

## Misogynistic Interpolations in the Letters of Paul

In Roman times it was common practice for a scribe to write in the name of a revered teacher from the past. Today we might think of this as forgery, but back then the act of attributing one's ideas and writings to someone from the past was regarded as an act of humility. It was also seen as a legitimate way of ensuring the ideas would be taken more seriously by readers; Roman culture was very conservative in the sense that ideas connected with the past were greatly respected. Another common practice (known as interpolation) was for a scribe to add a passage of their own writing to another person's text. When copying the text out they would stop at a suitable point, insert extra material, and then resume copying from the point they left off. Many of the well known works from ancient times contain these inserted passages, such as the writings of Josephus and Homer; yet few people consider the possibility that such inserted passages may also be present in the bible.

Interpolations can be identified by a number of characteristics:

- They do not match the writing style of the original author. Sometimes this is so obvious that it can be seen even in an English translation of the text.
- They do not fit in with the original flow of thought - they often cause the text to jump abruptly to a new subject, and then back to the original subject when the interpolation ends, in a confusing and disjointed way.
- They do not fit in with the structure of the text - ancient documents had a logical structure with sections that introduced the topic, contained background information, and summarised the conclusions, etc. - Interpolations do not fit in with this structure, as the original author did not plan for them to be there.
- They disrupt the original text - sometimes sentences that were meant to refer back to something that had just been mentioned will be separated from it by the inserted text, so that they become confusing or meaningless. Sometimes interpolations were added mid sentence, disrupting even the sentence structure.
- They often express ideas and opinions that contradict those of the original author.

Scribes would sometimes attempt to hide their interpolations, but these attempts were generally clumsy. They were primarily interested in the moral and spiritual interests of their ancient readers; they did not think that scholars would be analysing their work in detail centuries later.

When the letters of Paul in the bible are examined, many passages display the classic signs of interpolations. The misogynistic passages are obvious examples; consider for instance *1 Corinthians 14:29-37*:

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints [ the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also

says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? ] If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.

(ESV translation, square brackets added to mark out the interpolation)

A culturally conservative Roman scribe would have been unsettled by the idea of women actively participating in the the service and prophesying alongside the men. The inserted passage attempts to clarify and shift the interpretation of the preceding verses - a common purpose of an interpolation.

*1 Corinthians* 11:2-16 is another obvious example, the interpolation starts half way through verse 2, and finishes at the end of verse 16. Even when reading an English translation one can see that the words just before and after the interpolation originally formed a single sentence and were divided by the inserted passage.

*Ephesians* 5:22-6:9 is another interesting passage. It sits relatively late in the epistle, where things are being wrapped up and brought to a conclusion. This is a strange place for the writer to suddenly launch into a completely new discourse. The passage makes a great deal of sense when we consider the how a Christian scribe with conservative Roman values would react to *Ephesians* 5:21 (“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”) The idea of men and women both submitting to one another would not have sat comfortably with the patriarchal culture of Rome. The interpolation follows on from this, and explains to readers that Paul could not possibly have meant to include the submission of men to women in this statement. The traditional Roman patriarchy is reaffirmed by a scribe who thinks he is legitimately clarifying the meaning of Paul’s previous statement.

In this short article I have picked out the passages that deride women because these are among the simplest and most obvious examples of inserted passages; however, this is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many more fraudulent passages in the New Testament, and especially in the letters of Paul; there are even entire books that are fraudulent. The fraudulent material introduces destructive and harmful teaching on many issues. This is discussed in depth in a series of articles on my website:

[www.Original-Bible.com](http://www.Original-Bible.com)

Thank you for taking the time to read this; please also take the time to investigate this further. If you have any questions or comments do not hesitate to contact me:

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