

Trajectories on Violence, Slavery and Misogyny in the Bible

Section 02: A Trajectory on Patriarchy in the Pauline Corpus

Real Paul on Women	Post-Paul on Women	Anti-Paul on Women
<p>Real-Paul has fellow women workers and can pray and prophecy in church (which is not keeping silent!). Crossan writes, “both men and women were equal inside the community as ministers (1 Cor 11:5) and outside as apostles (Rom. 16:7).”</p> <p>Romans 16:7: “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.” Even if you interpret them as not being apostles, what made Junia so prominent? Her silence? Why was she in prison? Her hospitality?</p> <p>Romans 16 lists a lot of women in active roles if you read it through. Phoebe who was a deacon (see 1 Tim 3), Prisca who worked with Paul in Christ and Mary “who has worked very hard among you.”</p> <p>We also know that in Christ all are the same (Galatians 3:28 and 1 Cor 12:23) but that doesn’t necessarily negate social customs or specific roles for individuals.</p> <p>It should be noted that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is most likely an interpolation and does not reflect the thoughts of real-Paul.</p>	<p>Col 3:18-19 :¹⁸ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.</p> <p>Ephesians 5:22-33 is the other. Wives are told to submit to their husbands who are told to love their wives as Christ loved the church. More real estate is given to husbands (9 verses) as opposed to wives (3 verses) but this is not what we find in Anti-Paul even if it might be a stepping stone on the way.</p> <p>Post-Paul is not as radical as real-Paul but more conservative than anti-Paul. Both of the texts pertinent to women and their roles address both parties and have reciprocal obligations</p>	<p>1 Tim 2:9-15 says that women must dress modestly and learn in <i>silence</i> with full submission. “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.” Note the second silence in as many sentences. Anti-Paul ties this into the created order: Clearly Adam was formed first and was not deceived like the women who is saved by childbearing.</p> <p>The role of women is relegated to childbirth and submission to her husband. I challenge someone to write a more misogynistic statement.</p> <p>As Crossan wryly observes, “This is clearly reactionary, as one would hardly forbid what never happened.”</p> <p>The exegesis here is absolutely horrendous as well. Crossan writes, “Furthermore, If Adam were actually in charge of Eve, he should have simply refused her temptation. The one in charge is the one most responsible for what happens.”</p>

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As we can see, real-Paul can be considered widely egalitarian if compared to the misogyny in 1 Timothy. Talbert writes, “The evidence for a woman deacon (Phoebe, Rom 16:1-2), a woman apostle (Junia, Rom 16:7), and various female laborers for the Christian cause (Rom 16:6, Mary who has worked very hard among you; 16:12a, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, workers in the Lord; 16:12b, Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord; 16:13, Rufus’s mother who has been a mother to Paul; cf. Phil 4:2-3, Euodia and Syntyche who have struggled beside Paul in the work of the gospel; 1 Cor 11:4, women pray and prophesy in church) in the time of Paul raises the question about the role of women in Christian ministry.”¹

The 2nd century church father Origin wrote this in his commentary on Romans: “This passage teaches that there were women ordained in the church’s ministry by the apostles’ authority. . . . Not only that—they ought to be ordained into the ministry, because they helped in many ways and by their good services deserved the praise even of the apostle. “ Even 1 Timothy 3:11 might actually allow (begrudgingly?) women deaconesses despite what it says earlier in chapter 2. It is abundantly clear that women played a tremendous role in early Christianity and in the undisputed Pauline corpus for sure. Caution is warranted since we are looking at situational letters but the treatment of women appears markedly different as we move from real-Paul to Post-Paul to Anti-Paul.

Raymond Collins wrote, “Second-and first-century **B.C.E.** marriage contracts provide evidence of the duties incumbent upon a wife in the Hellenistic world. First among these duties was that she should be subject to her husband . . . The subjection of a woman to her husband is enjoined by the late- first-century deutero- and trito-Pauline texts (Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18; 1 Tim 2:11-15; 1 Pet 3:1-6). That practice is to be explained by the social circumstances of late-first-century Christian communities. **These communities sought to achieve social acceptance.**”

For some Christians, the misogyny that resulted from attempts to make the church more palatable might have been worth it overall if it allowed the Church to grow. Whatever one thinks of that, radical Paul was domesticated. Crossan writes, “Paul was never terribly hard to understand on the theoretical and theological levels. Instead, he was terribly hard to follow on the social and practical levels. The same goes for Jesus before him: easy to understand, difficult to follow.”

¹ Charles Talbert, Romans, Smyth Helwys bible Commentary