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PAUL: A MISOGYNIST?

Miriam R. Alejandrino, O.S.B.

This article examines Pauline texts (1 Cor. 7; 11:2–16; the "household codes" in Col. 3:18–4:1; Eph. 5:21–6:9; 1 Tim. 2:8–15; Titus 2:1–10) which may portray Paul as a misogynist. It also presents some Pauline texts (Acts 16:11–15, 40; 18:2, 18; Rom. 16:1–16; 1 Cor. 16:19; Phil. 4:2–3; Col. 4:15) which speak positively of women. Our aim is to understand the Pauline view on women and evaluate whether Paul's thoughts are still of value to our present context.

Paul's writings, however, do not offer a systematic presentation of his thoughts. Through various topics he exhorts his churches to practice a more intense Christian life. In his expositions, he combines elements of revelation, fragments of the primitive kerygma, teachings of Christ, interpretations of the Old Testament, and his personal understanding of the Christ-event. Paul's letters have been composed in response to concrete problems. To understand and synthesize Paul's thought, we must read his letters in their respective historical contexts.

This article thus employs diachronic as well as synchronic approaches in the study of the relevant texts. In the first part, we determine Paul's historical and socio-cultural background in order to understand better what he meant when he wrote to the early Christians. The second part is a literary analysis of the pertinent texts. Our diachronic and synchronic analyses will allow us to ascertain what

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Paul's theology and ethical exhortations meant for his original audience. We will conclude by evaluating them, for a theology is incomplete if it does not produce a coherent ethics grounded on *religious* principles.

The Historical and Socio-Cultural Background of Paul[1]

Paul himself claims that he was a Hebrew/Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin.[2] He thinks and expresses himself in Old Testament categories and images, and quotes from the LXX. The composition of his letters in Greek and his style betray a good Greek education, often revealing the influence of Greek rhetoric.[3] Paul frequently uses images derived from the Greek urban culture. He makes use of Greek legal terms as well as commercial (Philemon 18) and political terminologies (e.g., Phil. 1:17; 3:20). He alludes to Greek games (Phil. 2:16; 1 Cor. 9:24–27). He mentions the Hellenistic slave trade (Gal. 3:15; 4:1–2; Rom. 7:1) and celebrations in honor of a visiting emperor (1 Thess. 2:19). He also subscribes to the Hellenistic ideas of "freedom" (Gal. 5:1, 13), which may have influenced his ethical teaching.[4]

It was his encounter with Christ on the way to Damascus that turned Paul the Pharisee into an apostle.[5] This experience gave Paul a deep insight into the mystery of Christ, making him the first Christian theologian.

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[1]For an extensive exposition of the world and mindset of Paul, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Pauline Theology," in *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), 802–805; J. M. Callewaert, *The World of Saint Paul*, trans. M. J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011); and N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Parts I & II, Christian Origins and the Question of God (Great Britain: SPCK, 2013).

[2]Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5; Gal. 1:14; 2 Cor. 11:22.

[3]Hans Deter Betz, *Galatians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 14.

[4]Betz, *Galatians*, 16.

[5]Acts 9; 22; 27 and Galatians 2 recount Paul's conversion.

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From his earliest letters (1 Thess. 2:13–14; cf. Rom. 1:16; 2:9–10), Paul reveals an awareness of the privileged position of his fellow Jews in the divine plan of salvation. In Rom. 9–11 he wrestles with the problem of the role of Israel in the Father's new plan of salvation by grace and through faith in Christ Jesus. But he knows that he has been called to preach to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15–16); he calls himself an "apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13).

Paul admits that he is "a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians" (Rom. 1:14). His teaching on the Church as the "body" of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27–28) is almost certainly influenced by the contemporary Greco-Roman understanding of the state as the body politic. The problems that Paul himself encountered in founding and governing individual churches are almost certainly responsible for his gradual awareness of what the "church" meant in a transcendent, universal sense.

Paul reflects on theological issues while at the same time he copes with the social and ethical problems of his day, e.g., with immorality, misbehavior in worship, civil status in society, and conflicting teachings of various Christian preachers.

Controversial Texts on Women

1 Corinthians[6]

Historical and Socio-Cultural Background[7]

Corinth was an ancient Greek city destroyed by the Romans in 146 BCE. It was rebuilt as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar in 44 BCE.

[6]In his book *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), K. E. Baily attempts to show that the rhetorical styles of 1 Corinthians can be traced to the writing prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and the culture of the eastern Mediterranean world.

[7]For a description of Corinth and its historical background, see Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, trans. James Limburg, et al., Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 151.

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As the capital of Achaia, Corinth was the center of commerce with two ports[8] and convenient land transportation. A cosmopolitan city of mixed cultures and religions, it attracted people of various social classes: rich and poor, free citizens and slaves. Many traders from all over the Mediterranean world came to the city for trade.

Corinth was strongly influenced by the Greco-Roman culture in which women had little or no freedom at all. They were expected to get married at a young age, and once married, they belonged to their husbands.

Like any flourishing port city, Corinth was famous for its prostitutes and courtesans with their particular mode of dress and hairstyle. Prostitutes were known to keep their hair loose and adorned with ornaments, while courtesans kept theirs closely cropped. This could be the reason for Paul's insistence that women should cover their heads when they pray and prophesy in order to avoid discrimination.

Analysis of pertinent texts

1 Cor. 7:1–26, 32–35. Paul advocates marriage rather than celibacy because of the immorality of the Corinthians (5:1–13; 6:13b–20). However, Paul's personal ideal is the asexual life and unmarried state. He identifies himself with the celibates whom he says have a special gift (7:8, 27, 38, 40). He says that unmarried people can serve God single-mindedly without being encumbered with family problems (7:32–35). Such a position would have been considered exceptional because the Roman Empire encouraged marriage and big families for political reasons. Widows and divorcees of both sexes were expected by the state and society to remarry. Paul's advice to remain free from the marriage bond was thus an attack on the intentions of the State,

[8]Cenchreae; Aegean to the East and Lechaeum; Ionian/Adriatic Sea to the West; see Robert L. Hohfelder, "Cenchreae," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vol. 1, A–C (New York / London / Toronto / Sydney / Auckland: Doubleday, 1992), 881.

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especially for people who lived in urban centers of the Roman Empire.[9] It was also a form of rebellion against the wishes of fathers who had authority over their daughters. Paul's injunction on young widows not to marry was unheard of at that time, and it gave women freedom which their foremothers never had.[10]

In verses 3–4, Paul exhorts the husband "to give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does." Paul stresses the rights and responsibilities of both sexes and the equality of man and woman whether they remain single or married. He does not intend to enslave either woman or man but to give them the freedom to make choices.

1 Cor. 11:2–16.[11] This section serves as an introduction to Paul's instruction on correct behavior during the pneumatic worship of the community as described in chapters 11–14. Paul concludes in 14:40 with the exhortation, "But all things should be done decently and in order."

Paul starts with a theological argument that uses a descending hierarchy of creation: God-Christ-Man-Woman. For Fiorenza,[12]

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[9]Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 225.

[10]According to Fiorenza, "… his (Paul's) advice to women to remain non-married was a severe infringement of the right of the *paterfamilias* since, according to Roman law, a woman remained under the tutorship of her father and family, even after she married" (*In Memory of Her*, 225).

[11]On 1 Cor. 11:2–16 as an interpolation, see W. O. Walker, "1 Corinthians 11:2–16 and Paul's View Regarding Women," *JBL* 94 (1975): 94–110; Lamar Cope, "1 Cor 11:2–16: One Step Further," *JBL* 97 (1978): 435–436. On arguments against this idea, see J. Murphy-O'Connor, "The Non-Pauline Character of 1 Corinthians 11:2–16?," *JBL* 95 (1976): 615–621; J. Murphy-O'Connor, "Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 482–500; J. P. Meier, "On the Veiling of Hermeneutics (1 Cor 11:2–16)," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 212–226.

[12]Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 229.

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Paul's argument focuses on "glory" and climaxes with hair as the woman's glory (verse 15a). Thus, the first directive of Paul is on head coverings.[13] He resorts to nature to emphasize his point: when praying or prophesying men should not have a head covering, whereas women should wear a veil. Paul's argument thus is for correct worship rather than a theological principle on who is head or chief.[14] Fiorenza explains:

> … Paul does not argue in 11:2–16 for the "creational" or "symbolic" *difference* between women and men despite their equality in Christ, but for the custom to bound-up hair, as the symbol of women's prophetic-charismatic power.[15]

S. Bedale[16] claims that κεφαλὴ in verse 3 never connotes authority or superiority. For Bedale, "source" is the only appropriate meaning here. H. Schlier[17] claims that κεφαλή in verse 4 means the whole person. Other ancient manuscripts and patristic witnesses[18] read κάλυμμα (veil) instead of ἐξουσίαν (literally, "freedom of choice, right to act, decide, or dispose of one's property as one wishes")[19] in verse

[13]On the wearing of flowing and unbound hair in Isis cult as a possible background of the Pauline texts, see S. Kelly Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Greco-Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 60.

[14]Murphy-O'Connor, "Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16," 497f.

[15]Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 230.

[16]Stephen Bedale, "The Meaning of *kephalē* in the Pauline Epistles," *JTS* 5 (1954): 211–215.

[17]Heinrich E. Schlier, "κεφαλὴ in the New Testament," in *TDNT* 3: 679; see also Murphy-O'Connor, "The Non-Pauline Character of 1 Corinthians 11:2–16?," 619.

[18]See Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 26th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), 459.

[19]William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 277.

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10. Some scholars[20] interpret ἐξουσίαν in the active sense as power over the woman's head, wherein "head" has a double meaning, namely, the actual head and man as the head of women (verses 3ff).

The angels in verse 10 refer to the "guardians of the created order" who are acknowledged as participants in God's worship. According to Jewish and Christian apocalyptic theology, angels mediate the words of prophecy.[21]

Paul affirms very clearly the interdependence of man and woman in verses 11–12—one cannot exist without the other, and both are equally dependent on God who is their source: "… in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God."

Such an affirmation strongly corrects any hierarchical implications of his earlier argument. It is important to note that the issue is not about hierarchy or man's authority over woman but about correct order of worship (verses 4–5 and 13).

In verse 16, Paul was referring to a custom which other churches did not have. In a culture where women and slaves did not count, Paul's preaching on freedom for all, including women and slaves, was revolutionary. Women could be single if they so wished; they could preach and prophesy, and married women could have freedom of movement.

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[20]E.g., Bedale, "The Meaning of *kephalē* in the Pauline Epistles," 213f; M. D. Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor xi.10," *NTS* 10 (1964/1965): 410–416; A. Feuillet, "Le sign de puissance sur la tête de la femme (I Cor xi.10)," *NRT* 55 (1973): 945–954.

[21]In the New Testament, see e.g., the Book of Revelation chapters 7–11. For a commentary on these, see Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Apokalypsis and Propheteia: The Book of Revelation in the Context of Early Christian Prophecy," in J. Lambrecht, ed., *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, BETL 53 (Grembloux: Duculot / Leuven University Press, 1980), 105–128.

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It could be that this newfound freedom was misused by some individuals, for in verses 2 and 16 Paul talks about a tradition and custom that he had handed down to them. Paul discusses the behavior of both women and men during worship, thereby affirming that both women and men share in the gifts of the Spirit.[22]

Paul's injunctions are for both women and men. But Paul was especially emphatic in his instructions for women since their authority and independence were new experiences that needed to be guarded lest they be abused or misused.

1 Cor. 14:33–36. Although Pauline authorship of this text is debated,[23] we shall examine it because of our canonical approach to the Pauline literature. In the context of chapters 12–14, 14:33–36 is part of Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to observe decency and order during worship rather than exercise individual pneumatic inspiration.[24] The purpose of Paul's instruction is to "build up the church" (verses 5 and 12). In content, verses 33b–36 seem to contradict 11:2ff, where the active participation of women is presupposed.

1 Cor. 14:33–36 is best understood in the context of a church order with rules for a glossolalist (vv. 27ff), prophets (vv. 29–33), and wives (vv. 34–36).[25] It should be noted that verses 34–36 are addressed only

[22]Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 229.

[23]Some scholars argue that 1 Cor. 14:33–36 was a post-Pauline interpolation, e.g., G. Fitzer, *Das Weib schweige in der Gemeinde*, TEH 110 (Munich: Kaiser, 1963); Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 246; A. Feuillet, "La dignité et le role de la femme d'après quelques textes pauliniens," *NTS* 21 (1975): 162–170.

[24]A. B. Spurgeon ("Pauline Commands and Women in 1 Corinthians 14," *BiblSac* 168:671 [2011]: 317–333) proposes that the imperatives in these verses should be taken as "permissive imperatives," that is, Paul was sanctioning an ongoing situation that he felt should continue: "Women are to continue to remain silent, continue to submit, and continue to ask questions of their family." This alternative sees a situation in which Corinthian women hesitated to speak in front of unrelated men because of their cultural upbringing.

[25]On the structure of these rules, see Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 230.

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to wives of Christians, not to all women. The reason given by Paul why they should keep silence in the churches, and if there is anything they wish to know, they should instead ask their husbands at home, is for proper behavior (verse 35b). Paul gives a theological reason for this in verse 36.[26]

Fiorenza gives a socio-cultural explanation:

> … within the Christian worship assembly, wives had dared to question other women's husbands or point out some mistakes of their own during the congregational interpreting of the Scriptures and of prophecy. Such behavior was against all traditional custom and law. However, the text does not say that wives should subordinate themselves either to the community leadership or to their husbands. It asks simply that they keep quiet and remain subdued in the assembly of the community.[27]

Summary

Paul's injunction on women in 1 Corinthians has to be seen in the light of the prevailing cultic decorum in that society. He affirms that women in the Christian community are equal with men in terms of their right and ability to preach and prophesy (11:2–16). However, Paul was very strict about orderly worship; therefore, he enjoins wives not to raise questions during their public worship (14:34–36).

In the texts examined above, Paul gives instruction regarding the correct form of worship, which has to be orderly. Fiorenza sees a missionary aspect in these Pauline texts:

> Paul's interests … are missionary and not directed against the spiritual freedom and charismatic involvement of women in the community … he subordinates women's behavior in marriage and worship assembly to the interests of Christian mission, and restricts their rights not only as "pneumatics" but also as "women …"[28]

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[26]For a possible Jewish-Hellenistic background of this argument, see Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 231f.

[27]Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 232.

[28]Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 236.

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"Household Codes" in Colossians 3:18–4:1; Ephesians 5:21–6:9; 1 Timothy 2:8–15; Titus 2:1–10

Historical and Socio-Cultural Background

The Pauline "household codes" describe Christian obligations of members of the *familia* in the Greco-Roman world. Scholars vary in their opinions on the origin of Paul's "household codes."[29] Some trace their beginnings to early Christianity, while others trace them to the Hellenistic synagogues.[30] Philo's and Josephus' traditions connect the topic of the household to the larger topics of the state and the classical Greek philosophers.[31] Whatever their origin—whether pagan, or Jewish, or Christian—they are characterized by the dominant patriarchal orientation of the family.[32]

During the first century, Greco-Roman culture claimed that the father had almost absolute legal power over his children. Hellenistic Jewish writings stressed the status and authority of parents. The Greco-

[29]For an extensive discussion on the origin and function of the household codes, see J. E. Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafeln*, FRLANT 109 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 9–36, and his own conclusion on pages 146–151; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina Vol. 17 (Collegeville, Minneapolis: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 159–169.

[30]Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafeln*, 95–101.

[31]As discussed in D. L. Bach, *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981) and in a review of the pertinent issues in "Household Codes" in D. E. Aune, ed., *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25–50.

[32]Carol L. Meyers, however, explains that ancient Israel should not be called a patriarchal society, for the term "patriarchy" is an inadequate and misleading designation of the social reality of ancient Israel. She proposes the concept of *heterarchy*, which "concedes the existence of hierarchies but does not situate them all in a linear pattern. Rather it acknowledges that different power structures can exist simultaneously in any given society …" (Carol L. Meyers, "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?," *JBL* 133 [2014]: 27).

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Roman tradition of *paterfamilias* considered the male as head of the family; thus, he had all authority and power over the household.[33]

In Greco-Roman culture, wives, children, and slaves were expected to accept the religion of the *paterfamilias*. Religious groups that attracted women and slaves were particularly seen as likely to be subversive of societal stability. As women and slaves joined the new Christian movement in large numbers, it too became an object of suspicion and criticism.

Timothy M. Willis claims that:

> There is evidence that there were slight regional differences, which reflect competing Hellenistic and Roman practices. There are indications, e.g., that women were more involved in public life in the Roman West than the Hellenistic East, and there was less separation of roles along gender lines in the West.[34]

Margaret Y. MacDonald explains:

> The household codes are ethical ideals and do not tell the whole historical story; they need to be understood in light of the realities of an emerging Christianity in competition with their social groups and subject to hostility from others.[35]

Regulation for the household was deemed essential for the good order of the family, the basic unit of society. Although life in Christian households had its distinctive religious motivations, it provided a good model for those concerned with virtue in Greco-Roman society. As a consequence, the Christian household was no longer considered subversive but within the bounds of received wisdom.

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[33]Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Letter to the Colossians: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in *NIB* Vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 665.

[34]Timothy M. Willis, "Family," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* Vol. 2, 427–430.

[35]MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 169.

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Issues about freedom and enthusiasm could have created major problems in Paul's mission and ministry. The special focus he gave on the inclusivism of the gospel which attracted many slaves and women could have posed a threat to the orderliness of the Church both in worship and in social issues. His insistence that Jewish Christians should not expect Gentile Christians to live like Jews (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13, and Col. 3:11) must have further generated longing for their full acceptance in the Church. Moreover, the new Christian understanding of equality must have come into conflict with the patriarchal households. Hence, the household codes might have been written for the purpose of putting order and stability in the Christian households.

Analysis of pertinent texts

Col. 3:18–4:1. This section is an exhortation to wives, husbands, children, fathers, and slaves. Husbands, fathers, and masters are given a dominant role while wives, children, and slaves have a subordinate role.[36]

The verb ὑποτάσσεσθε used in 3:18[37] is the same verb found in Eph. 5:21.[38] It means "to submit," to take a subordinate role in relation to another person.[39] The motivation given to the Colossians is "as is fitting in the Lord" (verse 18). Subordination is appropriate for members who confess Christ as Lord. The patriarchal marriage pattern is reinforced and given a Christological aspect. Husbands are exhorted to love their wives and "never treat them harshly" (verse 19).

[36]Lincoln, "Colossians," 551–669.

[37]For a cultural background of this verse, see MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 152f.

[38]In Titus 2:5 and 1 Peter 3:1, the word means "to obey."

[39]Henry George Liddell & Robert Scott, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 1897f.

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The social composition of the churches addressed, as described in 3:22–4:1, shows that there were more slaves than owners.[40] Verse 22a literally refers to "earthly masters." There is a shift of its meaning in verse 22b–24, where it refers to Christ. This must be a reminder to earthly masters that they have a heavenly master. The motivation given for Christian slaves to be obedient to their earthly masters is "fear of the Lord" (3:22), who gives the inheritance as reward (3:24).[41]

This early Christian adaptation of the household code assumes the hierarchical structure of the master/slave relationship, and has a view of justice that does not attempt to change social structures but to improve and transform conditions within them.[42]

Eph. 5:21–6:9. This section opens with the exhortation "Be subject[43] to one another out of reverence for Christ" (5:21). Here Paul addresses both husband and wife, asking them to be subject to one another—for Christian households this is a new order which stresses reciprocity and mutual responsibility rather than subordination in marital relationship. The motivation given is Christological.[44]

The husbands are commanded three times (5:25, 28, and 33) to love their wives. In 5:25, husbands are not only to love their wives but they must also be prepared to give their lives for their wives as Christ gave His life for the Church. Husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies (5:28). However, Fiorenza claims that

[40]According to MacDonald, "… the conversion of women and slaves who were part of pagan households was a source of tension between church communities and the outside world" (*Colossians and Ephesians*, 162).

[41]See Col. 1:12 on what this inheritance refers to.

[42]Lincoln, "Colossians," 658.

[43]The Greek word ὑποτασσόμενοι also has a military nuance, that is, "to line up"; it can also mean "to assign." For the meaning in its cultural and literary context, see MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 152f.

[44]However, Fiorenza argues that "the cultural-social structures of domination are theologized and thereby reinforced" (Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 270).

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> the code and its theological legitimation are not descriptive of the actual situation of women and slaves in the communities of Asia Minor. It is exhortative or prescriptive and seeks to establish a Christian behavior that is not yet realized in the life of the Christians in Asia Minor.[45]

Margaret Y. MacDonald explains that

> The primary purpose of Ephesians 5:21–6:9 is to provide a theological justification and motivation for the subordination of wives, children, and slaves to the head of the household.[46]

1 Tim. 2:8–15. In this section, ἀνήρ in verse 8 and γυνή in verses 9–12 can mean "husband and wife." The wives' dress and appearances should be "chastely" (verse 9). Paul asks for "good deeds" instead of adornment (verse 10). The specific focus is on one's comportment during the gatherings for worship (verses 8–12).[47] The warning presupposes the presence of some well-to-do women who find satisfaction in costly attire.

Paul's motive must have been to conform church order to that of the well-ordered household (hence, read 3:4–5, 12). In verses 13–14, Paul seems to be bending before social conventions. The relation described in verse 15 is between husband and wife. The focus of concern is husband and wife, not man and woman in general.[48] The admonition had in view the good functioning of the society's basic household unit, formed around husband and wife.[49]

This passage is significant because it affirms the relationships that maintain the strength of marriage and the stability of the household.

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[45]Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 270.

[46]MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 341.

[47]The same context of worship as described in 1 Cor. 11:12–16.

[48]Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Sacra Pagina Vol. 12 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 64–67.

[49]James D. G. Dunn, "1 Timothy," in *NIB* Vol. XI (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 773–788.

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Principles of strong marriage and stable household remain fundamental to a Christianity that looks back to Gen. 2:24 as the most fundamental model for intimate human relationships.[50]

Titus 2:1–10. After telling Titus to "teach what is consistent with sound doctrine" (verse 1), Paul gives him instruction on what to teach various members of the household (verses 2–10): e.g., older men, older women, young women, young men, and slaves. Good household management is a test of leadership and a model for good church management.[51]

The older men (πρεσβύτας)[52] are aged between 50–60 years old. They are exhorted "to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance" (verse 2). Σώφρονας means literally "self-controlled, sensible, prudent."[53]

The older women (πρεσβύτιδας[54]) are told "to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good" (verse 3). Their teaching role is in reference to younger women. It is their responsibility to pass on to the next generation the wisdom gained through the years. The role of the matriarch within the household is to encourage the wives of the household "to love their husbands, to love their children" (verse 4).

The main concern here is that the Christian message should produce behavior that would commend it to others: "so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our savior" (verse 10). In this case, we see that theology and ethics are interdependent.

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[50]Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 786.

[51]Dunn, "Titus 2:1–10," 861–880.

[52]Masculine, accusative, plural form of πρεσβύτης.

[53]Liddell & Scott, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1751.

[54]Feminine noun, accusative, plural form of πρεσβῦτις.

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Summary

In the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians, the following pairs are addressed: wives and husbands; fathers/parents and children; masters and slaves. In 1 Tim. 2:8–15 and Titus 2:1–10, married couples as well as slaves are addressed. In all these texts, the subordinate person (either the wife, or the child, or the slave) is asked to obey the dominant person (either the husband, or the father, or the master). The dominant person in each category is asked to do certain things, depending on what role he takes. Paul gives a new teaching to the dominant person while the subordinate person is asked to conform to the norms of society.

In Col. 3:18 and Eph. 5:21, the wives are asked to subordinate themselves to their husbands, not to all men. It is interesting to note that the Greek verb used here is ὑποτάσσω ("to be subject, subordinate"), in the imperative passive (be subject!) or in the passive participle (being subject), suggesting a continual activity which wives themselves must do. Paul does not tell husbands to insist that their wives perform this "duty."

This request for subordination is applied not only to wives, but also to children and slaves. In the case of these two other groups, the imperative ὑπακούετε (obey!) is used in Col. 3:20, 22 and Eph. 6:1, 5 to indicate their submission.

It has been argued[55] that the primary purpose of the household codes was apologetic and missionary. They showed that the Christian teachings did not subvert the traditional hierarchies and roles in the family and society. On the contrary, they upheld and fostered the socially acceptable submissive behavior in the Christian household which attracted converts to the faith.

[55]Ruth B. Edwards, *The Case for Women's Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1989), 63.

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Women in the Ministry of Paul

1) Priscilla[56] in Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19

Priscilla and Aquila were a wife and husband team in the new community of Jesus. Priscilla was Roman, of noble birth, while Aquila was a Jew, a native of the Roman province of Pontus. When Claudius ordered the Jews to leave Rome, they moved to Corinth were they started a house church.[57] Both accompanied Paul to Ephesus and met Timothy there. When Paul left Ephesus, they remained there and instructed Apollos about the new way.

Paul paid them the highest compliment by calling them "my co-workers who risked their life for me" and saying that "all the Gentile churches are grateful to them." Wherever they settled, they started a house church. In the list of greetings in Romans 16, theirs is the only group designated as a "church" (*ekklesia*). Priscilla was a church leader, missionary, apostle, and teacher of a missionary apostle, Apollos.

Collins explains: "That Prisca's name appears first than that of Aquila might … be an indication of her superior status, otherwise it might be a reflection of her greater role in the Christian mission."[58]

2) Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2–3

Paul said that Euodia and Syntyche struggled with him to advance the gospel. He ranked them alongside Clement and other co-workers.

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[56]For a discussion that Priscilla and Prisca refer to the same person, see Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 151.

[57]On the background and activities of Aquila and Prisca, see Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina Vol. 7 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 608ff; and Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina Vol. 6 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 452.

[58]Collins, *First Corinthians*, 609.

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Paul said that the names of the two women are in the book of life. Most probably they were leaders of a house church in Philippi. At one time, the two had some disagreement between them, and their dissension was affecting the life of the congregation not only in Philippi but also in the wider Church.[59] Paul pleaded with them to reconcile. He regarded them important enough such that he sent an emissary to help mediate the reconciliation.

3) Lydia in Acts 16:11–15, 40

Lydia was a businesswoman who came from Thyatira[60] in Asia Minor and lived in Philippi. She was a seller of dyed goods for which her city was famous. She herself traded in purple cloth, a luxury item which indicated her wealth and influence.[61] A "worshipper of God" (σεβομένη τὸν θεόν), i.e., a Gentile convert to Judaism, she was with a group of Jewish women who came together to pray. On the Sabbath day, Paul went to the place of prayer and met Lydia and other women. After listening to Paul, she became a Christian, the first in Europe to be baptized along with her household.

Paul accepted her invitation to stay at her home, where she provided hospitality and financial support to Paul and his companion. The Church in Philippi began with her conversion and Lydia would have been the leader in her house church. House churches were important to the missionary movement, for they provided a meeting place for the liturgies of the Word and Eucharist.

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[59]Bonnie B. Thurston & Judith M. Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, Sacra Pagina Vol. 10 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2005), 140–142.

[60]Thyatira was a famous center for the purple dyeing industry; see Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 130.

[61]Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 491–492. For an opinion that Lydia belongs to the marginalized in Philippi, see I. Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 102–109.

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4) Nympha in Colossians 4:15

Nympha was a Christian woman[62] in Asia Minor to whom Paul sent greetings at the end of his letter to Colossae. The letter says that a church (ἐκκλησία) met in her house. She herself must have been a leader and Paul thought her important enough that he sent her greetings. According to Margaret Y. MacDonald,

> Nympha no doubt played a key leadership role in the churches of the Lycus Valley …. The reference to Nympha comes as a reminder that the adoption of traditional ethics in church groups did not negate all avenues for women's influence.[63]

5) Several Women in Romans 16:1–16

Paul commends Phoebe, τὴν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν, οὖσαν [καὶ] διάκονον τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν Κεγχρεαῖς (verse 1). She must have been a leader in the church at Cenchreae in the eastern port of Corinth. Her being a deaconess of a congregation suggests that she held an ecclesial office.[64] She is said to have delivered Paul's letter to Rome.[65] "If … this letter was really proclaimed orally and interpreted on the spot by the bearer, Phoebe would have had considerable rhetorical skill and experience in theological exposition."[66]

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[62]On a discussion on whether Nympha is a masculine or feminine name, see E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 309. This article follows the proposal of MacDonald (*Colossians and Ephesians,* 183) that Nympha is a woman.

[63]MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 188.

[64]B. W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 125; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 916.

[65]Byrne, *Romans*, 447.

[66]Miriam Therese Winter, *Woman Word* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 228.

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She was a leader who provided personal care and hospitality to many, including Paul. Paul gave her two titles: ἀδελφή (sister) and διάκονος, translated as "deacon" or "deaconess" or "servant." Διάκονος is the same word Paul used to describe himself. Byrne claims that "Paul's commendation of Phoebe is an important indication of the leadership roles exercised by women in the early communities."[67]

Mary[68] was a Jewish woman who Paul said had been working hard, πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν, for the Lord (v. 6). Some translate[69] πολλὰ ἐκοπίασεν as "much labor," suggesting that Mary was one of the earliest members of the church in Rome who greatly influenced its organization.

Andronicus and Junia,[70] another husband and wife team, were co-workers of Paul and had been in prison with him. Unfortunately, Junia had been given a "sex change" sometime in the 13th century and most Bibles name her as Junias, making her a male.[71] This is probably because Paul describes her and her husband as "prominent among the apostles" (v. 7). John Chrysostom said of Junia: "To be an apostle is something great. But to be outstanding among them, just think what a wonderful encomium that is! How great this woman's devotion to learning must have been that she was worthy of the title apostle."[72]

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[67]Byrne, *Romans*, 448.

[68]For a discussion on her origin, see Byrne, *Romans*, 453.

[69]John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* Vols. I & II, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 229.

[70]Another version has "Junias," the masculine form. However, R. S. Cervin ("A Note Regarding the Name 'Junia(s)' in Romans 16.7," *NTS* 40/3 [1994]: 464–470) demonstrates that the name is indeed feminine.

[71]For more discussion on this issue, see B. Brooten, "'Junia … Outstanding among the Apostles' (Romans 16:7)," in L. Swidler & A. Swidler, eds., *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Documents* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 141–144; Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 168–172, 178–183; R. R. Schulz, "Romans 16:7: Junia or Junias?," *ExpTim* 98 (1986–1987): 108–110.

[72]Quoted in Edwards, *The Case for Women's Ministry*, 23.

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Tryphaena and Tryphosa (v. 12) may have been sisters.[73] Paul said they worked hard in the Lord, τὰς κοπιώσας ἐν κυρίῳ. Persis, whom Paul calls "the beloved," is also said to have worked hard for the Lord. Paul used the Greek verb κοπιάω (to work very hard)[74] to refer to a ministry of the gospel and to describe his own apostolic ministry. It is a word associated with preaching, evangelism, and a leadership which commands authority. These women to whom Paul sends greetings were engaged in such a ministry in Rome.[75]

Julia and Philologus (v. 15) were another pair mentioned by Paul. Julia might be the wife of Philologus, and Nereus and his sister could be their children.[76] Whatever their relationship might be, Julia and Nereus' sister would have contributed in some way to the church in Rome or may have been outstanding members of the church there.

Summary

Was Paul a misogynist? J.-C. Havyarimana explains:

> Far from being a misogynist, Paul was an engaged feminist who did all he could to elevate women's status in society and in the church. But he was misinterpreted and betrayed later by those who did not like his pro-women views because the latter did not agree with the andro-centric culture prevalent at the time.[77]

There are certainly texts which show that Paul's interaction with women had been very positive. He regarded them as co-workers, respected them and valued the work they did, especially in proclaiming

[73]Byrne, *Romans*, 454.

[74]Liddell & Scott, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 978.

[75]Winter, *Woman Word*, 230.

[76]Byrne, *Romans*, 454; N. T. Wright, "The Letter to the Romans," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* Vol. X (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 763.

[77]J.-C. Havyarimana, "Saint Paul, grand promoteur de la dignité de la femme," *Hekima Rev* 44 (2011): 77.

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the Gospel to the Gentiles. Many women of different ethnicities and classes were engaged in a variety of work in the early Church, e.g., as missionaries, teachers, preachers, emissaries, deacons, and apostles. They all worked hard alongside men and Paul showed his deep indebtedness, gratitude, and respect for these women whom he called his co-workers.

When Paul writes, he attempts to further the cause of Jesus Christ and His Gospel whatever the situation demands. Thus, in the heat of a debate, Paul may use hyperbolic language to emphasize his point (Gal. 5:12). It also means that Paul often tries to be diplomatic in order to achieve his ends (1 Cor. 6:12–13; 9:19–23). Finally, the context of a controversy can lead Paul to stress certain points not because they are of great importance but because he must redress an imbalance in the thinking of his audience.[78]

His purpose in writing these letters was to

> strengthen the life of the Christian people, to help them with problems they faced as new Christians in a complex world on matters of faith and Christian life; to show what the Lord requires of us, which is love above everything else …. His main purpose in doing all this was to build up the church.[79]

Evaluation

Our exposition above has shown that the historical and socio-cultural contexts, norms, and conventions of the time had limited horizons and expectations of men and women, and these had influenced the text.

To acknowledge the context-conditioned character of Biblical teaching on relationships within marriage is not to deny authority

[78]Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 25.

[79]S. Wesley Ariarajah, *Did I Betray the Gospel: The Letters of Paul and the Place of Women* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 1996), xiii.

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to that teaching. Rather, it is to affirm the relevance of the teaching to the particular historical circumstances for which it was written. Contemporary social teaching that does not take into account the different circumstances of today is much less authoritative.

Paul's letters were written in response to questions asked by certain churches or his co-workers. We have to be mindful of the social and political locations of Paul's time. As we read these passages, we see how the early Church adapted to the prevailing customs, traditions, and social norms at that time while affirming the new teaching brought about by Christ as interpreted by Paul. With the changing attitude toward women today, these passages must not be used to justify subordination or oppression of women. More than anything else, we have to seek the mind of Christ as we try to interpret these texts.

The essence of the Gospel is the response in love to the challenges of historical, social, and human needs in situations whereby we celebrate the glorious freedom that is in Christ for all humanity. It is through the perspective of this gospel message that we should reread Pauline texts that are seemingly oppressive to women.

Present-day Christians need to bring to bear on contemporary conventional values with regard to the family and to social structures what they hold to be the heart of the Christian message and of their faith in Christ as Lord, e.g., bringing love and justice into marriage as well as respecting parents and honoring children's dignity.[80]

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[80]Lincoln, "Colossians," 660.

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