

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND NEW METHOD

“The history of effects shows that texts have power and therefore cannot be separated from their consequences”¹

General Introduction and Location of this author

The idea that New Testament texts reflect and even embody the cultural milieu out of which they came is not a new or debated proposition. Yet when we merely give lip-service to this idea and do not investigate some of the factors that make this embodiment possible, we miss a valuable opportunity to delve deeper into the ways social, political and religious dynamics drive the need for the composition of these texts as well as influence their content. As a student of the new testament and Christian origins, I am intrigued by how the writings themselves reflect the milieu out of which they came and embody the early Christian movement’s struggle with social and political powers.

I have come to this particular topic because of a culmination of diverse experiences in Christian communities or churches. Theologically, I was reared and formatively trained in two different faith communities: one that was socially minded, focusing upon living the gospel through community and social justice, and viewed the scriptures as a source for guidance in the Christian faith; and one that employed a conservative “literalist” or fundamentalist (scripture as inerrant) interpretation of the scriptures while focusing upon saving souls. Neither of these communities dealt with or acknowledged the political dimension of our lives or discussed the

¹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence, and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 33.

political ramifications of our beliefs. While I do not want to fault them for the tradition they had been handed and in which they chose to participate, the choice to de-politicize the message and content of the biblical texts, which inform to a certain degree the beliefs of these communities, is a symptom of a depoliticized worldview. Since the texts of the early church had social, political and economic implications, I think it is important that we bring these factors to bear on an understanding or interpretation of them.

The more conservative of these communities endorsed certain restrictions for women within the worship and leadership realms, restrictions that were based upon their understanding of the biblical texts and their choice to give those texts ultimate authority in their lives. All advice on marriage relationships began with new testament mandates or exhortations, buttressed by “Old Testament”² texts when possible, as did parental instruction. All significant aspects of the members’ lives were adequately and sufficiently informed by the texts they considered the divine words of God. Since texts themselves were believed to be divine, the words or teachings drawn from the bible were ascribed divinity as well. It was a given that true believers would emulate as much as possible the examples set forth within these texts, thus materializing—making real within the familial, social, and political realms of society—these commands and regulations.

I refer to this particular conservative, and at times extremist, Christian community in order to highlight a certain reality in every Christian community – that beliefs drawn from these texts become embodied in the members, in their relationships and roles in life, whether or not they are conscious of it.

² I am not completely comfortable with any of the labels we have for the texts that make up the Christian bible, but will respect the tradition of using the label “new testament” throughout this paper. The use of “Old Testament” here is also a reflection of the tradition to which I am referring.

As a young woman with strong leadership skills and “gifting,” I was constantly pushed, pulled or willingly stepping into roles with responsibility over other people, male and female.³ Again, referring to the more conservative communities, leadership was one thing, but being the “ultimate head” of a congregation was not an option. Make no mistake about it, this concern was always grounded in the various depictions within scripture of women as subservient to and thus “ordained by God” to need to be led by men. Partnership, in this worldview, is one where the final word rests with the husband.⁴ Needless to say, ordination of women was out of the question for these communities. Occasionally, a young woman who claimed she never wanted to be head pastor (i.e. would always choose to be an associate) would be smiled upon for knowing her place while wanting to use her gifts to “glorify God.” The double message of: “we need strong women in leadership” and “women must be contained” resonates throughout my experiences in my late teens and twenties.

As I came to understand in seminary, the issue I have just described is deeply rooted in the naming of and imagery used to describe G*d, the creeds and the sacred texts of the church, as well as the structure and tradition of the church since they are built upon, and thus embody, all of these things. It was in stumbling⁵ upon the following words that I first began to be set free, in

³ The dualistic conception of “male” and “female” is not one that I personally subscribe to, but in terms of describing certain communities’ beliefs or reflecting the content of 1 Peter, later on, it will be necessary to use and refer to this kind of binary construction.

⁴ Of course I use “husband” and not “partner” intentionally.

⁵ I use the word “stumble” quite intentionally. It was not a reading assigned in a class or even referenced in class readings. A New Testament PhD candidate handed me *Bread Not Stone* after I had finished the first draft of an exegetical paper that was intended for my own PhD applications. Needless to say it blew my mind and radically changed the thrust of and confidence displayed in my paper.

spite of and in the midst of the patriarchal reality of the church that had defined my worldview and which I had willingly perpetuated:⁶

A feminist hermeneutics cannot trust or accept Bible and tradition simply as divine revelation. Rather it must critically evaluate them as patriarchal articulations, since even in the last century Sarah Grimké, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had recognized that biblical texts are not the words of God but the words of *men* (x-xi).

The Bible is not only written in the words of men but also serves to legitimate patriarchal power and oppression insofar as it “renders God” male and determines ultimate reality in male terms, which make women invisible or marginal. . . .The development of a feminist biblical hermeneutics is not only a theological *but also a profoundly political task* (xi, italics added).

Feminist interpretation therefore begins with a hermeneutics of suspicion that applies to both contemporary androcentric interpretations of the Bible and the biblical texts themselves (xii).

A feminist reading of the Bible requires both a transformation of our patriarchal understandings of God, Scripture, and the Church and a transformation in the self-understanding of historical-critical scholarship and the theological disciplines (xvii).

Schüssler Fiorenza’s claims both made sense of my experiences and pointed a way toward something better, something more life-affirming and liberative than what I had known and faithfully taught to others. They also meant that if I were to take them seriously, I had to question everything—the texts, doctrines and traditions—and to expect resistance to my efforts.

Believing in the importance of a hermeneutics of suspicion, I entered a doctoral program in the deep south of the United States where, it was made clear to me, my questioning was not going to be understood or encouraged. While I was grateful to be enlightened on this matter, I will never forget the threat that I posed in that space and the various ways professors silenced, shamed or tried to re-direct me. I was affirmed for insights as long as they were the right kind, those that came from “objective” and faithful interrogation of the texts. Consequently, over the

⁶ All of the following quotations are from Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1995).

course of my time there, the passion and vision that had motivated me to apply for doctoral work was squelched. They were succeeding in their efforts to silence and contain me and my voice.

The first new testament seminar in which I enrolled for doctoral work was on 1 Peter. While 1 Peter is notoriously difficult to date, it does reflect an ethos and primary concern much different from what we find in Pauline material. The concept of stages of development within the Christian communities was now highlighted in my view and, in spite of the positivistic approach to scripture in that particular program, I began questioning and problematizing the manifestation of this development within canonized texts.

That first semester was also marked by a disturbing evening ritual: listening to a young couple, my upstairs neighbors, fighting several nights a week. These arguments started with verbal abuse, in both directions, and usually ended with the young woman being beaten by her lover, who also was the father of her child. While others in the 1 Peter seminar took to their studies with admirable “objective” perspectives, I could not help but wonder if the woman I heard was scared into staying in part because of socio-religious beliefs that told her that her suffering made her Christ-like and she might “win over” her partner if she would patiently bear the unjust situation. Being in a culture highly influenced by Christianity, even if this young woman did not hold those specific theological beliefs, it was quite likely that she had bought into a social stigma that maintained similar expectations of her. No amount of parsing and translation kept me from making the connection between the content of the household code in 1 Peter and the modern day multi-layered stigma surrounding the choice a woman makes to escape an abusive situation.

While I was aware that there are many other factors that make either staying or leaving this situation a difficult decision, I began to realize that, since even those “non-religious”

dynamics were also a part of the household in first century, they were implicitly present in the *Haustafel* of 1 Peter. Regardless of the fact that it was faith communities that were being addressed by this letter, economic, political, and cultural pressures and expectations were present in the manifest problems and the language chosen for the proposed solution. I saw in 1 Peter an imitation of the kyriarchal domestic codes, a social construct regarding the management of households, which were discussed by various philosophers of ancient Greece because of their importance in maintaining social stability. I was asking the questions that postcolonial studies addresses, though I had yet to even hear of the term “postcolonial.” Homi Bhabha’s concepts of ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity, which have proved immensely helpful for giving biblical scholars terminology and a framework for discussing the ideological implications of the adaptation of various aspects of the surrounding culture within the Christian movement, gave me vocabulary for the dynamics I saw at work in this text.⁷

With neophyte “postcolonial” critical lenses in place, I applied for and continued doctoral work elsewhere. Not only free to ask all the questions I could of these texts but also affirmed in doing so, I began the project of analyzing or critiquing 1 Peter’s *Haustafel*. Suspicious of the patriarchal and kyriarchal context in which they were written, the political influences of Roman occupation of Asia Minor, and the guarantee that those particular socio-cultural expectations would continue throughout the structure and unconscious expectation of the church as long as this text has authority, I was resolutely on the path to a feminist, postcolonialist, materialist critique of this text.

⁷ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), chapter four in particular. See also, Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1999) and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), and Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

History of Scholarship

State of 1 Peter Studies

In the mid 1970's John Elliott sounded a clarion call to all who would listen, asking for a rehabilitation of the exegetical stepchild, the letter of 1 Peter.⁸ Whatever aspect of 1 Peter that would be the focus of successive studies, this article would be noted as a significant piece of the renewed interest in this letter. One can only surmise all the motivations behind Elliott's "rehabilitation" article. What we do know is that in part he was responding to the social climate in the way that biblical studies in general do. Though the response may take a decade or so, the issues that are raised in the public/social realm of the educated western society eventually enter into the realm of biblical studies, bringing with them new questions to take to the texts.

Prior to this clarion call, there had been two main realms of scholarship on 1 Peter: one debating the letter's genre and one its sources. At the end of the 19th century, Adolf von Harnack declared that the letter of 1 Peter was initially a sermon, to which the opening and closing pieces were added later for the sake of circulation.⁹ Not 15 years later, Perdelwitz added that it was not just any sermon, but a baptismal homily in particular. He also had a hunch that it was crafted specifically with those "converting" from mystery cults in mind.¹⁰ Though later scholars do not all agree on this mystery cult influence, several echoed the baptismal homily idea. Then Edward Selwyn, in the late 1940's suggested that 1 Peter was initially an encyclical letter, which is one

⁸ John Hall Elliott, "The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-Child: 1 Peter in Recent Research," *JBL* 95/2 (1976): 243-54.

⁹ Adolf von Harnack, *Die Chronologie der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Irenaus* vol 1 (2d ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897), 451-65.

¹⁰ R. Perdelwitz, *Die Mysterienreligion und das Problem des I. Petrusbriefes: Ein literarischer und religionsgeschichtlicher Versuch* (Religionsgeschichtliche und Vorarbeiten 11/3; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1911).

intended for circulation among certain locations.¹¹ Other scholars would chime in that the baptism aspect was not central to the entire letter, thus should not be noted as the overall purpose as some had suggested.¹²

There were other discussions during the middle of the century regarding the sources for this letter. Affirming the idea that 1 Peter was not a homily but was initially put together as a letter, Eduard Lohse noted that the aporias within the text, the strange jumps or breaks in it, are attributable to the author drawing upon various sources.¹³ After him, Helmut Millauer also noted the two particular strands of thought, what he called the *Leidenstheologie*, regarding the author's depiction of suffering in the letter. There was suffering as a result of the judgment of the elect for their deeds in this world, something that built upon martyr traditions; and there was a strand of innocent suffering of the elect for the sake of identifying with the Christ.¹⁴ Leonard Goppelt picked up on this assessment of suffering in 1 Peter, emphasizing that the issue was not the suffering per se, but that the community was to persevere in following Christ in spite of the persecution.¹⁵ All discussions of genre and source I find to be interesting to a point. Since my interest lies with the effects of these texts, however, they are all but irrelevant to the task at hand.

¹¹ Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of Saint Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays* (London: MacMillan, 1946).

¹² Francis Wright Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Translation and Notes* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1947); Hans Windisch, *Die katholischen Briefe* (dritte Auflage von Herbert Preisker; Tübingen : J.C.B. Mohr, 1951), 49-82. David Hill, "On Suffering and Baptism in 1 Peter," *Novum Testamentum* 18 (1976): 181-9.

¹³ Eduard Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht; Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühntod Jesu Christi* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 201.

¹⁴ Helmut Millauer, *Leiden als Gnade : eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zur Leidenstheologie des ersten Petrusbriefes* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976).

¹⁵ Leonhard Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter* (John E. Alsup, trans; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993; *Der erste Petrusbrief*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978).

In the early 1980s John Elliott and David Balch each contributed volumes to the corpus on 1 Peter,¹⁶ which changed the primary focus of mainstream Petrine scholarship from issues of authorship, dating, and the use of baptismal liturgy, to socio-critical concerns, specifically how to handle the implications of the identity of the recipients as “aliens and exiles” (in 1:1 and 2:11, per Elliott) and how the presence of the “domestic code” affects interpretation (per Balch).¹⁷ What both men were aiming for was a step beyond historical-critical studies, one that would take social, political and cultural dynamics into consideration.

Elliott applied his interest in social-scientific studies, noted by his book *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?*,¹⁸ to the task of determining the make-up of the community – how are we to understand the use of terms such as *paroikoi*, *parepidēmos*, *eklektos*, and *hagioi*? He claims that the use of *parepidēmos* indicated that the people were actually transient, or were not native to that area, so they were already identifying with the socio-political labels of stranger or alien before they became a part of the Christian community. With this in mind, the author used *oikos* terminology to give these “homeless” people a new identity as the people of God in the household of God. While this interpretation has fantastic theological application today, in embracing all who are homeless, literally or figuratively, it does not address the social and relational implications of household dynamics from the first century being maintained within the faith communities.

¹⁶ David Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter* (Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 26. Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), and John Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

¹⁷ Torrey Seland suggests that this terminology indicates that many of the members of these communities were proselytes. Torrey Seland, *Strangers in the Light: Philonic Perspectives on Christian Identity in 1 Peter* (Boston: Brill, 2005), 39-78.

¹⁸ John Hall Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

Balch, as his title *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in I Peter* implies, also applies an approach that takes seriously the context of the communities addressed in the letter, and the possible influence of popular and philosophical writings of the day. He concludes that the letter of 1 Peter was an apologetic and that the use of the household code was a move to encourage acculturation and assimilation. He also sees a subtle critique of Aristotelian kyriarchal relations (his term: patriarchy) and a continuation of the “egalitarian” Jesus tradition in the way this formula was applied in various new testament texts. At times, slaves and women were held up as exemplary members and the household code is directed not simply toward the *paterfamilias* but to other specific household members. While I know that Balch has critiqued the trajectory within the history of the church that has misinterpreted these passages in ways that take away freedoms from women and slaves, the problem remains that these texts embody the kyriarchal socio-political ethos in which these texts were written. The very ways the slaves and women were held up as an example is open to critique on many levels, for instance.

While these two scholars and their respective contributions focus on two separate parts of 1 Peter, they each maintain the “correctness” of their own approach and the limitations of the other’s for grasping the overall theme of the letter, which can be seen in a dialogue between the two in *Perspectives on First Peter*.¹⁹ These two scholars exemplify that fascinating dynamic at work in most malestream scholarship, which is that “the” interpretation of a given passage must be determined and claimed. The focus seems to be upon figuring out who is right and who is wrong, instead of determining, for instance, if the texts themselves are useful for liberative and life-sustaining work or whether they need to be questioned because of their potentially oppressive and dominating effects upon people.

¹⁹ Charles Talbert, ed., *Perspectives on First Peter* (NABPR, Special Study Series 9; Macon: Mercer University, 1986).

In the work done after 1981, four foci can be identified: 1) discerning the precipitating circumstances for the letter and the make-up of the initial recipients, 2) addressing Christological content, 3) literary and rhetorical assessments, and 4) analyzing the social and theological implications for women.

First, with a renewed interest in the impact of the context on the letter, scholars tried to address or assess the circumstances that inspired the letter and the make-up of the community in general. Most notably, in addition to Balch and Elliott's work, were the contributions of Paul Achtemeier, Reinhard Feldmeier, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.²⁰ Achtemeier, countering both Elliott and Balch, interprets the *paroikoi* and *oikos* terminology as a part of the larger controlling metaphor, and thus not something to be taken literally, and suggests that acculturation cannot be in view, since the community members are encouraged to make a break with their past way of life. Reinhard Feldmeier focuses upon the *parepidemos* ("strangers") designation as it resonates with passages in the Hebrew bible where a stranger was someone who did not know the God of the Israelites. The application of it here is an ironic one because now the strangers are the chosen people of God. The issue, according to Feldmeier, is not one of either straight assimilation or sectarian division, but of who is in and who is outside the people of God.²¹

²⁰ Paul Achtemeier, "Newborn Babes and Living Stones: Literal and Figurative in 1 Peter," in *To Touch the Text: Biblical and Related Studies in Honor of Joseph A. Fitzmyer* (Maurya P. Horgan and Paul J. Kobelski, eds.; New York: Crossroad, 1989), 207-36. Reinhard Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde: Die Metapher der Fremde in der antiken Welt, im Urchristentum und im 1. Petrusbrief* (WUNT, 64. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992). Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," in *The Postcolonial Commentary of the New Testament* (The Bible and Postcolonialism Series; Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, Forthcoming), 380-401.

²¹ Feldmeier, *Die Christen als Fremde*, esp. 92-6.

For Schüssler Fiorenza, however, the terms *parepidemos* and *paroikoi* are somewhat ambiguous, but primarily accentuate the political-individual aspect of the recipients.²² Furthermore, she insists that it is necessary to delineate one's overall interpretive framework and method before making claims regarding the nuances of the meanings intended by the use of the terms *parepidemos* and *paroikoi*.²³ In other words, the relative sub-ordinate status of the recipients, noted by the terms used, which has caused their suffering to begin with, is reinscribed by the letter and ensures that the communities will be marked by kyriarchal relations of dominance. Schussler Fiorenza sufficiently problematizes the labels, in contrast with other scholars who valorize, or at the very least accept as beneficial, these sub-ordinating labels.

Next, the Christology of the letter serves as an overarching topic that includes the issue of suffering and discipleship.²⁴ For Goppelt the letter was written to encourage faithfulness in following after Christ, no matter the circumstances. Christ in his sufferings stood as an example to follow, though Christians' suffering would have different ends, as it could not be salvific as Christ's was.²⁵ Stephen Bechtler, drawing upon Victor Turner's concept of liminality, sees the Christian communities as living in a temporal and socio-political liminal state. God bestows on these people a new form of honor through the suffering they were experiencing due to their religious beliefs; it is an honor that will sustain them in their state of liminality.²⁶ Sharon Pearson

²² Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," 383, 386-9.

²³ Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," 389.

²⁴ Depending upon how one reads the scholarship, one could say that an eschatological thrust is a primary focus of this letter. I have touched upon many of the scholars who take this line. For a more in-depth analysis of such content, see Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in First Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12-19* (SBL 33; New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

²⁵ Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter*; Paul Achtemeier, "Suffering Servant and Suffering Christ in 1 Peter," in *The Future of Christology: L. E. Keck Festschrift* (A. J. Malherbe and Wayne A. Meeks, eds.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 176-88.

represents those who study the Hebrew Bible hymnic sections of the letter, all of which she sees as Christological.²⁷ Hers is a study that addresses textual echoes, but does not address cultural or contextual issues. Kathleen Corley is interested in pointing to positive places in the text with which women can identify. Her main concern is that suffering should never be affirmed for its own sake, but that it should always be in the service of making something better.²⁸ In a similar vein, Betsy Bauman-Martin strongly critiques feminist theologies of suffering, and argues for a feminist theological approach to suffering that focuses upon granting women agency and autonomy.²⁹ While I do understand and appreciate Corley and Bauman-Martin's efforts and think that there are helpful pastoral and ecclesial applications of their contributions, for me, the fact remains that the text elevates suffering as a mark of discipleship of Christ, as the rest of the scholarship on this aspect of 1 Peter indicates.

The resurgence in literary and rhetorical approaches to 1 Peter is primarily driven by the thought that understanding these aspects of the letter will grant insight into its meaning and purpose. Lauri Thurén stands out for his malestream rhetorical work on the letter. He suggests that the use of ambiguous participial phrases, which are at transition points in the letter, allows the author to address two major segments of the communities: those who are actively resisting and those who are passively submitting to whatever befalls them.³⁰ Careful attention to the

²⁶ Steven Richard Bechtler, *Following in His Steps: Suffering, Community and Christology in 1 Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).

²⁷ Sharon Clark Pearson, *The Christological and Rhetorical Properties of 1 Peter* (SBEC 45; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon, 2001).

²⁸ Kathleen Corley, "1 Peter," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary* (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed.; New York: Crossroad, 1994), 349-60.

²⁹ Betsy J. Bauman-Martin, "Feminist Theologies of Suffering and Current Interpretations of 1 Peter 2.18-3.9," in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* (Amy-Jill Levine with Maria Mayo-Robbins, eds.; Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004), pp. 63-82.

rhetorical devices, Thurén claims, provides much insight into the community and the author's intention in writing to them. Charles Talbert's assessment of the "plan" of the letter is determined by thoroughly analyzing the epistolary form of 1 Peter.³¹ In other words, whatever the author's or the recipients' context, the meaning of the letter can be found by understanding the flow of the argument. Bonnie Howe has recently published a book on the role of metaphor in this letter, most significantly pointing out how the use of family terminology (contained in the household code) will ensure a patriarchal familial structuring of the communities.³² Many other scholars have tried to grasp the literary argument as a means of understanding the letter's overall meaning, W.J. Thompson in particular.³³

These rhetorical studies stand in stark contrast with the feminist rhetorical work of scholars such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, whose solid rhetorical work is not done with feigned neutrality regarding her own socio-political location.³⁴ Most importantly, she has the explicit goal of interpreting the letter from the perspective of those against whom the author has written the letter.³⁵ She calls biblical scholars to defy the "academic credo of value-detached objectivism" by naming and articulating their own socio-religious and socio-political locations. It is no surprise, then, that most of the commentaries on 1 Peter that are written by Euro-American

³⁰ Lauri Thurén, *The Rhetorical Strategy of 1 Peter with Special Regard to Ambiguous Expressions* (Åbo: Åbo Academy Press, 1990).

³¹ Charles Talbert, "Once Again: the Plan of 1 Peter," in *Perspectives on First Peter* (NABPR Special Study Series, 9; Charles Talbert, ed.; Macon: Mercer University, 1986).

³² Bonnie Howe, *Because you Bear this Name: Conceptual Metaphor and the Moral Meaning of 1 Peter* (BIS, 81; Boston: Brill, 2006).

³³ James W. Thompson, "The Rhetoric of 1 Peter," *Restoration Quarterly* 36 (1994): 237-50.

³⁴ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," in *The Postcolonial Commentary of the New Testament* (The Bible and Postcolonialism; Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, eds.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, Forthcoming;). See also, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

³⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," 396.

Christian academicians, who are seemingly capable of detached objectivity, reflect no problematicization of the letter's author or content. The purposes and goals of malestream versus critical feminist rhetorical scholarship on 1 Peter are vastly different, so much so that it seems these scholars are speaking different languages or are addressing different texts.

For example, Schüssler Fiorenza begins her commentary on 1 Peter with an explanation of her critical emancipatory interpretation of scripture, which requires conscientization and a systemic analysis of the letter as more than communication, but rather in terms of it being embedded within the power relations that were a part of the socio-political context out of which it came. Following Chela Sandoval, she also employs a doubled analysis of power that recognizes both the horizontal network of relations of domination and the vertical, pyramidal, kyriarchal system of power relations, recognizing that the kyriarchal system in particular is structured upon various forms of intersecting relations of domination, including but not limited to those of gender, class, race, empire, age and religion.³⁶ She clearly notes that, while a scholar may hold a "confessional stance" toward the biblical texts, one must move beyond this realm of identity politics in order to be open to critical evaluations of the texts themselves and the "inscriptions of power" within them, with the ultimate goal of finding liberative interpretations for the oppressed.³⁷ Finally, the explanation of her method sets the stage for her main interest, noted above, which is that of attempting to reconstruct the submerged voices that were silenced by the author and this text.

An explanation of her method allows us to see that every aspect of her commentary is driven and informed by her own socio-political and socio-religious location, and is anything but value-neutral, as malestream biblical scholarship feigns to be. Her contributions on the

³⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," 381.

³⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," 381.

understanding of the *parepidemioi*, or on the elements of valorized suffering within the text, or her final decolonizing interpretation of the text as a whole must all be understood in terms of her interest in emancipatory interpretations of biblical texts for the sake of well-being and wholeness of all people. Her interpretation of the religio-political status of the recipients, for instance, does not stand on its own, but is thoroughly informed by her feminist critical rhetorical decolonizing interpretation of the letter as a whole. The desire and efforts to focus purely on the rhetoric of the letter or the bits and pieces that touch upon suffering or Christological content reflect a deeper symptom prevalent in biblical studies that separates the religious implications of biblical texts from all other aspects of life.

Since the early 80s, mainstream scholarship, as I see it, has begun to move beyond the discussion of genre into the realm of assessing the contexts of both the author and the recipients of the letter. While this move has deepened the “source” discussion in a way that has begun to draw out the implications of the adaptation of certain sources, it is merely a beginning. All such source and genre discussions remain positivistic until they are free to question the implications of such matters.

Those scholars working on 1 Peter who self-identify as “feminist” to some extent all address matters related to aspects of the household code or to the “co-elect woman”³⁸ mentioned at the end of the letter, as these are the pieces of the text that have the most obvious implications for women.³⁹ It is worth noting at this point—as I will return to a more thorough discussion of the contributions of these scholars in the next section—that their work does not necessarily fall

³⁸ Judith K. Applegate, “The Co-Elect Woman of 1 Peter,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* (Amy-Jill Levine, with Maria Mayo Robbins, eds.; Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004), 89-102. All other contributions are discussed under “Uniqueness of 1 Peter’s *Haustafel*” below.

³⁹ Sharon Ringe’s contribution to the *Global Bible Commentary*, though brief due to the nature of the commentary, offers a pointed feminist critique of 1 Peter that touches upon the implications for women as well as liberationist and postcolonial concerns. Sharon Ringe, “1&2 Peter, Jude,” in *Global Bible Commentary* (Daniel Patte, et al, eds.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2004), 545-52.

under the easily named categories of genre, source, author, date, and so forth. Any of these scholars may touch on one or several of these traditional topics, but only to the extent that it opens doors into deeper concerns. Mark Dubis highlights quite nicely the (un)natural divide between traditional malestream scholarship and anything that stands outside of those rigid confines.⁴⁰ In his 2006 “comprehensive bibliography” of scholarship on 1 Peter since 1985, there is not a single “feminist” contribution listed though most of it on 1 Peter falls into those intervening twenty years. His bibliography is a perfect example of the way hegemonic malestream scholarship perpetuates the false idea that feminist critical scholarship, as one among many voices in biblical scholarship, is peripheral, and thus secondary to, traditional biblical studies.

History of scholarship on 1 Peter’s *Haustafel*

It is the household code⁴¹—also referred to as the “domestic” or “station” code⁴²—that sets the background for my project. This is a strand of scholarship that is founded upon Balch’s work, though is increasingly being populated by other new voices. Before assessing Balch’s work specifically and the other critical contributions, I offer a summary of the scholarship on the

⁴⁰ Mark Dubis, “Research on 1 Peter: A Survey of Scholarly Literature Since 1985,” *Currents in Biblical Scholarship* 4/2 (2006): 199-239.

⁴¹ From here on, for consistency, I will refer to this construct as the household codes. I prefer the term “household” to “domestic” as the former reminds me that we are discussing a social institution that included people beyond the immediate family; the latter term has too many modern connotations for my own preference (see note 127).

⁴² Troy W. Martin, *Metaphor and Composition in 1 Peter* (SBL Dissertation Series 131. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982), 124. This label has been in use since Luther, who affixed this label above the Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians 5:21-33 passages, and perhaps was made popular by Dibelius and more specifically his student Weidinger. Here is a quotation from a letter written by E. J. Goodspeed to Francis W. Beare in 1949 that addresses this very issue: “As for the *haustafeln* idea, we at Chicago were never able to find any such ‘*haustafeln*’ as it had been claimed anciently existed. Most scholars simply accept Weidinger’s say-so, but the natural explanation seems to be a germ in Col. Expanding in Eph., and then in 1 Peter.” Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 195.

origin of the household code as found in new testament documents, the delineation of such a construct within the new testament, and the sources drawn upon for this form.

General Haustafel Studies

Origin of the Form

David Balch offers an excellent summary of household code studies in general in his contribution to *Greco-Roman Literature*.⁴³ His summary suggests two main strands of thought regarding the provenance of the household codes as we have them in the new testament: that of an adaptation of Stoic/philosophical thought, and that of an adaptation of ideas contained in Aristotle's *Politics* (I.2.i; II.2.ii) and other writings that reflect Aristotle's tri-partite division of households.

The first strand of research was begun by Martin Dibelius, who in his work on Colossians saw similarities with Stoic thought in phrases such as "as is fitting," and the use of "acceptable." He concluded that the household code was Christianized Stoic thought because of the addition of "in the Lord."⁴⁴ Karl Weidinger after him noted that Hellenistic Judaism had already made this step, thus he thought the household codes were from this tradition instead.⁴⁵ David Schroeder agrees with Weidinger and turns specifically to Philo whose discussion in *Decalogue* (165-67),

⁴³ David Balch, "Household Codes," in *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (SBL SBS 21; David Aune, ed.; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 25-50. See also James E. Crouch, *The Origin and Intention of the Colossian Haustafel* (FRLANT 109; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972).

⁴⁴ Martin Dibelius, *An Die Kolosser, an die Epheser, an Philemon* (HNT 12; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1927). Karl Heinrich Rengstorf noted similar aspects of the *Haustafeln*, but claimed that the differences between the "Christian" versions and those of the Hellenistic and Jewish parallels were significant enough such that they should be regarded as uniquely Christian creations. This thesis, based upon the use of the term , and the "in the Lord" phrases, is sufficiently countered in the work of the other scholars mentioned here. Karl Rengstorf, "Die neutestamentlichen Mahnungen an die Frau, sich dem Manne unterzuordnen," in *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum. Eine Festschrift für Otto Schmitz zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag am 16. Juni 1953* (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1953), 131-45.

⁴⁵ Karl Weidinger, *Die Haustafeln, ein Stück urchristlicher Paranaese* (UNT 14; Leipzig: J. C. Heinrich, 1928).

he thinks, is similar to the new testament household code form due to the address to social classes instead of individuals. Philo assigns duties to pairs that are hierarchalized, which is considered foreign to the Stoic value of individual self-sufficiency but is something that the new testament *Haustafeln* include.⁴⁶ One voice rejects the Hellenistic influence, Ernst Lohmeyer. He agrees that there must be some paraenetic unit upon which Colossians, as the earliest new testament version, is based, but insists that it was purely a Jewish source.⁴⁷ Finally, James E. Crouch also agrees that the Hellenistic Judaism origin is most likely, but emphasizes that it is a nomistic Pauline move within “Oriental-Jewish” thought that is brought in to counter the freedom within purely Hellenistic religious practices, such as behavior found in the worship of Isis.⁴⁸ He also draws upon Philo’s *De Hypothetica* 7:14 and Josephus’s *Against Apion* 190-219, content that will be discussed further below. Curiously enough, this strand of scholarship does more work with the underlying implications of such an inclusion in these texts than the next strand does, though I do find this second strand a more fruitful point of departure for my own work.

The second main strand of scholarship on the provenance of the household codes includes, most significantly, Dieter Lührmann, Klaus Thraede and David Balch. They agree that it is from the philosophical genre, *peri oikonomias*. Lührmann noted that the household codes are “latently political”⁴⁹ and then later also noted an interesting three phase development of thought from (1) the Pauline material, to (2) Colossians/Ephesians, and 1 Peter, to (3) the Pastorals,

⁴⁶ David Schroeder, *Die Haustafeln des Neuen Testaments* (Hamburg Dissertation, 1959).

⁴⁷ Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Kolosser und an Philemon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 152.

⁴⁸ Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, 142.

⁴⁹ Dieter Lührmann, “Wo man nicht mehr Sklave oder Freier ist. Überlegungen zur Struktur frühchristlicher Gemeinden,” *Wort und Dienst* 13 (1975): 53-83.

concerning content related to this topic.⁵⁰ Many feminist scholars make a similar assessment of the development of thought contained in the canon in general, though certainly evident in the texts Lührmann notes.⁵¹ This topic is clearly a much larger discussion than I can sufficiently summarize at this point.⁵²

Klaus Thraede suggested that what we see in the household codes is a rational middle ground between complete egalitarian dynamics and unqualified patriarchal structures, drawing upon Neo-Pythagorean literature as important sources.⁵³ Balch finds this view of Thraede's a bit too simplistic, but more importantly, as noted above, he suggests that in 1 Peter the adaptation of the *peri oikonomias* material is a subtle *critique* of patriarchy, and as such it continues the thoughts and actions we have of Jesus in the gospels. Balch also suggests that the work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, to be discussed below, should be considered as relevant to the household code forms that we have in the new testament materials.

Delineation of the New Testament Haustafeln

⁵⁰ Dieter Lührmann, "Neutestamentliche Haustafeln und antike Ökonomie," *NTS* 28 (1980), though this development was noted by Goodspeed more than thirty years earlier (see n. 34).

⁵¹ For example, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Discipleship and Patriarchy: Early Christian Ethos and Christian Ethics in a Feminist Theological Perspective," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 2/1 (1982): 131-72; William O. Walker claims that nothing in the "genuine" Pauline corpus says anything about women's subordination but only of egalitarian views and practices. William O. Walker, "The 'Theology of Women's Place' and the 'Paulinist' Tradition," *Semeia* 28 (1983): 101-12. See also, Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Colossians," in *Searching the Scriptures* vol. 2 (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, with Shelly Matthews, eds.; New York: Crossroad, 1993), 313-24; E. Elizabeth Johnson, "Ephesians," in *Women's Bible Commentary, Expanded Edition with Apocrypha* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 428-32, "Colossians," in *Women's Bible Commentary, Expanded Edition with Apocrypha* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 437-9; Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 96-107; and Carolyn Osiek, "The Bride of Christ (5:22-23): A Problematic Wedding," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32/1 (2002): 29-39.

⁵² For prominent voices in the discussion I would send the reader to Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Letters* (New York: Cambridge University, 1988).

⁵³ Klaus Thraede, "Zum historischen Hintergrund der 'Haustafeln' des NT," in *Pietas: Festschrift für Bernhard Kötting* (Ernst Dassmann und K. Suso Frank, hrsg.; JAC 8. Münster: Aschendorff, 1980): 361, 365, 367.

As one might expect, the delineation of what counts as *Haustafel* material is directly related to a scholar's understanding of the purpose of such material and to some degree to her or his view of its provenance. There are six general categories scholars have used to define what content is household code material and what is not.

The first category is the most strictly defined, held by Karlheinz Müller. He asserts that only Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and Colossians 3:18-4:1 be considered true examples of the household code in the new testament, as they are the only ones that reflect both parties in the three types of relationships that Aristotle mentions in his writings.⁵⁴ While one might understand Müller's standard and respect for keeping a particular form, his limits make the discussion more narrowly focused than such content implied originally because it leaves out the view toward city management with which these relationships were defined.

The next category includes texts where any household members are mentioned, with or without reciprocity. William Knox-Little, requiring reciprocity, would add 1 Peter 3:1-7 to Müller's list, as this section refers to both wives and husbands.⁵⁵ J. Paul Sampley, who does not require that both members of a duality be addressed, extends the 1 Peter passage to include 2:17-3:9 (an extension that covers the exhortation, "Honor all, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king," the words addressed to the slaves, and verses 3:8-9 that encourage good behavior in all people), as well as 1 Timothy 2:8-15, 6:1-10 and Titus 2:1-10.⁵⁶ These pastoral passages include

⁵⁴ Karlheinz Müller, "Die Haustafel des Kolosserbriefes und das antike Frauenthema: Eine kritische Rückschau auf alte Ergebnisse," in *Die Frau im Urchristentum* (G. Dautzenberg, et al, eds.; Freiburg: Herder, 1983), 263-319.

⁵⁵ William J. Knox-Little, *The Christian Home: Its Foundations and Duties* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1895).

⁵⁶ J. Paul Sampley, *'And the two shall become one flesh': A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21-33* (SNTSMS 16; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1971), 19.

directives for women, words addressed to slaves, and exhortations to men in general as the implied leaders in the communities.

Martin Dibelius exemplifies the third category of scholars who look for exhortations to submit to others as the determining factor.⁵⁷ Thus Dibelius adds the (in)famous passage Romans 13:1-7 (which discusses relations with governors or rulers) and Titus 3:1-9, which also addresses being obedient to rulers, but also simply good behavior. Cannon, drawing upon the idea that the author of Colossians was using a traditional paraenetic unit,⁵⁸ also suggests that with Dibelius's reasoning 1 Peter 2:12-17 should be added to the list.⁵⁹ This section is framed by admonitions regarding obeying governing rulers.

The next category is most interesting for my project. It includes all content mentioned so far, and adds passages with admonitions to church leaders or regarding church order. This definition assumes that one knows when church leaders are being addressed, but this topic itself is a matter of great debate. Nonetheless, Crouch suggests that any text that addresses old and young, men and women, bishops, presbyters, deacons, widows and the state fall under the rubric of household codes.⁶⁰

Fifth, David Balch asserts that any text that has admonitions to "do good,"⁶¹ which thus extends the 1 Peter material to begin at 2:11 and end at 3:12, should be considered household code material. Sixth and finally, Leonhard Goppelt's claims regarding these texts are worth a

⁵⁷ Dibelius, *An Die Kolosser*, 48. George E. Cannon, *The Use of Traditional Materials in Colossians* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University, 1983), 99.

⁵⁸ Cannon, *Traditional Materials in Colossians*, 96.

⁵⁹ Cannon, *Traditional Materials in Colossians*, 99. But Cannon agrees with Crouch's approach that is what he considers the most broadly conceived category.

⁶⁰ Crouch, *Origin and Intention*, 12-3. Please see the next chapter for more discussion on this point of church leadership.

⁶¹ David Balch, "Early Christian Criticism of Patriarchal Authority: 1 Peter 2:11-3:12," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 39 (1984): 161-73.

brief summary. Goppelt makes a clear distinction between “household codes,” which strictly address household roles, and the more general and broad concept of “station codes.”⁶² Here Goppelt defines a person’s “station” as the role in society to which a person is assigned by God’s sovereignty.⁶³ His clear delineation is worth noting for two reasons.

The first is that he states that he is drawing upon the term “station” as it was used in the Reformation.⁶⁴ Asserting that “station codes” is much more appropriate than “household codes” based on Luther’s terminology may be a move to appeal to tradition, but that claim alone does not make it definitive. It is also just as arbitrary as claiming that “household codes” *can* embrace more than just household duties. Balch makes such an assertion when he explains that household relationships were important for city management. Thus the charge in 1 Peter 2:13 to be obedient to the emperor and his governors is appropriately placed within what Goppelt considers to be the household code, 1 Peter 2:11-3:12.⁶⁵

Along the same lines, Cannon makes a similar claim, based purely upon the way he reads the new testament texts. For him the *Haustafeln* are to be understood as addressing household issues as well as the concerns of the church. In fact he claims that these segments of the new testament are more ecclesiological than socio-political.⁶⁶ In all three cases—Goppelt, Balch and Cannon—the scholars make definitive claims about the household code based upon the way each

⁶² Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter*, 162-3.

⁶³ Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter*, 165.

⁶⁴ Goppelt, *A Commentary on I Peter*, 165, n.10.

⁶⁵ Balch, “Household Codes,” 34.

⁶⁶ Cannon, *Traditional Materials in Colossians*, 100.

one reads them and understands the connection between the household and society in the first century C.E.⁶⁷

The second reason I point to Goppelt's claim is that while he sees a clear differentiation between the household roles and all other social roles a person might have, that does not mean that the line between them actually ever existed, and even if it did that line has not been blurred over time. Wishing, even willing, these realms to remain separate does not make it so. More importantly, it is clear that, at the point in time in which this letter was written, the faith communities were meeting within the household spaces. It is ludicrous to claim that the line separating roles as leader of a household and leader of a household of G*d was well maintained. Goppelt serves as a prime example of how a person's wants or needs shape that person's interpretation of the texts.

Sources for this Construct

I have placed the discussion of the sources for this literary and socio-political construct here, after the scholarship that debates what should be included in this category, because it is the content that is overlooked in this arena that leads to my contribution. Discussing the sources is the best way to highlight my critique of what has been published on the topic. This section must be limited in scope, as a full discussion of all relevant texts is too grand a project for this context, and has been done, more or less, by Abraham Malherbe.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ I do not mean to imply that I am free of such influences or tendencies in my own work. The reason I include that piece is to highlight how well-meaning scholars can come up with mutually exclusive interpretations of these texts, and all claim to have 'the' correct interpretation. Another fine example of such a move is found in Stephen James ("Divine Justice and Retributive Duty of Civil Government") also completely denies any relation between the civil and legal structure of society and the work of Christ. "The saving work of Jesus is effective only with respect to the eternal and direct sphere of divine justice, and has no bearing on the indirect or civil sphere" (210). He makes this claim in an article that draws from Rom 13, 1 Peter 2:13-4 and some of the gospels.

⁶⁸ In particular for the Neo-Pythagorean writings that Thraede and others claim are essential for understanding the household codes. Abraham Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986).

The primary ancient author who comes into the picture of the scope and form of the household code is Aristotle, specifically in his *Politics*.⁶⁹ He begins his treatise on politics speaking of partnerships: every state is a partnership and every partnership aims at some good. The political association is the greatest of all partnerships and includes all partnerships that human beings create (I.1.i). He then moves on to speak of two necessary “couplings.” The first is the husband and wife, for the sake of continuing humanity, and the second is the natural ruler and natural subject, for the sake of security (I.1.iv). This first coupling establishes a household; a partnership of households creates a village; and a partnership of villages creates a city-state. For Aristotle, we must note, the whole takes precedence over the parts, because each part is dependent upon the whole for safety and sustenance (I.1.iv-v). Then he speaks of the three dualistic components that make up any household, each in terms of the role the male head of the household plays. The master/slave relationship is one of mastership; the husband/wife piece is a republican relationship; and the father/children dynamic is a progenitive and monarchic relationship. Each of these dualistic relations is also, according to Aristotle, a partnership (I.2.i).⁷⁰

The nature of the various partnerships is discussed throughout the treatise, as well as reasons for who rules over whom. His concluding thoughts in Book I are quite to the point.

Since every household is part of a state, and these relationships are part of the household, and the excellence of the part must have regard for that of the whole, it is necessary that the education both of the children and of the women should be educated with regard to the form of the constitution, if it makes any difference as regards the goodness of the state for the children and the women to be good (I.5.xii).

⁶⁹ Several scholars turn to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* as well, a move that I see as tangential at best. In V.6.viii-ix he discusses matters of justice, in particular between two people. In book VIII, on friendships, scholars tend to be drawn to his discussion of friendships between unequals, or to the passages that discuss what is just in a friendship. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (LCL 73; H. Rackham, trans.; Cambridge, Mass.; 1934).

⁷⁰ Aristotle has a great deal to say about the nature of a slave and the natural relations between a slave and his [or her] master (esp. I.2.ii; I.5.vi-vii), content that will be helpful for future projects on household code content in the new testament.

Though this quotation touches upon two matters that are well beyond the scope of this project, that of education and the constitution of the city-state, the underlying message is that for the state to succeed, the households must be run with an eye toward the state and all members of the households are to be trained/educated with the goals of the state in mind. Thus we can see in Aristotle's work both the basic tri-partite form of the "household code" and a socio-political motivation for the maintenance of the household.

The remaining authors are typically drawn upon secondarily to Aristotle, in light of chronology and relevant content. Dionysius of Halicarnassus spent twenty-two years learning Greek and compiling sources for his writing. His most influential work for our purposes is *Roman Histories*, written about the founding of Rome, presumably in order to calm the Greeks from being angry at being ruled by Rome/Romans. Of relevance for household code form and content are two passages. II.16.1 refers to the third policy that Romulus prescribed, which was

not to slay all the men of military age or to enslave the rest of the population of the cities captured in war (or land to go to pasture) ... but send settlers ... to possess some part of the country by lot and to make conquered cities Roman colonies and even grant citizenship to some of them.

Not only do the Romans continue this practice into the first few centuries of the common era, but this practice in particular raises significant postcolonial questions and concerns that are relevant to many new testament documents.

The second Dionysius passage (II.24.i) notes that one particular law of Romulus's illustrates "the character of the rest of his legislation." He took care of all situations related to "marriage and commerce with women" in one law, which said that a woman joined to a husband in holy marriage should share in his possessions and sacred rites (II.25.ii). This law ensures that women take on the religious practices of her husband and consider his belongings her own, so

that her cares and concerns are bound up with his. At the same time, it was essential for the husband to take care of his wife and to “rule her as a necessary and inseparable possession” (II.25.vi-v). We can see how these ideas are similarly reflected in various household code forms in the new testament, and the issue of taking on religious practices is most relevant for 1 Peter.

Several scholars have brought in bits and pieces of the writings by Seneca, Philo and Josephus, along with various other contemporary authors, in particular some Apostolic Fathers and Neo-Pythagorean writers.⁷¹ Seneca’s Epistle #94, “On the Value of Advice,” addresses the three main roles of the *paterfamilias*: that of the husband, father and master. Couched in terms of differentiating between two types of philosophy – for individual cases and for humanity at large – Seneca’s thoughts highlight the fact that there was an understanding of individual action, though always directed ultimately toward the corporate realm.

Philo and Josephus are most often employed in this discussion for their thoughts on the tri-partite roles of the head of the household, reflected in *Apology for the Jews* and *Against Apion*, respectively.⁷² In 7.1-14, Philo offers a summary of the constitution of the “nation of the Jews,” in which he exhorts wives to reasonable obedience in all things because the husband is endowed with abilities to interpret the laws sufficiently for his wife, the father to children, and the master to slaves. Focusing upon the collective people instead of on the marriage institution, Philo’s philosophical treatment of the topic also indicates the subtle, although essential, connection between the household realm and the socio-political matrix. As we see in Seneca, Philo also addresses the issue of personal possessions, with the assertion that each person is lord

⁷¹ For primary sources on the Neo-Pythagoreans, see Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*. I list here the relevant Apostolic Fathers passages because they are of interest in the development of this form and content within the church tradition, but are not as helpful in establishing sources upon which other new testament authors may have drawn. *I Clement* 3:21:6-9 and 38:1f; *Barnabas* 19:5-7; *Ignatius to Polycarp* 4:1-6:1; *Didache* 4:9-11; *Polycarp to the Philippians* 4:1-6:3.

⁷² Philo, “Apology for the Jews,” from *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, in one volume* (C. D. Yonge, trans.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2000), 742-6.

over them (7.3). I will address this concern with possessions again below, as it shows up in Xenophon's treatise as a matter of particular interest for this project.

In *Against Apion* (II.199-209) Josephus claims that "scripture" says that "a woman is inferior to her husband in all things." Many scholars have noted that though this section is relevant to the household code discussion, it is limited in scope as it reflects more the concerns of the Decalogue than those of the household in general. Nonetheless, both Philo and Josephus illustrate the general framework that Aristotle set forth in his *Politics*, regardless of the emendations each may have made for their specific contexts.

I have chosen to discuss Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* (*Oikonomikos*)⁷³ last as it is a fine example of a document that sheds light upon possible undercurrents associated with household matters, yet is not dealt with to any large degree by biblical scholars.⁷⁴ While this is the term from which we derive "economics," it is also helpful to keep in mind that its Greek rendering is, woodenly, "law of the house." Thus, the very foundation of discussions of economics, whether of first or twenty-first century C.E., is the household and its maintenance and operation. Even Cicero himself is a witness to this interconnection, when he praises Xenophon for the eloquence of his writings that address managing estates.⁷⁵

As Sarah Pomeroy has noted, we would do well to reconsider the importance of the productivity and labor of the wife, children and slaves within the households, or should we say

⁷³ I can only assume that most scholars today refer to this piece with the Latin transliteration, instead of Greek, because of the ancient authors who referred to Xenophon's work who wrote in Latin. I have not found a discussion of this minutia but I do find it to be an interesting one, a move that has colonizing overtones and serves to erase part of Xenophon's identity and to align him with all that is Latin in language, thought or culture.

⁷⁴ Many of his writings deal strictly with economic concerns: *Revenues*, *Cyropaedia*, and *Anabasis* in particular. But *Oeconomicus* is more well known than these pieces and is thus more relevant to this discussion (though perhaps the cause and effect of that last statement should be flipped).

⁷⁵ Cicero, *De Senectute* (William Armistead Falconer, trans.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1996; reprint of 1923 edition), XVII.1.

“estates,” of the Greco-Roman era.⁷⁶ Many of the philosophers I have briefly touched upon above note that the male heads of households are responsible for and appropriate the goods of the households within society, but do not discuss how the men were ultimately dependent upon and could not survive without the members of the household.

There are subtle ways that Xenophon proves to be a bit more progressive than Aristotle, most strikingly in the fact that he can allow for a woman’s intelligence to be developed, something that was by nature impossible, according to Aristotle. Xenophon also gives full recognition to a wife’s role or contribution within the household, making him one of if not *the* first philosopher to do so in his writings. He does not describe her as a parasite or “necessary property” as Aristotle and Dionysius do, though to support his view of interdependence Xenophon sees different aptitudes in men and women, which leads to inevitable gender roles.

More to the point, though, are the following insights gathered from this treatise. Estate management is considered in the same branch of knowledge as medicine, smithing and carpentry. Clearly it is a highly valued endeavor. Every good thing a person possesses (even in another city) is a part of his estate; these possessions include anything that is beneficial to the owner (I.7), and should be well maintained (I.7-12) and organized (III.3). Xenophon speaks about Cyrus and what it was that made him great, which was his focus upon farming/agriculture and war. For our purposes, I think it is important to keep in mind that the agriculture and war efforts, while separate endeavors, were mutually dependent upon one another. Finally, in order to indicate the importance of the professional role of being a housewife, Xenophon tells a young couple’s story. It exemplifies his beliefs that the way the husband treats the wife is central to

⁷⁶ Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Xenophon, Oeconomicus: A Social and Historical Commentary* (New York: Oxford University, 1994), introduction.

their success and that it is the husband's fault if he does not train his wife well and they fail (III.10).

The story is about Ischomachus and his wife, who was 15 when they married. She had been carefully watched over prior to marriage, which meant that she knew that she was to “see, hear and speak as little as possible,” and that she had been taught some important essentials: how to take wool and make a cloak, control her appetite and give tasks to slaves (VII.1-7), all of which when added to self-control (*sōphronein*) would lead to the greatest increase in their property (VII.17). Once Ischomachus's wife was “tamed and domesticated,” i.e. she could carry a conversation, he sat her down for a talk or for specific training in running the household, namely, how to: treat the servants, organize their belongings most efficiently, and utilize her powers of memory and concern in order to protect and manage their household. Her ability to heed well Ischomachus's words makes her a virtuous woman of high-mindedness, which is likened to a “masculine intelligence.” It is a lofty compliment indeed.

Ischomachus offers one final example of her virtue and quick obedience, an example that I find intriguingly relevant to 1 Peter 3:1-6. It is an anecdote about her appearance. Right there in the midst of a discussion on household management, Xenophon relates this insight on what it is that makes a woman most beautiful. Ischomachus says that his wife does not need to wear make-up or jewelry because in her unadorned state she is most becoming; in fact, he compares her with horses who are most beautiful just as they are to other horses. And what *does* make her beautiful: teaching what she knows best about running the household and learning in the areas where she lacks.

Clearly these ideas from Xenophon's treatise are not lacking in content to critique from a feminist, postcolonial, materialist perspective. My comments here, however, will be in keeping with the specific focus of household codes and their derivation, form and content.

First, it seems to me that bringing in a text such as this one helps to support all the arguments for how different the Christianized versions of the household code are, in that they speak directly to the women and slaves instead of to and through the male head of the household. It is a shame that it has been left out of these discussions in the past.

Second, all of the malestream scholarship that focuses purely upon form, thus only draws upon texts that reflect or are similar to Aristotle's tri-partite division, is missing textual evidence for the reasoning behind such a structure. If at the end of the day what all biblical scholars in this realm are most concerned about is what this form *does* in this letter, it seems to me that contextualizing the socio-political motivations behind a well-run household would be essential to a responsible interpretation. Beyond the basic assumption that a well-run household is an essential contribution to the well-run state, something we clearly receive from Aristotle, Xenophon's story makes clear the ways the husband is truly in control of all aspects of the home and is responsible for his wife's training for her professional role as housewife. Here we see clearly what Rosemary Hennessy speaks of when she critiques a kyriarchal structure of knowledge and empowerment: what we do impacts what we can know; what we know impacts what we can do – this is the “materiality of knowledge.”⁷⁷

Third, when we combine Xenophon's insights with Dionysius's on the law that women should take on their husband's possessions and religious practices, we have a much more visceral image of the socio-political motivations behind the well-run household. We are also in a

⁷⁷ Rosemary Hennessy, *A Feminist Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

position to see that the section in 1 Peter on women's adornment is not out of place in these exhortations to women and slaves, but may have actually been included because of the association that one has with the other. We are then free to focus on analyzing the pieces of tradition and collective religious identity the author chooses for his adaptation of the admonitions regarding women's adornment and behavior.

Fourth and finally, as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has noted, leaving an analysis of the derivation, form and content of the household codes to the primary realm of the Aristotelian tripartite roles and power relations of the *paterfamilias* within the household "occludes how kyriarchal relations of domination still determine people's lives and consciousness."⁷⁸

I find Xenophon's work on household management, which foremost includes economic concerns and the wife's role in sustaining them, helps make a connection between the household and the socio-political realm. It is with these things in mind that I build upon the scholarship that has come before me on 1 Peter's *Haustafel*.

Uniqueness of 1 Peter's Haustafel

Now at last we have come to the discussion of scholarship that pertains to the uniqueness of the household code in 1 Peter. In general there are three pieces of this text that scholars have focused upon: the fact that the majority of this section is addressed to the house-slaves and wives and the implications thereof, what exactly was intended by making reference to Sarah as an excellent foremother of faith to emulate, and how does this exhortation section relate to the command to honor the emperor? Let us begin with the corpus discussing the slaves and wives as direct addressees.

⁷⁸ Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," 381.

*Address Directed Toward Slaves and Wives*⁷⁹

The fact that house-slaves and wives are addressed directly is a significant move away from the Aristotelian form of simply referring to and acknowledging the male head of the household. Indeed, many a scholar has noted and made something of this change in focus. Some scholars have chosen to see the liberating aspect of this move;⁸⁰ some see it within the context of the overall development of the Christian movement and conclude that it prescribes roles and realities for these groups of people that are more restrictive than what they could have expected previously within this faith community. Ironically, I can refer to Balch for both positions. He considers 1 Peter to be rejecting and thereby critiquing Aristotle's view of women and slaves that is embodied in the repressive, hierarchical and patriarchal Roman society. This somewhat liberative view sees the letter in line with the behavior of and stories about Jesus and his interactions with people. The problem is that, according to Balch, any liberative potential has been erased by the trajectory of interpretation and application of this passage.⁸¹ Therein lies the

⁷⁹ Very little has been done with the brief address to the husbands in this passage. Carl D. Gross has put forth the theory that the wives of these men were not members of the community and thus were not "Christian." It is a textually reasoned thesis, though one that draws upon some modern psychological assessments. Carl D. Gross, "Are the Wives of 1 Peter 3.7 Christians?" *JSNT* 35 (1989):89-96. Ultimately my focus will be upon the implications for the wives/women. Though I am keenly aware of the possibility of including the slaves / house-servants in this analysis, more pointedly of the need for such an analysis, in this paper I will focus on the production and maintenance of subjectivities of the women in 1 Peter 2:18-3:7. Chapter 5 in *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Carolyn Osiek and Margaret Y. MacDonald, with Janet H. Tulloch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), "Female Slaves: Twice Vulnerable," points to some of the possible dynamics at work for slaves that are different from wives, which reinforces the need to treat servants/slaves separately from the wives in order to begin to do justice to their particular situation, a project for future endeavors. It is also important to note that these two particular groups are significant within this context of a materialist critique, due to their role (being "needed") in maintaining the structure of society as it was. See also, Clarice J. Martin, "The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: "Free Slaves" and "Subordinate Women," in *Stony the Road we Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Cain Hope Felder, ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 206-31.

⁸⁰ For instance, Franz Laub, *Die Begegnung des frühen Christentums mit der antiken Sklaverei* (Stuttgart : Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1982), focuses on the message of agape in the NT versions, and the fact that the slaves are actually addressed. Catherine Clark Kroeger, "Toward a Pastoral Understanding of 1 Peter 3.1-6 and Related Texts," in *A feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* (A.-J. Levine, with Maria Mayo Robbins, eds.; Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004), 82-88. Robert L. Richardson, Jr., "From 'Subjection to Authority' to 'Mutual Submission': The Ethic of Subordination in 1 Peter," *Faith and Mission* 4 (1987): 70-80.

crux of the interpretations on this part of 1 Peter’s household code: is it liberative or restrictive for the slaves and wives?⁸²

As long as there are churches that believe in the inerrancy of scripture and people who go to these texts looking for answers and not questioning the texts themselves, there will be people who read passages about women as directly reflecting God’s will. When a person must uphold the “truthfulness” of scripture over questioning potentially oppressive content within it, any exhortations to women are understood to be freeing by definition of being prescribed for them by God. This line of thinking, which has produced much in the way of scholarship, is difficult to engage here, as the basic premise of their argument is one that I deem to be faulty and, to use their terminology, sinful.

Though the degree to which scholars need to “redeem” the text varies, positivistic interpretations of scripture are rooted in the belief in the ultimate authority and usefulness of scripture.⁸³ Unfortunately, these interpretations are examples of idolatry at its best, privileging words on a page over the real life experiences of people who are energized and inspired by the life-breathing spirit of the God whom they claim also inspired the texts. I note these authors for the sake of acknowledging that positivistic perspectives on this text do indeed exist.⁸⁴ When all

⁸¹ Balch, “Early Christian Criticism,” 169.

⁸² Balch, “Early Christian Criticism,” 170.

⁸³ For example, Kroeger, “Toward a Pastoral Understanding,” 82-88, is critical of an interpretation of scripture that negates biblical equality of men and women, but does not find anything problematic in drawing upon Sarah as an example for women in this context or in the charge to women to submit silently, as both pieces are about piety and doing what is right, in her opinion. Robert L. Richardson, Jr.’s word study on *hupotassesthai* and *tapeinophrones* seems to be driven by a need to be able to embrace this passage, and concludes that mutuality is the final note that modern Christians are to take from this letter. See also, Richardson, “From ‘Subjection to Authority’ to ‘Mutual Submission,’” 70-80.

⁸⁴ Wayne Grudem, “Wives Like Sarah, and the Husbands Who Honor Them: 1 Peter 3:1-7,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminists* (John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds.; Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), 194-208, goes into great detail defining submission and listing its benefits for women/wives, which goes hand-in-hand with considerate leadership on the husband’s part. James Slaughter, in

scriptural injunctions to men and women are understood to be God's will, all manifestations of them are then just and holy and good.

Balch is not alone in his assessment of the trend toward more restrictive or oppressive social and relational constructs and most other such scholars claim the label "feminist" to some degree.⁸⁵ In a move to help give reasoning for this particular command toward women, Margaret Y. MacDonald makes sense of this piece of the text in terms of the overall threat to social stability and the possible or probable roles women may have been playing within this burgeoning movement. This appraisal ties in with the underlying issues of the Pastoral Letters in general and her own work on the "hysterical woman" in particular, and she suggests that we would do well to comprehend the kind of "equilibrium" the author was attempting to find.⁸⁶ More specific to the 1

addition to a three-part discussion of this topic within the journal, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, also suggests "Peter's message must be understood and practiced by husbands in their efforts to represent Christ to their wives. Otherwise the marriage dynamic is weakened by the absence of a crucial biblical element. Only with the consistent application by Christian husbands of Peter's instructions in 1 Peter 3:7 can marriage truly be all God intends it to be," James Slaughter, "Peter's Instructions to Husbands in 1 Peter 3:7," in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 185. See also his three-part series entitled, "Instructions to Christian Wives in 1 Peter 3:1-6": "The Submission of Wives (1 Pet 3:1a) in the Context of 1 Peter," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 63-74; "Sarah as a Model for Christian Wives (1 Pet. 3:5-6)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 357-65; "Winning Unbelieving Husbands to Christ (1 Peter 3:1b-4)," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (1996): 199-211. Mary Shivanandan, "Feminism and Marriage: A Reflection on Ephesians 5:21-33" *Diakonia* 29/1 (1996):5-22. Though this is an article on Ephesians, it represents a similar perspective on the roles of men and women as taken from scripture, as she concludes that in the divinely created order the man has the initiative and the woman is to submissively respond (9).

⁸⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Discipleship and Patriarchy," 131-72. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite: also reads the lack of "male and female" in the Colossian domestic code as a loss of the earlier egalitarian Jesus movement. Thistlethwaite, "Every Two Minutes," 105. E. Elizabeth Johnson notes that the adaptation of the domestic code signifies a step away from the freedom in the early church: "Ephesians is concerned that the church faithfully mirror the creation [thus enters the reference to Gen 2:24] and that the household mirror the church." Johnson, "Ephesians," 431. In Colossians, as well, Johnson notes the role of the Church/household in reflecting the redeemed creation. This domestic code is for her a "reassertion of patriarchal morality." Johnson, "Colossians," 437. Carolyn Osiek notes that the combining of images sets up a relational dominance within the church – she does not state it clearly, but I see her suggesting that there was a move toward a more hierarchical structure than what was present at the beginning of the movement. Osiek, "The Bride of Christ," 29-39. Mary Rose D'Angelo suggests that, "While some of Colossians' reformulations of Pauline motifs could have been used to challenge patterns of domination and subordination, the new theological picture formed by shifts in eschatology, ecclesiology, and parenesis facilitated the enforcement of patriarchy." D'Angelo, "Colossians," 314.

⁸⁶ Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Early Christian Women Married to Unbelievers," *Studies in Religion* 19 (1990): 221-34; also *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (New York: Cambridge University, 1996).

Peter situation, though, she suggests that when making “house calls” where only the women were believers, the wives could go in unnoticed and would not cause the stir, or possibly scandal, that a man visiting them might. She also suggests that any exhortation in relation to the being yoked with non-believers issue may simply reflect a frustration that the church leaders had in watching the unstable behavior of the wives of non-believers.⁸⁷ MacDonald’s scholarship is quite helpful for a deeper understanding of possible dynamics at work in these communities, but she does not, like so many other scholars, deal with the socio-political realities that this letter creates when it becomes normative for the church.

Jeannine K. Brown contrasts the silence predicated upon/of wives in 3:1-6 with the command to the community in general to be prepared to speak, ready with a verbal defense of their Christian hope in 3:14-16.⁸⁸ These two sections are “strikingly similar” in many ways, in particular in the vocabulary used, and just as striking for their differences. In light of these similarities, many (including Elliott) have suggested that women were exemplary models for the other members of the community, which means that characteristics attributed to wives become commended to all Christians. While there may not seem to be a problem with attributing women with exemplary status, Brown notes two significant issues this idea raises. The first is that skipping over the dissimilarities (between 3:1-6 and 3:14-16) in order to affirm the silent suffering example of women means that those dissimilarities are not held up for critique. The second issue is that of the problematic of valorizing suffering at all, even more so for the most vulnerable people of a society.

⁸⁷ MacDonald, “Early Christian Women,” 221.

⁸⁸ Jeannine K. Brown, “Silent Wives, Verbal Believers: Ethical and Hermeneutical Considerations in 1 Peter 3:1-6 and Its Context,” *Word & World* 24/4 (2004): 395-403.

The theological ramifications of comparing the human suffering in this instance with the silent suffering of Jesus are more detrimental than helpful. If suffering makes one Christ-like, then there is no motivation to try to alleviate the source of the oppression or abuse. Betsy J. Bauman-Martin suggests that for many women today who have no option of escaping abusive situations this passage can be empowering and sustaining.⁸⁹ I think that this is an important and vital way of reading this passage. Bauman-Martin is not denying that this passage has significantly contributed *to* the ethos that causes or allows such terrible situations for women to develop; she is simply looking for a way for women who cherish these texts to read them for their benefit. I affirm her choice to find something life-sustaining in this text, while maintaining my purpose of seeking out the oppressive and abusive realities that this text has been used to engender.

Mary H. Schertz offers an important critique of this text when she sees in it a continuity between the slavery and wifely submission pieces. If we choose to enforce the wifely submission, then we must also accept all that is associated with the kind of slavery at work in households at that time, as well as be willing to say that exploitative actions lead people to Christ.⁹⁰ Her conclusion, however, locates her with Bauman-Martin in the sense that, for those with no other options, nonretaliation is not a bad strategy.⁹¹

Each of these “feminist” contributions is helpful for understanding the text and some of what was “in the air” as the letter was written. Simply trying to understand the content of the text

⁸⁹ Bauman-Martin, “Feminist Theologies of Suffering,” 63-82.

⁹⁰ Mary H. Schertz, “Nonretaliation and the *Haustafeln* in 1 Peter,” in *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (W. H. Swartley, ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 283.

⁹¹ Schertz, “Nonretaliation,” 285. Warren Carter, “Going All the Way? Honoring the Emperor and Sacrificing Wives and Slaves in 1 Peter 2.13-3.6,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* (A.-J. Levine, ed., with Maria Mayo Robbins; Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004), 14-33. Bauman-Martin, “Feminist Theologies of Suffering,” 63-81.

and the possible circumstances to which it was addressed does not go far enough, in my estimation of the matter. What I am trying to address is the distinction between this passage offering hope in a hopeless situation and it being a cornerstone in the constructed identity of women within these faith communities, a construction that has carried through the centuries and that indeed does contribute to maintaining and remaining within abusive relations.

Reference to Sarah

Several scholars have noted the intriguing reference to Sarah in the passage directed toward the women, which falls immediately after the exhortations regarding adornment and the beauty of the inner spirit:

For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear (1 Peter 3:5-6).

Granted, it is such a brief excursus on Sarah, it would be easy to disregard it. This is precisely the point. What may seem like an off-handed reference to Sarah must have carried some weight or had some effect on the recipients. Otherwise, why bother? Was it a passing thought that the author felt like including at the last minute? Was it a story that is often told among or to wives when the issues of jewelry and wanting to be outspoken arose? Perhaps it is something much more subtle, as Mark Kiley and Dorothy Sly have suggested,⁹² or simply the most obvious choice given the Hebrew Bible references in the first two chapters.⁹³

The conversation between Kiley and Sly is focused upon the claims that Sarah called Abraham 'lord' and that in this reverence for her husband she is to be emulated. The problem is

⁹² Mark Kiley, "Like Sara: The Tale of Terror Behind 1 Peter 3:6," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987): 689-92; and Dorothy I. Sly, "1 Peter 3:6b in the Light of Philo and Josephus," *JBL* 110 (1991): 126-129.

⁹³ See also Magda Misset-van de Weg, "Sarah Imagery in 1 Peter," in *A Feminist Companion to the Catholic Epistles and Hebrews* (A.-J. Levine, ed., with Maria Mayo Robbins; Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2004), 50-62.

that the only time Sarah *does* refer to Abraham as ‘lord’ is in Genesis 18:12 when Sarah is laughing about bearing a child: “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” This is clearly not an instance of obedience to or reverence for her husband.

The second claim has almost frightening implications: “how exactly does Sarah function as the mother of those who ‘do right and let nothing terrify them’?” It is assumed that Genesis 12 and 20, which discuss Abraham handing Sarah over to the Egyptian Pharaoh and the King of Gerar, are in the background of this passage. Both situations for Sarah and Abraham appear to take place in a somewhat hostile environment in a foreign land, settings that resonate with the situation at hand for the communities in Asia Minor. According to the way the stories are told, Kiley claims that Sarah’s outward beauty played a significant role in causing the predicaments, thus it makes sense to him that she would come to mind for the author at this point in the letter.⁹⁴ Kiley thus concludes that Sarah is a model for those women suffering unjustly because she submitted to the unjust treatment and “less-than-noble-will” of Abraham.⁹⁵

On the other hand, Sly suggests that the author of 1 Peter was intentionally choosing to portray Sarah in submissive and typically Hellenistic terms in much the same way that Philo and Josephus re-wrote parts of the Abraham/Sarah story.⁹⁶ The matter of Abraham being obedient or listening to Sarah in Genesis 16:2, 6, and 21:12 had become embarrassing, an issue Philo solved by allegorizing Sarah as wisdom and Josephus by simply re-writing the events entirely. Since these two men were comfortable making these emendations, Sly suggests that it is likely that the author of 1 Peter did the same thing. Sly’s article is brief, as any textual note would be, so she

⁹⁴ Kiley mentions one final textual resonance between Gen 20 and 1 Peter 3:3-7, which is that the husbands’ prayers will not continue to be hindered, as in Genesis 20 Abraham was able to pray to god on behalf of Abimelech.

⁹⁵ Kiley, “Like Sara,” 691.

⁹⁶ Sly, “1 Peter 3:6b,” 129.

does not tease out the implications of her fascinating proposition. In addition to erasing or taming the image of Sarah, this move reflects a freedom men presume that they have to manipulate women and the texts that give voice to them. Given the significance of narratives in forming the Judeo-Christian traditions and the nature of the discourse within these communities, this kind of freedom has far reaching effects.

There are, of course, plenty of positivistic interpretations of this reference to Sarah as a model for women in difficult situations. James Slaughter offers one of the most blatantly dangerous comments about the “holy” wives of 1 Peter as women who willingly submitted to the unjust treatment of their husbands, not because they were avoiding hardship or were attempting to manipulate their husbands. Their quiet confidence that God would save them allowed women to submit to their husbands without fear of harm.⁹⁷ As well intended as this and other similar interpretations are, they play into the formation of not just pastoral advice but theologically grounded belief that women are to stay in abusive situations and that suffering, no matter the source or cause, promotes godliness.

While the specific stories about Sarah in the Hebrew Bible may reveal as much independent thought and action on her part as obedience, the choice to appeal to the wife of the father of Israel is perhaps more impressionable in this context. The first chapter and a half of this letter draws heavily upon the narratives, promises and traditions of the people of Israel. The fact that Sarah is depicted here as much more subservient than she appears in the ancient texts is, in my opinion, a mere ideologically driven literary device.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Slaughter, “Sarah as a Model,” 359.

⁹⁸ I do try to keep in mind the fact that we are able to go back and re-read the stories as they have been passed down to us in writing, a leisure that allows for comparing “original” stories with the various allusions to them in other texts. It seems that so many arguments or absolutist claims are made based upon such comparisons without allowing room for the significant difference between the way the stories would have been heard and remembered then and how they are passed along and taught today.

Cultural Significance – Imperial Pawns?

James W. Aageson has published an article that touches upon many of the typically feminist interests in this section of the letter. He highlights the problematic implications of emulating the suffering of Christ, of framing obedience in terms of a theological mandate, of power relations and the social status of the recipient communities then and now, and the problems associated with cross-cultural translation, canonization, and honor-shame dynamics. With all of these factors noted, it is somewhat disappointing to see him note that emancipatory movements today are struggling against such violations of the humanity of women and slaves that were a part of the social realities in the first-century Greco-Roman world.⁹⁹ Various forms of slavery and women's subordination continue to be realities in the twenty-first century, due in part to texts such as this one in 1 Peter and other similar biblical mandates that have had a significant role in forming the socio-political ethos of the dominating western world. It is simply not enough to note that our values have changed when the texts of our religious communities have not, in particular when those texts have been so formative for the kyriarchal structures and power relations within family, church, and governmental roles in the dominant powers of the West.¹⁰⁰

In her ever direct manner, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has had plenty to say regarding the implications the household codes have for women, preferring to call them “patterns of patriarchal submission.”¹⁰¹ She goes on to say what many scholars imply, though do not address

⁹⁹ In a similar way, so is Warren Carter's article, “Going All the Way?,” 14-33. The thrust of his argument is very similar to Bauman-Martin as he claims that for those in a difficult situation this letter offers a way to externally comply yet inwardly resist. He, too, does not deal with the implications this perspective holds for women.

¹⁰⁰ I am keenly aware of Edward Said's claims about the formation and construction of the ideas such as “West” and “East” or “Orient” and their role in religio-political discourses today. Said, *Orientalism*, 5. I do agree that such labels are mere constructions and should be problematized. At the same time, I think it is important to claim or own the inheritance that such constructions have given us.

directly, which is that we should not seek to explain away any accusations that the Christian mission was subversive, because one of the social implications of this movement is a disruption of the patriarchal rule of the households. The fact of the matter is that the particular concern to reestablish traditional order that would appease government officials could have had a great deal to do with the inclusion of the household code in the relatively later (canonical) documents, Ephesians, Colossians and 1 Peter.¹⁰² Too many people are willing to admit that this may have been a motivating factor in the adaptation of the household code, but not to consider the ways this structure and behavioral prescription become real in the church and in people's lives.

Instead of rejecting the kyriarchal structure of the household and society, the ethos of the *Haustafel* is right in line with it, making these communities perfect targets for political cooptation by the Roman Empire. One of the most significant relationships within the community, the husband/wife relation, is defined by submission and obedience. The movement as a whole, then, will be defined and structured by such a dynamic.¹⁰³ Many of the scholars I have addressed above speak to these issues, though none as directly and forthrightly as Schüssler Fiorenza.

Her feminist postcolonial rhetorical analysis of 1 Peter is the only significant feminist postcolonial contribution to 1 Peter studies to date,¹⁰⁴ and subsequently becomes a part of the method I will employ in my critical reading of this text. She offers a critical feminist decolonizing analysis of the letter as a system of communication that goes beyond holding meaning for communities to constructing relations of power, affecting both horizontal and

¹⁰¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Discipleship and Patriarchy," 141.

¹⁰² Schüssler Fiorenza, "Discipleship and Patriarchy," 143.

¹⁰³ Schüssler Fiorenza, "Discipleship and Patriarchy," 148. See also, Nancy C. M. Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Boston: Northeastern University, 1985), 155.

¹⁰⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter."

vertical relations.¹⁰⁵

She names four steps that summarize her approach. She begins by exploring the socio-religious location of the author of the letter and its recipients. Second, she looks for power relations that are inscribed in the argument of the letter. Third, she analyzes the rhetorical strategies of the letter as well as the way subsequent scholars have interpreted the rhetoric. Finally, she wants to retrieve the voices that this letter has silenced. Her overall goal is to ask whether this letter engenders “emancipatory dissident consciousness” and egalitarian relations or whether it reinscribes a dominating kyriarchal ethos and structuring of relations within the communities. It is the first three steps that are essential for my own project on the household codes.¹⁰⁶

The fourth step of reconstructing the submerged voices and arguments is one that I think is worth attempting. Unfortunately, we will never be certain that we are accurately identifying the voices that were originally silenced, though I do think that such silencing took place. I think it is just as important to address the effects of the power dynamics embedded in these texts whether or not someone was objecting to them in the first place.

My point here is that a) some of those who objected may not have actually made their objections known, such that what we have in the letter may reflect more the fears of the author than actual issues that had already arisen; b) many of those who *should* have objected to such language may not have due to their inculturation and the extent to which they had internalized the *habitus* in which they lived; and c) at the end of the day this text was canonized and thus is a part of the collective consciousness of the Christian tradition, whether or not people acknowledge it as such. Therefore, I am more interested in focusing upon the materiality of this

¹⁰⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, “1 Peter,” 382.

¹⁰⁶ Schüssler Fiorenza, “1 Peter,” 381.

text—i.e. the way it is embodied in various ways in our histories and our lives—which is a piece I see Schüssler Fiorenza concerned with, as well,¹⁰⁷ than in offering my version of Schüssler Fiorenza’s fourth step.

In reference to 1 Peter 3:1-6, the section addressed specifically to the wives, Misset-van de Weg has noted that this passage has been read prescriptively and from this vantage point has influenced the formation of Christian marital ethics and the role of women in Western churches and society. This fact alone, she claims, makes it worthy of more study.¹⁰⁸ She has touched upon two fundamental feminist and materialist concerns regarding this text and its effects or materiality, because she hints at the specific construction of women and the circumscription of roles for women that this text engenders. Of course there are nuances within both of these realms of discourse that I will address, but her basic claim is one that rings true for me, and this project is intended to be one piece of that further study of which she speaks.¹⁰⁹ As I hope this review of the scholarship on 1 Peter’s *Haustafel* indicates, my own engagement of this passage delves into not just the “words on the page” but the various ways this text reflects and embodies the cultural milieu out of which it came. Thus it is time to describe the feminist, postcolonial, materialist methodology I will use to produce such an engagement.

¹⁰⁷ See for example, Schüssler Fiorenza, “Discipleship and Patriarchy,” 159. “Such a hermeneutics [that solely focuses on the liberative aspects of the bible] is, as a result, in danger of formulating a feminist Biblical apologetics instead of sufficiently acknowledging and exploring the oppressive function of patriarchal Biblical texts in the past and in the present. It would be a serious and fatal mistake to relegate the *Haustafel* trajectory, for example, to culturally conditioned Biblical traditions no longer valid today and thereby overlook the authoritative-oppressive impact these texts still have in the lives of Christian women.”

¹⁰⁸ Misset-van de Weg, “Sarah Imagery in 1 Peter,” 50.

¹⁰⁹ Magda Misset-van de Weg, “Een vrouwen Spiegel, 1 Petrus 3,1-6,” *Proeven van Vrouwenstudies Theologi*, Keel IV (A.-M. Kort, et al, eds.; IIMO Research Publication 44; Zoetermeer: Meinema, 1996), 145-82, offers a detailed account of 1 Peter 3:1-6’s application and affect in Church doctrine and belief.

A New Methodology

In addition to the fact that a feminist, postcolonial, materialist critique has not yet been done on 1 Peter, there is not presently a method that will sufficiently direct such a critical analysis of a biblical text using these three specific lenses. There are many avenues for feminist critical approaches to biblical texts, and postcolonial biblical studies are currently building momentum, in particular within the area of the new testament. At this point, however, there are very few examples that combine these two particular approaches, much less that incorporate the specific perspective engendered by the type of materialist analysis that I am seeking to produce. Thus it is the purpose of the remainder of this chapter to set forth the parameters of such a multidimensional critique.

Naming a method with various qualifying descriptors is simultaneously misleading and freeing. It is misleading in the sense that it projects to the reader that the totality of the dimensions named, in this case “feminist”, “postcolonial”, and “materialist,” will be represented in the critique. The reality is that there is a spectrum of feminist concerns in any field, thus one still cannot know to what this qualifier, “feminist,” refers. The same is true of the other two qualifiers. Whose perspective of postcolonial studies is being built upon and what elements of a geo-political setting are being assumed and/or addressed? Is the focus upon the texts, the interpreters of those texts, or some combination of the two? From which perspective, economic or embodiment, is a materialist critique conducted?

The freeing aspect is that naming specific realms of interest allows a person to locate herself within a general range of discourse, while acknowledging that there are various socio-political dynamics that have an influence on her understanding of the texts. Ultimately I think that labels are more harmful or detrimental than helpful because they are based upon a system of

knowledge and power that needs to contain and circumscribe discourses. Until the day comes that we can throw off the yoke of containment I will participate in the discourses of power and choose my own labels, while trying to create new visions of possibility for engaging knowledge, power and social relations. The next step, then, is to set forth my understanding of what each of these three specific components—feminist, postcolonial and materialist critiques—addresses.

Feminist Studies: Realms of Concern

It has been said that within a group of five feminist scholars there will be at least six interpretations of a given text. While the claim may not be grounded in data from scientifically conducted surveys, the underlying message is what I value at the moment. This claim speaks to the reality that one cannot neatly list, package and hand on to a novice with absolute certainty all feminist concerns, and that any given “feminist” is able to empathize with the viewpoint and needs of another person. Who we are and the experiences we have had directly affect the way we see and interpret texts, which also means that no two people come to a given text with the same questions.

It is important to me as a feminist scholar that the centrality and relevance of our social locations be acknowledged in our interpretations. This means that Euro-centric white mainstream scholarship does not get the final word, nor does it deserve to be normative or elevated to the place of most esteemed interpretation. While I think that our social location is informed by many aspects of our lives (race, gender, sexuality, age, religious beliefs, etc.), the word “feminist” is primarily a term to denote gender equality, and for the sake of theoretical clarity, I will discuss it here in such terms.

Representation: Speaking for and Standing in

There are two significant aspects of the concept of representation within feminist discourse that I would like to highlight. The first addresses the false assumption that men¹¹⁰ can speak for and represent the beliefs, viewpoints and life experiences of women. The second aspect addresses how “the feminine” or concepts related to “women” and the female body are invoked in order to minimize or denigrate certain behaviors, beliefs and relations in the private and political realms.

Traditional western white male discourse is critiqued for projecting universal representation and objectivity in its claims to truth, in its interpretations of human relations, and, in this context, in biblical interpretations. The lack of awareness about this problem is present throughout various fields of study and even more so within the general population of the western world. Just as the civil war in the United States “ended” slavery in this country over a century ago yet the effects of racism and systemic slavery are alive and well here today, so too did the Women’s liberation movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s set things on a *better* course but did not affect a complete transformation of society in this regard. Unproblematized, non-socially located male-centered scholarship and ideology persist—significantly so within biblical studies—thus so does the need to name this problem that some men believe that they are “speaking for” or on behalf of women.

Due to the nature of inculturation and the power of the *habitus*¹¹¹ on the formation of ideological beliefs, it is not simply white western males of privilege and power who create and

¹¹⁰ I am well aware that using terms such as “men”, “women”, “male”, “female”, “feminine” and so on perpetuate the dualistic worldview that I am trying to critique. This situation is much like my choice to use or claim labels for my methodology – they are both choices made in order to be understood within a certain discursive context.

¹¹¹ This is a reference to Pierre Bourdieu’s concept, discussed more thoroughly below.

perpetuate this false sense of universal interpretations of biblical texts. Many wo/men¹¹² internalize the particular worldview that has subjugated and oppressed them. Thus they are often not even aware that their own beliefs, and applications of biblical interpretations, are keeping them from fullness of life.

The other aspect of representation, that of invoking gendered images or labels for the sake of denigrating or minimizing someone or something else, is similarly pervasive throughout western cultures and societies. “Feminizing” language serves to justify, in the minds of some, the domination of one group of people over another. It is based upon another false belief that women are in essence¹¹³ ontologically weaker and less intelligent than men and in need of protection and care from some other entity.¹¹⁴ Thus anything that is “appropriately” associated with the feminine can be controlled, subjugated and treated as property. Unfortunately, this kind of use of language has a cyclical way of perpetuating itself: the belief that wo/men are lesser beings on any level “allows” the use of applying such gendered language to things that are assumed to be of relatively insignificant value, or are things that someone wishes to own, control or master. The socially sanctioned “approval” of the use of gendered language for such purposes then perpetuates a belief that wo/men indeed are lesser in value than men. There is no aspect of a person’s life that is not affected by such a view of others and of oneself.

¹¹² I use this term, “wo/men”, to refer to all people who are oppressed or silenced by malestream society. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic*, 1-14, for more explanation on the terms “wo/men” and “malestream”.

¹¹³ See below for a brief discussion of the problematic of essentialism.

¹¹⁴ I am constantly baffled by the number of people who are numb to the various media that depict women as in need of protection. In addition to music videos, whether of male or female singers/bands, or just the lyrics themselves, it is a rare TV sitcom or series involving male/female relations that does not depict and thus perpetuate this ownership mentality of women.

Both aspects of representation—representing other’s perspectives and invoking feminine concepts in derogatory ways—continue because there are social pillars upon which our society is founded that embody such oppressive or unjust behaviors and practices.

Essentialism and “Othering”

Essentialism in this context reflects a way of thinking that contends that one can describe or capture the “essential” core element of a given subject, whether it is in ontological, moral or behavioral terms. This essence is understood to be universal, thus it can be used accurately and appropriately to refer to all subjects to which this essence is ascribed. Essentialism is one of the primary factors contributing to the belief that one person can speak on behalf of the rest of humanity, and in particular within the context of men representing wo/men.¹¹⁵ Thanks to post-modern and deconstructionist thought that eschew objectivity, hail the relevance of context and admit that as human beings we are constantly changing, essentialist tendencies no longer rule the day. At the same time, that does not mean that they are completely eradicated.

Any claim such as, “women should do this,” or “that’s just the way men behave,” reflects essentialist thought, which ultimately serves to contain and circumscribe the identity and activity of others. Such claims are only a problem if people start to believe them and behave accordingly. Since these kinds of stereotypical phrases are commonplace in popular social discourse, we would be wise to attend to factors that contribute to and perpetuate them. Within the context of biblical interpretation, then, a reader is advised to pay attention to discourse that labels wo/men with specific and narrow subjectivity or addresses wo/men in such a way that one aspect of their being becomes definitive of their entire being.

¹¹⁵ Ellen Armour, “Essentialism,” *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* (Letty M. Russell and J. Shannon Clarkson, eds.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 88; Peter Sedgwick, “Essentialism,” in *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts* (Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, eds.; New York: Routledge, 2002), 131-2.

The concern of “othering” goes far beyond the male/female divide, given the racial, socio-political, cultural, tribal, and theological “others” that are denounced within the Christian canon. For many feminist biblical scholars including myself, then, all aspects of inequality and oppression that are justified or maintained by these texts fall under the scope of their “feminist” critical scholarship. At this point, we will focus the discussion on the othering that takes place within the male/female dichotomy, and the specific concerns raised by its representation within biblical texts.

It must be noted that there is both a positive and a negative way to approach “others”. Positively, scholars speak in terms of mutual understanding that comes from acknowledging and learning from people who inhabit a social location different from one’s own. This line of thought is similar to something we can see in Mikhail Bakhtin’s work, as he discusses how a subject cannot fully know herself without the vision of the “other” filling in what she cannot see. She needs the other in order to be full and fully known, know herself fully, and the other in turn is more fully known in the process.¹¹⁶

Of course, this simple dichotomy, which I understand for Bakhtin is based upon a reverence for humanity and the depth, simplicity, and power of relationships, can also be used in incredibly oppressive and demeaning ways. Within the realm of specifically gendered discourse, negative “othering” draws upon essentialist views of anyone who is not heterosexual male. Pointing to the difference in this “other”, the heterosexual male—or anyone who affirms the values of heterosexual androcentrism—identifies with normativity and the power that is ascribed to it. As with any hierarchy or dichotomy, this identifying with normativity creates an unequal power relation. In an ironic twist, that which is considered normative and is most highly valued

¹¹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays* (Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, eds.; Vadim Liapunov, trans.; Austin: University of Texas, 1990). Focus on the “self” and an individualistic view of the world are certainly foremost in this kind of discourse, for better and for worse.

is only possible or necessary when an “inferior” party is present. The superior *needs* the inferior. One might think that this grants the inferior a certain amount of autonomous power, but this is only the case when that power can be acted upon independently.

Language/Discourse

The issue of language from a feminist perspective highlights the problematic of language and discourse being created by and from the perspective of “male” society, thus creating the false sense that male perspectives are normative. If male is normative, then language that supports this “reality” is also normative and any new language that counters male-centeredness is viewed as subversive or threatening in some form. Any aspect of language or social discourse that affirms or acknowledges other realities can do so only by the fact that it is defined in terms of not being what is centrally normative. By being labeled as other or peripheral it maintains the normative or central status of “what has always been.”

When new knowledge is created within western malestream social and political discourses, it creates a place for itself only to the extent that it expands the realm in general. It does not displace malestream language or realities from their central and normative location. It must remain on the periphery, all the more accentuating the power and prominence of “normative” language. In the same way that patriarchal or kyriarchal binaries or multi-layered constructions define one element of a pair in contrast to the other, instead of on its own terms, so too the language of patriarchal and kyriarchal structures can allow a certain amount of new-ness only to the extent that it is defined in terms of “what has always been.”

From the perspective of biblical studies, we would do well to assess the ways malestream language serves to repress all peripheral or non-normative voices. Luce Irigaray speaks of this

silencing in the texts of a culture or society as the “procedures of repression.”¹¹⁷ She urges us to analyze the way the “*operation of the ‘grammar’* of each figure of discourse” serves to define and separate the true and meaningful from the false and meaningless. We must also attend to what does not get articulated, the pieces that are denied utterance.¹¹⁸ The exclusion of women from the dominant, male determined discourse is still internal to the overall order: wo/men are confined within, yet excluded from; they are necessary for sustaining the system, yet this is so only as long as wo/men are defined by this system as “other” or as lacking.

Wo/men and wo/men’s words and stories are silenced by or subjugated to the malestream tradition because they are an internal threat to the kyriarchal system and the discourse which forms, establishes, and maintains this system.¹¹⁹ The impulse to circumscribe in socially constructed roles over half of the population¹²⁰ requires a means by which to designate the weak and the strong, or the superior and inferior, or whatever hierarchical binary works best for the reader. These designations are justified by essentialist thought and maintained by othering rhetoric. The irony is that all people are affected by socially constructed roles. It is just that those who fit the norm or are more centrally located within the social relations of power do not have to acknowledge or contend with theirs.

¹¹⁷ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One* (Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke, trans.; Ithaca: Cornell University, 1985), 75.

¹¹⁸ Irigaray, *This Sex*, 75. Cixous and Clément also speak of the repressed words of women and the need for a new or transformed language and literature, in a space that does not allow for the hierarchical ‘principles’ of culture as it stands today (xviii).

¹¹⁹ Irigaray, *This Sex*, 91.

¹²⁰ Again, in a dualistic understanding that allows for only male or female, we are told that roughly 51% of the world’s population is female – a statistic that itself is highly skewed due to its provenance in western European studies. This simple gender binary overlooks or denies the reality of those who see their “gender” as fluid or simply as something that is neither male nor female. From this perspective, the sum of the percentages of “male” and “female” in the world would certainly not be 100%.

Power

As words such as “maintain,” “define,” and “confine” indicate, language and discourse are ultimately related to power. “What is it that we are trying to verify or justify in asserting that [some set of knowledge] is ‘scientific’? Proving the ‘validity’ of a method or set of knowledge is an attempt to invest that discourse with the ‘effects of power.’”¹²¹ As Foucault says of scientific knowledge, so we can say about attempts to create and assert correct dogma, theology, or structural relations: they are efforts to imbue certain beliefs and behaviors with power.

We must address the genderedness of power, since power structures the human community and defines how “legitimate” communities function.¹²² It is clear that the early Christian communities were constructed by and for “male” constituencies, given that only male voices were canonized and that the communities are ordered and structured in hierarchical/kyriarchical ways. These texts and social relations are characterized by malestream kyriarchal images, assumptions, and experiences. They draw upon the language of their fathers, literally. They depend upon social systems that are run by “men,” specifically those related to imperial powers or leaders of various local groups. The elements that create and maintain power are social exchanges, which are given formal expression with malestream language. So we have come full circle back to the discussion of language and discourse. Knowledge, language, and power are intimately related, thus they must all be taken into consideration in a feminist critique.

¹²¹ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Collin Gordon, et al, trans.; New York: Pantheon, 1980), 85

¹²² Hartsock, *Money, Sex and Power*, 6.

Sexual Power

“Domesticated feminism denies that sexual domination is at issue.”¹²³ I am intrigued by this point precisely because the church has tended to do the same thing: deny that domestic codes have any implications for the realm of sexuality and sexual relations between (strictly) men and women. This is why the Feminist Sexual Ethics Program at Brandeis University, for instance, is so important, since it begins to address the long ignored – by some members of our culture and society – and insidious effects of slavery and domination within sexual relations in this country.

While I will not be focusing upon the heterosexual presuppositions within the household codes at this point, they must be noted as relevant to the discussion when more broadly conceived. The church has almost two thousand years of repressed sexuality as a part of its legacy. The asexual treatment of passages such as this one highlights the role that these texts play in informing that repression. The “purely” religious treatment of a passage such as this domestic code does not remove the sexual power implications. In much the same way that ignoring political issues within biblical texts does not remove, but simply serves to deny, the political impact of one’s interpretation or that of the text itself, denying the impact in defining “normalcy” in sexual relations that a text such as this one has within the Christian tradition does not cancel out such effects, but only allows them to continue without being critiqued.

Feminist Summary

When brought into the realm of biblical or religious studies, all of the factors mentioned above take on the added element of being ordained, that is set in place, by a Creator or Divine Being. Within Christian discourse, the issue of a male (triune) divinity is variously ignored,

¹²³ Carole Pateman, “Introduction,” in *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory* (Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross, eds.; Boston: Northeastern University, 1981), 5.

denounced, rationalized or re-directed, depending upon the person's relation to that Divinity and her/his need to be able to affirm the doctrines and traditions of the church.

Given the issues raised by feminist critiques, it will be important for me to look for ways that the text: 1) speaks on behalf of wo/men or directly to them from a place of power over them; 2) uses an essentialist description or assumption when individuals or groups of wo/men are addressed; 3) uses gendered terms to establish or perpetuate a relational hierarchy or to justify possessing or dominating over someone; 4) uses malestream language which serves to repress all peripheral or non-normative voices and to reinscribe those that resonate with androcentric kyriarchal views; and 5) represents sexuality and the power it ascribes or denies to a person.

Postcolonial Studies

As I intimated in the introductory section of this chapter, the general framework for the questions that "postcolonial studies" raise can be grasped without reading a single theorist. Something happens within societies and cultures when one dominating power imposes itself upon another more vulnerable and militaristically weaker people. In what discursive ways is this domination and subsequent exploitation justified? What happens to the identity of the oppressed and colonized peoples? Do they internalize and accept as natural their state of colonization or do they subversively mimic the dominant group, or is there a combination of various responses?

Though there can be multiple ways of applying the critiques that come from postcolonial studies, they all, by definition of the geo-political nature of any kind of colonial discourse, address the dynamics and exchanges between a central dominant power and the colonized or de-colonizing peoples on the periphery.

Can we do “Postcolonial” studies on pre-modern texts?

Kwok Pui Lan has asked how a twenty-first century scholar, living in an era of decolonization and some forms of “postcolonialism,” is able to undertake postcolonial studies of an ancient, pre-modern text.¹²⁴ I am primarily using a “postcolonial” critique in the sense of analyzing the effects of the presence of the Roman Empire on these sacred texts of the church. Yet, the fact that almost two thousand years after the fall of the Roman Empire I can see its influence still in the world today does highlight the question of when a colonial rule actually ends. It is because of the insights that have been gathered by scholars such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha—the “trinity” within postcolonial theoretical work—and Kwok Pui Lan, Fernando F. Segovia, and R.S. Sugirtharajah—three biblical scholars whose work has significantly informed my own—that I am able to apply reading strategies that look for colonial epistemological frameworks within these ancient texts.¹²⁵

I am also aware that there are traces of colonialist rationale, purpose, and action within me, since I have grown up and lived in the United States my entire life. Depending upon your understanding of the global role of the U.S. and the responsibility its current “citizens” have for past atrocities, I can be understood to be a colonizer, a member of the elite within a global empire, a victim due to my ascribed gender and political beliefs, or some other combined form of objective and subjective relation to the U.S. governmental powers. However one might define my socio-political location, I have benefited from as well as been marginalized and silenced because of my socially ascribed identity. Postcolonial studies have helped me to make a

¹²⁴ Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 2. For a discussion of the distinctions between colonialism, post-colonialism, decolonialism and neo-colonialism, see Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-103.

¹²⁵ Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 2. See also, Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

connection between the religious and political realms of the society in which I live. Thus it is only natural that I would then turn to the texts that are part of the foundation of the Christian church and its doctrines with the many aspects of postcolonial studies as a part of my approach to this task.

Realms of Concern

Colonial studies proper refers to work done analyzing the exploitation and other effects of colonization on political and social structures, or literary works that represent or reflect upon such structures.¹²⁶ Two of its primary concerns focus upon analyzing the dynamics of representation and mimicry and how they contribute to or justify the colonizing project. How does the dominant body represent the dominated, and vice versa? And in what ways can we see the colonized imitating the relations of power and the social structures of the colonizer? With the added prefix, “post,” the temporal dimension of these studies is brought to the fore, which complicates the process of analyzing the various dynamics of accommodation, mimicry, and re-establishing control that are all a part of post-colonial realities.

In what follows, one can see that there is some overlap in the particular realms of concern for a feminist and a postcolonial critique. How they differ is in terms of the starting point or perspective from which the topic is analyzed.

Representation

There are two sides to the issue of representation within postcolonial studies. The first deals with how people are represented, whether it is the image of the colonizer by the colonized

¹²⁶ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 40-50.

in a way that intends to be subversive or at times collusionary, or that of the colonized by the colonizer in a way that justifies the domination of those particular people. The former aspect of representation is more relevant for the sake of my method, which will ultimately be applied to Christian biblical texts. Within postcolonial biblical studies, the question often arises as to whether texts that discuss imperial powers are resisting them or perhaps aligning the communities with them. For many people within the church, the second possibility adds the concern of whether the authors of these texts were conscious of their political alignments. While we will never be able fully to determine intentions of authors, we can assess some of the implications of the content of their efforts.

The second issue of representation, most notably addressed by Gayatri Spivak, is an issue of whose version of the representation is considered valid and true.¹²⁷ Do “subaltern” peoples have enough of a grasp of the global socio-political relations that affect them to be able to present their own perspective of it? Is it not true that requiring that the subaltern represent themselves according to the standards of the system that is causing their oppression is yet another form of oppression and restriction? Yet, if they cannot fully grasp or put words to these socio-political dynamics, who can speak for them? How do people of any form of privilege presume to be able to represent the realities of others, realities they have never experienced first hand? Clearly the issues of “voice,” power relations, and language are intimately related to the matter of representation, both here and in feminist discourse. What I find most relevant for a postcolonial approach to biblical studies, then, are the direct and indirect representations of Rome/the Roman Empire and being able to question, that is to apply a hermeneutics of suspicion

¹²⁷ Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds.; New York: Columbia University, 1994), 66-111.

to, the texts that provide some sense of mediation between the Christian communities and the socio-political realm.

Mimicry

The issue of mimicry is closely tied to representation, and brings into the discussion ideas such as ambivalence, hegemony, and hybridity.¹²⁸ Mimicry is the result of the colonized or occupied peoples' attempts to imitate the social and cultural beliefs and behaviors of the colonizer/occupier. According to Bhabha, there will always be a slippage in this attempt to imitate; that is the imitation will be not quite perfect. Some may think of this slippage as a gap. Whatever one's understanding of it, the ambivalence is seen in the colonized teetering back and forth between desiring to emulate the colonizer—which is what the dominant power would like, as it confirms its ruling position—and desiring to create a subversive parody of the colonizer. At the end of the day, however, it does not matter what the intentions are. The imitation of a dominating or imperial presence assures that the new system or structure formed will also be characterized by a dominating, hierarchical/kyriarchical structure and ethos. We should expect to see in this imitation the same methods of creating and maintaining control and order that are employed by the imperial power.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 85-122; and for a lay-person's brief explanation of these ideas, see Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies*, 139-42. While I am fascinated by the dynamics or realities of hegemony and hybridity, they are not essential to this method.

¹²⁹ For a recent study on such methods, see Joseph A. Marchal, *Hierarchy, Unity and Imitation: A Feminist Rhetorical Analysis of Power Dynamics in Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Academia Biblica 24; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006) and Elizabeth Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

Language and Power

Though I said that two of the primary realms of concern for postcolonial studies are representation and mimicry, I also bring into this section the issues of language, power, and sexuality because they are central to my own understanding of postcolonial studies.

The issues of language and power are relevant to feminist and postcolonialist discourses in complementary ways. At times it is difficult to know when a critique is grounded in gender and when in political matters, which is entirely appropriate given how interconnected all of these pieces are in reality. Theoretically speaking, however, a postcolonial critique of language focuses upon the propagandistic aspect of language as it functions to promote and maintain social and political structures, creating and defining “others” in such a way that justifies their subjugated position. The combination of language and power, then, functions quite powerfully within the realm of the collective psyche of a people, in what Pierre Bourdieu has called the *habitus*.

Bourdieu defines the *habitus* of a society as the “dispositions [that] generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are ‘regular’ without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any ‘rule’.”¹³⁰ This definition is strikingly similar to some definitions of ideology, and has a hint of hegemony to it. In choosing the term *habitus* he places an emphasis upon the way the dispositions are embodied and lived out on a daily basis. This idea goes beyond a controlling or hegemonic ideology that the ruling powers need to reinforce constantly; the *habitus* addresses the beliefs that people unconsciously realize—bring into being—in their lives. Much like ideological beliefs, it is the fact that aspects of the *habitus* go unspoken and unnamed that makes them so powerful and so difficult to counter. Thus, I find that addressing the *habitus* of a people

¹³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Gino Raymond and Matthew Samson, trans, and John B. Thompson, ed.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1991), 12. See also, Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Richard Nice, trans.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977).

creates a space for assessing the effects of the combination of language and power in the socio-political realm.

Bodies and Sex

While I am aware that bringing up the issue of sexual relations and abuses taps into a significant body of research and scholarship that I cannot fully represent in this setting, it is an important aspect of colonial discourse that must be mentioned. The construction of wo/men is manifested within all areas of life, not simply the social and political. Jean Kim's feminist postcolonial interpretation of various stories in the gospel of John highlights the significance of sexual relations, whether abusive or pleasurable, of the lived realities of so many people, realities that biblical scholarship has done its share of overlooking. Colonialism and nationalism, being gendered in their basic construct, not only reinforce patriarchal and kyriarchal structures and systems, but they do this primarily through the regulation and control of women's sexuality.¹³¹

Saying that colonization is a gendered construct means that we must acknowledge the connection between geopolitical domination and any social norms that allow for or perpetuate the domination of men over wo/men, and thus by extension of one class over another or of one race over another, of humanity over the earth, and so forth.¹³² In all instances the "right" of one party to treat another inhumanely or unjustly is justified by these dualistic hierarchical and kyriarchical constructions embedded within societies. The horrific effects of such unjust treatment serve to maintain multiple levels of the dominant/dominated relationship, the

¹³¹ Jean Kim, *Woman and Nation: An Intercontextual Reading of the Gospel of John from a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective* (Boston: Brill, 2004). See also, Jenny Sharpe, "The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds.; New York: Columbia University, 1994), 221-43.

¹³² Jean Kim, *Woman and Nation*, 31.

oppressed being in such a state to be unable to stand up for themselves, which in turn renders the dominating power structure seemingly inevitable.

Coming back to the conversation of sexuality within the specific realm of postcolonial discourse then, we must be wary of texts that in prescribing socio-political expectations indirectly maintain control over the sexuality of wo/men. Even to this day, our social consciousness reflects the underlying notion that women are the reproducers of any country or nation,¹³³ an idea that is directly contiguous with the thought behind the domestic codes of the philosophical treatises in the ancient world, for instance. Women are valued for their ability to produce the next generation, and in maintaining stable families they sustain the stability of the country or nation. We can see similar concerns at work within biblical texts of the new testament, in particular when authors seem concerned about sustaining the movement, and most poignantly so within the passages that contain adapted versions of household code structures and expectations. This control over women's sexuality is a manifestation of power in a kyriarchal system, one that draws upon essentialist thought, ultimately prescribing specific expectations for wo/men.

M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty describe their feminist postcolonial paradigm as one that foregrounds “decolonization which stresses power, history, memory, relational analysis, justice (not just representation), and ethics.”¹³⁴ In so doing they highlight the multi-dimensional nature of geo-politics and the interconnectedness of all people in today's global reality.

¹³³ Jean Kim, *Woman and Nation*, 30; in particular she speaks of the familial language of nationhood: “mothers of the nation”, women nurture the next generation, and so forth. I would add to this brief list the use of “domestic” in everyday situations, such as “foreign” versus “domestic” cars, the phrase “she's a domestic” used to refer to a homemaker, a domesticated animal, etc.

¹³⁴ M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies, Movements,” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds.; New York: Routledge, 1997), xix.

While Alexander and Mohanty are explicating feminist postcolonial discourse within the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I think that their theoretical analyses are relevant for first century Greco-Roman dynamics precisely because our socio-political realities today in the “West” are based upon structures and expectations found within the Greco-Roman world. We may be able to trace the evolution of the economic structures or systems in place during these intervening two thousand years, but the fact that there are pieces of continuity throughout, specifically the role and subjectivity of wo/men, indicates that there are components of the “ancient” system that have never been significantly re-envisioned or reconfigured within the dominant or hegemonic social and political discourse of the western world. Alexander and Mohanty note how state practices and fundamentalist religious discourses focus upon women’s bodies, minds, and the roles they are allowed to occupy in the service of maintaining kyriarchal control and regulating morality.¹³⁵ The reader can just as easily apply these observations to today’s political realm, to that of what we see represented within Christian biblical texts, or to various times and locations in between.

Zillah Eisenstein notes that she

start[s] with bodies because political states always have an interest in them; because politics usually derive from such interests; and because, as we move increasingly toward new technologies that redefine female bodies, we must recognize these interests as utterly political.¹³⁶

If any move to re-define women’s bodies is utterly political, then any rhetorical, philosophical, or theological move to maintain the definition of women’s bodies is just as political.

I shudder to think of how trite the phrase, “the personal is political,” has become. Its overuse or lack of contextualization as it is used and referenced contributes to an ability to

¹³⁵ Alexander and Mohanty, “Introduction,” xxv.

¹³⁶ Zillah Eisenstein, *The Color of Gender: Reimagining Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 171.

disregard the implications of its claim. What happens to the person, the body, the psyche, and so on, of members of a society reverberates politically. The political realm is one that contains or relates to all other aspects of life. So many biblical scholars and well-intentioned Christians over the centuries have denied the influence on socio-political systems and relations of power that the claims of scripture have. This is no more or less the case with biblical texts that are related to or focused upon regulating women. It must be noted, however, that their desire to see them as separate, to deny the deep interconnectedness, does not make it so.

Economic Issues

A discussion of economic issues today tends to lead to the contributions of Karl Marx to social and political discourse, and the general framework of “materialism” or Marxism. I include it here in postcolonial discourse because of Roland Boer’s exhortation that we consider the economic aspect of a society as foundational to postcolonial criticism.¹³⁷ The geo-political struggle presently at work in the twenty-first century global community attests to the fact that economic exploitation goes hand in hand with political domination and control. The creation of “Free Trade Agreements” and the sanctioning of financial aid provisions by world leaders to members of the two-thirds world are just the tip of the iceberg of the manifestation of economic and political collusion. There can be no getting around this connection today. I suggest that though we do not have parallel documentation for the relations between Rome and its colonies in the first century, we can rest assured that the same collusion was present then as well. Thus any discussion of matters related to the *oikonomikos* will be grounded in a geo-political or Roman Imperial framework.

¹³⁷ Roland Boer, “Marx, Postcolonialism and the Bible,” in *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (Fernando Segovia and Stephen Moore, eds.; New York: T&T Clark, 2005).

Postcolonial Summary

The pieces that a postcolonial critique contributes to a method of biblical interpretation are the following: 1) assessing the portrayal of the Roman Empire or imperial representatives and the relation or interaction with them that is encouraged for members of the faith communities; 2) analyzing the various layers of language, knowledge, and power that are affected by mimicry of the imperial methods of control and relational structures; and 3) noting what we learn about the view of wo/men, in particular how their bodies and their sexuality or sexual relationships are used as a part of these methods of structural and relational control, and thus how they are circumscribed by the text.

Materialist Concerns

The materialist approach I am using reaches beyond the economic structure of households in first century CE Asia Minor, the realm a reader may anticipate by the label “materialist”,¹³⁸ in order to assess the construction of meaning and social arrangements that the texts of Christian scriptures support and engender. This approach is based upon Rosemary Hennessy’s particular interest in the systems and power relations that texts adhere to, perpetuate and set in motion. She reads “irruptions” in texts as “symptoms” of the hegemonic voice silencing the voice of others who pose a threat to its normative ideology. In her words, her symptomatic reading “draws out the unnaturalness of the text and makes visible another logic haunting its surface.”¹³⁹ It is with Hennessy’s terminology in mind that I have titled this dissertation, “Circumscribed Symptomatic Subjectivities in 1 Peter,” in an effort to point beyond a critique of a text with a feminist postcolonial lens to an assessment of the subjectivities that are

¹³⁸ The typical Marxian critique of the divisions of labor is not enough but must include a gendered/sexual, and I would add at least “racial,” division of labor.

¹³⁹ Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, 93.

constructed and circumscribed and subsequently take on material reality by texts from the Christian canon. In order to make such an assessment, in addition to the feminist and postcolonial contributions, we need to look at the creation of knowledge and construction of subjects.

Creation of Knowledge

The creation of knowledge touches upon several of the realms of concern already discussed: power and language in particular. According to Hennessy, discourse joins power and knowledge, in part because it typically comes about as a result of a struggle between unequal power relations. Thus discourse can be both instrument and effect of power.¹⁴⁰ Social discourse itself is a form of ideology that reflects the (often unconscious) political ideology of the one speaking or writing. I would suggest that the political ideology is embodied and passed along in part through the *habitus*, as discussed previously. So we can read texts looking for the ideology that they perpetuate, and in so doing, the realm of knowledge of what is normative for a particular community. Hennessy also suggests that if we understand that the social discourse of the *habitus* is intended to take on hegemonic force, we can read silences in a text as “irruptions” in the narrative, entry points to discover counter-hegemonic voices in the discourse that were silenced by those in power.¹⁴¹

A Gramscian understanding of hegemony acknowledges the need to continually reassert the ruling or dominating ideology. This happens because, though the ruling ideology is somewhat embedded within the social structures, behavioral expectations, and relations of

¹⁴⁰ Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, 41, 42.

¹⁴¹ Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, xii-xvii, 94.

power, there is a voice, resistance, or a heteronomous way of viewing the world that is also present, such that the ruling ideology must be continually reinforced. Normative knowledge is maintained by the silencing, and denigrating, of alternative perspectives and voices. When we see behavior or beliefs being corrected or redirected by pronouncements and commands, often in an over-determined fashion, we can assume that some form of resistance or movement of change was/is afoot.

Hennessy wrote with twentieth-century socio-political realities in mind in her discussion of creating new knowledge. She challenges her reader to conceive of altogether new paradigms and structures for understanding our world. The goal to create counter-hegemonic discourses, specifically countering the dominant patriarchal/kyriarchal social system, is sought in part by the production of new feminist knowledge. It is important to emphasize the “new” aspect, since she seeks not simply a feminist revision of history and knowledge as currently promulgated by our institutions, but a creation of an entirely new sphere in and by which to create knowledge. The new sphere or space allows for alternative social constructions and norms of relating, which support knowledge produced in and from various aspects of life. This task of creating new knowledge today is often addressed in terms of the content disseminated by universities through college courses but more importantly through journals and other publications.¹⁴²

While journals do not have a direct parallel within the first century Greco-Roman setting, I suggest that the production of documents and texts and the canonization process do reflect the same underlying agenda: the creation or construction of knowledge and behavioral standards for the sake of consistency and survival. Scholarship reflects the socio-cultural concerns of the context in which it is written, different fields have their own significant—and often

¹⁴² For instance, see Patrice McDermott, *Politics and Scholarship: Feminist Academic Journals and the Production of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1994).

unconscious—presuppositions and it bears the race, class, and gender perspectives of the person who wrote it.¹⁴³ The texts of the new testament were written and collected with many of the same socio-cultural factors present as we see in scholarship today. The processes and content of textual and canonical creation are inherently political. These political texts, whether first century CE ecclesial correspondence or twenty-first century academic publications, determine normativity of thought, beliefs and actions.

Construction of Subjects

The construction of subjects and creation of knowledge are intimately related. As Hennessy notes, “What we do impacts what we can know; and what we know impacts what we can do.”¹⁴⁴ Subjectivities are discursively constructed, often very clearly delineated or “circumscribed” according to what is normative knowledge and behavior. While we can see various aspects of language and power coming into play in the social construction of wo/men, it is important to try to isolate, for the sake of creating a method, the particular dynamic of construction. It is a peculiar dynamic, in that the subject so constructed does not necessarily actually exist in that society. The very nature of subject construction implies that there are counter-images simultaneously at work, ones that the dominant discourse or ideology needs to silence or eradicate. As Carol Smart states, “Woman is not a singular unity that has existed unchanged throughout history as certain feminist, religious and biological discourses might proclaim. Rather, each discourse brings its own Woman into being and proclaims her to be

¹⁴³ Patrice McDermott, *Politics and Scholarship*, 5. I refer to these three general categories well aware that they are not comprehensive in terms of identifying the aspects of a person’s life that have such an impact.

¹⁴⁴ Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism*, 7.

natural Woman.”¹⁴⁵ Thus it is through discourse that subjects are constructed, and it is when the discourse permeates the *habitus* that these constructions become embodied, realized or materialized.

While defining a subject may seem to be an innocent endeavor, the need to construct or define is ultimately a matter of power and control. It establishes correct behavior and circumscribes the realms of influence for the subject in question. It also touches upon issues of essentialism, at the very least.

When looking at biblical texts, we need to look beyond the particular relations it addresses to the underlying realms of life that are also affected by the prescriptions within the texts. These underlying relations are often more central to wo/men’s lives than the ones being addressed. Addressing a superficial relation as a means of controlling something deeper is in effect a type of irruption itself. Whether or not the author was conscious of the deeper impact is not the point. This is not a blame game of pointing fingers; it is simply an exercise in addressing the implications of a social construction, the material realities of prescriptions of subjects.

The problem is that normativity of knowledge and of socio-cultural expectations, as defined within a kyriarchal system, does not give full value to the realities of subordinate members. The political ideology of a society or community, inasmuch as it is defined by kyriarchal rulers, is foreign to subordinate members to a large degree, as it is imposed from without and does not take into consideration or reflect their own experiences. It is in this way that certain discourses or kinds of language are silenced altogether. Since they are not reflected or recorded in the shared social discourse they are not passed along for future generations. Their voices are not a part of the collective practices and perceptions. Yet the imposed ideology with

¹⁴⁵ Carol Smart, “Disruptive bodies and unruly sex: The regulation of reproduction and sexuality in the nineteenth century,” in *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

its kyriarchal power relations becomes familiar, has a way of justifying itself and perpetuating the status quo, and over time is even embraced by many who are oppressed by it, either because of a need to survive or a lack of will/resources to resist it. We can turn to the *habitus* again, the space in which language (discourse) and power (ideologies) come together, to understand or explain this phenomenon.

Let me reiterate Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* of a society: it is the set of "dispositions [that] generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any 'rule'."¹⁴⁶ In his definition, I understand the "dispositions" to be related to, if not the same thing as, Terry Eagleton's characterization of dominant ideology, which: *promotes* the beliefs and values that maintain it, *naturalizes* and *universalizes* them so that they are unconsciously embraced as self-evident, *denigrates* those belief systems that challenge or subvert it, *excludes* rival forms of thought from the common discourse, and *obscures* social reality in such a way as to promote itself.¹⁴⁷ Clearly, his definition of ideology overlaps with Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus*.

For the purposes of this project, I do not think that a thorough debate or resolution between these two realms is necessary. What I would like to emphasize instead is the social, often unconscious nature of the power of both. What, then, were the practices, perceptions and attitudes that needed to be regular within the early Christian communities? The answer is found within the writings and traditions that were collected and passed along by these communities. Naturally I will be focusing upon the nature of the writings, given my purpose for this project.

The purpose of correspondence was to affirm some communities and to correct behavior that was incongruent with what someone (who?) had determined was appropriate for this

¹⁴⁶ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 12.

¹⁴⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 1991), 5-6.

burgeoning movement. Ensuring the perpetuity of the movement, at times by offering encouraging words for those in the midst of persecution, took precedence over perpetuating the initial purpose of the movement.¹⁴⁸ At times the letters were comforting and poetic, at times they were full of rebuke, and often they were a mixture of content and purpose. In all cases there was something like the narrative of the faith communities contained within them. Though it may seem to be a bit of a stretch to call Paul's letters, and the other non-gospel writings that are collected in the new testament, narrative, at a basic level that is exactly what they constitute: the narrative of a young, burgeoning social movement.

Narrative is "essential for constructing the worlds we inhabit, sustaining the communities that hold us, and enlivening the rituals that shape us."¹⁴⁹ Stories, phrases, pithy sayings, myths, proverbs, poetry, lines from film and various other forms of writing make up our collective social consciousness today. How much more affective are such traditions and collected stories of legends and heroes in an age of papyri, scrolls and codices, and oral transmission? We construct meaning and identity, both individual and communal, through stories.

Joseph E. Davis claims that narrative is an essential element of any movement's discourse, and therefore becomes a productive source for analyzing the nature of the movement.¹⁵⁰ Robert D. Benford's contribution to Davis's edited volume focuses on how these narratives function as control mechanisms within social movements. He notes how the members of a movement actively, even strategically, engage in activities that uphold the narrative that

¹⁴⁸ I am aware that there is no consensus on the matter of what the "original" purpose was of the Jesus movement. However, it is clear that if Jesus was indeed crucified by the Romans, it was his actions and reputation that led to it. Those of his later followers who were persecuted or killed were so treated because of touting his *name* not necessarily for imitating his socio-political actions.

¹⁴⁹ Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 5.

¹⁵⁰ Joseph E. Davis, "Narrative and Social Movements: The Power of Stories," in *Stories of Change: Narrative and Social Movements* (Joseph E. Davis, ed.; Albany: State University of New York, 2002), 4.

defines the movement and even work to prevent alternative narratives from taking root or being disseminated. This adherence to the movement's narrative or story, he claims, creates uniformity by "channeling and constraining individual as well as collective sentiments, emotions, and action."¹⁵¹ It is striking how well these insights drawn from observing nonviolent peace movements in the twentieth century reflect some of what we can see at work in the first and second century formative Christian communities.

The act of preventing alternative or competing messages runs throughout Paul's letters. Several of the Pastorals are aimed at constraining the actions and realm of influence of women, which is also tied to controlling the "story that is told about the movement." It is clear from the content of 1 Peter that the author was seeking to direct and control the actions and emotions of the recipients. Even as I say these things, I can hear the objections that there is no other way to sustain or maintain a movement with any continuity with the past unless the beliefs, behaviors and roles are clearly delineated. I agree. The problem remains with two basic pieces of these well-intentioned and very successful attempts to sustain this movement. The first is that it does not allow for change, which is inherent to human nature. The second is more germane to this paper and brings us back to the issue of constructing subjectivities: whose version of events, narratives, beliefs, and proper behavior is made the controlling paradigm?

The issue of constructing subjects taps into numerous socio-political dynamics of social acceptability and sustainability, vertical and horizontal power relations, essentialism and representation, and even mimicry and collusion. What we can do affects what we can know. What we can know is affected by the nature of the communities of which we are a part. When

¹⁵¹ Robert D. Benford, "Controlling Narratives and Narratives as Control within Social Movements," 53-75 in *Stories of Change: Narrative and Social Movements* (Joseph E. Davis, ed.; Albany: State University of New York, 2002), 53.

any of a community's power relations are marked by a domination/submission dynamic, then the nature of the community as a whole will be structured by domination.¹⁵² Thus subjects within this community will be constructed accordingly. Given the plethora of domination/submission relations encouraged in the documents of the early Christian movement, we can safely say that the construction of wo/men within the early Christian documents reflects the desires of those in power, not the wo/men themselves.

Materialist Summary

The materialist critique that I will undertake reflects an assessment of the creation of knowledge by addressing the power dynamics within and behind the text, thus what the text allows wo/men to know. The construction of subjects, and thus their materiality, is addressed by granting the importance of the content of ecclesial correspondence, naming the ideologies at work behind commands or prescriptions, acknowledging the various aspects of wo/men's reality that are affected by such prescriptions, and sorting through how actions and behaviors are circumscribed by a text. These two pieces are predicated upon an agreement with Hartsock's insight, that the relations that define and circumscribe wo/men's activity are embodied in and perpetuated by their communities.

Weaving the Threads

The time has come to pull together the various strands of thought and inquiry that will inform and direct the interpretation and critique of this project. First, it is important to note that I see the letter of 1 Peter as a system of communication that is embedded in and reinscribes power relations, and that I assume that the content of this and other ecclesial correspondence is taken

¹⁵² Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power*, 155.

very seriously, in varying degrees, as a part of worship services, the primary source for guidance into God's will, and the true means of God's witness to the third member of the Trinity. Then, I read for seven specific dynamics or components of the text:

- 1) How it speaks on behalf of wo/men or directly to them from a place of power over them. What does this piece tell us that wo/men can do and know?
- 2) The mainstream language that represses peripheral and non-normative language and experiences, noting for whose sake this occurs.
- 3) How it uses essentialist assumptions and descriptions in order to perpetuate kyriarchal relations and to justify dominating over or possessing someone.
- 4) Explicit or implicit reference to sexuality and other aspects of wo/men's lives that are affected by these ascriptions and commands that are often overlooked in interpretations.
- 5) Portrayals of the Roman Empire and its representatives, and relations with them that are encouraged.
- 6) The layers of knowledge, power and language of these communities that are impacted by Imperial Ideology.
- 7) What do we learn about the view of wo/men, in particular how their bodies and their sexuality or sexual relationships are used as a part of these methods of structural and relational control, and thus how they are circumscribed by the text?

Ultimately, these analyses brought together will inform my assessment as to whether 1 Peter engenders "emancipatory dissident consciousness" and egalitarian relations or whether it reinscribes a dominating kyriarchal ethos and structuring of relations within the communities.¹⁵³ These insights in turn highlight the actions, behaviors and knowledge that are circumscribed for wo/men by this text.

One final comment is appropriate at this point. While I fully agree with Musa Dube in her clarion call to feminist biblical scholars to be conscious of producing interpretations that "resist and reject kyriarchal oppression and allow the experiences and voices of colonized people to articulate a liberative interpretation,"¹⁵⁴ I am consciously not including such redemptive and resistant readings at this point. I am choosing to remain with the colonizing effect of the texts because the materialist aspect of my critique requires it, and because I think that this piece is

¹⁵³ Schüssler Fiorenza, "1 Peter," 381.

¹⁵⁴ Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 43.

often overlooked in the effort to get to redemptive interpretations. In order to address the symptoms the problem must be aired and named for what it is.

Thesis

The author of 1 Peter adapts aspects of a Greco-Roman socio-cultural expectation, that of the hierarchically ordered relations within households, and prescribes this adaptation for the behavior of certain members of the religious communities. Though the exhortations are related to behavior in their own homes, drawing upon household relationships in discussing faithful discipleship blurs the line between family households and the religious “family” gathered in households. As a result, the structure of the basic communal unit within burgeoning Christianity mimics the basic unit of the State.¹⁵⁵

I argue that such a move has socio-political implications that lead to collusion with Empire, thus, 1 Peter is one of many texts that perpetuate imperial ideology. It also constructs women’s subjectivity and agency in terms of their silent Christ-like suffering and in relation to their husbands, and circumscribes them within the household domain. I argue, then, that this silenced, circumscribed subjectivity is “materialized” within the subsequent faith communities, and becomes necessary for the perpetuation of the church.

1 Peter has yet to be thoroughly analyzed through the matrix of gender role, socio-political and materialist discourses, with a view toward the implications such an analysis has for the church and its relation to Empire. Given these lacunae and the work that can be done simply

¹⁵⁵ There is a great deal of scholarship on the issue of the development in the Christian movement, in terms of its purpose and of its leadership. I am granting a basic premise that letters written to communities in Asia Minor from a missionary or leader in Rome suggests a significantly different structure than what we see or have evidence for in the ‘grass roots’ movement begun by Jesus. While I understand that my designation ‘grass roots’ is not univocally agreed upon, it serves to highlight the significant swing from organic movement to what we begin to see in the structured and house-based gatherings.

focused upon the *Haustafel* in 1 Peter, I will offer a feminist, postcolonial, materialist critique of 1 Peter 2:13-3:7.