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## **Feminism in First Corinthians A Dialogue with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**

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*Among the vast series of recent publications adopting a feminist approach to the Bible the work of Professor E. S. Fiorenza is particularly important; stimulated by it Mr. Padgett, who is pastor of San Jacinto United Methodist Church, offers some critical reflections.*

The publication of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) is a publishing event of the first magnitude for the history of the early church. This is a work of vast erudition and deep meditation upon the NT and other first century literature. She has made a classic case for the importance of the role of women leaders, preachers, prophets and teachers in the development of the early church. Besides establishing the central importance of women for the early church, Fiorenza has also demonstrated the importance of 'heretical' literature for the reconstruction of the history of the NT era, especially gnostic texts. Future histories of this period will ignore Fiorenza's work only at the peril of their scholarly reputations.

Any great work that establishes a paradigm-shift for scholarship of necessity, it seems, overstates the case. IMH (*In Memory of Her*) is no exception. There are in this great book a number of highly speculative conclusions, based (one might say) on an overenthusiastic attachment to one of the central theses of this work. This thesis posits a basic struggle in the NT era between two ecclesiastical tendencies. On the one hand there existed church groups which were close to Jesus and the Palestinian roots of Christian faith. This group, like Jesus himself, worshipped the Goddess Sophia, as an aspect of the godhead. The Jesus movement, a renewal movement within Judaism, followed Jesus-Sophia as Messiah. This developed into a church-type that worshipped Sophia-Spirit. In both of these groups women had important leadership roles to play, especially single women and women married to believing men. On the other hand, there were the church groups that centered on Paul. Paul accepted to some

extent the leadership of women in the church, in part because they were leaders before him and he had no alternative but to accept them (IMH, 50). Paul had a distinct and ongoing polemic with the Sophia-Spirit worshippers. He was concerned that these pneumatics, and their excesses might cause the Christian community to be confused with 'one of the orgiastic, secret, oriental cults that undermined public order and decency' (IMH, 232). Paul's concern with the women's leadership centered on his missionary concern to spread the gospel with as little obstruction as possible. What began with Paul was carried on by his disciples (Eph., Col., the Past.) in a more dogmatic and patriarchal vein, resulting ultimately in the infamous patristic chauvinism.

Fiorenza is thoroughly in debt to Bultmann and his school for her understanding of the text and the historical background of the NT. This is clear in her analysis of Sophia worship, Hellenic/Hebraic conflict and her approach to the so-called deutero-Pauline letters. My concern is not so much with her re-reading of NT history as with her suggestions concerning the interpretation of the NT text, especially the Pauline corpus. I would like, in this essay, to test her hypothesis against the text of 1 Corinthians.<sup>1</sup> After all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and the proof of Fiorenza's new theory will lie in how well it explains and interprets the text.

I believe that the interpretation of texts can be likened to a science; I propose to run an experiment on Fiorenza's new model of the NT. I agree with her, following contextual-hermeneutic theory, that there is no such thing as neutral, value-free exegesis. But there is no such thing as objective, value-free science either.<sup>2</sup> Like any science, NT exegesis has three foci: data, models (interpretation of data) and testing of models (experimentation). Fiorenza is right to insist on the importance of imagination in the construction of interpretive theories, or models of the data. There is a limit to speculation, however. This limit is the data that the model is supposed to interpret. While Kuhn has shown that

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<sup>1</sup> I have chosen 1 Cor. because it is one of the Hauptbriefe; Fiorenza devotes much of ch. 6 to this book; and finally because I am very interested in the task of a feminist reading of this letter. See my 'Paul on Women in the Church: The Contradictions of Coiffure in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16', *JSNT* 20, 1984, 69-86.

<sup>2</sup> On this point, see above all M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Pr., 1960). On the use of models and paradigms in science, see Mary Hesse, *Science and the Human Imagination* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955); Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithica: Cornell U. Pr., 1962); T. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Pr., 1970); Ian Barbour, *Myth, Models and Paradigms* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

models and paradigms in science are not always changed because of the data, nevertheless a relevant and proper model ought to interpret all the data, and make as much sense of it as possible. The data for NT exegesis is the text itself, considered as an objective set of symbols. This data forms the norm for the hermeneutic of the text, in scientific exegesis (in this paper I will denote this scientific approach to the text with the word 'critical'). It is not possible for critical hermeneutics to run experiments as they are done in the natural sciences, in order to test models. But this third aspect of the scientific method is most important. What must take place in hermeneutics is a critical comparison with the data of the text, an 'experiment', in order to revise pre-understandings and theoretical models. In my opinion, this is the ultimate purpose of the well-known 'hermeneutical circle': to create a dialogue between the text and the pre-understandings and hermeneutic models of the reading community. Of course, Fiorenza recognizes the importance of what she calls the 'dialogical-hermeneutical' programme for the interpretation of the text (IMH, 5). But whereas she contrasts and sets this against the doctrinal approach, and the approach of liberation theology, I believe—quite to the contrary—that *all three approaches must be utilized by the church and her theologians*. Anything less than a theological *and* critical *and* liberating hermeneutic of Scripture will lead the church into profound misunderstandings of the Word of God. In this essay I focus on critical exegesis, but that does not mean I disagree with the important implications of IMH for contemporary liberating praxis and theology.

In the experiment I wish to run on the attractive model of the NT that Fiorenza has put forth, I will concentrate on four areas: (1). the implications of the use of *sophia* in 1 Cor. 1:18–31 for Sophia-Spirit worship, (2). Paul's teaching on marriage in 1 Cor. 7, (3). 1 Cor. 11:2–16 and (4). 1 Cor. 14:33–36.

## I

The use of *sophia* in the Pauline corpus is concentrated almost exclusively at 1 Cor. 1–4. I agree with Fiorenza, following many other scholars, that 1:18–31 had its origin in the pre-Pauline communities, and that Paul is using this midrash for his own purposes.<sup>3</sup> In contrast with Fiorenza, however, these scholars see

<sup>3</sup> W. Wuellner, 'Haggadic Homily Genre in 1 Corinthians 1–3', *JBL* 89, 1970, 199–204; G. Sellin, 'Das "Geheimnis" der Weisheit und das Rätsel der "Christuspartei" (zu 1 Kor. 1–4)', *ZNW* 73, 1982, 69–96, V. P. Branick, 'Source and Redaction Analysis of 1 Corinthians 1–3', *JBL* 101, 1982, 251–269, and the critical commentaries. Of course, Paul may have written it himself!

the pneumatic group from which this arises as a Pauline community. Fiorenza sees these verses as originating with the Sophia-Spirit communities. The belief that early Christian communities worshipped Sophia is argued by Ulrich Wilkens in his dissertation under Bultmann.<sup>4</sup> Two central criticisms can be made of this position. First, that it reads certain gnostic texts of the second century back into the earlier Hellenistic-Jewish and Christian texts. It is only the gnostic texts that develop the worship of a separate divine being or title, Sophia.<sup>5</sup> Second, Hellenistic-Jewish texts also speak of Wisdom as a divine being or persona, but this is most likely poetic personification or hypostatization (as it surely is at Pr. 8).<sup>6</sup> But these criticisms deal with interpretations of texts (models) rather than the texts themselves.

An examination of the actual text of what is undoubtedly a pre-Pauline source in 1 Cor. 1:18–31 shows little indication of either Sophia-Spirit worship, or of hypostatization. Fiorenza finds two indications here, however (IMH, 189). The first is the christological formula of v. 24, which she translates 'Christ God's Power and Sophia'. This formula was 'probably created in a (Pauline) group of pneumatics prior to its use'. It is part of the midrash-like commentary and application of a quote from Is. 29:4 (v.19). The entire section, like the Isaiah reference, speaks of wisdom as an *attribute* of both God and people. The parallel with God's Power indicates this. What is more, christological references in Paul, such as Lord, Christ, Head, Rock, etc. are usually not accompanied by the genitive of *theos*. The other text she cites from this pericope is v. 30, which she translates (IMH, 189):

You however are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us Sophia from

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<sup>4</sup> *Weisheit und Torheit* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1959), and his *sophia*, TDNT, VII, 508f.; see also W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> For this criticism, see R. Scroggs, 'Paul: *Sophia* and *Pneumatikos*', NTS 14, 1967–68, 33–35; E. M. Yamauchi, 'The Descent of Ishtar, the Fall of Sophia and the Jewish Roots of Gnosticism', TB, 29, 1978, 143–175, and his *Pre-Christian Gnosticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983<sup>2</sup>); E. E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1978), ch., 3; J. Dupont, *Gnosis* (Paris: Gabalda, 1960<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> This point is not certain, but I think it is correct. See H. Windisch, 'Die göttliche Weisheit der Juden und die paulinische Christologie', in *Neutestamentliche Studien für G. Heinrich*, ed. A. Deissmann (Leipzig: Heinrichs, 1914), 220–234; H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 48; E. M. Yamauchi, 'Descent', and his *Gnosticism*; R. A. Horsley, "'How Can Some of You Say That There is No Resurrection of the Dead?'" Spiritual Elitism in Corinth' *NovT* 20, 1978, 203–231; and arts. in n. 3 above. Cf. B. L. Mack, *Logos und Sophia* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).

God; not only justice (righteousness) but also sanctification and liberation (redemption).

She indicates that we should 'note the change in pronoun', and that 'the text refers to baptism' (with a citation to the work of B.A. Pearson).<sup>8</sup> What the change in pronoun indicates to me is not only that the phrase after 'Jesus' is a citation from the pneumatic community, but that Paul *fully accepted the theology of the pre-Pauline community*. I do not believe, for the reasons given in the previous paragraph, that Sophia played any part in the worship of the early church. However, I will grant Fiorenza this point, for the sake of argument. If this community did worship Sophia, then Paul too must have accepted this divine persona. This is also indicated by the very structure of the midrashic section in 1 Cor. 1:18–3:20.<sup>9</sup> The pre-Pauline source in 1:18–31 acts as a foundation and an authority for the application to the life of the Corinthian community in 2:1–5 (note the repetition of words like 'weakness', 'wisdom' and 'power'). This usage of the midrash of 1:18–32 indicates that Paul was in complete agreement with this pre-Pauline source! But perhaps Fiorenza would respond that it is not the text itself, but what Paul is arguing against in the text that tells us about the Sophia-Spirit group in Corinth. She tells us the fact that 'the pre-Pauline Christian missionary movement understood the resurrected Christ in terms of Sophia-Spirit is evident in Paul's polemical argument in 1 Corinthians' (IMH, 188). But there is little indication that Paul is polemically arguing against a faction of Sophia-Spirit worshippers (cf. 3:1–9) anywhere in the text of 1 Cor. On the contrary, everything in 1:13–3:20 indicates that he *completely accepts* the christology of his sources.<sup>10</sup> Why, then, would he not accept their view of the equality of women? Indeed, I think he does argue for the equality of women and men in 1 Cor.: for their equality in marriage in 7:1–5 and for their equality in the church in 11:2–16. Let us move on to these texts.

<sup>7</sup> Ellis, *Prophecy*, 26 with reference to 1 Cor. 2:6–16 which he sees as stemming from the same source as 1:18ff. (p. 213).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* B. A. Pearson, 'Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Paul', in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. R. Wilken (Notre Dame: U. of Notre Dame, 1975), 43–66. See also Fiorenza's art. *op. cit.*, 17–42.

<sup>9</sup> Wuellner, 'Haggadic Homily'; Branick, 'Source and Redaction'.

<sup>10</sup> The opposition of 'power of God' with the pejorative 'wisdom of men' (2:5, cf. 3:3) is simply an application of the pre-Pauline source of 1:19f. It does not indicate a rejection of the notion of Christ as the wisdom of God. On Paul's wisdom christology in general, see A. Feuillet, *Le Christ Sagesse de Dieu* (Paris: Gabalda, 1966).

## II

Fiorenza recognizes the egalitarianism of 7:1–5, esp. 4. She also notes, quite rightly, that the discussion in this chapter parallels the male/female, slave/free, Jew/Gentile of Gal. 3:28 (IMH, 220), and is an application of it. For this reason, I think she is absolutely right to understand the well-known crux of 7:21 to say that if a slave can find freedom, s/he should take it.<sup>11</sup> The reference to circumcision (vv. 17–20) indicates that he fully accepts the equality of Jew and Gentile in the church. But unlike the baptismal formula of Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 7:4 speaks of equality in *marriage*, not just in the church. Fiorenza tries to limit this to merely sexual equality (IMH, 224). But the word *sōma* (body) can have a range of meanings: by synecdoche, even ‘person’.<sup>12</sup> What is more, the context of the entire chapter is very important for our understanding of v. 4. The discussion of marriage in vv. 32–34 indicates that in v. 4 Paul has in mind the mutuality of marriage in all of its personal and psychological ramifications. The fact that he says the married woman is concerned about her husband and *vice versa* (and surely this concern cannot be limited to the sexual fulfilment, since the virgin has the same ‘concern’ about the Lord), interprets v. 4, where the woman is free with respect to, or has authority over (*exousiazō*) the man, and *vice versa*. Granted, the immediate context of vv. 1–4 is sexual: but the phrase in v. 4 has a much broader range and application as a whole. It must be remembered, too, that v. 4 is an application of Gal. 3:28, which cannot be understood only in sexual terms. The power that the spouse has over the married man or woman, is simply a result of the concern which the married person has for her/his spouse! Any other interpretation is far too legalistic, implying that a man can demand sex from his wife.<sup>13</sup>

## III

Fiorenza’s understanding of 1 Cor. 11:2–16, at first glance, seems to be an exciting one (IMH, 227–230). All exegetes recognize that

<sup>11</sup> IMH, 221. Cf. S. Scott Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai* (Missoula: Scholars Pr. 1973).

<sup>12</sup> S. Wibbing, ‘Body, *NIDNTT*, 1:234–238: ‘there is a wider significance here [7.4] than the physical’ (p. 235). But cf. R. H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology* (Cambridge: C.U. Pr., 1976) who argues that *sōma* always means physical body. *Pace* Gundry, see J. A. Ziesler, ‘*Sōma* in the Septuagint’ *NovT* 25, 1983, 133–145: ‘*sōma* may not strictly mean person, but it is used to indicate the person’ (p. 144).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. the view of J. Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925<sup>10</sup>), *ad loc.* I am in debt to Robin Scroggs, ‘Paul and the Eschatological Woman’, *JAAR* 40, 1972, 283–303, for pointing out the egalitarianism of 1 Cor. 7.

this is a very difficult passage to understand. Fiorenza begins by assuming, *pace* the majority of interpreters, that Paul is giving a ruling that he would consider binding on all the churches, and not just responding to a particular problem in Corinth. The problem, as she sees it, was that the Sophia-Spirit church groups were wearing their hair after the fashion of oriental, ecstatic worshippers in the cult of Isis, Dionysos, etc. With his missionary concern not to offend, and his desire for proper order (see 1 Cor. 14), Paul commands that women wear their hair in the proper Greek manner, bound up with ribbons and jewelry. She sees this as linked to a Jewish notion that women with unbound hair were unclean. 'Bound up hair must be understood as a liturgical symbol of women's power, because in the community women and men are not different from each other (IMH, 229 with ref. to vv. 10–12) . . . The goal of his argument, then, is not the re-enforcement of gender differences but the order and missionary character of the worship community' (IMH, 230).

Although this is an interesting interpretation, which avoids the errors of the traditional model of this verse, it has all the marks of being read into the text on the basis of parallel movements in Hellenistic religions, rather than arising from the text.<sup>14</sup> This is a harsh criticism to make, especially given the depth and breadth of Fiorenza's scholarship. But I believe it is warranted, for the following reason. First, this model does not deal with the men, nor does it make sense when extrapolated to deal with them. Second, it does not explain Paul's *theological* references to man as the image of God, nor the discussion of the creation of man and woman in vv. 8, 9, which is a theological—not a cultural—explanation. Third, v. 10 begins with *dia touto* (for this reason), in other words, it is the conclusion to the discussion about creation in vv. 7–8, with absolutely no indication that Paul is speaking about uncleanness here. Fourth, the words 'symbol of' are not found in v. 10. The verse says a woman ought to have power over her head (*exousian echein epi*). This seems a very strange locution, if by it Paul means a coiffure. Fifth, v. 15 says that *koma* is given to women *anti peribolaïou* by nature. *Komaō* means 'to wear long hair', and *komē* generally means *long or curly hair*. *Anti* can only mean 'instead of', as Fiorenza herself notes (IMH, 227):

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<sup>14</sup> This is a common criticism of members of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*. See Henri Frankfort, *The Problem of Similarity in Ancient Near Eastern Religions* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Pr., 1951); C. Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); and Yamauchi, *Gnosticism*.

Traditionally, exegetes have conjectured that Paul was insisting that the pneumatic women leaders wear the veil according to Jewish custom. Yet v. 15 maintains that women have their hair instead of a head-covering, and thus militates against such an interpretation.

While she is right about the traditional interpretation, her own model runs afoul of v. 15 also. *Peribolaïou* does not mean a head covering, but something that is wrapped around (cf. *periballō*, 'to wrap around, clothe'), i.e., the wrapped around, bound up hair of vv. 4, 5.<sup>15</sup> According to v. 15, Paul felt that nature had given *long, loose hair instead of bound up hair*, which means that v. 15 is directly contrary to the model Fiorenza has put forth. Sixth, though not a conclusive argument, there is every indication that Paul is responding to a problem that was peculiar to the Corinthians (see v. 16, 'we have *no such custom*, nor do the churches of God'). Whatever this 'custom' was, it was unique to Corinth.

This pericope is notoriously difficult to interpret. I have proposed elsewhere that in it Paul was arguing, against a Corinthian position outlined in vv. 3–7a, that women ought to be able to wear their hair however they wish in church, since they are the glory and splendour of man (v. 10, where he states that a woman ought to have freedom [*exousia*] over her head).<sup>16</sup> If this is correct then once again Paul is *siding with* the women leaders in the hypothetical Sophia-Spirit group in Corinth. He argues for the equality and dignity of women in vv. 7b–16 against an upper class faction that demanded a certain standard of dress in church.

Apart from this text itself, there are some difficulties with Fiorenza's view. Her model would have Paul impose a culture-bound regulation about a very insignificant issue. Fiorenza herself notes that 'this is contrary to the traditions and teachings which he had originally spoken to them about the new life in the Spirit and the Christian freedom evolving from it' (IMH, 227). Why should Paul so contradict himself? In a 'control test' of 1 Cor. 8–10 on not eating meat sacrificed to idols, Paul clearly indicates that, while idols are nothing (10:19, 8:4) nevertheless the Corinthians should avoid eating meat sacrificed to idols in front of those who are weak (8:9) and also for the unbelieving Jew or Greek (10:27, 32). Paul clearly states his reasons for imposing a culture-bound regulation (cf. Acts 15:19f; Tit. 2:5, 8, 10). Does Paul give any similar indication at 11:2–16? I think not.

<sup>15</sup> This is the view of J. Murphy-O'Connor, 'Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16', *CBQ* 42, 1980, 482–500, esp. 483f., to whom Fiorenza is in debt for much of her understanding of this passage, as are all NT scholars.

<sup>16</sup> 'Paul on Women', see n. 1 above.



## IV

It seems unlikely that Paul is arguing for order at 11:2–16; there can be no doubts about his argument for order in ch. 14 (vv. 27, 31, 40). This chapter is famous for its injunction to women to submit, and to be quiet in church (v. 34f). In this chapter Paul has a musical metaphor for the church, with the Spirit Himself as the conductor (vv. 7, 8; cf. 13:1). He desires that, like an orchestra, each worshipper should play with the rest of the band, at the proper time, place, tempo and volume that the Conductor calls for. The result will be a melodious sound that glorifies God and edifies the church, rather than noisy confusion. While Fiorenza is correct, that order is not a ‘specifically Christian’ virtue (IMH, 227), the beauty of this metaphor and its importance for Christian worship services is obvious to those who have pastoral experience. The chapter speaks to three different groups of people: speakers in tongues (vv. 2, 5, 9–19, 27f.), prophets (vv. 3, 24, 29–32) and women (34f.).<sup>17</sup> Fiorenza points to the structural similarities between the regulations for each of these groups (IMH, 230). Each group is called to be silent (*σιγαῶ*), given a concrete application of this command, and also a rationale (the rationale for the command for tongues-speakers to ‘be silent’ is given in 14:9–19 and is not repeated in v. 27f.).

Fiorenza, once again, comes up with a creative model for the interpretation of this text. She suggests that Paul’s command to be silent is (1). meant to apply in all the churches (v. 33b) and (2). meant to apply only to the married women (v. 35, *idiōtas andras*). To back up point (2)., she notes that Paul in 7:32–35 accepts the ‘holiness’ of virgins, and would have no problems with their leading a service, but married women were not as holy, since they had been ‘touched by a man’. Paul did not want married women participating in the service as teachers or leaders, since this is against the law (Fiorenza points to the Roman injunction against women participating in secret cults and Cybeline orgies, IMH, 232).

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<sup>17</sup> Against those who argue that vv. 34f. are a later interpolation, I must insist that: (1). the textual evidence for their inclusion somewhere in this chapter is early and geographically diverse (see B. M. Metzger, *a Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, [New York: United Bible Societies, 1971], 565), and (2). the general structure and the word *σιγαῶ* which are characteristic of this section are found here, too (cf. vv. 27f., 29–32). Against this, see G. Fitzer, *Das Weib Schweige in der Geminde* (Munich: Kaiser, 1963); but cf. James H. Conner, ‘An Examination of 1 Corinthians 14:34–36’ (MA thesis, 1977 Emmanuel School of Religion, Route 6, Box 500, Johnson City, TN 37601, USA).

Fiorenza's interpretation is consistent with her overall model, and gives us a better understanding of the word *nomos* at v. 34. Typically, interpreters understand this word to refer to the OT, specifically Gn. 3:16. But Gn. 3:16 is not a command or curse on women, but a description of what it means to live East of Eden (cf. the 'thorns and thistles' of v. 18). What is more, this verse does not say that women will be subordinate to man. It says that woman will desire (*teshuqah*) man. It also says that man will dominate or oppress woman (*mashal*: cf. Ps. 105:20; LXX *kyriousei*). This is a result of the Fall, not a creation order. But even this verse does *not* say that a woman ought to submit to her husband. Since the OT never says women ought to submit, *nomos* cannot refer to the OT itself, as it does so often in Paul. Unfortunately, *nomos* never refers to 'public law' or 'Gentile law' in Paul. Even if it did, there is no evidence that in Corinth women were legally forbidden to attend cults that elevated their status; this was a Roman response to the problem, limited to Italy. Besides, this Roman law applied to both married women and virgins, but Fiorenza wants to apply these verses to married women only.

One might understand *nomos* here to mean the OT as interpreted by the Rabbis, that is, the oral law, rather than the OT itself.<sup>18</sup> If this is the case, there is ample evidence to indicate that women were not *supposed* to have that much freedom in the synagogues, according to the teachings of the Rabbis.<sup>19</sup> If this is how we should understand *nomos* at v. 34, then Fiorenza's basic point still remains, but we have to see Paul accommodating the Jews (as he does with respect to idol worship in chps. 8–10) rather than the Romans.

I think that the words 'as the law says' of v. 34, and 'it is shameful' of v. 35, may be motivated by a desire to accommodate the Jews (or possibly the Romans, as Fiorenza thinks) and understood in reference to them. But it is impossible to

<sup>18</sup> As suggested by Virginia Mollenkott, *Women, Men and the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), 96. See Rom. 2:17–20, Eph. 2:15, Phil. 3:5f., Acts 22:3, where Paul uses *nomos* to refer to the oral law (as interpreting and including, of course, the OT). Most scholars agree that the semantic range of *nomos* is broad and can include 'Jewish religion' and 'legalism' (=the Judaizers) BAG, 544 (5th ed, p. 542); W. Gutbrod, *nomos*, TDNT 4:1022–1090, esp. 1069. For a complete discussion, see Heikki Raisanen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), who notes the flexibility of Paul's use of the term.

<sup>19</sup> There is archaeological evidence that, *contra* what one might expect from Rabbinic literature, women were leaders in the synagogues of the NT era. See B. J. Broton, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico: Scholars Pr., 1982). Granted their socio-economic leadership, one still wonders how much *teaching* they actually did.

understand the entire passage as an accommodation. As Fiorenza clearly sees, the motive behind ch. 14 is one of order in the worship service. The married women were apparently asking a lot of questions that disrupted the service.<sup>20</sup> Paul told them to ask their husbands at home (v. 35). The force of 'their *own* husbands' may indicate that certain of the women believers, who were probably new converts and less knowledgeable concerning the OT, were disrupting the service by asking other men about what was taking place. An illuminating parallel to this is found in 11:34. There, the hungry (11:21) were stuffing themselves at the Lord's Supper. Paul says 'let them eat' (cf. the 'let them ask' of 14:35) *en oikō* (the same words used in 14:35). Shall we forbid church potlucks on the basis of this verse? These women, too, may have been hungry for knowledge about their new religion, and their new freedom in the Spirit. Paul suggests that they ask their own husbands in their own home, rather than the home where the church met (1 Cor. 11:22, 16:19, cf. 1 Tim. 3:15). Although the desire for the proper 'orchestration' of the worship services was no doubt universal in Paul, the particular command, to be silent as well as the groups they are aimed at, are unique to the Corinthian situation. Paul accepts the teaching leadership of women in other places, why would he change his mind for Corinth? What is more, Fiorenza's understanding of 7:32–35 and its implications for this passage is skewed. Paul at 7:32–35 sees a virgin as 'holy' in that she is wholly dedicated to the Lord (cf. the Heb. *qodesh*) not that she is any better suited to lead the congregation. *Pace* Fiorenza, Paul is simply making a practical observation about marriage here, not a theological ascetic argument against marriage *per se*.<sup>21</sup> Paul is lifting up his model of single ministry over against the more typical model of apostolic married couples (1 Cor. 9:5). There is every indication, therefore, that Paul's command that women be silent and submissive was meant to apply only to the *Sitz in Leben* of 14:34f. I also believe that a careful reading of the passage as a whole indicates that 'as in all the churches' ought to apply to the peace of God rather than the silence of woman, especially since the former but not the latter *would* apply in all the churches. Finally, Fiorenza sees the rhetorical questions and the 'word of the Lord' in vv. 36ff. as evidence of the opposition Paul expected his exclusion of married

<sup>20</sup> This is the view of Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be* (Waco: Word, 1974), 49ff.

<sup>21</sup> See Ridderbos, *Paul* secs. 49–51; and for the literary background of Paul's argument, see David Balch, '1 Cor. 7:32–35 and Stoic Debates about Marriage, Anxiety, and Distraction', *JBL* 102, 1983, 429–439.

women from church leadership to provoke, (IMH, 232f.). But the fact that the 'you' of v. 36 is masculine (*hymōn*) indicates that vv. 36–40 are a conclusion to the entire chapter and to all the commands to be silent. They do not apply just to the women. A more reasonable model for these verses, then, is not that Paul was excluding all married women from leadership in every church, but that he was asking some women to stop asking questions in one particular church at one particular time.<sup>22</sup>

To turn a phrase, criticism is the sincerest recognition of importance. If I have been critical of IMH, it is only because I consider to be one of the most important books on early church history published in 1983. I have argued that her 'model' for 1 Cor. is less true to the text itself than certain others. This essay is a dialogue with Fiorenza; I am not trying to say that my model is 'right' and hers is 'wrong'. Rather, as with any new paradigm in science, I am posing 'puzzles' based on the actual data. There is in this book a subtle thematic which, in almost every case, interprets the Pauline corpus in as chauvinistic a manner as possible.<sup>23</sup> I believe that the way out of this puzzle is to carefully read these letters in a manner that overcomes two thousand years of male-biased exegesis. I find it strange that, *mutatis mutandis*, Fiorenza reads the Pauline corpus in as chauvinistic a manner as the most androcentric fundamentalist. But in the end, she has done a great service to NT students, in demonstrating, nay *proving*, the existence and importance of women leaders in the early church.

<sup>22</sup> For another egalitarian model for this verse, see D. W. Odell-Scott, 'Let the Women Speak in Church', *BTB* 13, 1983, 90ff; but I find his suggestion conflicts with the structure of the entire passage, and the parallels with the *sigāō* command to prophets and tongues-speakers; also, I see v. 36ff. as applying to the entire chapter.

<sup>23</sup> I find this in her interpretation of 1 Cor. as well as her understanding of the so-called deuterio-Pauline *Haustafeln*. For a more positive understanding of the house-codes (Eph. 5, Col. 3 and 4) see Else Kähler, *Die Frau in den paulinischen Briefen* (Zurich/Frankfurt: Gotthelf, 1960); W. Schrage, 'Zur Ethik der Neutestamentlichen Haustafeln' *NTS* 21, 1974–75, 1–22; M. Barth, *Ephesians 4–6* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1977); and on the 'church-codes' (i.e. 1 Pet. 2, Tit. 2, Did. 4), see D. L. Balch, *Let Women Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico: Scholars Pr., 1981); and my 'The Pauline Rationale for Submission: Biblical Feminism and the *Hina* Clauses of Titus 2:1–10', *EQ* (forthcoming).