

CHAPTER III

COMPONENTS OF COLLUSION

Introduction

Now that I have done a brief analysis of some of the religious and socio-political aspects of the text leading up to the household code, I will turn to the code itself. The ultimate goal of this project is to address how women/wives are constructed according to 1 Peter: their circumscribed subjectivity prescribed by kyriarchal structures and power relations. Given the nature of the household code, however, it will also be helpful to address, ever so briefly, the components related to the slaves and the husbands as well. In doing so, using the method proposed in chapter 1, I will discuss the “components of collusion” within this text.

Thus I will begin with a review of *Haustafel* concerns related to this project, address the irruptions within the household code itself—in terms of the slaves, the wives, and the husbands—link these irruptions with the role of households within the Roman Empire, and conclude with an analysis of the ambivalent mimicry contained within this section of 1 Peter and some of the implications of its presence in the Christian canon.

Review of *Haustafeln* Background

As noted in chapter 1, there is a general consensus among scholars that Aristotle was the first to provide in writing the general tripartite division of roles for the husband, or *paterfamilias*, within the household: husband over wife, father over child, master over slave. Thus discussions of how the household code was altered, or Christianized, in its application within Christian texts

tend to use his work as expressing the normative form of these socio-political roles and expectations.

While Aristotle may seem more concerned about order, evidenced by the hierarchical structure he espouses, than the survival and prosperity of households, political and socio-economic dynamics were still a part of every household. It is precisely the fact that household management was tied to the economic prosperity of the family *in addition to* the maintenance of the political state that gives me an additional warrant for a postcolonial avenue of analysis and recourse to Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*.

There is another interesting twist in the adaptation of this structure in 1 Peter. Aristotle's use of it is directed toward the head of the household in terms of what leadership or active administration he is to perform. The 1 Peter example is not simply directed to those who are to submit, but is done in such a way that *accentuates* their submission; it encourages and affirms a passive leadership for women.¹

Luce Irigaray quotes Freud as having said that, "A marriage is not made secure until the wife has succeeded in making her husband her child as well,"² which resonates with the line in the *Oeconomicus* where the husband says that the most pleasant experience for his wife is to make even him her servant. Including an extended excerpt at this point seem apt.

But I assure you, dear, there are other duties peculiar to you that are pleasant to perform. It is delightful to teach spinning to a maid who had no knowledge of it when you received her, and to double her worth to you: to take in hand a girl who is ignorant of housekeeping and service, and after teaching her and making her trustworthy and serviceable to find her worth any amount. . . . But the pleasantest experience of all is to prove yourself better than I am, to make me your servant; and, so far from having cause to fear that as you grow older you may be less honored in the household, to feel confident

¹ David Horrell, "Leadership Patterns and the Development of Ideology in Early Christianity," *Sociology of Religion* 58 (1997): 333, "though in these codes the focus is not upon the forms of leadership as such, but is often upon the appropriate submission expected of subordinate social groups."

² Luce Irigaray, *This Sex*, 133.

that with advancing years, the better partner you prove to me and the better housewife to our children, the greater will be the honor paid to you in our home. For it is not through outward comeliness that the sum of things good and beautiful is increased in the world, but by the daily practice of the virtues (VII.41-3).

The way Xenophon narrates this marker of achievement it is difficult to tell for whom it is such a “sweet experience,” whether it is for the wife or for him. It also conveys a false sense of the wife’s authority since she is always under the final authority of the *paterfamilias*. We still see such dynamics at work in almost all facets of life today, when a woman is affirmed for her capabilities and given leadership positions as long as it does not completely dismantle the kyriarchal structures and relations of power that are already in place.

Though almost two thousand years separate Xenophon and Freud, there is a common thread that creates a purview for other underlying factors for both comments. What Irigaray sees in Freud’s comment is a deeper unconscious desire *for* these relations, for the woman to nurture and mother the husband. Though it is beyond the scope of this project to fully develop and analyze the affects of desire on our (sub)consciousness, it is within the scope of this method to note that texts written within kyriarchal social structures will be markedly influenced by the need or the desire to maintain such systems. This influence suggests to me to look for components of texts that collude with, instead of resist, dominating powers and structures.

It is also important to note that the injunctions within biblical texts only represent an ideal, not necessarily the lived reality.³ As many scholars have noted, this very prescription in 1 Peter indicates that some behavior was out of place and in need of correction, though we will never know to what extent the initial recipients heeded the advice.

What has endured, however, is the text itself and along with it the kyriarchal structure and power relations that it espouses and thus ensures are a part of the communities that embrace

³ See also, Ringe, “1 and 2 Peter, Jude,” 548.

it, in other words: its materiality. As a means of getting to the materiality of this text, I will address its symptomatic irruptions—the places where matters of control and construction of “reality” urgently break into the narrative or surface of a text.

Symptomatic Irruptions

As Rosemary Hennessy suggests, in addressing symptoms or irruptions in a text I am also working with the materiality of knowledge: what a person does informs what she can know and what a person knows informs what she can do. In the interplay of real lived experiences and the representation of them in biblical texts, the strong leadership and active participation of women is so often transformed or redirected toward the maintenance of kyriarchy instead. While the original experiences may never be recuperated, the startling symptomatic irruption within a text helps us note when and where to question the text and its role in such cooptation and silencing of women’s experiences. In this context, I would like to address the irruptions related to the slaves and wives, as well as the husbands, with an eye toward their indication of collusion with vs. resistance to Empire.

Slaves and Wives

The scholarship on this section of the letter tends to skip past analyses of how women and slaves become a part of the households in the first place, thus leaving uncriticized various exploitative and objectifying practices that are already at work. It also tends to be driven by questions drawn only from the content of the text, which is an act of collusion with the kyriarchal representation and repression of others. This approach, within the context of two thousand years of tradition, directs scholars to assume that the only concern between the wives and husbands

was an issue of different religious practices, or, in terms of the slaves, that we need not be concerned about the dynamic of slavery in this text given our different it was at that time. It seems that these scholars are looking back to those situations with the sanitized views of Sunday morning “church” in the Western (developed) world in mind. It is hard to change this perspective, given that it is the reality of so many such scholars, yet it does not do justice to the texts or to the people whose stories are co-opted and/or silenced in the service of the author’s agenda. Thus, with an eye toward what the irruptions in the text betray about the author’s collusion with kyriarchal structures, I will discuss the call to silent suffering, the issue of outward adornment and the reference to Sarah in this text.

The Call to Silent Suffering

Many scholars have noted that addressing specifically the slaves and the wives is an unusual move on the author’s part, an irruption of sorts, since the philosophical treatises that contain household codes address them to the male head of the household and define all relations within the household centered on him in typically dualistic terms. While the androcentrism, hierarchy and dualistic nature of the household codes is to be expected, there is something more at work within this variation in 1 Peter. The “original” household codes are clear in referring to not simply women but women as *wives*. This piece is then carried over into the religious community.

Though it is noteworthy that these people are spoken to directly, it is done by a man who has authority in the communities, and thus is speaking to them from a position of power. What might come as sound advice from a peer becomes social expectation, even an aspect of group identity, in this context. The cloak of “social acceptability” has concealed and justified deeper issues in this text for centuries.

The “fear” that is to be rendered to God in 2:17 is also the manner in which the slaves and wives are to interact with their superior, the head of the household. Whether consciously or not, it seems it is no coincidence that the male god-figure and the male head of the household are to be given the same treatment and “reverence.”⁴ Singling out the wives and slaves in this way accentuates their vulnerability as well as their potential to cause a commotion if they do not “shape up.” From a materialist perspective, the very choice to address these members of the household is a symptomatic irruption because it highlights the instability of the communities and the need the author has to control their behavior in particular.⁵

There are reasons to suggest that, when the religious tensions, which may have been very real, became the focus of the letter, all other tensions or abusive dynamics were subsumed under them and thus were silenced and ignored. Just as we see in many faith communities today, the actions of an abusive or unjust husband / *paterfamilias* might not be dealt with directly but in terms of religious beliefs and identities instead. From this perspective, the charge to the wives to be submissive to their husbands in fear/reverence can sound like a threat. It is a command that has the effect of “lording it over” these women, but with theological justification.⁶

It has also been noted that there are significant theological implications in this segment, since the example of Christ suffering silently is employed to affirm the position of the slaves and thus indirectly that of the women.⁷ While we cannot know to what extent they actually embraced

⁴ Mary Daly’s oft-quoted line, “If God is male then male is god,” lingers in the backdrop of such a correlation.

⁵ Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, which constantly has to keep reasserting itself, and Benford, “Controlling Narratives,” 53, illuminate the power struggle and the ways story and language are used to control others.

⁶ Krentz, “Order in the ‘House’ of God,” 282.

⁷ Goppelt makes an interesting assertion that the theology of suffering that we see in 1 Peter is drawn from the martyrology that we see in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, Daniel in particular, instead of Job, and on the

these directives, it is clear from the history of interpretation and tradition that subsequent communities, especially the leaders therein, did. The textual evidence, in this case, speaks louder than the lived realities, rendering the actual experiences of wo/men inconsequential. Their actions that *do* matter are the ones that are in line with maintaining kyriarchal structures and relations of power.

Jeannine K. Brown's insights into the silence predicated upon/of wives in 3:1-6 compared with the command to the community in general to be prepared to speak in 3:14-16 help to highlight the second particular irruption I see in the *Haustafel*. The community is to be ready with a verbal defense of their Christian hope; the women/wives are to let their actions speak for them.⁸ If the women were autonomous in these actions, that would be one thing, but they were not.

In other words, they were not allowed to speak, but were to let their actions, determined by a kyriarchal social expectation, speak on their behalf. Not only were their words taken from them, but the messages they were allowed to speak-in-action were those of the kyriarchal social system. The contrast between the wives and the male non-slave members of the communities is heightened by the terminology that the two sections share. They both speak of realms of the heart (3:4, 15) and the recipients' conduct (3:1-2, 16), the "reverence" or fear with which they are to behave (3:2, 16), a prohibition from fearing ill treatment from superiors (3:6, 14), a value placed upon holiness (3:5, 15),⁹ and good conduct or doing good things (3:6, 16). Though many

beatitude regarding suffering for righteousness' sake (174). It seems that most of the commentators I have read stay only with Jesus' own suffering and death, and do not draw in the beatitude or the Daniel parallel.

⁸ Brown, "Silent Wives, Verbal Believers," 395-403.

⁹ The second instance, of commanding the community members to "sanctify Christ as lord in their hearts" (whatever that meant/s), resonates with the idea of setting something apart, as well as the sanctification associated with the jobs of priests. These choices on the author's part may be coincidental, or they may be another example of the way a theme or image once attributed to a group continues to function throughout the text.

scholars have tried to see the positive side of these parallels, which is that it makes the wives strong examples in the communities, I cannot help but question whether such a strong parallel would have been made (allowed) if it were encouraging the women to use their words and not just their bodies.¹⁰

With a text like 1 Peter, we are missing one side of the dialogue; we do not know what the other side of the conversation was advocating or resisting. In this regard, the women are doubly silenced. The initial concerns about what was going on in the Asia Minor communities are lost but for this hint that is recorded in the response contained in 1 Peter. But the very fact that part of the problem was mistreatment at the hands of spouses or masters, and that they are being told to go back to those spaces of abuse, is a primary level of silencing of the most vulnerable in those communities. The author's response to the problem is to silence whatever the complaints were about mistreatment.¹¹

For another perspective on the mistreatment element, I would like to raise the (strong) possibility that the women in these communities were from various living situations. The traditional view of women being sold from father to husband is certainly relevant, but does not represent the lives of all women. I suggest that we consider that some of the women had been part of the spoils of war, or that some of them were not living within traditional household situations. How would the exclusively coupled-centered discourse of the socio-political

¹⁰ J. Ramsey Michaels, "St. Peter's Passion: The Passion Narrative in 1 Peter," *Word & World* 24/4 (2004): 387-94. He claims that, "in 1 Peter the accent is *not* on Jesus' silence, possible because (except among Christian wives, 3:1) silence is not what he wants to encourage among those who follow Jesus" (391). I note this comment because it strikes me as almost clueless as to the effects of this one exception, as if this were a minor oversight on author's part.

¹¹ Here I am reminded of Kim's discourse on the ways the sex trade, or existence of comfort women, was covered up by the Korean government by destroying all records that indicate that they knew what was going on. Destroying the evidence is a form of silencing the complaints. And in both cases it is being done with an eye toward social and economic "survival." See chapter 1 or the introduction of Kim's *Woman and Nation*.

structural norm of the household codes sound to these latter groups?¹² For any women who were sexually “impure” due to the actions of men staking territory through the women’s bodies, this kind of rhetoric judges them again for what has been done *to* them, and it repeals the freedom they might have initially found in an embracing, accepting and empowering community / situation.

While the slaves were being encouraged to silently endure mistreatment simply because it was in their best interests, for the wives it had missiological ends. Contrary to the advice to brides and grooms that the wives should take on the gods of their husbands, Peter seems to be implying that they not only do not need to do so but should see their example as one that may win over their husbands to their own God.¹³ I must note, however, that nowhere in the text does it say to what the husbands might be won over; in other words, Peter may simply be hoping for peace among households that are mixed in their religious practices.¹⁴

Additionally, if the gospel announces, to some degree, the liberation from all that separates us from our G*d, our neighbors and ourselves, then the call to silent suffering has no place within the kerygma of Christ. Much like Ann McGuire has said of Colossians, in all instances the choice to adapt any social construct is an example of an internal contradiction. Such

¹² Luise Schottroff, *Feminist Interpretation: The Bible in Women’s Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 188; see also, Jean Kim, “Uncovering her Nakedness: An Inter(con)textual Reading of Revelation 17 from a Postcolonial Feminist Perspective,” *Postcolonial Perspectives on the New Testament. JSNT* 73 (1999): 61-81.

¹³ Krentz, “Order in the ‘House’ of God,” 284, “Peter urges Christian wives to use their way of life as a means to convert their husbands to Christianity (3:1), and here he breaks the social mold of the time.” See also, Brown, “Silent Wives, Verbal Believers,” 400.

¹⁴ I am also somewhat suspicious of any attempts to claim that these women were giving up entirely the honoring and/or worshipping of their husband’s gods. The popular religious practices that take place in the homes do not always conform to the official practices and expectations of the organized religions. See Phyllis Bird, “The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus,” *Women in the Hebrew Bible* (Alice Bach, ed. NY: Routledge, 1999), 3-21.

adaptation and accommodation cannot be held within the same paradigm as that of seeking newness.¹⁵

On the one hand, if Jesus' example of suffering is truly done as the Son of God, then social relations are turned on their heads. This being the case, then any reverting to the lowliest in the community – who have no “power from on high” that would give their suffering the potential to be redemptive – as examples of selfless suffering is a denial of the crucifixion of Christ.

On the other hand, if Jesus suffered in solidarity with the outcast and oppressed, he was still doing so as a male with a following. The power discrepancies between Jesus and the slaves and wives do not allow for a fair comparison. Turning to women and slaves as the embodiment of Jesus' example is again reinscribing the very structures Jesus was speaking against. In other words, if Jesus died as one of the lowly, then his death was for nothing if the lowliest of the lowly continue to be persecuted. An act to reinscribe within the faith communities the hierarchical kyriarchal system that eventually put Jesus to death is to have his followers completely miss the point. They are embracing the systems that Jesus died to overcome.

The author also reinforces the silence with a charge that their holy lives win over their husbands (*tēn en phobō hagnēn anastrophēn*): the men will observe their wives, and see that their behavior is innocent, pure, and/or holy. Of course, this sounds like the issue of being well received in the communities, that their way of living would be upright. The terms “innocent” and “pure” resonate with Paul's wish to present a “pure” bride to Christ, to the Corinthian congregation being “innocent” of wrongdoing (whatever that was), as well as to some form of lack-of-innocence associated with the leading astray of Eve by the serpent in the garden.

¹⁵ Ann McGuire, “Equality and Subordination in Christ: Displacing the Powers of the Household Code in Colossians,” in *Religion and Economic Ethics* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1990), 65-85.

As there are many ways to read this passage in Genesis, there are many conclusions that one can draw regarding “what Paul meant” in making this particular allusion. At some point we must recognize that there is a divide between how this story was “originally” intended and how it has been appropriated over the years. A person can find ways to read this story that make Adam or Eve look to be the fool. The more relevant issue here is, in what situations do the new testament authors employ images of Eve or make implied or direct references to that story? In other words, what kinds of associations are they making in order for their inclusion of it to seem natural?

This may seem like an extended excursus on something not related to 1 Peter, as there is no reference to Eve in this letter. But the larger picture is that of a general mindset toward or underlying stereotypes about women. I am not trying to define once and for all what the social construction of women looked like in any one particular time and place. What I am pointing toward is how such stigmatic associations might have seemed perfectly normal. Once those associations are made in texts that are part of the canon, they begin to make connections to one another within the *habitus* of the communities, whether or not the situations being addressed by the texts are related to one another.

Thus, we are back to the text of 1 Peter 3:1-6, and we can see that, though motherhood is not mentioned and children are not addressed at all here, the pure or innocent way of living for the wives *is* the focus of discussion. No matter how the women are addressed or what roles they are assumed to fill, their re-productive and sexual potential is in the background. In fact, the overtones of sexuality are present simply by the use of the terms “husband” and “wife.” The combination of these overtones with pure and upright behavior is a powerful collusion indeed, in

particular if one grants that the typical honor/shame social dynamic is actively influential in these communities.¹⁶

Constraining the sexuality of women, and implying that this aspect of their personhood holds the key to whether or not they live uprightly, essentializes them as sexual beings. Within the overall context of this letter, then, the women/wives in the faith community will all be sexually pure and innocent. The issue is not that I am trying to approve of licentiousness, but only to point to the material reality, the socio-political implications, of such rhetoric which mimics that of imperial ideology. These essentialized (a)sexual beings uphold Empire and the *ekklēsia* gatherings alike.

Finally, we can also see a strong correlation between the submission of everyone in the communities to the Emperor and the wives to their husbands. Submitting to every human institution (2:13) is clarified as being in terms of the Emperor or his representatives. The subsequent directives to the slaves and wives (2:18-3:6) to then be submissive to their masters and husbands is equally under the same injunction.¹⁷ The roles of Emperor, his regional representatives, and the *paterfamilias* are all human institutions, and the men in these positions are all to be given reverence and authority.

Outward Adornment

¹⁶ Stephen Bechtler discusses the honor/shame system motivation as he sees it playing out in this letter. He sees three particularly relevant passages, 2:12-15, 3:13-16 and 4:14. symbolic construction of communal self-identity for the addressees (honor/shame discourse primary here; serves as a basis for constructing a new symbolic universe in which what used to accrue shame now attributes honor from God. Suffering and disgrace (loss of honor) are the problems that Peter addresses, and depends upon only *verbal* disgrace. Bechtler refers to the *dox*- root (14 times), *tim*- (6) and *epainos* (2) and dishonor: *kataiskunō* (2) and *aisksunomai* (1). He also notes the connection to gender in the honor-shame system, specifically in terms of the wife's sexual purity, which is what she contributes to the honor of her husband/family, which he suggests explains the commands to the wives regarding their behavior. Bechtler, *Following in His Steps*, 102-3.

¹⁷ Mary Schertz, "Nonretaliation and the Haustafeln," 258-86. Schertz sees a parallel between the slaves and wives which reinforces the unity of the sections, thus the injunctions can be assumed to be posed to all.

Much has been made of this passage regarding the braiding of hair and wearing of fine jewelry, in particular in comparison with wealthy women's practices and adornment, as well as in light of positions of leadership in other religious contexts at that time.¹⁸ This approach to the topic makes a basic assumption that these are the only (or most) relevant contexts for comparison. Yet even this tidbit is a curious symptomatic irruption within the fabric of new testament scholarship, as most male scholars go out of their way to explain why the household codes have nothing to do with leadership roles. Perhaps there is a cue for us in this lack of alignment, which indicates how fluid the boundaries were from one role to another that any given person held.¹⁹

In a world where women were commodities, and everything about their lives was ultimately under the rule of her husband, requiring one's wife to be unadorned can be viewed as serving the needs of the husband in some way. Here it is a direct command from an authoritative person who was in a position of power over the communities. It is a choice being made and prescribed for the women, one that is also reinforced with theological justification (3:4, "Let your adornment be the inner self with the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in God's sight"). There is no representation of the women's perspective or even an acknowledgement that the matter is open for discussion. It is a foregone conclusion that the command will be heeded by the recipients. Again, whether or not the directives were actually

¹⁸ See 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and attendant scholarship for part of the picture surrounding hair and women in prophetic/leadership roles (chapter 4, n.8). There is also a general sense that, since the wealthy women in ancient Greece and Rome wore ribbons and jewelry in their hair and gold and jewelry on their body, we can assume that the author was trying to promote a counter-image of modesty among these women. Contemporary philosophers also spoke of this kind of modesty or of beauty being something that comes from within a woman.

¹⁹ I do not intend to disregard all theory on how space is/was often demarcated by gender and that gender plays/ed a role in differentiating between "sacred" and "secular" space. I simply wish to point to the difficulty we have in making clear distinctions or of completely compartmentalizing and separating the social implications of structure and ritual in one space from that in another.

followed is not something we can know with any certainty. It is the fact that such directives were appropriately included at this point in the letter that creates a problem.

While the mention of outward adornment in this context of household relationships may seem like an irruption in the text for the modern mind, as I mentioned above it is actually a rather appropriate place for such a topic. While Xenophon reports that what makes a woman truly beautiful is her competency within the home and her ability to continue to learn and to teach others, it seems the issue for Peter is that a woman's beauty be derived from her gentle and quiet spirit and the "hidden person of the heart." This is a significant shift toward a focus on controlling the women. Every action of theirs will reflect, positively or negatively, the beauty of which the author speaks. All that the woman looks like and does reflects upon her husband. All that she can do and be is subsumed under his authority. What a difference this makes between Xenophon and Peter's ideals if we compare the direction of their trajectories.

Again, there is nothing wrong with encouraging people to strive to embody a gentle spirit; the problem comes when this is coupled with injunctions to be silently submissive, which is then the ultimate marker of faith and godliness for one specific group of people.²⁰ This is a clear example of the body and bodiliness being used as a means for control. In this case it is a refusal to appreciate the body or to resist adorning it for whatever reasons, both of which denied the "traditional hallmarks of feminine beauty [at the time]: skin, hair, clothes."²¹

²⁰ On one level this idea offers a wonderful critique of or counter to what is held out as "beauty" today in the United States in particular, and thus in other countries that are influenced by its cultural fads and norms. At the same time, though, it also allows for the body/spirit split to come into the discussion.

²¹ Richard Hawley, "The Dynamics of Beauty in Classical Greece," in *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity* (Dominic Montserrat, ed.; New York: Routledge, 1998), 49. I am keenly aware that the sources and scholarship that I am working with do not include much in the way of Jewish voices, mostly due to the fact that I am more concerned with the effects than the sources of these commands. In terms of giving some insight into halachic views of dress, adornment and behavior, I would send the reader to Rabbi Pesach Eliyahu Falk, *'oz v'hadar levushah: Modesty, as Adornment for Life: Halachos and Attitudes Concerning Tznius of Dress and Conduct* (Nanuet, NY: Feldheim, 1998). While this *sefer* goes farther in portraying one

Even if we choose to see Peter as in line with philosophical thought at the time, instead of actively denying the body and its beauty, we must also take his injunctions regarding outward adornment together with the rest of the admonitions toward the wives. Then the symptomatic irruptions take on the force of circumscribing wives to, among other things, silent positions of submission in both the marriage and ecclesial contexts, roles that support kyriarchal power structures.

Parallel to Sarah – Symptomatic Irruption or Logical Conclusion?

A handful of scholars have noted the “strange” choice to refer to Sarah calling Abraham lord and her attitude toward him as an example of being submissive. According to the biblical stories, the only time she actually called him “lord” was in laughter, when God had said that she would have a child within the year. But the two times she notably submitted to Abraham was when they were in the Pharaoh’s court and with the King of Gerar, and she was taken in as a member of the concubinage of each.

On one hand, referring to Sarah may have simply been because of the significant imagery drawn from Israel and their texts that is used in the first couple of chapters, in addition to the fact that Abraham and Sarah were in foreign lands and were uncertain of their relationship to the ruling powers, much like the opening and some of the content of 1 Peter implies about its recipients. On the other hand, this particular confluence of elements can be said to stand out too

particular modern interpretation of halachah than some of the first century views, it is helpful for the bridge that it creates between the two. For instance, “*tznius* does not deny the woman her natural requirements [for fine clothes and jewelry] and far be it from *Yiddishkeit* to prevent a woman having one of her innate and instinctive needs fulfilled. . . . To our good fortune, modesty and refinement are an intrinsic part of being a Jewish woman or girl. Women have inherited these treasures from the original ‘mothers of *Klal Yisroel*’, each of whom personified special modesty, bashfulness and *eidelkeit*. It is our duty to reawaken these partly dormant qualities once again within ourselves” (5). This is one of many views on this topic, but noteworthy for how it essentializes and naturalizes a “need” for outer adornment.

much. In this regard it is a symptomatic irruption in the fabric of the text, one that requires attention.

From the perspective of lifting out components of collusion, the kind of deference or reverence that is called for is aimed at keeping people in line and willing to comply with structures and systems instead of to resist them. I suggest that it is not a coincidence that 2:17-3:16 is replete with echoes of “fear.” It modifies the way the wives were to relate to their husbands, the house-slaves to their masters, and all people to their king or the king’s representatives.²²

When I read through this part of the text, it seems that the line between mortal fear²³ and reverence for an authority is blurred. Being afraid of their husbands is quite different from being deferential to one’s god or master. When read holding both types of fear in mind, this passage becomes an example of how easily a person in a position of power can disregard the various dynamics of the daily reality of those to whom he speaks. This approach of offering universal directives instead of truly empathizing with and understanding the people affected by the “solutions” is similar to the way white western malestream biblical scholarship has proclaimed its own authoritativeness. In both cases, the voice with authority is heeded and what he says goes.

The author would have us believe that Sarah did not give in to the fear she must have experienced when in the possession of other men. In addition to erasing or taming the image of what happened to Sarah, this move reflects a freedom men presume that they have to manipulate both the women in their lives and the texts that (could) give voice to them.

²² Fear (n): 1:17, 2:18, 3:2, 3:14, 3:16; fear (vb.) 2:17, 3:6, 3:14.

²³ This topic, “mortal fear,” is addressed in the following chapter.

In this adaptation of the household code, all of the directives or commands given, including the submissive and compliant behavior attributed to Sarah, are reflective of a model citizen of Empire. Since this text is beneficial to Empire, the author is, intentionally or not, colluding with imperial ideologies.

Husbands

While I am not working with this section of the household code as much as the pieces addressed to wives and slaves, I do find it useful to address briefly, particularly at this point in the project. Primarily, it serves to highlight a distinction between roles for women and men that are realized within faith communities.

Muted Directives: “showing consideration” vs. “suffer in silence”

Jeannine Brown has noted the unexpected element here of charging husbands to show honor to their wives, in 3:7: “Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life-- so that nothing may hinder your prayers.” This seemingly pleasant irruption—pleasant to the extent that showing consideration and paying honor to a person are welcome behaviors—should give us reason to pause, however. Within a kyriarchal society that depends upon all members to behave in ways that sustain that order, all relational dynamics must be analyzed for their contribution to maintaining the status quo.

As the name of this section notes, there is a significant distinction between the commands given to the wives and those of the husbands in these communities. Whether or not the husbands

being addressed are married to women within these communities is not my primary concern.²⁴

The issue is that within the first century context such distinctions between behavioral expectations of husbands and wives were typical, thus many scholars note that we cannot fault the authors of these texts for, in a sense, being themselves. They could not help but to think of women and men differently and thus to have very different directives for them. But this basic disclaimer preempts any attempt to critique that very socio-political reality in which the authors lived and which they in turn textualized in their writing endeavors.

The “love patriarchy” analysis is one of the most common ways to justify or to get around holding these texts accountable for what they engender in faith communities.²⁵ All such endeavors remain on the surface of the texts: “what Jesus ‘said’ was more loving and accepting than ...,” or, “it was unheard of for someone to suggest that a man give honor to his wife, thus the Christian movement was quite progressive in its early formative years.” This kind of approach to the passage is understandable, in that it points to what the scholar perceives to be a positive aspect of the text.

But my concern is not to decide whether these claims are wrong or right, but to note how finding the affirmative aspects of texts without holding them accountable for the oppressive realities that they perpetuate is also an act of collusion with the texts. A “step in the ‘right’ direction,” by this way of interpreting, is still a step within the kyriarchal framework. There is still a stark contrast in roles between wives submitting silently and husbands ruling, however considerately, and this text assures that both parties will behave accordingly.

²⁴ I refer the reader interested in this topic to Gross, “Are the Wives of I Peter 3.7 Christians?,” 89-96.

²⁵ Gerd Theissen adopted Troeltsch’s understanding of patriarchy in order to explain why one particular early Christian trajectory “survived” or was “successful” beyond the second and third centuries. According to Theissen, the Christian communities blended an agapeic love with the patriarchal structures, hierarchies and roles. The result was a “willing acceptance of given inequalities” within the social sphere, while maintaining an equality “in Christ” within the religious sphere. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 78-84.

Ultimately, there is a stark contrast between the silence of the wives and the “considerate treatment” that is expected of the husbands, in order that their prayers not be hindered. One group is silenced and the other’s ability to voice needs and issues is protected within the span of seven verses! The deference required of wives toward their husbands was not a new idea in terms of the socio-cultural expectations of that time, nor was the suggestion that husbands treat their wives well. They do clearly endorse behavior constituent of kyriarchal power relations, however, and in this sense are examples of components of collusion.

Role of overseer in the home and ekklēsia

In addition to the general dynamic between husband and wife that this text espouses, we can also see in the charge given to the husbands in 3:7 that the stance and roles of the husbands within the household in general are carried over into this exhortation. Though in Peter’s exhortations there may be a softening of the typically domineering temperament, the kyriarchal system is still in place and the roles the men have within the household are simply transferred into the religious communities. There is a feigned sense of the women being highly esteemed because they are exemplary in their work and behaviors, since all the while the men are still given the ultimate rule or the final word. For the women it is an example of tokenism. The rhetorical effect of the charge to the husbands in 1 Peter 3:7 is the wink of acknowledging their ultimate control.

Margaret Y. MacDonald has noted that “the role of leaders as relatively well-to-do householders who act as masters of their wives, children, and slaves is inseparably linked with their authority in the church.”²⁶ The same reality that the wives may have done all the hard work within the household including overseeing the work of the children and slaves, while the

²⁶ MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, 214.

husband had the ultimate authority, is then played out within the gatherings of the faith communities. The final authority in the household rests with the *paterfamilias*; the final authority within the *ekklēsia* rests with men who were heads of their households, those who by “nature” or by experience have proven to be able to command such authority.

This connection is further supported by the fact that the author of Ephesians draws upon the husband and wife “unity” as the primary image of the church in relation to Christ. No matter how loving the husband-wife and Christ-church relationships may have been, they are clearly hierarchical and thus have one dominant member over the other in both situations. Given the socio-political context of both the authors and the recipients, it is understandable that the authors would draw upon the husband-wife relationship to help explain the kyriarchical relations of the church, Christ and God. Any of their alternatives would have been equally hierarchically determined, as this kind of worldview was part of the *habitus* at that time.²⁷

One of the points of debate in the household code scholarship is that of determining which passages “count” as such material. 1 Peter presents an interesting twist in this debate. While Aristotle addresses three dyadic relationships—husband/wife, father/child, master/slave—the father/child dimension is conspicuously removed from the (implied master)-slave and husband-wife content in 1 Peter. The children do show up in 5:1-5, however. Just as the wives are “likewise” exhorted to be submissive to their husbands and husbands are “likewise” encouraged to respect their wives, the young-ones were are “likewise” exhorted to submit themselves to the *presbuteroi*.²⁸

²⁷ We are not lacking in voices who would say that systemically and structurally this worldview dominates to this day.

²⁸ I agree with most scholars that the “likewise” is referring back to the initial exhortations to the slaves.

The debate as to whether or not the section in 5:1-5 qualifies as household code material serves to hide or deny the fact that a connection *can* be made between household roles and those of the gathered *ekklēsia*. As MacDonald has noted, “Here one discovers evidence that roles in the patriarchal household are inseparably linked to ministry roles in the community and to the formation of offices.”²⁹ While scholars do not agree as to whether the household code content is drawn upon for defining leadership roles within the church, they do agree that 5:1-6 *is* significant in this regard. The splitting of hairs over which texts specifically impact our understanding of leadership roles is itself an irruption worth noting. In the end, however, I agree with MacDonald that household and *ekklēsia* are inseparably linked, thus the sacred space is structured and run in terms of the kyriarchal (Imperial) roles and expectations.

Households in Empire

Schüssler Fiorenza has summarized the crux of the issue of the role of households in upholding Empire, suggesting that since the rules of the household, religious rites and ancestral customs all had political and economic implications, wives and slaves who chose not to worship the gods of the paterfamilias, “violate not only their household duties but also the laws of the state.”³⁰ These conclusions are primarily drawn from Aristotle’s ideas about households. What I would like to contribute to this discussion is an initial assessment of how this idea becomes manifest, an analysis that goes beyond the behaviors and roles within households. I suggest that

²⁹ MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches*, 216. See also, Howe, *Because you Bear this Name*, 225.

³⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Praxis of Co-equal Discipleship,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Richard A. Horsley, ed.; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1997), 241.

what is needed is to address the various factors that make possible that these behaviors and these alone, which are conducive to the kyriarchal system, are accepted.³¹

For instance, Margaret MacDonald has noted how the use of the domestic code in 1 Peter has a subtle effect of invalidating any interest there may still have been to gravitate toward the ascetic lifestyle. While the household code may be specifically addressing relations between believing wives and non-believing husbands, failing to mention the Christian communal option of women living together, for instance, effectively erases this possibility from the collective consciousness.³² It is a life lived in an orderly and fruitful patriarchal household that matters.³³

Continuing with this train of thought, the general category “wives” gives the impression that all wives and their situations are the same, which is just as ridiculous today as it was then. Additionally, the other non-household members of the society are conspicuously not acknowledged in the letter. I am referring to the people who are most exploited by the economic structure, day-laborers in particular. We must remember that whether women were among the

³¹ In the United States today, though there may be an individualistic worldview that esteems the self as first and foremost, the well-worn creed: “God, Country, Flag” is the motto our government would have us embody. As United States (non)citizens, we are to be obedient to and to serve “our” God, country and flag before all other masters or organizations. The resonance between Aristotle’s view and that of the government of the United States is hard to miss. Both are based upon and thus perpetuate a kyriarchal worldview and socio-political structure, and both trade in the fears and insecurities of the populace. I am all too aware of my own context as I write these pages. In a time of “war on terror” that operates out of fear and the perpetual production of a state of fear within the people living within the borders of this country, I am struck by the daily advertisements for the armed forces and National Guard that I hear on the radio, which are usually followed by a recording of the National Anthem. These morning moments of patriotism are to me propaganda of the simplest and most effective kind. This parallel also brings to mind the effects of silence or denial for the sake of the honor of the military or for the greater cause, something we know is constantly at work today. “For example, the motto of the United States Marine Corps, ‘Semper Fidelis’ (Latin for always faithful), is further interpreted as ‘faithful to my God, country, and the Corps.’ It is a cherished and respected code used by marines with great pride. However, it has also been used as a shield of silence.” T. S. Nelson, *For Love of Country: Confronting Rape and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military* (New York: Haworth Maltreatment and Trauma, 2002), 6.

³² MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, 216.

³³ Given that most texts that might tell us something informative about women during this time were written by men from a man’s perspective, we should not be surprised to see only pragmatic discussions of women and their roles. But it needs to be said that it is precisely such limited views of women then that have informed the structures and relationships of various institutions in the western world today. The lack of representation then has become a lived reality for women today.

ranks of day-laborers, and thus attending to children simultaneously, or that they stayed at home to rear children, tending to all household matters, their labor was essential in all cases. Any such wives, widows and non-married young women who were members of these communities, already in a position of relative invisibility, would have the additional slap in the face that this letter engendered.

While it may at first seem to be an “innocent” mistake that only members of the household are acknowledged in this letter, it is also a symptomatic irruption of the underlying need to simultaneously affirm and control the people in these particular roles. In choosing to elevate the roles of the household, the author makes an accommodation to Empire. Collusion with the exploitative system precludes seeking justice for those who are exploited *by* the system.

Within the context of the Roman Empire, one may ask about the citizenship of day-laborers or of any of the members of these faith communities. In fact, the opening lines of this letter raise this question for us when addressing the recipients as “chosen refugees.” There is a curious tension between acknowledging the members of these communities as non-citizens and refugees at the outset of the letter, yet choosing to affirm a socio-political norm that exploits those particular people. It is not the *paroikoi* or *parepidemioi* (and their lifestyles and contributions to society) who are held up as exemplary members of the communities in this section of the letter. Now, the author turns his attention to those *in households* who were most essential for the maintenance of the kyriarchal socio-political structure that is an essential aspect of Imperial rule and domination.

To put it another way, addressing these faith communities in rural areas but only noting the role of the household slaves and wives, with no mention of the realities / status of the wo/men laborers, elevates and valorizes the household economic system and re-marginalizes the

laborers and their realities. It is a form of collusion with the exploitative practices that prey upon those who are most vulnerable.

There is a curious piece of history about the Asia Minor region regarding the acceptability of Christianity that is relevant to this issue. According to the findings of Samuel Dickey, there were an unusual number of strikes or examples of “labor unrest” that occurred in the cities of Asia Minor in the second through the fifth centuries, events unparalleled elsewhere within Roman colonies at that time.³⁴ The elite and well-to-do peoples of these nether regions at first resisted Christianity, yet within 200 years they would be the people embracing it. Perhaps there were restless laborers claiming to be a part of this movement, making it less than appealing for those trying to stay in the good graces of Rome and its representatives to associate themselves with such a movement. This possibility would also explain the multiple exhortations to “do good” within this circular letter, and the striking parallel with the terminology associated with accusations made of “Christians.”³⁵

Only a transformation in the constitution of the movement/organization can account for such a drastic change in the population of this movement. Coincidence or not, it was not until the “household code” ethic had been introduced, which made Christianity adaptable for Imperial goals and its adherents appear to be obedient citizens,³⁶ that the Asia Minor region began to embrace Christianity.

³⁴ Dickey, “Some Economic and Social Conditions,” 405.

³⁵ See chapter 2 n. 68.

³⁶ Of note is Goppelt’s understanding of the use of *hypotagete*: “order yourselves,” in 2:13. He read this command as a counter not to rebellion but to “the flight of emigration.” Goppelt, *A Commentary of I Peter*, 168. They were to enlist themselves in the organizations of their society, as Epictetus notes in his *Dissertationes* that the “role of a Man” was to be a citizen of the world which meant that one should bear in mind the proper character of a citizen (2.10.1) (Goppelt, 171).

These things said, it seems that then as now the official institutions that are sanctioned are those that support the status quo and the roles and laborers outside of this system are overlooked, erased from the social discourse, and yet still exploited for their productivity. I am well aware of the debate regarding the “true” mission that Jesus led during his time on earth: was it a grassroots movement “for the people”? was he merely claiming to be for those exploited by the system while spending all his time with the elite who benefited from that exploitation? did he in fact envision his movement leading to a political coup? was he more of a peripatetic gentle teacher and healer? and so on. It is worth pointing out, however, the potential interpretation that the movement changed from supporting “the people” to embracing the establishment of the ruling elite.

Whatever the case, the institution of the household was deeply embedded in the societies of first century Asia Minor. The well-run household (and the rearing of children) was the main contribution that wives, under the supervision of their husbands, could make to society that was productive and praise-worthy. It was a role defined by men and for the socio-political and economic benefit of men and the kyriarchal social structure. All that happened behind closed doors and beneath the outward appearance of orderliness was denied a presence or a voice within the socio-political discourse. Then as now, the focus was upon producing obedient citizens who conformed to certain socio-political ideals.

1 Peter’s *Haustafel* as ambivalent mimicry

Having discussed some of the specific pieces of the *Haustafel* in 1 Peter and how those irruptions highlight, to some extent, the role of households in upholding Empire, I would now

like to address the larger picture of the incorporation of this adapted socio-political construct within this letter.

For me, one of the most fascinating aspects of the inclusion of a version of the household code is how it plays upon the power of the metonymy of presence.³⁷ This presence is, in Homi Bhabha's words, one of the strategic objectives of colonial mimicry. In rearticulating an aspect of the colonial kyriarchal structural system of relations, the author of the letter invokes within his discourse the very institution he wishes to disavow.³⁸ By merely referring to a part of this Imperial institution, without having to qualify the reference, the author confirms the power of this standard. In so doing, he simultaneously elicits the responses of fear and respect that are granted to Imperial representatives, and claims for himself the attendant power and authority.

At the same time, the discourse of mimicry is "constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."³⁹ The imitation can never be complete, but, in the face of a dominating imperial "other," the colonized seemingly have no other choice but to engage with the patterns and expectations of Empire. The author of 1 Peter makes the mimicry quite easy to recognize, as he includes striking Christological meaning in his adaptation. The idea of ambivalence within acts of mimicry—its "almost but not quite" nature—is what makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine whether such rhetorical moves are subversive or collusionary.

Symbolic Dominating Power of Author over Recipients

³⁷ Bhabha, *Location*, 89.

³⁸ Bhabha, *Location*, 91.

³⁹ Bhabha, *Location*, 86.

The two issues of power and authority keep resurfacing in this discussion, and it is to be expected. The inquisitive mind may ask how or why this letter was well received at the time and was passed along to the next generations. The answer has to do with the dynamics of authority—whose voice or opinion matters most—and power between groups of people. Power wielded in a kyriarchal structure of relations implies that a hierarchy is required and thus must be maintained for the relations to continue as they began.⁴⁰ Power is a function of relations, since authoritative language “never governs without the collaboration of those it governs.”⁴¹

Balch notes that it is probably not a coincidence that all of the new testament letters that adopt the household code are written by someone from a Roman prison, to a community (or communities) experiencing tension with the Roman social order in general, and reflect a concern for how to respond to outsiders.⁴² Letters from prison hold their own weighty authority.⁴³ Though we cannot know entirely how the location of the authors affected what was written or how the missive was received, we can appreciate that 1 Peter gains authority because it comes from someone who knows the consequences of having a “run in” with the ruling powers. The fact that Peter was in Rome, the central command of the Empire, adds another layer of experiential insight and importance to what he has to say. Having seen the grandeur of Rome and the power of its military, an extension of the power of the Caesar himself, Peter’s exhortations to “do good” and to live in a way that invokes praise and not punishment must have held significant sway among his audience.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991).

⁴¹ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 113.

⁴² Balch, *Wives*, 80 n. 58.

⁴³ There are many reasons for this pull or unique authority. As a way of contextualizing this dynamic, one only needs to consider the respect that other writings from prison have received: Martin Luther King’s famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s writings and letters, even Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* is the focus of interest in ways that his other “writings” of various forms are not.

The discourse that is used in the letter draws upon the language of the colonizer in addition to the language of the faith tradition out of which the Christian movement developed. The power of the imperial language and the structures that it supports is due in part to the fact that it all goes without mention by so many scholars, or is noted in highly detached or spiritualized ways. I am convinced that the introduction of the household code in 1 Peter (as well as Colossians and Ephesians) was nothing of a surprise to those who read it, but was so much a part of the culture/society in which they lived that no one thought twice about it. There is an all-pervasiveness to the Empire and its presence, such that accommodation to it requires no explanation.⁴⁴ The power and authority associated with the Empire, in this metonymy of presence, is then extended to the author of this letter, granting his exhortations and commands authoritative status.

Cynthia Briggs Kittredge addresses the powerful and affective combination of unity and obedience language in Pauline literature. Her insights can help us to see a similar dynamic at work in 1 Peter between the commands to be obedient and to do good and the identity of the faith communities as chosen people of G*d. Though the rhetoric and discourse of 1 Peter reflects the matters of the household code, the imperial rulers and authorities, and the need to be winsome in their behavior, it is all subsumed under the calling of Yahweh (1:1-2:12), and is even explicitly rendered under G*d's dominance.

The obedience required in the socio-political dimension is here intimately connected with their religious context and the deity that they worship. "The conventional connotations of obedience language," she argues, "in the social contexts of the patriarchal family and in the

⁴⁴ Fernando Segovia, "Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies," in *The Postcolonial Bible* (R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1998), 49-65.

political context of ruling and being ruled *are not transformed*⁴⁵ within the letter of 1 Peter. The theological support may not be explicit at the end of chapter 2, but there is no mistaking the imposition of the religious or theological justification onto the functioning imperial rule (2:13-17), which is then reinforced by the familial realm of the household, itself now inscribed in the religious realm. The household terminology contributes to the possibility of such a circular path of theologically justified submission.

In analyzing power relations, we must look at, among other things, the degree of rationalization required in order for the relations to be seen as obvious and representing a larger truth.⁴⁶ For our purposes, the introductory chapters of the letter serve as the rationalization for the commands. In the relationships between the author and the recipients, an authorized act has been created and received. It is something which is spoken by a person “legitimately licensed to do so,” in a legitimate situation with or according to the legitimate forms.⁴⁷ The author has drawn upon “legitimate” symbolic universes, both the religious and the imperial, to buttress his authority and in not only receiving but passing along the directives the faith communities grant him power and respect. The kyriarchal power relation between the author and these communities that we see in the letter becomes realized in their lives.⁴⁸

Adapted Household Code – Subversive or Collusionary?

⁴⁵ Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradition* (Harvard Theological Studies 45; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1998), 176. See also, Schüssler Fiorenza, “Discipleship and Patriarchy,” 148.

⁴⁶ Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, 50.

⁴⁷ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 113. I address this matter in chapter 2.

⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 37.

Since in his adaptation of the household code, the author speaks on behalf of and to the members of these communities, and he does so with power and authority, perhaps the question should be how is this *not* a move of collusion with Imperial ideology?

Speaking of the house churches in Rome, James Jeffers claims that the congregations associated with Clement and his understanding of how the churches were to relate to the Roman government “came to accept social distinctions among themselves as a basis for ordering their relationships. That is, through the influence of Roman ideology, they came to accept hierarchy as natural to Christianity.”⁴⁹ Notice how simply he claims the influence of Roman ideology on the house churches in Rome. Certainly the influence of Imperial ideology was present for and affected all groups of people, though to varying degrees.

Part of the power of imperial domination is that it often goes unnoticed or unquestioned. While some claim that taking the language of the colonizer and re-interpreting it for one’s own cause is a move of subversion, I contend that it only helps to mask the extent of the control the colonizer has over the colonized. When the language that is “subverted” is violent and evokes images of war, destructive power and domination, then the colonizer, not the colonized, has won in the adaptation, and subversion quickly becomes collusion. For this situation of faith communities, the language of violence and war resonates more closely with a dominating presence’s ideology than that of a liberating and loving G*d. What is intended to subvert actually reinforces and reinscribes the role of the colonizer.⁵⁰

It also creates the need to maintain such a kyriarchal structure, otherwise the language used and the relationships that it creates no longer function in the way they did initially. Put

⁴⁹ James S. Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 131.

⁵⁰ Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 116.

positively, changing the structure or the paradigm off of which the community is formed and gets its identity would require new language and ways of relating. But given the extent to which the *habitus* affects social norms, ways of behaving and relating to one another, and even the language that is official or legitimate, such changes would have to be very intentional and carefully wrought. Neither of these things are what I see at work in the letter of 1 Peter.

Thus, this collusion with Imperial ideology affects the language, power dynamics, and roles within these communities. It is almost irrelevant that this accommodation or adaptation was done for expediency and the survival of the Christian movement. For now it is within the canon of the Christian traditions ensuring its efficacy for thousands of years.

Canonizing Collusion

The language of the colonizer in the mouths and proclamations of the colonized is not a minor issue. Many scholars have pointed to the ways in which the Christian communities and the authors of the gospels adopted terms and labels from the imperial realm. In doing so, they make the language of Christos Victor, Savior, and King of Kings, for instance, “innocent” and valid. In this way, the church was a part of veiling the imperial impact and influence on the peoples and the regions that were dominated.

As Sarah Tanzer has noted, the household provided not just the initial meeting place for the church, but the conceptual foundation for “universal church” as well.⁵¹ The appropriated household code then produces a certain kind of knowledge and defines the realm of behavior and of possibilities for the members of the faith communities. Because texts that embody elements of imperial ideology were canonized, the patterns of kyriarchal power relations and the expectation

⁵¹ Sarah Tanzer, “Ephesians,” in *Searching the Scriptures* vol. 2 (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, with Shelly Matthews, eds.; New York: Crossroad, 1993), 328-9. See also David Horrell, “Leadership Patterns,” 335.

of ultimate obedience to the government become embodied in the structure, language and roles of the church.

In addition, the canonization and later transportation of this letter to various parts of the world serves to promulgate the underlying kyriarchal structure of the household code to these societies. While the extent to which these societies adapt the socio-political structure varies from place to place and over time, it is still relevant that this particular institutional and behavioral expectation is a part of the bible of the western world. These texts may have inspired a great amount of artistic expressions over the centuries, but they have also been quite useful in colonization efforts and in justifying the suppression and oppression of myriad groups of people.⁵² The imposition of such blatantly kyriarchal power structures on the communities gathered in the name of Christ contributed to the movement's ability to become the official religion of the Roman Empire. This is an important point for this discussion because of the role the ruling powers have on determining social roles and relations of power, as well as the language that is used to establish and control such behavior.

There are many details to which one can point to highlight a change that took place in the structure and definition of roles from the early movement and Pauline material to the second phase, as documented in Ephesians, Colossians and 1 Peter. I have addressed the Christological issue briefly already, in terms of the command to be silent and to embrace suffering. Schüssler Fiorenza has noted another poignant textual irruption in the move from “no longer male and female” to the employment of household roles to circumscribe obedience and relations among the members of the communities. If we understand Galatians 3:28 to be addressing the socially

⁵² See Michael Prior, CM, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique* (The Biblical Seminar 48; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); R.S. Sugirtharajah, “Biblical Studies after the Empire: From a Colonial to a Postcolonial Mode of Interpretation,” pp. 12-23 in *The Postcolonial Bible* (The Bible and Postcolonialism, 1; R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 102-22.

constructed relations of husbands and wives, masters and slaves, then it is making a claim that these relations do not exist within the body of Christ. So, the early radical denial of the relevance of social roles within the *ekklēsia* is turned on its head as those very social roles define all relations within the *ekklēsia*.⁵³

While the adaptation of the *Haustafel* was imposed on the faith communities sometime around the end of the first century CE, the inclusion of 1 Peter in the canon ensures that its structure and role constructions become unconsciously upheld and embodied by future members of the *ekklēsia*. The distance that many scholars would like us to believe exists between the influence of this text and matters within the church and society today is one that I cannot agree exists. It is precisely because of the presence in the Christian canon of texts such as 1 Peter that reflect kyriarchal socio-cultural norms and power differential relations that we still have the need for emancipatory movements, within the church and western societies today.

⁵³ Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Praxis of Coequal Discipleship," 227-8.