for forming a local theology that is relevant to the local context, Schreiter mainly analyzes church traditions so that they may dialogue with local cultures. The primary concern of a critical contextual hermeneutic is its relevance for the local context. This area therefore unfolds through analysis of Scripture. Scripture here refers to local Bible translations, which are used regularly to interpret meaning in the local context. Looking critically at local Bible translations involves paying close attention to the usage of vocabulary and linguistic structures in translation. It also involves uncovering differences from and similarities with other Bible translations.

The purpose of this opening of Scripture through analysis is to gain an understanding of contemporary local questions by critically revisiting the choices made by the translator in question. As mentioned in Area (2), the opening of dialogue with previous local interpretations can begin either with the opening of culture through analysis (Area 2) or with the opening of Scripture (Area 4). One example of the link between local questions and local translations of Scripture can be found in Judson’s translation of 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36, explored in Chapter 2.

5.2.4.3.5 Analysis of Translator’s Interpretations (5)

Starting with this area, my map of critical contextual hermeneutics diverges significantly from Schreiter’s map of local theology. After critically analyzing the language usage in translations, the process moves to the translator’s interpretations, where the focal point is the context of the translator-as-interpreter. Investigating the context of the translator includes looking at the historical setting and prevailing interpretations in the translator’s time and place. This is done from the perspective that translation is interpretation; in

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1358 As cited in Chapter 2.1.
1359 As cited in Chapter 3.2.
1360 Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 25.
other words, translation of the Bible is an interpretation by the translator. It is a product of the translator’s context, and this influences translation.

The way this analysis of translation operates in the critical contextual hermeneutic process is explained in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 2 focused on the influence of the Judson Bible translation in Myanmar.\textsuperscript{1361} I examined in detail his translation of 1 Corinthians 13:34b-36 by comparing it with the Greek texts in Chapter 3.\textsuperscript{1362} In addition, Chapter 3 also includes a comparative analysis between Judson’s translation and another Burmese translation to show differences in the use of the Burmese language. I have also explained in Chapter 6 that such analysis of the translator’s interpretations has occurred very infrequently in Myanmar due to respect for the translator.\textsuperscript{1363}

5.2.4.3.6 Impact of Translator’s Interpretations on Church Traditions and Theologies (6)

After analyzing the context of translations and translators, the process then seeks to discover the impact of the translator’s interpretation on church tradition and theology. This area also diverges from Schreiter’s approach (Area 8), where he focused on “the impact of local theologies on church tradition.”\textsuperscript{1364} The impact of the translator’s interpretation is the main concern here, since the translator significantly influences local understandings of Scripture. Local understandings have come about through reading translations, which have shaped the theology of the church.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the translator’s usage of language and terminologies represents the translator’s views of the biblical texts. These views are products of the translator’s theology and culture, which in turn influence local theologies and church traditions. Therefore, this area focuses on discovering the nature and extent of the influences which the translator’s views have had on church tradition and theology in Myanmar. In the case of 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36, Chapter 2 revealed the impact of the translator’s interpretation on the role of women in the church.\textsuperscript{1365} It is important to note

\textsuperscript{1361} As cited in Chapter 2.2.2.
\textsuperscript{1362} As cited in Chapter 3.2.2.
\textsuperscript{1363} As cited in Chapter 6.3.1.
\textsuperscript{1364} Schreiter, \textit{Constructing Local Theologies}, 25.
\textsuperscript{1365} As cited in Chapter 2.2.
that Area 6 feeds back into Area 4, the opening of Scripture through analysis. This shows the circle of influence that Bible translation has on local interpretation.

5.2.4.3.7 Analysis of Scripture in Original Biblical Languages (7)

As mentioned earlier, the opening of interaction can begin with either the local culture or the local translation of the Bible. Regardless of where one starts to engage with the process, there must be interaction with the historical context of the Bible. In order to analyze the historical context of biblical texts, it is necessary to analyze the texts in their original language. In the context of Myanmar, this step is especially crucial since local interpretations have rested on imported theological traditions and mostly on the Bible translation of Adoniram Judson. The analysis of biblical texts in their original language contributes to the interpreter’s awareness of problematic areas in local interpretations.

This step is of central importance to the critical contextual hermeneutic process, because contextual hermeneutics as I practise it is committed to scriptural authority. Grounded in this commitment, contextual hermeneutics seeks to discover the intended meanings in the historical biblical context to apply them in a contextually appropriate manner. Therefore, this area examines the terminology usage, grammar and structural features of the original biblical language and compares them with local Bible translations, pinpointing similarities, and differences. Chapter 3 employs this analysis, and points out similarities and differences between the original biblical language and Judson’s translation of the text in question.

5.2.4.3.8 Analysis of Intended Meaning in Historical Context (8)

After analyzing biblical texts in their original languages, we proceed to an analysis of the meaning of the biblical texts. Due to time and cultural distances between the biblical authors and the present day, careful exegesis of the biblical texts in their own setting is crucial in critical contextualization. To this end, this process begins by examining the socio-historical backgrounds of the texts. The process then explores the theology and teachings of the biblical author elsewhere on similar issues. In addition, it looks critically at the biblical author’s usage of words, syntax, and literary forms. All of this is done to discover the intended meaning of the original author of the text. Chapter 7 will demonstrate this process of critical contextual hermeneutics.
5.2.4.3.9 Determining Appropriate Application for the Church (9)

The next important component of critical contextual hermeneutics is identifying appropriate applications for the church in Myanmar today. This entails linking the original meaning of the biblical texts to the contemporary situation. In other words, the process of critical contextual hermeneutics moves from determining the original meaning of the texts to discovering their contemporary significance.

The principles related to analysis of the contextual application of the text are as follows. The first principle of application looks at whether the text is restricted to its original historical context or is broadly applicable in the present context. The second principle of application analyzes cultural relativity as applied to the present context. These principles also consider the theological trajectory that the New Testament is pursuing to determine whether the text is applicable to today’s context.

5.2.4.3.10 Impact of Local Interpretation on the Church and Culture (10)

The final process of critical contextual hermeneutics is like Schreiter’s local theology map (Area 9), where he looks at “the impact of local theologies upon the culture.” Critical contextual hermeneutics examines the impact of local interpretations on the church and culture. This is approached from the perspective that the contestation related to previous local interpretations, which involves critically reflecting on inherited local interpretations of biblical texts, will contribute positive results for the church and the culture. Schreiter’s summary is helpful in this regard:

Like contextual theology, any reading of the context affects local theology, the traditions of the local church, and the local culture. Thus, this process looks at the contributions of new interpretations to local theology and church traditions. This process also investigates the impact of local interpretations in light of new understandings of the texts in local settings—that is, the extent to which the Bible affirms or challenges the local culture. This area feeds back into the cultural setting which is the focus of Area 2. This demonstrates the ‘dialectical cycle’ of influence that local interpretation has on the local church and culture.

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As cited in this chapter 5.2.4.2.
As cited in this chapter 5.2.4.2.
Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies, 25.
Ibid., 36.
5.3 CONCLUSION

Drawing on all of the issues raised in Chapters 1 to 4, this chapter has outlined a critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar. Three contemporary schools of interpretation, together with an appropriation of contextual theology and a hermeneutic of critical contextualization, have contributed to an articulation of principles of interpretation for Myanmar. This analysis has highlighted criteria for a Myanmar hermeneutic, incorporating dialectical analysis of three contexts, analysis of the contextual application of the texts, and a dynamic interaction process. Together these provide a framework within which to evaluate traditional interpretations affecting the role and status of women in Myanmar, while retaining a high view of the authority of Scripture and its role in the Christian church. From these understandings, the next section revisits the context of Myanmar and revisits the 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36 text.
SECTION III: REVISITING THE CONTEXT AND THE TEXT
The first part of this section, chapter 6, looks at the problematic nature of Myanmar hermeneutics in engaging critically with the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text. They are vital in understanding obstacles that interpreters encounter in approaching the text, and how these obstacles hinder the interpreters in analyzing the Bible translation of Adoniram Judson. This will involve using steps 2 and 4 of my chart. Then, chapter 7 revisits the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text through principles learned from the proposed context-sensitive hermeneutics mentioned in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 6
REVISITING THE CONTEXT

6.1 INTRODUCTION: AN INTERPLAY OF CONTEXTS
Since the movement toward church independence after the repatriation of missionaries by the authorities in the 1960s,1370 some Christian scholars in Myanmar have begun to address the need to develop a contextual theology that is relevant to the Myanmar setting. However, their focus has been primarily on understanding the Buddhist worldview, since Christians are a small minority in Myanmar facing difficult challenges in terms of co-existence with or evangelization of the dominant Buddhists. They have devoted much less attention to the influences of the Myanmar context on interpreters’ approach to biblical texts.

As explained in Chapter 2, the Myanmar worldview is deeply rooted in a complex and overlapping cultural, religious, and political framework. These elements play influential roles in Myanmar interpreters’ “hermeneutical orientations” 1371 or “hermeneutical assumptions,”1372 which determine the kinds of questions that are raised about the text and the presuppositions one has about the meanings of words in the text. Recognition of

1372 Ibid., 93.
these influences on the formation of theological meaning becomes an important focal point in developing a contextual hermeneutical method that is relevant for Myanmar. This is particularly pertinent for the interest of this thesis in understanding biblical passages concerning women, as interpretations of these passages have a bearing on how the church perceives the role of women in the church.

Given my concern to construct a hermeneutical methodology that has relevance for the Myanmar cultural context or “cognitive environment,” in Chapter 3 I identified the context of Bible translation as another important influence on interpretations of passages about women’s silence, along with the context of the interpreter and the context of the text. In Chapter 4, I also evaluated three contemporary hermeneutical approaches from Western interpreters, whose views represent popular approaches to interpretation in Myanmar, to show “the function and place of the interpreter,” and how the interpreter’s context influences assumptions and theological meanings.

Drawing on these discussions, this chapter elaborates on the challenges entailed in constructing a contextual hermeneutic in Myanmar. The first part of the chapter examines some of the obstacles to doing contextual hermeneutics in Myanmar. The second section further develops the challenges encountered by Myanmar interpreters by highlighting aspects of interpretation that require rethinking. This is followed by specific suggestions to overcome these obstacles through the application of contextual hermeneutical principles.

In evaluating three contemporary hermeneutical approaches to determining meaning in 1 Cor 14:34-35, it became clear that all three are influenced by two contexts: the context of the Bible, and the context of the interpreter. All three hermeneutical methodologies show the overlap between the biblical context and the interpreter’s context, whereby “a fusion of the horizons” occurs as their cultural backgrounds dialogue with the text. None of these scholars mention the translator’s context, since they work directly with the

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1373 Caldwell, "Part 2: Reconsidering Our Biblical Roots," 120. See also Caldwell, "Interpreting the Bible with the Poor."; Caldwell, "How Asian is Asian Theological Education?"; Caldwell, "Towards the New Discipline of Ethnohermeneutics."


original biblical languages, Greek and Hebrew. However, as I have argued previously, Bible translation must be included as another key context for interpretation in Myanmar, alongside the interpreter’s context and the historical context of the text, for translation has played a crucial role in biblical studies in Myanmar. Considering the importance of these three contexts, the following section will examine some of the obstacles to doing contextual hermeneutics in Myanmar.

6.2 CULTURAL OBSTACLES TO DEVELOPING A MYANMAR CONTEXTUAL HERMENEUTICS

In Myanmar, there are several obstacles which arise in reading biblical passages that command women to be silent in the church. As mentioned previously, the most obvious obstacles would be personal biases and assumptions that interpreters bring to the text. However, the obstacles I wish to highlight in this section are more to do with cultural roadblocks that make it difficult to move beyond the common hermeneutical practices in Myanmar that prevent interpreters from reading biblical texts with critical eyes. We will consider several of these obstacles in turn.

6.2.1 Problems with the Culture of Obedience

The culture of obedience is a major obstacle to doing critical analysis of biblical texts in Myanmar. Since the concept of silent obedience to authority is deeply rooted in culture, religion and history in Myanmar, biblical passages concerning women’s silence in 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-12 have been accepted without critical analysis. Interpreters detect strong similarities between the cultural worldview revealed in these texts and that which predominates in Myanmar, and this contributes to an uncritical and literal appropriation of the texts.

In writing about the parallels between the patriarchal cultures of the Bible and Myanmar, Anna May Chain’s comments can aid our understanding of why there is such an uncritical approach to biblical interpretation in Myanmar. In her research among Myanmar women interpreters, she found that women in Myanmar generally see the Bible as affirming their traditional female role as wife and mother, whose sphere is confined to the home. As she notes,
The stories of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Naomi and Ruth, among others, resonate in their lives. They identify closely with these women as they lived in cultures and societies very similar to their own. They suffer together with Sarah in Pharaoh's harem, they are angry with Lot who was willing for his daughters to be raped in place of his guests, and they sympathize with Naomi and Ruth as they struggle for survival in a man's world. These biblical women's stories are their stories.\textsuperscript{1376}

Many Myanmar Christian women do indeed see the lives of ancient Israelite women, who lived in a thoroughly patriarchal system, as like their own lives. Like these biblical women, Burmese women see themselves, in Chain's words, as having “to work hard to put food on the table, working outside in the fields, factories, and offices; at the same time, they must fulfill the traditional roles of wife and mother by caring for the children, doing household chores, and pleasing their husband.”\textsuperscript{1377} It is thus understandable that they would view biblical women as “circumscribed by customs and traditions that are so familiar to Burmese women. They must act within the boundaries set for them. They have been taught since childhood to be obedient and passive daughters, wives, and mothers.”\textsuperscript{1378}

A male contextual theologian, Peter Thein Nyunt, also affirmed this circumscribed image of women in Myanmar's patriarchal system. As he points out, “concerning women’s role, mothers, being submissive to fathers, ... are strictly bounded by patriarchal traditions and cultures, not only to bear and care for children, but also to control the purse, prepare food, keep order and discipline, to be responsible for the general wellbeing of the whole family, and to share what she can with her husband’s relations and her own.”\textsuperscript{1379}

Myanmar Christians often reference the Genesis 2 creation narrative to reinforce the view that, because Eve was created second and from Adam's rib, women are meant to be subordinate and therefore obedient to men. Aye Aye Win points out that in Myanmar churches, the traditional interpretation of “Genesis 2 is especially used to show how the

\textsuperscript{1376} Chain, "Wives, Warriors And Leaders."
\textsuperscript{1377} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1378} Ibid.
Bible complements the Bamar Buddhist cultural heritage,” which is similarly patriarchal. Anna May Chain suggests that this literal reading of Scripture leads both men and women to believe that “the Bible affirms the traditional woman’s role as wife and mother, her sphere confined to the house,” because such patriarchal stories in the Bible resonate with their own lives; “they identify closely with these women, as they lived in cultures and societies very similar to their own.”

The postcolonial feminist biblical scholar Eh Tar Gay links this uncritical correlation between biblical and Myanmar patriarchy to the fact that most churches in Myanmar are fundamentalist, and thus their approach to biblical interpretation is literal. She sees this literal approach as contributing greatly to the blind acceptance of less than flattering passages about women, whereby interpreters conclude that the “stories of Eve, Potiphar’s wife, Lot’s daughters, Moabite women, Delilah, Jezebel, Herodias, and Salome, show women as weak, prone to temptation, and as seducers of men.” This view is backed up by Myanmar churches’ teachings that Eve’s disobedience to God and God’s subsequent punishment of all women was a “divine injunction for perpetuity so that women should always accept the power and authority of men over them. Therefore, they must resign themselves to this inferior position and not attempt to take positions of leadership in the home, church, or public affairs.” Given this perspective, it is inevitable that such interpretations will reaffirm the ideology of patriarchy, and thereby reinforce the subordination of women in church and society.

To summarize, there is clearly a link between the Myanmar culture of obedience to patriarchal traditions and interpreters’ literalist acceptance of biblical texts that appear to support patriarchy. This way of reading the Bible leads to accepting such texts without question. It is because of this culture of obedience that interpreters in Myanmar often conclude that the Bible confirms the subordinate role of women.

1381 Chain, "Wives, Warriors And Leaders."
1382 Gay, "Authority and Submission," 49.
1383 Ibid. She also cites Anna May Say Pa, “Because of Eve: Reading Genesis 2 and 3 from Feminist Perspectives,” Engagement 5 (December 2005): 31-36.
6.2.2 Problems with the Virtue of Submission

Interpreters in Myanmar have tended to highlight similarities between the biblical and Myanmar virtue of female submission, and its other side, the culture of shame. Eh Tar Gay points out, for example, that the apparent inference in some New Testament texts that long hair represents the glory of women with feminine virtue rooted in modesty and submission finds resonance with “the concepts of eindaray, theika and hpon” in Myanmar culture.\(^{1384}\)

In Myanmar culture, long hair is considered not only a proper hairstyle for women but also a symbol of their feminine virtue. A famous saying in Myanmar describes men’s hpon (glory) as their letyone (strength), while women’s glory is their san htoone (a hair bun that requires having long hair). This long hair symbolises a key virtue ascribed only for women, eindaray, which Eh Tar Gay defines as “decent, silent and submissive behaviour.”\(^{1385}\)

Possessing this virtue means that a woman must speak softly, never shout, have a submissive attitude to the “control and protection of a father or a brother or a husband,” and avoid “a job involving contact with or leading many men, having more than one partner, [or] turning to prostitution.”\(^{1386}\)

The Burmese saying, “women’s eindaray cannot be bought with gold,” is widely used in Myanmar to reinforce women’s submission. Shame occurs when this virtue of submission is not practiced. If a woman does not exhibit the virtue of eindaray, she is described as someone who does not possess theikha, meaning dignity or reverence, and the absence of theikha is the epitome of shame.

Given this cultural orientation, Myanmar interpreters often see 1 Cor 11 as affirming not only a proper hairstyle for women (long hair), but also a submissive role for women. Eh Tar Gay notes that since this virtue of submission does not allow women “to have equal status with men or participate in many spheres of social, political and religious affairs,” women in Myanmar accept such biblical texts as affirming that their virtue consists in “modesty … silence, submissiveness, bearing children, faith, love and holiness.”\(^{1387}\)

Since this understanding of virtue creates in women a sense of “timidity, lack of self-confidence and other constraints of culture,” Anna May Say Pa refers to such submission and shame

\(^{1384}\) Gay, "Authority and Submission," 316.
\(^{1385}\) Ibid., 300.
\(^{1386}\) Ibid., 301.
\(^{1387}\) Ibid.
as “dragons” that create obstacles to Myanmar women’s quest for wholeness, including those attempting to do theology. Since Judson’s rendering of 1 Tim 2:9-15 translates the term for women’s propriety and decency as eindaray (‘decent, silent and obedient behaviour’), interpreters in Myanmar have seen this text as reinforcing women’s submissive role. Later in this chapter, I will elaborate on Judson’s usage of this word eindaray as one of the problematic aspects of his translation.

In sum, since women’s silent submission (and shame if this virtue is violated) are accepted as cultural norms in Myanmar, the tendency in Myanmar has been to internalize biblical passages that appear to validate this virtue, without critically analyzing these texts. This understanding of women’s virtue is taught from the earliest age, and is reinforced by the culture of shame in the socialization process. For this reason, biblical passages that indicate a submissive and silent role for women are accepted at face value, because they echo what people already accept about women.

6.2.3 Problems with Passive Acceptance of Biblical Texts

As we have seen, the stranglehold of patriarchy in Myanmar, whether in society or in the church, forces women into obedient and submissive roles. Many women in Myanmar therefore approach biblical texts from the perspective of passive acceptance, which does not permit questioning or scrutiny. This leads to a literal acceptance of the words they read in scripture, which creates a significant obstacle to interpreting a passage such as 1 Cor 14, with its reference to women remaining silent in church.

Samuel Ngun Ling sees a sign of this pattern of passive acceptance of whatever is authoritative, whether the words of Scripture or cultural norms, in Myanmar women’s passive response to violence. He argues that women tend to accept the violence they suffer at the hands of men because they have internalized patriarchal assumptions. As he observes, “Myanmar women were for many centuries acculturated to subjugate their roles as inferior to men,” and “these submissive roles of Myanmar women have much to do with the imposition of their religion and culture.” Given this religio-cultural worldview, which views one’s present condition as the direct result of one’s deeds in past

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lives, women in Myanmar often find themselves accepting their low status as the result of bad *karma*, or fate. Consequently, “even educated women will support a view that they are less worthy than men and that they do not need liberation from male dominance.”

Feminist theologians in Myanmar, such as Anna May Say Pa and Anna May Chain, have addressed this reality of women’s passive acceptance of male authority and their own inferiority. They also link women’s passive acceptance of patriarchal assumptions in Scripture to the concept of *karma*, such that they accept their subordinate role as foreordained. This is what predisposes Christian women not to question or ‘dig deeper’ into biblical passages that appear to support patriarchal authority that silences them. This passive acceptance is a major obstacle to doing contextual hermeneutics in Myanmar.

6.3 RETHINKING APPROACHES TO INTERPRETATION

All the above-mentioned obstacles to doing contextual hermeneutics in Myanmar show the need to rethink approaches to interpretation. This includes rethinking the influence of the culture of respect in interpretation (particularly regarding translation), our approaches to language study, comparative biblical studies and hermeneutical methods, and our theology of leadership.

As just one example of the need to rethink our approach to interpretation, it is worth considering Myanmar Christians’ approach to polygamy in the Bible. The practice of polygamy in Myanmar was noted by one of the earliest Catholic missionaries, Father Vincentius Sangermano, who observed that although “the Law of Gautama forbids polygamy, still the Bamar people, besides their lawful wife, have two or three concubines.”

The practice of polygamy is also mentioned in the report of CEDAW, the United Nations Committee on Discrimination against Women, as being permitted by Buddhist customary law, under the condition that the second wife must be given an equal

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1390 Ibid.
1392 Chain, "Wives, Warriors And Leaders."
social status with the first wife. However, this practice of polygamy is no longer legal in Myanmar since March 30, 2015, when parliament passed a monogamy bill.

The fact that polygamy was practiced in Myanmar’s historical past and until recently raises interpretational challenges for Christians. The apparent similarities between the patriarchal cultures of Myanmar and the Bible mean that non-Christians in Myanmar have at times labelled the Bible as “affirming violence such as tribal conflicts, family conflicts (in the case of polygamy) … and many other forms of oppression of one group over another.” However, polygamy has never been practiced among Christians in Myanmar. The fact that Myanmar Christians have rejected polygamy shows a selective literalism in their approach to biblical texts that accept polygamy. These passages are conveniently ignored, despite the general support for literalism.

This raises the need for critical dialogue between the culture of Myanmar and that of the Bible. Another example of selective literalism is the fact that interpreters in Myanmar typically view the biblical prohibition against wearing jewelleries and braiding hair mentioned in 1 Tim 2:9 and 1 Peter 3:3 as a cultural practice relevant to biblical times that is not binding for Myanmar today. However, when it comes to women’s silence, the same interpreters view these biblical injunctions as a literal command that is binding forever and in all contexts.

The challenge, then, for Myanmar hermeneutics is to re-read biblical texts with critical eyes. Since culture is a lens through which interpreters approach the text, interpreters in

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1395 “Law on the Practice of Polygamy,” Burma Library, http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/2015-08-31-Law_on_the_Practice_of_Monogamy-54-bu.pdf, accessed 22 February, 2016. Also in Richard Horsey, “New Religious Legislation in Myanmar” (paper presented, at the SSRC Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, 13 February 2015). This monogamy law was passed under the umbrella of ‘race and religion’ bills that include a Buddhist women’s special marriage bill, religious conversion bill, and birth control bill. Horsey translates the monogamy law from Burmese to English and notes, “The law applies to all people living in Myanmar, Myanmar citizens living abroad, and foreigners who married Myanmar citizens while living in Myanmar. A marriage contracted in accordance with an existing law or religious or customary practice shall be deemed legitimate only if it is solemnized in accordance with monogamy. Any man or woman who has married one spouse or more, under any relevant law or religious or customary practice, shall not marry again or unofficially live together with another person as long as the earlier marriage remains valid. Lawful marriages contracted prior to this law coming into force shall remain valid.” Violation of this law is committing a family crime, punishable up to “seven years’ imprisonment under section 494 of the Penal Code, and shall also be liable to a fine.”

Myanmar need to acknowledge and analyse the influential role of their own cultural lens in their reading of texts. Reading the text with critical eyes would also include analyzing the differences between the biblical culture and Myanmar culture. This process enables the interpreter to discern whether a text is situational or normative. This would in turn assist the interpreter in addressing the issue of selectivity in biblical interpretation, whereby interpreters claim neutrality in their reading of texts but are guilty of selective interpretations, as seen in the examples of polygamy and feminine adornment. Against this backdrop, we now consider several aspects of interpretation which require rethinking.

6.3.1 Rethinking the Culture of Respect in Interpretation

The culture of respect in Myanmar, wherein younger persons must show respect to older persons, junior in rank to senior in rank, students to teachers, lower classes to higher classes, and of course women to men, is a major hindrance to reading biblical texts with critical eyes. A comment from an Indian biblical scholar, who shares this same culture of respect, clarifies the impact of this attitude of respect on biblical studies. Monica Melanchthon points out that, in this kind of culture, “the teacher is the expert, with ascribed authority as well as achieved authority,” and students expect teachers to transmit knowledge to the students in the form of a “banking system,” in which students’ brains are the passive ‘banks’ into which teachers’ deposit knowledge. This means that students are not prepared to ask questions or think critically and are often “unprepared and ill equipped to handle research which requires skill, individual initiative, evaluation of sources, and the identification of a hermeneutical framework.”

From the perspective of this culture of respect that has taught us never to question teachers, theological education in Myanmar did not encourage critical thinking in the past. Due to government restrictions, seminaries focused on practical training and indoctrinating respective denominational leaders. One theologian in Myanmar links this problem to the traditional Buddhist monastery teaching method “known in Burmese as

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1398 Ibid.
kyet-thu-yueh sa-an (parrot learning method),” which requires a student to recite back exactly what the monks say. He argues that this kind of teaching methodology influenced Christian theological education in Myanmar, and consequently “most teachers of seminaries and Bible schools also became accustomed to the depository or banking method rather than participatory methods. The net result is that these traditional teaching methods do not seem to help students to be critical and creative.”

Another perspective on the culture of respect is raised by Aye Nwe, a feminist theologian and lecturer at the Myanmar Institute of Theology in Yangon. She notes that the famous Burmese expression lah na dei, meaning “a desire not to impose on others or reluctance to impose on others,” which places the highest value on considering others’ feelings and avoiding upsetting the other, has greatly influenced the behaviors of the people of Myanmar. From this perspective of respect for others, students will always obey the teacher and accept what the teacher says; even if the teacher is demonstrably in error, students would rather keep quiet than challenge the teacher. Nwe believes this culture of respect is particularly strong among Myanmar women, and notes that “most women in society do not speak out or critique others.”

Given this culture of respect, it is important to note its impact on biblical studies. The following sub-sections will show how significantly this attitude impacts Myanmar interpreters’ attitude toward the Bible, and toward translation issues. I argue that these two ramifications of the culture of respect prevent interpreters from examining biblical texts with critical eyes.

### 6.3.1.1 Respect for the Bible in General

The respect that Myanmar interpreters have for the Bible leads them to accept whatever they see there at face value, without critically considering possible nuances of meaning. Aye Nwe has noted the link between this culture of respect and the common practice of a literal reading of biblical texts in Myanmar. Such respect demands blind obedience and precludes questioning.

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1400 Ibid., 7.
1401 Nwe, "Empowerement as Constructive Power for Gender," 1.
1402 Ibid.
Nwe argues that “this uncritical interpretation of the Bible hinders the church to realize its patriarchal domination that engenders women’s exclusion and oppression, as well as its negative consequence of the church being alienated from its democratic ideals of equality, freedom, rights and justice.” She charges her own denomination, the Myanmar Baptist Church, to move away from their traditional “respectful” reading of the Bible because it makes them “gender blind,” in the sense that they ignore the harmful effects of the patriarchal elements of the Bible on women. She calls for a transformation in approaches to reading and applying the Bible in Myanmar, such that the Bible can be read from “social, political and gender perspectives,” “through the lens of Myanmar women’s ‘redemptive body’ or liberation.” She advocates Jesus’ model of church, which Schüssler Fiorenza describes as being a ‘discipleship of equals.’ This is a direct challenge to the ‘culture of respect’ orientation which blocks any critical or questioning approach to reading biblical texts.

6.3.1.2 Respect for the Translation

The culture of respect for the translation work of Adoniram Judson is another challenge for biblical interpreters in Myanmar. Given the culture of respect for teachers, and Myanmar Christians’ widespread respect for Judson as the most revered missionary in Myanmar’s history, his translation has been accepted uncritically until very recently. Even when the work of Judson is questioned, this is mostly regarding his mission strategies, specifically his communication strategy related to evangelization of Buddhists.

Among the books and articles written about Judson are publications by Samuel Ngun Ling, Tha Din, Cung Nawl, Cung Lian Hup, Aung Mang, Simon Pau Khan

1403 Nwe, "Womens Roles," 32.
1404 Ibid., 33.
1405 Ling, Communicating Christ in Myanmar: Issues, Interactions and Perspectives, 172-74. See also these other works Ling, "Doing Theology Under the Bo Tree: Communicating the Christian Gospel in the Bama Buddhist Context," 172-74. Ling, "Challenges, Problems, and Prospects of Theological Education in Myanmar."
1406 Din, Comparative Study.
1407 Cung Nawl, Why Myanmar Church Fails in Evangelizing the Buddhist Bamar People (Yangon: n.p., 2004).
1408 Cung Lian Hup, "A Brief Survey of Mission in Myanmar from a Missiological Perspective," in Our Theological Journey: Writings in honor of Dr. Anna May Say Pa ed. Festschrift committee (Yangon: Myanmar Institute of Theology, 2006).
En, La Seng Dingrin,1410 and Peter Thein Nyunt.1411 These scholars see positive aspects of Judson’s work but also raise some critiques of his mission strategy. La Seng deals extensively with Judson’s borrowing of Buddhist terminology from sacred literature, particularly Judson’s language for God and theological concepts borrowed from Buddhism. He acknowledges Judson’s sincere efforts to achieve translatability between Buddhist and Christian concepts, but also points out that Judson’s negative attitude toward Buddhism contributed to his failure to win over the Burmese Buddhists to Christianity.

To my knowledge, only a very few Christian scholars have ever questioned the work of Judson in terms of his word usage in his Bible translation. Khoi Lam Thang,1412 who is a translation officer of the Bible Society of Myanmar, has addressed some problematic aspects of Judson’s translation. For example, he highlights what he sees as Judson’s unfortunate choice of the term *shwe lin ta* (“golden vulture”) rather than *lin yung* (“eagle”) in Isaiah 40:31. He notes that a new translation of this passage by unknown authors, called the Eagle Edition, came out in 2006 and revised this word usage in Judson’s translation. Thang agrees that, in the context of Isaiah 40, “it is appropriate to translate *nesher* as ‘eagle’ rather than ‘vulture,’ because although both birds are noted for their ability to soar upwards, the vulture has many more negative associations because of its carrion-eating, and is therefore a less suitable translation.” 1413 In response to the argument that Judson might not have known the term for “eagle” in Burmese, he notes Judson’s usage of both *lin yung* and *shwe lin ta* in Lev 11.13 and Deut 14.12. However, he acknowledges that critics of Judson question his usage in Isaiah due to “a very strong negative connotation” associated with vultures in Myanmar, and that even the positive term “golden” before “vulture” “cannot supersede the negative connotations of vulture.” 1414

The fact that the authors of the revised translation remain anonymous, and that so few have questioned Judson’s translation, can be linked to Myanmar’s culture of respect.

1410 Dingrin, "A Literary Study of Adoniram Judson’s Tracts with Respect to the Mutual Relationship Between Christian and Buddhist Terminology."
1411 En, "Nat Worship: A Paradigm for Doing Contextual Theology for Myanmar."
1413 Ibid.
1414 Ibid.
Adoniram Judson is not only respected among Christians but also by other religious groups in Myanmar, for his contributions to the Burmese language. U Pe Maung Tin noted this widespread respect in relation to the legacy of Judson College. This widely acclaimed institution was founded in 1920, but was closed by the authorities in 1948. In lamenting this closure, Maung Tin noted that “the Judson Bible was a welcome contribution to Burmese literature and the Buddhists would never dream of burning it, but Judson College, with its fine academic record, was closed down”\textsuperscript{1415} Nonetheless, because it was a foreign (American) missionary college. The point is that, because of the culture of respect, the people of Myanmar have found it extremely difficult to critique the work of someone as highly respected as Judson.

The challenge for Myanmar biblical interpreters is to understand the difference between constructive criticism and negative, disrespectful criticism. The need to re-examine Judson’s Burmese translation is an important task for biblical studies in Myanmar. As a case in point, let us return to a concern from our earlier discussion of the virtue of submission about the use of the word \textit{eindaray} (‘decent, silent, submissive behavior’) in Judson’s translation of 1 Tim 2:9-15. His choice of \textit{eindaray} rather than other terms for modesty and self-restraint indicates the need for a critical revisiting of this translation decision.

Eh Tar Gay has commented on the usage of this word \textit{eindaray} in Judson’s translation of 1 Tim 2:9\textsuperscript{1416} and verse 15,\textsuperscript{1417} rather than other words for feminine virtue.\textsuperscript{1418} But she does not mention the conceptual distance between the word that Judson used and the actual context of the texts. For example, in 1 Tim 2:9 and 15, the Greek word used is \textit{σωφροσύνη}, “decently” or “modestly.” Louw and Nida define this word as “to have understanding about practical matters and thus be able to act sensibly—to have sound judgment, to be sensible, to use good sense, sound judgment.”\textsuperscript{1419} In contrast, the word

\textsuperscript{1416} "Also that the women should dress themselves modestly and decently (σωφροσύνης) in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes.” (NRSV)
\textsuperscript{1417} "Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty (σωφροσύνης).” (NRSV)
\textsuperscript{1418} Gay, "Authority and Submission,” 304.
\textsuperscript{1419} Nida, \textit{Greek-English Lexicon}, 1, 383.
eindaray refers to a distinctively feminine understanding of decency which includes “having long hair,” “speaking softly, not shouting,” “having a submissive attitude to the control and protection of a father or a brother or a husband,” and avoiding “a job involving contact with or leading many men, having more than one partner, turning to prostitution.” The difference in meaning between σωφροσύνη and eindaray shows the problematic nature of Judson’s translation choice in this instance. Judson’s choice of eindaray has consequences in terms of Myanmar women’s understanding of what it means to have the virtue of submission. Critical analysis is likewise needed in relation to Judson’s word choices in 1 Cor 14:34-35 regarding women and silence.

To summarize, there is a need for biblical interpreters in Myanmar to come to a new understanding that re-reading the Judson translation with critical eyes does not mean disrespecting the translator. Without liberating the Myanmar culture of respect from its most extreme constraints, it will be impossible for interpreters to fully understand how the translator’s context-influenced choices play such an important role in translation. The need in Myanmar is to understand Judson’s translation as an interpretation of the translator, influenced by the translator’s context as well as the receptor’s context. This understanding will help us both to appreciate the depth of Judson’s scholarship as well as to open space for critical inquiry that will aid scholars in Myanmar in constructing adequate hermeneutics.

6.3.2 Rethinking Language Study

The need for Myanmar interpreters to develop some critical contextual hermeneutics also surfaces around language study, which includes original biblical languages and Burmese Buddhist terminologies in Judson’s Bible translation. Although the biblical languages, Greek and Hebrew, are taught in Bible colleges and seminaries in Myanmar, they are taught in dialogue with English texts rather than the Burmese Bible translation. From my personal experience of teaching Greek language courses in Myanmar, I have found that this process of translating Greek into English prevents interpreters from examining biblical texts in Burmese with a critical eye.

1420 Gay, "Authority and Submission," 301.
This deficiency in language training in biblical studies highlights a more general need to revisit the curriculum that is standard in Myanmar theological institutions. Since Christianity came to Myanmar from the West, our theological education was also imported from the West, and Western curricular models are still being used, even though the missionaries have been gone for many years. This uncritical acceptance of imported models of theological education is a serious weakness of the Myanmar churches. This has been noted by Peter Thein Nyunt in his comment that Myanmar theologians and biblical interpreters are “venerating the imported mission outreach or strategy inherited from the past centuries and eras without critical appraisal of their relevancy and empowering vitality,” and that this results in “weaknesses in mission strategy, ineffective Christian communication, and lack of indigeneity in particular.”

This has created a Myanmar church that “looks like an imported monstrosity. Its buildings, forms, music, and methods are often so different from those of the Bamar Buddhist society.” Samuel Ngun Ling also notes the dependency patterns of theological formation in Myanmar, which continue to rely on the missionaries’ teaching and imported theologies, and which are still seen in “the textbooks, curricula, and teaching methodologies used in Bible Schools and theological institutes of Myanmar.”

Recognizing the need to transform these patterns, some of the theologians in Myanmar referenced earlier in this chapter have sought to construct a contextual theology that will address contextual concerns of the people of Myanmar. Among these scholars, La Seng Dingrin has drawn attention to the important role of Adoniram Judson in forming Christian terminologies by borrowing Pali words in his translation of the Bible. He notes that Judson borrowed at least 80 principal Burmese Buddhist terms in his construction of Christian terminologies. Some examples include the usage of bhura (God or god), tara (law), kusala (merit), kye ju to (grace), and many more. La Seng argues that “Judson would not have been able to communicate the Christian concept of God without borrowing, and then Christianizing, the term bhura (God or god) from Burmese Buddhism.” Because these Burmese Buddhist concepts are so prominent in Judson’s Bible translation, dialectical

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1422 Ibid., 5.
1423 Ling, "Challenges, Problems, and Prospects of Theological Education in Myanmar," 3.
1424 Dingrin, "The Conflicting Legacy of Adoniram Judson."
1425 Ibid.
studies of Buddhism and Christianity are now finally beginning to be taught in some seminaries that are attempting to take context seriously. The serious study of all relevant languages is essential if we are to construct a relevant hermeneutical methodology for Myanmar.

6.3.3 Rethinking Comparative Studies

A common practice in Myanmar hermeneutical approaches is to compare the texts of several English translations, at times with the text in its original language—for those who have some knowledge of the original biblical languages. The most popular English translations used in Myanmar for comparative study are the New International Version and the King James Version. The problem with comparing these English translations is that they are, of course, their translators’ understandings of the text. Without understanding the translator’s role as interpreter, interpreters today often end up with different meanings than what the text originally said, and this is especially so in the case of 1 Cor 14:34-35.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Judson Burmese translation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 has significantly influenced the role of women in the church. Given the propensity of the culture of obedience to take a literal approach to reading the Bible, it is understandable that interpreters who have used only Judson’s translation take this passage as a prohibition of women preaching in the church. However, surprisingly, many of the interpreters who do comparative studies with English versions often end up with even stricter restrictions on women. This will be demonstrated in the following comparative chart, which compares the Judson Burmese Translation with the KJV and NIV English versions.

We see here that although the KJV and NIV translate \( \alpha \gamma \nu \omega \) (be silent) applied to “speak,” the Judson Burmese translation has silence being applied to “preach.” Instead of considering these differences that highlight problematic aspects of the text, Myanmar interpreters often take this prohibition in English translations as applying to all kinds of speech, as well as preaching. Thus, the English translations become more restrictive for women than the Burmese translation would indicate. This shows the weakness in
comparing translations without critical analysis and in limiting the translations under comparison.

### Table 16: Comparison of Bible Translations in Myanmar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judson Burmese Translation</th>
<th>English Translation of Judson Burmese Bible</th>
<th>King James Version</th>
<th>New International Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>သင်တိဦးက သင်နိုင်သည်ကို ဆန့်ကျင်သည်။</td>
<td>The wives of yours should remain silent in the church.</td>
<td>34 Let your women keep silence in the churches:</td>
<td>34 Women should remain silent in the churches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>သင်တိဦးက ဆိုသည်။</td>
<td>They have no permission to preach.</td>
<td>for it is not permitted unto them to speak;</td>
<td>They are not allowed to speak,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>အခွင့်မည်တုံးသို့ သင်တိဦးက ဆိုသည်။</td>
<td>As the Law says, they should consent to man's ruling.</td>
<td>but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.</td>
<td>but must be in submission, as the law says.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ဗုဒ္ဓကို သင်တိဦးက ဆိုသည်။</td>
<td>If women want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home.</td>
<td>35 And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home:</td>
<td>35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>သင်တိဦးက ဆိုသည်။</td>
<td>For a woman to preach in the church, it is a shameful thing.</td>
<td>for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.</td>
<td>for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.3.4 Rethinking Hermeneutical Methods

Another challenge in reading a difficult passage like 1 Cor 14:34-35 is selecting a method of approach to the text. The common practice of biblical studies in Myanmar is a traditional methodological approach handed down by the missionaries, as well as denominational teachings. This traditional method assumes objectivity and normativity, and this prevents interpreters from looking at the text from a different perspective. Although contextual factors impinging on the interpreter play an influential role in
determining how one approaches and interprets Scripture, this role has been ignored in hermeneutical practices in Myanmar.

Many Myanmar Christians would agree generally with Ling’s statement that “doing theology in Myanmar should be concerned with the need to study current issues in Myanmar. These issues include economic poverty, religious freedom, gender, women and children, health, development and environment.” However, these same people would be reluctant to accept the view that all interpreters approach the text with culturally or denominationally conditioned presuppositions. Texts concerning women and silence found in 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2 are examples of sources of tension for women doing theology in Myanmar. If they raise hermeneutical issues, they are immediately branded as feminist, Western, and anti-male. Typically, their views are ignored and their methodologies are deemed to be a case of ‘bias’ rather than critical analysis.

This raises the crucial issue of how Myanmar Christians can explore and evaluate new hermeneutical approaches to contentious texts such as 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2. Some contemporary interpreters in Myanmar do tend to approach biblical texts in a way similar to their counterparts in “Latin America, Africa and Asia, where people are reading and studying the Bible in direct relation to the often trying circumstances of their daily lives.” Due to the constant struggles and instability caused by longstanding political crises in Myanmar, the Bible is largely read and studied by these interpreters in direct relation to daily experiences of struggle, whether knowingly or unconsciously. This is different from hermeneutical methodologies in the West, where interpreters approach texts more abstractly.

The need for Myanmar interpreters to understand and respond to the Myanmar context when approaching biblical texts is echoed in the Willowbank statement, which states that biblical interpreters “cannot come to the text in a personal vacuum and should not try to. Instead, they should come with an awareness of concerns stemming from their cultural background, personal situation, and responsibility to others.”

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1427 Luz, ed., The Bible in a World Context: An Experiment in Contextual Hermeneutics, backcover.
awareness of the interpreter’s role in the hermeneutical process, as well as considering the effects of contextually influenced interpretation on the lives of people. This also means that Myanmar interpreters should not try to ignore or suppress concerns and questions, but rather allow themselves to be challenged by the text and be willing to be corrected by the process of critical analysis. This approach gives interpreters freedom from fear of being labeled exemplars of ‘bias’ and the liberty to raise all concerns arising from texts and contexts, while at the same time generating theological reflection that is relevant for Myanmar.

6.3.5 Rethinking Leadership

Another area in need of rethinking in the development of a critical contextual hermeneutics is the Myanmar understanding of leadership. The observations of Chin Do Kham, who conducted a study on Myanmar church leaders, clarify how leadership is viewed in Myanmar. He points out that “in churches today, including Myanmar, many seem to preach biblical leadership principles such as servanthood, yet their day to day actions reflect secular, dictatorial, authoritarian leadership styles.”1429 This he links to traditional cultural understandings of leadership that are deeply rooted in the hierarchical system of Burmese Buddhism (with its longstanding influence on Myanmar monarchs throughout the centuries), British colonial values, and Western missionary values. In this light, he concludes that “servant leadership is seen as a weakness in the Burmese context.”1430

Kham’s study finds that the concept of leadership in Myanmar is based on a traditional understanding that a leader’s legitimacy derives from his position, “which is a symbol of power, authority, superiority and control.”1431 In this view, leaders “who can command others are seen as competent, influential, and effective.”1432 He also notes that since the dominant image of leadership in Myanmar is “performance oriented,”1433 forceful leaders

1430 Ibid.
1431 Kham, “Historical Values and Modes of Leadership in Myanmar,” 157. Ibid.
1432 Ibid.
1433 Ibid.
with many followers are seen as successful, and thus the character traits of leaders are
deemed to be secondary.

Kham sees Jesus’ teaching on servant leadership as in direct contrast to this dominant
cultural view of leadership in Myanmar. This teaching of Jesus is found for example in
Mark 10:35-45, where he taught that those who aspire to be in leadership must become
servants among God’s people; and in John 13:5, where Jesus demonstrated servant
leadership by washing the feet of his disciples. Since the word “servant” is a negative term
in the worldview of people in Myanmar, Kham acknowledges that “all Burmese Christian
leaders are living with a strong tension between the culturally acceptable authoritarian
leadership style and biblical servant leadership.” Therefore, although servant
leadership is accepted conceptually in Myanmar, men cling to their positions of power,
authority, superiority, and control in the hierarchy of the church.

Given this conceptual clash between the servant leadership demanded and exemplified
by Jesus and the strongly hierarchical understanding of leadership in Myanmar culture, it
is inevitable that a literal interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 that commands women to be
silent always has not been questioned. It is also understandable that re-reading this text
with critical eyes will be met with great resistance. This illustrates the crucial impact of
cultural understandings of concepts such as leadership on the interpretation of texts like
1 Cor 14:34-35, and thus the need for critical analysis of both the interpreter’s context
and the context of the text.

6.4 OBSTACLES TO A CRITICAL CONTEXTUAL MYANMAR HERMENEUTIC

This section focuses on ways to address the obstacles and challenges to developing a
critical contextual Myanmar hermeneutic that have been identified in this chapter. This
will require a willingness to review the Myanmar context and to learn from other
approaches to interpretation. But such openness will be possible only through greater
exposure to the world of scholarship. This will lead not only to a more honest appraisal of
the Myanmar context, but to rethinking the translator’s role, re-reading the text
considering its historical context, and embracing servant leadership.

1434 Kham, "Historical Values and Modes of Leadership in Myanmar," 152.
6.4.1 Need for Increased Exposure to the World

A major issue we have identified in interpreting passages that concern women in the church is a literal reading of such texts. As demonstrated in previous sections, this approach can be linked to the cultures of respect and obedience, and it is problematic because it does not critically analyze the contextual influences on the translators’ choices. This shows the need for greater willingness and ability to understand and analyze all contexts (biblical, translator, and interpreter) in Myanmar hermeneutics. Yet this will only be possible through increased exposure to different approaches to interpretation around the world. While actual travel to other centres of biblical scholarship is unfeasible for most Myanmar interpreters, the explosion of respected sources online now makes this exposure more possible.

However, awareness of these reservoirs of knowledge in Myanmar has been very limited to date, for two reasons: lack of theological materials, especially developments in contextual theologies from around the world, and lack of access to the internet. The shortage of theological materials does not mean that theologians in Myanmar have not been writing about or raising contextual questions. Yet, as noted in Chapter 2, a related challenge has been lack of freedom of expression and ability to publish, as well as very strict government regulations that have prohibited the import of religious materials until recently. Since resources have only circulated within certain organizations, exposure to information, from both within and outside the country, has been limited. With the opening of Myanmar society since the restoration of democracy, it is hoped that this exposure will increase exponentially in the near future.

6.4.1.1 Exposure through Online Resources

Many contextual theologians and biblical scholars around the world, including Asia, other parts of the non-Western world, and in the West, have written extensively on the importance of context in biblical interpretation. Many of these resources are now available online. Following Myanmar’s years of self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world, which ended only in 2010, mobile SIM card prices began to drop from 20 lakhs
(nearly 2000 USD) to 1500 kyats (1.50 USD) in 2014.  

Although the internet was introduced in Myanmar in 1997, only 1 percent of the population had internet access in 2011. The price drop has meant increasing affordability of cellphones, and this has led in turn to increased use of internet services.

The legacy of isolation from the world explains the difficulties entailed in being able to access available theological materials online, access which theologians and biblical scholars from other countries have enjoyed for many years. Myanmar thus lags far behind in theology and biblical studies in comparison to the rest of the world. Although internet access is now more widely available for public use in Myanmar, the internet speed is widely referred to as ‘slower than a turtle.’ However, the hope for Myanmar is that as internet speed and access continue to improve, the exposure to different approaches to interpretation, especially those open to critical contextual analysis, will raise awareness on the part of Myanmar interpreters of ways to overcome the obstacles to critical contextual hermeneutics. They will gain the ability and confidence to approach all contexts critically—biblical, translator, and interpreter.

6.4.1.2 Exposure through External Publications

Increased exposure to published resources, particularly through online sources, will mean greater acquaintance with a variety of scholars writing on feminism, women in leadership, contextual theology, developments in hermeneutics, and other related fields. This will assist Myanmar interpreters in understanding that not all who advocate feminism in Christianity are women, and that not all Western feminists are antagonistic toward males. Many well-known Western male scholars, such as Ben Witherington, Gordon Fee, Craig Keener, and Stanley Grenz, whom I often reference in this thesis, are among a host of respected biblical scholars who hold a “biblical feminist” view. They differ from proponents of “Christian feminism” represented by scholars such as Elisabeth Schüssler

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1435 Bridget Di Certo, “Building a Digital Future in Myanmar,” Reach March 2014)16. The Telenor, Norway Company is one of the telecommunications companies that gained permission by the Myanmar government to operate. Ooredoo, a Qatar Company, was first launched on 2 August, 2014.


1437 This is explained in Alvera Mickelsen, ed. Women, Authority and the Bible (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986). There are 26 essays in this book and the authors were among the 36 participants in the 1984 Evangelical Colloquium on Women and the Bible.
Fiorenza, who advocate for “suspicion of biblical authority” and who seek to “denounce all texts and traditions that perpetrate and legitimate oppressive patriarchal structures in the ‘Word of God’ for contemporary communities and people.”

Biblical interpreters in Myanmar will benefit from knowledge of both approaches. “Biblical feminists” affirm the authority of the Bible and see the issue of oppression of women as one which can be addressed through careful interpretation. They argue that the Bible advocates for the mutuality of men and women in all spheres of life, including marriage and ministry in the church. Both views of feminism consider the role of the interpreter in the process of interpretation, but they differ in their views of the authority of the Bible, and this leads to differences in their approaches to biblical passages about women. These approaches can be instructive for biblical interpreters in Myanmar, as they evaluate these different views in dialogue with the contextual realities of Myanmar, to re-read biblical texts about women with effective critical contextual hermeneutics.

6.4.1.3 Exposure through Myanmar Publications

There is also a critical need for growth in academic publications by biblical scholars from Myanmar, specifically on passages that concern women. This will not only help increase awareness of the role of our context in the process of interpretation, but will also stimulate a more relevant theology that seeks to answer questions that arise from within our context. This is “contextualizing theology,” to borrow from Kosuke Koyama, rather than contextual theology. This contextualizing is a dynamic, ongoing process that will raise awareness of the complex nature of our social reality in Myanmar, where poverty, deeply held religious beliefs (both Christian and Buddhist), violence, communal conflict, authoritarianism, colonial history, entrenched patriarchy, and the reality of discrimination co-exist at all levels of society. Contextualizing theology raises consciousness of all the ways in which our theological reflection, praxis, and our reading of Scripture are deeply influenced by the interplay of political, cultural, and religious dynamics in Myanmar.

1439 Kosuke Koyama, "New Heaven and New Earth: Theological Education for the New Millennium" (paper presented, at the General Assembly of ATESEA, Hong Kong, 1997).
Within this enterprise of contextualizing theology in Myanmar, some biblical scholars have already begun grappling with questions that arise from the social realities of Myanmar. For example, Samuel Ngun Ling has raised the issue of the linkage between violence and poverty in Myanmar,¹⁴⁴⁰ where ethnic violence and conflicts are extensive, due to the long history of oppression by the military government. In this light, his comment on women and violence mentioned before sheds further light on the need to engage in contextualizing theology and biblical study in Myanmar. He points out various forms of violence, including sexual violence, suffered by women in Myanmar, and links these harsh realities to the long history of the submissive role imposed on women by the patriarchal political, religious, and cultural worldview of Myanmar. He concludes that “physical violence against women has become an important gender-related dimension.”¹⁴⁴¹ He therefore suggests that the issues of violence and poverty in Myanmar require a “radical change of human attitude and mentality, spirituality and lifestyle—the creation of a new praxis, from passive co-existence to active pro-existence according to the model and way of Christ.”¹⁴⁴² This orientation has profound implications for Myanmar interpreters’ approach to biblical texts affecting women.

### 6.4.2 Rethinking Judson’s Translation

The exploration of ways to overcome the obstacles to a Myanmar hermeneutic that address biblical passages concerning women also suggests the need to rethink the translator context in Myanmar. As discussed earlier, due to Myanmar’s culture of respect that has led interpreters to revere the translator Adoniram Judson, his translation work has seldom been questioned. Yet, since the focus of this thesis is on the translation work of Judson, its effect on the role of women in the church, rethinking Judson’s translation is a necessity if we are to overcome the obstacles to an adequate Myanmar hermeneutics. I argue that there are two issues which interpreters in Myanmar must address in the translation work of Judson: learning from his usage of Burmese terminologies in his translation (along with related mistakes in his approach to mission), and analyzing the

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¹⁴⁴⁰ See 6.2.3 of this thesis.
¹⁴⁴² Ibid.
influences of his own context on his translation. We must rethink Judson’s translation from a critical point of view rather than from the perspective of incontestable respect.

**6.4.2.1 Terminology in Translation**

According to La Seng Dingrin, as cited earlier in this chapter, the legacy of Judson must be understood in terms of two conflicting facts. First, Judson borrowed Burmese Buddhist terminologies in his translation, reappropriating them for Christian use. However, at the same time he held a very negative view of Buddhism and attempted to replace Buddhist ideology with a Christian ideology. Dingrin believes that understanding both aspects of Judson is important in evaluating his work. He argues that the first aspect—Judson’s usage of Burmese Buddhist terminologies for Christian purposes—was largely a success, while his negative attitude toward Buddhism was a failure. A contextually conscious hermeneutic in Myanmar must evaluate both the success and failure of Judson to make an accurate assessment of his translation.

I argue that the fact that Judson borrowed Burmese Buddhist terms and turned them into Christian terms accentuates the need for Myanmar interpreters to undertake a serious analysis of Judson’s translation choices. This task entails a dialectical study of Buddhism and Christianity. As mentioned earlier, Judson sought to spread the gospel in the vernacular to convert the Burmese people, and an essential part of this mission was his production of a Bible translation and tracts using the Burmese language. He did this with the understanding that the “formation of Christian literature in Myanmar indicates the meeting of the Christian gospel with Theravada Buddhism.”

This is seen in his usage of the word *bhura* for God, a term borrowed from Burmese Buddhism. Since *bhura* has a wide range of meanings, such as one who is “the highest and holiest of human beings” or the “noblest religious term” for the Buddha and monks, La Seng argues that this concept is “not only very Theravada Buddhist but also contradictory to the Christian concepts of God, creation, and the atonement of Jesus Christ.” He believes that it was for this reason that Judson added *thavara* (eternal)

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1445 Dingrin, “A Literary Study of Adoniram Judson’s Tracts with Respect to the Mutual Relationship Between Christian and Buddhist Terminology,” 53.
1447 Ibid.
before *bhura*, meaning “eternal God,” to better describe the Christian concept of God. He sees this choice, along with other Burmese Buddhist terminologies, as evidence that Judson was “perfectly acquainted with the terms he employs” in his translation, since this term looks “very Christian” and “at the same, truly Burmese Buddhist too, though it does not refer at all to the Buddha.”

Even looking at this one example of Judson’s borrowing and reframing of Burmese Buddhist concepts, he was contextually aware to some extent in his thinking.

Judson’s contextual awareness is further seen in terminology that he avoided using. This is mentioned by Nyunt, who notes that Judson was clearly aware that the Buddhist understanding of heaven is quite different from the Christian concept. Since the “ultimate need of Buddhists is enlightenment or obtaining *Nibbana*, … [which is] not a perpetuation of reincarnation,” Judson avoided using this term to describe the Christian concept for the result of one’s faith, and thus translated as “eternal life” or “heaven” the terms *htawara a-that* or *kaung kin bon*. He understood that the Christian concept of heaven or eternal life is quite different from the Buddhist concept that sees heaven as a continuation of a miserable state of suffering, although it is to some degree better than earthly existence. In this view, heaven is the biggest curse for Buddhists, since “it is understood in terms of a predestined process, a miserable cyclic rise and fall of one meaningless, aimless reincarnation after another.”

In examining these and other examples of terminology Judson borrowed as well as avoided in his Bible translation, Myanmar interpreters need to have in-depth knowledge of Burmese Buddhism to evaluate Judson’s usage of Buddhist terminology. In Nyunt’s research among local missionaries, mainly from minority ethnic groups in Myanmar who are working among the Bamar Buddhists, he notes their lack of contextualization in communicating the gospel. He says,

> Significantly, most respondents were still not ready to exchange traditional approaches with more culturally relevant and contextually appropriate approaches. In the area of language, all communicators strongly emphasized using Burmese language but still many of them were not yet familiar with Buddhist

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1450 Ibid.
terms. In general, most churches were hesitant to make use of the Buddhist Scripture. This may be a sign their negative attitudes towards the Buddhist religion and its scriptures.\textsuperscript{1451}

La Seng links these negative attitudes toward the Buddhist religion and scriptures to Judson’s negative view of Buddhism, which he refers to as a conflicting legacy. He describes several examples of Judson’s view of Burmese Buddhism, which he referred to as “atheistic,” “false,” “fictitious,” “idolatrous,” and “offering no escape,” and references Judson’s prediction of “the fall of Buddhism and the worldwide victory of Christianity.”\textsuperscript{1452} Because of Judson’s attitude, in Pe Maung Tin’s view, “the missionaries evidently came neither to learn from nor to make Buddhists the object of their missionary love and concern. Rather, the Buddhists are seen only as the object of the missionaries’ preaching.”\textsuperscript{1453} Nyunt links Judson’s negative perspectives on Burmese Buddhism to his failure in his mission work, where it took him around six years to win one convert.\textsuperscript{1454} The clash between what the Burmese think of themselves and what Westerners like Judson have thought of them clarifies this dynamic. Nyunt describes this disjunction clearly:

Leaving aside the history, the Bamar people assume themselves as the descendants of Buddha’s clan and assume that they know more about life and religion than any other ethnic group in the world.\textsuperscript{1455} For this reason, when Western missionaries came and preached the gospel to them, they felt insulted instead of accepting it. They could not endure to hear any better knowledge than they had. It reflects their belief that they had arrived on this earth earlier than others. Consequently, they presumed that they knew more about life and religion than the Westerners who came to preach. This heritage produced a mentality of superiority in the Bamar people and has been a challenge to the missionary task of the Church.\textsuperscript{1456}

The above observations show that reconsidering Judson’s work must include, firstly, a critical examination of Judson’s familiarity with Buddhist terms and his appropriation of them in his translation. Secondly, reconsidering Judson’s work necessitates an evaluation of the mistakes of Judson the missionary, learning from them as an important task for

\textsuperscript{1451} Nyunt, "Toward a Paradigm," 162.
\textsuperscript{1452} Dingrin, "The Conflicting Legacy of Adoniram Judson," 3.
\textsuperscript{1454} Nyunt, "Toward a Paradigm," 145.
\textsuperscript{1455} Roger Bischoff, Buddhism in Myanmar: A Short History (Kandy, Myanmar: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), 4.
\textsuperscript{1456} Nyunt, "Toward a Paradigm," 109.
critical analysis. This is relevant today since Judson’s negative attitudes toward Buddhism remain prevalent among current missionaries and clergy in Myanmar, as well as in theological education. Noting these negative attitudes in the Myanmar church today, Nyunt points out that “the Christian missionaries in Myanmar did not seem to be so active in indigenizing the gospel and in adapting themselves to the Bamar situation;” for this reason, the “foreignness of Christianity as introduced and practiced in Myanmar constitutes a difficult barrier for the present-day missionary to overcome.”

Ling observes these same negative attitudes toward Buddhism in theological education in Myanmar, where “less or even no attention [is paid] to questions posed by multi-faith traditions (Buddhist, Christian, and others), their spiritual experiences and moral values.”

This legacy of Judson points out the need for Myanmar interpreters to take into better account the cultures and languages within the Myanmar context. This process entails a thoroughgoing reconsideration of Judson’s translation. In that context, a re-examination of texts that concern women, particularly texts on women and silence like 1 Cor 14:34-35, would mean engaging dialogically with both the translator’s choices and the cultural context of contemporary interpreters and readers.

**6.4.2.2 Influence of the Translator’s Context**

Rethinking Judson’s translation also entails critically analyzing how his own context influenced his translation. Since translation is already the translator’s interpretation, the influences of the translator’s own cognitive environment are inevitable and they are visible in the translator’s choice of words. Paul Ellingworth’s explanation of this dynamic is instructive. He claims that if the work of the translator is effective, “it will challenge its readers, potentially a whole language community, to undertake a reverse pilgrimage from B (interpreter’s own situation) to A (world of the Bible); that is, in translational terms, to ‘analyze’ its own situation and presuppositions; to relate or ‘transfer’ them to the world of the Bible, and relate them by a process of ‘restructuring’ to the biblical message.”

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1457 Ibid., 145.
1458 Ling, "Challenges, Problems, and Prospects of Theological Education in Myanmar," 5.
1459 Italics are my own.
I would argue that when a translation has been accepted in the interpretive community as a good translation, the interpreter often wrongly goes straight from his or her context to the context of the Bible, without considering the historical gap, the language gap, and the time gap between the contexts. This explains an important aspect of the uncritical nature of most interpretation that relies on Judson’s translation. Since the translation is well received in Myanmar, the interpreter often does not pause to consider that his own context influenced the translator. It is critical for Myanmar interpreters to understand that Judson’s translation is itself an interpretation and that it thus needs to be subject to critical analysis like any other work. This would entail understanding factors in Judson’s own nineteenth century Protestant American cultural and religious background that would have predisposed him to come to texts such as 1 Cor 14 with a view on the roles and status of women. As discussed in Chapter 3, Judson’s views on women preaching, and broader issues surrounding women’s leadership in the church, are important factors in understanding the choices he made in translating such texts.

6.4.3 Re-reading the Text in Light of the Historical Context

Given the Myanmar culture of obedience and respect which leads to a literal reading of biblical texts, Myanmar interpreters tend to equate the present situation with the historical context described or implied in the text. These interpreters thus often appropriate the patriarchy they find in the Bible as normative for today and use it to reinforce the subservient role of women in family, church, and society, without considering the text within its own context. This form of spontaneous adoption through literal interpretation does not critically consider the gaps between the world of the Bible and the present context of the interpreter—the “historical gap,” the “cultural gap,” similarities or differences in worldviews (also called the “philosophical gap”), and the “linguistic gap.”1461 The remedy is to explore the meaning of the text in light of its historical context, for “the meaning of a text cannot be interpreted with any degree of certainty without historical-cultural and contextual analysis.”1462

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1462 Ibid., 81.
Regarding this investigation of the historical context of a biblical text, Osborne’s suggestions are helpful for the Myanmar interpreter. He argues that understanding the historical context of the text is the first stage in serious biblical study, for this process is a consideration of “the larger context within which a passage is found.” Without this, “interpretation is doomed from the start,” because “statements simply have no meaning apart from their context.” In addition, the interpreter must investigate issues of authorship, dating, the audience being addressed in the text, and, most importantly, the purpose and themes of the text in light of the larger context, because the interpreter “should not study any passage without a basic knowledge of the problems and situation addressed in the book and the themes with which the writer addressed those problems.” All of these concerns are important aspects of critical analysis of the historical context.

The purpose of this historical study is to discover what the text meant in its original setting and how it relates to the rest of Scripture, to apply the originally intended meaning in a contextually relevant way today. With regard to this important role of historical context in forming theological meaning, the Myanmar scholar Khin Swe Oo argues that passages that concern women in ministry today must be “properly examined and interpreted in the light of the overall teachings of the Scripture, and the cultural environment of those days for which they were originally intended, as well as practical theological implications in our present context.” In that light, she notes that problematic passages such as 1 Cor 11, 14 and 1 Tim 2 “were originally written to different audiences and places, regarding different specific situations, contexts, times and problems encountered.” This knowledge of the historical context of the texts should condition our application of such texts for our own context today.

An understanding of the nature of contextual theology is also helpful in looking at the text in historical context. Contextual interpretation studies the original context and language,

1464 Ibid.
1465 Ibid., 38.
1467 Ibid.
but also with an eye toward listening to God’s Word and heeding it. In other words, the interpreter appropriates the text in its historical context and, in that light, seeks to discern “what Scripture is affirming”\(^{1468}\) to apply it in culturally appropriate forms in the present. As mentioned earlier, in the discussion of selective literalism in Myanmar interpretation, the fact that the women’s head covering advised in 1 Cor 11 is rejected solely because head covering is not a Myanmar tradition, and that “Burmese Christians do not wear veils or avoid teaching,”\(^ {1469}\) indicates the need to pay greater attention to the historical context of the text.

This example indicates the complexity of interpretation in Myanmar, where readers are more selective in their interpretational process than their claim for a literal approach would suggest, as well as less contextual than their claim for contextualization would suggest. This situation bolsters my call for greater availability in Myanmar to resources in biblical studies, specifically those on the historical background of texts, such as commentaries, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, and works on cultural customs in the biblical period. A tremendous effort is also needed to translate these works into Burmese languages, so that theological students, pastors, and others can read biblical texts in the light of their historical context.

### 6.4.4 The Need to Embrace Servant Leadership

As discussed earlier, the hierarchical system in Myanmar society is among the obstacles to doing contextual hermeneutics, because this ideology understands leadership as ‘power-over’—exercising coercive authority over others and viewing the servant as the lowest form of human experience. This concept of hierarchical power clashes with the concept Jesus introduced in Mk 10:42-45, where he says to his disciples that the greatest person is the one who serves others. Myanmar interpreters know this precept, but although they have accepted it conceptually it has been difficult to apply it in the church, given the cultural embrace of ‘power-over’ leadership. This once again calls for a re-evaluation of our theology and practice as Myanmar Christians, so that we can embrace servant leadership more fully.

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\(^{1469}\) Gay, "Authority and Submission," 300.
Aye Nwe suggests that embracing servant leadership in Myanmar will necessitate a redefinition of power. She sees this as the key to overcoming the obstacles standing in the way of greater involvement of women in leadership in the Myanmar churches. She claims that the current practice of ‘power-over’ leadership is destructive since this is the power of domination, which “creates dualism between the powerful and powerless, rich and poor, strong and weak, advantaged and disadvantaged, man and woman, perpetrator of violence and victim, oppressor and oppressed.” 

This occurs, she says, due to misinterpretations of the power that God has given to both male and female in creation. The power they have been given through God’s gift of ‘dominion’ is a gift of stewardship or care for creation, which is different from the ‘militaristic and patriarchal understanding of power as domination.’ Such domination serves the interests of the ruler rather than the well-being of the weak.

In contrast, Jesus’ servant model of leadership is “the real imperative to the existing chaos. It is a calling to serve for the well-being of others rather than for self. It is different from hierarchical and patriarchal power. It is constructive power that recognizes ‘the power in all.’ In the servant model of power, or ‘the power to serve,’ it is essential for all, men and women, to be included.” Nwe concludes that God’s originally intended ideal form of power is modeled by Jesus in Matt 20:14-30, and that Jesus also admonishes his followers to serve others rather than self by his own example in Mk 10:42-45, where he says to his disciples, “but whoever would be great among you must be servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all.” This power that Jesus modeled and bequeathed to his followers is “the power which sets people free from bondage, oppression, exploitation, abuse, injustice, inhumanity and domination. It is the power that embraces all [so as] to have peace, restoration, order, self-esteem, and harmony with each other.”

Embracing this ideal of servant leadership by redefining the meaning of power is also the key in addressing hermeneutical obstacles in Myanmar, especially in relation to passages

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1470 Nwe, "Empowerement as Constructive Power for Gender," 2.
1471 Ibid.
1472 Ibid., 3.
1473 Ibid.
1474 Ibid.
that concern women in the church. This suggests that when we interpret passages that relate to ministry and church life, we must look at these texts considering Jesus’ pattern of servant leadership. This includes our approach to interpretations of passages about women such as 1 Cor 14 and 1 Tim 2. If ministry is serving and a locus of servanthood, and if the church fully accepts ministry as serving the body of Christ in Myanmar, our understanding of these passages will be emended, since no one will fight over being the waiter. Embracing servant leadership will mean that no one can ‘lord it over’ anyone, including women.

6.5 CONCLUSION
Having examined the many obstacles and challenges Myanmar interpreters face in interpreting passages that concern women in the church, such as 1 Cor 14, and having advocated ways to overcome these obstacles, I would like to conclude with two additional matters. Firstly, I would like to point out that there are a variety of opinions on the issue of women’s silence in the church, and that in this thesis I have presented only three hermeneutical approaches that deal specifically with 1 Cor 14:34-35. I find that understanding a variety of opinions on this passage and comparing them side by side is not only helpful in gaining insight, but also more liberating than focusing only on one perspective. Due to the traditional practices of biblical study in Myanmar, interpreters often remain trapped in only one interpretation. However, for Myanmar biblical studies to be both critical and contextually relevant, interpreters need to become more aware of a variety of interpretations of passages. This indicates the need to introduce a range of hermeneutical approaches in our theological institutions. This does not mean that all interpretations are correct, but considering them critically necessitates looking at them side by side to gain greater insight.

Opening ourselves to a range of hermeneutical approaches also brings challenges to the way we approach biblical texts in Myanmar. As mentioned elsewhere, due to Myanmar’s missionary teaching from the evangelical tradition, many Myanmar interpreters approach texts solely from the point of view of reverence for the authority of the Bible. Some contemporary interpreters who are more conscious of contextual theology tend to be critical of the missionaries and their approach to mission, and these interpreters are attempting to deal with contextual issues. However, Myanmar interpreters very rarely
deal with the implications of the fact that our translation of the Bible came from a missionary. To create well-informed and contextually relevant hermeneutics in Myanmar, interpreters must re-read biblical texts with fresh eyes, taking account all the contexts that inform the texts.
CHAPTER 7

REVISITING THE TEXT THROUGH CRITICAL CONTEXTUAL HERMENEUTICS

Drawing on the proposed principles and methodology of a critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar outlined in Chapter 6, this chapter revisits issues surrounding the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36. Having discussed my own context in Myanmar detail, and so rendered the impact of contextual factors and the obstacles provided by context, I can now reexamine the primary textual issues raised earlier, as well as contextual issues affecting translation and interpretation. The first section looks at the contextual issues arising from the text that concern women, particularly relating to the historical context. This section argues for an analysis of the historical context as an interpretive key in revisiting the text. The second section reexamines the primary textual issues by considering the identified hermeneutical keys. This is done by means of a comparative analysis across the contemporary interpretations discussed earlier. These tasks contribute to an understanding of what the texts are likely to have meant to the original readers in their historical context, and help to identify criteria for a culturally appropriate application of the text in the contemporary context of Myanmar.

7.1 INTERPRETIVE KEYS IN REVISITING THE TEXT

Despite the widespread use of Lectio Divina and other devotional practices that focus on the immediate sense of a reading of Scripture without reference to background knowledge of the text, biblical interpreters generally agree that an understanding of the historical background of the text is critical for hermeneutics. Contextual critical hermeneutics understands the historical context of the biblical text as constituting an important hermeneutical key in determining textual meaning. In this light, this section argues for two interpretive keys in any examination of Pauline passages that concern women in the church. The first key concerns the role of women in the historical context in which the text was written, and the second key concerns the overall attitude of Paul toward women. In analyzing the 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36 passage regarding women and silence, then, the hermeneutical keys would include an analysis of the historical context
as it related to the role of women in first century Corinth, and an analysis of Paul’s attitude toward women.

The first key, an analysis of the historical context of the 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36 text, highlights the socio-political setting of Corinth as well as the role of women in Corinthian society. The socio-political background is relevant because it reveals the attitudes toward women in first-century Greco-Roman society and the influences which shaped such attitudes. The next part of this analysis examines the role of women in Corinth. Three analytical foci are relevant to the issue in women and silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36: the general role of women in society, how silence was understood in Corinthian society, and the role of women in the religious setting. Addressing these issues can assist the interpreter in undertaking a contextual critical analysis of the text in question.

This analysis is undertaken to demonstrate how these hermeneutical keys can contribute to interpreting difficult texts in Pauline literature. The presupposition is that a critical form of analysis in contextual hermeneutics must seriously consider the historical context before revisiting the meaning and significance of the text. My claim is that the critical analysis of historical contexts is responsible hermeneutics, for it seeks both to be faithful to the historical context and to uncover relevant applications for contemporary settings today.

This critical analysis aspect of contextual hermeneutics recognizes that any interpretation must go through a process of historical reconstruction. Historical analysis requires that the interpreter draw informed conclusions about the circumstances surrounding the text. This means that interpreters of 1 Corinthians need to reconstruct the context to explain the situation in the Corinthian church at the time of Paul’s writing. In this process, critical-contextual hermeneutics acknowledges the role of interpreter bias in historical analysis, because, like all interpreters of Paul, we are forced to concede a degree of speculation regarding the social circumstances in which his letters were written.

Interpretation of the available information is also likely to be influenced by “our own and other’s predilections, preconceived ideas about Paul, views on men and women, limited knowledge of Greco-Roman culture, and a whole host of other subjective and elusive
factors.” These factors are at work with respect to the three contemporary interpreters (Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington) whose approaches were explicated in Chapter 4. Each of these three scholars’ interpretations construct the historical setting slightly differently from the others, although all three view the broader context of 1 Corinthians 14 in relation to prophecy. The following section examines important features to consider in a historical reconstruction of the social setting of Corinth in Paul’s time.

### 7.1.1 Women in Corinth

The first part of the analysis of the historical context of 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36 focuses on the social and cultural background of Corinth during the time of Paul. According to Fee, understanding “the various sociological, economic, and religious factors that made up the environment of the city of Corinth has a profound influence on one’s understanding of Paul’s letters to the church there.” From the perspective of critical contextual hermeneutics, this analysis is an important process given our concern for the role of women in the Myanmar church, since it helps to provide a critical awareness of the historical gap between the Corinthian context and the Myanmar context. Moreover, as Crocker points out, this critical analysis makes “one aware of how time-bound some of the problems are that the Corinthians are dealing with and that Paul is discussing.”

The city of Corinth was situated about two miles from the Gulf of Corinth, at the southern gateway of the isthmus connecting mainland Greece with the Peloponnesian peninsula. The city had been the largest and most prosperous city in Greece before it was destroyed by the consul Lucius Mummius with his Roman forces in 146 B.C.E. It was re-established as a Roman colony by the order of Julius Caesar in March of 44

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1476 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1.
1479 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1. Also in Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth Text and Archaeology*, 6-10, 51-54. And Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 4-5. Strabo, *Geography* 8.6.20, cited in Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth Text and Archaeology*, 51-54. writes: “Corinth is called ‘wealthy’ because of its commerce, since it is situated on the Isthmus and is master of two harbours, of which one leads straight to Asia, and the other to Italy; and it makes easy the exchange of merchandise from both countries.”
B.C.E. The city was repopulated mainly with Roman freedmen, army veterans, and urban tradespersons and laborers.

Once the city was ruled by Roman officials, even the architecture of the city took on the look of a Roman city. Greeks who remained and lived in and around Corinth, even in its ruins, became “resident aliens,” since only Romans and their descendants were now considered citizens. However, many immigrants, including Jews, migrated into the city due to its prosperous economy after it was rebuilt. The kinds of people mentioned in 1 Cor 12:13 who were living in the city, and their social status, were described as being “Jew, Greek, slave, free.” Many scholars agree with Thiselton that the culture of Corinth after the Roman takeover was “formed after a Roman model” and deemed to be “prosperous and self-sufficient” based on the inhabitants’ success in trade and business. Witherington notes that evidence from architecture, arts, and inscriptions depicts a city that was deeply rooted in Roman culture, beyond the official language being Latin and the city being governed according to Roman law. Therefore, he sees the term “Greco-Roman” as the most accurate way to describe Roman Corinth.

Understanding the historical context of Corinth as Roman is important for interpreting passages in 1 Corinthians, as this helps to shed light on the contextual realities which informed Paul’s writings. Since “the church was in many ways a mirror of the city,” many of the practices within the Corinthian church derived from the influence of Roman culture. Thiselton highlights this “impact of the culture of Corinth upon the developing faith of newly converted believers.” Paul sees this cultural influence as problematic.

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1481 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3. Also in Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 4-5.
1482 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3. Also in Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 4-5.
1485 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 4-5.
1488 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3.
1489 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, xviii.
and thus calls for new practices to infuse the life of the church. For example, 1 Corinthians speaks repeatedly of the problems of boasting and false pride in the Corinthian church (eg. 1 Cor 1:28-31, 5:1-2). These behaviors reflected the concept of honor and shame in Roman culture. Witherington points out that this culture of honor and shame was prominent in Corinth, such that public boasting and self-promotion were common practice, and indeed a highly-developed art form. The Corinthians had brought such attitudes into the church. It is in this light that Paul beseeched the Corinthians to allow these Roman cultural values to be transformed by the gospel.

Another aspect of Roman culture which Paul addresses is the custom of veiling for women in public. This is found in the head covering passage of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. There has been great debate among scholars regarding what Paul meant by ‘head covering.’ Although this thesis does not address this debate in detail, a brief description of differences of opinion among interpreters is helpful. For example, Payne, Bloomberg, and Murphy-O’Connor see head covering as referring not to an actual head covering, but to appropriate hairstyles for both men and women in Roman culture. However, Fee, Winter, and Thiselton conclude that the passage refers to an actual head covering, based on another aspect of Roman culture. All their arguments focus on what was deemed appropriate for women in Roman culture. This is captured by Thiselton’s comment that “for a married woman in Roman society to appear in public without a hood sent out signals of sexual availability or at the very least a lack of concern for respectability.”

Understanding the dress codes for married women in Roman culture helps to explain why wearing a head covering became such an issue in the church.

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1491 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 8.
1492 Philip B. Payne, "Wild Hair and Gender Equality in 1 Cor 11:2-16," Priscilla Papers 20, no. 3 (2006), https://www.linguistsoftware.com/Payne2006PP1Cor11_2-16.pdf, accessed 14 Aug 2016. Payne differentiates between hairstyles for men and women, where long hair for men is associated with homosexuality and respectable women’s hair must be pinned up and not left loose.
1493 Craig Blomberg, 1 Corinthians (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 211. Blomberg sees Paul as warning Corinthian Christian men to keep their hair short and women to keep their hair tied up.
1494 Murphy-O’Connor, Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues, 132.
1495 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1. And Winter, Roman Wives.
1496 Winter, Roman Wives, 77.
1497 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 5.
1498 Ibid.
in Corinth. This also sheds light on the reason behind Paul’s command for women to prophesy with their heads covered.

This leads to the second concern of the historical analysis, the role of women in Corinthian society. Since the focus of this thesis is 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36, which speaks of women and silence in the religious setting, this setting becomes our specific concern regarding the role of women. The question to consider is how Corinthian society understood women speaking in relation to the role of women in the religious setting. Focusing on this question is helpful in assisting interpreters not only to understand the issue of women and silence in the primary text but also to bring critical judgment to bear on what Paul meant by prohibiting women from speaking.

Winter acknowledges, although he does detect a new attitude rising among Roman women in Paul’s time, that women in the Roman world lived in a deeply patriarchal and hierarchical society, where “the power of husbands over their wives can be paralleled with that of the father over his children.”

Crocker also points out that the Corinthian congregation existed in a hierarchical and patriarchal culture that envisioned an ideal family as one in which “men should be dominant over women.” In this culture, the man as the head or pater familias “cared for and was obeyed by his wife and children as well as all clients, servants, and slaves.”

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1499 Bruce W. Winter, Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 17. Winter holds the view that Paul’s prohibition of women speaking concerns the attitudes that women bring into the church, which reflected attitudes of the new women of Roman Corinth, in defiance of the imperial rule. According to Winter, the penetration of Roman culture in the East meant that the transfer of the values of Roman women were both traditional as well as new. He explains that in the first century, “the Roman women, unlike their Greek sisters in Hellenistic times, appeared in the public domain,” and that the “imperial wives appear to have set a precedent for wives of senatorial rank and others in the social hierarchy.” (37) Therefore, he sums up his view as follows: “In the last three years significant new material has been published by ancient historians which throws light on the issue of veiling in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. It supports the interpretation that the wives praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered in the Christian gathering were replicating the attitude and actions of new wives. As Christians, they defied a traditional imperial and Corinthian norm for wives engaging in what their compatriots would have judged to be a religious activity.” (77) He explains the “angels” in 1 Cor 11:2-6 as messengers or spies whom the imperial court would have sent to investigate whether women were breaking the law. (91) Therefore, he sees Paul as asking the wives to wear “marriage veils” while “praying and prophesying” so that their actions would not be “misunderstood.” (93-4) He concludes that “the filtering down of the new roles for women enabled Christian women to contribute to a wider sphere of service.” (204)

1500 Crocker, Reading First Corinthians in the Twenty-First Century, 129.
1501 Ibid., 129-30.
put his wife to death in the case of murder.\textsuperscript{1502} Both in Greek and Roman culture, chastity was expected only from wives.\textsuperscript{1503}

Ciampa and Rosner argue that understanding this cultural background sheds light on the impact of mutuality in Paul’s comment on the role of women. They conclude that Paul’s comment in 1 Cor 7 on the husband and wife both being faithful in marriage, and the authority that both husband and wife had over each other’s bodies, was “revolutionary in the ancient world where patriarchy was the norm.”\textsuperscript{1504}

This leads to our primary question related to passages that concern women’s silence in Paul’s writing: whether cultural issues are behind his rebuke. Were women allowed to speak in Corinthian society? Were there different norms for different classes of citizens? These questions lead us to examine how women speaking was understood in this cultural setting. In the Greco-Roman world, there was a strong prejudice against women speaking in public. Generally, in a society with strictly defined gender and social roles and a strong view of the rights of a husband over his wife, such behavior was viewed as inappropriate. In particular, for a married woman to carry on a conversation with another woman’s husband was considered shameful.\textsuperscript{1505} Cases are recorded in which husbands divorced their wives for even having a private conversation in a public setting with a common freedwoman.\textsuperscript{1506} As cited by Ciampa and Rosner, Plutarch wrote that a wife was “to do her talking either to her husband or through her husband,” implying that a woman’s personal speech was a way of exposing herself.\textsuperscript{1507} Marcus Porcius Cato (195 B.C.E.) also denounced women’s speaking to other women’s husbands in public as immodest.\textsuperscript{1508}

\textsuperscript{1502} Winter, Roman Wives, 18.
\textsuperscript{1503} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{1505} Ibid., 725.
\textsuperscript{1506} Ibid., 726. The quote in its entirety reads, “In his Memorable Deeds and Sayings, Valerius Maximus (from the early first century A.D.), speaking of the harsh treatment of some husbands toward their wives, mentions Quintus Antistius Vetus, who divorced his wife because he had seen her in public having a private conversation with a common freedwoman. For, moved not by an actual crime but, so to speak, by the birth and nourishment of one, he punished her before the crime could be committed, so that he might prevent the deed’s being done at all, rather than punish it afterwards.” According to this text, “a wife should not be having a private conversation (where was her attendant?) with a stranger, certainly not a ‘common freedwoman’ (and even more certainly not someone else’s husband).”
\textsuperscript{1507} Cited in Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 726.
\textsuperscript{1508} Livy, History of Rome 34.1, cited in Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, eds., Women’s Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 143-
Regarding women speaking in a legal setting, Winter points out that Roman law prohibited married women from arguing in court due to the cultural mores that considered women speaking in public as immodest behavior. He notes that the ban forbidding women to “intervene (intercede) in public settings” on behalf of their husbands was already an imperial ban in the time of Augustus.\footnote{Winter, Roman Wives, 178. Winter cites this from The Digest, 16.1.2 (Ulpian). See also J. E. Grubbs, Women in the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood (London: Routledge, 2002), 55.} In the time of Claudius, this prohibition—“the Velleian Decree of the Senate”—was legally validated to discourage women from speaking on behalf of others, especially on behalf of their husbands, in a legal setting.\footnote{Ibid. Although Winter quotes this, he believes that “it is not clear what incident occurred at that time or what follows from it.” He argues that Valerius might be referring to his regrets over allowing women to engage in speaking in politeia, i.e., the courts and, in one instance, the forum.”} From all of this evidence it is clear that married women in Greco-Roman culture were not allowed to speak to other women’s husbands or to speak on behalf of their husbands in a public setting. This leads to the question of whether women could speak at all in Roman Corinth.

Although the notion of married women speaking in a public setting was considered shameful in the Greco-Roman world, women could speak in the religious setting. Witherington notes that this was the case in temple worship near Corinth,\footnote{Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 17. He explains that “the oracle was certainly past its heyday in Paul’s time. But it was still functioning, and there was a close connection between Apollo and the oracle. There was a temple of Apollo in Corinth, and Delphi is only about 50 km. from Corinth. Apollo was the god of prophecy, and it is more than likely that the Corinthians would have understood prophecy in the light of this part of their context.”} where women could be priestesses in the temple. He comments that “young girls apparently served there as priestesses as in other Greek Demeter shrines and may have worn a distinctive ceremonial hat.”\footnote{Ibid. Witherington’s interpretation of the head covering in 1 Cor 11 is that it was like the distinctive ceremonial hat that the priestess wore as a sign of her authority to prophesy. He notes that “there is evidence that secret rites, perhaps initiatory rites, were carried out in a room directly behind a dining room in a building in the shrine precincts.”} He connects this to issues addressed in 1 Corinthians 11–14 and argues that the issue in 1 Cor 11 likely concerned a ceremonial headpiece rather than an actual head covering or hairstyles, a conclusion which differs from other scholars.
mentioned previously.\footnote{Payne, Bloomberg and Murphy-O’Connor see the head covering as referring to hairstyles, whereas Fee, Winter and Thielson see it as an actual covering.} He points out that “it is very believable that these women assumed that Christian prophets or prophetesses functioned much like [those at] the oracle at Delphi, who only prophesied in response to questions, including questions about purely personal matters.”\footnote{Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 17.}

Looking at this historical data on women speaking in the Greco-Roman setting of Corinth as a whole, a common agreement among these interpreters is that the role of women in Corinth was situated in a strongly patriarchal setting. All of them see Christian behavior in Corinth as influenced by the Greco-Roman culture of the time. However, what they make of this historical data appears to depend on their view of Paul: whether they are convinced that he was committed to patriarchy, held views of patriarchy and egalitarianism in tension, or was committed to egalitarianism.

This dynamic is also evident in the interpretations of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington, where they refer to religious practices at Delphi. Although all of them situate women’s silence within the context of prophecy, Grudem argues that their prophetic role should not be compared to that of prophetesses at Delphi, because the prophecy at Delphi consisted of “unintelligible utterances.”\footnote{Wayne Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 224.} Schüssler Fiorenza contends that the practice of unbound hair and heads thrown back that was typical of prophetesses at Delphi was something which the Corinthian Christian pneumatics copied.\footnote{Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 228.} Witherington also relates the Corinthian Christian context to the practice of prophetic utterances in the temple worship at Delphi.\footnote{Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 17.}

Regardless of one’s view regarding women’s silence in Paul’s writing, understanding the historical background of Corinth is significant in revisiting the text. This gives interpreters an awareness that the historical context in Paul’s Corinth is considerably different from contemporary interpreters’ contexts. This awareness also highlights the fact that Paul’s writings were his response to contextual issues which arose for a specific historical audience, among people who were very much influenced by their surrounding culture.

\footnote{Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 17.}
This acknowledgement assists contemporary interpreters in being more appreciative of the influential role of culture in our own understanding of biblical texts.

This leads to the second interpretive key for our passage on women and silence: an analysis of Paul’s overall view of women, particularly his attitude toward women in ministry. Our critical contextual hermeneutic argues from the perspective that Paul’s attitude toward women in general and women in the church needs to be seriously considered in revisiting a difficult passage like 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36. It also argues that Paul’s attitude toward women in ministry should be analyzed considering his overall view on ministry. Without such analysis, the intended meaning of the author would likely be misinterpreted.

7.1.2 Paul’s Attitude on Women in the Church

The questions surrounding Paul’s views on women center on two seemingly contradictory statements of Paul. First, he acknowledges in 1 Cor 11 that women pray and prophesy, yet two chapters later he commands women to be silent in the church. How can women exercise their ministries of praying and prophesying if they are to be silent in the church? Some interpret these contradictory statements as evidence of Paul changing his attitude. Others argue that the prohibition against women speaking in church cannot be of Paul and therefore conclude that 1 Cor 14:34b-36 must be an interpolation. A hermeneutical decision considering this conundrum depends on the interpreter’s honest attempt to gain an understanding of Paul’s overall view of women, whether they see him as a traditionalist or a feminist.

Paul’s attitude toward women can be discerned somewhat based on his treatment of women leaders in the church. Paul mentions several women in his writings as co-workers in the churches. Ellis notes that Paul used the term συνεργός (“coworkers”) most commonly to refer to those who helped him in ministry. This term is used thirteen times in the New Testament, but it is used twelve times in Paul’s writings. Paul used this term and another similar term, κοπός, to refer to several women.

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1518 See section 7.2.1.
1520 Ibid.
For example, in Phil 4:2-3 Paul mentions Euodia and Syntyche as αἵτινες ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ συνήθλησάν μοι μετὰ καί Κλήμεντος καί τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου,¹⁵²¹ that is, those who “struggled together with me in the gospel along with Clement also and the rest of my co-workers.” In Rom 16:3 and 1 Cor 16:19, he mentions Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, as συνεργοῦς, “coworkers” who “risked their necks” for Paul. They were both leaders in the church. Acts 18:26 mentions them as those who discipled Apollos in the faith. In Rom 16:6-7, Paul mentions Mary as a “hard worker,” πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν, which is related from κοπίω. According to Ellis, this has the same meaning as co-worker.¹⁵²² In Rom 16:7, Paul mentions Junia. Some commentators suggest that, since Junia’s name is mentioned together with Andronicus, it is possible that they were another husband and wife team.¹⁵²³ Other scholars argue that, although Junia is a female name, this must have been a male.¹⁵²⁴ However, it is now clear that Junia was a woman.¹⁵²⁵ Junia and Andronicus were both called ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις “well known among the apostles.”¹⁵²⁶ Also in Rom 16:12, Paul mentions Tryphena and Tryphosa as τὰς κοπιώσας ἐν κυρίῳ, “workers in the Lord.”

Paul also references Phoebe in Rom 16:1. Paul refers to her as διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας, meaning “deacon.” Witherington notes that Rom 16:1 and 1 Tim 3:11 are the “only two places where women are given the title διάκονον in the New Testament.”¹⁵²⁷ Our question at this point is whether these women spoke in public in the churches where they were considered as co-workers or deacons. Bassler’s comment on this issue is helpful in focusing attention on the role these women played in the church. She asks how these women could “function as co-workers 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.”¹⁵²⁸

¹⁵²¹ Nestle and Nestle, NA28.
¹⁵²² Ellis, Prophecy and Hermeneutics in Early Christianity, 3.
¹⁵²⁵ Epp, Junia: The First Woman Apostle.
¹⁵²⁷ Ibid., 113. Also in Payne, Man and Woman, 61-63.
Considering all of Paul’s references to these women as noteworthy enough to be singled out by name, it seems clear that Paul worked together with women in ministry. Grudem and Schüessler Fiorenza agree that Paul offered words of appreciation to these women. However, Grudem believes that the roles these women played in the early churches did not involve authoritative speaking,\textsuperscript{1529} and Schüessler Fiorenza sees Paul as recognizing the role of these women out of obligation.\textsuperscript{1530} As I have argued in Chapter 4, both views are problematic and misrepresent Paul. Grudem’s view is problematic since the New Testament does not provide a clear reference as to what is an authoritative or non-authoritative form of speech. Schüessler Fiorenza’s view is problematic because it stereotypes Paul as being insincere. I find Witherington’s view more persuasive. Witherington sees the roles that these women played as necessarily involving a speaking role, and Paul as recognizing the ministries of these women not out of obligation but in genuine appreciation.\textsuperscript{1531}

Regardless of one’s view on Paul’s attitude toward women, no interpreter can fail to note that Paul allowed women to pray and prophecy in public in 1 Cor 11. In the New Testament church mentioned in Acts 21:9, Philip’s four daughters were known already as prophets. This fact and the role of other women as co-workers and deacons leads to the question of Paul’s views on ministry. In 1 Cor 12:28, Paul describes the gift of prophecy as a gift from the Holy Spirit that edifies the whole church. He mentions the gift of prophecy before the gift of teaching. There is nothing in Scripture that alludes to the gift of prophecy as gender-specific.

Paul’s theology of ministry is relevant in this regard. In 1 Corinthians alone, Paul portrays himself as God’s servant together with Apollos in 3:5-9, and as a servant of Jesus Christ in 4:1. In Romans 1:1, he mentions that he is “Paul, a slave (δοῦλος) of Jesus Christ.” Like Jesus, Paul sees a leader in the church as someone who serves. Given this theology of servant leadership, one could conclude that Paul recognized and accepted women as co-workers in the church. He expected them to serve in ministry. Considering the historical background of women’s role in Roman Corinth highlighted earlier, and Paul’s attitude.

\textsuperscript{1529} As cited in Chapter 4.1.3.
\textsuperscript{1530} As cited in Chapter 4.2.3.2.
\textsuperscript{1531} As cited in Chapter 4.2.3.2.
toward women in the church, the following section revisits the 1 Cor 14:34-35 passage to understand what Paul was saying when he admonished women to be silent in the church.

7.2 REVISITING 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35
As noted previously, scholars have differed greatly on what they believe Paul meant in this passage and how it should be interpreted. In my research on three contemporary Pauline interpreters—Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington—it became clear that there are five areas where interpreters are required to make decisions relating to the intended meaning of this particular passage. As authorship, context, women, submission, and the law in historical context, in relation to the concept of silence.

A critical analysis of Adoniram Judson’s translation of this text in the Myanmar context shows evidence of similar conscious or unconscious decision-making by him as a translator. In reaching my own exegetical conclusions, I follow the same pattern of analysis and also take the perspective that the problem presented by women and silence in Corinth is most helpfully seen as a specific situation which needs to take note of Paul’s overall attitude toward women in the church and his theological perspective.

7.2.1 Pauline Authorship
The significance of the concept of silence in 1 Cor 14:34-36 is clearly influenced by the interpreter’s understanding of authorship and decisions about textual variants. This question is also raised by the apparent contradiction between 1 Cor 14:34-36 and 1 Cor 11:3-16, where Paul encourages all believers to participate in praying and prophesying, without specifying gender. Due to the difficulty of reconciling the apparent differences between these two texts, and the sense in which 1 Cor 14:34-36 sounds “un-Pauline,” many egalitarian scholars such as Fee and Payne take 14:34-36 as an interpolation. Some other egalitarian scholars see this text as Paul’s citation of others’ views to refute them. However, all three contemporary interpreters whom I have presented in this

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1532 As cited in Chapter 4.1.1.
1533 As cited in Chapter 3.2.2.
1534 See Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 789.
1535 See Payne, Man and Woman.
thesis see Paul as the author of 1 Cor 14:34-36.\textsuperscript{1537} This would also have been the case with Judson. My proposed reading of 1 Cor 14:34-36 likewise takes Paul as the author.

Nevertheless, the interpolation theory needs to be considered seriously. As noted in Chapter 4, there is a textual variant issue in 1 Cor 14:34-35, where verses 34-35 follow verse 40 in some manuscripts. This transposition of vv. 34-35 is found in Western manuscripts such as -uncials D (06),\textsuperscript{1538} F (010),\textsuperscript{1539} G (012),\textsuperscript{1540} a b (old Latin witnesses of the fourth and fifth centuries), vg\textsuperscript{ms} (Vulgate manuscript),\textsuperscript{1542} and the fourth-century church father Ambrosiaster.\textsuperscript{1543} In addition to these manuscripts, UBS\textsuperscript{4} also mentions codex 88, and Sedulius-Scottus.\textsuperscript{1544}

However, the very early papyri \(\gamma\)\textsuperscript{46} together with uncials \(\chi\) (01), B (03), \(\Psi\) (044) and most the \(\mathfrak{M}\) manuscripts\textsuperscript{1545} read these verses in their traditionally accepted order. The UBS\textsuperscript{4} also provides manuscripts that witness to this text. They include all that NA\textsuperscript{27} mentioned plus four more uncials, A K L 0150 0243,\textsuperscript{1546} and 22 minuscules.\textsuperscript{1547} Although transpositions in copying are common, and it is therefore not surprising that such transpositions of this text have occurred in different manuscripts, transposition alone would not provide sufficient reason for an interpolation theory. Fee attaches more weight to the usage of words, such as \(\lambda\alpha\lambda\epsilon\omega\), \(\sigma\iota\gamma\omega\), \(\upsilon\pi\omicron\tau\alpha\omicron\sigma\omega\), and \(\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma\), which he sees as contradicting Paul’s linguistic usages in other accepted texts.\textsuperscript{1548}

Although I agree with Fee that Paul’s linguistic usage here seems different from his linguistic usage elsewhere, the fact that there is no manuscript that does not include

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{1537} As cited in Chapter 4.1.1.1. Others such as Wire and Keener also consider Pauline authorship as authentic; see Wire, \textit{The Corinthian Women Prophets}, 14-158. And Keener, \textit{Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women in the Letters of Paul}, 70-100.

\textsuperscript{1538} Codex Claromontanus.

\textsuperscript{1539} Codex Augiensis.

\textsuperscript{1540} Codex Boernerianus.

\textsuperscript{1541} Old Latin manuscripts entitled Armachanus and Veronensis.

\textsuperscript{1542} Codex Fuldensis.

\textsuperscript{1543} Research, ed., NA28, 466.

\textsuperscript{1544} Aland et al., eds., \textit{UBS}4.

\textsuperscript{1545} Research, ed., NA28, 466.

\textsuperscript{1546} Aland et al., eds., \textit{UBS}4.

\textsuperscript{1547} They are: 6 33 81 104 256 263 365 424 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1573 1739 1852 1881 1912 1962 2127 2200 2464. Ibid..

\textsuperscript{1548} Fee, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 789.

\end{footnotesize}
verses 34-35 makes the authorship of Paul a stronger possibility than the interpolation theory. Then the question becomes why such a textual variant occurred. Ebogo argues that the variant occurred based on various scribes’ personal beliefs or their churches’ views of what they thought Paul was saying.\footnote{Ebojo, “Should Women be Silent,” 6. Thiselton notes that the displacement could be “by scribes who assumed that they were about household order, not order in worship, scribes working at a time when there were church buildings separate from private homes.” In Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1149. See also Witherington, Paul’s Narrative Thought World, 288. And Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 90-92.} In other words, the repositioning of verses 34-35 after verse 40 reflects the scribes’ own interpretation of the text.\footnote{Metzger mentions several possible reasons for the repositioning of the text. See Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 259. Witherington also argues that “Displacement is no argument for interpolation. Probably these verses were displaced by scribes who assumed that they were about household order, not order in worship, scribes working at a time when there were church buildings separate from private homes.” In Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 288. see also 91-2. Also Philip Wesley Comfort, “Scribes as Readers: Looking at New Testament Textual Variants According to Reader Reception Analysis,” Neotestamentica 38, no. 1 (2004): 28-53. Comfort suggests reader-reception analysis, which sees textual variants as the process of scribal readings/interpretations.}

7.2.2 Silence: The Context

It is vitally important for our interests to attempt to understand the context of 1 Cor 14:34-36. As mentioned above, some interpreters see this passage in the context of a rhetorical argument in which Paul is quoting the negative views of Corinthians themselves on women in the church in order to refute those views.\footnote{As noted earlier in this chapter, 301. Although Thiselton believes this passage is the authentic words of Paul, he sees this view as “not farfetched, for Paul appears to do precisely this in 6:12; 7:1; 10:23; and perhaps elsewhere (e.g., in 8:1–6).” Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1150.} Some interpreters also see this text as part of the larger debate about speaking in tongues in worship, which Paul has just been addressing.\footnote{Kroeger, “Strange Tongues or Plain Talk?,” 10-13.} Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington all see these verses in the context of prophecy. However, they disagree on who Paul is restricting within the context of prophecy. Grudem sees Paul as restricting all women, Schüssler Fiorenza sees the restrictions as applying only to Corinthian wives, and Witherington sees them as referring to Corinthian prophetesses.\footnote{As discussed in Chapter 4.1.2.}

Regardless of one’s views on the overall context, or to whom the restrictions apply, there is still a question concerning whether verse 33b, ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων, meaning “as in all the churches of the saints,” is related primarily to verse 33a or to verse
34. If verse 33b is linked with 33a, the sentence will read, “For God is not [a God?] of confusion but of peace as in all the churches of the saints.” If verse 33b is linked with verse 34, then it will read, “As in all the churches of the saints, women should be silent in the churches” (NRSV). The crux of the debate rests on whether this command for silence is situation-specific or universal, to be applied to every church. The argument is that, if verse 33b goes with verse 34, the command becomes a universal requirement for women to be silent in the church.

Although Grudem, Schüßler Fiorenza and Witherington disagree on who they think Paul is prohibiting from speaking in this context, they all agree that verse 33b is linked logically with verse 34. Greek texts in NA27 and UBS4 also link verse 33b with 34. It is true that several other scholars and Bible translations link verse 33b with the preceding verse. However, a number of other scholars and Bible translations, including the Judson Burmese translation, support the reading of verse 33b with 33a. The Judson Burmese translation reads, “God does not administer things that cause confusion. As it happens in all the churches of the saints he administers harmonious peace.” Grudem in particular finds this form of reading the text problematic.

Nevertheless, I argue that Judson’s view remains plausible. First, the link between verses 33b and 33a is less problematic than the link with verse 34, because linking verse 33b with verse 34 results in two occurrences of ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις in one sentence. The challenge for scholars who link verse 33b with verse 34 is reconciling these two appearances of ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις...
ἐκκλησίαις. Some explain the first usage of ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις as being a reference to universal believers and the latter ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις as referring only to the Corinthian believers. I agree with Ebogo that taking these two occurrences as separate units is the “most natural reading” and the most logical.

A rationale for this conclusion is that Paul used ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις in the conclusions of both 1 Cor 4:17 and 7:17. Further, the expression used in 33b is similar to the usage in 1 Cor 4:17 (ἐν πάσῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ, meaning “in every church”) and in 1 Cor 7:17 (ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις πάσαις meaning “in all the churches”). Both phrases occur at the end of a sentence. The use of this similar phrase indicates that verse 33b is likely to be a concluding statement to all that Paul has argued in the whole paragraph. Agreeing with this, Ellingworth and Hatton explain that “verse 33b will form the conclusion, not only of verses 32–33a, but also of the whole paragraph,” including verses 26-33.

Moreover, the transposition of verses 34-35 to after verse 40 without verse 33b is another indicator that verse 33b goes with the previous verse rather than the following verse. Ebogo sees this transposition as a clue that shows the scribal understanding of where this verse belongs, and concludes that this clue indicates a “context-specific” instruction. He thus shares Ellingworth’s view and points out that connecting verse 33b to 33a “localizes the validity of the prohibition, and universalizes the call for an orderly exercise of the pneumatic experience.” This way of understanding the verse appears to be the case for Judson as well.

After connecting verse 33b to the preceding verse, the question then becomes where verses 34-35 fit into the larger picture. Like the three contemporary interpreters, I see this

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1565 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 96; Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287; Garland, 1 Corinthians, 670.  
1567 Ibid.  
1568 Conversely, Witherington observes that whenever this phrase, “as in all the churches,” is used in 1 Cor 4:17 and 7:17, Paul is referring to “a rule of behavior, his rule, or the rule of all the Christian churches,” but not to “the behavior of God in all the churches.” Therefore, he does not see this phrase in verse 33b as similar to the other verses. Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 96.  
1569 Ellingworth and Hatton, A Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, 324. Ellington notes that this should be translated as a separate sentence: “This is what happens in all the churches of God’s people.” Also in Ebojo, “Should Women be Silent,” 20.  
1571 Ibid.  
1572 Ibid.
text in the context of prophecy. It is part of instructions given by Paul for orderly worship in the churches. Within the context of prophecy I see Paul as admonishing Corinthian prophetesses who were wives to be silent in the church. The following section explains further the reason behind this exegetical decision.

### 7.2.3 Silence: The Women

Scholars also differ regarding the question of who Paul is restricting in this passage. This is seen in the interpretations of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington. They differ on whether αἱ γυναῖκες in 1 Cor 14:34 is referring to all women or just to wives. Grudem sees αἱ γυναῖκες as referring to all women, including unmarried women. He argues from the culture of patriarchy in Corinth at the time of Paul’s writing, where all women, married and unmarried alike, were under the authority of men. From that perspective, he sees Paul as restricting all women from speaking in the church. Schüssler Fiorenza sees αἱ γυναῖκες as referring to wives. She assumes that Paul is prohibiting only the wives, who had been praying in tongues and prophesying in the worship of the community. Witherington views αἱ γυναῖκες as referring to “married women” who are the Christian “prophets.” He sees Paul as restricting Christian women prophetesses from asking questions during the worship service.

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1573 As discussed in Chapter 4.1.1.2. from Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, 102. Also in Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1158. Thiselton notes that “with Witherington, we believe that the speaking in question denotes the activity of sifting or weighing the words of prophets, especially by asking probing questions about the prophet’s theology or even the prophet’s lifestyle in public.”

1574 Witherington sees the order in worship as the theme of 1 Cor 14. See *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 287. Also Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1146-49.

1575 This is the view of Witherington, who also notes that these prophetesses are likely to be wives. As cited in Chapter 4.1.2.

1576 This is emphasized by Schüssler Fiorenza, as cited in Chapter 4.1.2.

1577 As noted in Chapter 4.1.2. Ciampa and Rosner rebut this view, stating that “it is not at all clear that very young and immature girls would have been permitted to speak in the church at all.” Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 722.


1580 As noted in Chapter 4.1.2.

1581 Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 287.

1582 Ibid.
A decision on who ἡ γυναῖκες is referring to hinges on two things: the interpreters’ understanding of the textual variant issue on the omission of ὑμῶν in verse 34 following ἡ γυναῖκες, and the interpreters’ understanding of τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας in verse 35. For the textual variant issue of ὑμῶν in verse 34, the appearance of this word is supported by manuscripts such as D F G (a b) sy; Cyp (Ambst), but Ν Α Β ψ 0243 33 81 104 365 1175 1241 1739 1881 2464 supports the reading without ὑμῶν. As noted, the manuscripts that support the insertion, such as D F G, are Western manuscripts, Greek-Latin bilingual texts that have a 6th and 9th century dating. The reading of just ἡ γυναῖκες without ὑμῶν is supported by the Alexandrian witnesses such as Ν Α Β, which are 4th and 5th century documents. Judson follows the tradition of the Western manuscripts and translates this passage with ὑμῶν.

The preferred reading here is the reading of ἡ γυναῖκες without ὑμῶν due to “the earlier date” of the supporting manuscripts. The dating of the Alexandrian manuscripts is generally considered to be earlier than the Western manuscripts. The question once again is the reason for such variation. Scholars like Metzger see this as “probably a scribal addition.” Other scholars such as Thiselton explain this addition as scribes’ attempt to “localize the rule” to Corinth. Perhaps this was also the view of Judson when he selected ἡ γυναῖκες with ὑμῶν but translated ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, the plural “churches,” into the singular “church.” By translating the plural into the singular, the instruction becomes context-specific to the Corinthian church rather than to the ‘churches’ as a whole. Although all of the above reasons for variation are plausible, the scribal interpretation of what Paul meant in this passage is more likely the reason behind such addition. This is the same reason for the textual variant issue, the transposition of verse 34-35 to after verse 40. Although the reading without ὑμῶν after ἡ γυναῖκες is

1583 Codex Athous Lavrensis.
1585 As cited in Chapter 4.1.2.
1587 As cited in Chapter 4.
1589 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1150.
1590 As cited in Chapter 3.2.2.
1592 As discussed earlier in this chapter, 305.
the preferred reading as noted, αἱ γυναῖκες is more likely a reference to the “wives” for the following reasons.

The usage of τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας in verse 35 points to the women in this context being “wives.” As noted, the phrase τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας can be translated as either “their own men”1593 or “their own husbands,”1594 depending on interpreters’ understanding of the text. Although “your own men”1595 as inclusive of all men is possible considering the patriarchal cultural setting, Witherington argues that “husbands” is more likely what Paul had in mind in this context.1596 The reason is that Paul used the phrase τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα in 1 Cor 7:21597 in the context of the husband and wife relationship. Paul also used the same phrase in Eph 5:22 and Titus 2:41598 regarding the husband and wife relationship. This consistent usage indicates that τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας is more likely “husbands,” and that therefore the women in this context are “wives.” Similarly, the paired usage of “ὁ ἄνηγ’” with “ἡ γυνή” in verse 35 likely refers to wives and husbands. Scholars such as Garland,1599 Johnson1600 and Ebogo1601 argue that this word pair usage is a significant indicator that Paul is referring to wives and husbands. The same word pair usage is found in other 1 Corinthians texts, particularly 1 Cor 7:3-4, 10-16, 34, and 39, where the reference is clearly to marital relationships.1602

My analysis of the above findings leads to the conclusion that the women in this passage are the Corinthian Christian wives. The overall context of Paul’s concern, orderly worship in the churches and orderly practice of prophecy, suggests that the wives in this context are prophetesses1603 or at least participating in prophecy. These conclusions lead to the

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1593 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy, ; Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets, 156.
1594 “Their own husbands” in NIV, NRSV, REB, ASV, and NJB; “their husbands” in KJV and ESV.
1595 As cited in Chapter 4.1.4.
1596 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287; Garland, 1 Corinthians, 667.
1597 Research, ed., NA28, 450.
1598 Paul’s authorship of the Pastorals is disputed.
1600 Johnson, 1 Corinthians, 275. He notes that whenever “ἡ γυνή” is used in the same context with “ὁ ἄνηγ’,” ‘wife’ is the “correct translation (1 Cor 7:14; Eph 5:22; 1 Tim 3:2; 1 Pet 3:1),” but adds that “on the other hand, there are places such as in this context where ‘woman’ and ‘man’ may be more appropriate (Acts 5:14; 8:12; 22:4; 1 Cor 11:11-12).”
1601 Ebojo, “Should Women be Silent,” 18. He notes that Paul uses this pair 31 times, more or less with regard to the marital status of the woman in focus.
1602 Other passages in Pauline writings include Rom 7:2-3, Eph 5:22-25, Col 3:18-19, Tit 2:4-5. Ibid.
1603 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 287.
next question, regarding what Paul meant by αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν (women should be silent in the church), since he has already acknowledged that women pray and prophesy in worship in 1 Cor 11:5.

7.2.4 Silence: The Speaking

The next interpretive challenge is Paul’s usage of the word σιγάω (to be silent) in verse 34. As noted previously, Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington all view this text in the context of prophecy. Grudem sees Paul as using σιγάω (to be silent) to prohibit any woman from asking evaluative questions about a prophecy given by a man during a worship service. He interprets λαλέω here as “judging or evaluating” in the sense of an authoritative form of speech that only the male leadership is permitted to use in the church. Schüssler Fiorenza concludes that Paul is using σιγάω to prohibit only the wives of men in the church from a general sense of λαλέω, “speaking to and questioning” their husbands during the Christian worship assembly. She argues that the reason for this injunction was so as not to give the wrong impression to unbelievers who, based on their cultural mores, would consider such questioning inappropriate.

Witherington also understands λαλέω in the general sense of asking questions, including questions about purely personal matters, and concludes that Paul was using σιγάω to silence wives from asking disruptive questions during the prophetic worship service itself. These interpretations highlight two areas of concern in determining the meaning of σιγάω, which are the interpreters’ understanding of Paul’s usage of σιγάω in the particular context, and the usage of σιγάω in relation to λαλέω from verses 34 and 35.

1605 As noted in chapter 7.2.2.
1606 See Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy, 233. James B. Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 185-94. Also Carson, "Silent in the Churches: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36," 129. Agreeing with Grudem, Thiselton comments, “We believe that the speaking in question denotes the activity of sifting or weighing the words of prophets, especially by asking probing questions about the prophet’s theology or even the prophet’s lifestyle in public. This would become especially sensitive and problematic if wives were cross-examining their husbands about the speech and conduct which supported or undermined the authenticity of a claim to utter a prophetic message, and would readily introduce Paul’s allusion to reserving questions of a certain kind for home.” Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1158.
1607 As noted in Chapter 4.1.3
1608 As discussed in Chapter 4.1.3 from Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, 1, 363.
1609 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 228.
1610 As cited in Chapter 4.1.4.
1611 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 102.
Generally, interpretive differences regarding Paul’s usage of σιγάω hinge on the interpreters’ understanding of the context and how this affects decisions about whether this word is referring to a temporal or a permanent command, or to an absolute or specific form of silence. These differences among interpreters’ understandings of Paul’s usage of σιγάω are seen in Bible translations, where some simply use σιγάω to mean that women “should be silent,”\(^\text{1612}\) while others say that women “should keep silence”\(^\text{1613}\) or “should remain silent.”\(^\text{1614}\) Unlike some interpreters who see Paul as relegating women to “absolute silence,”\(^\text{1615}\) the three interpreters whom I have highlighted in this study (Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza, and Witherington) see Paul as restricting women to a specific form of speech in the context of worship in the church.\(^\text{1616}\) They argue that Paul could not have meant absolute silence for women in 1 Cor 14:34 since the women were given permission to pray and prophesy in 1 Cor 11.\(^\text{1617}\)

The question is whether the present active imperative usage of σιγάω offers such meaning. The word σιγάω appears in two other verses, in 1 Cor 14:28 and 30. These two usages of σιγάω are in the present active imperative form in the singular, and verse 34 is in the present active imperative plural form. The nature of the imperative mood in the

\(^{1612}\) The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version.


\(^{1615}\) John Phillips, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005), 324. He notes that Paul here is referring to three things. “First, there is an absolute rule (14:34). There is a blunt prohibition: ‘Let your women keep silence in the churches (14:34a); there is a biblical precept: ‘for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law’ (14:34b). The word for silence here is a strong one. It is sigao. It means ‘absolute silence.’” He contends that the command for women to keep silence as cultural and confined to Corinth is contrary to Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 11. He argues that absolute silence here is supported by Paul’s statement, ‘it is not permitted for them to speak’ and ‘let them ask their husbands at home,’ in line with the usage of ‘shame’ in 1 Cor 14:35. See also W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Romans through Galatians, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Zondervan, 1976): 275-76. Mare notes that “women were not to speak in public worship.... The command seems absolute: Women are not to do any public speaking in the church.” Fee also contends that “the plain sense of the sentence is an absolute prohibition of all speaking in the assembly” and thus argues for interpolation theory. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 706-07.

\(^{1616}\) As explained in Chapter 4.1.3. Schüssler Fiorenza includes “remain silent.”

\(^{1617}\) As noted in Chapter 4.1.1. Interpreters like C. K. Barrett argue that Paul meant absolute silence and that 1 Cor 14 is about the public worship setting, whereas 1 Cor 11 is about the private worship setting (formal vs. informal settings). Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 332. Also H. Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 246. The problem with this view is that there is no such indication in the text. Hurley notes that the flow of Chapter 14 suggests that “the verses regulating women’s speaking are to be understood as making it all the more unlikely that two radically different kinds of service are in view.” Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective, 187.
present tense does offer the meaning of “the action as an ongoing process.” Grudem and Witherington render the word as “keep” and Schüssler Fiorenza renders it as “remain.” These words, “keep” or “remain,” possibly indicate two things: They acknowledge that the role of silence for women was already a familiar practice for Corinthian women in the church; or, conversely, this command for women to be silent has a timeless claim on women in the church. Our three interpreters conclude that it is the former to which σιγάω is referring in the text. They see the phrase 1 Cor 14:33b, “as in all the churches of the saints,” as a clue that this practice is already normative in Corinth, and thus they see Paul’s command here as limited to a specific situation and not to an absolute command.

Other interpreters see σιγάω as meaning “stop speaking” or “refrain from speaking.” Ciampa and Rosner maintain that Paul probably means “refrain from speaking,” since he had already asked different participants in worship to do likewise, in the context of speaking in tongues in verse 28 as well as in the weighing of prophecy in verse 30. In his proposal to translate σιγάω as “should allow for silence,” Thiselton maintains that the verb σιγάω could mean “to stop speaking” or “to hold one’s tongue, or hold one’s peace, or to refrain from using a particular kind of speech, or speech in a presupposed context,” depending on the context. He notes that the REB translates σιγάω as “stop speaking” in 1 Cor 14:30, although it translates it in verse 34 as “should keep silent.”

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1619 As cited in Chapter 4.1.3.
1620 As cited in Chapter 4.1.1.2. I have argued already in this chapter that 1 Cor 14:33b is to be linked with 1 Cor 14:33a and not with 34. See also Chapter 3.2.2.
1621 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1153.
1623 Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 720. Also Ellis, "The Silenced Wives of Corinth (1 Cor 14:34–35)," 213-20.
1624 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1153.
1625 1 Cor 14:30, in Oxford University Press, The Revised English Bible (with Apocrypha) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Also in Ellingworth and Hatton, A Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, 322. He notes that “the situation is probably not exactly the same as that in verse 28. That is why the same verb is translated ‘keep silence’ in verse 28 and ‘be silent’ in verse 30. In the present verse, ‘stop speaking’ as in TEV is a better translation.”
One could argue that the translation of σιγάω as “to stop speaking” is plausible in the context of 1 Cor 14, where the prohibition of Paul should relate to resolving problems related to pneumatic practices in the church. Two other occurrences of σιγάω, in 1 Cor 14:28 and 30, support the translation of “stop speaking” for 1 Cor 14:34 as well. The reason is that the first verse (1 Cor 14:28) admonishes a speaker who was speaking in tongues to stop speaking when no interpreter is available to provide an interpretation. The second verse (1 Cor 14:30) is an instruction to a prophet to stop speaking if someone else receives a revelation. In both cases, Thiselton notes that σιγάω could be referring to “stop speaking” or to “sifting prophetic speech.”

The idea of “stop speaking” links well not only with the context where Paul’s primary concern is correcting disorderliness and promoting decency in worship, but also with the usage of λαλέω in the following verses, 34 and 35.

As noted, many interpreters’ understanding of σιγάω links to the usage of λαλέω, especially in terms of the kind of speech to which Paul refers in this context. The question focuses on whether Paul is referring to formal or informal forms of speech. Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington see the usage of the word λαλέω in this context as conveying a general sense of speaking that includes questioning, while Grudem understands λαλέω as referring to a more inspired form of speaking, “judging or evaluation.” This is also likely the view of Judson, where he translated λαλέω as an authoritative form of speaking, particularly “preaching.” This translation of the word λαλέω as “preaching” all twelve times it is used in the context of prophesying and speaking in tongues, rather than the pattern of silence suggested by σιγάω.

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1626 Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 720. Interpreters differ widely on the meaning in all three verses. For example, Ciampa and Rosner see verse 28 as “remaining silent” and verse 30 as “stop speaking.” They see the verse 34 usage as being the same as verse 28’s “remain silent.” Ebogo sees verses 28 and 30 as “let [a person] be silent” but verse 34 as absolute silence. Ebojo, “Should Women be Silent,” 17.

1627 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1153.

1628 As cited in Chapter 4.1.3.

1629 Interpreters like Barrett understand λαλέω as referring to a form of inspired speech, “speaking in tongues.” Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 332. Henry, Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume, 2271. notes that women “are not permitted to speak (v. 34) in the church, neither in praying nor prophesying. The connection seems plainly to include the latter, in the limited sense in which it is taken in this chapter, namely, for preaching, or interpreting scripture by inspiration. And, indeed, for a woman to prophesy in this sense was to teach, which does not so well befit her state of teacher of others, [means that she] has in that respect a superiority over them, which is not allowed the woman over the man, nor must she therefore be allowed to teach in a congregation: I suffer them not to teach. But praying, and uttering hymns inspired, were not teaching.”

1630 As noted in Chapter 3.2.2.3.
than as “speaking,” highlights a significant change of meaning in relation to the requirement that women should be silent.\footnote{As noted in Chapter 3. 2.2.3.}

The next question, then, is whether the text alludes to such meaning. As noted in Grudem’s interpretation, the usage of the same word λαλέω in 1 Tim 2:11-15, which prohibited women from teaching, is the link for this interpretation.\footnote{As discussed in Chapter 4.1.3. Ebojo contends that the dissimilarities are greater than the similarities between 1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-12. He also notes that the mandate to be silent in 1 Tim is a didactic problem in the Ephesian church, whereas 1 Cor 14 addresses the problem of pneumatic practices in relation to church order and decency. Ebojo, "Should Women be Silent," 16. Keener argues that "Paul here actually opposes something more basic than women teaching in public ... he opposes them learning too loudly in public." Keener, Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women in the Letters of Paul, 80.}

It is from this perspective that Grudem sees the word λαλέω in 1 Cor 14:34 as referring to women not participating in judging or evaluating their husband’s prophecies,\footnote{Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1158. He notes that Witherington shares this view as well. However, Witherington points out that the problem was being “disrespectful or they may have been asked in a disrespectful manner.” He sees Paul as telling the wives that “questions should not be asked in worship. The wives should ask their husbands at home. Worship was not to be turned into a question-and-answer session.” Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 102.} which would mean that they could question their authoritative role that was only reserved for male leaders who were preachers and teachers. The problem with this view is that the word λαλέω is referring to the informal sense of “speak or talk,” not to inspired forms of speech.\footnote{Louw and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, 1, 396. See also “λαλεῖν,” in BDAG, 582.}

Moreover, the fact that the speech is described as “shameful” suggests that the form of speech to which the verse refers could not be an inspired form of speech. Paul also does not differentiate the judgment entailed in discerning prophecy as higher than the general gift of prophecy or anything related to prophecy as a gender-specific gift.\footnote{As noted in Chapter 4.1.4. A rebuttal of Grudem’s view is found in James Greenbury, “1 Corinthians 14:34-35: Evaluation of Prophecy Revisited,” JETS 51, no. 4 (December 2008): 721-31. http://www.bible-researcher.com/greenbury.pdf, accessed 15 September, 2015.}

Furthermore, in the context of the evaluation and judging of prophecy, Paul used the term διακρίνω for “judging” in verse 29, not λαλέω.\footnote{Ibid.}

The clearest contextual clue regarding what Paul meant by λαλέω is found in verse 35, where there is the conditional clause εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν (“but if they [women] want to learn”).\footnote{μαθεῖν, from μανθάνω. NRSV translates this as “If there is anything they desire to know,” ESV as “if there is anything they desire to learn,” NIV as “If they want to inquire about something,” NASB as “If they desire to learn anything,” NET as “to find out about,” KJV as “if they will learn anything,” and NLT as “if they}
process of learning.” This implies that the reason behind women’s speech is their desire to learn. Judson’s translation captures this in translating the phrase “If women want to learn something.” The emphasis is on the fact that whatever questions the women asked were considered acceptable at home, but unacceptable in the context of public worship. It is in this context that Paul says that the women should ask their own husbands at home. This fits well with the Greco-Roman cultural worldview that considered it “scandalous for a married woman to carry on conversation with other women’s husbands” even in private, but even more in a public setting.

Considering all the above findings, I find that the usage of the word σιγάω in 1 Cor 14:34 makes sense given the overall context of Paul’s concern in 1 Cor 14, which is correcting disorderly behavior in the worship of the church. When it is translated as a command to married women to “stop speaking,” this is not about inspired forms of speech such as prophecy or tongues, but to a specific form of informal conversation such as questioning, and in the context of being disruptive in the worship of the church. Given this understanding, the following section examines what Paul meant by using the word ὑποτάσσω in verse 35.

7.2.5 Silence: The Submission

Another much debated issue in interpreting 1 Cor 14:34-35 is the usage of ὑποτάσσω, meaning “to submit.” Translators differ greatly on how this word is to be translated. For example, various translations are that women “should be subordinate,” should “be under obedience,” that “they must not be in charge,” or that they “should keep their place as the law directs.” Interpreters’ differences on the meaning of the word center on their understanding of to whom the women should submit and the context in which the women are to submit. The issue here is that the passage does not give a clear

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1638 μανθάνω in Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, 1, 381.
1639 As cited in Chapter 3.2.2.5.
1641 RSV, NRSV.
1642 KJV.
1643 TEV.
1644 REB.
indication concerning to whom the women are to submit. Grudem argues that Paul’s main concern is “the principle of submission,” and that such submission is to “male leadership in the church.” Schüssler Fiorenza perceives this word as referring to submission of wives to their husbands. Witherington understands the term as referring here to submission of wives to the principle of order in the worship service.

Among the three, Witherington’s understanding of ὑποτάσσω seems to me to be most likely what Paul had in mind in this context. As noted, the scribe of codex A added τοῖς ἀνδράσιν after ὑποτάσσω, which gives the sense that the submission in this context is submission of the wives to their husbands. Although a preferred reading here is ὑποτάσσω without τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, since the reading with τοῖς ἀνδράσιν appeared in only one manuscript, it is likely that ὑποτάσσω is referring to submission of wives to husbands.

The reason is found in the usage of ὑποτάσσω in relation to the words “ὁ ἁνήρ” and “ἡ γυνὴ.” These words appear together in 1 Cor 14:34-35, Eph 5:21, and Titus 2:4. In Eph 5:21 and Titus 2:4, Paul is referring to the relationship between husband and wife. This is probably the view of Judson as well, since he translated the text with the insertion of τοῖς ἀνδράσιν after ὑποτάσσω.

The question then is the context in which Paul is asking the wives to submit. The way Paul asks the wives to submit influences the meaning of ὑποτάσσω. The occurrence of ὑποτάσσω in verse 32 before verse 34 offers two possibilities. First, the middle voice

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1645 Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 247. Grudem here objects that Paul’s main concern is order in the church, noting that “Paul himself says that his concern is the principle of submission.” The problem with this view is that although Paul mentions submission here, he does not mention that this is his main concern.

1646 As noted in Chapter 4.1.4.

1647 As noted in Chapter 4.1.4. She reasons from the “Greco-Roman exhortations for the subordination of wives as part of the law.” Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 231.

1648 As noted in Chapter 4.1.4. He notes the usage of ὑποτάσσω in terms of the relationship between husband and wife in Eph 5:22, Col 3:18, Titus 2:5; between child and parents in Luke 2:51; slaves and masters in Titus 2:9, 1 Pet 2:18; submission by all to secular authority in Rom 13:1, Titus 3:1, 1 Pet 2:13; Christians to church officials in 1 Pet 5:5; everyone in relation to God in Jas 4:7, 1 Pet 5:5; and believers in relation to Christ in Eph 5:22.

1649 Codex Alexandrinus.

1650 As cited in Chapter 4.1.4.


1652 As explained in Chapter 3.2.2.4.

1653 As explained in Chapter 4.1.4. Witherington notes that the only time silence is associated with submission in the Old Testament is out of respect for God in Hab 2:20, Is 46:1, Zech 2:13, Judges 3:19, Job 29:21, and Ps 37:17.
usage of ὑποτάσσω in verse 32 gives the meaning of submission as denoting “self-control, or controlled speech.” Second, the usage in verse 32 suggests that the middle voice usage of ὑποτάσσω in verse 34 should be read in the same context. Translators differ here on whether to take ὑποτάσσω as infinitive or imperative due to an apparent textual variant issue. A preferred reading is ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, supported by Α B 33 81 104 365 (1175) 1241 2464. The reason once again is that these manuscripts are dated earlier than the manuscripts with ὑποτασσέσθαι in the infinitive. The middle voice usage provides the nuance of submission as being voluntary. As noted, Judson’s usage of won khan (“accept”) instead of nar khan (“must obey”) shows his view of submission in this text as self-voluntary action of wives to their husbands.

These reasons provide a framework for understanding what Paul is saying in the larger context of his concern for order. With Witherington, I find that the reference here is to order in the worship service, not in the family. The usage of ὑποτάσσω in this text is often understood by scholars as subordination of wives to husbands based on Gen 3:16. However, basing an interpretation on Gen 3:16 is problematic since this passage is about the stage after the Fall. Thiselton rightly points out that patterning the understanding of submission on the Fall is in conflict with Paul’s affirmation of a new model of relationality for Christian believers in Gal 3:28, where there is no longer any

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1654 ὑποτάσσεται is in the Present Middle/Passive Indicative. “The spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets’” (NRSV, ESV), “subject to the control of” (NIV), and “in control” (NLT).
1655 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1155.
1657 “They are commanded to be under obedience” (KJV); “should be subordinate” (NRSV); “must be in submission” (NIV); “should be in submission” (ESV); “should be submissive” (NLT).
1658 Variant reading from ὑποτασσέσθωσαν is ὑποτασσέσθαι, which is in Present Passive Infinitive. This is supported by (D F G) Ψ 0243 33 lat(t) sy.
1659 As cited in Chapter 3.2.2.4.
1660 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 102-03. Witherington argues that the submission “is not gender specific” since “Paul requires respect, submission, and silence of any listener when any prophet is speaking” (vv. 28–32), and that in admonishing some women who are asking questions (vv. 34f.) Paul is arguing from the same principle. Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 276. Also see Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1155.
1661 Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy, 253. Grudem notes the problematic nature of Gen 3:16 and later changes this to pattern after the Gen 2 pre-Fall created order. Scholars who see this text as referring to Gen 3:16 include Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 330. See also Robertson and Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, 325.
1662 As cited in Chapter 4.1.4.
division between male and female, slave or free, Jew or Greek. Given this understanding, he proposes that the most accurate meaning of ὑποτάσσω is “let them keep to their ordered place” in the context of Christian worship.

This explanation by Thiselton fits well within the overall context of 1 Corinthians, where Paul was correcting the abuses of Christian liberty in worship. The ‘ordered place’ then refers to order in worship, not order in the family relationship. This kind of submission in 1 Cor 14:28–32 is expected by Paul of any listener when any prophet is speaking. In that same context, Paul requires voluntary submission of wives, who were the violators in this context, to the principle of order in the worship service. Based on this understanding, the following section examines what Paul meant by saying ὑποτασσέσθωσαν in relation to ὁ νόμος.

8.2.6 Silence: The Law

Interpreters disagree extensively over what Paul means in his references to ὁ νόμος. Those who regard 1 Cor 14:34-45 as an interpolation see the usage of ὁ νόμος here as “the ultimate problem for Pauline authorship.” The problem is that Paul’s usage of ὁ νόμος in this context is different from his usage elsewhere. This is the only place where Paul does not give a supporting text for his arguments, and the only usage of ὁ νόμος in relation to “Christian behaviour;” moreover, there is nothing in the Old Testament Law that talks about women or silence. For those who accept Pauline authorship, the debate centers on whether ὁ νόμος is referring to the Mosaic Law, to Jewish Custom

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1663 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1155. Wire, who sees Paul as an insecure authoritarian, states that the issue here is whether “order” still applies to a charismatic gospel community. Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets, 13-38.

1664 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1155. REB takes the same usage of ὑποτάσσω and translates it as women “should keep their place as the law directs.”

1665 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 791.

1666 Ibid. Fee describes the problem in this way: “First, when Paul elsewhere appeals to ‘the Law,’ he regularly cites the text (e.g., 9:8; 14:21), usually to support a point he himself is making. Nowhere else in the entire corpus does he appeal to the Law in this general, but absolute, way as binding on Christian behavior. More difficult yet is the fact that the Law does not say any such thing. An early passage in Genesis (3:16) is often appealed to, but that text does not say what is argued by this glossator.”

1667 Nash, 1 Corinthians, 382. He holds that the Law of Moses did teach the subordination of wives to their husbands, and husbands’ duty to teach the law to their wives.
as Law, the Old Testament scriptures as Law, or to Roman Law. Bible translations reflect these disagreements among interpreters on Paul’s usage of ὁ νόμος.

These different views on the usage of the word ὁ νόμος (“the law”) in 1 Cor 14:34 are generally linked to the interpreter’s understanding of σιγάω (“silence”) and ὑποτάσσω (“to be subordinate”). The fact that Paul does not specify the object of women’s submission in the text generates debate on whether this law is referring to σιγάω or ὑποτάσσω. Assuming ὑποτάσσω as subordination of all women to male leadership, Grudem sees ὁ νόμος as referring to the Old Testament, particularly the creation order in Genesis 2. Schüssler Fiorenza explains ὑποτάσσω as subordination of wives to husbands and assumes ὁ νόμος as the Greco-Roman law that prohibited wives from “speaking” in public. Unlike Grudem and Schüssler Fiorenza, Witherington links this passage directly to silence. He takes ὁ νόμος as alluding to the Old Testament as the Law.

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1668 Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 533. From his view of this passage as the words of the Corinthian men, he sees “the law” here as referring to the Jewish tradition.


1673 As noted in Chapter 4.1.4. At first, he saw this passage as referring to Gen 3:16 but later changed his opinion to Gen 2. He argues that in 119 usages of ὁ νόμος Paul never once uses it about Rabbinic law or Roman law. Church Fathers such as Clement of Alexandria assumed the subordination view, which believed that men are superior to women. This is discussed in Coyle, *"The Fathers on Women and Women’s Ordination,"* 117-67.

1674 As noted in Chapter 4.1.5. She maintains that the “Jewish-Hellenistic missionary tradition” was derived from Greco-Roman law.
particularly noting Job 29:21, which mentions respectful silence when a word of counsel is spoken.\textsuperscript{1675}

These interpreters also examine Paul’s usage of ὁ νόμος elsewhere in their efforts to determine what he most likely meant in the context of 1 Cor 14:34. The term ὁ νόμος appears 123 times in Pauline writings,\textsuperscript{1676} nine times in 1 Corinthians and none in 2 Corinthians.\textsuperscript{1677} The phrase ὁ νόμος λέγει (“the law says”) appears only two times elsewhere, in Rom 3:19 and 1 Cor 9:8. Fee, who sees the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text as not being written by Paul, provides helpful explanations on Paul’s usages of the term ὁ νόμος elsewhere. He points out that whenever Paul appeals to ὁ νόμος, a specific Old Testament text is cited, as in 1 Cor 9:8 and 14:21.\textsuperscript{1678} An issue for 1 Cor 14:34 is that Paul does not hint at or cite any specific text from the Old Testament. Paul elsewhere “does not say” the law is binding on “Christian behavior.”\textsuperscript{1679} Furthermore, there is nothing in the entire Old Testament that discusses women speaking.\textsuperscript{1680} Winter also notes that there is no specific command about women’s vocal participation in the Mosaic Law.\textsuperscript{1681}

While acknowledging that there is no specific Old Testament command that can be directly linked to what Paul is saying about ὁ νόμος in this context, Grudem and Witherington nevertheless argue that the term alludes to some Old Testament passage. Other scholars likewise argue that the meaning of the term must consider the perspective of Old Testament law, given Paul’s Jewish background.\textsuperscript{1682} From that perspective, some

\textsuperscript{1675} Weitherington, \textit{Women in the Earliest Church}, 103. Ciampa and Rosner see this passage as alluding to Numbers 12:1-1, in which Miriam criticized Moses. They see Miriam as violating her role of submission and silence. Ciampa and Rosner, \textit{The First Letter to the Corinthians}, 727. Thiselton sees the word ὁ νόμος as referring to the Pentateuch, which “declares the ordered character of creation and human life and the regulative character (especially Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers) of boundaries or differentiations.” Thiselton, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 1153.

\textsuperscript{1676} As explained in Chapter 4.1.5.

\textsuperscript{1677} Research, ed., \textit{NA28}.

\textsuperscript{1678} Fee, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 791.

\textsuperscript{1679} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1680} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1681} Winter, \textit{Roman Wives}, 93.

\textsuperscript{1682} Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, and Walter Bauer, \textit{Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Frühchristlichen Literatur} (2012). They argue that νόμος in Rom 3:27, 4:15 and 5:13 refer to the law in general or the Roman law, that Rom 7:21-25 and 8:2 are referring to “rule,” Rom 3:27, 8:2, and Gal 8:2 are referring to the new law, and all the other references in Pauline writings are to the Jewish law, the law of Moses or the holy Scriptures. Also in Garland, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 672. and Charles Hodge, \textit{First Epistle to the Corinthians} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1953), 1953.
interpreters assume that ὁ νόμος is a reference to Gen 3:16, while others refer to Gen 2:21-24. This was probably the view of Judson as well when he translated ὁ νόμος as "pyit nyat tayar," meaning "the Law." His translation of ὑποτασσόμαι ("women should accept men’s ruling") alongside καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει ("as the Law commands") suggests that he sees the law here as referring to Gen 3:16.

I find that Schüssler Fiorenza’s view of ὁ νόμος as referring to the Greco-Roman law offers the more convincing argument, for the following reasons. First, this view connects the usages of σιγάω ("silence") and ὑποτάσσω ("subordination") to ὁ νόμος. Although Paul’s reference to ὁ νόμος links both submission and silence to women in the text of 1 Cor 14:34, interpreters often make only one such linkage. As mentioned about the usage of ὑποτάσσω, linking ὁ νόμος to Gen 3:16 is problematic since this passage is talking about the relationship after the Fall. Likewise, in linking ὁ νόμος to Gen 2:20-24, "the created order" is problematic since this interpretation of the created order conflicts with Paul’s concept of new creation in Gal 3:28. Moreover, the Gen 2 passage does not mention anything about speaking or asking questions.

Although Witherington’s view is promising, the connection with Job 29:21 is unconvincing since that text is about respectful silence, not about women. However, as I have noted Schüssler Fiorenza convincingly connects the usage of σιγάω ("silence") and ὑποτάσσω ("to be subordinate") to ὁ νόμος by explaining the law here as a reference to the Roman law, particularly the Vellian decree of the Roman Senate that banned wives from speaking and asking questions in public. She sees Paul as prohibiting wives from speaking and

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1684 Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 136. Bruce rejects the view that refers to Gen 3:16. He argues that “[t]his is unlikely, since in MT and LXX Gen 3:16 speaks of a woman’s instinctive inclination ... towards her husband, of which he takes advantage so as to dominate her. The reference is more probably to the creation narratives.”

1685 Grudem initially saw this usage as referring to Gen 3:16 (post-Fall), but later changed this to Gen 2 (a pre-Fall husband-wife relationship).


1688 As noted in Chapter 4.1.5.

1689 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1155.

questioning in the public worship assembly because such behaviour was regarded as
contradictory to the submissive and silent role of wives in Greco-Roman culture.  

Second, the usage of αἰσχρόν ("shame") with γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ("for a woman to
speak") in 1 Cor 14:35 further supports Schüssler Fiorenza's argument for the Roman law
as being a fit with the Greco-Roman cultural background of Corinth. Since there is no law
in the Old Testament that specifically mentions women speaking, the silence of women,
or the submission of women, it is possible that Paul is referring to a law that the
Corinthians would naturally understand. Regardless of the interpreter's understanding of
the nature of women's or wives' participation in worship, the usage of the word αἰσχρόν
("shame") suggests that the command here refers to cultural mores regarding propriety,
where certain actions of wives were considered shameful for themselves and their
husbands.

The culture in the historical setting of Corinth was a mixture of Greeks, Romans and Jews.
Ciampa and Rosner argue that since this Greco-Roman culture was strongly patriarchal
and hierarchical, in terms of the law a woman's submission would normally be understood
"to refer to her submission to the authority of her husband" regardless of the specific sub-
context, whether Jewish, Greek, or Roman. Therefore, the term ὁ νόμος ("the law") in
this text may plausibly be understood as referring to the prevailing legal framework in the
cultural construct of propriety in Greco-Roman Corinth.

The question here is whether Paul would use ὁ νόμος in reference to the Roman law. As
noted above, interpreters who focus on the influence of Paul's Jewish background argue
that Paul never uses ὁ νόμος 'the law' to refer to Roman law. However, at issue is also
the fact that there is no specific reference that supports the prohibition of women
speaking or submission in the Old Testament. An argument can therefore be made
here in support of the influence of the Greco-Roman cultural setting in Corinth.

Kroeger understands the law here as the legal efforts of Greco-Roman society to control ecstatic female
behavior, and translates the submission as "they must control themselves."

She argues that the "Jewish-Hellenistic missionary tradition" derived from the Greco-Roman law.

As noted in this chapter, 319.


Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 791.
This is highlighted by Hollander in his explanation of the double usage of ὁ νόμος in 1 Cor 9, where he sees the first ὁ νόμος as referring to “the law” in general and the latter to “the law of Moses.” In Hollander’s view, “all this makes it wholly understandable that Paul, as a Hellenistic Jew and Christian living in the Greco-Roman culture, could refer first to ‘the law’ in general, and next to ‘the law of Moses’ as a specimen of a larger class of national laws, given by a God-inspired man, Moses, to the people of Israel (or the Jews).” He therefore argues that it is very doubtful that the law in 1 Cor 14:34 is the Jewish law, since his “(Gentile) readers in Corinth would not have understood the Pauline phrase this way.” From this same perspective, it is possible that Paul could use ὁ νόμος to refer to the Roman law in this context. Winter notes that the concern for propriety, shame and obligations in the Corinthian context provide “powerful arguments to invoke in Roman culture.” It is within this framework that Paul is anxious not to cause unnecessary social offence.

The next question, then, asks what lies behind Paul’s reference to the Roman law. The sentence ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν in verse 35, meaning “they should ask their own husbands at home,” serves as a clue to the reasoning behind Paul’s usage of ὁ νόμος. The fact that these women were asking questions would be considered “inconsistent with this manner of respecting the husband” in Greco-Roman culture. Winter links this behavior of the wives to “the new women” who were emerging in the Greco-Roman world at that time, and points out that such women ‘asking questions’ may have been a reason for the imperial decree that banned wives from speaking on behalf of their husbands.

Witherington also concludes that 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 “seem to be Paul’s reaction to those whom he perceived to be overly liberated women.” Agreeing with this view, Ebogo notes that the presence of this new attitude among women at this time in “the

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1697 Ibid., 123.
1698 Ibid.
1699 Winter, *Roman Wives*, 93.
church, as a public assembly, was not spared either.” Winter thus sees Paul as referencing the Roman law in this context, because “the wrong impression being given to the outsider is also central to the issue of order in the service, and particularly prophetic activity which is for the unbeliever (14:22-25) and in which women also engage (11:5).” However, when we evaluate these explanations, the sentence is not only about speaking or asking questions as a shameful act. The fact that Paul commands the wives to ask these questions at home in verse 35, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν (“let them ask their husbands at home”), supports the view that Paul’s concern is the way the wives ask, not just the fact of their asking. If so, it is the disruptive manner of the wives’ questioning that Paul considered shameful and which was of primary concern. This is the view of Witherington, who points out that the purpose of Paul’s command was “correcting an abuse of a privilege, not taking back a woman’s right to speak in the assembly,” which he had already acknowledged in 1 Cor 11.

In light of the concern in these passages about maintaining order in worship and the immediate issue of prophesying in worship services, the wives are commanded to respect the good order of the service; in effect, they are to avoid being disorderly. The motive behind using the Roman law, then, could be as Schüssler Fiorenza sees it, that of not giving the wrong impression to unbelievers and protecting the Corinthian Christian community from being seen as an “orgiastic” cult. Agreeing with this, Garland also concludes that

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1703 Ebojo, "Should Women be Silent," 25-29. He mentions several church leaders before the fourth century, such as Ambrosiaster, John Chrysostom, and Tertullian, as making overtures against women’s apparently disrupting presence.
1704 Winter, Roman Wives, 93.
1705 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 102. Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1159. Wire, The Corinthian Women Prophets, 152-58.iso Keener, Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women in the Letters of Paul, 70-100. Keener suggests that the reason women asked irrelevant questions during the assembly was that they were uneducated and wanted to learn.
1706 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 287. He writes, “In light of the discussion of pagan prophecy above, it is very believable that these women assumed that Christian prophets or prophetesses functioned much like the oracle at Delphi, who only prophesied in response to questions, including questions about purely personal matters. Paul argues that Christian prophecy is different: Prophets and prophetesses speak in response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, without any human priming of the pump. Paul then limits such questions to another location, namely home. He may imply that the husband or man who was to be asked was either a prophet or at least able to answer such questions at a more appropriate time.”
1707 Ibid.
1708 As noted in this chapter 7.2.5.
1709 Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 232. Winter, Roman Wives, 93.
“Paul’s instructions are conditioned by the social realities of his age and a desire to prevent a serious breach in decorum.”

7.3 CONTEXTUAL APPLICATION OF THE TEXT

Considering the translation work of Judson in Myanmar, contemporary interpretations, and the historical-cultural background, a possible reading of the interpretive problem concerning women’s silence is that it is a situation-specific command for the context of Corinth in Paul’s day. All of the above findings show that the prohibition against women speaking in 1 Cor 14:34-35 is plausible when this text is seen in its historical context as (1) a problem of the church in the specific context of Corinth; (2) directed to a specific group, the wives in the Corinthian church; (3) intended to stop these women from a specific kind of speaking (asking questions during times of prophetic utterances in the church’s worship services); (4) for a specific problem, namely that their questions had disrupted the worship order of the church; and (5) making use of a specific social framework, the Roman law, as a reminder that such questioning by the wives would be considered inappropriate and shameful in their cultural setting. Paul mentioned the wives since they were the ones disrupting worship. Paul asked them to stop what they were doing and to submit voluntarily to maintain the orderliness of the worship service. He did not stop them from learning, but directed their questions to another setting for (6) a specific purpose, that of not giving the wrong impression to unbelievers about the Corinthian Christian community.

These findings fit well within the context of 1 Cor 14, where Paul talks about the proper use of spiritual gifts, tongues, and prophecy. This includes speaking in tongues and prophetic utterances during worship in 1 Cor 14:28-30. He urges the Corinthians to stop speaking in tongues without meaningful interpretation and to take turns to prophesy. In both cases, Paul’s main concern is about order in the worship service. The above explanation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 also fits well with Paul’s conclusion statement in 1 Cor 14:39-40, where he urges both Corinthian men and women to “be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues,” and to minister in the gifts of the Spirit “decently and

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1710 Garland, 1 Corinthians, 673.
1711 Witherington, Women in the Earliest Churches, 276.
This suggests that Paul is here arguing that "disorder and division were created not by the gifts themselves, but by the way in which they were used." Further, our findings fit well within the overall context of 1 Corinthians, where Paul allowed women to prophesy in 1 Cor 11:5 with a head covering, and where he dealt with the proper conduct of believers during the Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor 12, given the concern for propriety especially in relation to sensitivity to outsiders. Finally, our findings cohere with Paul’s concerns for the broader context, where he speaks of limiting one’s freedom in Christ for the sake of others; he addresses this concern regarding lawsuits among believers (1 Cor 6), married life (1 Cor 7), food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8), Paul’s use of his own freedom (1 Cor 9), and believers’ freedom (1 Cor 10).

The next question, then, is whether the command for women’s silence is still applicable in the church today, since all our findings suggest that Paul’s command is situationally specific for the first-century Corinthian context. As we have seen, contemporary interpreters differ on whether the text is normative or a context-specific command. From Grudem’s perspective that sees all teaching of the Bible as normative and applicable for Christians in all times and places, he views this text as normative for women in the church today. He reasons that if Paul did not want this rule to be apply in other churches, then he would not say that “women should remain silent in the churches.” Witherington shares this view. However, they differ on what they see as normative. Grudem sees Paul as prohibiting women from speaking an authoritative form of speaking that includes judging and evaluating, which were reserved for male leadership only. Witherington sees Paul as prohibiting wives from asking disruptive questions to the prophets in the worship service.

Critical contextual hermeneutics seeks not only to understand the text as it was received in its historical context, but also to identify an appropriate application of the text for the

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1714 As noted in Chapter 4.2.1.
1715 Grudem, Evangelical Feminism, 245.
1716 As cited in Chapter 4.2.1.
1717 As noted in Chapter 4.1.3.
1718 Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth, 274.
present context, from the perspective of faith and the authority of the Bible. My view is that the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text is situation-specific, and therefore normative only in similar situations. After examining the historical background and agreeing with Witherington’s view of Paul’s main concern in this passage, my conclusion is that the general principle for 1 Cor 14:34-35 is showing appropriate respect when another is speaking in a worship service. The principle is not about gender, even though it is relevant for us to understand the significance of gender issues in first-century Corinth. The text is not about stopping Christian women from speaking generally, or restricting women from speaking authoritatively in the church.

This leads to the next question, concerning how this text is best applied in the church today in the Myanmar context when similar situations occur. This requires Myanmar interpreters’ awareness, following Ciampa and Rosner, of the extent to which Paul was being sensitive to issues of cultural appropriateness in the places where the church found itself. The challenge in applying such a text to the church in Myanmar is that the biblical interpreter must have a critical awareness of the social realities in the Myanmar cultural context. This means being able to understand and articulate what is considered an appropriate way of showing respect in Myanmar culture. As noted earlier, biblical interpreters in Myanmar often view social practices of Myanmar as like the social norms of Paul’s day. From that perspective, interpreters in Myanmar have typically appropriated this text uncritically and have accepted the silent role of women as normative for today in Myanmar.

The challenge for Myanmar interpreters is not only to understand that we bring our own questions and life situations to the text, but also allowing the biblical texts to function as Scripture. This requires allowing “the texts to ask questions of us, to confront our cultural presuppositions, to challenge and reshape our default readings.” Therefore, the challenge for Myanmar interpreters is to understand that there are not only similarities but differences between contemporary Myanmar culture and first-century Greco-Roman

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1719 As noted in Chapter 5.2.2.
1720 As explained in this chapter 7.2.4.
1721 Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 720.
1722 As noted in Chapter 6.2.3.
Corinth culture, and that these similarities and differences must be analyzed critically in
their search for the meaning of biblical texts.

In general, the culture of Myanmar is a shame-based culture, as was Corinth in Paul’s day.
It is also a strongly patriarchal and hierarchical culture, as was Corinth.1724 Women are less
likely to ask questions than their husbands are in Myanmar society. Although there is no
overt restriction on women’s participation in public settings, speaking with other women’s
husbands in public or in private would be considered shameful, as in Corinth. Additionally,
for a woman to speak with a loud voice is considered too authoritative and therefore
shameful in Myanmar culture.1725

Yet exhibiting sensitivity to this cultural reality, as Paul urged the Corinthian Christians to
do, is not a straightforward matter with respect to Myanmar Christians. The obvious
reason is that there is no law in Myanmar that prohibits women from speaking in public
or representing their husbands in court, as there was in Corinth. Moreover, although
women were less educated than men in the past in Myanmar, as in Corinth (which was a
possible reason for Paul to ask women to ask their husbands questions at home if they
wanted to learn),1726 this is no longer the case in Myanmar today, where education is open
to females as well as males. These areas of possible convergence and divergence mean
that biblical interpreters cannot apply this text to the Myanmar Christian context without
a critical contextual hermeneutical approach.

One could argue that respectful silence is already a normative value in Myanmar culture.
This culture of respectful silence is required for younger persons in relation to older
persons, and for those who are lower in social ranking in relation to someone who is
higher in rank.1727 This cultural value has been reinforced throughout the authoritarian
and hierarchical history of Myanmar. In this culture, asking questions of anyone who is in
an authoritative role, such as leaders, elders, parents, and teachers, is considered
inappropriate and disrespectful, regardless of which gender is asking the questions.1728 At
the same time, it is also true that there may be a deeply engrained assumption that the

1724 As explained in Chapter 2.1.
1725 As explained in Chapter 2.2.
1726 Keener, Paul, Women and Wives, 81.
1727 As noted in Chapter 6.3.1.
1728 As noted in Chapter 6.3.1.
respect given by someone in a lower position to someone in a higher position would include women as ‘lower than’ men. But this assumption would be contrary to Paul’s theology of ministry without hierarchy and his theology of inclusivity and “oneness in Christ.”

Paul’s command in 1 Cor 14:34-35 to show respect when another is speaking in worship is best understood by considering Paul’s purpose in giving such a command. Paul’s intention was to protect the Corinthian Christian community from giving the wrong impression to unbelievers so that they could build up the mission of Christ. From that understanding Paul asks believers to limit their own freedom for the sake of others throughout 1 Corinthians. In this light, the contextually appropriate application of 1 Cor 14:34-35 for Myanmar is the challenge to limit our own freedom for the sake of others, in the contemporary Myanmar context, so that Myanmar Christians too can build up the Body of Christ. It is for this reason, as Paul reminds the Corinthians in 1 Cor 14:40, that “all things should be done decently and in order.”

7.4 CONCLUSION

Drawing on the principles and methodology of a critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar, this chapter has examined in depth the issues surrounding the interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34-35, keeping in mind the Myanmar context. In Chapter 3, I demonstrated the ways in which the translation work of Adoniram Judson was similar to or different from the Greek New Testament texts. I also showed how Judson’s interpretations were similar to or different from contemporary interpreters such as Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington. Considering all that has been discussed, I can only conclude that Judson’s translation was itself an interpretation that was influenced by his presuppositions and cultural worldview. The challenge for Myanmar interpreters who read Judson’s translation today is to recognize that “the gospel must challenge the presuppositions of the missionary’s culture if it has any hope of speaking prophetically to the new culture in which it is being contextualized.”

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1729 As noted in Chapter 4.2.3.5.
1730 *NRSV*.
My analysis of the interpretations of Grudem, Schüssler Fiorenza and Witherington also highlighted the role of the interpreter’s context in the interpretation of the Scripture. Considering all the information derived from Judson’s Bible translation and these contemporary interpreters, the challenge for Myanmar interpreters is to recognize that our own presuppositions inevitably influenced all our interpretations of biblical meaning. This means that interpreters must allow the gospel to challenge those influences that shape our understandings of Scripture. This is what happened to Paul as well. Although Paul’s interpretations of the meaning of the gospel for the emerging church were influenced by three cultures (Jewish, Greek, and Roman), he also challenged the worldviews, values and practices of Greco-Roman society that were normative in Corinth. One of the examples in 1 Corinthians is his challenge to “the culture of status, power and self-promotion” that characterized Roman Corinth in light of the cross, which makes ‘the cross’ and everything it stands for offensive in that culture (1 Cor 1.18).

My analysis has demonstrated the complexity and challenges that interpreters have faced in determining the meaning of 1 Cor 14:34-35, both in its historical context and in terms of its application for contemporary Christians, including Myanmar Christians. I argue that both translation decisions and views of the historical context of Corinth in Paul’s day must be viewed as products of the interpreters’ cultural worldviews. The hope is that this approach to hermeneutics will give hope to Myanmar interpreters who approach biblical texts from the perspective of faith to see the benefits of engaging in this kind of critical contextual analysis.

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1732 Flemming explains context as “a variety of boundaries: regionality, nationality, culture, language, ethnicity, social and economic status, political structures, education, gender, age, religious or theological tradition, worldview or values’ (the ‘life world’ of the audience).” Flemming, Contextualization in the New Testament, 20.
1733 Ibid., 171.
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

In the introductory chapter, I introduced the problem of the interpretation of biblical texts concerning the role and status of women in the church in Myanmar. To address this challenge, the first section of the thesis focused on the interpretation of a specific text, 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, and the influential translation by the missionary Adoniram Judson in his Burmese Bible, which was published in 1840. The second portion of the thesis evaluated representative contemporary interpreters in the search for hermeneutical tools that could aid those (particularly Myanmar biblical scholars) who wish to take both the authority of the Bible and the significance of biblical, historical, and cultural contexts seriously in addressing such texts and their application for the church in Myanmar today.

Considering these concerns, the first section of the thesis focused on two problematic areas, culture and translation, surrounding interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 in Myanmar. The second part highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of different hermeneutical schools of thought when applied to biblical interpretation in Myanmar, and then articulated a proposed critical contextual hermeneutic that takes the Myanmar context seriously. Below is a summary of these contributions to biblical interpretation in Myanmar. The third part revisits the 1 Cor 14:34-35 text and the context through principles learned from the proposed context-sensitive hermeneutics.

8.1 HERMENEUTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

8.1.1 Contribution of Culture

In the first part of the thesis, concerning problematic issues surrounding the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 in Myanmar, I examined the contributions of translation and culture to Christian attitudes which have defined the role of women in the church. In Chapter 2, I discussed how the concept of silence has been understood in Myanmar culture and how this understanding has contributed to Myanmar Christians’ attitudes about the role of women in the church. I noted how the conceptual framework
for understanding the word ‘silence’ is deeply rooted in people’s experiences of authoritarian rule throughout imperial, colonial, and post-colonial periods of Myanmar history. The religious teachings of Buddhism, the major religion in Myanmar, also reinforced this concept of silence. The concept of silence as a sign of submission to authority became inseparable from Myanmar culture and was understood as submission not just to national authorities but to anyone in a position of authority. This understanding strengthened the control of every perceived authority over the people in all areas of life, including political, societal, and religious spheres. It governed the relationship between rulers and ruled, men and women, and parents and children.

Generally, biblical interpreters’ understanding and usage of words is intertwined with symbols from the past, their own experiences, and their own worldviews. This same dynamic would be expected to occur in Myanmar as well. This intertwined nature of the interpreter’s understanding of words generates a situation where a Biblical translation communicates ideas and ideologies that go beyond the intent of the original author. For instance, Judson translated a generic term meaning “speaking” in the original New Testament Greek as “preaching” in 1 Corinthians 14:34b-36, which as a specific form of speaking has serious implications for the issue of women's silence in the Myanmar church. This choice by Judson helps to explain how the word ‘silence’ in this text has been construed by subsequent Myanmar interpreters in a way that goes beyond the meaning the original author intended, as far as this can be discerned. The evidence suggests that the cultural understanding of silence has influenced Myanmar interpreters in a way that has affected the received understanding of the meaning of this and other texts, without those involved being aware of the influential role of their cultural assumptions.

In short, Myanmar’s contextual understanding of the concept of silence contributed to the ongoing uncritical acceptance of a translation that has reinforced the practice of silencing women in the church. Thus, one could conclude that Myanmar culture has contributed to negative attitudes towards women in the church in Myanmar today by

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1734 As noted in Chapter 3.2.2.3. This is elaborated further in the next section.
1735 As noted in Chapter 2.
1736 As noted in Chapter 2. Also in Chapter 6.2.3.
reinforcing assumptions about what this and other biblical texts mean. From the perspective of contextualization, to deny cultural influences in one’s hermeneutics, or to accept everything in one’s culture without reflecting on it in the light of the Scripture, is to fall into the trap of uncriticality. With this understanding of how our reading of Scripture is affected by our social and cultural location, we can only conclude that Christians in Myanmar need to have a basis for analyzing all cultures that impinge on biblical interpretation—that of the translator, contemporary interpreters, the Bible, as well as our own culture.

### 8.1.3 Contributions of Different Schools of Interpretation

Chapters 4 analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of different hermeneutical schools of thought when applied to the above-mentioned interpretive issues in Myanmar. They were examined to assess hermeneutical tools in resolving problems of interpretation in passages concerning women. This was done from the perspective of those who wish to take both the authority of the Bible and the significance of context seriously. To this end, I examined three different hermeneutical schools of thought in Chapter 4 and identified the principles and presuppositions behind each hermeneutical school to learn how those contribute to their interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. This chapter then unpacked their detailed explanations of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36. Drawing on the insights from this chapter, Chapter 5 proposed a critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar, focusing on issues related to the role of women highlighted in the Corinthians text.

Leading up to this constructive proposal, I addressed the principles underlying the approaches of different hermeneutical schools from different contexts in interpreting 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, highlighting two approaches. First, in Chapter 4, Part One, I explored how hermeneutical schools that prioritize either Scripture over culture, or the rights and interests of women over Scripture, have both contributed to contemporary interpretations, despite their differences in perspective. This exploration highlighted how all interpreters’ presuppositions are linked to their sociological and cultural positioning and to their understanding of the nature and authority of the Bible. It also highlighted how these presuppositions undergird the theoretical frameworks that influence their hermeneutical approaches to biblical passages affecting women. This in turn accentuates
the important function of the interpreter in the interpretive process, which includes
determining the starting point for interpretation and establishing meanings of texts.

However, although both the hermeneutical schools that prioritize Scripture over culture
and those prioritizing the rights and interests of women over Scripture have contributed
to our understanding, neither adequately addresses the perspective of interpreters who
wish to hold together a serious concern for the status of women, the authority of the
Bible, and the significance of context for interpretation and translation. Hermeneutical
schools that prioritize Scripture over culture tend to see biblical interpretation as a
culturally straightforward process without realizing how their own cultural worldviews
and corresponding values influence their interpretations. Hemeneutical schools that
prioritize the rights and interests of women over Scripture are not in keeping with the high
view of Scripture which is held by most Christians in Myanmar.

I have therefore advocated for a critical contextual hermeneutic, a different form of
interpretation that deals adequately with both Christian tradition and biblical authority,
on the one hand, and relevant cultural concerns in the Myanmar context on the other
hand. This need for critical hermeneutics which takes seriously the Christian and cultural
traditions in Myanmar was elaborated further in Chapter 6, where I demonstrated the
problematic nature of Myanmar hermeneutics given the fact that it has not adequately
considered the influences of our cultural presuppositions in biblical interpretation.

Incorporating all of the issues raised and addressed in Chapters 3 and 4, I then articulated
a critical contextual hermeneutic for Myanmar in Chapter 5. Drawing on aspects of the
above-mentioned schools of interpretation, together with a theology of critical
contextualization, this hermeneutic provides a way to analyze certain perspectives of
Christian tradition in Myanmar, particularly related to the status and roles of women. This
approach seriously considers the significance of context in interpretation and translation.
It provides a framework which makes it possible to contest traditional interpretations that
have restricted the roles and status of women in Myanmar, while retaining a high view of
the authority of Scripture and its role in the Christian church.
8.1.2 Contribution of Translation

Chapter 2 further investigated how Bible translation in Myanmar supported an understanding of silence as a proper sign of submission. Bible translation contributed significantly to Christian attitudes to the role of women in the church in Myanmar. The Burmese Bible translation work of the nineteenth century missionary Adoniram Judson has been the most significant translation in this regard.\textsuperscript{1737} This translation’s influence was reinforced by the revered status of Judson as the pioneer Protestant missionary in the country and the popularity of his translation. To demonstrate this influence, I explained how 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 was translated in Judson’s Burmese Bible and the impact of that translation on Myanmar Christians’ views of the role of women in the church.

Particularly, I noted in Chapter 3 that Judson’s Burmese translation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 interpreted silence to mean that women should not be “preaching.” As noted in the previous section, this is an example of how translators’ understandings of words are intertwined with their own worldviews.\textsuperscript{1738} Judson’s translation greatly impacted views and practices surrounding the role of women in the Myanmar church. Considering all the issues surrounding the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 in Myanmar, one could conclude that the translator’s approach to interpretation and his lack of consideration of issues in the Corinthian church, together with other influences, led to an uncritical acceptance of the silent role of women in church.

In other words, Adoniram Judson’s understanding of the role of women in his own society contributed to his choice of words in his translation of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, and consequently to Myanmar Christian views about the role of women in the church. His understanding of the role of women in society was like that of the popular teachings of his day, rendering this text as an injunction that women should not preach in the church.\textsuperscript{1739}

Judson most likely believed that he was being true to what the Bible was saying. And although his translation of this text contributed to present-day restrictions on the role of women in the church, it is important to note that he did support giving some freedom for

\textsuperscript{1737} As noted in Chapter 2.2.2.
\textsuperscript{1738} As noted on page 333.
\textsuperscript{1739} As noted in Chapter 3.3
women to be involved in the Myanmar church during his time. Missionary women in those
days, including his wives, were actively involved in evangelism and teaching in the church
and were very occasionally involved in preaching.\textsuperscript{1740} It was through their active
involvement in ministry and their contributions to mission work that many more women
in their home countries were encouraged to become missionaries, and the women's
missionary movement flourished.

An added dynamic in understanding Judson’s views and how they affected his usage of
words in texts is that he was not asking the questions that we are asking now. When he
translated the Bible, his main interest was a missionary concern. From this missionary
concern, he adopted many terms from Burmese culture, including religious terms, and
adapted them to present the Christian message in a familiar linguistic and cultural
framework. However, his translation shows that, while some local linguistic terms worked
well, others suggested different meanings than Judson or the original text may have
intended, due to the complex nature of the language and associations and nuances in
meaning of which he may not have been aware.\textsuperscript{1741} The usage of the word ‘silence’ in
Judson’s translation is one of those instances which resulted in more than the translator
may have intended. We as interpreters today are now looking back at Judson’s translation
and noticing these dynamics in his translation work. As noted in the previous section, this
dynamic of translation offers a contribution to understanding our own cultural
assumptions and their influential role in interpretation.

One can also conclude that Judson’s association of ‘silence’ with ‘not preaching’ in 1
Corinthians 14:33b-36 supported a pre-existing view of the role of women in Myanmar
society. His translation helped enable the church in Myanmar to maintain this patriarchal
authority structure. It reinforced a belief that women should be silent in the church as in
other spheres in Myanmar society. For some, it restricted women from preaching in the
presence of men. For others, it restricted women from preaching entirely.\textsuperscript{1742}

To summarize, although in certain respects Judson’s translation work and personal faith
were somewhat liberating for women in the church with regard to teaching roles during

\textsuperscript{1740} As mentione in Chapter 2.2.3.
\textsuperscript{1741} As discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{1742} As noted in Chapter 2.2.2.
that period in Myanmar, they also contributed to the restricted role of women in the church of Myanmar today. Due to the respect given to Judson for what he accomplished for Christianity in Myanmar, taking a different view of women’s role in the family, society and church is difficult for Myanmar Christians today. Whether one attempts to deny the impact of the translator’s role, or to accept everything in a translation without critical analysis—both amount to uncritical contextualization. With this understanding of how patriarchal culture influenced translation and how translation in turn reinforced cultural attitudes towards women in the church in Myanmar today, it is possible to critique the translation while still being respectful of the translator.

8.1.4 Contribution of Critical Hermeneutical Tools

In light of all the hermeneutical problems surrounding the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 in Myanmar, this thesis has presented a critical hermeneutic grounded in three contexts: the Myanmar context, the Bible translator’s context, and the biblical context in its historical setting. Within this contextual framework, this thesis has examined the impact of Myanmar culture and religious teachings on Myanmar Christians’ view of the role of women in the church and the attitudes behind their interpretations of biblical texts. The thesis also revisited the impact of Adoniram Judson’s Bible translation on Myanmar Christians’ view of the role of women in the church. All of this was done to identify problems in interpreting biblical texts concerning women’s role in the church that the thesis proposed.

Then, from my perspective that takes the authority of the Bible and the significance of context seriously, I revisited 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 in Chapter 7, considering all the principles proposed in my critical contextual hermeneutic. This part of the thesis focused on the biblical context of Corinth to better understand what the text meant to the original readers of that historical time. This was done to show the importance of understanding the hermeneutical distance between historical context and contemporary context. To accept all Scripture as literal and normative for all times, without critical analysis, is uncritical contextualization. With this understanding of how the context influenced the meaning of biblical texts, and how these historical contextual meanings, through critical

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1743 As noted in Chapter 6.2.
analysis, may help create culturally appropriate applications for the church in Myanmar today, it is possible to critique traditional interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 based on the Judson Burmese Bible translation, in terms of how they have influenced the role and status of women in the Myanmar church.

Through analyzing all of the influences of translation in determining our understanding of the meaning of silence in the Myanmar church, I concluded that Judson’s translation of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, and his own personal positioning, led to two oppositional effects. The first effect -was support for a degree of freedom for the women of his day to be involved in ministry in that his translation of λαλέω as ‘preaching’ meant women in Myanmar were not expected to be totally silent in church. At the same time, however, Judson appears to have reinforced the pre-existing concept of the silent role of women in society whereby women could not preach and could not lead. Thus, critical questions about the exact situation Paul was addressing were not asked. However, I have also noted that Judson’s concern was not the same as that of interpreters today. We are now looking back at Judson’s translation and observing retrospectively all the influences on his translation, and have concluded that his views were shaped by a culture of patriarchy which, in turn, reinforced the silent role of women in the church of Myanmar. In the same way, we are also now looking back at what happened in Corinth from the perspective of Myanmar today and noticing influences of patriarchy in that culture.

At the same time, when we analyze what happened in Corinth and its implication for Myanmar today, elements of Paul’s teaching about salvation also challenged the prevailing views of patriarchy in the ancient world (e.g., Gal 3:28). In the case of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36, Paul appears to have gone along with patriarchal conventions in a specific situation. It can also be argued that Paul was restricting what women were actually saying, rather than restricting them solely because of their gender. So, while at times Paul appears to have gone along with patriarchal views in dealing with a specific situation, his overall teaching, when it is in line with the teaching of Jesus, reflects a more inclusive view of women. Therefore, one could conclude that the situation addressed in 1

\[1744 \text{ As noted in Chapter 2.3.}
\[1745 \text{ As noted in Chapter 3.3.}
\[1746 \text{ As noted in Chapter 7.4.}\]
Corinthians 14:33b-36 was normative only in that specific situation. With this understanding of how Scripture is interpreted and how our reading of Scripture is affected by people’s social setting, both in the time of Scripture and throughout history, it is possible to have a clearer understanding of how attitudes towards the role and status of women in the church in Myanmar today should be constructed.

8.2 CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

The role of women in the church has become an issue of serious concern in Myanmar today. Women leaders in and out of the church raised this concern, especially since the recent opening of society, accelerated by changing events in the political situation as well as the impacts of globalization. The question that this thesis has raised is what to do with their concerns. Often when women raised questions like this, they are labelled as not taking the Bible seriously. However, it is important to know that there are other ways of interpreting biblical texts from the perspective of faith. This faith perspective views the Bible as an authoritative text, not one approached solely from the perspective of the hermeneutics of suspicion. A prime example of such reading, which shares the conviction that the Bible is a book of freedom and empowerment for women, as I have also proposed in this thesis, was undertaken by Katherine C. Bushnell, who questioned traditional biblical interpretations affecting women in the nineteenth century.

Katherine Bushnell (1856-1946) was an American medical missionary of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the influential 19th century women’s movement. When she went to China as a missionary she discovered that the Chinese Bible was mistranslated in a way that supported cultural prejudices against women preaching, leading her to conclude that the struggles surrounding the social and spiritual suppression of women in the Chinese church in her day could be directly linked to such

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1747 As argued in Chapter 7.3.
1749 Bushnell, *God’s Word to Women*, 2
“mistranslations”\textsuperscript{1750} of the Bible. Consequently, she began to compare her English translation to the original Greek language of the New Testament and found mistranslations there in her English translation. She attributed these mistranslations to male translators who allowed their cultural bias against the equality of women to influence their biblical translations.\textsuperscript{1751}

Bushnell argued from the perspective of one who took both the authority of the Bible and the experiences of women seriously, and thus advocated that seemingly contradictory statements in the Bible should not be rejected out of hand or embraced uncritically, but studied with careful analysis. In certain Pauline passages in the Bible, she believed that the “ego-centric” view of patriarchal male interpreters distorted the original meaning of Paul.\textsuperscript{1752} She therefore insisted that the problem of women’s suppression would be resolved when sufficient woman-power was invested in “translations, research, and hermeneutical endeavors.”\textsuperscript{1753}

From this perspective and her conviction of the Bible’s message of liberation for women, Bushnell composed one hundred biblical studies on passages concerning women in the Bible, and compiled them in her book, \textit{God’s Word to Women}, in 1921.\textsuperscript{1754} For this achievement, Bushnell has been called a forerunner of the feminist movement and the most prominent egalitarian voice of her day in declaring the Bible to be a source of liberation for women.

This thesis has raised, for today’s Myanmar context, the kinds of questions on the role of women in the church that Bushnell raised in the nineteenth century in the Chinese context. The risk of asking these questions in Myanmar is like that in Bushnell’s day, namely, that some will hold on to the domesticating model of patriarchy and try to force the church and Scripture into this mold, or else move away from Christianity altogether. When Bushnell advocated that the Bible, rightly interpreted, supported women’s liberation, the women’s movement of her day quickly faded and women became less

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1750} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1752} Bushnell, \textit{God’s Word to Women}, 218.
\textsuperscript{1754} Bushnell, \textit{God’s Word to Women}. Also in Bushnell, \textit{Dr. Katherine C. Bushnell: A Brief Sketch of Her Life and Work}.
\end{footnotesize}
active. As the movement became further liberalized, many traditional Christians did not want to deal with this issue any more, since they associated any questions on the role of women in the church with rejecting the authority of the Bible. They also felt that challenges to specific passages by women were not necessary since Paul advocated that women be treated with respect by admonishing men to love their wives as they would love themselves. These Christians felt that the Bible was sufficient and they were no longer interested in dealing with the questions that women like Bushnell had raised.

Despite these challenges from all sides, which persist in Myanmar today, this thesis has presented a contextual evangelical feminist reading within the Myanmar context, which critically evaluates our own past customs and considers a new biblical understanding. This understanding includes careful analysis of a difficult text in Pauline literature, considering Paul's overall view of women in the church, as well as his view of ministry. From this understanding, one can conclude that Paul's comment on women's silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 is situationally specific and thus normative only for the specific situation in Corinth at that time.

Due to the strong patriarchal cultural background in Myanmar, this way of approaching interpretation is likely to face resistance. At the same time, the far-reaching implications of Paul's teaching on slavery give us hope regarding the possibility of attitudes changing on the issue of women in the church in Myanmar. Although Paul did not specifically condemn slavery in Philemon, his exhortation to accept each other as brothers and sisters in Christ helped to change people's attitudes towards slavery in North America. Perhaps this is the nature of the gospel—that the gospel continually challenges us to form new attitudes towards others, in every time and place. From this understanding of how Scripture is interpreted and how our reading of Scripture is affected by our social situation, all contextual questions require critical dialogue with the gospel. Through such critical dialogue, there is hope that the always unfolding teaching of the gospel will form new attitudes towards women in the church in Myanmar today, and in the years to come.

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1755 Ephesians 5:22.
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